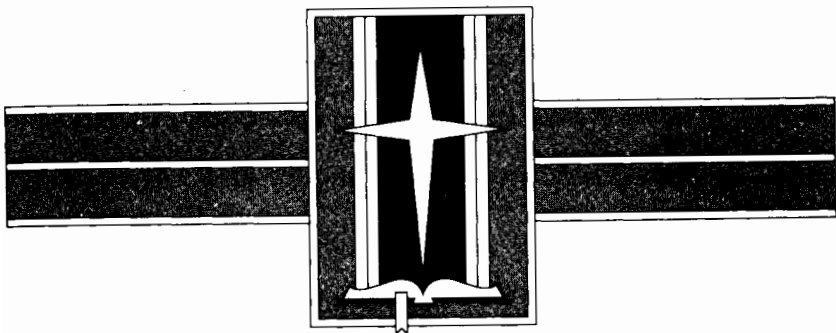


THE NEW AMERICAN COMMENTARY



Volume
3A

LEVITICUS

Mark F. Rooker

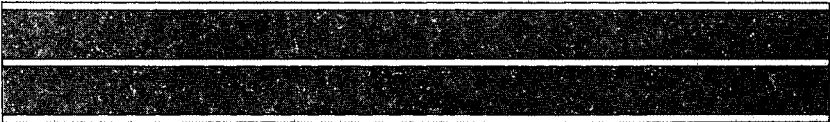


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To my wife Carole

Partner in Life and Service

Eccl 4:9–10

Editors' Preface

God's Word does not change. God's world, however, changes in every generation. These changes, in addition to new findings by scholars and a new variety of challenges to the gospel message, call for the church in each generation to interpret and apply God's Word for God's people. Thus, THE NEW AMERICAN COMMENTARY is introduced to bridge the twentieth and twenty-first centuries. This new series has been designed primarily to enable pastors, teachers, and students to read the Bible with clarity and proclaim it with power.

In one sense THE NEW AMERICAN COMMENTARY is not new, for it represents the continuation of a heritage rich in biblical and theological exposition. The title of this forty-volume set points to the continuity of this series with an important commentary project published at the end of the nineteenth century called AN AMERICAN COMMENTARY, edited by Alvah Hovey. The older series included, among other significant contributions, the outstanding volume on Matthew by John A. Broadus, from whom the publisher of the new series, Broadman Press, partly derives its name. The former series was authored and edited by scholars committed to the infallibility of Scripture, making it a solid foundation for the present project. In line with this heritage, all NAC authors affirm the divine inspiration, inerrancy, complete truthfulness, and full authority of the Bible. The perspective of the NAC is unapologetically confessional and rooted in the evangelical tradition.

Since a commentary is a fundamental tool for the expositor or teacher who seeks to interpret and apply Scripture in the church or classroom, the NAC focuses on communicating the theological structure and content of each biblical book. The writers seek to illuminate both the historical meaning and contemporary significance of Holy Scripture.

In its attempt to make a unique contribution to the Christian community, the NAC focuses on two concerns. First, the commentary emphasizes how each section of a book fits together so that the reader becomes aware of the theological unity of each book and of Scripture as a whole. The writers, however, remain aware of the Bible's inherently rich variety. Second, the NAC is produced with the conviction that the Bible primarily belongs to the church. We believe that scholarship and the academy provide an indispensable foundation for biblical understanding and the service of Christ, but the editors and authors of this series have attempted to communicate the findings of their research in a manner that will build up the whole body of Christ. Thus, the commentary concentrates on theological exegesis while providing practical, applicable exposition.

THE NEW AMERICAN COMMENTARY's theological focus enables

the reader to see the parts as well as the whole of Scripture. The biblical books vary in content, context, literary type, and style. In addition to this rich variety, the editors and authors recognize that the doctrinal emphasis and use of the biblical books differs in various places, contexts, and cultures among God's people. These factors, as well as other concerns, have led the editors to give freedom to the writers to wrestle with the issues raised by the scholarly community surrounding each book and to determine the appropriate shape and length of the introductory materials. Moreover, each writer has developed the structure of the commentary in a way best suited for expounding the basic structure and the meaning of the biblical books for our day. Generally, discussions relating to contemporary scholarship and technical points of grammar and syntax appear in the footnotes and not in the text of the commentary. This format allows pastors and interested laypersons, scholars and teachers, and serious college and seminary students to profit from the commentary at various levels. This approach has been employed because we believe that all Christians have the privilege and responsibility to read and seek to understand the Bible for themselves.

Consistent with the desire to produce a readable, up-to-date commentary, the editors selected the *New International Version* as the standard translation for the commentary series. The selection was made primarily because of the NIV's faithfulness to the original languages and its beautiful and readable style. The authors, however, have been given the liberty to differ at places from the NIV as they develop their own translations from the Greek and Hebrew texts.

The NAC reflects the vision and leadership of those who provide oversight for Broadman Press, who in 1987 called for a new commentary series that would evidence a commitment to the inerrancy of Scripture and a faithfulness to the classic Christian tradition. While the commentary adopts an "American" name, it should be noted some writers represent countries outside the United States, giving the commentary an international perspective. The diverse group of writers includes scholars, teachers, and administrators from almost twenty different colleges and seminaries, as well as pastors, missionaries, and a layperson.

The editors and writers hope that THE NEW AMERICAN COMMENTARY will be helpful and instructive for pastors and teachers, scholars and students, for men and women in the churches who study and teach God's Word in various settings. We trust that for editors, authors, and readers alike, the commentary will be used to build up the church, encourage obedience, and bring renewal to God's people. Above all, we pray that the NAC will bring glory and honor to our Lord who has graciously redeemed us and faithfully revealed himself to us in his Holy Word.

SOLI DEO GLORIA
The Editors

Author's Preface

At the end of the process of writing a commentary I am indebted to numerous individuals who have been of tremendous personal encouragement and assistance. I wish to express my appreciation first of all to Dr. George B. Davis, Sr., Associate Pastor of First Baptist Church of Dallas, Texas, who both encouraged me to work on Leviticus and was instrumental in recommending me to the New American Commentary series.

I am indebted to students at Criswell College, Moscow Theological Seminary, and especially Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary, where I have had the privilege of teaching Leviticus over the past decade. These students have both challenged and encouraged me in wrestling with the meaning of Leviticus for the contemporary Christian.

A special word of thanks goes to all of my former Hebrew professors at Dallas Seminary, Brandeis University, and the Hebrew University of Jerusalem. I am grateful for their persistence in teaching me Hebrew, while each in his own way has contributed to my love for the Hebrew language.

I would like to thank the editors of Broadman & Holman for the invitation to be involved in the New American Commentary series. A special word of thanks to E. Ray Clendenen, General Editor for the project, for his patience and direction in guiding me along the way. I would also like to express my appreciation as well to Manuscript Editor Linda Scott for her diligent work, patient spirit, and cheerful attitude.

Since I am on sabbatical leave during the final stages of writing this commentary, I would like to thank Dr. Paige Patterson, the Administration, and the Trustees of Southeastern Baptist Seminary not only for granting the sabbatical leave but also for allowing me to work in a unique environment where serious Bible study is wedded to a resounding commitment to Christian service.

I would like to offer a special thanks to my wife Carole for supporting me throughout the entire project. I would like to thank her for her consistent and patient encouragement to complete the commentary and the extra "sacrifices" she made for the undertaking to be completed. I gladly and appreciatively dedicate this work to her.

As we begin the twenty-first century, it is apparent that the greatest fear our culture now faces may not be that of a nuclear catastrophe but rather corruption from within. We have witnessed a moral decay in all echelons of our society, even in high places. The religion of the Canaanites is making a decisive comeback! The Book of Leviticus calls us to a holy living under prescribed and unalterable ethical norms but also speaks of a way of atonement. In one sense no book of the Bible could be more relevant. My prayer is that this volume will be of assistance in the exposition and understanding of Leviticus for the church and that the Lamb of God who was sacrificed for our transgressions will be exalted. Thanks be to God for the time and the strength He has given me to undertake this concentrated study on this precious but often neglected portion of Holy Scripture. Thanks be to the Lord Jesus Christ whom I have come to know in a more intimate way through the study of Leviticus (Luke 24:27).

—Mark F. Rooker
Wake Forest, North Carolina

Abbreviations

Bible Books

Gen	Isa	Luke
Exod	Jer	John
Lev	Lam	Acts
Num	Ezek	Rom
Deut	Dan	1, 2 Cor
Josh	Hos	Gal
Judg	Joel	Eph
Ruth	Amos	Phil
1, 2 Sam	Obad	Col
1, 2 Kgs	Jonah	1, 2 Thess
1, 2 Chr	Mic	1, 2 Tim
Ezra	Nah	Titus
Neh	Hab	Phlm
Esth	Zeph	Heb
Job	Hag	Jas
Ps (pl. Pss)	Zech	1, 2 Pet
Prov	Mal	1, 2, 3 John
Eccl	Matt	Jude
Song	Mark	Rev

Apocrypha

<i>Add Esth</i>	<i>The Additions to the Book of Esther</i>
<i>Bar</i>	<i>Baruch</i>
<i>Bel</i>	<i>Bel and the Dragon</i>
<i>1,2 Esdr</i>	<i>1, 2 Esdras</i>
<i>4 Ezra</i>	<i>4 Ezra</i>
<i>Jdt</i>	<i>Judith</i>
<i>Ep Jer</i>	<i>Epistle of Jeremiah</i>
<i>1,2,3,4 Mac</i>	<i>1, 2, 3, 4 Maccabees</i>
<i>Pr Azar</i>	<i>Prayer of Azariah and the Song of the Three Jews</i>
<i>Pr Man</i>	<i>Prayer of Manasseh</i>
<i>Sir</i>	<i>Sirach, Ecclesiasticus</i>
<i>Sus</i>	<i>Susanna</i>
<i>Tob</i>	<i>Tobit</i>
<i>Wis</i>	<i>The Wisdom of Solomon</i>

Commonly Used Sources

AASOR	Annual of the American Schools of Oriental Research
AB	Anchor Bible
ABR	<i>Australian Biblical Review</i>
ABD	<i>Anchor Bible Dictionary</i> , ed. D. N. Freedman
ABW	<i>Archaeology and the Biblical World</i>
AC	An American Commentary, ed. A. Hovey
AcOr	<i>Acta orientalia</i>
AEL	M. Lichtheim, <i>Ancient Egyptian Literature</i>
AHW	W. von Soden, <i>Akkadisches Handwörterbuch</i>
AJBI	<i>Annual of the Japanese Biblical Institute</i>
AJSL	<i>American Journal of Semitic Languages and Literature</i>
Akk.	Akkadian
AnBib	Analecta Biblica
ANET	<i>Ancient Near Eastern Texts</i> , ed. J. B. Pritchard
ANETS	<i>Ancient Near Eastern Texts and Studies</i>
ANEP	<i>Ancient Near Eastern Pictures</i> , ed. J. B. Pritchard
Ant.	<i>Antiquities</i>
AOAT	Alter Orient und Altes Testament
AOS	American Oriental Society
AOTS	<i>Archaeology and Old Testament Study</i> , ed. D. W. Thomas
ARM	Archives royales de Mari
ArOr	Archiv orientální
AS	Assyriological Studies
ATD	Das Alte Testament Deutsch
ATR	<i>Anglican Theological Review</i>
AusBR	<i>Australian Biblical Review</i>
AUSS	<i>Andrews University Seminary Studies</i>
AV	Authorized Version
BA	<i>Biblical Archaeologist</i>
BAGD	W. Bauer, W. F. Arndt, F. W. Gingrich, and F. W. Danker, <i>Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament</i>
BALS	Bible and Literature Series
BARev	<i>Biblical Archaeology Review</i>
BASOR	<i>Bulletin of the American Schools of Oriental Research</i>
B. Bat	<i>Baba Batra</i>
BBR	<i>Bulletin for Biblical Research</i>
BDB	F. Brown, S. R. Driver, and C. A. Briggs, <i>Hebrew and English Lexicon of the Old Testament</i>
BETL	Bibliotheca ephemeridum theologicarum lovaniensium
BFT	Biblical Foundations in Theology
BHS	<i>Biblia hebraica stuttgartensia</i>
Bib	<i>Biblica</i>
BibOr	Biblica et orientalia
BibRev	<i>Bible Review</i>
BJRL	<i>Bulletin of the Johns Rylands University Library</i>
BJS	Brown Judaic Studies
BKAT	Biblischer Kommentar: Altes Testament
BN	<i>Biblische Notizen</i>

<i>BO</i>	<i>Bibliotheca orientalis</i>
<i>BR</i>	<i>Biblical Research</i>
<i>BSac</i>	<i>Bibliotheca Sacra</i>
<i>BSC</i>	Bible Student Commentary
<i>BST</i>	Bible Speaks Today
<i>BT</i>	<i>The Bible Translator</i>
<i>BTB</i>	<i>Biblical Theology Bulletin</i>
<i>BurH</i>	<i>Buried History</i>
<i>BZ</i>	<i>Biblische Zeitschrift</i>
<i>BZAW</i>	Beihefte zur ZAW
<i>CAD</i>	<i>The Assyrian Dictionary of the Oriental Institute of the University of Chicago</i>
<i>CAH</i>	<i>Cambridge Ancient History</i>
<i>CB</i>	Century Bible
<i>CBSC</i>	Cambridge Bible for Schools and Colleges
<i>CBC</i>	Cambridge Bible Commentary
<i>CBQ</i>	<i>Catholic Biblical Quarterly</i>
<i>CBQMS</i>	Catholic Biblical Quarterly Monograph Series
<i>CC</i>	The Communicator's Commentary
<i>CCK</i>	<i>Chronicles of Chaldean Kings</i> , D. J. Wiseman
<i>CD</i>	Cairo <i>Damascus Document</i>
<i>CGTC</i>	Cambridge Greek Testament Commentaries
<i>CHAL</i>	<i>Concise Hebrew and Aramic Lexicon</i> , ed. W. L. Holladay
<i>Comm.</i>	J. Calvin, <i>Commentary on the First Book of Moses Called Genesis</i> , trans., rev. J. King
<i>ConB</i>	Coniectanea biblica
<i>ConBOT</i>	Coniectanea biblica, Old Testament
<i>COT</i>	<i>Commentary on the Old Testament</i> , C. F. Keil and F. Delitzsch
<i>CR:BS</i>	<i>Currents in Research: Biblical Studies</i>
<i>CSR</i>	<i>Christian Scholar's Review</i>
<i>CT</i>	<i>Christianity Today</i>
<i>CTM</i>	<i>Concordia Theological Monthly</i>
<i>CTR</i>	<i>Criswell Theological Review</i>
<i>CurTM</i>	<i>Currents in Theology and Mission</i>
<i>DCH</i>	<i>Dictionary of Classical Hebrew</i> , ed. D. J. A. Clines
<i>DISO</i>	C.-F. Jean and J. Hoftijzer, <i>Dictionnaire des inscriptions sémitiques de l'ouest</i>
<i>DJD</i>	Discoveries in the Judean Desert
<i>DNWSI</i>	<i>Dictionary of Northwest Semitic Inscriptions</i>
<i>DOTT</i>	<i>Documents from Old Testament Times</i> , ed. D. W. Thomas
<i>DSBS</i>	Daily Study Bible Series
<i>DSS</i>	Dead Sea Scrolls
<i>EAEHL</i>	<i>Encyclopedia of Archaeological Excavations in the Holy Land</i> , ed. M. Avi-Yonah
<i>EBC</i>	Expositor's Bible Commentary
<i>Ebib</i>	Etudes bibliques
<i>EDBT</i>	<i>Evangelical Dictionary of Biblical Theology</i> , W. A. Elwell, ed.
<i>EE</i>	<i>Enuma Elish</i>

<i>EDNT</i>	<i>Exegetical Dictionary of the New Testament</i>
<i>EGT</i>	<i>The Expositor's Greek Testament</i>
<i>EM</i>	<i>Ensiqlopedia Miqra'it</i>
<i>EncJud</i>	<i>Encyclopaedia Judaica</i> (1971)
<i>ErIsr</i>	<i>Eretz Israel</i>
<i>ETL</i>	<i>Ephemerides theologicae lovanienses</i>
<i>EvBC</i>	Everyman's Bible Commentary
<i>EV(s)</i>	English Version(s)
<i>EvQ</i>	<i>Evangelical Quarterly</i>
<i>ExpTim</i>	<i>Expository Times</i>
<i>FB</i>	Forschung zur Bibel
<i>FOTL</i>	Forms of Old Testament Literature
<i>Gk.</i>	Greek
<i>GBH</i>	P. Joüon, <i>A Grammar of Biblical Hebrew</i> , 2 vols., trans. and rev. T. Muraoka
<i>GKC</i>	Gesenius's Hebrew Grammar, ed. E. Kautzsch, trans. A. E. Cowley
<i>GTJ</i>	<i>Grace Theological Journal</i>
<i>HALOT</i>	L. Koehler and W. Baumgartner, <i>The Hebrew and Aramaic Lexicon of the Old Testament</i>
<i>HAR</i>	<i>Hebrew Annual Review</i>
<i>HAT</i>	Handbuch zum Alten Testament
<i>HBD</i>	<i>Harper's Bible Dictionary</i> , ed. P. Achtemeier
<i>HBT</i>	<i>Horizons in Biblical Theology</i>
<i>HDR</i>	Harvard Dissertations in Religion
<i>Her</i>	Hermeneia
<i>HKAT</i>	Handkommentar zum Alten Testament
<i>HS</i>	<i>Hebrew Studies</i>
<i>HSM</i>	Harvard Semitic Monographs
<i>HT</i>	Helps for Translators
<i>HTR</i>	<i>Harvard Theological Review</i>
<i>HUCA</i>	<i>Hebrew Union College Annual</i>
<i>IB</i>	<i>Interpreter's Bible</i>
<i>IBC</i>	International Bible Commentary, ed. F. F. Bruce
<i>IBD</i>	<i>Illustrated Bible Dictionary</i> , ed. J. D. Douglas and N. Hillyer
<i>ICC</i>	International Critical Commentary
<i>IBHS</i>	B. K. Waltke and M. O'Connor, <i>Introduction to Biblical Hebrew Syntax</i>
<i>IBS</i>	<i>Irish Biblical Studies</i>
<i>IDB</i>	<i>Interpreter's Dictionary of the Bible</i> , ed. G. A. Buttrick et al.
<i>IDBSup</i>	Supplementary volume to <i>IDB</i>
<i>IEJ</i>	<i>Israel Exploration Journal</i>
<i>IES</i>	Israel Exploration Society
<i>IJT</i>	<i>Indian Journal of Theology</i>
<i>Int</i>	<i>Interpretation</i>
<i>INT</i>	Interpretation: A Bible Commentary for Teaching and Preaching
<i>IOS</i>	<i>Israel Oriental Studies</i>
<i>ISBE</i>	<i>International Standard Bible Encyclopedia</i> , rev. ed.,

	G. W. Bromiley
ITC	International Theological Commentary
ITQ	<i>Irish Theological Quarterly</i>
JAAR	<i>Journal of the American Academy of Religion</i>
JAARSup	<i>Journal of the American Academy of Religion</i> , Supplement
JANES	<i>Journal of Ancient Near Eastern Society</i>
JAOS	<i>Journal of the American Oriental Society</i>
JBL	<i>Journal of Biblical Literature</i>
JBR	<i>Journal of Bible and Religion</i>
JCS	<i>Journal of Cuneiform Studies</i>
JEA	<i>Journal of Egyptian Archaeology</i>
JETS	<i>Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society</i>
JJS	<i>Journal of Jewish Studies</i>
JNES	<i>Journal of Near Eastern Studies</i>
JNSL	<i>Journal of Northwest Semitic Languages</i>
JOTT	<i>Journal of Translation and Textlinguistics</i>
JPOS	<i>Journal of Palestine Oriental Society</i>
JPS	Jewish Publication Society
JPSV	Jewish Publication Society Version
JPST	Jewish Publication Society Torah
JRT	<i>Journal of Religious Thought</i>
JSJ	<i>Journal for the Study of Judaism in the Persian, Hellenistic, and Roman Period</i>
JSOR	<i>Journal of the Society for Oriental Research</i>
JSOT	<i>Journal for the Study of the Old Testament</i>
JSOTSup	JSOT—Supplement Series
JSS	<i>Journal of Semitic Studies</i>
JTS	<i>Journal of Theological Studies</i>
JTSNS	<i>Journal of Theological Studies, New Series</i>
JTT	<i>Journal of Translation and Textlinguistics</i>
KAT	Kommentar zum Alten Testament
KB	L. Koehler and W. Baumgartner, <i>Lexicon in Veteris Testamenti libros</i>
KD	<i>Kerygma und Dogma</i>
LBBC	Layman's Bible Book Commentary
LBH	Late Biblical Hebrew
LBI	Library of Biblical Interpretation
LCC	Library of Christian Classics
LLAVT	E. Vogt, <i>Lexicon Linguae Aramaicae Veteris Testamenti</i>
LSJ	Liddell-Scott-Jones, <i>Greek-English Lexicon</i>
LTQ	<i>Lexington Theological Quarterly</i>
LW	<i>Luther's Works. Lecture's on Genesis</i> , ed. J. Pelikan and D. Poellot, trans. G. Schick
LXX	Septuagint
MT	Masoretic Text
MSS	Manuscripts
NAB	New American Bible
NASB	New American Standard Bible
NAC	New American Commentary, ed. R. Clendenen

<i>NB</i>	<i>Nebuchadrezzar and Babylon</i> , D. J. Wiseman
<i>NBD</i>	<i>New Bible Dictionary</i> , ed. J. D. Douglas
<i>NCBC</i>	New Century Bible Commentary
<i>NEAEHL</i>	<i>The New Encyclopedia of Archaeological Excavations in the Holy Land</i> , ed. E. Stern
<i>NEB</i>	New English Bible
<i>NIB</i>	The New Interpreter's Bible
<i>NICNT</i>	New International Commentary on the New Testament
<i>NICOT</i>	New International Commentary on the Old Testament
<i>NIDOTTE</i>	<i>The New International Dictionary of Old Testament Theology and Exegesis</i> , ed. W. A. VanGemeren
<i>NJB</i>	New Jerusalem Bible
<i>NJPS</i>	New Jewish Publication Society Version
<i>NKZ</i>	<i>Neue kirchliche Zeitschrift</i>
<i>NovT</i>	<i>Novum Testamentum</i>
<i>NRSV</i>	New Revised Standard Version
<i>NRT</i>	<i>La nouvelle revue théologique</i>
<i>NTS</i>	<i>New Testament Studies</i>
<i>NTT</i>	Norsk Teologisk Tidsskrift
<i>OBO</i>	Orbis biblicus et orientalis
<i>OL</i>	Old Latin
<i>Or</i>	<i>Orientalia</i>
<i>OTL</i>	Old Testament Library
<i>OTP</i>	<i>The Old Testament Pseudepigrapha</i> , ed. J. H. Charlesworth
<i>OTS</i>	<i>Oudtestamentische Studiën</i>
<i>OTWSA</i>	<i>Ou-Testamentiese Werkgemeenskap in Suid-Afrika</i>
<i>PCB</i>	<i>Peake's Commentary on the Bible</i> , ed. M. Black and H. H. Rowley
<i>PEQ</i>	<i>Palestine Exploration Quarterly</i>
<i>POTT</i>	<i>Peoples of Old Testament Times</i> , ed. D. J. Wiseman
<i>POTW</i>	<i>Peoples of the Old Testament World</i> , ed. A. E. Hoerth, G. L. Mattingly, and E. M. Yamauchi
<i>PTMS</i>	Pittsburgh Theological Monograph Series
<i>PTR</i>	<i>Princeton Theological Review</i>
<i>RA</i>	<i>Revue d'assyriologie et d'archéologie orientale</i>
<i>RB</i>	<i>Revue biblique</i>
<i>REB</i>	Revised English Bible
<i>ResQ</i>	<i>Restoration Quarterly</i>
<i>RevExp</i>	<i>Review and Expositor</i>
<i>RHPR</i>	<i>Revue d'histoire et de philosophie religieuses</i>
<i>RSR</i>	Recherches de science religieuse
<i>RTR</i>	<i>Reformed Theological Review</i>
<i>SANE</i>	Sources from the Ancient Near East
<i>SBH</i>	Standard Biblical Hebrew
<i>SBJT</i>	<i>Southern Baptist Journal of Theology</i>
<i>SBLDS</i>	Society of Biblical Literature Dissertation Series
<i>SBLMS</i>	Society of Biblical Literature Monograph Series
<i>SBLSP</i>	Society of Biblical Literature Seminar Papers
<i>SBT</i>	Studies in Biblical Theology
<i>SHCANÉ</i>	Studies in the History and Culture of the Ancient Near East

<i>SJT</i>	<i>Scottish Journal of Theology</i>
<i>SJOT</i>	<i>Scandinavian Journal of the Old Testament</i>
<i>SJLA</i>	<i>Studies in Judaism in Late Antiquity</i>
<i>SLJA</i>	<i>Saint Luke's Journal of Theology</i>
<i>SOTI</i>	<i>A Survey of Old Testament Introduction</i> , G. L. Archer
<i>SP</i>	<i>Samaritan Pentateuch</i>
<i>SR</i>	<i>Studies in Religion/Sciences religieuses</i>
<i>SSI</i>	<i>Syrian Semitic Inscriptions</i>
<i>ST</i>	<i>Studia theologica</i>
<i>STJD</i>	<i>Studies on the Texts of the Desert of Judah</i>
<i>Syr.</i>	<i>Syriac</i>
<i>TBT</i>	<i>The Bible Today</i>
<i>TD</i>	<i>Theology Digest</i>
<i>TDNT</i>	<i>Theological Dictionary of the New Testament</i> , ed. G. Kittel and G. Friedrich
<i>TDOT</i>	<i>Theological Dictionary of the Old Testament</i> , ed. G. J. Botterweck and H. Ringgren
<i>TEV</i>	<i>Today's English Version</i>
<i>Tg(s).</i>	<i>Targum(s)</i>
<i>TJNS</i>	<i>Trinity Journal—New Series</i>
<i>TLOT</i>	<i>Theological Lexicon of the Old Testament</i> , ed. E. Jenni and C. Westermann
<i>TLZ</i>	<i>Theologische Literaturzeitung</i>
<i>TNTC</i>	<i>Tyndale New Testament Commentaries</i>
<i>TOTC</i>	<i>Tyndale Old Testament Commentaries</i>
<i>TrinJ</i>	<i>Trinity Journal</i>
<i>TS</i>	<i>Theological Studies</i>
<i>TToday</i>	<i>Theology Today</i>
<i>Tur</i>	<i>Traditionsgeschichtliche Untersuchungen zum Richterbuch</i>
<i>TWAT</i>	<i>Theologisches Wörterbuch zum Alten Testament</i> , ed. G. J. Botterweck and H. Ringgren
<i>TWOT</i>	<i>Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament</i>
<i>TynBul</i>	<i>Tyndale Bulletin</i>
<i>UF</i>	<i>Ugarit-Forschungen</i>
<i>Ug.</i>	<i>Ugaritic</i>
<i>UT</i>	<i>C. H. Gordon, Ugaritic Textbook</i>
<i>Vg</i>	<i>Vulgate</i>
<i>VT</i>	<i>Vetus Testamentum</i>
<i>VTSup</i>	<i>Vetus Testamentum, Supplements</i>
<i>WBC</i>	<i>Word Biblical Commentaries</i>
<i>WEC</i>	<i>Wycliffe Exegetical Commentary</i>
<i>WHJP</i>	<i>World History of the Jewish People</i> , ed. B. Mazer
<i>WO</i>	<i>Die Welt des Orients</i>
<i>WTJ</i>	<i>Westminster Theological Journal</i>
<i>WMANT</i>	<i>Wissenschaftliche Monographien zum Alten und Neuen Testament</i>
<i>ZAW</i>	<i>Zeitschrift für die alttestamentliche Wissenschaft</i>
<i>ZDMG</i>	<i>Zeitschrift der deutschen morgenländischen Gesellschaft</i>
<i>ZDPV</i>	<i>Zeitschrift des deutschen Palästina-Vereins</i>
<i>ZPEB</i>	<i>Zondervan Pictorial Encyclopedia of the Bible</i>
<i>ZKT</i>	<i>Zeitschrift für katholische Theologie</i>

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Leviticus

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INTRODUCTION

“Large areas of Hebrew religion, such as animal sacrifice or the veneration of sacred places, require relatively little attention, because they ceased to be important for the religion of the New Testament.”¹ This attitude,

¹M. Burrows, *An Outline of Biblical Theology* (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1946), 5.

expressed some fifty years ago, still unfortunately prevails in the church of Jesus Christ today and certainly explains the lack of interest in the Book of Leviticus. This same lack of interest, however, cannot be attributed to our Jewish forebears. In the Old Testament period the offering of sacrifices was characterized as a joyful event because the offering of sacrifice was a critical component in expressing gratitude to God for his working in a believer's life. This response of rendering thanks to God explains why the believing pilgrims joyfully journeyed to the temple in Jerusalem with a longing to meet with the Lord.²

Nor did the interest in Leviticus and the offering of sacrifices end with the completion of divine revelation or even with the destruction of the temple in A.D. 70, which brought Israelite sacrifices to an end. Leviticus was a critical work for the understanding of postbiblical Judaism. In fact it is no exaggeration to claim that the Book of Leviticus has had more impact on Judaism than any other book of the Old Testament. Traditionally it was the first book taught to Jewish children, and over half the commentary of the Talmud is concerned with understanding its contents.³

Unlike the deserved veneration given to the Book of Leviticus among the Jews, the book has been largely ignored by the church. At no point, for many Christians, does the Bible appear more mysterious and seemingly irrelevant than when it focuses on the temple and the sacrificial system. But the truths found in these texts and what they foreshadow must be grasped if the New Testament teaching is to be understood.⁴ According to Knight, this temptation to ignore Leviticus was even true of our Savior's experience:

One of the satanic temptations Jesus underwent at the beginning of his ministry was to accept the innuendo that his task was merely to preach the Gospel, heal the sick, feed the hungry, but at the same time to turn his back on the book of Leviticus.⁵

It behooves the New Testament believer to give more attention to this book, for we base our eternal destinies on the one of whom Leviticus loudly speaks.

²N. B. Courtman, "Sacrifice in the Psalms," in *Sacrifice in the Bible*, ed. R. T. Beckwith and M. J. Selman (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1995), 41–58, and D. Peterson, *Engaging with God* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1992), 37. Amos 5:23 seems to indicate that songs were sung at the time sacrifices were being offered (see Pss 20:4; 26:5; 27:6; 66:13–15; 81:4; 107:22; 116:17).

³V. P. Hamilton, "Recent Studies in Leviticus and Their Contribution to a Further Understanding of Wesleyan Theology," in *A Spectrum of Thought: Essays in Honor of Dennis F. Kinlaw*, ed. M. L. Peterson (Wilmore, Ky.: Asbury College, 1982), 146.

⁴Peterson, *Engaging with God*, 23.

⁵G. A. F. Knight, *Leviticus*, DSBS (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1981), 94.

1. Title of the Book

In keeping with the traditional titles of works in the ancient Near East the Hebrew name of Leviticus comes from the first word in the book *wayyiqra*, “and he called.” In the later rabbinic works and similarly in the Syriac translation, the Peshitta, the book was called *tōrat kōhānim*, “book of the priests.”

The English title, Leviticus, comes from the Latin Vulgate translation of the Greek term *Leuitikon*. The Greek term is an adjectival form, “Levitical,” which thus means “that which concerns the priests.”⁶ Since Hellenistic Jews called the priests “Levites” (an equation already evident in Deut 17:9,18; 18:1),⁷ the meaning of the Greek title is actually no different from the traditional title of the Jews, the “book of priests.”

2. Date and Authorship: The Documentary Hypothesis

For most of the history of biblical interpretation it had been assumed by Jewish and Christian interpreters that Moses was the author of the Pentateuch and of the Book of Leviticus.⁸ This consensus began to change with the rise of deistic philosophy in the eighteenth century and with the Enlightenment in the West. It was at this time that critical scholars began to voice skepticism over the authorship of biblical books, particularly the Pentateuch. By 1878, when Julius Wellhausen penned his classic synthesis of this approach, it was commonly accepted that the Pentateuch was composed of four basic but different sources, JEDP.⁹

The J document, which used the name Jehovah (Yahweh), was composed around 850 B.C. and represented an early stage in Israel’s religion when the Israelites described God in human terms and worshiped him under the stars unencumbered by any formality. The E source (ca. 750 B.C.) used the name Elohim and often described the interaction between God and the Israelites from the context of dreams and visions, thus giving God more of a transcendent quality than the J source. E was also more concerned with ethical issues than J, but like J it knew nothing of a need for priests. The D document was equated with the Book of Deuteronomy (esp. Deut 5–26; 28). It was thought to be composed near the time of Josiah’s reform (621 B.C.). The P source stands for the Priestly Code and contained most of the material in the Pentateuch that pertains

⁶ See B. A. Levine, “Leviticus, Book Of,” *ABD* 4:312.

⁷ The same concept is found in the NT in Heb 7:11, “Levitical priesthood.”

⁸ The few exceptions to this general rule are listed and discussed by H. Livingston, *The Pentateuch in Its Cultural Environment* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1974), 220.

⁹ J. Wellhausen, *Prolegomena to the History of Israel* (1878; reprint, New York: World, 1957).

to priesthood and sacrifice. This source is the latest of the sources and reflects a transcendent deity who can only be approached through the meticulous processes outlined in the Israelite sacrificial system. This source was composed in the postexilic period in the mid to late fifth century B.C.¹⁰

Some scholars have argued that Leviticus is the combination of material from the P source that includes Leviticus 1–16 and an anonymous H (Holiness) source (Lev 17–26) composed in the exile about the time of the writing of the Book of Ezekiel.¹¹ Or alternatively, it is sometimes argued that H is the earliest section of the P source. Regardless, Leviticus reflects the very last stage of the religion of Israel in the Old Testament period. To give the contents of Leviticus an authoritative ring, however, P fictitiously portrays the material as though it was revealed by God to Moses. Thus, the ancient sacrificial system, the Aaronic priesthood, and the tabernacle are nothing but a fabrication depicting practices of the postexilic period as though they occurred the second millennium B.C., during the time of Moses.¹²

This critical analysis of the Pentateuch has been challenged since its emergence, but it still is taught as fact in many secular or denominational colleges, universities, and seminaries. Even though some staunch adherents of the critical theory occasionally state that the hypothesis was only a theory,¹³ while others wonder aloud if modern scholarship is in a position to confidently divide an ancient work into literary sources,¹⁴ adherence to the division of the Pentateuch into sources had become required in many institutions of higher learning. It has gained the status of dogma equal to any ecclesiastical position in church history. R. Rendtorff, Professor Emeritus of the University of Heidelberg, has accurately commented on the pervasiveness of this approach to the Bible in institutions of higher learning:

¹⁰ This description of the sources is according to the analysis of the Pentateuch by Wellhausen. In truth, however, the Documentary Hypothesis went through ten stages, but the Wellhausen core is still the simplest way to describe and analyze the hypothesis (O. Eissfeldt, *The Old Testament: An Introduction* [New York: Harper & Row, 1965], 158–70). For a survey and treatment of the Documentary Hypothesis from an evangelical point of view see the exhaustive treatments by G. Archer, *A Survey of Old Testament Introduction*, rev. ed. (Chicago: Moody, 1994), 89–189 and D. Garrett, *Rethinking Genesis* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1991).

¹¹ Eissfeldt, *Introduction*, 238–40 and E. Sellin and G. Fohrer, *Introduction to the Old Testament* (Nashville: Abingdon, 1968), 185.

¹² Wellhausen, *Prolegomena to the History of Israel*, 36–37.

¹³ Eissfeldt, *Introduction*, 240.

¹⁴ S. R. Driver, *HDB* 1:201 (cited by W. Möller and J. B. Payne, “Atonement, Day of,” *ISBE* 1:361).

Current international study of the Pentateuch presents at first glance a picture of complete unanimity. The overwhelming majority of scholars in almost all countries where scholarly study of the Old Testament is pursued, take the documentary hypothesis as the virtually uncontested point of departure for their work; and their interest in the most precise understanding of the nature and theological purposes of the individual written sources seems undisturbed.¹⁵

Most of the proponents of the critical approach would echo von Rad's confidence (if not arrogance) in the methodology employed by its adherents: "No doubt, recent historical scholarship, using methods which were unknown in ancient Israel, has worked out a picture of Israel's history which is in one respect more exact than the picture which Israel herself had." They also would share his view of the historical accuracy of the narratives in the Pentateuch: "The various patriarchal narratives as now compiled into quasi-biographical compositions ... can no longer be regarded as trustworthy reports which come from these men's actual lives."¹⁶ How did this critical position come to be preeminent in liberal Catholic and Protestant institutions as well as become the unassailable position¹⁷ in the secular academic world? To understand how the Pentateuch and Leviticus are interpreted in the modern world it is necessary to survey the rise of the *Documentary Hypothesis*.

(1) *The Criteria of the Documentary Hypothesis*

In 1753 Jean Astruc, a French physician and student of the Bible, noted that two different words for God were used in Genesis 1 and 2. In Genesis 1 the name of Elohim occurred, while in Genesis 2 the name Yahweh (Jehovah) was used. Based on this distinction Astruc concluded that Moses must have used two separate sources, one that had the name Elohim and the other with Yahweh, when he composed the Pentateuch. Thus the Documentary Hypothesis was conceived. In later years, however, the sources were not deemed to be those used by Moses. On the contrary, they were thought to reflect independent documents that were written after the time of the beginning of the Monarchy (ca. 1050 B.C.)

¹⁵R. Rendtorff, *The Problem of the Process of Transmission in the Pentateuch*, JSOTSup 89 (Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1990), 101. Rendtorff goes on to contend that Pentateuchal research is far less unanimous than it is often portrayed, and an increasing number of voices questions this apparent consensus (pp. 106–7).

¹⁶G. von Rad, *Old Testament Theology*, 2 vols. (New York: Harper & Row, 1962), 2:424. Von Rad apparently was not as confident in the critical approach near the end of his life when he called for a new analysis of the Pentateuchal narratives (*Genesis*, rev. ed., OTL [Philadelphia: Westminster, 1972], 440).

¹⁷Thus R. N. Whybray, *The Making of the Pentateuch*, JSOTSup 53 (Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1987), 15–16.

and were not completed until the final phase of Israel's history after the Israelites had returned from Babylon (ca. 550 B.C.). The individual who is given the most credit for popularizing the theory was Julius Wellhausen, the son of a Lutheran pastor, who integrated previous theses and wrote the definitive work, *Prolegomena to the History of Israel*, in 1878.

In addition to the occurrence of different divine names, three other criteria were subsequently employed to substantiate the fact that the Pentateuch was not a unified composition revealed by God to Moses but was rather a literary work with a long compositional history. These criteria included the duplications (or even triplications) of singular incidents, variations in language and style, and different theological and religious concepts. Based on these criteria, it was not long before critical scholars had detected the four distinct sources in the Pentateuch. But each of these criteria have not gone without challenge, particularly in recent years. In fact, it is not an exaggeration to state that based on the current status of Old Testament scholarship, if the Documentary Hypothesis had not arisen until our particular time, it would have been rejected immediately by the scholarly world. Recent studies have challenged the validity of the criteria upon which the theory is based and have not agreed on the date of the alleged sources.¹⁸ As a result, some critical scholars are calling for a new approach.¹⁹ Given this situation, it is valid to reexamine each of the pillars of the Documentary Hypothesis.

Regarding the issue of differing divine names, it is now clear from archaeological data not available to Wellhausen and early critical scholars that deities in the ancient Near East often had multiple names. This fact is especially clear in the conclusion to the Babylonian Creation account, the *Enuma Elish*, where the god Marduk is declared to be pre-eminent and his fifty different names are mentioned in celebration of his conquest.²⁰ No one has suggested that each name represents a different source, as was done in biblical studies. On the contrary, it would have been impossible to attribute these different names to different sources that have been pasted or joined together in the literary account because the Mesopotamian writing system involved inscription in stone! More-

¹⁸ While certainly not advocating a conservative approach to Scripture, the informed reader should note how far recent treatments of the transmission of the Pentateuch have departed from Wellhausen's views (e.g., J. Van Seters, *Abraham in History and Tradition* [New Haven: Yale University Press, 1975]; Whybray, *The Making of the Pentateuch*, and especially Rendtorff, *The Problem of the Process of Transmission in the Pentateuch*).

¹⁹ Rendtorff, *The Problem of the Process of Transmission in the Pentateuch*, 41–42.

²⁰ See K. Kitchen, *The Ancient Orient and the Old Testament* (Chicago: InterVarsity Press, 1966), 121–23 for a list of other gods and individuals from other civilizations, particularly Egypt and Mesopotamia, who had more than one name.

over, it is clear that throughout the Old Testament the occurrence of the names of God as Elohim or Yahweh are to be attributed to contextual and semantic issues, not the existence of sources. This conclusion is borne out by the fact that the names consistently occur in predictable genre. In the legal and prophetic texts the name Yahweh always appears, while in wisdom literature the name for God is invariably Elohim. In narrative literature, which includes much of the Pentateuch, both Yahweh and Elohim are used.²¹ Yet consistently the names do not indicate different sources but were chosen by design. The name Elohim was used in passages to express the abstract idea of Deity as evident in God's role as Creator of the universe and the Ruler of nature. Yahweh, on the other hand, is the special covenant name of God who has entered into a relationship with the Israelites since the name reflects God's ethical character.²² Given the understanding of the meaning of these names for God, it is no wonder that the source which contains the name Yahweh would appear to reflect a different theology from a selected group of texts which contained the name Elohim. Moreover, if we applied this criterion of source division based on differing divine names to the Psalms, we would have to conclude that a single verse such as Ps 47:5—"God [Elohim] has ascended amid shouts of joy, / the LORD [Yahweh] amid the sounding of trumpets"—be attributed to two different sources since two different names for God are used. In addition, Segal observed that while narratives frequently refer to the names of royal rulers, they may refer to him as only "king" within the same context. He concludes:

Just as those interchanges of human proper names and their respective appellative common nouns cannot by any stretch of the imagination be ascribed to a change of author or source or document, so also the corresponding interchanges of the divine names in the Pentateuch must not be attributed to such a literary cause.²³

Thus through scientific discovery and analysis the criterion of the differing divine names, which gave rise to the Documentary Hypothesis, has been found wanting. If this information would have been known in the last years of the nineteenth century, it is safe to assume that the critical approach to the Pentateuch would never have seen the light of day.

The second criterion for the Documentary Hypothesis is that of repetition of events or duplications. This criterion is based on the premise that

²¹ Similarly Livingston has pointed out that the cognate West Semitic divine names *il* and *ya(w)* appear interchangeable in the Eblaite tablets (*The Pentateuch in Its Cultural Environment*, 224).

²² U. Cassuto, *The Documentary Hypothesis* (Jerusalem: Magnes, 1961), 31.

²³ M. H. Segal, "El, Elohim and YHWH in the Bible," *JQR* 46 (1955/56): 89-115.

no writer would record the same kind of event twice. If similar events happen more than one time in a given piece of literature, the theory is that the same event has been recorded as two or more occurrences by different authors. Perhaps the best known example of this possibility is that of the Matriarch in Danger, a motif that occurs three times in Genesis, with Sarah in Egypt (Gen 12:10–20), Sarah in Gerar (Gen 20), and Rebekah in Gerar (Gen 26:7–11).²⁴ The premise here is that each of these three similar stories could only refer to one event, which three different sources of the Pentateuch has preserved. But Kikawada and Quinn have noted that there are marked differences between the two accounts about Sarah:

What is striking about these stories of Sarah when they are placed side-by-side is that the second story is consistently amplified to soften the first. In the first, Sarai goes into the Pharaoh's house and the implication is that she has sexual relations with him; in the second we are specifically told that Abimelech did not touch her. In the first the Pharaoh is punished "with great plagues" for his taking Sarai; in the second Abimelech is preserved from any punishment beyond the temporary barrenness of his women. In the first the Pharaoh apparently infers what has happened himself; in the second Abimelech is informed specifically by Yahweh. In the first Abram, when accused, says nothing; in the second Abraham is allowed to explain away his lie by casuistry. Abram is summarily sent away; Abraham is allowed to stay in friendship after he has interceded for Abimelech.²⁵

These are not duplicate accounts but rather distinctive events. Moreover, Thompson maintains that doublet or even triplet stories are not due to different sources but rather are to be expected in single traditions.²⁶

Contradictions in sources constitute the third criterion for the Documentary Hypothesis. If there are conflicts over details of the same event, it is argued, the discrepancies are to be accounted for by the fact that they come from a different source. The two classic texts that are perennially invoked as illustrations of conflicting sources are the creation account of Genesis 1–2 and the account of the flood in Genesis 6–9.

With regard to Genesis 1–2, these two chapters do not contain two distinct and conflicting accounts from different sources, but rather they refer to the same creation. Broadly speaking, we may say that the two accounts do not contradict but rather complement each other. Genesis 1 concludes with the pinnacle of creation, the creation of male and female

²⁴For a list of other alleged duplicated accounts, see Livingston, *The Pentateuch*, 224.

²⁵I. M. Kikawada and A. Quinn, *Before Abraham Was* (1985; reprint, San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1989), 95–96.

²⁶T. Thompson, *The Origin Tradition of Ancient Israel*, JSOTSup 55 (Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1987), 59.

in the image of God, while Genesis 2 focuses on this theme by giving more information and detail about the creation of the two sexes in God's image.

More specifically, it has been argued that Gen 2:19 contradicts Genesis 1 in that Gen 2:19 describes the creation of animals after man has been created, while Genesis 1 has the animals created before man. However, if the verb in Gen 2:19 is taken as a pluperfect, "had formed" (NIV), a legitimate option for the *waw*-consecutive, then no discrepancy exists.²⁷ It should further be noted that the attribution of the two accounts to separate independent sources would destroy the unity of the passage. This in turn would undermine the author's intention to provide critical background information for the understanding of Genesis 3.²⁸

As for the flood narrative, source critics frequently point out that there is a contradiction between the number of paired animals that entered the ark. In Gen 6:20 Noah is told to bring one pair of animals into the ark, while in 7:2 he is told to bring in seven pairs of clean animals. There is no contradiction here at all because we are informed from the overall context that the seven pairs of animals were designated as *clean* animals. The larger number of clean animals would be necessary for sacrifice as well as possibly for food.²⁹

Many recent studies have examined the flood account from a literary perspective, analyzing the text in its present form. This analysis has yielded information that addresses the alleged contradiction in the so-called J source and P source. Wenham observed that the literary arrangement of the entire account of the flood narrative was structured in a chiasm, which would explain the repetition; yet this scheme is interpreted by critical scholars as evidence of different sources. The repetition in the account is not due to the existence of two sources that have been sewn together but is rather a feature of the author's communicative technique.³⁰ As Kikawada and Quinn observe: "Once we approach the passage not philosophically but rhetorically, what seemed to us as redundant or conceptually unnecessary becomes rather a measure of the author's skill."³¹ As they further observe: "Over the past decade the Wellhausen

²⁷ See Kitchen, *The Ancient Orient and the Old Testament*, 118 and n. 19.

²⁸ Cassuto, *The Documentary Hypothesis*, 73–78.

²⁹ The notion that only clean animals were to be used for sacrifice is already assumed in Gen 15:9–10 since only clean animals are sacrificed in the covenant-making ritual.

³⁰ See especially G. Wenham, "The Coherence of the Flood Narrative," *VT* 28 (1978): 336–48.

³¹ Kikawada and Quinn, *Before Abraham Was*, 94. In addition Wenham has observed seventeen explicit parallels of the flood narrative to the Babylonian flood account in the epic of Gilgamesh. If one were to assume that the Genesis account is from two sources, then the J document has twelve of these features while the P account has ten (see "The Coherence of the Flood Narrative," 343–45 and Garrett, *Rethinking Genesis*, 27).

interpretation of Noah has been systematically dismantled by younger scholars.”³² Repetition is an important feature of Semitic literature as is evident in the Psalms, the parallel accounts of Samuel-Kings with Chronicles, and the Synoptic Gospels. Moreover, if the same criteria of alleged inconsistencies were used on other ancient Near Eastern sources, it would lead to impossible conclusions. For example, we know that the Code of Hammurabi was published in its entirety as a statement regarding the legal practices of the king. And yet one could point out inconsistencies in the laws no less glaring than those alleged to appear in the biblical texts. But these inconsistencies cannot come from different sources pasted together as the law code was engraved on a stone monument.³³

The fourth criterion for the Documentary Hypothesis pertains to the apparent variations of language and style reflected in the alleged Pentateuchal sources. Cassuto pointed out the circularity of using this criterion for deciphering different sources: “We must not rely upon the differences in language in order to determine the origin of the sections, which we shall subsequently use to decide the linguistic characteristics of the sources, for in that case we shall indeed fall into the snare of reasoning in a circle.”³⁴ Moreover, if it was determined that a particular source was characterized by a certain theological slant and then all passages containing this theological stance were attributed to the same source, it would be inevitable that a distinctive language and vocabulary would be the result. For example, to the alleged P source were ascribed such passages that dealt with issues pertinent to the sacrificial system as well as laws of holiness and genealogies. Moreover, this source was said to view God as majestic and transcendent.³⁵ Is it surprising that critics then turn around and say that P is characterized by a formal style? The material relegated to a source will dictate its style. In other words, different style results from different subject matter, not from the existence of different sources.

(2) *The P Source*

The late dating of the alleged P source (ca. fifth century B.C.) was critical to Wellhausen’s hypothesis, since the predominant view among source critics prior to his work was that the P source was among the ear-

³² Kikawada and Quinn, *Before Abraham Was*, 84.

³³ M. Greenberg, “Some Postulates of Biblical Criminal Law,” in *Y. Kaufmann Jubilee Volume*, ed. M. Haran (Jerusalem: Magnes, 1960), 6.

³⁴ Cassuto, *The Documentary Hypothesis*, 44.

³⁵ Sellin-Fohrer, *Introduction*, 179.

liest of the Pentateuchal sources. In fact, it can be argued that the primary point of Wellhausen's *Prolegomena* is to prove that the Israelite law and sacrificial system did not emerge during the earliest stages of the nation's history but rather arose much later in the postexilic period.³⁶ Wellhausen's arguments won the day, and the P source, which included much of Leviticus, thus described Israelite religion only after the Jews returned from Babylon, beginning about 539 B.C. R. H. Pfeiffer is typical of Old Testament scholars when he describes the P source as follows: "The Priestly Code is a fifth century midrash, or historical commentary, on the embryonic Pentateuch (JED), including a series of narratives often illustrating legal precedents, and a codification of ritual laws based on earlier codes."³⁷ This P source was argued to have been greatly influenced by D and the Book of Ezekiel, which would have already existed before P was written. Thus the religious practices described in Leviticus 1–16 arose in the postexilic period based on Wellhausen's evolutionary analysis of the history of Israel's religion wherein the worship of God began with the simple (J and E) and developed into the complex (P and the intricate sacrificial system). Although the contents may reflect some earlier practices and traditions that would have been passed down to subsequent generations through oral tradition, the final composition of the book emerged after the exile.

3. Date and Authorship: A Critique of the Documentary Hypothesis

The Documentary Hypothesis has had an enormous effect on Pentateuchal studies since Wellhausen's *Prolegomena* was published in 1878. W. Kaiser comments on the deleterious effect it has had on the proclamation of biblical truths:

For many it is too much to assume that there is consistency within one book or even a series of books alleged to have been written by the same author, for many contend that various forms of literary criticism have suggested composite documents often traditionally posing under one single author. This argument, more than any other argument in the last two hundred years, has been responsible for cutting the main nerve of the case for the unity and authority of the biblical message.³⁸

³⁶ Wellhausen, *Prolegomena to the History of Israel*, 2–3. See H. J. Kraus, *Worship in Israel* (Richmond: John Knox, 1966), 4, and F. M. Cross, "The Priestly Tabernacle," *BAR* 1 (1961): 201.

³⁷ R. H. Pfeiffer, *An Introduction to the Old Testament* (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1948), 188.

³⁸ W. Kaiser, *Toward Old Testament Ethics* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1983), 26.

Moreover, the atomistic approach many of the critical scholars display reveals a lack of broader perspective regarding literature in general. For example, J. Aloni has observed that recent studies of Lev 17:3–9 have revealed a total of eight stages of development, and each term of the passage is dated as being either early or late.³⁹ It was certainly in response to such analysis that C. S. Lewis remarked: “First then, whatever these men may be as Biblical critics, I distrust them as critics. They seem to me to lack literary judgment, to be imperceptive about the very quality of the texts they are reading.”⁴⁰ Critical scholars read the texts contrary to their intention: “These men ask me to believe they can read between the lines of the old texts; the evidence is their obvious inability to read (in any sense worth discussing) the lines themselves. They claim to see fern-see and can’t see an elephant ten yards away in broad daylight.”⁴¹ In addition, these scholars exhibit a certain academic disdain toward any scholar who happened to live before the time of the Enlightenment, as though no one could correctly read the Bible until our modern age.⁴² In addition to what has been discussed above regarding the fallacies of the criteria used in source critical study, there are other reasons to voice skepticism over the skepticism of the biblical critic.

First and foremost, it is apparent that the philosophy of evolution is the silent presupposition of the Documentary Hypothesis. And just as this philosophy has become dogma in other academic arenas, it is not surprising that it controls the thinking of liberal critics in biblical studies as well. Since the evolutionary model in the field of biology attempts to remove God from his role as Creator of all biological life, one cannot but surmise that a subconscious motivation for the Documentary Hypothesis was to eliminate the supernatural activities of God from the narratives of the Bible.

Evolutionary thinking has infected the Documentary Hypothesis in two principal ways. First, analogous to the development of organic life in the field of biology, the religious life of man is explained in a naturalistic way, from the simple to the complex. So among the critics the religious side of man was explained as a natural process that began with a primitive animism that progressed to polydemonism, to polytheism, to monotheism, and finally to monotheism. Second, the manner or complexity of worship in Israel’s history was explained along evolutionary lines. The history of Israelite religion began with the worship of God under the

³⁹ J. Aloni, “The Place of Worship and the Place of Sacrifice in Leviticus 17:3–9,” *Shnaton* 7–8 (1983–84): 24–25 [in Hb.].

⁴⁰ C. S. Lewis, *Christian Reflections* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1967), 154.

⁴¹ *Ibid.*, 157.

⁴² R. Rendtorff, “What We Miss By Taking the Bible Apart,” *BR* 24, 1 (1998): 44.

stars in J and E but eventually developed into an intricate temple sacrificial system in the postexilic period, at which time the Israelites were merely carrying out a perfunctory religion that elevated the written law of God to near-divine status.⁴³ The propensity to elevate the law in this manner led to a focus on performance and ritual. This pattern continued and intensified, it is argued, until first-century A.D. Pharisees appeared to worship the law rather than obey it. The opposition of the New Testament writers to this Pharisaic view of law explains their seemingly negative statements about the law, but evolutionary views of authorship have led to the false perception among many of a sharp distinction between the gospel and the law. This issue will be discussed later in this Introduction.

The evolutionary model followed by critical biblical scholars should be discounted for several reasons. First of all, the premise that one's worship of God evolves from the primitive to the complex has yet to be documented in history. In fact, no culture has ever developed a true monotheistic faith apart from those cultures that have had the benefit of being exposed to the teaching of the Scriptures. For example, in the New Testament those cultures that had been pagan for centuries held to a belief in many gods; they had not naturally developed a monotheistic faith.⁴⁴ Some cultures have in fact demonstrated the opposite phenomenon, that is, they have departed from a form of belief in God approximating monotheism to polytheism.⁴⁵ Moreover, archaeological discoveries in Mesopotamia and the Levant have uncovered intricate systems of worship across the Fertile Crescent in the second millennium B.C. and even in the third millennium B.C., long before the time of Moses.⁴⁶ The civilization at Ugarit, not discovered until 1929, is roughly contemporaneous to the time of Moses, yet it is clear that a sacrificial system not too different from the one outlined in the Book of Leviticus was in operation.⁴⁷ As Eichrodt, who still holds to the source view, has stated in light of archaeological discovery: "Because of a greater knowledge of the ancient Near East, serious consideration has had to be given once more to the possibil-

⁴³ Echoing his own disdain for the religious practices of the postexilic period, S. R. Driver fallaciously claims that even the Hebrew language had deteriorated during these late stages of OT history (*An Introduction to the Literature of the Old Testament* [New York: T & T Clark, 1956], 505, 535). The notion that languages experience decay in time has been abandoned in linguistic circles (see M. Rooker, *Biblical Hebrew in Transition: The Language of the Book of Ezekiel*, JSOTSup 90 [Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1990], 13–14).

⁴⁴ Archer, *Introduction*, 151.

⁴⁵ W. Albright, *From Stone Age to Christianity* (New York: Doubleday, 1957), 170–71.

⁴⁶ See A. Rainey, "Sacrifices and Offerings," *ZPEB* 5 (1975): 195; G. Wenham, "Leviticus," *ISBE* 3:112; M. D. Cassuto, "אֲשֵׁרִי," *EM* 2:881; Archer, *Introduction*, 175, 182.

⁴⁷ See H. Ringgren, *Religions of the Ancient Near East* (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1973), 161–62.

ity of a written codification of the law in the time of Moses."⁴⁸ Similarly, Wellhausen's contention that the tabernacle was a fabrication projecting the temple in the wilderness has been abandoned based on more recent information about life in the ancient Near East. F. M. Cross argues that the tent shrines of the ancient Semitic world in Phoenicia and Arabia are certainly parallels to the ancient tabernacle.⁴⁹ The tabernacle is not an ancient fiction. This critical inclination to authoritatively reconstruct the history of the texts instead of accepting the data at face value is a characteristic of biblical critics. But as in the case of the tabernacle, "certainty" in one generation may be abandoned in the text. C. S. Lewis, after commenting how his contemporary reviewers had invariably failed in reconstructing the public events that had directed his own writing, makes an excellent application to the field of biblical studies:

The superiority in judgment and diligence which you are going to attribute to the Biblical critics will have to be almost superhuman if it is to offset the fact that they are everywhere faced with customs, language, race-characteristics, class-characteristics, a religious background, habits of composition, and basic assumptions, which no scholarship will enable any man now alive to know as surely and intimately and instinctively as the reviewer can know mine. And for the very same reason, remember, the Biblical critics, whatever reconstructions they devise, can never be crudely proved wrong.⁵⁰

Also the extremely important role of oral transmission in passing on the stories generation after generation before the sources were committed to writing has been contradicted by our increased knowledge of writing practices in the ancient Near East. Civilization after civilization exhibits the same response to significant events: events of importance were recorded in written form soon after they took place.⁵¹ Moreover, there is indubitable evidence that the alphabetic writing method already existed in Syria at Ugarit as well as in the Sinai Peninsula contemporaneous with the time of Moses.

A second avenue of modern biblical studies that has caused grave difficulties for the critical approach to the composition of the Pentateuch is one of inner biblical interpretation, or intertextuality. This method, analogous to the popular subject of the use of the Old Testament in the New Testament, examines how Old Testament writers used previously written

⁴⁸ W. Eichrodt, *Theology of the Old Testament* (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1961), 1:72.

⁴⁹ Cross, "The Priestly Tabernacle," 217-19, and *Canaanite Myth and Hebrew Epic* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1973), 72.

⁵⁰ Lewis, *Christian Reflections*, 161.

⁵¹ See Kitchen, *The Ancient Orient and the Old Testament*, 136, and B. Waltke, "Oral Tradition," in *A Tribute to Gleason Archer*, ed. W. Kaiser, Jr. and R. Youngblood (Chicago: Moody, 1986), 17-34.

Old Testament texts. These studies have concluded that the prophets did not create Israelite faith; on the contrary, they were merely proclaiming previously written biblical law. One acclaimed tome in this field is M. Fishbane's *Biblical Interpretation in Ancient Israel*, which focuses in biblical interpretation within the Old Testament and particularly how the prophets interpret and apply Pentateuchal Law.⁵² Fishbane does not state how much of the law was written before the prophetic books were composed, but his work has shown conclusively that the prophets based their messages on previously written biblical laws. Consequently, though Fishbane does not stress this point, these laws were written earlier than the prophets. This finding overturns Wellhausen's fundamental belief that the prophets were the primary innovators of Israelite religion and in some sense inspired the writing of biblical laws. Thirty years earlier G. von Rad anticipated the results of Fishbane's monograph when he stated: "Much research was necessary before gradual elucidation of the history of law in ancient Israel led to the demolition of Wellhausen's revolutionary hypothesis that the law came not before but after the prophets."⁵³ As Archer has eloquently stated:

Suffice it to say that there is surely no parallel to this to be found anywhere else in human history, that neither the introducers of a radically new concept of God nor those to whom they introduced it realized that there was anything new about it. Both the prophets themselves and their audiences seemed to labor under the impression that it was the God of Moses whose message they were transmitting.⁵⁴

Without a widespread understanding of the law of God among the Israelites, the Israelite prophets would have had no telling message.

A third approach in biblical studies that has caused difficulties for critical approaches to the Bible has been the recent surge in literary studies, which examine biblical texts in their present form. R. Alter's *The Art of*

⁵² M. Fishbane, *Biblical Interpretation in Ancient Israel* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1985), esp., 292–316. This work has been well received in the scholarly world since it was the winner of the 1986 Jewish Book Award, the Biblical Archaeology Society 1986 Publication Award, and the Kenneth B. Smilen/Present Tense Literary Award. Also see M. Rooker, "The Use of the Old Testament in the Book of Hosea," *CTR* 7,1 (1993): 51–66, and id., "The Use of the Old Testament in the Book of Ezekiel," *Faith and Mission* 15.2 (1998): 45–52.

⁵³ von Rad, *Old Testament Theology*, 2:390.

⁵⁴ Archer, *Introduction*, 157. For a convenient list of the frequency of the covenant cursings and blessings that occur throughout prophetic literature, see D. Stuart, *Hosea-Jonah*, WBC (Waco: Word, 1987), xxxiii–xl. Ezekiel, as a prophetic-priest, also writes with the writing of Leviticus understood as the theological background to his prophecy (J. Milgrom, "Leviticus," *IDBS*, 544, and Wenham, "Leviticus," 112).

*Biblical Narrative*⁵⁵ was one of the early works in this discipline. Alter has shown that duplications in narratives for example are recorded for emphasis as a deliberate feature of an artistic literary technique. Consequently, it is possible to find literary reasons for many of the alleged inconsistencies that heretofore led critics to dissect these sources and attribute them to different authors.⁵⁶

A fourth modern study that has undermined the claims of the Documentary Hypothesis is one based on linguistic analysis, particularly the diachronic study of biblical Hebrew.⁵⁷ Based on sound and testable methodology,⁵⁸ it has been demonstrated that Wellhausen's main premise that Ezekiel preceded Leviticus has been demolished because Ezekiel's language is of a later linguistic stratum than the language of Leviticus, which always exhibits language features from the earliest stratum of the Hebrew language.⁵⁹ Israeli scholar A. Hurvitz, Professor of Bible and the Hebrew Language at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem, has dedicated his academic life to the study of these phenomena. The findings in this field are being accepted by various scholars, notably great Pentateuchal scholars such as Milgrom and Whybray.⁶⁰ Thus the essence of Wellhausen's proposal, that the law and the cult were postexilic, has been particularly undermined by the new disciplines of intertextuality and linguistic analysis.

⁵⁵R. Alter, *The Art of Biblical Narrative* (New York: Basic Books, Inc., 1981), esp., 133–54. See also M. Sternberg, *The Poetics of Biblical Narrative* (Bloomington: University of Indiana Press, 1987), and T. Longman, *Literary Approaches to Biblical Interpretation* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1987). Despite reaching this conclusion, Alter still accepts the Documentary Hypothesis.

⁵⁶See Whybray, *The Making of the Pentateuch*, 52, and K. Mathews, "Literary Criticism of the Old Testament," in *Foundations for Biblical Interpretation*, ed. D. S. Dockery, K. Mathews, and R. Sloan (Nashville: Broadman & Holman, 1994), 205–31.

⁵⁷For the history of this new discipline, see M. Rooker, "The Diachronic Study of Biblical Hebrew," *JNSL* 14 (1988): 199–214.

⁵⁸For the method employed in this discipline see A. Hurvitz, "Linguistic Criteria for Dating Problematic Biblical Texts," *Hebrew Abstracts* 14 (1973): 74–79, id., "The Chronological Significance of 'Aramaisms' in Biblical Hebrew," *IEJ* 18 (1968): 234–40, and Rooker, *Biblical Hebrew in Transition*, 55–64.

⁵⁹See A. Hurvitz, *A Linguistic Study of the Relationship between the Priestly Source and the Book of Ezekiel* (Paris: Cahiers de la Revue biblique, 1982).

⁶⁰Whybray, *The Making of the Pentateuch*; id., *Introduction to the Pentateuch* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1995), 25, and J. Milgrom, *Leviticus 1–16*, AB (New York: Doubleday, 1991). In 1970 Thompson concluded that Hurvitz's linguistic argument was unsatisfactory (R. Thompson, *Moses and the Law in a Century of Criticism Since Graf* [Leiden: Brill, 1970], 164). This judgment was premature and consequently unfounded since Hurvitz's dissertation on the dating of Psalms based on linguistic criteria was not published until 1972. For Hurvitz's important publications for this discipline up to 1990, see Rooker, *Biblical Hebrew in Transition*, 193.

After reviewing the claims of the Documentary Hypothesis, R. Rendtorff concluded that the evidence for this critical approach is extremely contradictory and can no longer provide a viable contribution to our understanding of the composition of the Pentateuch.⁶¹ In coming to this conclusion he echoed the findings of H. Hahn uttered more than thirty years ago:

This review of activity in the field of Old Testament criticism during the last quarter century has revealed a chaos of conflicting trends, ending in contradictory results, which create an impression of ineffectiveness in this type of research. The conclusion seems to be unavoidable that the higher criticism has long since passed the age of constructive achievement.⁶²

Moreover, it should not be overlooked that there are no literary references of any kind in any ancient document to one of these sources or to the consciousness of sources as a whole.

But beyond the inconsistencies and weaknesses of this critical approach to the Bible is perhaps the more troubling presuppositional base of its proponents regarding the nature of the Bible.

At the heart of the Documentary Hypothesis argument, at least for many of its adherents, is the denial of the authority of Scripture. The possibility of special revelation from God in the Bible is discounted at worst and downplayed at best. The notion that a living God can speak to finite human beings and intervene in history is called into question by this critical theory. Recently Rendtorff has candidly confessed the lack of open-mindedness displayed by modern critical scholars:

Historical-critical method is mainly a negative method. The critical method tries to discern historical truths about the time and the authorship of biblical texts, and in many cases the conclusions differ from what the texts themselves are saying, either explicitly or implicitly. ... The starting point is the suspicion that the text itself might have no integrity.⁶³

The latter concession came to lay heavy on the heart of Wellhausen himself when he wrestled with his liberal approach to the Bible and his obligation to train pastors for ministry. He explained why he had to resign from his position as a professor of theology:

I became a theologian because the scientific study of the Bible interested me; only gradually did I come to understand that a professor of theology also has the practical task of preparing the students for service in the Protestant Church, and that I am not adequate to this practical task, but that instead despite all cau-

⁶¹ Rendtorff, *The Process of the Transmission of the Pentateuch*, 178–79.

⁶² H. Hahn, *The Old Testament in Modern Research* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1966), 41.

⁶³ Rendtorff, "What We Miss By Taking the Bible Apart," 42.

tion on my part I make my hearers unfit for their office. Since then my theological professorship has been weighing heavily on my conscience.⁶⁴

If only other critical scholars who teach in denominational schools were as candid.

4. Date and Authorship: The Biblical Evidence

Clearly, Pentateuchal studies are somewhat in disarray. At the very least, it is reasonable to take another look at what Scripture itself indicates about the authorship of the Pentateuch. After all, the Bible is the oldest evidence we possess on the subject. An examination of the text itself reveals that the biblical writers thought Leviticus was written by Moses.

Mosaic authorship is clearly affirmed by a straightforward reading of the biblical text. Large amounts of the Pentateuch are attributed to Moses (Exod 24:4; 30:11,17; 33:1,5; 39:1,5,29; Lev 1:1; 4:1; 6:1; Num 4:1; Deut 1:1,5; 5:1; 31:22,30; 33:1). His authorship of the Pentateuch is assumed later by Jews in the postexilic community (1 Chr 15:15; 22:13; 2 Chr 23:18; 24:6; 25:4; 30:16; 35:12; Ezra 3:2; 7:6; Neh 1:7; 8:1; 13:1; Mal 4:4) and by the New Testament writers (Matt 8:4; Mark 12:26; Luke 16:31; 25:27,44; John 1:17; Acts 3:22).⁶⁵ In John 5:46–47 Jesus responds to his own Jewish critics who question his practices by saying: “If you believed Moses, you would believe me, for he wrote about me. But since you do not believe what he wrote, how are you going to believe what I say?” Could it be any clearer that Jesus and the Jews of his day had no doubts about who wrote the Pentateuch? Similarly in Rom 10:5 Paul claims that the expression “The man who does these things will live by them” (Lev 18:5) was written by Moses.

Jesus and the New Testament writers repeatedly refer to the Pentateuch and the prophets as “Moses and the prophets” (Luke 16:29,31; 24:37) or “the law of Moses and the prophets” (Luke 24:44; Acts 28:23). As Green has pointed out:

Of the injunctions of the Pentateuch not only do the Jews say, when addressing our Lord, “Moses commanded” (John 8:5), but our Lord repeatedly uses the same form of speech (Matt 8:4; 19:7,8; Mark 1:44; 10:3; Luke 5:14), as testified by three of the evangelists. Of the law in general he says, “Moses gave the law” (John 7:19), and the evangelist echoes “the law was given by Moses”

⁶⁴R. Smend, “Julius Wellhausen and His Prolegomena to the History of Israel,” *Semeia* 25 (1982): 6.

⁶⁵See Garrett, *Rethinking Genesis*, 51; W. H. Green, *The Higher Criticism of the Pentateuch* (reprint, Grand Rapids: Baker, 1978), xviii, and Archer, *Introduction*, 118.

(John 1:17). And that Moses was not only the author of the law, but committed its precepts to writing, is affirmed by the Jews (Mark 12:19), and also by our Lord (Mark 10:5), who further speaks of him as writing predictions respecting himself (John 5:46,47), and also traces a narrative in the Pentateuchal history to him (Mark 12:26). ... For those who consider Jesus to be an infallible teacher this settles the question.⁶⁶

Moreover, with specific regard to Leviticus, no other book claims divine inspiration more than the third book of the Pentateuch. No less than thirty-eight times in the twenty-seven chapters we find the expression "The LORD said to Moses [or Aaron]." Thus, on the basis of the claims of Scripture, the testimony of Jesus, the virtual unbroken unilateral tradition among both Jews and Christians, and the scholarly evidence cited above, the evidence overwhelmingly suggests that Moses is the author of Leviticus.

5. Literary and Covenantal Context

As the middle book of the Pentateuch, Leviticus stands at the heart of the Old Testament Torah.⁶⁷ The laws recorded in Leviticus are actually the continuation of the laws revealed to Moses at Mount Sinai after the nation had been liberated from slavery in Egypt. Thus the entire book continues the stipulations of the Mosaic Covenant, following the Book of Exodus, which ended with the instruction and subsequent completion of the tabernacle. Leviticus records how the sacrifices and offerings are to be performed in this newly constructed tabernacle. Exodus thus ends with where God is to be worshiped—in the tabernacle. Leviticus focuses on how God is to be worshiped—by the offering of sacrifices. In a word, Leviticus contains the laws that outline what it meant for Israel to serve the Lord. These sacrifices were essential for Israel's existence as the covenant people of God because the existence of sin and impurity constantly threatened their relationship with God. Therefore the tabernacle and its sacrificial services were gracious gifts from God enabling the people of God to serve him in purity and holiness.⁶⁸ The Pentateuchal narrative thus resumes God's instruction of Moses (Exod 29:43–46) that the goal of the establishment of the tabernacle (Exod 25–31,35–40), the sacrificial offerings, and the priesthood was that God would dwell among his people and be their God (Exod 29:45). God's personal presence was first

⁶⁶ Green, *The Higher Criticism of the Pentateuch*, 32–33.

⁶⁷ W. L. Lasor, D. A. Hubbard, F. M. Bush, *Old Testament Survey*, 2nd. ed. (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1996), 80.

⁶⁸ P. P. Jenson, "The Levitical Sacrificial System," in *Sacrifice in the Bible*, ed. R. T. Beckwith and M. J. Selman (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1995), 37.

promised to Abraham and his immediate descendants. Now it is guaranteed for the whole nation by means of the sacrificial system, which will operate in the tabernacle, the visible representation of God's presence, the place where he could be encountered. As the special place of God's presence, the tabernacle was a reminder to the people of Israel of the blessing of having a personal relationship with God, who dwelt in their midst. By means of this special blessing Israel was in turn to bless the world. The sacrifices were God's provision whereby this special covenant relationship could be maintained.

The Mosaic Covenant should be viewed historically and logically as subordinate to the promises made to Israel's great patriarch Abraham in the Abrahamic Covenant. After the failure of mankind (Gen 1–11) and particularly the rebellion of the nations in Genesis 11, God promised to bless Abraham and make him a great nation (cf. Gen 12:1–3).⁶⁹ Through this nation all families of the earth would be blessed (Gen 12:3c), thus reversing the damage caused by the nations' pride in Gen 11:1–9.

The close association between the Abrahamic and Mosaic Covenants is evident in Lev 26:42–45, where in the conclusion of the laws in Leviticus the word "covenant" occurs five times, first in reference to the Abrahamic Covenant and then to the Mosaic Covenant.⁷⁰ Though the word "covenant" appears infrequently, covenantal ideas pervade the book. As Wenham explains:

Leviticus explains how covenant worship should be conducted (chaps. 1–17), then how the covenant people should behave (18–25), and closes with a section of blessings and curses, entirely appropriate to a covenant document (chap. 26). Indeed the last verse of this chapter connects all that precedes with Sinai, where the covenant was concluded (26:46). ... The Sinai Covenant was at once a treaty between God and Israel and laws imposed on the nation.⁷¹

As has already been stated, this covenant relationship extended to the entire nation the earlier relationship God had established with the Patriarchs.

Three elements are essential for any nation to exist: a people, a land, and a constitution. From the inception of the promise in Genesis 12, the issue of progeny for Abraham becomes the critical issue. Hardly any narrative from Genesis 12–50 is free from the issue of the survival of Abraham's seed, that is, a people to exist to form the great nation. This theme

⁶⁹ According to R. N. Whybray the birth and adolescence of the nation of Israel is the theme of the Pentateuch (*Introduction to the Pentateuch* [Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1995], 9).

⁷⁰ The word "covenant" occurs only ten times in the Book of Leviticus (2:13; 24:8; 26:9, 15, 25, 42 [3x], 44, 45) (see R. Averbek, "Leviticus: Theology of," *NIDOTTE* 4:921).

⁷¹ G. J. Wenham, *The Book of Leviticus*, NICOT (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1979), 29.

continues to dominate the biblical narrative until Exodus 19, when the entire congregation of Israel, the descendants of Abraham, has left Egypt and has gathered on Mount Sinai. At Sinai the nation is given a mission statement, "You will be a holy nation" (Exod 19:6). Thus the Mosaic Covenant and the Sinaitic legislation refashion the Abrahamic promises now that the Patriarchs have become a great nation. It is the appropriation by the whole nation of the covenant made with Abraham.⁷²

From this point onward the chief concern in the narrative of the Pentateuch becomes the elaboration of the laws of the constitution of the nation. The legislation begins with the Ten Commandments in Exodus 20 and continues to Num 10:10. These laws define what it means for Israel to be a holy nation (Exod 19:6). Beginning with Num 10:11 when the Israelites break camp and continuing to the end of the Book of Joshua, the overriding issue becomes the occupation of the land of Canaan, that is, the provision of land, the third essential component of nationhood.⁷³ Thus Numbers delineates the laws of the Israelite camp in motion. The overall structure of the formative history of the people of Israel from Genesis 12 through Joshua may be viewed as follows:⁷⁴

People	Gen 12:10–Exodus 19
Law	Exodus 20–Num 10:10
Land	Num 10:11–Joshua 24

Leviticus is part of the stipulations of laws or the constitution, but it should not be overlooked that the entire context, including the giving of legislation, is within a narrative framework. This narrative is reinforced by the occurrence of the oft-repeated formula: "The LORD said to Moses," which functions like a connective thread throughout the work. It is also supported by the fact that Leviticus begins with the narrative sequence verb *wayyiqrāʾ*, "and he called" (Lev 1:1). Moreover, the legal and cultic sections of Leviticus are interspersed with narrative passages

⁷²W. Eichrodt, *Theology of the Old Testament* (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1961), 1:56–57.

⁷³The concept of holiness that is to characterize the entire nation (Exod 19:6) is also extended to the land. It finds its ultimate expression in the OT in the choice of Mount Zion as the temple site, which is also the place to which all nations will eventually make a pilgrimage to worship God. This holiness is broadened to Jerusalem and actually the entire land of Israel as a holy site. This truth may be the explanation for the fact that in the Bible no sacrifices are offered outside of Palestine. It also may provide the theological rationale of Jesus' earthly confinement to live and travel mainly in the land of Israel. This ultimately finds its basis in Gen 12:1–3 on the promise that God would give this elect nation, through which all nations would be blessed, a special land. That the entire land would be considered holy to the Lord is expressed as early as Exod 15:17.

⁷⁴For an excellent discussion of the "People and Land" theme in addition to other themes, see D. J. A. Clines, *The Theme of the Pentateuch*, JSOTSup 10 (Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1978).

that address legal themes (see 8; 9; 10:1–5,16–20; 25:10–14,23). It should thus always be borne in mind that the entirety of the Levitical legislation is best understood as part of a narrative context.⁷⁵ Leviticus is to be understood therefore as part of the journey of God's people from Egypt to the promised land. The giving of the law, which delineated what it meant to be the people of God, a kingdom of priests, and a holy nation, was one of the salient events of this account.⁷⁶ The entire period of the instruction in Leviticus took place over the period of one month (Exod 40:1,17; Num 1:1).

The book is marked by a beginning (1:1–2) and a conclusion (26:45), with the last chapter functioning as an appendix that contains a closing formula for the entire Mosaic legislation (27:34). The major division should be viewed as occurring after Leviticus 16, which addresses the Day of Atonement. Leviticus 1–16 deals with the role of the priest and the execution of the sacrificial system, while Leviticus 17–27 addresses the requirements of holiness for the Israelite people.⁷⁷ Leviticus 1–16 contains instruction on the way of access to God, and Leviticus 17–27 emphasizes the way of living for God.⁷⁸ Put differently, the main concern of Leviticus 1–16 is the continuance of the presence of God in the midst of the sinful nation, while Leviticus 17–27 records the effect of the presence of God upon the congregation. Consequently, the abiding presence of God in the midst of the nation spans the entire contents of the Book of Leviticus. This progression of moving from doctrine to practice is evident in the macrostructure of other biblical books, particularly in the New Testament:

<i>Doctrine</i>	<i>Application</i>
Leviticus 1–16	Leviticus 17–27
Romans 1–11	Romans 12–16
Ephesians 1–3	Ephesians 4–6

⁷⁵ See R. Averbeck, E. Merrill, and M. Rooker, *The Word and Its World: An Introduction to the Old Testament* (Grand Rapids: Baker, forthcoming). Based on parallel structure with the Hittite treaty form, B. Waltke argues that Exodus 19–Leviticus 26 should be viewed as a subunit within this larger Pentateuchal narrative (“Leviticus,” *ZPEB* 3:914).

⁷⁶ Wenham, *Leviticus*, 49–50.

⁷⁷ The book is a unity as suggested from the style and structure of the entire book. There is no need, and no evidence, for separating Leviticus 17–27 as part of a discrete hypothetical document called the H source (M. Segal, *Introduction to the Bible*, 2 vols. [Jerusalem: Kiryat-Sepher, 1964], 1:90 [in Hb.]). See also E. J. Young, *An Introduction to the Old Testament* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1949), 81.

⁷⁸ Möller and Payne, “Atonement, Day of,” 360. M. Segal has offered another viable division, arguing that Leviticus 1–10, which concludes the account of the tabernacle, and Leviticus 11–27, which concludes the Sinaitic legislation, are continuations of these two major themes from the Book of Exodus (*The Pentateuch* [Jerusalem: Magnes, 1967], 45).

It may be argued that chaps. 1–16 correspond to the dictum “Love the LORD your God with all your heart” (Deut 6:5), while the rest of the book, Leviticus 17–27, is summarized by the statement found within the section, “Love your neighbor as yourself” (19:18). In this regard the content of Leviticus mirrors the Ten Commandments, where the first four commandments address the believer’s relationship to God and the last six commandments prescribe the believer’s responsibility to his fellow man.

6. Interpreting Leviticus

When a Christian studies the Book of Leviticus, the question of its meaning and relevance will inevitably arise. The contents of the book, perhaps more than any other book of the Bible, seem so removed from the daily life of the contemporary Christian that one is tempted to avoid making the effort.

Early church fathers utilized a method of interpretation known as allegory to apply Leviticus to their contemporary situations. In allegorical interpretation the historical context of a passage was ignored (or thought to be offensive) and thus was pushed aside in order to find the “spiritual” sense in the text. This technique reads back into the Old Testament text its New Testament knowledge of Jesus Christ. Although this method may still exist in some circles today, it has largely been rejected by most evangelical and nonevangelical interpreters.

The interpretive method employed in this commentary will involve several steps aimed at determining the intention of the original author when he wrote the text. Although no attempt will be made to identify the biblical author’s thought processes, by means of a thorough analysis of the written text itself the goal of ascertaining the author’s intention is attainable. Determining the author’s intention is enhanced through an understanding of the historical and cultural context of the composition. As a result of archaeological discovery we now know a great deal about the beliefs, customs, and practices of the ancient Near Eastern civilizations in the second millennium B.C. These findings will inevitably shed light on the biblical text, for they provide the perspective of the author and his original audience. Also, and perhaps more importantly, the author’s original intention may be grasped from a better understanding of the literary context. This analysis not only examines what immediately precedes and follows each passage but also requires a close reading of the original text, that is, a careful examination of the grammar and literary structure of each passage.⁷⁹ Diligent application

⁷⁹ For a full treatment of this method, see W. C. Kaiser, *Toward an Exegetical Theology* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1981); T. Longman III, *Making Sense of the Old Testament* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1998), 22–54; and R. Chisholm, *From Exegesis to Exposition* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1998), 57–147.

of these methods will result in identifying the objective meaning of the passage under consideration. Once each passage has been thoroughly studied and it is understood what the meaning was for its original audience, evidence that the passage may have been the basis for a subsequent legal decision or was alluded to in other parts of Scripture will be considered.

Related to the latter procedure is the examination of the theology of each passage in light of the overall canon of Scripture, especially the New Testament.⁸⁰ Thus we read the Old Testament in accord with its meaning in its Old Testament context and environment and ponder how this historical meaning continues to speak to the church today.⁸¹ Since the Book of Leviticus is mainly concerned with the preservation of the covenant relationship between sinful people and their holy God, the principles and theology of the passages are directly applicable to the believer's contemporary life because these conditions are not time bound.

In reading the Old Testament text alongside the New Testament we observe similar correspondences or patterns between the Testaments. The study of these patterns or correspondences is what is known as typology. Typology is the study of types that consist of "persons, institutions, and events of the Old Testament which are regarded as divinely established models or prerespresentations of corresponding realities in the New Testament."⁸² The New Testament corresponding realities are called antitypes. In contrast to allegory, typology does not ignore the ancient historical context by trying to read the New Testament back into the Old Testament. Both the Old Testament type and New Testament antitype must be based on historical facts or occurrences, though there is an escalation or intensification from the Old Testament type to New Testament antitype.⁸³ The New Testament writers approached the Old Testament with a typological outlook. The typological approach leaves the Old Testament in its historical setting; but in bringing it alongside and in connection, the New Testament recognizes its function as relevant proclamation. Thus typology is a way to explain the understanding of the Old Testament when it is read alongside the New Testament. Since Leviticus addresses the functions of Israel's priesthood and institutions, we will explore the possible

⁸⁰ Comparing Scripture with Scripture also places limits on the possible interpretations of any given text (see D. S. Dockery, *Biblical Interpretation Then and Now* [Grand Rapids: Baker, 1992], 180).

⁸¹ H. Wolff, "The Hermeneutics of the Old Testament," in *Essays on Old Testament Hermeneutics*, ed. C. Westermann (Richmond: John Knox, 1963), 188–89.

⁸² W. Eichrodt, "Is Typological Exegesis an Appropriate Method?" in *Essays on Old Testament Hermeneutics*, 225.

⁸³ See L. Goppelt, *Typos: The Typological Interpretation of the Old Testament in the New* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1982), 17–18.

typological connections to the New Testament.

It should be apparent in what has been stated above that the Old Testament, including the Book of Leviticus, should not be ignored by the modern Christian. Indeed, the reading of the New Testament itself leads one to this conclusion. The apostle Paul reminds us on two occasions that the written revelation of the Old Testament was in fact written for the church (Rom 15:4; 1 Cor 10:11). What is more, neither Paul nor the rest of the New Testament writers believed they could testify to the person of Jesus Christ without constantly quoting the Old Testament. More than 30 percent of the New Testament is either a citation of or an allusion to the Old Testament.⁸⁴ It is imperative that every believer meditate and reflect upon the entirety of God's revelation to maximize their usefulness in the Master's service (2 Tim 3:16–17). Neglect of the Old Testament by the church has led to tragic results.⁸⁵ Ignoring its contents will diminish the impact the believer will have on his culture.⁸⁶

7. Outline of the Contents of the Book

The following outline of Leviticus reflects the legal framework of the book but also underscores the central role of Leviticus 16, the Day of Atonement. Leviticus 16 has a pivotal function in the book, both structurally and theologically.

- I. Laws Concerning Offerings and Sacrifices (1:1–7:38)
 1. God Commissions the Sacrificial System (1:1–2)
 2. The Burnt Offering Sacrifice (1:3–17)
 3. The Grain Offering (2:1–16)
 4. The Fellowship Offering (3:1–17)
 5. The Sin Offering (4:1–5:13)
 6. The Guilt Offering (5:14–6:7[MT 5:26])
 7. Disposal of Offerings (6:8[1]–7:36)
 8. Summary (7:37–38)
- II. The Institution of the Priesthood (8:1–10:20)
 1. The Ordination of Aaron and His Sons (8:1–36)
 2. The Priests Begin Their Ministry (9:1–24)

⁸⁴ A. E. Hill and J. H. Walton, *A Survey of the Old Testament* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1991), 435.

⁸⁵ See W. C. Kaiser, *Toward Rediscovering the Old Testament* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1987), 14–15.

⁸⁶ O. Weber, *Grundlagen der Dogmatik*, 2 vols. (Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchener Verlag, 1955), 1:323, and D. Bonhoeffer, *Widerstand und Ergebung* (München: Chr. Kaiser Verlag, 1959), 113.

3. The Role of Priests in Israelite Religion (10:1–20)
4. Conclusion
- III. Laws of Purity (11:1–15:33)
 1. Clean and Unclean Animals (11:1–47)
 2. Purification after Childbirth (12:1–8)
 3. Skin Infections and Mildew (13:1–14:57)
 4. Bodily Discharges (15:1–33)
 5. Conclusion on Purity Laws
- IV. Day of Atonement (16:1–34)
 1. General Instructions for the Day of Atonement (16:1–10)
 2. Offerings of the High Priest in the Holy Place (16:11–14)
 3. Purification for the Tabernacle (16:15–19)
 4. The Scapegoat (16:20–22)
 5. Procedures after the Dispatch of the Scapegoat (16:23–28)
 6. The Day of Atonement Is to Be a Permanent Statute (16:29–34)
 7. Conclusion of Day of Atonement
- V. Laws of Holiness (17:1–26:46)
 1. Regulations Regarding Sacrifices and Blood (17:1–16)
 2. Sexual Prohibitions (18:1–30)
 3. A Lifestyle of Holiness (19:1–37)
 4. Punishment for Holiness Violations (Lev 20:1–27)
 5. Regulations for Priests (21:1–22:33)
 6. Appointed Festivals (23:1–44)
 7. Oil, Bread, Sanctuary (24:1–9)
 8. A Blasphemer Is Stoned (24:10–23)
 9. The Sabbath Year and the Year of Jubilee (25:1–55)
 10. Blessings and Cursings (26:1–46)
- VI. Vows and Tithes (27:1–34)
 1. Regulation of Vows (27:1–29)
 2. Regulation of Tithes (27:30–33)
 3. Conclusion
 4. Conclusion of Leviticus (27:34)

8. Theological Themes

(1) *Holiness*

The root for “holy,” *qđš*, occurs more than 150 times in the Book of Leviticus. This concentration of the term is more dense than any other book of the Bible and reveals something of the purpose of the book. Holiness implies separation and is so defined in Lev 20:26: “You are to be holy to me because I, the LORD, am holy, and I have set you apart from the nations to be my own.” Holiness is first of all a transcendental

attribute of God, a trait intrinsic to his character. It underscores the “separateness” or “otherness” of God. The latter is to be manifested by his people in their devotion to him.

For various reasons it is valid to view holiness as the central theme of the Book of Leviticus. The book contains the instruction whereby Israel will be a kingdom of priests and a holy nation (Exod 19:6). Leviticus 1–16 deals largely with Israel’s priestly responsibilities, which are critical for the maintenance of holiness in the nation, while Leviticus 17–27 addresses the issue of the demonstration of holiness among the people.⁸⁷ For God’s presence to remain in the Israelite camp demonstrative holiness among the people was required. This is the main concern of the book and is the justification for the sacrificial rituals, which receive their most comprehensive treatment in Scripture in Leviticus. These rituals were essential, for although Israel was to demonstrate holiness among the nations, the fact that the Israelites were sinners could not be ignored. This sinful condition was even true of the high priest, who offered multiple sacrifices for his own sin on the Day of Atonement. Sin had to be dealt with if holiness was to be achieved and maintained. God cannot condone sin, so evident holiness was essential if God was to continue to abide among the people. Holiness was essential for the presence of God to remain in the tabernacle.⁸⁸ In that holiness also involves “separateness,” holiness was demonstrated when the nation distinguished itself from other nations; this distinction in effect constituted Israel as a “holy” nation (Exod 19:6). The Israelites were to be holy because God is holy (11:44). They were to imitate God as is the New Testament believer today (Matt 5:48; 1 Cor 11:1). Thus the theme of holiness indicates the relevance of Leviticus for the contemporary church. As Charles Spurgeon said: “If I had my choice of all the blessings I can conceive of, I would choose perfect conformity to the Lord Jesus, or, in a word, holiness.”⁸⁹

(2) *Sacrifice*

SACRIFICE IN THE ANCIENT WORLD. The transition from speaking of “holiness” to that of “sacrifice” is a natural one since the roots of these terms are related etymologically in Latin. And yet, where the mean-

⁸⁷ This division based on the two-part nature of Israel as described in Exod 19:6 should not be overly pressed. The phrase “kingdom of priests” is not limited to those who served as priests among the Israelite nation. As a holy nation the entire nation of Israel served a mediatory role to the entire world. This role included the provision of Scripture for the world as well as preserving the Savior of the world, who would come through the nation Israel. Early in Patriarchal History Abraham intercedes on behalf of a foreign nation (Gen 18:16–33 [esp. 18:17–18]).

⁸⁸ Averbeck, “Leviticus: Theology of,” 922.

⁸⁹ In W. Wiersbe, *Be Holy* (Wheaton: Victor, 1979), 10.

ing of holiness appears to be transparent, the same cannot be said about the meaning of sacrifice. The Old Testament contains neither laws nor explanations that would in any way approach a theology of sacrifice, even though the offering of sacrifice was the principal act in Israelite worship.⁹⁰ For this reason many have turned to comparable practices exhibited by Israel's neighbors in the ancient Near East to gain insight on this essential component of Israelite religion.

The practice of slaying an animal for a sacrifice was not unique to the Israelite tradition. The slaughtering of an animal as a "religious" expression was a common practice in the ancient world, particularly in the ancient Near East. That there was this commonly understood method of approaching a deity is to be expected, for God did not reveal himself nor relate to the Israelites from a historical vacuum. He related to the nation in a manner in which they were accustomed and thus could understand. The purposes for offering sacrifices in Israel, however, could not have been more different from those of their pagan neighbors. This fact is seen primarily in the *raison d'être* for presenting a sacrifice to a pagan god. The rationale for sacrifices in the ancient world was the maintenance and sustenance of the gods, since the gods were believed to have the same appetites as humans. The motivation for a devotee to present food to the god was to gain the particular god's favor. Thus pagan worship was self-serving at its core because the person presenting the offering was using the gift for his own advantage. He was in effect manipulating the god.⁹¹ The offering of sacrifice from the pagan conception was actually no different from magic, given the fact that a mechanism was being employed to effect a supernatural intervention. It is thus not surprising that in Mesopotamia, for example, the magician was as important as the priest.⁹²

The integration and cohesiveness of the entire sacrificial construct is one major way the religion of Israel was distinguished from all other sacrificial systems in the ancient world.⁹³ This unity is in no small way due to the fact that the entire sacrificial complex is an outworking and

⁹⁰R. de Vaux, *Ancient Israel*, 2 vols. (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1965), 2:415.

⁹¹M. J. Selman, "Sacrifice in the Ancient Near East," in *Sacrifice in the Bible*, ed. R. T. Beckwith and M. J. Selman (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1995), 95. See A. Rainey, "Sacrifices and Offerings," 195. These magical powers as well as morality are not the will of a god but are part of the forces of the transcendent, primordial realm above the gods, according to pagan thought (see Y. Kaufmann, *History of the Religion of Israel*, 4th ed., 4 vols. (Jerusalem: Bialik, 1937-56), 1:345 [in Hb.]).

⁹²Selman, "Sacrifice in the Ancient Near East," 96.

⁹³Rainey, "Sacrifices and Offerings," 194. The following comments use the terms "Israel," "Israelite," and "Israelite religion" to refer to the standards revealed in Scripture. The Bible clearly states that not every Israelite adhered to these divine principles and states just as clearly that any deviation from God's revealed will was sin.

expression of Israel's covenant relationship with God. The function of a sacrificial system in the context of a covenantal relationship is another unique feature of the Israelite system in the ancient world. While in the pagan world the sacrifices were something the gods needed, in Israel the sacrifices were something the people needed. This is especially borne out by the uniqueness of the atonement offerings among the Israelites. Although some general analogies have been proposed, pagan sacrifices in no way perform the same function as they do in Israelite religion. They are in no wise connected with the moral demands of a deity and the maintenance of a right covenant relationship with the Lord as in the Old Testament.⁹⁴ And while it may be proper to view the offerings of the Israelites as gifts (as the pagan devotee would), the faithful Israelite would understand that it is actually impossible to enrich God.⁹⁵

In spite of the enormous difference in the motivation for approaching the deity, there are some parallels in the ancient Near East to the Israelite system of sacrifice. These parallels may be addressed in a general manner in which the explanations for ancient sacrifice as gift, communion, or expiation are all applicable to the Israelite conception of sacrifice.⁹⁶ Given this similarity, however, it should always be borne in mind that Israel's system was given by revelation of the living God and hence was not dependent in any way on any of these pagan procedures.⁹⁷ From the fact that the whole sacrificial matrix is revealed by God to Moses, it must be emphasized that God is always separate from the cultic apparatus; he is not a coefficient to the sacrificial network. As such God's response to obedience in performing the sacrificial rite is always based on his grace. God cannot be coerced or compelled to respond. Otherwise his response to the offerings of his people would have differed little from the pagan conception of the efficiency of offering a sacrifice.

SACRIFICE IN ISRAEL. The offering of sacrifice was the principle act of Israel's worship experience. In the commentary below sacrifices are divided into two broad categories: voluntary and involuntary offerings based on the presence or absence of the formulaic expression "pleasing

⁹⁴ Selman, "Sacrifice in the Ancient Near East," 101.

⁹⁵ G. Vos, *Biblical Theology* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1948), 157. The gift offerings being either domesticated animals or vegetable produce represents part of the worshiper's life. He thus deprives himself when he presents them as offerings (de Vaux, *Ancient Israel*, 2:451).

⁹⁶ Even though those using these terms are normally—based on comparative evidence—focusing on one of these purposes as being the origin of the ancient conception of sacrifice, maintaining that they have developed along evolutionary lines (H. Ringgren, *Israelite Religion* [Philadelphia: Fortress, 1966], 167, and A. R. W. Green, *The Role of Human Sacrifice* [Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1975], 3–17).

⁹⁷ J. Gray, "Cultic Affinities between Israel and Ras Shamra," *ZAW* 62 (1949): 213–14, 19–20; de Vaux, *Ancient Israel*, 2:435, 437, 439, and Rainey, "Sacrifice and Offerings," 194.

to the Lord.” In the legislation for the voluntary offerings—the burnt, cereal, and fellowship offerings—this expression is used, although it is absent in the mandatory offerings—the sin and guilt offerings. From a theological standpoint, however, it may be better to divide the offerings into the categories of expiation or propitiation, gift (consecration), and communion.⁹⁸ In any particular sacrifice one aspect might predominate as the distinctive meaning of the sacrifice, yet it is certain that there was some overlapping of function with other offerings as well. For example, the burnt offering is normally viewed as a gift of consecration, but Lev 1:4 also mentions that it had a propitiatory function. The sin offering was mainly an offering for expiation; yet since the offering was burned, it may also have been viewed as a gift.⁹⁹ As Wenham has stated regarding the purposes of the burnt, sin, and peace (fellowship) offerings:

This glance at three sacrifices has attempted to show that while they all have a common core meaning, each has distinctive meaning of its own. They all presuppose that the animal victim is a substitute for the worshipper, makes atonement for him, and thereby restores him to favour with God. But whereas the burnt offering focuses on the total consecration from sin, and the peace offering on God’s continued blessing of the worshipper ... all these sacrifices have an atoning aspect at their core.¹⁰⁰

A justification for the threefold division we are maintaining emerges from the historical execution of multiple sacrifices in narrative texts where the order of sacrifices are described. In each narrative text where multiple offerings are presented we find the sin offering occurring first, followed by the burnt offering, and finally the fellowship offering (Num 6:16–17; Ezek 43:22–27; 2 Chr 29:20–36).¹⁰¹ The same holds true for the order of sacrifices in the account of the inauguration of the priesthood in Leviticus 8–9. Dumbrell has captured the theological significance of this order:

⁹⁸H. H. Rowley, “The Meaning of Sacrifice in the Old Testament,” *BJRL* 33 (1950): 79, and R. Dillard and T. Longman, *An Introduction to the Old Testament* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1994), 77.

⁹⁹Vos, *Biblical Theology*, 170.

¹⁰⁰G. J. Wenham, “The Theology of Old Testament Sacrifice,” in *Sacrifice in the Bible*, ed. R. T. Beckwith and M. J. Selman (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1995), 84. See also Rowley, “The Meaning of Sacrifice in the Old Testament,” 79. Indeed, a few eminent OT scholars maintain that all the offerings had a propitiatory or expiatory function (Eichrodt, *Theology*, 2:461; de Vaux, *Ancient Israel*, 2:453), and Wenham, “The Theology of Old Testament Sacrifice,” 84). Similarly, S. Schultz argues that every blood sacrifice had an atoning effect (*The Old Testament Speaks*, 3rd. ed. [San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1980], 66).

¹⁰¹See A. Rainey, “The Order of Sacrifices in Old Testament Ritual Texts,” *Bib* 51 (1970): 485–98.

In the actual working of the system emphasis has been placed upon sin which needs to be forgiven, and thus upon a breach of relationships which must be healed. If we may take, as is normally done with some plausibility, the whole burnt offering as a symbol of dedication and thus of commitment, propitiation for sin is followed by what may be termed personal consecration. In its turn this evidence of renewed commitment issues finally into shared peace offerings, that sacrifice which brought worshipper and Deity together and which was thus emblematic of fellowship established. Seen in this way, the sacrificial system offers the progressive rationale of propitiation, consecration and fellowship.¹⁰²

(3) *Atonement*

ATONEMENT IN ISRAEL. Though Leviticus provides the most comprehensive treatment for the sacrificial system in the Bible, it may be rightly claimed that the role of the offering of sacrifices for expiation and forgiveness of sin is the prevailing one in the book,¹⁰³ if not the dominant role of the entire sacrificial complex.¹⁰⁴ In this regard, R. K. Harrison maintained that even cereal offerings had a propitiatory function.¹⁰⁵ Sin inevitably breaches the covenant relationship, and it is through atonement that reconciliation with God occurs.

According to the *New Oxford Dictionary* the English word "atonement" traces its origin to the sixteenth century, when it appeared as two separate words ("at onement") in translating *eis eirēnēn* in Acts 7:26. In William Tyndale's 1526 translation the word was used to render the Greek word *katallagē* in 2 Cor 5:18. The term addresses the need for reconciliation in the relationship between God and man, which is disturbed by human sin. The need for atonement is necessitated by the universality of sin, the seriousness of sin, and man's inability to remove or deal with his sin.¹⁰⁶ The term is closely related to and frequently occurs in context with the prominent theological themes of forgiveness and reconciliation. It specifically addresses the need for removal of sin (expiation) to effect reconciliation with God.

There has been a great amount of discussion in the last two hundred years regarding the meaning of atonement in the Old Testament. Part of the disagreement can be traced to the understanding of what is the essential meaning of the root *kpr*, which is normally translated "atone." The

¹⁰² W. J. Dumbrell, *Covenant and Creation* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1984), 113.

¹⁰³ So Vos, *Biblical Theology*, 167. Similarly, B. A. Levine, *Leviticus* (Philadelphia: The Jewish Publication Society, 1989), 231.

¹⁰⁴ The latter view was held by such OT scholars as Gunkel, Skinner, and von Rad (Wenham, "The Theology of Old Testament Sacrifice," 80).

¹⁰⁵ R. K. Harrison, *Introduction to the Old Testament* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1969), 600.

¹⁰⁶ L. Morris, "Atonement," *NBD*, 104. See Eichrodt, *Theology* 2:444.

verb form occurs fifty times in the Book of Leviticus, while the cognate noun *kippurîm* is found three times and is best known for its occurrence in the expression Yom Kippur, “Day of Atonement.” Thus all but forty-three occurrences of the root are confined to Leviticus, which indicates not only that Leviticus says more about atonement than any other book but that it also is one of the key terms that needs clarification to understand the book’s contents.

Three proposals have been offered for the proper meaning of the etymology or background of the term. Until recently it was widely held among evangelical and nonevangelical scholars alike that the term was related to an Arabic cognate with the meaning “to cover.” This connection with the Arabic language has been virtually abandoned in modern scholarship because of the failure to demonstrate this meaning based on use in Hebrew as well as the methodological problem of using only Arabic to validate a Hebrew meaning.¹⁰⁷ Thus two other possibilities have been suggested. The first is to understand the verb to mean “to wipe, purge.” Support for this position comes from the fact that the cognate term in the Akkadian language had this meaning, and the verb occurs in parallelism to other Hebrew verbs within this semantic range (Isa 27:9; Jer 18:21). This meaning works especially well when inanimate objects are the object of the verbal action. Another proposal is one that understands *kipper* as a denominative verb from the noun *kōper*, which means “ransom” (e.g., Exod 21:30). The idea would be that a person is paying or making a ransom for himself when he offers a sacrifice.¹⁰⁸ Leviticus 17:11 provides a good illustration of this usage. Thus both of these meanings can be demonstrated from the Bible. The best solution may be that both the second and third meanings are appropriate depending upon the context. When an object such as the altar at the tabernacle is the object of the verb, *kpr* has the meaning of “to cleanse” or “wipe,” thereby cleansing this holy object of the contaminants that have resulted from human sin. When, on the other hand, a person is the beneficiary of the offering, *kpr* seems to carry the idea of making a ransom, of a life given in place of another. Through the animal’s death and the carrying out of

¹⁰⁷ B. Lang, כִּפֶּר, *kipper*, *TDOT* 7:289–90; L. Harris, כִּפָּר (*kāpar*), *TWOT* 1:452–53; Levine, *Leviticus*, 56–63, and B. Schwartz, “Prohibitions Concerning the ‘Eating’ of Blood in Leviticus 17,” 54, n. 2. Note even the change in the second edition of Lasor, Hubbard, and Bush from “cover over” (*Old Testament Survey*, 1st ed. [1982], 156–57) to “expiate” sin (2nd ed. [1996], 96).

¹⁰⁸ For a defense of this position, see L. Harris, כִּפָּר (*kāpar*); L. Morris, *The Apostolic Preaching of the Cross* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1955), 143–51, and B. Janowski, *Sühne als Heilsgeschehen*, *Wissenschaftlich Monographien zum Alten und Neuen Testament* (Neukirchenvluy: Neukirchener Verlag, 1982), 27–102.

the appropriate ritual, the sinner is ransomed from the death that his sins merit.¹⁰⁹

ATONEMENT AND BLOOD. A critical component of the atonement process was the crucial role God has assigned to the blood of the propitiatory sacrifices. Leviticus 17:11 has been regarded in fact as the most definitive remark regarding the role of blood in the sacrifice: "For the life of a creature is in the blood, and I have given it to you to make atonement for yourselves on the altar; it is the blood that makes atonement for one's life."¹¹⁰ The blood of the sacrificial victim makes atonement for the worshiper, for the victim's blood (life) is being offered in the worshiper's place. Thus the concept of substitution is foundational to the understanding of the Israelite sacrificial system. The emphasis on blood is not merely the existence of blood within the body or the natural vitality of blood that was effective for atonement. The focus is on blood that is shed. As Vos has stated: "Blood has its rich symbolism in sacrifice, first, because it stands for death, secondly because it stands for the death of an individual, substitutionary person, and thirdly because it stands for a death involving suffering."¹¹¹ Blood was established by God to have this atoning purpose (17:11). This unique teaching regarding the blood is particular to Israel, for there is little evidence of blood playing a significant role in any other sacrificial system, whether in Babylon, Syria, or Phoenicia.¹¹² In Israel, however, the manipulation of blood was a unifying factor to the entire sacrificial system. Wenham may in fact be correct in contending that blood spilled in all animal sacrifices makes atonement.¹¹³

It is important to understand that all sins could be atoned for in the Old Testament period. This fact is illustrated particularly in the Day of Atonement ritual, where it is stated that all sins, including *pšc* ("transgressions"), the most severe form of sin in the Bible, were atoned for on

¹⁰⁹ See J. Milgrom, "Atonement in the OT," *IDBS*, 78–82. It is quite possible that the verbs meaning "to wipe" and "to ransom" are actually two different verbs that are spelled the same. They would be called homographs. Schwartz argues for this position ("Prohibitions Concerning the 'Eating' of Blood in Leviticus 17," 54, n. 2).

¹¹⁰ The association of atonement with ransom fits perfectly with the purpose of blood as stated in Lev 17:11.

¹¹¹ Vos, *Biblical Theology*, 165.

¹¹² R. de Vaux, *Ancient Israel*, 2:433, 440; D. J. McCarthy, S. J., "The Symbolism of Blood and Sacrifice," *JBL* 88 (1969): 176; Rainey, "Sacrifices and Offerings," 196, and E. R. Clendenen, "Religious Background of the Old Testament," in *Foundations for Biblical Interpretation*, ed. D. S. Dockery, K. Mathews, and R. Sloan (Nashville: Broadman & Holman, 1994), 282. The burning of the animal is also distinctive, although there is some evidence that this was practiced among the Canaanites and the Greeks (de Vaux, *Ancient Israel*, 2:440).

¹¹³ Wenham, "The Theology of Old Testament Sacrifice," 82.

this day. Otherwise inadvertent sins could be forgiven through the appropriate sin or guilt offering, and deliberate sins were placed in this same category when accompanied by repentance and confession (Lev 5:5; 16:21; 26:40; Num 5:5–10). Only high-handed sins, equivalent to sinning against the Holy Spirit, were not atoned (Num 15:27–31; Heb 10:26–31). Atonement is thus God's way of addressing the sin problem of his people. God took the initiative in establishing the means whereby atonement could be effected when he stated: "I have given it to you to make atonement for yourselves" (Lev 17:11). There is no inherent value in the sacrificial victim per se whereby atonement could be made; the institution of atonement is nothing other than a gracious creation of God!¹¹⁴

The Old Testament sacrifices were ultimately validated by the sacrifice of Christ, whose sacrifice alone was the determinative ground for the payment of sins and the removal of guilt. The objective ground for sinners of all eras to be justified before God was the atonement of Jesus Christ. Any grace that the Old Testament sacrifices conveyed was the result of the sacrifice of Christ they foreshadowed. As Morris has stated:

The NT takes the line that the sacrifices of old were not the root cause of the putting away of sins. Redemption is to be obtained even 'from the transgressions under the first covenant' only by the death of Christ (Heb 9:15). The cross is absolutely central to the NT, and, indeed, to the whole Bible. All before leads up to it. All after looks back to it.¹¹⁵

And yet the Old Testament sacrifices were efficacious for ceremonial cleansing or the cleansing of the flesh, although they could not make the worshiper's conscience perfect (Heb 9:9).¹¹⁶ It could be said that these sacrifices pertained to the believer's sanctification rather than justification. They may have functioned like confession in the New Testament (1 John 1:9) and in doing so preserved relationships that had been established. They did not initiate a new relationship.¹¹⁷ The sacrifices did provide atonement (Lev 1:4; 4:26–31; 5:16; Num 15:25–26) while simultaneously foreshadow-

¹¹⁴ Eichrodt, *Theology*, 2, 446.

¹¹⁵ L. Morris, "Atonement," 104. See also R. T. Beckwith, "Christ as Sacrifice in Paul and Hebrews," in *Sacrifice in the Bible*, ed. R. T. Beckwith and M. J. Selman (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1995), 134.

¹¹⁶ See J. C. Whitcomb, "Christ's Atonement and Animal Sacrifices in Israel," *GTJ* 6 (1985): 210–12.

¹¹⁷ See Dumbrell, *Covenant and Creation*, 111–12. Yet the fact that "calling upon the name of the Lord" is often juxtaposed with building an altar in the Patriarchal narratives (Gen 12:8; 13:4; 21:33) suggests that the Israelites had an understanding of the relationship between justification and sacrificial atonement. Altars represented God since they were built only at those sites where a theophany of God had occurred. Thus sacrifices were only to be offered at those sacred sites where God had appeared.

ing Christ's sacrifice: "While they truly atoned for the sins of the worshiper, yet the Old Testament sacrifices were validated in the mind of God on the basis of the all-sufficient, truly efficacious sacrifice of the Lamb of God slain from the foundation of the world (1 Pet 1:20)."¹¹⁸

ATONEMENT AND REPENTANCE. Despite its efficacious nature, the provision of a sacrificial lamb did not automatically produce forgiveness, which is clear especially from the juxtaposition of confession with sacrifice (Lev 5:5; 16:21). The heart attitude or spiritual disposition of the worshiper was critical if forgiveness and atonement were to ensue. Proverbs comments on the offering of a sacrificial animal by a person not walking with the Lord: "The sacrifice of the wicked is detestable, how much more so when brought with evil intent" (Prov 21:27), and "The Lord detests the sacrifice of the wicked" (Prov 15:8). To approach God while not walking in obedience to his commands is to offer the "sacrifice of fools" (Eccl 5:1). These texts clearly state that the bringing of sacrifices to God did not automatically result in atonement but in fact could be detestable in God's sight. It was necessary for the guilty sinner to come before God with an attitude of contrition and repentance.

This truth helps us understand what might be called the "unforgivable sin" in the Old Testament, which was to sin with the "high-hand" (Num 15:30-31). The person who in defiance thumbs his nose at God would not likely soon come to God in repentance for his sin. This individual would not find forgiveness, for forgiveness cannot exist where there is no repentance. Sins committed in blatant contempt for the will of God lack the subjective precondition for atonement.¹¹⁹ Repentance, which manifests itself most explicitly in confession, is the inexorable condition of forgiveness. Put differently, in the Old Testament as well as the New there is no occasion where forgiveness can take place where there is unconfessed sin. This repentance would involve a willingness to turn from sin, with the desire never to repeat the sin again. Rowley has well stated what is involved in coming before God with repentance and confession after the commitment of a sin:

No plea for forgiveness could be sincere, if there was no renunciation of the sin in the heart; no cry for cleansing could have any meaning, if there was still the purpose to renew the act that brought the stain; no prayer for communion could

¹¹⁸H. E. Freeman, "The Problem of the Efficacy of Old Testament Sacrifices," *Bulletin of the Evangelical Theological Society* 5 (1962): 73. Similarly, J. S. Feinberg, "Salvation in the Old Testament," in *Continuity and Discontinuity: Perspectives on the Relationship between the Old and New Testaments*, ed. J. S. Feinberg (Westchester, Ill.: Crossway, 1988), 72.

¹¹⁹Eichrodt, *Theology*, 2:447.

be genuinely expressed by a sacrifice, if there was no desire to walk in harmony with God's will.¹²⁰

The crucial role of repentance and confession in the process of forgiveness and atonement is also illustrated when heinous sins were committed for which there were no sacrifices prescribed in the Law. The best example is that of King David, who committed the atrocious sins of adultery and murder, sins too great for atonement by sacrifice because they were capital offenses, and hence there were no offerings. The fact that there was no atonement for such sins should be understood as the background for David's statement: "You do not delight in sacrifice" (Ps 51:16). Yet based on his contrition, which manifested itself in confession, he was told by God's spokesman that his sins were forgiven (2 Sam 12:13).¹²¹ These sins too great for sacrificial offering could only be granted on the grounds of true repentance. That the heart attitude was the critical ingredient in atonement may also be illustrated from the existence of graduated offerings in the Mosaic Law. For economic reasons an individual was permitted to bring a less costly animal for a sacrifice than the more fortunate brother who could afford a more costly animal, yet with equal results (see commentary).

From this understanding of the subjective side of bringing offerings to God we should be not surprised by some of the railings against the offering of sacrifices by the prophets (1 Sam 15:22; Isa 1:11–20; Hos 6:6; Amos 5:22; Mic 6:6–8). The same sentiment was echoed by Jesus (cp. Matt 12:6 with Hos 6:6). The prophets were not at odds with the priests and certainly were not against the sacrificial system, as some critics have proposed. On the contrary, the prophets were pointing out that the special relationship with God involved more than a punctilious observance of the sacrificial offerings. The special relationship with the Lord was a way of life requiring obedience in all areas, including especially moral obligations.¹²² Many Israelites had adapted the pagan belief that the offering of sacrifices alone would be pleasing to God. In approaching God in this

¹²⁰Rowley, "The Meaning of Sacrifice in the Old Testament," 91. Similarly, Eichrodt, *Theology*, 2:465. The Jewish rabbis understood the critical necessity for repentance for forgiveness to be bestowed so well that they almost gave repentance a transcendent quality. According to later Jewish writers repentance was created before the world and was placed on the same level as sinlessness (G. Moore, *Judaism*, 2 vols. [Peabody: Hendrickson, 1997], 1:526, 532).

¹²¹Only the author of the law could waive the punishment for the offense. In Mesopotamian law this was the king. In Israel it had to be forgiven by God, the author of biblical laws. David's sin was forgiven, although he did experience its consequences throughout his life. His sin was dealt with objectively on the Day of Atonement.

¹²²E. C. Lucas, "Sacrifice in the Prophets," in *Sacrifice in the Bible*, ed. R. T. Beckwith and M. J. Selman (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1995), 71.

way they had fallen into the trap of thinking that offering sacrifices would result in some magical effect. The prophets rightly denounced sacrifices not offered with the right spirit, a spirit of humility, repentance, and obedience. The psalmists expressed this same prophetic concern regarding the offering of sacrifices (Pss 40:6–7; 51:16–17; 69:30–31). Thus the prophets and the psalmists speak with one voice regarding the basic postulate of the sacrificial system: for a sacrifice to be effective it must be offered in the right state of mind by an individual committed to walk in God's ways. Rowley has well stated this overall purpose of the sacrificial system, particularly in light of Israel's special relationship to God: "The purpose of the ritual with its accompanying liturgy was to foster penitence, thanksgiving, adoration, devotion, and humble surrender and consecration to God, and it brings the Law, the Prophets, and the Psalms together into a natural synthesis."¹²³ Hill and Walton correctly state: "The external act of ritual sacrifice was symbolic and representative of the internal attitude and disposition of the heart."¹²⁴

This focus on the proper motivation in sacrifice naturally led to an extended or metaphorical use of the sacrifices. Sacrificial language was employed for the spiritual disposition of God's people: "The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit" (Ps 51:17; also Pss 50:23; 119:108). The people were not only to bring offerings before the Lord but were to live before him in a particular way. Thus, in the Old Testament era, there existed side by side not only the literal sacrifices—the animals slaughtered before the Lord—but the spiritual or ethical sacrifices as well. In this way there is an analogy to the rite of circumcision, which was a literal physical act that also represented an internal condition of the spiritual life (Deut 10:16; 30:6; Jer 4:4; also Rom 2:28–29). Therefore circumcision, like sacrifices, took on a metaphorical meaning for the correct moral disposition that the external act was to represent.

But, perhaps in some way, the ultimate inadequacy of Old Testament animal sacrifices is portrayed through the prophetic railings that focus on moral and ethical obedience (see Heb 10:1–18 with Ps 40:6–8). Moreover, the endless repetition of these offerings may hint at their ultimate inability to decisively deal with sin (cp. Heb 7:27; 8:7–13 with Jer 31:31–34; 9:25–26).¹²⁵ It is this inherent inadequacy that is exposed with the coming of Christ and in the writings of the New Testament.

¹²³H. H. Rowley, *Worship in Ancient Israel* (London: SPCK, 1967), 142.

¹²⁴A. Hill and J. Walton, *A Survey of the Old Testament* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1991), 124.

¹²⁵Jenson, "The Levitical Sacrificial System," 37.

(4) *Sacrifice and Atonement in the New Testament*

Before leaving the discussion of the role of sacrifices in the Old Testament, it is necessary to examine the New Testament teaching on this subject since much of Jesus' life was understood against the Old Testament view of sacrifice (Matt 26:28; Mark 10:45; John 1:29; Rom 4:25; 8:3; 1 Cor 5:7; Eph 5:2; Heb 1:3; 9:14; 10:10,19–20; 1 Pet 1:19; 2:24; 1 John 2:2). Indeed in the opening chapter of three of the Gospels, Jesus is introduced with reference to his role in forgiving sin (Matt 1:21; Luke 1:77; John 1:29). The concepts and theology of the Old Testament rituals undergird the New Testament teaching on atonement for sin and the need for forgiveness. The connection between the Old Testament system and Jesus' sacrifice upon the cross should be understood in the context of Jesus' statement that he came to fulfil the Law (Matt 5:17). With regard to sacrifice, Jesus came to fulfill the Law of sacrifice rather than abolish it, while at the same time he transcended and intensified it. Jesus' death inaugurated a new age of holy worship (Heb 10:14; 12:18–24). The writers of the New Testament surely understood the work of Christ in light of this theological background.¹²⁶ They came to understand that the Old Testament sacrificial system foreshadowed what Jesus accomplished in his sacrificial death at Calvary. In fact, each of the sacrifices of the pure and innocent animals prescribed in Leviticus not only met a specific need in the life of the Old Testament worshiper, but it also expressed some truth about the crucifixion of Christ, God's perfect sacrifice. Lyonnet and Sabourin, for example, comment how in Jesus' teaching at the Lord's Supper he describes his own death in terms of the Passover sacrifice, the covenant-making sacrifice (Exod 24:8), and the sin offering:

It must cause no special surprise that Christ himself at the last supper may have referred to all three sacrifices at the same time: namely, to the paschal sacrifice,

¹²⁶ Thus in one sense it is correct to understand the relationship of the OT offerings and Christ's sacrifice as metaphorical (R. Averbeck, "Offerings and Sacrifices," *NIDOTTE* 4:1017). And yet, because it had been determined from the foundation of the world (1 Pet 1:20 [Rev 13:8]) that Jesus would bear all of our sins, and the animal sacrifices of the OT were merely types testifying to that fact, it is better to understand the relationship of the animal's sacrifice to Jesus' death as one of type-antitype rather than as metaphor. The death of Christ is primary; the animal sacrifices were but pictures. This contention is reinforced if Gunton is correct when he argues that the concept of sacrifice is universal and in fact reflects the outworking of the Trinity in inner-trinitarian relations of giving and receiving. In this case the sacrifice that is Jesus' life and death would be a realization in time of the eternal arrangement and is thus universal (C. Gunton, "The Sacrifice and the Sacrifices: From Metaphor to Transcendental?" in *Trinity, Incarnation, and Atonement*, ed. R. J. Feenstra and C. Plantinga, Jr. [Notre Dame: University Press, 1989], 215, 221). Similarly, see R. T. Beckwith, "Christ as Sacrifice in Paul and Hebrews," in *Sacrifice in the Bible*, ed. R. T. Beckwith and M. J. Selman [Grand Rapids: Baker, 1995], 135.

as is evident from the day and hour chosen; to the covenant-sacrifice which is explicitly indicated when he speaks of "the blood of the new covenant"; and finally, with great probability, to the sacrifice of expiation which seems to be implied by the words of Mat 26:28: "unto the forgiveness of sins."¹²⁷

Like the paschal lamb, none of his bones were broken (Exod 12:46; John 19:14,36; 1 Cor 5:7; Ps 34:21[20]). Also like the sacrifice Moses made to seal the covenant with Israel (Exod 24:3–8), Jesus' blood inaugurated the new covenant (1 Cor 11:23–26; Matt 26:28; Mark 14:24; Heb 7:22; 8:6; 12:24). Jesus' death is the foundation sacrifice of the New Covenant, just as the blood sprinkled on the Israelites at Sinai was foundation sacrifice for the Mosaic Covenant. As such Jesus is the mediator of a New Covenant (Heb 9:15–22; Jer 31:31–34) through which the kingdom is to become reality.¹²⁸ The animal sacrifices were but a shadow of things to come (Heb 10:1); the sacrifice of Christ was the true reality they foreshadowed. Consequently, they need not be repeated, but their frequency formed a deep impression on the seriousness of sin. Poythress, looking at the overall New Testament teaching, comes to the same perspective:

All these aspects are combined fully in the sacrifice of Jesus Christ on the cross. Christ bore the punishment for our sins (1 Pet 2:24; Isa 53:5). Thus He is the final sin offering. Christ was wholly consecrated to God. He suffered death and destruction for sin, and also brings about our death to sin (Rom 6:2–7). Thus He is the final burnt offering. Christ in His perfect obedience gave to God the honor and thanks that are due to Him. Thus He is the final grain offering. Christ now offers us His flesh to eat (John 6:54–58). By partaking of His flesh and blood we have eternal life, we have communion with the Father, and we are transformed into Christ's image (2 Cor 3:18). Thus Christ is the final fellowship offering.¹²⁹

Each of these Old Testament sacrifices in different ways draws out the redemptive significance of Christ's atoning sacrifice. Christ's sacrifice "was a total gift, in which the victim returned wholly to God; a communion-sacrifice more intimate than man could ever have suspected; an expiation-sacrifice sufficient to atone for all the sins of the world."¹³⁰

¹²⁷ S. Lyonnet and L. Sabourin, *Sin, Redemption, and Sacrifice: A Biblical and Patristic Study* (Rome: Biblical Institute Press, 1970), 181. See also Gunton, "The Sacrifice and the Sacrifices," 224. P. M. Head maintains that the fundamental aspect of the gospel presentation of the death of Jesus is that of the inauguration of the New Covenant ("The Self-Offering and Death of Christ as a Sacrifice in the Gospels and the Acts of the Apostles," in *Sacrifice in the Bible*, ed. R. T. Beckwith and M. J. Selman [Grand Rapids: Baker, 1995], 123).

¹²⁸ See M. J. Selman, "Sacrifice for Christians Today," in *Sacrifice in the Bible*, 160.

¹²⁹ V. Poythress, *The Shadow of Christ in the Law of Moses* (Brentwood, Tenn.: Wolgemuth & Hyatt, 1991), 49.

¹³⁰ de Vaux, *Ancient Israel*, 2:456.

The full meaning of his sacrifice is greater than the sum of all its various aspects.

THE BOOK OF HEBREWS. Christ's sacrifice is discussed in great detail in what might be called the New Testament Book of Leviticus, the Epistle to the Hebrews. This designation is illustrated by the fact that three of the major concerns of the Book of Hebrews—the sacrificial system, the Day of Atonement, and the priesthood—have their textual and theological moorings in Leviticus.

The author of Hebrews explains how Jesus is not only a superior priest but also a superior sacrifice. The blood of Christ is the sprinkled blood (Heb 12:24) of the covenant sacrifice through which the new covenant was established (cp. Heb 9:20–22 with Exod 24:3–8). Jesus' death is depicted in Hebrews as the ultimate sin offering as well. As a sin offering was carried outside the camp to be disposed, so Jesus died outside the camp (cf. Heb 13:11–14). In discussing the finality and necessity of Christ's sacrifice, the writer points out that the blood of bulls and goats of the Old Testament period could not remove sins (Heb 10:4).¹³¹ The Day of Atonement is a type of the work of Christ (Heb 9–10). All the rites for the day were mere shadows of the coming reality in Christ (Heb 9:24; 10:1). The animal sacrifices were a "shadow of the good things to come" (Heb 10:1). The animals offered in the Old Testament were but symbols or pictures of the real sacrifice to come.¹³² This should have been realized in the Old Testament period itself, where in spite of the daily offerings individuals brought for their sin, this was not enough; for the Day of Atonement brought in a full atonement for the sin of the nation. What was lacking in the Old Testament sacrifices was more than superseded in the offering of Jesus upon the cross (see Rom 3:25). Thus his sacrifice consummated the entire Old Testament sacrificial system.

Christ as a superior priest serves from the order of Melchizedek (Heb 5:5–6; 7:1–29; Ps 110:4). Rather than presenting the blood of bulls and goats, as the Great High Priest he entered into the presence of God once for all with his own blood (Heb 9:12–14; 10:11–14). Because this sacrifice is of ultimate and infinite value, it does not need to be repeated (Heb 9:12).

SACRIFICE FOR THE WORLD. Although the Old Testament sacrifice was presented for the individual Israelite, the sacrifices also were pre-

¹³¹J. Stott has argued that it was impossible for the animal sacrifices to be effective in sacrificing for humans because animals are not equal to humans. Only the precious blood of Christ was valuable enough (1 Pet 1:19) (The Cross of Christ [Downers Grove: InterVarsity, 1986], 138). Similarly, see Poythress, *The Shadow of Christ in the Law of Moses*, 43).

¹³²W. Kaiser, *Toward an Old Testament Theology* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1978), 118, and id., "Response to Douglas Moo," in *Five Views on Law and Gospel*, ed. W. Strickland (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1993), 395.

sented for the nation as a whole (Num 28–29), which was particularly evident on the Day of Atonement, when sacrifice was made for the entire nation. Yet we find in the passage of the Suffering Servant (Isa 52:13–53:12), a passage often cited by the New Testament writers as finding its fulfillment in the crucifixion of Christ, an even greater application of sacrifice. The sacrifice of the Suffering Servant will not only benefit Israel but also the whole Gentile world. Thus we are informed of a sacrifice that will far transcend those made at the Temple in the Old Testament era. The range of people who benefit from the offering of sacrifices may be charted as follows:

Individual	Nation	World
Leviticus 1–7	Leviticus 16	Isaiah 53

When this truth is coupled with the influence of the Davidic king exercising rulership over the nations (Isa 2:2–4; 9:6–7; 11:3–9; Jer 23:5–6; Mic 4:1–4), we have a clear Old Testament glimpse of the work of Messiah in his first and second advents, ministries that flow out of the blessings of the New Covenant that Jesus has inaugurated (cp. Luke 22:20 with Jer 31:31). As the son of David he is the promised Messianic ruler who will restore his people Israel by delivering them from their sins (Matt 1:21). As a descendant of Abraham he is the promised one through whom all nations will be blessed (Gen 12:3; 17:7; 22:18; Matt 28:16–20).

CHRISTIAN SACRIFICES. Selman comments, “Just as Israel’s sacrifices were a response to God’s grace expressed in the Sinai covenant, so the NT church offered spiritual sacrifices to God because of the love Jesus had shown them at the cross.”¹³³ In the same way that sacrifices could be literal as well as metaphorical in the Old Testament period, in the New Testament both the reality and finality of the sacrifice of Christ and actions performed by believers are described as sacrifices. The sacrifices believers may offer in this present age include their faith (Phil 2:17), monetary support for missionaries (Phil 4:18), gifts for the poor (Heb 13:16), preaching the gospel (Rom 15:15–16), praise (Heb 13:15), and even their own lives (Rom 12:1; 2 Cor 2:14–17; Phil 2:17; 2 Tim 4:6; Rev 6:9).¹³⁴ And as in the case of the Old Testament sacrifice, the sacrifice of Christ and the sacrifices Christians perform are inseparably linked. It is the Spirit at work in the life of the believer who enables believers to

¹³³ Selman, “Sacrifice for Christians Today,” 159.

¹³⁴ For full discussions and justifications for understanding these NT passages in the context of OT sacrifices, see R. T. Beckwith, “The Relation between Christ’ Sacrifice and Priesthood and Those of the Church: An Attempt at a Summary Statement,” *Churchman* 103 (1989): 231–39, and R. J. Daly, “The New Testament Concept of Christian Sacrificial Activity,” *BTB* 8 (1978): 99–107.

realize the form of life the once-for-all atonement of Christ made possible.¹³⁵ The New Testament offerings of Christians are nonatonement. Rather they are atoned for and are made possible by the atoning sacrifice of Christ.¹³⁶ They are the fruit of Christ's sacrifice. In the Old Testament period sacrificial offerings had to be presented by the priests at the tabernacle and later the temple. The New Testament describes the same image in the offerings of believers today, especially in 1 Pet 2:4–10.

First Peter 2:4–10 states that all believers are priests (1 Pet 2:5,9). As priests in the Old Testament had the responsibility over the offering of sacrifices, so believers today offer up spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God¹³⁷ through Jesus Christ (1 Pet 2:5c). The sacred place where the offerings are to be presented is no longer the temple but is among the people of God themselves, who are God's spiritual house (1 Pet 2:5a). This concept of the individual believer or the believing community being described as the new temple is also found in 1 Cor 3:5–17. Describing the believer(s) in terms of the temple construction is an idea linked to the association of Jesus with the new temple (John 2:19–22; Col 2:9) and believers' identification with him. As Peterson concludes: "In the final analysis, the New Testament proclaims that Jesus Christ in union with his church is the new temple, where God dwells in or through the Spirit (e.g., 1 Cor 3:11–17; Eph 2:18–22)."¹³⁸

The writer of Hebrews takes this imagery even further. Hebrews 10:19–25 asserts that believers have the right to enter the Holy Place now through the veil as a direct result of Christ's death. In the Old Testament period the veil of the tabernacle, which marked the entrance of the Holy of Holies, was only traversed by the high priest once a year on the Day of Atonement. Now, in Christ, believers enter into the true heavenly Holy of Holies of which the earthly one had been only a copy (Exod 25:40; Heb 8:5).¹³⁹ Thus entrance into the earthly Holy of Holies had been the

¹³⁵ Gunton, "The Sacrifice and the Sacrifices: From Metaphor to Transcendental?" 223.

¹³⁶ Because the offerings of believers have no propitiatory value but rather reflect consecration to God, Beckwith may be correct when he suggests that these offerings of the NT be compared to burnt offerings rather than to sin offerings ("The Relation between Christ's Sacrifice and Priesthood and Those of the Church, 232).

¹³⁷ See discussion of offerings "pleasing" or "acceptable" to God in this commentary.

¹³⁸ Peterson, *Engaging with God*, 92. This truth does not necessarily negate the existence of a future temple in the millennium as described in Ezek 40–48 (see M. Rooker, "Evidence from Ezekiel," in *A Case for Premillennialism*, ed. D. Campbell and J. Townsend [Chicago: Moody, 1992], 128–34).

¹³⁹ The fact that the tabernacle had been constructed on the basis of a pattern (Exod 25:40) suggests that tabernacle apparatus did not reflect ultimate reality but pointed to something beyond. The very fact that the tabernacle was but a copy of the genuine article should have made each worshiper think beyond the earthly realm each time he brought an animal to the tabernacle for a sacrifice in the earthly tabernacle.

right only of the high priest prior to Christ's death. The severing of the temple veil at Jesus' death (Matt 27:51) demonstrated that his sacrifice had now opened the way into God's very presence (Heb 4:14; 8:5; 9:11,24). This is really what is significant about the priesthood of the New Testament believer. The fact that the phrase "you are a royal priesthood" is applied to believers is not as distinctive in that the same expression was also used to describe the nation of Israel at large, both priest and laity (Exod 19:6). Now that the way has been opened through the tearing of Jesus' flesh, the Christian has even greater access than the Israelite high priest (Heb 10:20).¹⁴⁰ Selman rightly concludes: "The sacrificial vocabulary and ideas which are widely scattered through the NT make it quite clear that all Christians are to take over and transform Israel's priestly ministry (1 Pet 2:5,9; cf. Exod 19:6; Rev 1:6)."¹⁴¹

(5) *Conclusion on Sacrifice and Atonement*

Sacrificial atonement is the central message of the Bible. The whole sacrificial system demonstrated that "the wages of sin is death" (Rom 6:23). It was on the basis of God's grace not only in the Old Testament but also in the New that "God provide ... the lamb" (Gen 22:8). "Why did God become man?" asked Anselm. It was in order "to atone for human sin."¹⁴² As Mark put it: The Son of man *must* suffer (Mark 8:31). God gave his Son (John 3:16; Rom 8:32), and in his death it pleased the Lord to strike him (Isa 53:10). As Jewett has beautifully stated:

The atonement for sin provided by the death of Christ had its source in God (2 Cor 5:19). The ultimate reason for this initiative is not to be found in any necessity laid upon Him, but in His free and sovereign love (John 3:16). This is the ultimate of revelation; i.e., the Atonement finds its ultimate explanation in an unfathomable urge in God toward His sinful and alienated creatures. He has been pleased, for reasons known only to Himself, to set His love upon those who are unworthy. The Lord has loved men with an everlasting love (Jer 31:3), and in due time commended that love to them in that while they were yet sinners Christ died for them (Rom 5:8). This, then, is the final reason for the Atonement. ... In this is love ... (1 John 4:10).¹⁴³

The motivation for God to make a way possible for man to find atonement and forgiveness of sins comes from his own character, particularly the

¹⁴⁰For further details of this text, see Daly, "The New Testament Concept of Christian Sacrificial Activity," *BTB* 8 (1978): 105-6.

¹⁴¹Selman, "Sacrifice for Christians Today," 165.

¹⁴²P. Quinn, "Aquinas on Atonement," in *Trinity, Incarnation, and Atonement*, ed. R. J. Feenstra and C. Plantinga, Jr. (Notre Dame: University Press, 1989), 153.

¹⁴³P. Jewett, "Atonement," *ZPEB* 1:410.

attributes of mercy and love that best express his nature. God is merciful to sinful man and provided a way of atonement that man might have his sin removed and thus enter into fellowship with the Lord. This desire to have fellowship with human beings must be the reason for the creation of mankind in the first place. It is the reason God walked in the garden in the middle of the day and the reason he redeemed Israel from slavery and established a covenant relationship with the nation. And ultimately and climactically it was the reason for providing his only Son as a sacrificial offering for the sins of the world. Sin can only be atoned for by a sacrificial death. This atoning sacrifice that brings man into relationship with God makes worship possible. Worship without sacrifice is inconceivable. It is the way God and man can be “at onement,” which fulfills the Abrahamic promise, “I will be their God” (Gen 17:8). The nation of Israel experienced this fellowship when God took up residence in the tabernacle and later in the temple. That Jesus was the fulfillment of the statement “God with us” (cp. Isa 7:14 with Matt 1:23) indicates that these hopes found their ultimate expression in his incarnation and indwelling ministry. He is in fact greater than the temple since the temple foreshadowed his presence among us (Matt 12:6). He represents God’s presence among us more fully (Matt 28:16–20) and continues to abide with us through the gift of the Spirit (John 14:15–20).

Jesus manifested the “glory” of God. The glory of God was associated with the theophany at Mount Sinai (Exod 24:15–16), the completed tabernacle (Exod 40:34), and finally the Jerusalem temple (1 Kgs 8:10–11; Isa 6:1–4). As Peterson states:

The temple stood for revelation and purification: it was both the meeting-place of heaven and earth and the place of sacrifice for purification from sin. Thus, it found fulfillment in the incarnation and the sacrifice of Christ. The coming of the ‘Greeks’ to Jerusalem marked the beginning of the predicted pilgrimage of the nations to Zion and was the signal to Jesus that the hour of his glorification through death had come (John 12:20–33). His ‘lifting up’ from the earth would be the means by which he drew the nations to himself. The temple of the new age in John’s gospel is not the church but the crucified and resurrected Son of God.¹⁴⁴

In this sense the exalted Christ can be understood not only as the place of God’s special presence but also as the fulfillment of the prophetic hope of the temple as the center of worship for all believers.

Finally, as noted above, Paul mentions that his preaching of the gospel was a form of offering a sacrifice (Rom 15:15–16), which indicates that evangelism should be viewed as an expression of worship. In proclaiming

¹⁴⁴Peterson, *Engaging with God*, 97.

the good news of what God has wrought in the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus Christ, one proclaims that which naturally leads to the praise of God. In describing the priesthood of the believer Peter claims that the reason we have this priesthood is to “declare the praises of him who called you out of darkness into his wonderful light” (1 Pet 2:9). Moreover, it is only through the acceptance of the gospel that human beings experience the new birth and thus only then become candidates for worshiping God as a living sacrifice (Rom 12:1).¹⁴⁵ God is seeking such people to be his worshipers (John 4:23; Ps 66:1–3).

9. The Law and the Christian

In recent years many articles and books have appeared that address the subject of the use and application of the Law of Moses in the life of the Christian.¹⁴⁶ These treatments discuss the degree to which the particular Levitical laws have any relevance for the Christian in the modern world, especially in Western society. More to the point, should a Christian be motivated to read Leviticus to find truth and guidance for his personal life today? The following discussion will address this issue by focusing on three major issues: (1) the purpose of the Law for the nation of Israel, (2) the meaning of the Law in the New Testament, and (3) the unity of the Law.

(1) *The Purpose of the Law for the Nation of Israel*

As was indicated above, God chose the nation of Israel as his special people to have relationship with him and to be the mediatory and revelatory people for the world so that all nations might be blessed (Gen 12:3). But for the nation to have a relationship with the holy God and in order for this holy God to reside in their midst they too must exhibit holiness. They must be a separate and distinct people. This, as was indicated above, was the rationale for the sacrificial system instituted to make it possible for the Israelites to receive forgiveness of sins and thereby exhibit holiness. But behind the precepts and meanings of what these sacrifices and atonement would accomplish is the instruction of the Law. The Law legislated the means for atonement as well as the admonitions and prohibitions Israel had to obey to live a life pleasing to God. In a

¹⁴⁵The role of the believer priest is thus parallel to the work of the OT priest (esp., Lev 10:11).

¹⁴⁶For evangelical treatments, see W. Strickland, ed., *Five Views on Law and Gospel*; T. Schreiner, *The Law and Its Fulfillment* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1993); F. Thielman, *Paul and the Law* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 1994), and C. Kruse, *Paul, the Law, and Justification* (Peabody: Hendrickson, 1996).

word, the revealed Law was at the heart of what it meant for Israel to be holy. The laws provided the instruction defining what living a holy life before a holy God entailed (Lev 11:44–47; 20:22–26; Exod 22:31 [Hb. 30]; Deut 14:21). By obeying this written instruction Israel lived a holy life (Lev 19:2–37; 20:7–27; Num 15:39–41). The Law of Moses was the will of God for those whom God had graciously redeemed. It was the practical guide for the man who was grateful for God's deliverance and who had as his highest ambition adherence to the wishes and plans of God. In essence, the Law was the means whereby man was joined by holiness of life to God.¹⁴⁷ Thus we see the intricate connection between holiness and the Law. Holiness was achieved by fidelity to the Law of God. The holiness of the Law may also be seen from the fact that the Ten Commandments were placed in the ark, the Most Holy Place of the tabernacle. In short, the Law was not a burden or yoke for the people of God in the Old Testament but was rather one of the greatest blessings God had given to them (Deut 4:7–8; Ps 147:19–20; Rom 9:4–5).¹⁴⁸

Consequently this Law that God had graciously revealed to Moses was not the means whereby the Israelites were declared righteous before God. On the contrary, the historical context of these laws is the redemption from Egypt and God's election of Israel as his people. The Law was given in the context of grace. In Leviticus specifically the motivation for Israel to obey these laws stems from the deliverance from Egypt that God has just performed (Lev 11:45; 18:3; 23:43). B. W. Anderson writes, "In Israel's faith, the good news of what God has done precedes the exposition of what the people must do."¹⁴⁹ Clearly salvation by grace through faith is the message of the Bible from Genesis to Revelation. As a result I must take exception to the following note from the *Scofield Study Bible* on John 1:16 that suggests an unwarranted contrast between how an individual was saved in the Old Testament in comparison with the New: "The point of testing is no longer legal obedience as the condition of salvation, but acceptance or rejection of Christ."¹⁵⁰ This statement cannot be sustained from the Old Testament (Gen 15:6; Neh 9:8; Ps 106:12–31; Isa 45:25; 54:17; Mic 6:6–8; Hab 2:4) and is contrary to the teaching of rab-

¹⁴⁷J. Calvin, *Calvin: Institutes of the Christian Religion*, ed. J. McNeill, 2 vols. (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1975), 1:415. Or put differently, "the Law was given as the means of binding Israel to its God" (G. Ladd, *A Theology of the New Testament*, rev. ed. [Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1993], 540).

¹⁴⁸Vos, *Biblical Theology*, 128.

¹⁴⁹B. W. Anderson, *Understanding the Old Testament*, 4th ed. (Englewood Cliffs: Prentice-Hall, 1986), 535.

¹⁵⁰*The Scofield Reference Bible*, 1st., ed., 1115, n. 2. S. Westerholm comes close to making this same faux pax (*Israel's Law and the Church's Faith* [Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1988], 116). Happily, in the second edition of the *Scofield Reference Bible* this statement was deleted.

binic Judaism.¹⁵¹ The rabbis encouraged the people to obey the commandments because they loved God.¹⁵² Works have never been the instrument of salvation; they are the evidence of salvation. Obedience to the laws should be placed in the domain of sanctification rather than justification, since by adherence to these laws a social distinction was maintained between the Israelites and the rest of the nations.

The laws of the Mosaic Covenant assume and amplify the Abrahamic Covenant (Exod 2:23–25; 3:6–8; Deut 7:7–8; Rom 4; Gal 3), which declares God's intention not only to bless Israel but also to bless the world through Israel's mediatory role. Also the prophets assign the Law a critical role in God's future blessing of Israel (Jer 31:31–37; Ezek 36:26–32). The New Testament addresses the beginning of this future.

(2) *The New Testament and the Law*

INTRODUCTION. The New Testament writers consistently chose the Greek term *nomos* to translate the Hebrew *tôrâ*, "law." *Nomos* occurs 195 times in the New Testament, with 121 of these usages occurring in Paul's letters. By the time of the postexilic period, the rabbinic writings, and the New Testament the term was normally used to refer to the Pentateuch, the Hebrew *tôrâ*.¹⁵³ But the term has a range of meaning in the New Testament and in Classical Greek. Although the term most often refers to the Pentateuch, it also has broader meaning.¹⁵⁴ Both John and the apostle Paul use the term to refer to the complete revelation of God in the Old Testament (John 10:34; 12:34; 15:25; 1 Cor 14:21). This use of the term probably was due to the pride of place the Mosaic Law occupied in the Old Testament and in Palestinian Judaism.¹⁵⁵ The term might also be used to refer to human law (Rom 7:2–4) or to a principle, whether to a principle of faith (Rom 3:27), of sin (Rom 7:25), or of the spirit of life (Rom 8:2).

JESUS AND THE LAW. The pervasiveness of the role of the Law of

¹⁵¹ This has been the major contribution of E. P. Sanders in his monumental book *Paul and Palestinian Judaism* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1977). See also Moore, *Judaism*, 2:94–95.

¹⁵² Sanders, *Paul and Palestinian Judaism*, 122. This response of faith would be true of all those believing Israelites in the OT as well as individuals such as Simeon and Anna in the NT (Luke 2:25–38). In correcting this error, however, Sanders may have overstated his case because there is evidence of legalism in the NT among some Jews (see D. Carson, *Divine Sovereignty and Human Responsibility* [Atlanta: John Knox, 1981], 86–95, and Schreiner, *The Law and Its Fulfillment*, 93).

¹⁵³ W. Gutbrod, "νομος," *TDNT* 4:1046, 1054, 1059.

¹⁵⁴ Westerholm's argument that νομος normally means Sinaitic legislation is not convincing (*Israel's Law and the Church's Faith*, 107–9).

¹⁵⁵ See S. Sandmel, *The Genius of Paul: A Study in History* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1979), 47, and Moore, *Judaism*, 1:263.

Moses still occupied Jewish minds in the first century, when God became man. Paul in fact encapsulated an unavoidable aspect of Jesus' life even at his birth: he was "born under law" (Gal 4:4). The issue of the Law played a critical role in the life of Christ, especially when Jesus was challenged on issues of Law by Jewish religious leaders. Shortly after the beginning of his ministry Jesus announced his relationship to the Law of Moses. He declared that he did not come to abolish the Law or the Prophets, but rather he came to fulfill them (Matt 5:17). In passages where it seems that Jesus is proposing something different from what was stated in the Law, it could be argued that this qualification that he was fulfilling the Law should be kept in mind. More often it is the case, however, that in those passages where Jesus appears to be at odds with the Law, his statements are not challenges to the Law at all but rather his responses to the oral law of the Pharisees, the traditions of men (Mark 7:8). In other words, on those occasions where Jesus seems critical of the Law it is not the Law he critiques but rather the incorrect interpretation or application of the laws (Matt 9:13; 12:7; 23:23). He is thus defending the Law. In this defense he stands with the Old Testament prophets in condemning illicit practices without criticizing the Law itself (Isa 1:11–18; Jer 7:21–24; Hos 6:6; Amos 5:21–24; Mic 6:6–8).¹⁵⁶ Jesus respected the Law, while occasionally expanding upon it or sharpening its intention (Matt 5:27,28). He gave the true interpretation of the Law of God in the Sermon on the Mount. Never did he detract from or deny the Mosaic Law.¹⁵⁷ In fact, he sternly warned anyone who would dare to do so (Matt 5:19). The Old Testament Law was directed toward Jesus Christ (Rom 8:3; 10:4; Gal 3:24) and was only properly revealed in him.¹⁵⁸ Yet surely in some respects it must be said that he did transcend it in that he fulfilled it in his ministry and especially in his death.

PAUL AND THE LAW. As noted from the occurrences of the term *nomos*, the issue of the Law was very important in the Pauline Epistles of the New Testament. In fact, it is not an exaggeration to state that Paul's view of the Law is as important to New Testament theology as the Mosaic Law is to the theology of the Old Testament.¹⁵⁹ Yet it is especially in analyzing Paul's view of the Mosaic Law where the tensions develop. Those who advocate the complete irrelevance of Old Testament

¹⁵⁶ Peterson, *Engaging with God*, 113.

¹⁵⁷ Kaiser, "Response to Douglas Moo," 399.

¹⁵⁸ von Rad, *Theology*, 2:408.

¹⁵⁹ For the importance of the issue of the Law in Paul's letters, see F. Thielman, "Law," in *Dictionary of Paul and His Letters*, ed. G. Hawthorne, R. Martin, and D. Reid (Downers Grove: InterVarsity, 1993), 529–42, and S. J. Hafemann, "Paul and His Interpreters," in *Dictionary of Paul and His Letters*, 666–79.

Law for the Christian as well as those who maintain that the Law is in various ways still normative for the believer appeal to Paul as their authority! Passages such as Rom 6:14; 7:4; 2 Cor 3:11; Gal 3:19–25; 4:1–5; Eph 2:15; Col 2:14 have been cited to suggest that Paul viewed the Law as obsolete for the Christian. On the other hand, Rom 3:31; 7:12–14; Eph 6:2 have been claimed to teach the ongoing relevance of the Law for the Christian today. Ephesians 6:2 is especially telling, for there Paul admonishes the Ephesian church not on his own apostolic authority but on the basis of the authority of the Mosaic Law.¹⁶⁰

Paul's sometimes apparent negative criticisms of the Law should be understood in the same way Jesus' and the prophets' railings were viewed: Paul was condemning a misuse of the Law and not the Law itself, which is holy, just, and good (Rom 7:12).¹⁶¹ With the coming of Christ and the creation of the new man, there was a shift in the working of God's kingdom program. The new man consisted of Jew and Gentile, one in Christ (Eph 2:15). Hence those laws that had earlier served as a badge for the nation of Israel and as a boundary to keep it distinct and separate from the world were no longer in force. These laws, particularly Sabbath, circumcision, and food laws (see Mark 7:19), had served their purpose and were completed or fulfilled in Christ (Eph 2:15; Col 2:16–17).¹⁶² As these laws were fulfilled, they ceased to operate on the literal plane to demarcate and preserve the children of Israel and now apply to the church in principle regarding what it means to live a life of holiness before God (e.g., 2 Cor 6:14–18). There has been a change in the administration of God's redemptive plan. Thus it can be said that believers are no longer under the Law. They are no longer under the religious system determined by the Law (Gal 5:18; Rom 14:14) but under the better promises of the new covenant.¹⁶³

(3) *The Unity of the Law*

The most important issue related to the question of the application of the Mosaic Law revolves around the issue of the unity of the Law. If the Law is a monolithic unity and the Christian is in no wise under this Law (Rom 3:19; 6:14,15; Gal 3:23; 4:5,21; 5:18), then the issue has been set-

¹⁶⁰ See Poythress, *The Shadow of the Cross*, 323. For non-Pauline passages that indicate the Law is still authoritative, see Jas 1:25; 2:8,12.

¹⁶¹ See J. Dunn, *Parting of the Ways: Between Christianity and Judaism and Their Significance for the Character of Christianity* (London: SCM Press, 1991), 137–38.

¹⁶² See especially J. Dunn, *Jesus, Paul, and the Law* (Westminster: John Knox, 1990), 200, 250.

¹⁶³ G. Bahnsen, "The Theonomic Reformed Approach to Law and Gospel," in *Five Views on Law and Gospel*, 108.

tled and the debate is over. The Law has no authority over the Christian life. If, on the other hand, there are different aspects of the Law, then the Law may still have jurisdiction over the Christian's life. Broadly speaking, scholars who tend to argue that the Law has no relevance for the Christian life are prone to suggest that the Mosaic Law be viewed as a unified entity and that it has been nullified entirely through the work of Christ. Conversely, scholars who see more of a continuity in God's plan between the Testaments are more apt to see divisions in the Law and argue for a greater role of the Law in the life of the New Testament Christian. The latter frequently follow Calvin's division of the Old Testament Law into moral, ceremonial, and civil categories.

The moral law is frequently associated with the Ten Commandments (as well as other ethical principles) that are not viewed as fulfilled in Christ or as having only a specific application to Israel's existence as a nation. For example, nine of the Ten Commandments are repeated in the New Testament; this strongly suggests the ongoing applicability of the Old Testament Law in the church age.¹⁶⁴ Moral laws are understood to have permanent validity. The ceremonial law includes various regulations for the Israelites such as sacrifices, feast days, dietary laws, the priesthood, and temple worship. The ceremonial laws symbolize and foreshadow the nature of Christ's redemptive work on the cross. They are a shadow of things to come (Rom 3:25; Eph 5:1; Col 2:17; Heb 4:14–16; 9:14; 1 Pet 2:5). The civil laws pertain to those laws given to Israel by which they are to be governed as a nation.¹⁶⁵

LAW IS UNIFIED. Proponents of the unity of the Law often argue that the Jews regarded the Law as a unified corpus. Support for this view may be found in the New Testament itself (e.g., Gal 5:3). The fact that the Law could be summarized by the two Mosaic Laws "Love the Lord

¹⁶⁴ Only the Fourth Commandment regarding the observance of the Sabbath is not repeated in the NT. This should not surprise us given the distinctive role the Sabbath played in the OT period as a covenant sign for the nation of Israel (Exod 31:12–17). As a sign of the covenant it was to last as long as the covenant. As such it is representative of ceremonial law and was part of the shadow of things to come (Rom 14:5–6; Gal 4:10–11; Col 2:14–17). It does have a function for the church because it typifies a believer's salvation (Heb 4:9) and serves as a principle of setting aside a day a week for rest (Matt 12:8; Mark 12:27) (see H. Dressler, "The Sabbath in the Old Testament," in *From Sabbath to Lord's Day*, ed. D. Carson [Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1982], 34. The church fathers were practically unanimous in rejecting the literal observance of the Sabbath (S. Bacciocchi, *From Sabbath to Sunday: A Historical Investigation of the Rise of Sunday Observance in Early Christianity* [Rome: The Pontifical Gregorian University Press, 1977], 213–14). Alternatively, one could argue that the Sabbath was treated differently because it was a creation ordinance, not a creation of the Sinai covenant.

¹⁶⁵ See e.g., R. L. Harris, *Man—God's Eternal Creation* (Chicago: Moody, 1971), 144–45, and Poythress, *The Shadow of the Cross*, 99.

your God with all your heart, mind, and strength” (Deut 6:5) and “love your neighbor as yourself” (Lev 19:18) suggests that there is a certain unity to the entire corpus of Mosaic Laws. Moreover, the fact that the purpose of all the laws was the creation of Israel as a holy nation (Exod 19:6; Lev 19:2) suggests unity in purpose as well. The Law may also be said to be unified in the sense that the whole of the Law foreshadowed Christ and was fulfilled in him.

And yet, although it is not ostensibly possible to pinpoint specific terminology for neatly dividing the Law, it does seem valid to see a diversity within this fundamental unity. A distinction should be made between what is universal and what uniquely applied to Israel’s special circumstance. The same statement by Jesus in Matt 22:37–40 could be argued to suggest that these summary statement laws, like the Ten Commandments, were in a special category as moral laws. The rest of the Law appears to be the application or outworking of these central obligations.¹⁶⁶ Jesus did single these laws out as illustrative; he did not vaguely say all the laws are the same. Moreover, in Matt 23:23 Jesus accuses the Pharisees of ignoring the weightier matters of the Law. In this particular case the weightier law is one of the Ten Commandments, the honoring of parents. The command to honor parents, because it was a weightier Commandment, can also be found in rabbinic literature.¹⁶⁷ The Old Testament seemed to make distinctions as well, as we noted earlier in the discussion of sacrifice. The prophets argued that the offering of sacrifices, as important as they are to maintain Israel’s spiritual and national life, are not as important as personal obedience. The prescriptions of sacrifice given in the Law were ineffective if the worshiper did not bring his offering with a heartfelt love for God (Deut 6:5) and a desire to live a life patterned after obedience (1 Sam 13:15). Kaiser has listed the passages that require making a distinction for a priority of the moral law:

Assigning priority to the moral aspect of the law over both its civil and ceremonial aspects can be observed in a plethora of passages found in the prophets. One need only consult such texts as 1 Samuel 15:22–23; Isaiah 1:11–17; Jeremiah 7:21–23; Micah 6:8; as well as texts in the Psalter such as Psalms 51:16–17. The moral law of God took precedence over the civil and ceremonial laws in that it was based on the character of God. The civil and ceremonial laws functioned only as further illustrations of the moral law. That is why

¹⁶⁶ Poythress, *The Shadow of the Cross*, 103.

¹⁶⁷ Moore, *Judaism*, 2:5–6, 9, 131. The rabbis used other expressions as well to indicate what appears to be a hierarchy in the Law. They employed such qualifications such as “grave” and “light” as well as the “essentials of the law” (2:84, n. 3, 93). Rabbi Akiba labeled Lev 19:18, “Love your neighbor as yourself,” as the most comprehensive law (Moore, *Judaism*, 2:85).

holiness and love could serve as veritable summaries of all that the law demanded.¹⁶⁸

Let those who are prone to argue that the entire Law has no relevance for the Christian life be reminded that it is in the Law that we find the promises made to the patriarchs. Paul in fact appealed to the example of Abraham from the Book of Genesis, the first book of the Law, to support the doctrine of justification by faith (Rom 4; Gal 3). Even though one may be justified in making the claim that the Jews viewed the Law as unified, a shift has occurred in salvation history that touches on the relevance of the application of the Law. The function of the Law has changed in the inauguration of the new age of the Messiah (1 Cor 10:11) in ways that might not have been completely clear from the Jewish perspective developed from the Old Testament prior to Christ's first coming. This change is represented in the words of Christ wherein he claimed that in his coming the Law had been fulfilled (Matt 5:17).

CIVIL LAWS AND THE CHRISTIAN. Virtually all Christians would agree that the ceremonial laws of the Old Testament have been fulfilled in Christ and consequently have a different application in the church age. No one comes to church with an unblemished sacrificial animal as an offering to God. We are not under this ceremonial law, for the Book of Hebrews has gone to great lengths to make the point that the sacrificial system has been fulfilled in Christ in his once-for-all sacrifice.

Among those who do find justification for a threefold division of the Law there is some debate, however, about the role and function of the civil laws for the Christian today. Simply put, do not Israel's civil laws wherein God gave the legal prescription for governing their society lay down forever the standards for national government? If so, those who desire to honor God should endeavor to have these laws in place to govern their own civic society. This position is known as Theonomy or, alternatively, Reconstructionism. The civil laws of the Mosaic Law, it is argued, are not fulfilled in the New Testament as are the ceremonial laws. And since there is nothing said about these laws being superseded or suspended in the New Testament, we should assume that they have continuing validity in matters of state.

There are several difficulties with this position, although faithful believers (including the Puritans) have maintained a similar position

¹⁶⁸ Kaiser, "The Law as God's Guidance for the Promotion of Holiness," in *Five Views on Law and Gospel*, 189–90. As Lucas concluded in analyzing the prophetic teaching of Amos 5:25 and Jer 7:21–23: "God also gave the moral law. Failure to obey the moral law breaks the covenant and renders the offering of material sacrifices null and void as an act of worship of Yahweh" ("Sacrifice in the Prophets," in *Sacrifice in the Bible*), 63.

about the role of the Bible in governing the state. Poythress points out one particular difficulty in the application of the civil laws in contemporary society that might suggest that the laws were restricted to Israel's unique experience before the coming of Christ:

Consider now some alternatives for modern society. We could specify the death penalty for all adultery. But how do we account for the fact that intercourse between a married man and a prostitute received no penalty in Mosaic law or in the Old Testament as a whole, and that intercourse between a married man and a virgin had a different solution?¹⁶⁹

This question poses a genuine difficulty for theonomists who argue that all Old Testament laws are valid for the church unless they have been explicitly altered in the New Testament.

Moreover, when the Israelites were under foreign oppression by the Babylonians, or later by the Romans, it would not have been possible for them to carry out the civil mandates of the Law; yet there is no record of a movement to reform these pagan societies so that these laws could be honored. More to the point, the Old Testament is not even evoked in the New Testament in issues regarding the governing of the state (Matt 22:17; Rom 13:1–10; 1 Pet 2:13–17). The people of God no longer exist and relate to God in a theocratic state but are a body united spiritually from all peoples of the earth. Does not this fact inform us that the laws had only a particular application in Israel's experience as a theocratic nation in the land of Palestine? And, as Averbeck has noted, the Old Testament Law was revealed within the context of the redemptive relationship of the Mosaic Covenant.¹⁷⁰ The law functioned as the regulations for a redeemed people; their context, unlike wisdom literature, is not one of general wisdom application for the governing of all nations.

Moreover, the foundational principle of theonomy, that unless Old Testament laws are overturned in the New Testament they have abiding validity, is flawed.¹⁷¹ The New Testament writings, particularly the writings of Paul, are *occasional* writings.¹⁷² That is, the Pauline letters for example were written to address a specific situation. This being the case we cannot be sure that there would be an occasion in the first century

¹⁶⁹ Poythress, *The Shadow of the Cross*, 220.

¹⁷⁰ R. Averbeck, "The Goodness, the Weakness, and the Unity of the Law," ETS Dispensational Study Group (November 1995), 19.

¹⁷¹ The converse principle, that no laws from the OT are valid for the church unless they happen to be repeated in the NT is equally invalid. The truth seems to lie between these two polar positions.

¹⁷² For this expression see G. Fee and D. Stuart, *How to Read the Bible for All It's Worth*, 2nd ed. (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1993).

A.D. church to address the overturning of a specific civil law.¹⁷³ For what reason would this be done anyway, given the social situation of the early church under the dominance of the Roman Empire and Roman law? Perhaps more to the point, Schreiner argues that the main deficiency in the approach of theonomy is the failure to recognize the shift in salvation-history from the Mosaic Covenant to the New Covenant.¹⁷⁴

Having said all this, however, a case could still be made for application in principle of the civil laws even though they should not be brought over wholesale as applicable to the governing of the contemporary state. For example, principles regarding the penal code in the Old Testament, such as quick punishment for offenses, appear to be valid for application. As Wenham has stated in his commentary:

Instead of distinguishing between moral and civil laws, it would be better to say that some injunctions are broad and generally applicable to most societies, while others are more specific and directed at the particular social problems of ancient Israel. In this commentary the following position is assumed: the principles underlying the OT are valid and authoritative for the Christian, but the particular applications found in the OT may not be. The moral principles are the same today, but insofar as our situation often differs from the OT setting, the application of the principles in our society may well be different too.¹⁷⁵

The division of Law as well as the specific application of laws to Israel should thus not be overplayed or else we may miss the meaning the ceremonial and civil laws do have for the Christian. These laws are part of the Mosaic Law within the Christian canon of Scripture. There is a moral dimension to all laws at least at the level of principle, which requires a teaching and reading of laws that are no longer directly binding on the Christian.¹⁷⁶ Again Wenham has masterfully captured the essence of the careful and holistic application of the ceremonial law, which all agree has been fulfilled in Christ:

In one sense then the whole ceremonial law in Leviticus is obsolete for the Christian. But in another sense the Levitical rituals are still of immense relevance. It was in terms of these sacrifices that Jesus himself and the early

¹⁷³ Similarly, Poythress, *The Shadow of the Cross*, 322, and W. Houston, *Purity and Monotheism*, JSOTSup 140 (Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1993), 280. The same argument can be made on the issue of abortion. Some who want to bring the NT into this debate have argued that since the NT is silent on the issue of abortion, the Christian should take no stand on this moral issue. This should be expected unless abortion had been an issue in the early church. Since it was not, this is the reason the NT does not address it. Early church fathers and rabbis were categorically against abortion and were certainly informed by such OT passages as Exodus 21 and Psalm 139.

¹⁷⁴ Schreiner, *The Law and Its Fulfillment*, 41.

¹⁷⁵ Wenham, *Leviticus*, 35.

¹⁷⁶ C. Wright, "Ethics," *NIDOTTE* 4:586.

church understood his atoning death. ... In rediscovering the principles of OT worship written there, we may learn something of the way we should approach a holy God.¹⁷⁷

Understanding the ongoing application of the Law as a whole appears to be more valid than Schreiner's hypothesis that only part of the Law (the moral law) applies to the church as a reduced law.¹⁷⁸ The entire Law applies to the church but in different ways and differently from when it applied to Israel. The status of the Law has changed in that it pointed to Christ and has been fulfilled in him. It has been superseded or transformed but not abrogated.¹⁷⁹

LAW AND GRACE. In a similar but related vein it should further be noted that the Law/Grace distinction should not be overplayed. This premise is often associated with Martin Luther, who came close to identifying the Old Testament with the Law and the New Testament with the Gospel.¹⁸⁰ But as von Rad asserts, the separation of Law and Promise as two distinct redemptive revelations cannot be supported from the Bible, for grace exhibited by redemption provides the context for the giving of the Law (Rom 3:21; 7:3; Phil 3:9).¹⁸¹ If the New Testament seems to emphasize grace more than the Old Testament, this is only because Christ's death has displayed the grace of God more strikingly than the exodus from Egypt.¹⁸² Faith is the prerequisite for sanctification, or legal obedience (Gen 15:6; Exod 4:5; 14:11; Num 20:12; Deut 1:32; 9:23). The same is true for the New Testament Christian; sanctification is expressed through obedience to an authoritative standard of teaching (Rom 6:17–19).¹⁸³

(4) *Conclusion on Law and the Christian*

The application of the role and function of the Old Testament Law in the church has been inconsistent at best and dangerous at worst. J. Wesley once stated that few subjects were as little understood.¹⁸⁴ Later in Germany the neglect of the Law was catastrophic. The study of the Law suffered not only from the adoption of critical analysis of the Pentateuch but also from a false dichotomy between law and gospel, provid-

¹⁷⁷ Wenham, *Leviticus*, 37.

¹⁷⁸ Thielman advocates a similar position to Schreiner (see *Paul and the Law*, 210).

¹⁷⁹ Poythress, *The Shadow of the Cross*, 285.

¹⁸⁰ See von Rad, *Theology*, 2:389, n. 1.

¹⁸¹ *Ibid.*, 2:407, n. 31.

¹⁸² Wenham, *Leviticus*, 34.

¹⁸³ *Id.*, "Leviticus," 115.

¹⁸⁴ J. Wesley, *Sermons: On Several Occasions, First Series* (London: Epworth, 1964), 381 (cited by Kaiser, "The Law as God's Guidance for the Promotion of Holiness," 179).

ing fertile soil for the rise of anti-Semitism in Germany in the 1920s and 1930s. The results were the most horrifying in world history. The church in the United States has not been immune from the effects of neglecting the whole counsel of God as it pertains particularly to the teaching of the Law. The church has not been able to guide culture on important moral issues like abortion, which is more specifically addressed in the Old Testament than the New. Thus we continue to experience our own "holocaust." Could this not be due in no small part to the fact that a significant number of evangelical Christians have "demonized" the Old Testament Law?

Moreover, and perhaps more devastating, neglect of the Law has resulted in a lack of reverence for the God, who is the author of the Law. The laws of the Old Testament are not arbitrary, but the Law is a revelation of the character of God. Through the Law we come to better understand his holiness or moral perfection. His character is the implied basis for the entire revelation of the Law.¹⁸⁵ As Erickson eloquently states:

The law ... should be seen as the expression of God's person and will. The law is something of a transcript of the nature of God. ... Disobeying the law is serious, not because the law has some inherent value or dignity which must be preserved, but because disobeying it is actually an attack upon the very nature of God himself. ... But if we hold that God is an objective reality, and that he has revealed rational, objective truth about himself, surely there is also room for the law as an objective representation of his will and, even more, of his nature.¹⁸⁶

Every law, even the most minute ceremonial and civil law, tells us something about Christ because he fulfilled the Law. Viewed in this light the entire law is normative, for it expresses universal principles. Or as Jesus summarized the Law, every law illustrates the principles of loving God or loving one's neighbor.¹⁸⁷ The Law, holiness, and the character of God are intricately and indissolubly combined.¹⁸⁸

The Law reveals God's character, but it also demands conformity to that character. The believers' response to obey the Law and thereby demonstrate holiness is nothing more than a response of love that is in no wise foreign to the demands of the Law. Jesus said this was the essence of the Law, and the New Testament focus on love is in harmony with the

¹⁸⁵The logical connection between Law and God's wisdom may be seen in Deut 4:6 and Prov 8:22-31. Wisdom and Law were frequently juxtaposed in rabbinic works (Moore, *Judaism* 1:263-5, 269).

¹⁸⁶M. Erickson, *Christian Theology* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1985), 802-3.

¹⁸⁷Poythress, *The Shadow of the Cross*, 36.

¹⁸⁸Similarly, see B. Childs, *Introduction to the Old Testament as Scripture* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1979), 185.

moral theme of the Old Testament: to love God with one's entire being (Deut 6:5).¹⁸⁹ And for us, who like Abraham are not under the Law (Rom 4; Gal 3), the natural outcome of our faith is obedience to the Law (Gen 26:5; Rom 8:4).¹⁹⁰

10. Leviticus in Biblical Theology

The Law, holiness, the sacrifices, the tabernacle—all the essential elements of Leviticus—find their meaning in Christ, who uniquely fulfilled the law, lived a perfect, sinless life, died as a sacrifice for sins, and was the presence of God incarnate. These themes are like streams that flow through biblical history as well as through the rest of the pages of Scripture until they converge in the person of the Messiah, Jesus Christ. Thus Leviticus, like the Bible as a whole, is about the person and work of Jesus Christ and finds its ultimate meaning in him. To ignore this section of the Word of God is to diminish our understanding of the long-anticipated one who has now brought us our great salvation!

11. Text of the Book

The Massoretic version of the Book of Leviticus has been excellently preserved. The variations found in the fragments from the Dead Sea Scrolls are not significant and certainly do not indicate a different text with a different intent.¹⁹¹

¹⁸⁹ Schreiner is correct when he argues that the moral norms of the OT are not to be severed from the NT concept of love ("Law of Christ," in *Dictionary of Paul and His Letters*, 544).

¹⁹⁰ See Averbeck, "The Goodness, the Weakness, and the Unity of the Law," 17, 28.

¹⁹¹ See D. Freedman and K. Mathews, *The Paleo-Hebrew Leviticus Scroll* (Winona Lake: Eisenbrauns, 1985); D. Freedman, "Variant Readings in the Leviticus Scroll from Qumran Cave 11," *CBQ* 36 (1974): 525–34; Milgrom, "Leviticus," 541, and Levine, "Leviticus, Book Of," 318.

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 - (2) Disposal of the Grain Offering (6:14–18[6:7–11])
 - (3) Daily Grain Offering of the High Priest (6:19–23[6:12–16])
 - (4) Disposal of the Sin Offering (6:24–30 [6:17–23])
 - (5) Disposal of the Guilt Offering (7:1–10)
 - (6) Disposal of the Fellowship Offering (7:11–21)
 - (7) Eating of Fat and Blood (7:22–27)
 - (8) Priests' Share of the Fellowship Offering (7:28–36)
 8. Summary (7:37–38)

I. LAWS CONCERNING OFFERINGS AND SACRIFICES (1:1–7:38)

At the close of the Book of Exodus the construction of the tabernacle is complete, for Moses and the Israelites have faithfully carried out the instructions given to them by God. Leviticus opens with God's call from the newly constructed tabernacle. Now the Lord will provide instructions for the operation of the sacrificial system. The communication of these instructions in the wake of the completion of the tabernacle underscores the preeminence of the sacrificial system in Israel's relationship with God. Here Moses explains how it is possible for the holy God to reside among sinful people. God's presence may reside among the Israelites through the instrumentation of sacrifices. The instruction of the sacrifices in Lev 1:1–7:38 has another function as well in the narrative structure of the Pentateuch. In Exodus 28–29 God had given Moses instructions for the ordination of the priesthood. This ceremony includes the offering of sacrifices. Hence, the instruction for sacrifices must be given before the priests can be inaugurated to their office. After the instructions for sacrifices are given in 1:1–7:38, the narrative immediately turns to the inauguration of the priests (Lev 8–9).

Leviticus 1–7 discusses the main components of the Israelite sacrificial system. In 1:1–6:7 the prescriptions for the sacrificial system are described from the perspective of the individual presenting the offering, while in 6:8–7:38 the laws are detailed from the standpoint of the priests who were the primary handlers of the offerings. The common denominator of these offerings is that they arise out of an unpredictable circumstance in the Israelite's religious life and are thus distinguished from public sacrifices, which were carried out at set occasions determined by Israel's religious calendar (Num 28–29).¹ Leviticus 7 (7:37–38) concludes the instruction regarding personal offerings by repeating information from the opening of the book (1–2a), suggesting that the entire section should be viewed as a unit.² The sacrifices described in Leviticus 1–7 remind us of the basic needs we have as God's people: commitment to God, communion with God, and cleansing from God.³

The offerings of 1:1–6:7 should be divided into two categories. The first three offerings—the burnt, grain, and fellowship offerings—were voluntary acts offered to God without a stated reason. The latter two

¹ J. Milgrom, "Leviticus," *IDBS*, 541.

² This technique is known as an inclusio.

³ W. Wiersbe, *Be Holy* (Wheaton: Victor, 1979), 20.

offerings, the sin and guilt offerings, on the other hand, were obligatory and were mandated upon the violation of a particular statute.⁴ The first category of sacrifices resulted in an “aroma pleasing to the LORD” (1:3–3:17), while the result of the last two offerings (4:1–6:7) was to declare the offerer forgiven of sin.⁵

Leviticus 1 neatly divides into three sections following the two introductory verses (1:1–2), which not only introduce the book as a whole but introduce the first section of offerings and sacrifices as well. Leviticus 1:2 is a general statement (introduced by the particle *kî*, “when”) that encapsulates the entire Israelite sacrificial system and thus functions as the introduction to the first major section, 1:3–7:38. The verse states that offerings were to be from either the herd or the flock. Following this general statement are three sections introduced by three subordinate clauses. These clauses are structurally similar in that each begins with the particle *ʾim*, “if” (vv. 3,10,14),⁶ and ends with the statement, “It is a burnt offering, an offering made by fire, an aroma pleasing to the LORD” (vv. 9,13,17).⁷

Thus Leviticus 1 may be divided into four parts, vv. 1–2, 3–9, 10–13, and 14–17. After the introductory statements in vv. 1–2 each of the three main sections of the chapter deal with four phases of the sacrificial process: presentation of the victim (vv. 3,10,14), slaughter of the victim (vv. 5,11,15), disposal of blood (vv. 5,11,15), and disposal of flesh (vv. 8–9,12–13,15,17).⁸

1. God Commissions the Sacrificial System (1:1–2)

¹The LORD called to Moses and spoke to him from the Tent of Meeting. He said, ²“Speak to the Israelites and say to them: ‘When any of you brings an

⁴The order of the five offerings is not based on the order in which they were carried out; rather, they had a didactic function to aid the memory of the priest (cf. P. Jenson, “The Levitical Sacrifice,” in *Sacrifice in the Bible*, ed. R. T. Beckwith and M. J. Selman [Grand Rapids: Baker, 1995], 27).

⁵See the excellent discussion by V. P. Hamilton, *Handbook on the Pentateuch* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1982), 247–49.

⁶The general statement introduced by *כִּי* followed by subordinate phrases beginning with *אִם* is typical of main sections and subdivisions in legal texts according to D. Hoffmann, *Das Buch Leviticus* (Berlin: Poppelauer, 1905/06), 1:114, and O. Eissfeldt, *The Old Testament: An Introduction*, trans. P. R. Ackroyd (New York: Harper & Row, 1965), 27; see also Milgrom, *Leviticus 1–16*, AB (New York: Doubleday, 1991), 144.

⁷The concluding phrase of 1:9 is slightly different from the two other concluding formulae in its omission of the pronoun *אֵלָיו* following the noun *עֹלָה*. As noted in the NIV, however, the verses may be translated in an identical fashion. The LXX harmonizes the endings, writing all three exactly the same.

⁸See P. Budd, *Leviticus*, NCBC (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1996), 53, and R. E. Clements, “Leviticus,” BBC (Nashville: Broadman, 1970), 10.

offering to the LORD, bring as your offering an animal from either the herd or the flock.

1:1 Leviticus 1:1 records God calling Moses from the tabernacle and connects the narrative to Exod 40:34–35, where it is recorded that Moses could not enter the Tent due to the presence of the Lord residing there.⁹ The uniqueness of God's call to Moses in the opening of Leviticus is suggested from the fact that this is the only occasion where God's voice comes to Moses from the Tent. Elsewhere, the voice of the Lord emanates from the Ark, where Moses is positioned inside the Tent but outside the veil (see Exod 25:22,30,36; Num 7:89; 17:19).¹⁰

The Tent of Meeting,¹¹ the visible sign of God's presence for the Israelites, is another name for the tabernacle, *miškān*,¹² and is to be distinguished from the Tent of Meeting that Moses set up outside the camp in Exod 33:7.¹³ The Tent housed the Ark (the special place of the Lord's presence which was understood as his throne),¹⁴ an incense altar, a table, and a seven-light candelabra. It was surrounded by an enclosed courtyard that

⁹The last three verses in the Book of Exodus, Exod 40:36–38, are a parenthetical summation stating that God led the Israelites by means of the cloud by day and the fire by night. Before the parenthetical statement we find that Moses could not enter the Tent of Meeting because the glory of the Lord filled the tabernacle (Exod 40:34–35). Leviticus is thus linked sequentially to Exodus. The lack of an expressed subject in the first phrase of the book of Leviticus "and He called to Moses" offers additional support for this contention. The understood subject of the verb is Yahweh, the subject of Exod 40:35 (thus the NIV like other English translations has Lord as subject of this phrase).

¹⁰See Milgrom, *Leviticus 1–16*, 134.

¹¹The word מוֹעֵד, "meeting," is from the Hb. root עָדַע, which means "to gather" or "meet by appointment" (see Josh 11:5; Neh 6:2) as well as "to reveal" (Exod 25:22; 30:6; Num 17:4). The Tent thus had a dual function as a place of meeting as well as a place of revelation (W. C. Kaiser, "Leviticus," IB [Nashville: Abingdon, 1994], 1:1008). Also see BDB, 416–17; B. A. Levine, *Leviticus*, JPS (Philadelphia: The Jewish Publication Society, 1989), 4. The term has shown up in an Egyptian source dated to approximately 1100 B.C. in reference to an assembly of people from Byblos (R. K. Harrison, *Leviticus: An Introduction and Commentary*, TOTC [Downers Grove: InterVarsity, 1980], 41). For evidence of similar structures among other people of the ancient Near East, especially the Canaanites, see R. J. Clifford, "The Tent of El and the Israelite Tent of Meeting," *CBQ* 33 (1971): 221–27, and Harrison, *Leviticus*, 42.

¹²The מוֹעֵד מִן־הַלֵּוִיִּם may be distinguished from מוֹעֵד in such texts as Exod 39:32; 40:2,6,29; cf. Exod 35:11; Num 3:25; 1 Chr 6:17. See BDB, 14.

¹³Tent and tabernacle occur in parallel lines in Num 24:5, suggesting that the two were equated. Yet it is possible to argue for a distinction between the terms with the Tent of Meeting referring to the place of divine revelation, while the tabernacle would encompass the entire area of curtained walls (Harrison, *Leviticus*, 41–42). In rabbinic texts the existence of two tents is attested, one for sacrificial purposes and the other for receiving oracles (see Milgrom, *Leviticus 1–16*, 140).

¹⁴See G. von Rad, *The Problem of the Pentateuch and Other Essays*, trans. E. W. Trueman Dicken (London: Oliver & Boyd, 1966), 103–24 and, W. Eichrodt, *Theology of the Old Testament* (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1961), 1:108.

included the altar of burnt offerings located in front of the Tent. The importance of the Tent in Israel's covenant relationship with God is twofold: (1) the tent was the place of God's revelation, where he communicated his word, and (2) the tent served as the place of worship, where God was approached through sacrifices.¹⁵ In Jesus Christ the presence of God would be incarnated in a human being, the divine God-Man. Jesus is not only the revelation of God but the fulfillment of the Old Testament sacrificial system that foreshadowed his sacrifice that would remove sins once and for all. The apostle John specifically alludes to this connection in stating that Jesus *eskānōsen*, "tabernacled," among us (John 1:14).¹⁶ The tabernacle as the special place of God's presence is a type of the incarnation of Christ, who "made his dwelling" (tabernacled) among us. Eichrodt speaks of the significance of the tabernacle and its New Testament reality in Christ:

The concept of the distant God who yet condescends to be really present in the midst of his people and enables them to participate in the divine life, lives on in the symbolic language of the New Testament, which uses the image of the 'tabernacled' to tell of the dwelling of the eternal God among men.¹⁷

In the Old Testament God spoke to man from the tabernacle, while in the New Testament he spoke to us through his Son.¹⁸ In a very real sense it can be said that Jesus replaced the temple (John 2:19–22; Col 2:9).¹⁹ Moreover, those who are in Christ now enjoy the permanent presence of the Spirit just as the tabernacle had been the spiritual abode of God's Spirit. The church as a whole as well as individual believers are the temple of the Holy Spirit (John 14:16–17; 1 Cor 3:16–17; 6:19–20; 2 Cor 6:16; Eph 2:19–22).

1:2 God commanded Moses to instruct the Israelites regarding the offerings (*qorbān*)²⁰ they were to bring before the Lord, that is, within

¹⁵ See Levine, *Leviticus*, 4, and R. Friedman, "Tabernacle," *ABD* 6:292–300.

¹⁶ M. J. Harris, "σκηνη," *DNTT* 3:813.

¹⁷ See John 1:14; Heb 8:2; 9:11; Rev 7:15; 15:5; 21:3 (cf. Eichrodt, *Theology of the Old Testament*, 1:112).

¹⁸ von Rad, *The Problem of the Pentateuch*, 124.

¹⁹ L. Goppelt, Typos, *The Typological Interpretation of the Old Testament in the New*, trans. D. Madvig (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1982), 86. See also G. Vos, *Biblical Theology* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1948), 154–55.

²⁰ Hb. קָרְבָּן, *qorbān*, from the root קָרַב, *qārēb*, "to bring near," indicated either the offering brought near or the means whereby one may live in nearness to God. The noun that is a general term for offerings is used to refer to offering of objects such as silver (Num 7:13) and gold (Num 31:50), but the term is most frequently used to refer to sacrificial offerings as here and often in Leviticus. Indeed, all but two of the seventy-nine occurrences of the word are in Leviticus and Numbers. The word has been discovered inscribed on sacred objects around Jerusalem and is transliterated (*Korban*, *Corban* in NIV) in Mark 7:11 (see BDB, 898; Levine, *Leviticus*, 5; Hamilton, *Handbook*, 252; B. Mazar, "The Excavations in the Old City of Jerusalem" [Jerusalem: Israel Exploration Society, 2969], plate 10, no. 5, and J. Fitzmyer, "The Aramaic Qorban Inscriptions," *JBL* 78 [1959]: 60–65).

the temple precincts and in the midst of the presence of God. The *qorbān* was a general term used for all Israelite sacrifices. It is stated here that it was to be an “animal” (*bēhēmā*)²¹ the Israelites were to bring from the herd or the flock. Birds are not mentioned in this general statement describing the whole sacrificial system, but they are described in the burnt offering of Leviticus 1. The offering of birds would be the offering of the poor, and since this was an exceptional sacrifice, it indicated that this offering would be rare; that is, the number of the poor in Israel was to be small.²²

2. The Burnt Offering Sacrifice (1:3–17)

The burnt offering was a sacrifice with which Israel was already familiar when Moses recorded God’s instructions in the Book of Leviticus. Burnt offerings are mentioned in such early texts as Gen 8:20; 22:22; Exod 10:25; and Job 1:5.²³ Although the occasions that evoked burnt offerings may have varied from one of thankfulness (Gen 8:20) to one of crisis (Judg 20:26), the purpose of the offering was to honor God and attract his attention.²⁴ Similar practices were carried out by other peoples of the ancient Near East, including the Hittites and the Egyptians. And yet, Jenson has argued that in the Israelite sacrificial system the burnt offering was the most important sacrifice, for it is the most prominent sacrifice in the festivals (Num 28–29), it occupies the preeminent position in the prescription lists (e.g., Lev 1–7), and it was completely burned (the priest would not eat any part of the victim).²⁵ On every one of the Israelite feast days, excluding the Day of Atonement when the sin offering is the central focus, the burnt offering was the most important sacrifice.²⁶

²¹ Hb. בְּהֵמָה indicates a domestic animal as opposed to a wild animal in the OT as well as in the Mishnah (BDB, 97; HALOT 1:111; G. J. Botterweck, בְּהֵמָה, “*bēhēmā*,” TDOT 2:9; G. J. Wenham, *The Book of Leviticus*, NICOT [Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1979], 51). This is the general term with the following terms “herd” and “flock” providing the specific animals to be presented. This technique became known in Jewish practice as *kelal u-frat*, “the general followed by the specific.” The general category is defined by its specifications (Levine, *Leviticus*, 5).

²² The animals listed in Leviticus 1 as candidates for the burnt offering—the bull, the sheep, the goat, the dove, and the pigeon—are the same animals sacrificed in Genesis 15 in the covenant ceremony with Abraham. This proves that the Israelites were certainly accustomed to the idea of approaching God through sacrifice (Milgrom, *Leviticus 1–16*, 167–68).

²³ See also Josh 8:31; Ps 40:6; Amos 5:22.

²⁴ Budd, *Leviticus*, 43. The burnt offering was also performed at momentous occasions in Israel’s history (Josh 8:31; 1 Kgs 2:4; 9:25). For an excellent discussion of the history and function of the burnt offering see Milgrom, *Leviticus 1–16*, 172–77. See also R. de Vaux, *Studies in Old Testament Sacrifice* (Cardiff: University of Wales, 1964), 34.

²⁵ Jenson, “The Levitical Sacrifice,” 28.

²⁶ Kaiser, “Leviticus,” 1009–10.

Many scholars view the burnt offering as the principal atoning sacrifice as well (Lev 9:7; 14:20; 16:24).²⁷ Some rabbis believed the burnt offering atoned for all sins that were not covered under the sin offerings.²⁸ This expiatory function is the focus of Leviticus 1.

The burnt offering is the first sacrifice prescribed in Leviticus. This may be due to the fact that the burnt offerings were the most frequent offerings, performed twice daily (Num 28) as well as on special holy days. The word for burnt offering, *‘ōlā*, is a noun that occurs 287 times in the Old Testament.²⁹ It comes from the Hebrew root *‘lh*, “to ascend,” and describes the smoke of the offering that ascends into heaven (see Judg 13:20).³⁰ This offering was distinctive among the Israelite sacrifices in that the entire offering, apart from the skin, was consumed and no portion of it was eaten by the priest or the offerer.

The Septuagint translates the Hebrew term *‘ōlā*, “burnt offering,” with the Greek word *holokautōma*, from which we get our English word “holocaust.”³¹ The term occurs only twice in the Greek New Testament, in Mark 12:33 and Heb 10:6–8 in citations of 1 Sam 15:13 and Ps 40:6–8 respectively. The citation in Heb 10:6–8 is particularly significant where burnt offerings, in association with other offerings, are shown to be inferior to the sacrifice of Jesus Christ, who offered himself as a sacrifice for sin once for all (Heb 10:1–4,10). This suggests that the sacrificial system and particularly the burnt offering foreshadows or typifies the death of Christ for sins.

(1) *Burnt Offering from the Herd (1:3–9)*

³“If the offering is a burnt offering from the herd, he is to offer a male without defect. He must present it at the entrance to the Tent of Meeting so that it will be acceptable to the LORD. ⁴He is to lay his hand on the head of the burnt offering, and it will be accepted on his behalf to make atonement for him. ⁵He is to slaughter the young bull before the LORD, and then Aaron’s sons the priests shall bring the blood and sprinkle it against the altar on all sides at the entrance to the Tent of Meeting. ⁶He is to skin the burnt offering and cut it into pieces. ⁷The sons of Aaron the priest are to put fire on the altar and arrange wood on the fire. ⁸Then Aaron’s sons the priests shall arrange the pieces, including the head and the fat, on the burning wood that is on the altar. ⁹He is to wash the inner parts and the legs with water, and the priest is to burn all of it

²⁷ Wenham, *Leviticus*, 95.

²⁸ Rabbi Akiba argued that the burnt offering expiates sins of omission (*t. Menah* 10:2; *Sipra*, Nedaba 4:8, Milgrom, *Leviticus 1–16*, 175).

²⁹ HALOT 2:830.

³⁰ See Levine, *Leviticus*, 5–6; Wenham, *Leviticus*, 52; and Kaiser, “Leviticus,” 1009.

³¹ The Jerusalem Bible and the New American Bible translations actually translate the term *עֹלָה* as “holocaust.”

on the altar. It is a burnt offering, an offering made by fire, an aroma pleasing to the LORD.

SACRIFICIAL VICTIM AT THE TENT OF MEETING (1:3) 1:3 The first animals mentioned as a burnt offering are those that come from the herd. Animals from the herd were believed to be the most valuable of the sacrificial animals.³² The order of the animals listed in chap. 1—herd, flock, birds—thus indicates a gradation in value. That is, the type of sacrifice presented would correspond to the donor's ability and resources. The Israelite of some means would offer a bull (1:3–5), the Israelite of average means would offer a sheep (1:10), while the poor would offer a bird (1:14). Hence, there is no indication that God desires to deprive his worshippers.³³

The burnt offering from the herd was to be a “male without defect.” The adjective “without defect” (Hb. *tāmîm*) is from the same root as the verb (*tmm*), which means “be complete.” This term would indicate that the offering must be physically perfect, hence without defects such as blindness, sores, or damaged testicles.³⁴ According to Philo, priests were meticulous in the examination of sacrificial animals.³⁵ The requirement that the sacrificial offerings be perfect and without defect³⁶ foreshadows the sacrifice of Christ. The LXX translated the adjective *tāmîm* with the word *amōmos*. Peter employed this Greek adjective to refer to the death of Christ as the offering of a lamb “unblemished” (1 Pet 1:19).

The desired result of the burnt offering was that it “be acceptable to the LORD.”³⁷ The use of the noun *rāṣôn*, “acceptable,” is cognate to the verb *rāṣâ*, “be pleased with, accept favorably.”³⁸ The word is used of the pleasure or delight of God (Deut 33:16; Isa 60:10; Pss 5:12 [Hb. 13]; 30:6,8), of man (Prov 14:35; 16:13,15; 10:32; 11:27), or in regard to the acceptance of an individual (Exod 28:38) or a sacrifice (Lev 22:20; Isa 56:7).³⁹ The sacrificial offering was thus to elicit favor from God. The description

³²The בָּקָרָהּ, *bāqār*, are also mentioned first in other lists of animals including Num 7:15–87 and 28:11–29:38 (Milgrom, *Leviticus 1–16*, 146–47). Also see Beck, בָּקָרָהּ, “*bāqār*,” *TDOT* 2:209–16.

³³Hamilton, *Handbook*, 254.

³⁴See J. E. Hartley, *Leviticus*, WBC (Dallas: Word, 1992), 18–19. The adjective is defined in Num 19:2, where the אֵינָהּ לְבֵטָחָהּ, “unblemished” red heifer, is qualified by the following relative clause: אֵינָהּ לְבֵטָחָהּ הַזֶּה, “in which is no defect.” The defects that would disqualify an animal as a sacrificial offering are listed in Lev 22:22–24.

³⁵Milgrom, *Leviticus 1–16*, 147.

³⁶See Lev 1:10; 3:1,6; 4:3,23,28,32; 5:15,18; 6:6.

³⁷The offering was brought “before the Lord,” i.e., before the Tent of Meeting.

³⁸See BDB, 953; and W. Grundmann, “δεχομαι,” *TDNT* 2:58.

³⁹W. White, רָשׁוֹן (*rāṣôn*), *TWOT* 2:859.

of an offering as being acceptable or pleasing to the Lord is also used in reference to the peace offerings (Lev 22:21) but is not used to describe sin and guilt offerings, which were more closely associated with forgiveness and expiation. Those who bring expiation offerings “approach God under the burden of sin; they seek his pardon, not his pleasure.”⁴⁰

INSTRUCTIONS FOR BURNT OFFERING FROM HERD (1:4–9). 1:4–9

The procedure for the burnt offering of the animal from the herd is more explicitly spelled out in Lev 1:4–9. In this paragraph, as well as in the following two paragraphs regarding other burnt offerings, responsibilities for the presenter of the offering and for the priests are given. This distinction is indicated by the number of the verbs used to describe the activities. If the worshiper is the subject, the verb is singular; but if the priests are to carry out a function, the verb is in the plural.⁴¹ If a single priest is involved in an activity, he is specifically referenced as such. When the activity involved handling the blood or contact with the altar, the priest is always the responsible party.

After the animal was brought into the tabernacle precinct, the worshiper was to place his hand on the head of the animal that he presents. The placement of hands upon the animal was a common feature of animal sacrifices (see Lev 3:2,8,13; 4:4,15,24,29,33). Usage of the verb *sāmak* suggests that the act of laying on hands implied the exertion of some pressure and should perhaps be rendered “lean upon.”⁴² The act of laying on hands may be understood differently in different contexts, but in regard to a sacrifice the practice indicated that the animal was to be a substitute for the offerer. The act symbolized the transfer of sins from the worshiper to the animal.⁴³ The sense would be that the animal is dying in the worshiper’s stead, or that it is subject to the death penalty because of the sins it has now received.⁴⁴ As Kaiser states:

⁴⁰ Milgrom, *Leviticus 1–16*, 149.

⁴¹ The LXX apparently has attempted a harmonization rendering many of the singular verbs in the MT as plural.

⁴² See Amos 5:19; Judg 16:29; 2 Kgs 18:31 = Isa 36:6 for illustrations of this usage.

⁴³ See A. S. Hartom and M. D. Cassuto, “Leviticus,” in *Torah, Prophets, Writings* (Tel-Aviv: Yavneh, 1977), 8 [in Hb.]; J. Calvin, *Commentaries on the Last Books of Moses*, trans. C. W. Bingham (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1979), 2:324; A. Noordtzig, *Leviticus*, BSC, trans. R. Togtman (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1982), 32–33; R. L. Harris, “Leviticus,” EBC (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1990), 2:537; Hamilton, *Handbook*, 255; S. Zeitlin, “The Semikah Controversy Between the School of Shammai and Hillel,” *JQR* 56 (1965): 242; N. Zohar, “Repentance and Purification: the Significance and Semantics of מִטְּאֵי־יָדַי in the Pentateuch,” *JBL* 107.4 (1988): 613; and N. Kiuchi, *The Purification Offering in the Priestly Literature*, JSOTSup 56 (Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1987), 108–9, 113, 117–19. For a summary of various views on the significance of the laying on of hands, see J. Licht, מִטְּאֵי־יָדַי , *EM* 5:1052–55.

⁴⁴ See Wenham, *Leviticus*, 59–62; V. S. Poythress, *The Shadow of Christ in the Law of Moses* (Brentwood, Tenn.: Wolgemuth & Hyatt, 1991), 43.

When the hands are laid on the victim, the one making the offering has to take it by faith that the victim will, in God's merciful provision, symbolically express what the offerer deserves but is now excused by virtue of another who substitutes life for life.⁴⁵

In Lev 16:21 in the Day of Atonement ritual laying hands on an offering is associated with the confession of sins, and we should assume that confession accompanied the laying on of hands as the worshiper identified his purpose in bringing an offering.⁴⁶ If carried out according to prescription, the offering was acceptable and resulted in atonement (1:4).⁴⁷ Other texts that link the burnt offering with atonement include Lev 9:7; 14:20; Job 1:5; 42:8; and Ezek 45:15. Thus atonement should be considered as part of the burnt offering's primary function.⁴⁸

The worshiper had the responsibility of slaughtering the animal, apparently by cutting its throat.⁴⁹ This practice was carried out by individual Israelites until the destruction of the temple by the Romans in A.D. 70.⁵⁰ After the victim was killed, the priests would sprinkle the animal's blood around the altar, which was at the entrance of the Tent of Meeting (1:5). The blood (indicating that death had taken place) was to be handled only by the priests. The fact that the blood was only to be handled by priests

⁴⁵ Kaiser, "Leviticus," 1011.

⁴⁶ Levine, *Leviticus*, 6; G. F. Oehler, *Theology of the Old Testament* (reprint, Minneapolis: Klock & Klock, 1978), 307; Wenham, *Leviticus*, 104–5; W. Lasor, D. Hubbard, and F. Bush, *Old Testament Survey*, 2nd ed. (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1996), 85; Harris, "Leviticus," 537, and M. Erickson, *Christian Theology* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1985), 805. Because many of the psalms (such as Pss 20:3[4]; 40:6[7]; 50:8; 51:16[18],19[21]; 66:13,15) mention the burnt offering, it is quite possible that they were later recited in conjunction with the presentation of this offering.

⁴⁷ See Wenham, *Leviticus*, 55, n. 7. See Introduction on Atonement, p. 51. In Lev 1:4 there is no reference to any specific sin for which the sinner needs to be forgiven. The idea may be that the offering is given to atone for the general sinful disposition of the worshiper. Thus Hartley, *Leviticus*, 19. Hartom and Cassuto and ancient Jewish rabbis believe that the burnt offering atones for the sins that do not have a specific offering in Leviticus 4–5 ("Leviticus," 8, and Milgrom, *Leviticus 1–16*, 172–77). Similarly Poythress, *The Shadow of Christ in the Law of Moses*, 49. It was suggested by some rabbis that the burnt offering could atone for sins of omission (J. Milgrom, "יָצַד יָצַד" *EM* 7:243).

⁴⁸ Clements, "Leviticus," 11.

⁴⁹ Hb. נָחַץ occurs eighty-four times in the OT and most often as a technical term for sacrificial slaughter (BDB, 1006). See the use of the term in 2 Kgs 10:7 for an example of the verb meaning "slitting the throat." See *b. Hul.* 27a; Milgrom, *Leviticus 1–16*, 154, and Hamilton, *Handbook*, 255. The slaughter of the animal by the worshiper in 1:5 began a series of activities where the worshiper and the priest alternatively carried out responsibilities until the priest finally burned the sacrifice in 1:9 (Lasor, Hubbard, Bush, *Old Testament Survey*, 85).

⁵⁰ de Vaux, *Studies in Old Testament Sacrifice*, 29.

indicates that the blood was the most holy element of the sacrifice.⁵¹ It also reminded the offerer that each person deserved death, or to have his blood offered, for his sins.⁵² The Greek verb *sphazō*, used to translate Hebrew *shāḥat* in the LXX, occurs four times in the Book of Revelation in reference to Christ as a “slain” lamb (5:6,9,12; 13:8).

The worshiper was also responsible for skinning⁵³ the animal and cutting it into pieces (1:6).⁵⁴ Skinning or flaying the sacrifice was unique to the whole burnt offering sacrifice. Cutting an animal in pieces on the other hand was commonplace for sacrifices with one notable exception, the Passover lamb (Exod 12:9). The quartering of the animal followed the divisions of the bone structure.⁵⁵ The priests would arrange the fire, the wood, and the animal sections on the altar (1:7–8). The arrangement of the fire and the wood on the altar recalls the incident of Abraham offering Isaac, which also was a burnt offering (Gen 22:7,9). The worshiper was to wash the inner parts and legs with water perhaps to remove the dung.⁵⁶ This was followed by the priest’s burning⁵⁷ the parts on the altar. The total consumption of the offering except for the skin distinguishes the burnt offering from the rest of the prescribed sacrifices in the Old Testament (contrast 2:9; 3:5; 4:26; 7:5).

This burnt offering by fire⁵⁸ was “an aroma pleasing to the LORD” (1:9). The phrase *rēaḥ nîḥōaḥ lyhwh*, “aroma pleasing to the LORD,”

⁵¹ The blood probably was collected in a basin as the animal was dying. The verb קָרַף is usually used in this ritual sense, “sprinkling of blood.” For discussion see G. André, קָרַף, “zāraq,” *TDOT* 4:162–65.

⁵² Kaiser, “Leviticus,” 1013.

⁵³ The verb שָׁחַט is usually used to refer to the removing of clothing or stripping. Here the removal of the animal’s clothing or skin is in view (BDB, 832–33).

⁵⁴ The specified parts are the head and the קֵרֶשֶׁת (“fat”). The precise reference of “fat” (v. 8) is unclear. Most commonly it is understood to refer to the fat that surrounds the internal organs (see Milgrom, *Leviticus 1–16*, 159; Noordtzig, *Leviticus*, 37). The word is only used here, 1:12; and in 8:20—all in reference to the burnt offering (Hartley, *Leviticus*, 13). The rendering “fat” is supported by the LXX translation στέαρ (LSJ, 1635).

⁵⁵ BDB, 677. The process is described in some detail in *m. Tamid* 4:2–3; *m. Yoma* 2:3–7.

⁵⁶ Milgrom, *Leviticus 1–16*, 159. That the worshiper was to carry out this task is indicated by the switch from the plural verbal forms in Lev 1:7–8, when the priests are in view, to the singular verb, when the individual worshiper is addressed. The same would hold for Lev 1:13 in the offering of the sheep or goat—the offerer was responsible for the washing of the parts.

⁵⁷ The verb שָׂחַט is a denominative verb related to the noun שָׂחָה, “smoke,” “odor of sacrifice, incense.” The verb is thus rendered by BDB with the meaning “make sacrifices smoke” (BDB, 882–83). For discussion of the use of the root שָׂחַט in the sacrificial rites see D. Edelman, “The Meaning of *Qifṣer*,” *VT* 35, 4 (1985): 395–404.

⁵⁸ Some relate Hb. הֶעֱרַן, “an offering made by fire” (NIV), to Ug. *itt*, “gift.” This understanding has merit since offerings such as wine libations, which are not burned, also called הֶעֱרַן, offerings “made by fire”; see Milgrom, *Leviticus 1–16*, 161–62; Hartley, *Leviticus*, 22, and apparently, Noordtzig, *Leviticus*, 39.

should not be understood in a physical sense connected with the sense of smell, for it was an archaic expression describing satisfaction with the offering.⁵⁹ As Harris describes: “The point is that the sacrifice gives an aroma of tranquility by bringing peace between God and the worshiper.”⁶⁰ Hence, prescribed worship is to bring pleasure to God.

Furthermore the LXX translates *rēah nîḥōah*, “pleasant aroma,” the thrice repeated Hebrew phrase in Leviticus 1, with the phrase *osmē euōdias*, “sweet aroma.”⁶¹ This Greek phrase is used to describe the sacrifice of Jesus Christ in Eph 5:2. Christ gave his life as an “aroma pleasing to the LORD.” This same phrase is used to portray the sacrifice of Christian giving (Phil 4:18).

(2) *Burnt Offering from the Flock (1:10–13)*

¹⁰“If the offering is a burnt offering from the flock, from either the sheep or the goats, he is to offer a male without defect. ¹¹He is to slaughter it at the north side of the altar before the LORD, and Aaron’s sons the priests shall sprinkle its blood against the altar on all sides. ¹²He is to cut it into pieces, and the priest shall arrange them, including the head and the fat, on the burning wood that is on the altar. ¹³He is to wash the inner parts and the legs with water, and the priest is to bring all of it and burn it on the altar. It is a burnt offering, an offering made by fire, an aroma pleasing to the LORD.

1:10–13 In this section the discussion moves from the burnt offering of the herd to the burnt offering from the flock. The sacrificial procedure is repeated, although the details about laying on of hands, skinning the animal, and building the fire are omitted. We should, however, presume that since the text is continuing the discussion on burnt offerings, these

⁵⁹The idea that a deity actually “smelled” a sacrifice and consequently drew pleasure from it was a common pagan notion (Licht, פִּיטָה, 832; also Harrison, *Leviticus*, 47). By contrast the Lord is most gratified by obedience rather than sacrifice (see 1 Sam 15:22; Hos 6:6; Matt 9:13; 12:7; Mark 12:33). The phrase is not only used to describe the Lord’s acceptance of the burnt offering, but it is also used with reference to other offerings including the grain offering, peace offering, and drink offering. The noun פִּיטָה, “pleasing,” in the phrase “pleasing to the LORD,” is understood as a nominal form from the root פִּיט, “to rest, be at ease,” and only occurs with פִּיטָה, thus meaning “quieting, soothing, tranquilizing” (BDB, 628–29). The Medieval Jewish commentator Maimonides believed this “pleasing aroma” was achieved through the use of aromatics, particularly incense (see Levine, *Leviticus*, 8). The sin offering is referred to as an offering with an “aroma pleasing to the LORD” only in Lev 4:31.

⁶⁰Harris, “Leviticus,” 539.

⁶¹The Aquila and Symmachus Greek versions translate the Hb. phrase as ὀσμὴ ἀναπνεύσας, which seems to suggest that these early translations understood the phrase, or at least the phrase in this context, to be equivalent with achieving atonement (Licht, פִּיטָה, *EM* 5:831).

procedures are understood.⁶² Moreover, the altar where the sacrifice is to occur is not specified as in Lev 1:5, but again we should assume it to be the burnt offering altar where this procedure took place (1:11).

Sheep (*kěšābîm*) and goats (*‘izzîm*) compose the second category of burnt offerings. The sacrifice of sheep as the burnt offering became the most common sacrifice in Israel’s system of worship. This is indicated by the reference to the Sheep Gate (Neh 3:1,31–32), which was one of the gates through the city walls of Jerusalem. The naming of the gate “Sheep Gate” illustrated the existence of a massive market for the selling of sheep.⁶³ This section on the offering from the flock, like the one from the herd, closes with the formula: “It is a burnt offering,⁶⁴ an offering made by fire, an aroma pleasing to the LORD.”

(3) *Burnt Offering from the Fowl (1:14–17)*

¹⁴“If the offering to the LORD is a burnt offering of birds, he is to offer a dove or a young pigeon. ¹⁵The priest shall bring it to the altar, wring off the head and burn it on the altar; its blood shall be drained out on the side of the altar. ¹⁶He is to remove the crop with its contents and throw it to the east side of the altar, where the ashes are. ¹⁷He shall tear it open by the wings, not severing it completely, and then the priest shall burn it on the wood that is on the fire on the altar. It is a burnt offering, an offering made by fire, an aroma pleasing to the LORD.

1:14–17 The last category of animals mentioned as candidates for the burnt offering was the category of birds. In the sacrifice of such a small animal only one priest carried out the procedure. Hence there is no reference to multiple priests, nor is there any occurrence of the plural verb in this section.⁶⁵

As with the previous paragraph concerning the flock, the birds also are further defined in two categories. The birds that were offered for burnt offerings were doves or pigeons (1:14). Birds were plentiful in Palestine

⁶² Milgrom, *Leviticus 1–16*, 163; Hartley, *Leviticus*, 23. A distinction between the sacrifice of the bull and the sheep or goat may exist in the location where the animal is to be slaughtered. A bull was to be slaughtered in the forecourt east of the altar, while the sheep or goat was to be slaughtered north of the altar (1:11). Noordtzig and Budd, however, maintain that the bull was also slaughtered on the north side of the altar (Noordtzig, *Leviticus*, 39; Budd, *Leviticus*, 51).

⁶³ Milgrom, *Leviticus 1–16*, 163. In NT days it appears that the selling of sheep had moved to the temple precincts (Matt 21:12–13).

⁶⁴ The actual phrase אֲשֶׁר לַיהוָה is a declaratory formula. A similar phrase is used for all the sacrifices (apart from the peace offering; Milgrom, *Leviticus 1–16*, 166).

⁶⁵ The offerer does bring the offering near (Lev 1:14), but the rest of the procedure is carried out by one priest.

(Isa 60:8; Matt 21:2; John 1:16) and consequently were considered to be the offering of the poor.⁶⁶ Being the smallest of the domestic animals for the burnt offering, birds were not cut in two like the larger categories of animals from the herd and flock. The corresponding procedure applied to the birds was the severing⁶⁷ of the head from the body (1:15). Thus the head was removed from birds as it was in the other burnt offerings (1:8,12; 9:13). According to ancient Jewish rabbis the priest applied his fingernail next to the nape of the neck to cut through the windpipe and gullet (*t. Zebah* 7:4).⁶⁸ The bird was subsequently burned, and the blood was “drained⁶⁹ out on the side of the altar.” The burnt offering of the birds required other unique procedures as well. First, the “crop⁷⁰ was removed with its contents⁷¹ and discarded east of the altar with the ashes⁷² (1:16). This was followed by the tearing of the bird by the wings⁷³ (1:17). This paragraph on the burnt offering of the birds ends with the same concluding phrase found at the end of the offering from the herd (1:9) and the flock (1:13), namely, that the offering was “a burnt offering, an offering made by fire, an aroma pleasing to the LORD.”

(4) Conclusion

In the discussion of the three types of burnt offerings from the herd, flock, or birds, the second and third sections regarding the flock and birds are more truncated paragraphs. The first paragraph contains ninety-seven words; section two, sixty-three words; and section three, sixty-one words

⁶⁶ Milgrom, *Leviticus 1–16*, 168; Hartley, *Leviticus*, 23.

⁶⁷ The verb קָטַף means “nip, nip off” and always has the head of birds as its object (BDB, 577).

⁶⁸ Cited by Milgrom, *Leviticus 1–16*, 169. Similarly, *HALOT* 2:594.

⁶⁹ The word translated “drain” in the NIV is the verb לָצַק , which means “to press out” and is used of pressing or wringing out the fleece in *Judg* 6:38.

⁷⁰ The noun כֶּסֶף , meaning “crop” or “alimentary canal,” occurs only here in the OT (BDB, 597).

⁷¹ The NIV “contents” probably should be understood as referring to “feathers” following the LXX (see *Ezek* 17:3,7; *Job* 39:13; BDB, 663). Milgrom understands the phrase to be referring to the lower digestive organs with their adjoining feathers (*Leviticus 1–16*, 170). The Aramaic Targum, the Peshitta, and some commentators understand the term to refer to excrement (see *HALOT* 2:683; Hartley, *Leviticus*, 23). Milgrom suggests that the term refers to the bird’s tail wing (*Leviticus 1–16*, 170).

⁷² The noun שֵׁן is cognate to the verb שָׁן , “be fat, grow fat.” Thus the noun should be rendered “fat ashes” (BDB, 206; *HALOT* 1:234; Negoita-Ringgren, שֵׁן , “*dešen*,” *TDOT* 3:312).

⁷³ The *piel* of the verb לָצַק normally has the connotation of “tearing in two,” but here it indicates only the tearing by or at the wings (BDB, 1042).

respectively.⁷⁴ This should not imply, however, that the sacrifice of an animal from the herd involved more steps than the other sacrifices. Rather many of the steps from sections two and three are omitted yet are understood.⁷⁵ Unnecessary repetition is avoided. This observation illustrates that in reading Leviticus the author assumes that the reader is aware of the preceding context. In the case of Leviticus 1, each successive paragraph assumes the understanding of the previous paragraph regarding the burnt offering. On a larger scale, as we will often see, Moses assumes that the reader is cognizant of previous revelation, particularly the content of the Book of Exodus.

Since the burnt offering was the most common sacrifice in Israelite worship, offered not only on a daily basis but also in conjunction with other festivals (Num 28), it was a daily reminder that believers must continually confess their sins to God (1 John 1:9). Moreover, the sacrifice was made wholly to God and thus was an expression of total obedience.⁷⁶ Many commentators believe that Paul's admonition for believers to present themselves as a living sacrifice in Rom 12:1,2 is an allusion to the presentation of the whole burnt offering.⁷⁷

We see in Leviticus 1 that worship is prescribed. All things are to be done in order (see 1 Cor 14:40). The graduated sacrifice indicates that God does not want to impoverish the believer through the sacrifice, and yet the offering is still costly. David recognized this principle when he was given the chance to have his burnt offerings donated to him (2 Sam 24:24). To whom much is given much is expected. Worship that is pleasing to God must cost the offerer something.

3. The Grain Offering (2:1–16)

Like Leviticus 1, Leviticus 2 divides into three major sections (vv. 1–3,4–10,11–16). The first two sections (2:1–3,4–10) deal with specific types of grain offerings and begin with the particle *kî*, “when” (2:1), “if” (2:4). The third section, which begins in v. 11 with the *waw* disjunctive,⁷⁸

⁷⁴This analysis might seem to indicate that sections two and three are approximately of equal length. This is misleading since in dealing with the special case of the offering of birds section three has to introduce seventeen new terms to describe the procedure. Section two contains only four unique words.

⁷⁵E.g., the provision of atonement is not mentioned with the burnt offering from the flock and the birds as with herd, but we know that the same result must ensue.

⁷⁶Clements, “Leviticus,” 11.

⁷⁷E.g., Hartley, *Leviticus*, 25, and A. Rainey, “Sacrifices and Offerings,” *ZPEB* 5 (1975): 210.

⁷⁸The *waw* disjunctive is used here to introduce a new section (*GKC* § 141e; 142d, and *IBHS* § 39.2.3).

is like an appendix, providing additional regulations regarding the grain offerings. The first two sections are also identical in their endings. Both mention the fact that what remained left over from the grain offering went to the priests, and both sections end with the phrase “it is a most holy part of the offerings made to the LORD by fire” (2:3,10). The third section closes with the truncated but similar phrase “made to the LORD by fire” (2:16).

The root meaning of the term “grain offering” (*minḥâ*) has been debated by scholars. The word is either related to the Semitic root *mnh*, with the meaning “give, lend,” or the root *nḥh*, meaning “to lead, conduct,” which indicates that this offering was placed before a ruler or deity.⁷⁹ The word probably was borrowed from the administrative or political arena, for we note the use of the term to refer to gifts that were brought (see 2 Sam 8:2,6; 1 Kgs 5:1; 2 Kgs 8:8–9; 17:3–4).⁸⁰ Since the word was employed in the religious sphere, it referred to a gift given by a worshiper to his Lord. In this sense the word had a general meaning of gift or tribute and referred to different types of offerings, such as the produce from the ground or an animal from the flock (Gen 4:3–5). The most common use of the term in sacrificial contexts like the current one is in reference to “grain offerings.” The grain offering almost always was offered with a burnt offering and often with the fellowship offering as well.⁸¹

(1) *Uncooked Grain Offerings (2:1–3)*

1“When someone brings a grain offering to the LORD, his offering is to be of fine flour. He is to pour oil on it, put incense on it ²and take it to Aaron’s sons the priests. The priest shall take a handful of the fine flour and oil, together with all the incense, and burn this as a memorial portion on the altar, an offering made by fire, an aroma pleasing to the LORD. ³The rest of the grain offering belongs to Aaron and his sons; it is a most holy part of the offerings made to the LORD by fire.

ELEMENTS OF GRAIN OFFERING 2:1–2 The *minḥâ*, “grain offering,” consisted of *sōlet*, which is rendered as “fine flour” or the “finest wheat.” The offerer covered the grain with oil and frankincense (“incense”).⁸² The oil served the purpose of aiding the combustion process,

⁷⁹ See M. Weinfeld, מִנְחָה *minḥâ*, TDOT 8:408.

⁸⁰ Levine, *Leviticus*, xxiii; Wenham, *Leviticus*, 69; BDB, 585, and HALOT 2:601.

⁸¹ Hartley, *Leviticus*, 32 (see Num 15:3–5; 2 Kgs 16:13).

⁸² Milgrom, *Leviticus 1–16*, 179; Levine, *Leviticus*, 9–10, and Hartley, *Leviticus*, 32.

while *lēbōnā*, “frankincense,” was the main ingredient in incense.⁸³ The offerer brought this gift to Aaron’s sons the priests, who took a handful of the offering and burned it as a “memorial portion.” The noun translated “memorial portion,” *ʾazkārā*, is related to the root *zkr*, which means “to remember” and indicates that the offerer is being mindful of God’s grace in providing him with food,⁸⁴ or possibly of God’s rule over all creation.⁸⁵ The handful probably was representative for the entire offering. According to the Mishnah while the priests were offering incense, the rest of the Israelites gathered in the outer court for prayer (*m. Tamid* 4:3; *m. Kelim* 1:9). Thus incense became associated with prayer.⁸⁶ The *minḥā* was offered at the ninth hour (3 p.m.), when the evening offering was presented (*m. Pesah* 5:1; Acts 3:1; 10:3,30).⁸⁷ This offering, like the burnt offering, was an “offering by fire” and an aroma pleasing to the LORD.⁸⁸

THE PRIESTS’ PORTION 2:3 What was leftover from the handful taken by the priest and offered to God was to be distributed to the priests in general as a means to maintain their sustenance (Lev 6:16). The portions allocated to the priests were called *qōdeš qōdāšîm*, “most holy part.” This food was to be eaten only by the priests themselves and could not be distributed for general consumption by their families.⁸⁹ Ezekiel 42:13 states that the eating was to take place in a specified area of the tabernacle/temple precinct.⁹⁰ Because the priests represent God, they have a right to those sacrifices offered to God. The grain offering apparently provided the main source of income for the priesthood.⁹¹

Those who are part of the New Covenant community are also to provide for the sustenance of those who minister. This was Paul’s argument

⁸³ Milgrom, *Leviticus 1–16*, 179–81. The NIV has unfortunately used the same English word to translate *קִטְוֶה* (incense) and *לֵבֹנָה* (frankincense). *לֵבֹנָה*, “frankincense,” is from the root that means “to be white,” which indicates that the *לֵבֹנָה* was a white substance from the bark of trees of the genus *Boswellia* (BDB, 526; *HALOT* 2:518; Kellermann, *לֵבֹנָה*, “*lēbōnā*,” *TDOT* 7:442). The trees are still the source of frankincense for preparing the incense used in the Catholic Church (J. Feliks, “Frankincense,” *EncJud* 7:99). See also A. Bowling, *לֵבֹנָה* (*lēbōnā*), *TWOT* 1:468, and W. Müller, “Frankincense,” *ABD* 2:854. In postexilic times frankincense was stored in designated chambers in the temple (Neh 13:5,9; 1 Chr 9:29).

⁸⁴ Hartley, *Leviticus*, 30.

⁸⁵ Kaiser, “Leviticus,” 1018. Some believe the use of the term merely indicates that God’s name was invoked (H. Eising, *זָכַר*, “*zākar*,” *TDOT* 4:80; K. Nielsen, “Incense,” *ABD* 3:407).

⁸⁶ Weinfeld, *minḥā*, 420.

⁸⁷ *Ibid.*

⁸⁸ See Lev 1:9,13,17.

⁸⁹ It is probable that large portions of most offerings were eaten by the priests (Levine, *Leviticus*, 11).

⁹⁰ Hartom and Cassuto, “Leviticus,” 10, and Hartley, *Leviticus*, 30.

⁹¹ Wenham, *Leviticus*, 72–73.

in 1 Corinthians 9, where the apostle appealed to the Old Testament practice (esp. see 1 Cor 9:13–14). According to Kaiser to fail in this responsibility to spiritual leaders or to comply in a half-hearted manner ultimately demeans both the Lord and the service rules he has put into place.⁹²

(2) Cooked Grain Offering (2:4–10)

⁴“If you bring a grain offering baked in an oven, it is to consist of fine flour: cakes made without yeast and mixed with oil, or wafers made without yeast and spread with oil. ⁵If your grain offering is prepared on a griddle, it is to be made of fine flour mixed with oil, and without yeast. ⁶Crumble it and pour oil on it; it is a grain offering. ⁷If your grain offering is cooked in a pan, it is to be made of fine flour and oil. ⁸Bring the grain offering made of these things to the LORD; present it to the priest, who shall take it to the altar. ⁹He shall take out the memorial portion from the grain offering and burn it on the altar as an offering made by fire, an aroma pleasing to the LORD. ¹⁰The rest of the grain offering belongs to Aaron and his sons; it is a most holy part of the offerings made to the LORD by fire.

VESSELS FOR GRAIN OFFERING (2:4–7). 2:4–7 These verses record the procedures for the grain offerings according to the vessel in which they were prepared. The first of the second category of grain offerings was one actually “cooked” (*maʿăpēh*) by the worshiper. The cooked grain offerings, like the uncooked grain offering (2:1–3), were to be taken from fine flour (*sōlet*, 2:1). If the grain offerings were baked or cooked in the oven,⁹³ the finished product would consist either of unleavened cakes (*ḥallôt*)⁹⁴ or wafers (*rēqîqîm*)⁹⁵ mixed or spread⁹⁶ with oil. If the grain offering was prepared in a *maḥābat* (“griddle,” 2:5), it was to follow the procedure described above. That is, it was to be made of fine flour (*sōlet*) with oil but without leaven. The meal was to be broken in pieces with

⁹² Kaiser, “Leviticus,” 1021.

⁹³ The grain offering was to be cooked in an אִנּוֹן, “oven.” The oven probably was cylindrical with a large opening at the top and positioned in the ground (cf. Milgrom, *Leviticus 1–16*, 184; and Hartley, *Leviticus*, 31 and the references cited).

⁹⁴ The term חַלּוֹת is related to the root חָלַל (“to pierce”), which may indicate perforated cakes or ring-shaped bread (BDB, 319; W. Dommershausen, חָלַל, “*ḥālal*,” *TDOT* 4:417). *HALOT* 1:317 relates the noun to a different root.

⁹⁵ The noun “wafer” is related to the root קָקַר, which means “thin,” indicating that the wafer was a thin cake. This type of wafer was always unleavened (see BDB, 956). The preparation of these wafers was the responsibility of the Levites (1 Chr 23:29).

⁹⁶ The word translated “spread” by the NIV is from the root מָשַׁח, which is usually rendered “anoint” and is the root of the term Messiah, “anointed one.” According to Jewish rabbis (*m. Menah* 6:3) the oil spread on the wafer was in the form of a cross (Milgrom, *Leviticus 1–16*, 184).

additional oil poured on it.⁹⁷ If the cooked grain offering was prepared in a *marḥešet* (“pan,” 2:7), it was to be composed of fine flour (*sōlet*) and oil. No leavened product could be offered on the altar. Two possible reasons have been offered for the prohibition of leaven: (1) leavened material along with honey would be prone to ferment and decay and thus would change the nature of the offering,⁹⁸ and (2) leaven and honey were used in pagan worship practices in the ancient Near East, so they were prohibited in the Israelite religion.

PRIESTS AND THE COOKED GRAIN OFFERING 2:8–10 These verses summarize the procedure that is applicable to all the cooked grain offerings and mirror the same procedure for the uncooked grain offerings in 2:2–3. The cooked grain offering was to be presented to the priests who, as in the procedure of the uncooked grain offering, took the “memorial portion” and burned it on the altar, resulting in “an aroma pleasing to the LORD” (2:9). Also like the uncooked offering, what remained from the “memorial portion” became the food of Aaron and his sons (the wording of 2:10 is identical to that of 2:3).

(3) *Additional Regulations Concerning Grain Offerings (2:11–16)*

11“Every grain offering you bring to the LORD must be made without yeast, for you are not to burn any yeast or honey in an offering made to the LORD by fire. **12**You may bring them to the LORD as an offering of the firstfruits, but they are not to be offered on the altar as a pleasing aroma. **13**Season all your grain offerings with salt. Do not leave the salt of the covenant of your God out of your grain offerings; add salt to all your offerings.

14“If you bring a grain offering of firstfruits to the LORD, offer crushed heads of new grain roasted in the fire. **15**Put oil and incense on it; it is a grain offering. **16**The priest shall burn the memorial portion of the crushed grain and the oil, together with all the incense, as an offering made to the LORD by fire.

YEAST FOR OFFERING OF FIRSTFRUITS (2:11–12). 2:11–12 This last section of Leviticus 2 highlights general regulations for the grain offering directed to the priests. The rules apply to all types of grain offerings previously mentioned. That the priests are primarily in view is made evident by the fact that plural verbs are employed. Also those addressed are the ones responsible for burning the offerings, an obligation that would only pertain to priests (2:11).⁹⁹

⁹⁷ It is not clear why this type of offering required the parts to be broken, a feature not mentioned as part of the other grain offerings. This practice may have been characteristic of the other grain offerings as well but is not mentioned to avoid redundancy.

⁹⁸ This is the position taken by G. Archer (*A Survey of Old Testament Introduction*, rev. ed. [Chicago: Moody, 1994], 259).

⁹⁹ Milgrom, *Leviticus 1–16*, 188; Hartley, *Leviticus*, 28.

The grain offerings were to be made without leaven (2:11, *hāmēš*, NIV “yeast”) and honey probably because these ingredients cause fermentation or decay.¹⁰⁰ In addition, as noted above, honey (*dēbaš*), like leaven, was widely used in pagan cults and was thus also prohibited. This fact may have been a collateral reason for the prohibition.¹⁰¹ Leaven was limited to grain foods such as wheat, barley, and spelt. It was not permitted in the house or on the table during Passover (Exod 13:3,7). It was also prohibited with other sacrifices (Exod 23:18; 34:25) but could be eaten with the thank offering (Lev 7:13; Amos 4:5) and with the fruit offerings (Lev 23:17).¹⁰² Offerings that contain leaven and honey could in fact be offered as “firstfruits,” *rēšīt* (2:12). The firstfruit offering was composed of the first processed fruit coming from the threshing floor.¹⁰³ The New Testament refers to Christ’s resurrection as the firstfruit, for his resurrection signals the first for millions of those who would believe in him (1 Cor 15:20).

SALT IN THE OFFERINGS (2:13). 2:13 Another regulation concerning the grain offering dealt with the use of salt. All the grain offerings were to be seasoned with salt. The salt is specified as “the salt of the covenant of your God.” Salt also was associated with covenants in Num 18:19 and 2 Chr 13:5. In Num 18:19 the Sinaitic Covenant is in view, while in 2 Chr 13:5 the Davidic Covenant is highlighted. Salt is a preservative, so it symbolizes the notion that the covenant cannot be destroyed by fire or decay. The phrase “covenant of salt” emphasizes the durability or eternity of the covenant.¹⁰⁴ Antiochus the Great donated 375 bushels of salt to the Jews for the temple service. A special chamber in the temple was designated for the storage of salt (*m. Mid.* 5:3).¹⁰⁵ Many believe the association of salt with covenants is derived from a practice of concluding covenants with for-

¹⁰⁰ Wenham, *Leviticus*, 71. Leaven became a metaphor for man’s evil tendencies (*b. Ber* 17a; Mark 8:15; Luke 12:1; 1 Cor 5:8) (Milgrom, *Leviticus 1–16*, 188–89). The leaven in the dough became figurative for the *yēšer hārāc*, the evil propensity in human nature (Hartom and Cassuto, “Leviticus,” 10).

¹⁰¹ A. Caquot, שֶׁבֶט, “*dēbaš*,” *TDOT* 3:129–30; Wenham, *Leviticus*, 71; Milgrom, *Leviticus 1–16*, 189–90, and Levine, *Leviticus*, 12. Bee honey and nectars were prohibited (Levine, *Leviticus*, 12).

¹⁰² G. Livingston, חָמֵץ (*hāmēš*), *TWOT* 1:680.

¹⁰³ Milgrom, *Leviticus 1–16*, 190–91. Two different Hb. terms are translated “firstfruits” in 2:12,14. In 2:12 the term is *rēšīt*, while in 2:14 we find the term *bikkūrim*. The *rēšīt* firstfruits indicate the barley harvest, which was seven weeks earlier than the Feast of Weeks and thus at the end of the Feast of Unleavened Bread (Budd, *Leviticus*, 63).

¹⁰⁴ Oehler, *Theology of the Old Testament*, 271; Wenham, *Leviticus*, 71, and L. Rabinowitz, “Salt,” *EncJud* 14:710.

¹⁰⁵ Rabinowitz, “Salt,” 711.

mal meals that included the use of salt.¹⁰⁶ This is the first indication that salt was to be added to all of the offerings (*qorbān*).¹⁰⁷

GRAIN OFFERING OF FIRSTFRUITS (2:14–16). **2:14–16** Verses 14–16 describe the procedure for the offering of firstfruits. The firstfruits of barley included offering the heads of barley¹⁰⁸ roasted in fire, with oil and incense added. The “memorial portion” was then burned and the offering was “an offering made by fire to the LORD.” The offering of firstfruits is also discussed in Exod 23:16,19; 34:22,26; Num 28:26. The same root *bkr* is used in reference to the firstborn of humans (Exod 13:13) and animals (Gen 4:4). The grain offering of firstfruits was distinguished from the other grain offerings in that the grain offering of the firstfruits marked a particular occasion (firstfruits). The other grain offerings could be offered at any time throughout the year.

(4) Conclusion

The grain offering was a gift to the Lord that honored him as the source of life and of the fertility of the land.¹⁰⁹ It represented the dedication to God of the fruit of one’s labor.¹¹⁰ In the grain offering the worshiper offered the best of the kernels of wheat to indicate that he was offering the best to God, which signified the dedication of one’s life and work to God. The same is to be the response of the New Testament worshiper as well. The most common New Testament word for sacrifice, *thysia*, is the term used to translate *minḥā* in the Septuagint.¹¹¹

The New Testament believer is also reminded that as the believer in Old Testament times offered this grain to God, so Jesus Christ as the Bread of life offered his life to God (John 6:32–35). Kaiser comments, “As the grain was bruised and crushed to make the sacrifice for the ancient Israelite, so the living Bread was bruised and crushed for all who would believe.”¹¹²

¹⁰⁶ Wenham, *Leviticus*, 71, and Kaiser, “Leviticus,” 1018. In Gen 26:20; 31:54; Exod 24:11; and 2 Sam 3:20 ratification of covenants are accompanied by a ceremonial meal. The Greeks also used salt in their covenant meals (Milgrom, *Leviticus 1–16*, 191–92).

¹⁰⁷ See Ezra 6:9; 7:22; cf. *b. Men.* 20a. The switch from the plural verb to the singular in v. 13 indicates that the offerer, not the priest, was responsible for seasoning the offering.

¹⁰⁸ See BDB, 1, כִּבְכֶן. The word כִּבְכֶן also designates the month in the spring when the grains ripen.

¹⁰⁹ Budd, *Leviticus*, 64.

¹¹⁰ Demarest, *Leviticus*, 46.

¹¹¹ The term occurs almost thirty times in the NT. In earlier Greek from about 900–700 B.C., however, the term referred to the equivalent of a burnt offering (B. Bergquist, “Bronze Age Sacrificial KOINE in the Eastern Mediterranean? A Study of Animal Sacrifice in the Ancient Near East,” in *Ritual and Sacrifice in the Ancient Near East*, ed. J. Quaegebeur [Leuven: Uitgeverij Peeters en Department Oriëntalistiek, 1993], 12).

¹¹² Kaiser, “Leviticus,” 1022.

This is certainly the theological context for the eucharist, for the bread represents the sacrificial flesh and supplies the symbol for communion with God. The body of the Son of God who was sacrificed for the sins of the world is compared to the bread that both God and humans partake of (Matt 26:26; Mark 14:22; Luke 22:19; 1 Cor 11:23f.).¹¹³

If the Israelite was to avoid using leaven and honey in the offerings because these were customary practices among the pagans, this passage would have an additional application to the Christian life. As the Israelite was called to be holy, and thus be separate from the world, so too the Christian is charged to be distinct, “holy,” set apart from this evil age (1 Pet 1:16). The Christian must avoid evil associations, especially those affiliations deemed to be part of pagan culture (1 Thess 5:22). Finally, the reference to the offerings being “seasoned with salt” may be the basis of Mark 9:49, which speaks of believers being salted with fire. As Calvin writes, “When we are searched and tried by fire, we shall be acceptable sacrifices to God, and that this is the seasoning of salt when our flesh with its affections shall have been well macerated.”¹¹⁴ Moreover, as “salt of the earth” (Matt 5:3) believers are to be pleasing and acceptable to God.

4. The Fellowship Offering (3:1–17)

Like Leviticus 1 and 2, Leviticus 3 divides into three sections, the concluding verse of each section containing the repeated phrase “an offering made by fire” (3:5,11,16). The conclusion of the first and third sections are also related in that they contain the phrase “a pleasing aroma.” The three sections are: fellowship offerings from the herd (3:1–5), fellowship offerings from the flock (3:6–11), and fellowship offerings from the goats (3:12–17). The fellowship offering was prescribed on three specific occasions: the Feast of Weeks (23:19,20), the completion of the Nazirite vow (Num 6:17–20), and the installation of the priests (Lev 9:18,22).¹¹⁵ There were three separate types of fellowship offerings: (1) the thanksgiving offering, which was presented in response to a particular blessing an Israelite had experienced (7:12–15); (2) the votive offering, which was presented as a result of the worshiper making a vow to God (Jonah 2:9); and (3) the freewill offering, which was presented as a general expression of gratitude to God.¹¹⁶ The fellowship offering appears to have been closely associated with the

¹¹³ E. Gerstenberger, *Leviticus*, OTL, trans. D. Stott (Louisville: Westminster, 1993), 45.

¹¹⁴ Calvin, *Commentaries on the Last Books of Moses*, 2:330.

¹¹⁵ Rainey, “Sacrifices and Offerings,” 207.

¹¹⁶ See S. Schultz, *The Old Testament Speaks*, 3rd ed. (San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1980), 66–67, and H. Wolf, *An Introduction to the Old Testament Pentateuch* (Chicago: Moody, 1991), 168–69.

burnt offering, which it invariably followed.¹¹⁷ The procedures for the presentation of the sacrificial victim and the priests' role in the disposal of the blood are virtually identical to those carried out for the burnt offering. Like the burnt offering and often in association with it, the fellowship offering was presented on momentous occasions in Israel's history.¹¹⁸

What was distinctive about the fellowship offering was that it could be shared by the offerer, who would partake of the meal.¹¹⁹ As such it expressed the joy of fellowship around a shared meal. Many scholars maintain that something like the fellowship offering was practiced by Israel's neighbors to the north as evidenced by the Ugaritic tablets.¹²⁰ Because the fellowship offering always included the partaking of a meal, birds were not candidates for this offering since they would be too small to provide an adequate amount of food.

(1) Fellowship Offering from the Herd (3:1–5)

1“If someone's offering is a fellowship offering, and he offers an animal from the herd, whether male or female, he is to present before the LORD an animal without defect. **2**He is to lay his hand on the head of his offering and slaughter it at the entrance to the Tent of Meeting. Then Aaron's sons the priests shall sprinkle the blood against the altar on all sides. **3**From the fellowship offering he is to bring a sacrifice made to the LORD by fire: all the fat that covers the inner parts or is connected to them, **4**both kidneys with the fat on them near the loins, and the covering of the liver, which he will remove with the kidneys. **5**Then Aaron's sons are to burn it on the altar on top of the burnt offering that is on the burning wood, as an offering made by fire, an aroma pleasing to the LORD.

3:1–5 The section regarding the fellowship offerings begins with the particle *wə'im*, “if” (3:1), similar to the introduction for the instruction on the burnt offering in 1:3 (*'im*). The expression “fellowship offering” is the interpretation of the phrase *zēbah šēlāmîm*.¹²¹ The noun *zēbah*, which is from the root *zbh*, meaning “to slaughter,” refers to a slain offering whose

¹¹⁷ B. Levine, *In the Presence of the Lord* (Leiden: Brill, 1974), 20, and B. Lang, זָבַח, “zābah,” *TDOT* 4:23. Additional evidence for the close association between the burnt offering and the fellowship offering is found in the use of the expression אָם וְזָבַח שְׁלָמִים קָרְבָּנוֹ in 3:1 to introduce the section on the fellowship offering. The corresponding expression אָם עֹלָה קָרְבָּנוֹ occurs in 1:3 in the introduction of the burnt offering. Both are clearly distinguished from the introduction of the grain offering פִּי תִקְרִיב קָרְבַּן (2:1).

¹¹⁸ See Exod 24:5; Lev 23:19; Deut 27:7; 1 Sam 11:15; 1 Kgs 8:63–65. See Wolf, *An Introduction to the Old Testament Pentateuch*, 168–69; Levine, *In the Presence*, 52.

¹¹⁹ The priests ate portions of the fellowship offering as well (Lev 7:31–35).

¹²⁰ See Budd, *Leviticus*, 69, for discussion.

¹²¹ Since the phrase contains the cognate term *šālôm*, “peace,” it has commonly been referred to as “the peace offering.” The Ug. (*šlm*) and Akk. (*šlmm*) cognate terms have parallel usages because they refer to gifts presented at a meeting (B. Levine, “Leviticus, Book Of,” *ABD* 4:312).

meat could be eaten (see Jer 7:21). This offering, in contrast to other sacrifices, was not restricted to the male gender but could be either male or female. This provision would be in harmony with part of the purpose of this offering, which was to provide food for the worshiper.

As with the burnt offering the Israelite brought his offering to the tabernacle, where he placed his hand upon the animal and slaughtered it. Also as in the burnt offering sacrifice the priest was responsible for applying the blood to the altar and then burning the various parts of the offering (3:2). A distinctive concern of the fellowship offering, however, was the removal of the fat (3:3–4). The *hēleb*, “the fat” that covers the organs and entrails, was not to be eaten but was to be burned. The fat represented the choicest part of the offering. The fat belonged to God and had to be offered to him in sacrifice.¹²² Other offerings that required special treatment of the fat included the sin offering (4:8), the guilt offering (7:3), and the redemption of the firstborn (Num 18:17).¹²³

The fat apparently was burned on top of the burnt offering sacrifice (3:5a).¹²⁴ This burnt offering sacrifice mentioned here should be understood as the daily burnt offering, which was offered in accordance with Exod 29:38–39 and Num 29:3–4. This offering was known as the Tamid sacrifice in reference to its continual, daily observance.

This same sequence of burnt offering followed by fellowship offering occurs in Lev 6:5b. The order, burnt offering followed by fellowship offering, is theologically significant. It indicates that the atonement that resulted from the burnt offering was essential before the fellowship offering, which indicates fellowship with God could be enjoyed.¹²⁵ This correlates to New Testament theology, where the death of Christ for our sins is the basis for sinners to have relationship and hence fellowship with God. As was the case with the burnt offering, the fellowship offering is likewise described as “an aroma pleasing to the LORD” (3:5b).

(2) *Fellowship Offering from the Flock (3:6–11)*

6“If he offers an animal from the flock as a fellowship offering to the LORD, he is to offer a male or female without defect. **7**If he offers a lamb, he is to present it before the LORD. **8**He is to lay his hand on the head of his offering and

¹²²The term is in fact rendered “the best” by the KJV translators in Num 18:12,29–30,32. See also Gen 4:4; Exod 23:18. HALOT 1:316 states that the meaning “best, choice part” is the metaphorical meaning of בָּהֵלֵב. See Oehler, *Theology of the Old Testament*, 290; G. Munderlein, בָּהֵלֵב, “*hēleb*,” TDOT 4:396. Another view is that the fat represented an animal’s strength (see Hartley, *Leviticus*, 41). For other views and analysis see Munderlein, “*hēleb*,” 394.

¹²³Budd, *Leviticus*, 72.

¹²⁴The suffix connected to the direct object marker אֹתוֹ must be understood to refer to בָּהֵלֵב, “fat” (3:3), that covers the internal parts of the animal mentioned in 3:3–4.

¹²⁵Hartley, *Leviticus*, 42.

slaughter it in front of the Tent of Meeting. Then Aaron's sons shall sprinkle its blood against the altar on all sides.⁹ From the fellowship offering he is to bring a sacrifice made to the LORD by fire: its fat, the entire fat tail cut off close to the backbone, all the fat that covers the inner parts or is connected to them,¹⁰ both kidneys with the fat on them near the loins, and the covering of the liver, which he will remove with the kidneys.¹¹ The priest shall burn them on the altar as food, an offering made to the LORD by fire.

3:6–11 The offering of an animal from the flock followed the same procedure as the fellowship offering from the herd.¹²⁶ What is unique about the offering of the flock is the designation of the offering as *lehem*, “food” or “bread” (3:11). Sacrificial offerings are also designated as God’s “food” in Lev 21:6 and Num 28:2. The reference to the offering as food does not indicate that the Israelites believed that the Lord actually needed physical sustenance to survive, although this was the view among pagan cultures (see Ps 50:12–13).¹²⁷ This belief is completely foreign to the Old Testament. As Eichrodt explains:

The whole tenor of ancient Israel’s belief in Yahweh is irreconcilable with the idea that God is fed by the sacrifice, bound up as this is with God’s dependence on man. The central concept of the covenant asserts no less than that Yahweh already existed and had proved his power, before ever Israel sacrificed to him. ... Here the offering of food and drink reminds men that God is the sole giver of life and nurture; and it is for this reason that their gifts to him take the form of the necessities of life.¹²⁸

Rather the reference to the offering as “food” is to be understood from the fact that this was the only offering shared with the worshiper, who would participate by actually eating the meat of the sacrifice. The worshiper in this sense shared a meal with the Lord, which means that he had fellowship with him. This concept of having fellowship through the sharing of a meal sheds light on Paul’s warning in 1 Cor 10:18–22 that partaking of a sacrifice offered to an idol or demon is in effect having fellowship with it.

(3) *Fellowship Offering from the Goats (3:12–17)*

12“If his offering is a goat, he is to present it before the LORD.¹³ He is to lay his hand on its head and slaughter it in front of the Tent of Meeting. Then Aaron’s sons shall sprinkle its blood against the altar on all sides.¹⁴ From what he offers he is to make this offering to the LORD by fire: all the fat that covers

¹²⁶ This section on sheep does have the additional reference to the removal of the נִיֹּבֶל , “tail.” This meaning (“tail”) is supported by the cognate nouns in Aramaic and Arabic (see BDB, 46–47; HALOT 1:55; Levine, *Leviticus*, 16, and Hartom and Cassuto, “Leviticus,” 12). The term also occurs in Exod 29:22; Lev 7:3; 8:25; 9:19.

¹²⁷ Levine, *Leviticus*, 17; J. Bergman, זָבַח , “*zābah*,” TDOT 4:14, 16–17.

¹²⁸ Eichrodt, *Theology of the Old Testament*, 1:143–44.

the inner parts or is connected to them,¹⁵ both kidneys with the fat on them near the loins, and the covering of the liver, which he will remove with the kidneys.¹⁶ The priest shall burn them on the altar as food, an offering made by fire, a pleasing aroma. All the fat is the LORD's.

¹⁷“This is a lasting ordinance for the generations to come, wherever you live: You must not eat any fat or any blood.”

3:12–17 Unlike the prescription for the burnt offering, which classifies the sheep and goats as one category, in the fellowship offering the sheep offering and the goat offering warrant distinct categories. The reason for this distinction is not immediately apparent.¹²⁹ The same procedure employed for the herd (3:1–5) and the sheep fellowship offerings (3:6–11) was prescribed for the goats. The offerer placed his hand on the victim, then slaughtered it before the tabernacle. The priest sprinkled the blood and burned the fat of the various animal parts (3:13–15). The offering was described as “an offering made by fire, a pleasing aroma” (3:16b).

Following this description of the goat fellowship offering the text states that “all the fat is the LORD's” (3:16c). This summary statement pertains to each of the three sections concerned with the proper offering of the *ḥēleb*, “fat,” to the Lord. The word *ḥēleb* occurs ten times in the three sections and twice in the concluding statement (3:16b–17). Verse 17 particularly stresses the gravity of this prescription regarding the proper disposal of the fat, stating that this ordinance¹³⁰ is a perpetual one lasting throughout all of Israel's generations. The phrase *ḥuqqat ʿōlām*, “lasting ordinance,” occurs in the Old Testament to describe such august events as the celebration of the Passover (Exod 12:14), the celebration of Unleavened Bread (Exod 12:17), and the observance of the Day of Atonement (Lev 16:29,31,34).¹³¹ Coupled with this prohibition of eating the fat in v. 17 is the prohibition of eating the blood.¹³² The mention of eating the blood is raised here because as was noted above this is the only sacrifice where the individual Israelite could participate by eating a portion of the offering. This prohibition is unqualified. Thus it is added to the prohibition of eating the fat although the subject of eating of blood has not been

¹²⁹ Milgrom believes the distinction is created because of the fact that the sheep have the broad tail (3:9), which would not be true of the goat (*Leviticus 1–16*, 213).

¹³⁰ The word *ḥuqqā*, “statute” or “ordinance,” is from the root *ḥqḥ*, meaning “to cut in, inscribe,” and thus alludes to the practice of inscribing or incising laws in stone (BDB, 349 and Levine, *Leviticus*, 17). For other nuances see H. Ringgren, *ḥuqqā*, *TDOT* 5:141.

¹³¹ The phrase also appears in Exod 27:21; 28:43; Lev 7:36; 10:9; 17:7; 23:14,21,31,41; 24:3; Num 10:8; 15:15; 18:23; 19:10,21; Ezek 46:14.

¹³² The same prohibition of eating the fat and blood is repeated in 7:22–27. It is worth noting in light of 3:11 that God states in Ezek 44:7 that fat and blood are considered to be *ḥēleb*, “my food.” The combination of blood and fat occurs in Babylonian literature in relationship to the offering of a sacrifice (Münderlein, “*ḥēleb*,” 395).

raised in Leviticus 3. The definitive statement prohibiting the partaking of blood is given in Lev 17:10–12, where blood is equated with life. Since life is a gift of God, blood, the unique manifestation of this gift, must not be eaten but given back to God, the source of life. The burning of the fat and the sprinkling of blood against the altar signified the giving of the life of the animal back to God upon its death.¹³³ The prohibition of eating of fat was conditioned upon whether the fat was part of an animal offered as a sacrifice to the Lord. When the fat of sacrificial animals was offered as a sacrifice, it belonged to the Lord and could not be eaten. By implication it may be assumed that it was permissible to eat the fat of nonsacrificial victims.

(4) *Conclusion*

Although the term “fellowship offering” does not occur in the New Testament, the distinctive feature of this offering, the eating of the festive meal in communion with God, does resemble the practice of the celebration of the Lord’s Supper. In Leviticus the worshiper is God’s invited guest to enjoy the festive meal. Similarly, in the Lord’s Supper the believer is invited to feast regularly upon the blood¹³⁴ and body of the lamb of God.¹³⁵ The participant is only warned to be clean in order to participate (Lev 7:20; 1 Cor 11:27).¹³⁶

The focus and main feature of the fellowship offering was fellowship with God. This fellowship was made possible by atonement through sacrifice. The fellowship offering was not presented until the burnt offering had been made. In order for anyone to have fellowship with God, an atoning sacrifice on behalf of the sinner must be made.

5. The Sin Offering (4:1–5:13)

Given the opening words of Leviticus 4, “The LORD said to Moses,” it is clear that a new section is being introduced. The last time the text had indicated that the Lord was beginning to address Moses occurred in Lev 1:1 (“The LORD called to Moses and spoke to him”). This division may

¹³³ See Clements, “Leviticus,” 15.

¹³⁴ Whereas the partaking of blood was prohibited in Leviticus, in the Lord’s Supper it is commanded, “albeit under the guise of wine” (Wenham, *Leviticus*, 82–83).

¹³⁵ See Hartley, *Leviticus*, 42–43; Wolf, *Pentateuch*, 169, and G. A. F. Knight, *Leviticus*, DSB (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1981), 24. In 7:17 we are informed that none of the offering of the fellowship offering was to be left over till the third day, perhaps to prevent decay. This possibly foreshadows the rising of Christ on the third day from his offering as a sacrifice to God (1 Cor 15:4) (see Kaiser, “Leviticus,” 1028–29).

¹³⁶ Wenham, *Leviticus*, 82–83.

indicate that the sacrifices about to be discussed, that of the sin and guilt offerings, are of distinct nature from the previous offerings, the burnt, grain, and fellowship offerings. The difference may be due to the fact that the sin and guilt offering are to be made as a consequence to a certain offense, while the offerings of Leviticus 1–3 could be viewed as voluntary.¹³⁷ Whereas the main issue in the burnt, grain, and fellowship offerings was the proper procedure to be followed, the main issue in the discussion in the sin and guilt offerings is the occasion that would require these sacrifices. Consequently, the new terms that dominate this section—*šēgāgā* (“inadvertence”), *hātē* (“sin”), *ʾašmā* (“guilt”), and *sālah* (“forgive”)—are absent from the previous three chapters in discussion of the burnt, grain, and fellowship offerings. Other features of this section that distinguish it from the previous discussion have to do with certain stylistic features, most notably the use of the particle *kaʿāšer* (“just as”; 4:10,21) to refer to previous instruction about the correct procedure for carrying out the sacrifices. Moreover, this section includes the abundant use of formulaic language to indicate the beginning and ending of various sections. As has been noted, 4:1 begins with the expression “The LORD said to Moses.” This introductory formula introduces sections beginning in 4:1; 5:14; 6:1[MT 5:20]. Other subsections are introduced by the particles “if” (*ʾim* in 4:13,27,32) and “when” (*ʾāšer* in 4:22), while larger sections are characterized by the introductory phrase *nepeš kī*¹³⁸ (“when anyone”; 4:2; 5:1; 5:15; 6:2[MT 5:21]). Expressions that include statements about atonement and forgiveness occur at the conclusion of several sections (4:20; 4:26; 4:31; 4:35; 5:10; 5:13; 5:16; 5:18; 6:7[MT 5:26]).¹³⁹ This combination occurs in the Old Testament elsewhere only in Lev 19:22 in reference to the guilt offering and in Num 15:25,28 with regard to the sin offering. Sin offerings of a male goat were required at each of the sacred festivals: New Moon (Num 28:15), each day of Passover (Num 25:22–24), Pentecost (Num 28:30), Rosh Hashanah (Num 29:5), the Day of Atonement (Num 29:11), and Tabernacles (Num 29:16,19).¹⁴⁰

The sin offering pericope (4:1–5:13) consists of the following sections: Introduction to Sin Offering (4:1–2), Sin Offering for Inadvertent Sin of High Priest (4:3–12), Sin Offering for Inadvertent Sin of Congregation (4:13–21), Sin Offering for Inadvertent Sin of Ruler (4:22–26), Sin Offer-

¹³⁷ Milgrom, *Leviticus 1–16*, 228.

¹³⁸ See Wenham, *Leviticus*, 88.

¹³⁹ The LXX and Samaritan Pentateuch versions include an additional expression about forgiveness in Lev 5:6, which would give the equivalent of ten occurrences of the phrase in Lev 4–5.

¹⁴⁰ A. Rainey, “Sacrifice,” *EncJud* 14:600. For other occasions requiring a sin offering see Lev 12:6–8; 14:19–31; 15:25–30; Num 6:10–14.

ing for Inadvertent Sin of Individual (4:27–35), and Sin Offering for Specific Inadvertent Offenses (5:1–13).

As mentioned above, beginning in Leviticus 4 the author deals with mandatory offerings required because of the committing of sin (Hb. *ḥāṭē*). Sin constitutes a violation of the covenant by a member of the Israelite covenant community. In the Old Testament there are two categories of sin, sins committed with a high hand and sins committed inadvertently. Sins committed with the high hand are not forgiven, while sins committed inadvertently may be forgiven or atoned through the proper sacrificial procedure. Sins committed with the high hand are discussed in Numbers 15 and are comparable to the New Testament concept of sins against the Holy Spirit.¹⁴¹

Within the category of inadvertent sins two categories may also be distinguished: those that are purified by the sin offering on the one hand (Lev 4:1–5:13) and those that require a compensation and a guilt offering on the other (5:14–6:7). Support for this distinction is found in the text itself, where characteristically near the conclusion of individual paragraphs the reader is informed about whether the offering is a sin offering or a guilt offering (see 4:21,24; 5:12,19).

(1) *Introduction to Sin Offering (4:1–2)*

¹The LORD said to Moses, ²“Say to the Israelites: ‘When anyone sins unintentionally and does what is forbidden in any of the LORD’s commands—

4:1–2 As was noted above, this new section begins with the introductory formula “The LORD said to Moses,” indicating that something new is to be discussed regarding the offerings of the Israelites. Here God informs Moses of what is the required sacrifice *nepeš kī teḥēṭāʾ bišgāgā* (“when one sins inadvertently”; NIV, “unintentionally”; 4:2). Two roots are introduced for the first time in the Book of Leviticus, the root *ḥṭʾ* for “sin” and the root *šgg* for “inadvertence.” These roots are predominant in the discussion of the last two major offerings, the sin offering and the guilt offering. The root *ḥṭʾ* occurs fifty-three times, and the root *šgg* occurs seven times in 4:1–6:7; the understanding of these terms is critical to the understanding of these last two offerings.

The root *ḥṭʾ* for “sin” occurs 595 times in the Old Testament, and Leviticus, with 116 attestations, has far more occurrences than any other Old Testament book.¹⁴² This section (fifty-three attestations) is the heaviest concentration of the discussion of “sin” in the Bible. In addition, since

¹⁴¹ E.g., see W. Kaiser, *Toward an Old Testament Theology* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1978), 117–18. See Introduction.

¹⁴² See R. Knierim, נחט, *ḥṭʾ*, *THAT* 1:542 for a chart illustrating the occurrence of the root in the OT.

this section of the sin offering addresses the proper procedure for the presentation of the sin offering among all possible groups of Israelite people, it reveals the pervasiveness of sin as a characteristic of the human condition. “No religious or civil leader was so prominent that his sin was condoned, nor any man so insignificant that his sin was ignored.”¹⁴³

The root *ḥṭʿ* suggests a violation of the covenant.¹⁴⁴ The best concrete, nontheological illustration of the meaning of the term occurs in Judg 20:16, where it refers to the left handed men of Benjamin who could sling a stone at a hair and not *miss*. The word translated “miss” is from the root *ḥṭʿ* and indicates that sinning in the religious realm is like “missing the mark,”¹⁴⁵ that is, not living in accord with God’s standards. Violation of God’s standard is dealt with by means of the “sin offering” (*ḥaṭṭaʿt*, from the same root). The sacrificial animal in effect takes the substance of sin upon itself, removing the guilt from the offender.¹⁴⁶

The root *šgg* has the meaning of “going astray, commit sin or error” and in relation to the commission of sin carries the connotation of sin by accident or inadvertence.¹⁴⁷ According to Eichrodt it refers to sins that are the consequence of human frailty.¹⁴⁸ This type of sin is to be distinguished from sinning in defiance against God with *bēyād rāmā*, “a high hand.”¹⁴⁹ This latter category cannot be expiated, and the offender is *kārat*, “cut off,” a term often understood as designating a premature death.¹⁵⁰ The contrast between these two types of sins is illustrated in Num 15:25,30. The inadvertent or accidental sin (*bišgāgā*) is described in Num 35:11,15 in reference to the manslayer who by definition is one who

¹⁴³ Schultz, *The Old Testament Speaks*, 67.

¹⁴⁴ The Akk. cognate *ḥāṣū* is also used in the context of treaty or covenant violation (Levine, *Leviticus*, 19). This idea may be further supported from the immediate context of Lev 4 since “sin” is described as a violation of one of God’s *mišwōt*, “commands” (4:2). In contrast to the terms used to refer to Israel’s laws, this term more specifically refers to a violation of the covenant relationship God has with Israel (Milgrom, *Leviticus 1–16*, 230–31).

¹⁴⁵ HALOT 1:305. For the proposal that the basic meaning of the root *ḥṭʿ* is related to the idea of substitution, see Zohar, “Repentance and Purification: The Significance and Semantics of חטאת in the Pentateuch,” 616.

¹⁴⁶ Gerstenberger, *Leviticus*, 71.

¹⁴⁷ BDB, 992–93. The same connotation is evident in the usage of the root in the DSS (see R. Knierim, חטאת, *šgg*, *THAT* 2:872). This meaning is also supported by the major versions. The LXX reads ακουσιως (see LSJ, 53), the Tg. חטאת (M. Jastrow, *A Dictionary of the Targumim, the Talmud Babli and Yerushalmi, and the Midrashic Literature* [Brooklyn: P. Shalom, 1967] 2:1579), the Peshitta *ṭwgh* (J. P. Smith, *A Compendious Syriac Dictionary* [Oxford: Clarendon, 1903], 169), and the Vg *ignorantia*.

¹⁴⁸ Eichrodt, *Theology of the Old Testament*, 1:161, n. 6.

¹⁴⁹ Rainey has suggested that the latter category of sin is essentially a violation of one of the Ten Commandments (see “Sacrifices and Offerings,” 204).

¹⁵⁰ However the term is used in parallelism to “bearing guilt” in Num 15:30.

kills without premeditation. Thus an important component of what distinguishes the inadvertent sin from the high-handed sin is the mental state of the person who commits the offense. In our context, in reference to expiation for inadvertent sin by the sin offering, the “inadvertent” sin refers to the commission of a sin, although the offender is not immediately conscious of the fact that he has violated the law of God.¹⁵¹

(2) *Sin Offering for Inadvertent Sin of High Priest (4:3–12)*

³“If the anointed priest sins, bringing guilt on the people, he must bring to the LORD a young bull without defect as a sin offering for the sin he has committed. ⁴He is to present the bull at the entrance to the Tent of Meeting before the LORD. He is to lay his hand on its head and slaughter it before the LORD. ⁵Then the anointed priest shall take some of the bull’s blood and carry it into the Tent of Meeting. ⁶He is to dip his finger into the blood and sprinkle some of it seven times before the LORD, in front of the curtain of the sanctuary. ⁷The priest shall then put some of the blood on the horns of the altar of fragrant incense that is before the LORD in the Tent of Meeting. The rest of the bull’s blood he shall pour out at the base of the altar of burnt offering at the entrance to the Tent of Meeting. ⁸He shall remove all the fat from the bull of the sin offering—the fat that covers the inner parts or is connected to them, ⁹both kidneys with the fat on them near the loins, and the covering of the liver, which he will remove with the kidneys— ¹⁰just as the fat is removed from the ox sacrificed as a fellowship offering. Then the priest shall burn them on the altar of burnt offering. ¹¹But the hide of the bull and all its flesh, as well as the head and legs, the inner parts and offal— ¹²that is, all the rest of the bull—he must take outside the camp to a place ceremonially clean, where the ashes are thrown, and burn it in a wood fire on the ash heap.

4:3–7 The first hypothetical situation that might call for the presentation of a sin offering is the sin committed by the high priest (4:3).¹⁵² This was surely a most serious offense since it caused the entire nation to become guilty. The offering for inadvertent sin was the sin (Hb. *ḥattaʿt*) offering.

There has been a great deal of discussion regarding the objective of the sin offering. Many modern commentators influenced by Milgrom have argued that the purpose of this rite was to bring about a purification of the altar because the altar had become contaminated by sin. These scholars prefer to refer to the offering as the purification offering rather than the

¹⁵¹ See especially Kiuchi, *The Purification Offering in the Priestly Literature*, 26–27, 31, and Calvin, *Commentaries on the Last Four Books of Moses*, 2:343. Calvin believes that this concept of an inadvertent sin is the basis for Paul’s statement in Gal 6:1 (p. 341).

¹⁵² Literally the phrase is אֲנֹכַח הַכֹּהֵן הַקָּדוֹשׁ, “anointed priest.” The phrase occurs elsewhere only in Lev 6:22 [MT 15]. Num 35:25 offers an explicit reference to the anointing of the high priest. The normal expression for the high priest is either the “great priest” or “chief priest.”

sin offering.¹⁵³ Support for this position comes from the fact that the sin offering is required in such passages as Leviticus 8; 12; 15; and Numbers 6, where the commission of sin does not appear to be at issue. The constant repetition of the fact that sins are forgiven in this passage, however, suggests that although purification may be involved, this is not all that is in view. Though the altar would be in need of purification because it was contaminated by sin (in the same way that Israel's sin contaminates the land), the overall objective is divine forgiveness of the Israelites in Lev 4:1–5:13.¹⁵⁴

The text states that the effect of the sin of the high priest was to bring “guilt on the people.” “Guilt” (Hb. *ʾāšām*) is the resultant effect of breaking one of God's commands.¹⁵⁵ Good biblical examples of guilt resulting from violation of God's laws may be found in Gen 26:10 and 1 Chr 21:3.

To atone for the sin of the high priest, the religious leader was required to bring a young bull without defect as a sin offering to the Lord. In performing this rite the high priest was acknowledging his offense, and it is safe to regard his action to remove the effects of his sin as equivalent to repentance.¹⁵⁶ Integral to what is involved in biblical repentance is a keen awareness that an offense against a holy God has been committed. Sinners of all eras must “change their mind” (Gk. *metanoō*) in agreeing with God that they have violated his command and are turning from it.

In the execution of the sin offering are several features that were not part of the procedure of any of the previous offerings. After the priest laid his hands on the bull and slaughtered it, he took blood from the animal and sprinkled the blood seven times before the Lord in front of the curtain of the sanctuary.¹⁵⁷ The fact that the blood was brought to the very border of the inner sanctum of the Holy of Holies highlights the seriousness of the sin of Israel's religious leader. The sevenfold sprinkling of the blood was peculiar to the sin offering in Leviticus 1–7. This feature occurs again in Lev 4:17, where it refers to the sin offering for the entire congregation.

¹⁵³ This is grammatically possible since the noun based on the *piel* formation of the root may render the opposite meaning. The idea would be “de-sin” (see *GKC* § 52h; *IBHS* § 24.4d; Levine, *Leviticus*, 20; Wenham, *Leviticus*, 89, n. 3, and G. Anderson, “Sacrifice and Sacrificial Offerings [OT],” *ABD* 5:879).

¹⁵⁴ Zohar, “Repentance and Purification,” 618, n. 38. Similarly, see Kaiser, “Leviticus,” 1033.

¹⁵⁵ Although the word may appear in parallelism with related terms that may be translated “sin” (*ʿāwōn* in Ezra 9:13 and *ḥāṭṭāt* in 2 Chr 28:13), the major denotation of the term should be viewed as the result or consequence of sin, i.e., “guilt” (*HALOT* 1:95).

¹⁵⁶ Zohar, “Repentance and Purification,” 614.

¹⁵⁷ Instructions for the curtain are given in Exod 26:31–37. The curtain separated the Holy of Holies, where the ark of the covenant was housed, from the rest of the sanctuary. It was this curtain that was torn in two at Christ's crucifixion (Matt 27:51; Mark 15:38; Luke 23:45).

It also appears in the ordinance of the red heifer in Num 19:4. The seven-fold sprinkling was also part of the Day of Atonement ritual (Lev 16:14,15,19), the purification of the leper ritual (13:13), and the dedication of the altar (8:11).¹⁵⁸

Another unique feature of the sin offering and the offering of the Day of Atonement sacrifice was the dabbing of the blood on the horns of the incense altar (4:7).¹⁵⁹ Since, as noted above, incense was associated with intercession, Kaiser maintains that the blood was applied to the four corners of the incense altar to indicate that the sinner's prayers and intercessions are accepted.¹⁶⁰

Also unique to the sin offering was the disposal of blood at the base of the altar. In other animal sacrifices the blood was completely used. It was offered up, sprinkled, or drained around the burnt offering altar (1:5,11,15; 3:2,8,13).

4:8–12 Verses 8–10 state that the fat of the animal was to be removed. In this passage a comparison is made to the removal and burning of the fat of the fellowship offering on the altar of burnt offering, thus assuming the prescription of the previous offering in Leviticus 3. In vv. 11 and 12 it is mentioned that in the sin offering the skin of the animal was to be burned along with its head, legs, inner parts, and offal and that this burning was to be done outside the camp on the ash heap.¹⁶¹ This process contrasts with the burnt offering, where all of the animal was burned apart from the skin. The only other offering that required the burning of the skin occurred on the Day of Atonement (16:27). The fact that the skin was burned outside the camp was also not part of any of the previous legislation concerning the offering of sacrifices. This extreme measure of burning a part of the offering "outside of the camp" and its resemblance to the ceremony of the Day of Atonement would be a constant reminder to the Israelites that the commission of a sin was a matter of great seriousness, for it constituted an offense against God.¹⁶²

¹⁵⁸ See Milgrom, *Leviticus 1–16*, 233.

¹⁵⁹ See Levine, *Leviticus*, 21. The horns of the incense altar were one piece with the altar and projected from the four corners (Exod 27:2; 30:2). Specifying these extremities would be a way of referring to the altar as a whole. Similar altars have been discovered in Palestine at Megiddo and Beer-sheba (Milgrom, *Leviticus 1–16*, 234; E. Ball, "Horns of the Altar," *ISBE* 2:758).

¹⁶⁰ Kaiser, "Leviticus," 1035.

¹⁶¹ The phrase אֶשׁ הָאֵשׁ occurs only in Lev 4:12. The noun is related to the root שָׂפַךְ, which means "to pour." The LXX translates the noun as meaning "ashes, heap of ashes" (see *BAGD*, σποδς, 763; LSJ σποδια, 1629).

¹⁶² That a special dump for the ashes of sacrifices existed in the time of the monarchy is evident in Jer 31:40 and Ezek 43:21. The existence of this dump is also mentioned in rabbinic literature as existing north of Jerusalem (see *t. Pesah* 3:17; *b. Yoma* 68a, Milgrom, *Leviticus 1–16*, 240).

These additional measures undertaken in the atonement of a sin committed by a high priest were necessary because of the uniqueness of his position in the Israelite community. Calvin asserts, "The more illustrious was his dignity, the more diligently and zealously ought his life to be confirmed to the model of holiness."¹⁶³ The same truth applies to those who serve in positions of leadership today in the church of Jesus Christ.

(3) *Sin Offering for Inadvertent Sin of Congregation (4:13–21)*

13"If the whole Israelite community sins unintentionally and does what is forbidden in any of the LORD's commands, even though the community is unaware of the matter, they are guilty. **14**When they become aware of the sin they committed, the assembly must bring a young bull as a sin offering and present it before the Tent of Meeting. **15**The elders of the community are to lay their hands on the bull's head before the LORD, and the bull shall be slaughtered before the LORD. **16**Then the anointed priest is to take some of the bull's blood into the Tent of Meeting. **17**He shall dip his finger into the blood and sprinkle it before the LORD seven times in front of the curtain. **18**He is to put some of the blood on the horns of the altar that is before the LORD in the Tent of Meeting. The rest of the blood he shall pour out at the base of the altar of burnt offering at the entrance to the Tent of Meeting. **19**He shall remove all the fat from it and burn it on the altar, **20**and do with this bull just as he did with the bull for the sin offering. In this way the priest will make atonement for them, and they will be forgiven. **21**Then he shall take the bull outside the camp and burn it as he burned the first bull. This is the sin offering for the community.

4:13–21 That a new section begins in 4:13 is indicated by the occurrence of the conjunction *waw* and particle *ʾim* (*wəʾim*) translated "if" in the NIV.¹⁶⁴ The discussion of the sin offering moves from the procedure that is to take place for the commission of a sin by the high priest to that of the sin of the "whole Israelite community."¹⁶⁵

The same general procedure for the sin offering for the high priest is repeated apart from a few additions and a few omissions. Additions

¹⁶³ Calvin, *The Last Four Books of Moses*, 2:342.

¹⁶⁴ Milgrom is representative of those who maintain that the inadvertent sin of the whole congregation is actually the same offense as was mentioned in the previous paragraph, the sin of the high priest. The priest as representative of the congregation brings guilt upon the people by his sin, so it could be stated that the entire congregation has committed the offense (*Leviticus 1–16*, 242). Support for this position may also be found in Lev 4:20 in the phrase "the priest will make atonement for them, and they will be forgiven," which serves as a sectional conclusion, perhaps indicating that the sin of the high priest and of the congregation go together. This phrase indicates the end of a section in 4:26,31,35.

¹⁶⁵ The noun translated "community" is the Hb. noun אָהֳלֵי. This noun is from the root אָהַל and carries the meaning "to appoint" (BDB, 416–17). The idea may be that Israel is a community or congregation "appointed" by God. The root אָהַל is also the root for the term *mōēd*, "tabernacle," i.e., "appointed place."

include the reference to the fact that the inadvertent sin is initially hidden (*ne^clam*, 4:13a) and then is discovered (*nōdē^cā*, 4:13–14), as well as the twice-mentioned statement that the procedure for the sin offering of the people is like the one made for the high priest (4:20–21). In addition, the conclusion of the paragraph includes a statement that the priest makes atonement for the people and they are forgiven (4:20). Omitted from the procedure of the first paragraph is the mention of the removal of the fat of the bull (4:8–10). This paragraph just mentions in summary fashion that the fat is removed (4:19).

As was discussed in the case of the burnt offering in Leviticus 1, the omissions from the previous paragraph regarding the inadvertent sin of the high priest were understood to be part of the procedure for the sin offering for the congregation. This fact is verified by the explicit comment that the procedure for the sin offering for the Israelite community was to be carried out just like the one for the high priest (4:20–21). Moreover, the additions of this section also should be understood as prescriptions for the first paragraph. Of paramount importance is the additional statement in 4:20 that atonement and forgiveness are the desired effects of the sin offering. It is safe to assume that though this statement is absent from the paragraph regarding the sin offering of the high priest, it was also true of that offering as well.

An important terminological addition is the occurrence of the root *slh*. The root *slh* (“forgiveness”) occurs for the first time in Leviticus in 4:20. This is the unique term for forgiveness in the Old Testament, and it has only God as its subject. Many relate the nontheological, concrete meaning of the root to the Akkadian cognate, which has the meaning “to wash, sprinkle.” Theologically this root would convey the notion that forgiveness is equivalent to having sins “washed away.”¹⁶⁶ The fact that only God is the subject and author of forgiveness explains the scribes’ reaction to Jesus’ announcement that the sins of the paralytic had been forgiven (Mark 2:7). Jesus’ pronouncement was in fact a claim to be equal with God.

The sin offering for the high priest and the Israelite community at large had more in common than the fact that both required a bull, the most economically costly offering. The unique features of the sin offerings for both the high priest and the congregation also included the sevenfold sprinkling of the blood in front of the curtain within the sanctuary, the placement of blood on the horns of the incense altar, and taking the remains of the bull outside the camp. All of these characteristics indicated

¹⁶⁶ See J. J. Stamm, סלח, *slh*, *THAT* 2:150–51; Levine, *Leviticus*, 24.

the severity of the sin of the high priest and the Israelite community at large.¹⁶⁷

(4) *Sin Offering for Inadvertent Sin of Ruler (4:22–26)*

22“When a leader sins unintentionally and does what is forbidden in any of the commands of the LORD his God, he is guilty. **23**When he is made aware of the sin he committed, he must bring as his offering a male goat without defect. **24**He is to lay his hand on the goat’s head and slaughter it at the place where the burnt offering is slaughtered before the LORD. It is a sin offering. **25**Then the priest shall take some of the blood of the sin offering with his finger and put it on the horns of the altar of burnt offering and pour out the rest of the blood at the base of the altar. **26**He shall burn all the fat on the altar as he burned the fat of the fellowship offering. In this way the priest will make atonement for the man’s sin, and he will be forgiven.

4:22–26 Beginning in v. 22 a new section of the sin offering is introduced by the particle *ʿāšer*, “when.” This section deals with the sin offering to be presented by the *nāšîʿ* (“leader”).¹⁶⁸ The offering of the leader was to be distinguished from the first two sin offerings in Leviticus 4. First of all, the victim was different. In the sin offerings for the high priest or the Israelite community a bull was offered. For the political leader, on the other hand, it was a male goat that was offered, which was less costly. In the sin offering for the leader the blood of the animal was not to be sprinkled inside the Tent or Holy Place but rather on the horns of the altar of burnt offering. Nor was the carcass to be burned outside the camp, as was the case in the sin offerings for the high priest and the people.¹⁶⁹ All of these changes indicate that the sin of the leader, while certainly grievous, was not as serious as that of the high priest or the Israelite community at large.¹⁷⁰ The offering was efficacious because atonement was provided and the leader experienced forgiveness (4:26).

¹⁶⁷J. Licht, *תורת כהנים*, *EM* 7:224; Jenson, “The Levitical Sacrifice,” 32–33. In a parallel text in Num 15:22–31 a goat is brought for the sin offering instead of a bull. Two opposing views are given for this distinction in Jewish tradition. According to the Mishnah this distinction was necessary because the offense in Numbers was that of idolatry (*m. Hor* 2:6). In the Temple Scroll of the Dead Sea Scrolls, Num 15 was the general practice and the offering of Lev 4 referred only to the occasion of ordination (Anderson, “Sacrifices,” 879). A. Rainey apparently agrees with the Mishnah when he states that a goat was to be brought instead of a bull when a ritual infraction had occurred (“Sacrifice,” *EncJud* 14:600).

¹⁶⁸Hb. *נָשִׂיא* is related to the root *נָשָׂא*, meaning “to lift up, elevate.” The term is used today in Modern Hebrew to refer to the “President.”

¹⁶⁹Moreover, the priests could partake of the portion of the sin offering for the secular ruler but not of the two previous sin offerings, when the bull was offered.

¹⁷⁰See Milgrom, *Leviticus 1–16*, 246; Levine, *Leviticus*, 24.

(5) *Sin Offering for Inadvertent Sin of Individual (4:27–35)*

²⁷“If a member of the community sins unintentionally and does what is forbidden in any of the LORD’s commands, he is guilty. ²⁸When he is made aware of the sin he committed, he must bring as his offering for the sin he committed a female goat without defect. ²⁹He is to lay his hand on the head of the sin offering and slaughter it at the place of the burnt offering. ³⁰Then the priest is to take some of the blood with his finger and put it on the horns of the altar of burnt offering and pour out the rest of the blood at the base of the altar. ³¹He shall remove all the fat, just as the fat is removed from the fellowship offering, and the priest shall burn it on the altar as an aroma pleasing to the LORD. In this way the priest will make atonement for him, and he will be forgiven.

³²“If he brings a lamb as his sin offering, he is to bring a female without defect. ³³He is to lay his hand on its head and slaughter it for a sin offering at the place where the burnt offering is slaughtered. ³⁴Then the priest shall take some of the blood of the sin offering with his finger and put it on the horns of the altar of burnt offering and pour out the rest of the blood at the base of the altar. ³⁵He shall remove all the fat, just as the fat is removed from the lamb of the fellowship offering, and the priest shall burn it on the altar on top of the offerings made to the LORD by fire. In this way the priest will make atonement for him for the sin he has committed, and he will be forgiven.

4:27–35 The rest of Leviticus 4 prescribes the procedure for the presentation of a sin offering of an individual Israelite.¹⁷¹ The procedure was virtually identical with the procedure mentioned in the previous paragraph regarding the sin offering of the ruler, although this section adds an additional instruction regarding the choice of a female lamb (4:32) instead of a female goat (4:28). The political leader was only to offer a male goat for his sin offering. Giving the individual Israelite some latitude in the offering he may present is analogous to the sliding scale for the burnt offering in chap. 1, since the sin offerings, like the burnt offerings, were not to result in deprivation for the individual worshiper. Providing this latitude for the Israelite also indicated that the offenses of Israel’s leaders, particularly the high priest, were considered more serious than that of an ordinary Israelite. The greater severity of the religious leader’s offense is congruent with the New Testament teaching that not many members of the church should aspire to be teacher-leaders because their punishment would be more severe (Jas 3:1). The reason for this distinction must be that the effects of the leader’s sin would be more far-reaching, damaging the people of faith as well as providing a poor testimony for outsiders (1 Tim 3:7).¹⁷²

¹⁷¹ Hb. *בְּנֵי הָאָרֶץ*, “people of the land,” would refer to those Israelites who did not have leadership positions in the nation of Israel.

¹⁷² Hartley, *Leviticus*, 71–72.

(6) *Sin Offering for Specific Inadvertent Offenses (5:1–13)*

¹“If a person sins because he does not speak up when he hears a public charge to testify regarding something he has seen or learned about, he will be held responsible.

²“Or if a person touches anything ceremonially unclean—whether the carcasses of unclean wild animals or of unclean livestock or of unclean creatures that move along the ground—even though he is unaware of it, he has become unclean and is guilty.

³“Or if he touches human uncleanness—anything that would make him unclean—even though he is unaware of it, when he learns of it he will be guilty.

⁴“Or if a person thoughtlessly takes an oath to do anything, whether good or evil—in any matter one might carelessly swear about—even though he is unaware of it, in any case when he learns of it he will be guilty.

⁵“When anyone is guilty in any of these ways, he must confess in what way he has sinned ⁶and, as a penalty for the sin he has committed, he must bring to the LORD a female lamb or goat from the flock as a sin offering; and the priest shall make atonement for him for his sin.

⁷“If he cannot afford a lamb, he is to bring two doves or two young pigeons to the LORD as a penalty for his sin—one for a sin offering and the other for a burnt offering. ⁸He is to bring them to the priest, who shall first offer the one for the sin offering. He is to wring its head from its neck, not severing it completely, ⁹and is to sprinkle some of the blood of the sin offering against the side of the altar; the rest of the blood must be drained out at the base of the altar. It is a sin offering. ¹⁰The priest shall then offer the other as a burnt offering in the prescribed way and make atonement for him for the sin he has committed, and he will be forgiven.

¹¹“If, however, he cannot afford two doves or two young pigeons, he is to bring as an offering for his sin a tenth of an ephah of fine flour for a sin offering. He must not put oil or incense on it, because it is a sin offering. ¹²He is to bring it to the priest, who shall take a handful of it as a memorial portion and burn it on the altar on top of the offerings made to the LORD by fire. It is a sin offering. ¹³In this way the priest will make atonement for him for any of these sins he has committed, and he will be forgiven. The rest of the offering will belong to the priest, as in the case of the grain offering.”

A new section clearly begins in Lev 5:1 since the verse begins with the formulaic expression *wēnepeš kī teḥēṭā* (“If a person sins”). Additional illustrations of a person committing an offense are introduced by the particle *ʔō* (“Or”; 5:2,3,4), which indicates parallel violations. Verses 5 and 6 break the pattern and function as a summary statement for 5:1–4. They describe the type of sacrifice that must be brought for the offerer to be atoned for the sin. The rest of the section (5:7–10 and 5:11–13) should be viewed as two subordinate sections to vv. 5 and 6 that provide exceptional offerings for those who cannot afford to bring the female lamb or goat from the flock as the sin offering.

5:1–4 Verses 1–4 mention four specific inadvertent sins that must be forgiven through the offering of the sin offering. The offenses include withholding evidence (5:1),¹⁷³ touching an unclean animal (5:2), human uncleanness (5:3), and taking a thoughtless oath (5:4).¹⁷⁴ The consequence for the first offense is that the man must “bear his iniquity” (“be held responsible”), while in the latter three cases the individual has become “guilty” (*ʿāšēm*). The order of the offenses is arranged chiasmatically:

- A not testifying to oath (v. 1)
- B touching unclean animal (v. 2)
- B' touching unclean human (v. 3)
- A' improper oath (v. 4)

The contact with the unclean (5:3–4) receives fuller treatment in Leviticus 13 and will be discussed below. The violations involving the taking of an oath in an inappropriate way are not immediately apparent and warrant explanation.

The point at issue in 5:1 was the failure of a witness to testify in a legal case. Failure to give testimony was referred to as not keeping an oath. An oath was a solemn promise between individuals (Gen 24:41; 26:28) and is used here as in Prov 29:24 to refer to court testimony.¹⁷⁵ According to Jewish tradition if a defendant refused to take an oath, a *herem*, “ban,” would be pronounced against him that would be in effect for thirty days. If the person continued to refuse to testify, he would then be subject to flogging.¹⁷⁶ The person who refused to testify was “held responsible” (“bore his iniquity”).¹⁷⁷ The phrase should be understood to mean that the punishment was to be meted out by God.¹⁷⁸

What was at issue in the taking of an impulsive oath (5:4) was the fact that the oath taker had put himself under obligation; he had promised to do or not do something in a haphazard fashion. That an oath puts one under obligation is vividly illustrated in 1 Kgs 1:13,17,30, where David was reminded of his oath to place Solomon on the throne. Failure to fulfill an oath was punishable by God (Ezek 17:13,16,18–19) since divine sanc-

¹⁷³ Milgrom interprets *b. Sanh.* 43a,b of the Talmud as charging Jesus with the commission of this offense (*Leviticus 1–16*, 297).

¹⁷⁴ Milgrom maintains that the root אָשַׁם suggests an impulsive statement and cites Num 30:7; Prov 12:18; and Ps 106:33 as illustrations (*Leviticus 1–16*, 299).

¹⁷⁵ J. Scott, אָשַׁם (*ʿāšā*), *TWOT* 1:45.

¹⁷⁶ H. Cohn, “Oath,” *EncJud* 12:1302.

¹⁷⁷ Wenham believes the expression refers to a curse on witnesses who fail to come forward and cites Judg 17:2 and Prov 29:24 as illustrations (*Leviticus*, 100). In the OT sin and punishment are not radically separate notions. The word אָשַׁם, which is employed for both concepts, is related to the verb אָשַׁם, which means “to bend, twist, deviate from the way” (C. Schultz, אָשַׁם [*ʿāwā*], *TWOT* 2:650–51).

¹⁷⁸ Milgrom, *Leviticus 1–16*, 295.

tions were part of the oath formula (1 Sam 3:17; 14:44; 2 Sam 3:35; 1 Kgs 2:23; 13:5–6).¹⁷⁹

In this section we see two important components of Israel's religion, purity expressed in what is sacred and responsibility in taking an oath (particularly in reference to a legal case).¹⁸⁰ This twofold nature of biblical religion is reflected in the Ten Commandments, which begin with one's personal relationship with God and then move to one's relationship to others. The commandments address both the vertical and horizontal relationships. This twofold nature of the believer's responsibilities is in harmony with Jesus' teaching (Matt 22:37–38) and with the New Testament as a whole (1 John 4:20).

5:5–6 Leviticus 5:5–6 addresses the sin offering to be offered for these inadvertent offenses,¹⁸¹ which are touching something unclean and inappropriate oaths. The sin offering was presented as a penalty for a personal offense (ʿăšāmō).¹⁸² These verses look back to what has preceded in that they describe the atonement ritual for the cited offenses (5:1–4). They are a link to the following sections (5:7–13), which continue the discussion on the offerings acceptable for the sin offering. The repetition of the phrase *lē/mēʾahat mēʾelleh* (“in any of these ways” / “for any of these,” 5:5,13) reinforces this evaluation, pointing back to the previous context and indicating that the entire section of 5:7–13 provides the divine remedy to 5:1–4.

What is most striking about the prescription for atonement is the guilty party's obligation to confess the offense that has been committed. The word “confess” is from the root *ydh*,¹⁸³ which has the meaning of “expose or reveal” and may be rendered “confess” or “praise.” The connection between these two concepts is determined by whether the focus of the action is upon God or man. If man is the object, the idea of confession of sin is paramount; but if God is the object, the notion of praise is called for. This distinction bears out the difference between God and man; expo-

¹⁷⁹ See Milgrom, *Leviticus 1–16*, 300; E. F. Campbell, *Ruth*, AB (Garden City: Doubleday, 1975), 74. For discussion of oaths in the ANE, see Milgrom, *Leviticus 1–16*, 313–14.

¹⁸⁰ In the ANE legal archives were normally located in the temple complexes, which again suggests the overlap of these two spheres of life in the ancient world (Levine, *Leviticus*, 27).

¹⁸¹ The new section is introduced by the previously unused construction in Leviticus, **כִּי יִשָּׂא אִשָּׁמ**, “when anyone is guilty,” which introduces a summation of how the offenses mentioned in 5:1–4 are to be atoned.

¹⁸² The word *ʿāšam*, “penalty,” is the same root for the guilt offering and has been translated “guilt offering” or “trespass offering” by such translations as the NASB and NKJV. The root here, however, is nontechnical and has been correctly rendered by the NIV and NRSV as “penalty” (see 5:15; 6:6; 19:21; Milgrom, *Leviticus 1–16*, 303; Hartley, *Leviticus*, 69).

¹⁸³ In the *qal* or *piel* stem the verb means “to throw, cast.” This is the root of **יָדָה**, “Judah,” which means “praise.”

sure of the true nature of God naturally leads to praise, while the revealing of the true nature of man leads to confession. Confession is thus the opposite of concealment (Ps 32:5).¹⁸⁴ Although the need for confession is particularly appropriate at this juncture, it should not be limited to these offenses.¹⁸⁵ We must assume that all Israelites who desired to have their sins forgiven must have admitted their guilt before God. Confession would then be an essential prerequisite for expiation and atonement. Any sin and guilt offerings prescribed in the law had to be preceded by confession.¹⁸⁶ The crucial role of confession was highlighted on the Day of Atonement (Lev 16:21). Confession is emphasized in 5:5 because the violations of 5:1–4 are of a deliberate nature. Thus confession was a means whereby a deliberate sin was considered an inadvertent sin, which qualified it to be expiated.¹⁸⁷ The rabbis declared: “Great is repentance, which converts intentional sins into unintentional ones” (*b. Yoma* 86b). Thus every case of forgiveness and atonement presupposes confession on the part of the worshiper (see *m. Yoma* 8:8; *b. Sebu* 13a; *t. Yoma* 8:9).¹⁸⁸ Confession is a sign of repentance.¹⁸⁹

The last two sections (5:7–10; 5:11–13) deal with the sin offerings for those who were financially deprived and unable to afford the lamb for the sin offering. These qualifications are in keeping with what was prescribed in the discussion of the burnt offering in Leviticus 1.¹⁹⁰ If an individual could not afford the lamb, he was to bring two doves or two pigeons, one to be offered as the sin offering and the other as a burnt offering that had an expiatory function (see 1:4). When presented in conjunction with other offerings, the sin offering always preceded a subsequent burnt or guilt offering. The order of sin offering followed by the burnt offering is not without significance. The sin offering must first take place to restore the

¹⁸⁴ B. Levine, “The Epilogue to the Holiness Code,” in *Judaic Perspectives on Ancient Israel*, ed. J. Neusner, B. Levine, and E. Frerichs (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1987), 18.

¹⁸⁵ Since both sin offerings and guilt offerings were presented for the commission of specific sins, it would be reasonable to assume that the presentation of such a sacrifice involved the public confession of the particular offense (W. Lasor, D. Hubbard, and F. Bush, *Old Testament Survey*, 1st ed. [Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1982], 154).

¹⁸⁶ Ed., “Confession of Sins,” *EncJud* 5:878. See also Eichrodt, *Theology*, 1:160–61; Levine, *Leviticus*, 28.

¹⁸⁷ The rabbis decreed that the confession must take place before a quorum of ten. For a full discussion see Milgrom, *Leviticus 1–16*, 301–3.

¹⁸⁸ See the excellent discussion by Milgrom, *Leviticus 1–16*, 373–78, and von Rad, 1, 271.

¹⁸⁹ D. Fürst, ὁμολογέω, *DNTT* 1:346, and H. E. Jacobs, “Confess, Confession,” *ISBE* 1:799. According to rabbinic tradition any sin could be forgiven following the proper atonement procedure if repentance was exhibited (E. P. Sanders, *Paul and Palestinian Judaism* [Minneapolis: Fortress, 1977], 147).

¹⁹⁰ The regulations of the burnt offering of Leviticus 1 are in fact assumed in the context with the phrase מִבְּשֵׁרֵי, “in the prescribed way” (4:10).

worshiper to God. Sin must be atoned for before there could be communion with God.¹⁹¹ The burnt offering is the first act of worship after forgiveness.¹⁹²

A person who was even more economically deprived could bring a tenth of an ephah of fine flour as grain offering (4:11–13). In this presentation of the grain as a sin offering the normal accessories of oil and frankincense are specifically ruled out (4:13). In the normal presentation of the grain offering these elements would accompany the sacrifice and would accentuate the joy of the occasion. Because in this exceptional case the grain offering was being substituted for the sin offering; those elements that would be associated with joy are omitted.¹⁹³

(7) Conclusion

As noted in the discussion above, this passage presents a sliding scale on two different levels. In Lev 4:1–35 the offenses of different segments of Israelite society required different types of sin offerings to effect the desired expiation. The sin of the high priest was at the top of the scale, and this indicated that he was capable of bringing greater judgment upon the community. This is similar to the New Testament teaching regarding teachers in Jas 3:1. In Leviticus 5 sin offerings were determined by a person's economic position. The sacrifice any person brought as a sin offering would be costly, but there was no desire on God's part to impoverish.

Also, as was stated above, only inadvertent offenses qualified for expiation in the Old Testament. This notion may be reflected in the New Testament as well. Paul states that he received forgiveness for his persecution of the church because he acted ignorantly in unbelief (1 Tim 1:13).¹⁹⁴ Similarly, Jesus' announcement from the cross, "Father, forgive them for they know not what they do," may also reflect the same notion.¹⁹⁵

It should be noted that in this extensive discussion of atonement for sin the sin offering held "the chief place amongst the sacrifices, inasmuch as, without reconciliation, there could never by any intercourse between men

¹⁹¹ V. P. Hamilton, "Recent Studies in Leviticus and their Contribution to a Further Understanding of Wesleyan Theology," in *A Spectrum of Thought: Essays in Honor of Dennis F. Kinlaw*, ed. M. L. Peterson (Asbury: Asbury College, 1982), 148–49, and Anderson, "Sacrifices," 880.

¹⁹² Levine, *Leviticus*, 29. For similar comments from rabbinic literature, see Milgrom, *Leviticus 1–16*, 304.

¹⁹³ See Levine, *Leviticus*, 29–30; Milgrom, *Leviticus 1–16*, 306, and Kaiser, "Leviticus," 1036.

¹⁹⁴ Knight argues that the inadvertent sin is the theological background for Paul's discussion of his struggle with sin in Rom 7 (*Leviticus*, 27).

¹⁹⁵ See J. N. D. Kelly, *A Commentary on the Pastoral Epistles* (London: A. & C. Black, 1963), 53.

and God.”¹⁹⁶ In the New Testament the apostle Paul identified Jesus Christ as the sin offering who brought reconciliation between God and man (2 Cor 5:20–21).¹⁹⁷ So while this passage is the most concentrated discussion of sin, it is also the most concentrated discussion of forgiveness in the Old Testament.¹⁹⁸ One of the unique features of the sin offering was the taking of the victim outside the camp. Taking the sin offering outside the camp prefigures the death of Christ, for he died outside the city gate (Heb 13:11–12).

Moreover, Wenham has observed an additional possible parallel with the New Testament related to the presence of God in the believer’s life and the purification effected by the sin offering:

Though Israel was still the chosen people, when it sinned it no longer enjoyed the benefits of God’s presence (cf Exod 32; Lev 10; Num 14, etc.). In a similar way the Christian is warned not to “grieve the Spirit” (Eph 4:30) by sin. God’s presence is now mediated by the Holy Spirit indwelling the believer (Eph 2:22); that is why Christ’s death has to purify our “conscience” or “heart.” There is the continued threat in the NT that sin can drive the Spirit from the believer just as under the law God could be driven from the tabernacle. The Christian is told to walk in the Spirit and be filled with the Spirit (Gal 5:25; Eph 5:18). . . . For a Christian the animal offering is no longer necessary, since Christ’s death has brought purification, but confession is, if fellowship is to be reestablished.¹⁹⁹

Just as the sin offering purified the temple, the special place of God’s presence in the Old Testament, so the New Testament believer, who has the Holy Spirit residing within, needs purification to maintain fellowship with God (1 Cor 6:19–20).

In Leviticus 5 we also noted the central role of confession in the sin offering. The necessity of confession indicated that forgiveness for the Israelite could not be attained simply by following the prescribed procedure given for a sacrifice. This would be tantamount to magic, which the Old Testament condemns. Rather, while proper procedure had to be followed, it was understood that the one making the offering did so with a heartfelt conviction that he was guilty of sin before God. This attitude on the part of the worshiper was essential if the offering was to be efficacious. The necessity

¹⁹⁶ Calvin, *The Last Four Books of Moses*, 340.

¹⁹⁷ Rainey, “Sacrifices and Offerings,” 210. It is also likely that the Greek expression *περὶ αμαρτίας* (Rom 8:3) is the equivalent of a sin offering, for this Greek expression was used in the OT to translate *חַטָּאת* (R. T. Beckwith, “The Death of Christ as a Sacrifice in the Teaching of Paul and Hebrews,” in *Sacrifice in the Bible*, ed. R. Beckwith and M. Selman [Grand Rapids: Baker, 1995], 131).

¹⁹⁸ Eight of the forty-six occurrences of *חַטָּאת* in the OT occur in Leviticus 4–5.

¹⁹⁹ Wenham, *Leviticus*, 103.

of repentance and confession in coming to God by means of a sacrifice has not changed in the New Testament era. For Christ's atonement to be applied to a sinner, the individual must acknowledge his sinful condition and confess that Jesus is Lord (e.g., Rom 10:9–10).

6. The Guilt Offering (5:14–6:7 [MT 5:26])

The last of the five sacrifices in the Israelite sacrificial system was the guilt offering. The guilt offering should be grouped together with the sin offering, since both deal with specific sins committed. Thus they are distinguished from the burnt offering, the grain offering, and the fellowship offering. The distinction between the sin offering and the guilt offering has been variously understood. According to Philo the sin offering was presented for involuntary faults against one's neighbor, while the guilt offering covered involuntary faults and voluntary transgressions against God. Josephus states that the presence of witnesses was the criterion that separated these two types of sacrifices. The sin offering was brought before witnesses, but the guilt offering was not. Origen believed the main difference was the gravity of the sin committed. The sin offering was offered for offenses that deserved death, while the guilt offering was for less grievous sins. Augustine, on the other hand, claimed that the sin offering was presented for sins committed and for voluntary faults, while the guilt offering was presented for either sins of omission or involuntary offenses.²⁰⁰

The best criterion for making a distinction between the sin offering and the guilt offering is explicit in this text. It is the issue of compensation. The guilt offering, in contrast to the sin offering, was required for the type of offense that created a debt calling for compensation.²⁰¹ This compensation applied both to indebtedness incurred by mistreatment of one's fellow man and for the improper treatment of one of God's "holy things."

The two main sections of the guilt offering begin with the opening phrase often occurring at the beginning of a new section in Leviticus, "The LORD said to Moses" (5:14; 6:1). Moreover, at the beginning of these two sections the particle *kî* ("when"; 5:15; 6:2) introduces the main cases. The subordinate clause in the first paragraph is introduced by the particle *ʾim* ("if"; 5:17), whereas the second section has an additional *kî* (6:4) clause and is functionally parallel to the phrase beginning in 6:2.

²⁰⁰ De Vaux, *Studies in Old Testament*, 98–99.

²⁰¹ See Anderson, "Sacrifice and Sacrificial Offerings (OT)," 880. For illustrations of the guilt offering being performed later in Israel's history see 1 Sam 6:3–4; 2 Kgs 12:16. If restitution could not be made to the offended individual or to his family, the reparations were then given to the priests (Num 5:5–10).

Both major sections close with the formula used repeatedly in 4:1–6:7 [MT 5:26]: “The priest will make atonement for him ..., and he will be forgiven” (5:18; 6:7). The discussion of the guilt offering is divided into Guilt Offerings for Inadvertent Sin (5:14–19) and Guilt Offerings for Deliberate Sin (6:1–7 [MT 5:20–26]).

(1) *Guilt Offerings for Inadvertent Sin (5:14–19)*

¹⁴The LORD said to Moses: ¹⁵“When a person commits a violation and sins unintentionally in regard to any of the LORD’s holy things, he is to bring to the LORD as a penalty a ram from the flock, one without defect and of the proper value in silver, according to the sanctuary shekel. It is a guilt offering. ¹⁶He must make restitution for what he has failed to do in regard to the holy things, add a fifth of the value to that and give it all to the priest, who will make atonement for him with the ram as a guilt offering, and he will be forgiven.

¹⁷“If a person sins and does what is forbidden in any of the LORD’s commands, even though he does not know it, he is guilty and will be held responsible. ¹⁸He is to bring to the priest as a guilt offering a ram from the flock, one without defect and of the proper value. In this way the priest will make atonement for him for the wrong he has committed unintentionally, and he will be forgiven. ¹⁹It is a guilt offering; he has been guilty of wrongdoing against the LORD.”

GUILT OFFERING FOR VIOLATION OF SACRED PLACE (5:14–16).

5:14–16 Sinning against the holy places or holy objects constituted “committing a violation” (*tim^cōl ma^cal*). The root *m^cl* suggests acting unfaithfully or treacherously, violating one’s obligations in either the judicial or religious sphere.²⁰² Most often the root is used to designate the violation of religious law as a conscious act of treachery against God, who would be the offended party. The idea is that an act of defection from covenantal allegiance had been committed. This sin caused Judah’s exile (Ezek 39:23; Dan 9:7). It describes unfaithfulness among those who are in a covenant relationship with the Lord.²⁰³ The verb is used in Josh 7:1 to describe the heinous sin of Achan, who took things devoted to the Lord (Josh 6:18). The word is also used to describe such atrocities as King Uzziah’s assumption of priestly authority (2 Chr 26:16–18) and King Ahaz’s promotion of idol worship in Israel (2 Chr 28:19–25; 29:19). This offense was thus viewed as sacrilege, as a direct affront against Israel’s God with whom the Israelites were aligned by covenant agreement.²⁰⁴

²⁰² See BDB, 591; *HALOT* 2:612–13.

²⁰³ V. Hamilton, מַעַל (*mā^cal*), *TWOT* 1:519–20.

²⁰⁴ Hartley, *Leviticus*, 80–81, and Milgrom, *Leviticus 1–16*, 320, 345–56.

The prescribed offering for this type offense was a ram²⁰⁵ without blemish and compensation (Lev 5:15–16).²⁰⁶ The additional restitution of twenty percent is the salient feature of the guilt offering. It indicates that the commission of the offense has created indebtedness.²⁰⁷ Rainey summarizes the function of the guilt offering and explains why this specific offering was also to be presented in the otherwise enigmatic case regarding the cleansing of the leper:

The guilt offering was a specialized kind of sin offering (cf 5:7) required in cases when someone had been denied his rightful due; reparation of the valued amount defrauded was required plus a fine of twenty percent (Lev 5:6; 6:5 [MT 5:24]). ... As with the sin offering, the animal went to the priest as food (7:6,7; 14:13). The guilt offering was commanded in instances when another party had suffered some deprivation. The case of the leper can be assigned to this category in that the Lord was deprived of the service due from the infected person so long as his disease kept him outside the pale of the ritually clean society (Lev 14:12–18).²⁰⁸

Restitution is made through monetary payment plus twenty percent, and forgiveness is provided for the guilty party through the guilt offering sacrifice.

GUILT OFFERING FOR VIOLATION OF COMMANDMENTS (5:17–19).
5:15–17 This section addresses general offenses or violations of the Law, indicating that they are also regarded as a desecration of the name of God.²⁰⁹ Wenham maintains that this section addresses the situation where an individual feels guilt for his sin and begins to suffer for it.²¹⁰ This understanding is supported by the statement that the individual who has violated the Law was not initially aware of it (5:18). For atonement to accrue, as in the case of the commission of sacrilege (5:15–16), a blameless ram had to be brought to the priest by the one who committed the offense.

(2) *Guilt Offerings for Deliberate Sin (6:1–7) [MT 5:20–26]*

¹The LORD said to Moses: ²“If anyone sins and is unfaithful to the LORD by deceiving his neighbor about something entrusted to him or left in his care or

²⁰⁵ The cleansed leper and the defiled Nazirite brought a male lamb as a guilt offering (Lev 14:12,21; Num 6:12).

²⁰⁶ The compensation is according to the shekel of the tabernacle. The sanctuary shekel is mentioned also in Exod 30:13; Lev 27:27; Num 3:47; 18:16; Ezek 45:12.

²⁰⁷ See HALOT 1:96; D. Kellermann, אֲשָׁם, *ʾāšam*, TDOT 1:431. The amount of shekels was probably established by the priests (Hartley, *Leviticus*, 81).

²⁰⁸ Rainey, “Sacrifices and Offerings,” 204; “Sacrifice,” *EncJud* 14:602. See also Calvin, *The Last Four Books of Moses*, 2:350.

²⁰⁹ Milgrom, *Leviticus 1–16*, 332.

²¹⁰ Wenham, *Leviticus*, 108.

stolen, or if he cheats him,³ or if he finds lost property and lies about it, or if he swears falsely, or if he commits any such sin that people may do—⁴ when he thus sins and becomes guilty, he must return what he has stolen or taken by extortion, or what was entrusted to him, or the lost property he found,⁵ or whatever it was he swore falsely about. He must make restitution in full, add a fifth of the value to it and give it all to the owner on the day he presents his guilt offering.⁶ And as a penalty he must bring to the priest, that is, to the LORD, his guilt offering, a ram from the flock, one without defect and of the proper value.⁷ In this way the priest will make atonement for him before the LORD, and he will be forgiven for any of these things he did that made him guilty.”

6:1–7 This section of the guilt offering deals with deliberate sins against one’s neighbor. First, the offenses are described (6:1–3), and then the proper procedure for restitution is prescribed (6:4–6). The section begins the same way as the previous section (5:14), with the phrase “The LORD said to Moses.” Clearly a new section within the category of guilt offering is being addressed. The section also closes with the common formulaic concluding phrase that mentions that the priest will make atonement on behalf of the violator and that the violator’s sin will be forgiven (6:7). In the introduction to the nature of the offenses, both sections begin with the phrase *nepeš ki*, “When/If a person/anyone,”²¹¹ and both describe the nature of the offenses with the roots *m^cl* and *h^t* (5:15; 6:2). What is distinctive in 6:1–7 is that now the act of unfaithfulness to God is committed through the deception²¹² of a neighbor in the matter of personal property (6:2–3).²¹³ Demarest comments, “Sin against a neighbor is a sin against God.”²¹⁴ The offense was compounded when it involved some sort of oath and the oath taker swore “falsely” (*‘al šāqer*, 6:3) regarding another’s possessions. The guilty party has taken an oath affirming that he did not take the property in question (see Exod 22:11) and has not been honest.²¹⁵ This offense thus violates the Third Commandment, where the same root, *šqr*, is also used in the phrase take the Lord’s name “in vain.”²¹⁶

²¹¹ The translation of the same phrase *כִּי יִפְעֹל* in different ways by the NIV (5:15; 6:2) obscures the structural harmony in these two sections.

²¹² Many maintain that the meaning of the root *שׁקַד* (6:2[5:20]) is primarily “to deny” and in this context renders the idea of “denying the truth of something,” i.e., “to deceive” (see HALOT 2:469–70, and K. Schunck, *שׁקַד*, *kāḥaš*, TDOT 7:132–35). The word occurs elsewhere in the same context with robbery (see Eccl 4:1; Ps 72:4). The word is used synonymously with *שָׁקַר*, “to lie,” in Lev 19:11.

²¹³ The NIV’s “something entrusted” is the translation of the Hb. *יְיָרֶקֶת*, which is often translated a “deposit” of personal property (see Gen 41:36).

²¹⁴ Demarest, *Leviticus*, 67.

²¹⁵ Budd, *Leviticus*, 107.

²¹⁶ “Misuse the name of the LORD” (Exod 20:7; Deut 5:11).

The process of restitution in the guilt offering begins with the introductory phrase *wēhāyā kī*, literally, “and it will be when” (Lev 6:4, see NKJV, NASB), which probably signals the time when the guilt has been proved.²¹⁷ The offender must first return the neighbor’s property and then add an additional twenty percent in value to what was taken (6:4–5). This additional amount was probably the monetary equivalent of twenty percent of the confiscated property.²¹⁸ After what had been taken was restored, with the additional penalty, the offender then brought the guilt offering, a ram without defect, to the priest. Only after restitution had been made with one’s fellow man could it be sought with God (6:6). This is certainly the principle, if not the very law, behind Jesus’ teaching in Matt 5:23–24. That restitution is to be made before atonement becomes effective reinforces the notion mentioned in connection with the sin offering that genuine repentance precedes forgiveness.²¹⁹

(3) Conclusion

This passage describing the procedure for the guilt offering indicates that sin places a person in debt. Jesus similarly depicts the sinner as a debtor to God (e.g., Matt 18:21–35). This passage also indicates the seriousness of sinning against one’s fellow man. Defrauding a neighbor is tantamount to a sin against God. Calvin writes, “Whenever an injury is inflicted on men, God in their person is offended.”²²⁰ This truth is illustrated both in Joseph’s response to Potiphar’s wife (Gen 39:9) and in the New Testament (1 John 4:20).

It is also of great Christological significance that the offering of the Suffering Servant in Isaiah 53 is described as a guilt offering (Isa 53:10). Since this passage was interpreted by the New Testament writers to be a prophecy of the suffering of the Christ,²²¹ Jesus’ death must be understood as a guilt offering that has removed the debt we owe to God. This notion is certainly the basis for the proclamation that Jesus “paid” for our sins.²²² Kaiser nicely sums up the Christological significance both of the sin and guilt offering and the distinguishing feature of the guilt offering, which involved the removal of debt:

The sin offering represents the passive aspect of the death of Christ in that he met the demands of the law by dying in the place of sinners. But the guilt offer-

²¹⁷ Levine, *Leviticus*, 34.

²¹⁸ See Milgrom, *Leviticus 1–16*, 338.

²¹⁹ Hartley, *Leviticus*, 85–86. See also Wiersbe, *Be Holy*, 29.

²²⁰ Calvin, *The Last Four Books of Moses*, 359.

²²¹ See John 12:38; Rom 10:16; Matt 8:17; 1 Pet 2:22,24–25; Luke 22:37.

²²² See Acts 20:28; 1 Cor 6:20; 7:23; Rev 5:9; 14:4.

ing represents the active aspect of the work of Christ in that he carried out the will of God completely by an act of voluntary obedience. It is a payment of a debt to render satisfaction for the reparation of the wrong committed, thus making reinstatement to the covenant family possible.²²³

7. Disposal of Offerings (6:8[1]–7:36)

With the offerings presented by individual Israelites specified in 1:1–6:7, the discussion now more specifically addresses the role of the priests and the priesthood in the Israelite sacrificial system. That the focus turns to the priesthood is apparent at the outset of this section, for immediately after the introductory formula of 6:8 Moses is commanded to “give Aaron and his sons this command” (6:9). The primary focus in this section is the role of the priests in partaking of the victims that have been offered for food. It was of preeminent importance for the priest to know exactly what kind and what portion of the sacrificial animal was for his food. “God was unwilling that anything should remain doubtful.”²²⁴ As noted above, the priest, like the New Testament minister, is maintained by the offerings of God’s people (1 Cor 9:13).

This section is structured around the formulae “the LORD said to Moses” and “these are the regulations for.” The introductory formula, “the LORD said to Moses,” occurs in 6:8,19,24; 7:22,28, while the legal formula, “these are the regulations for,” occurs in 6:9,14,25; 7:1,11,37. Based upon these formulae the section divides into nine units: 6:8–13,14–18,19–23,24–29; 7:1–10,11–21,22–27,28–36, and 37–38. Leviticus 6:8–9 and 6:24–25 contain both of the formulaic expressions, while the phrase “these are the regulations for” in 7:37 functions as a summary statement and hence not as an introduction. Leviticus 6:8–9 and 6:24–25, which have both formulae, introduce the two major divisions in this section on the disposal of offerings, voluntary and involuntary offerings, which are the same categorical distinctions of sacrifices found in Leviticus 1–5.²²⁵

(1) *Disposal of the Burnt Offering (6:8–13[6:1–6])*

⁸The LORD said to Moses: ⁹“Give Aaron and his sons this command: ‘These are the regulations for the burnt offering: The burnt offering is to remain on the altar hearth throughout the night, till morning, and the fire must be kept burn-

²²³ Kaiser, “Leviticus,” 1042.

²²⁴ Calvin, *Commentaries on the Last Books of Moses*, 2:363.

²²⁵ Notice how the two major sections in Lev 1–5 also begin with the notion of God calling/speaking to Moses (1:1; 4:1). Other suggestions regarding the rationale for the order of the offerings in 6:38–7:38 include that of the frequency of the offerings (Wenham, *Leviticus*, 118) and the movement from public to private offerings (Levine, *Leviticus*, 34–35).

ing on the altar. ¹⁰The priest shall then put on his linen clothes, with linen undergarments next to his body, and shall remove the ashes of the burnt offering that the fire has consumed on the altar and place them beside the altar. ¹¹Then he is to take off these clothes and put on others, and carry the ashes outside the camp to a place that is ceremonially clean. ¹²The fire on the altar must be kept burning; it must not go out. Every morning the priest is to add firewood and arrange the burnt offering on the fire and burn the fat of the fellowship offerings on it. ¹³The fire must be kept burning on the altar continuously; it must not go out.

6:8–9 The main theme that links the various paragraphs in 6:8–7:38 is partaking sacrifices in an appropriate manner. This preeminent issue is not the focus of the first, introductory section (6:8–13). The concern of this first section is that the burnt offering leaves no residue of food to be eaten by priest or worshiper. The issue at the heart of this section on the proper disposal of the burnt offering is rather maintaining the flame on the altar of burnt offering and disposing of the ashes that remain after the offering is consumed. In this way the paragraph supplements 1:6–9.

This section on the disposal of burnt offerings begins with the two introductory formulae and the command for Moses to admonish Aaron and his sons to maintain the fire upon the hearth²²⁶ of the altar (6:8–9). The fire was to be kept going from night until morning. This regulation regarding the fire presupposes the earlier legislation of Exod 29:38–42 concerning the evening burnt offering. Although the reason for this instruction is not provided, Hartley might be correct in suggesting that this provision made it possible for a soothing aroma to ascend continually without interruption.²²⁷ The care and maintenance of a continual fire upon the altar is related to the association of God with fire (Deut 4:24; Isa 10:17; 30:27; 31:9; 33:14; Heb 12:29).

6:10–11 Another aspect of administering the burnt offering concerned the proper disposal of the ashes left behind after the animal was burned. The issues involved the proper clothing to be worn by the priest and the appropriate procedure and location for disposing the ashes of the burnt offering. The priest was to wear linen garments²²⁸ when he removed the ashes from the hearth and placed them beside the altar (6:10). Then he was to remove these special garments as he left the tabernacle and disposed of the ashes outside the camp in a ceremonially clean place

²²⁶The noun מוֹקֵדֶת is from the root קָדַח, which means “to be kindled, burn.” The noun thus refers to the “place of burning” (BDB, 428–29). The term occurs only here in the OT. The verbal root occurs here in Lev 6:8b and is translated “burning” by the NIV translators.

²²⁷Hartley, *Leviticus*, 96. Similarly, Kaiser, “Leviticus,” 1044.

²²⁸Ezek 44:18 may explain the basis of this command because this text prohibits priests from wearing any garment that may cause perspiration. For priestly attire see Exod 28:40–42.

(6:11).²²⁹ The removal of the ashes away from the altar to the designated place reinforced the notion that the burnt offering was wholly God's. In no way were individuals to derive benefit from this offering.²³⁰

6:12–13 After the instructions regarding the proper procedure for the removal of the ashes of the burnt offering, the text returns to what truly is the main concern in this context: the continual maintenance of the flame upon the altar. Of special importance in the maintaining of the flame was the daily morning provision of wood. This provision of wood is the subject of later biblical narrative texts in Neh 10:34; 13:31. The occasion of bringing the wood for the sacrificial offerings was also the subject of much discussion in Jewish literature, which mentions the hardship and dangers often involved in making this provision by the Israelite people.²³¹ The daily morning provision of the wood was first lit to ignite the morning burnt offering mentioned in Exod 29:39–41. This would be the first sacrifice of the day.

(2) *Disposal of the Grain Offering (6:14–18[6:7–11])*

¹⁴“These are the regulations for the grain offering: Aaron’s sons are to bring it before the LORD, in front of the altar. ¹⁵The priest is to take a handful of fine flour and oil, together with all the incense on the grain offering, and burn the memorial portion on the altar as an aroma pleasing to the LORD. ¹⁶Aaron and his sons shall eat the rest of it, but it is to be eaten without yeast in a holy place; they are to eat it in the courtyard of the Tent of Meeting. ¹⁷It must not be baked with yeast; I have given it as their share of the offerings made to me by fire. Like the sin offering and the guilt offering, it is most holy. ¹⁸Any male descendant of Aaron may eat it. It is his regular share of the offerings made to the LORD by fire for the generations to come. Whatever touches them will become holy.”

6:14–18 The next section begins with the formula *wəzōt tôrat ham-minhâ* (“these are the regulations for the grain offering”; 6:14).²³² After the procedure for the burning of the grain offering is given (6:15), this paragraph details the proper way the remainder of the offering was to be eaten by the priests. The instruction supplements 2:3,10, and it revolves

²²⁹ According to the rabbis lots were cast each morning to determine which of the priests would have ash removal duty (*m. Tamid* 1:2).

²³⁰ Budd, *Leviticus*, 110.

²³¹ See Levine, *Leviticus*, 36, and Milgrom, *Leviticus 1–16*, 387–88, for discussion and references.

²³² Josephus and many rabbis argue that the grain offering is not to be viewed as independent of the preceding burnt offering but should be viewed as merely adjunct to it (Milgrom, *Leviticus 1–16*, 389–91). The use of the infinitive absolute *haqrēb*, “to bring,” is somewhat unusual and has been amended by the Samaritan Pentateuch and several of the Greek versions to the expected plural form.

around the place the offering was to be eaten and what must not accompany its consumption. The offering was to be eaten by the priests in the courtyard,²³³ and no leaven (“yeast”) was to be added to the meal (6:16–19; see Exod 12:15). The offerings are most holy (*qōdeš qodāšîm*, 6:17); they were food for the priests. All who would have any contact with the offerings must be holy (*yiqdāš*); that is, only priests were to touch these sacrifices, for they were the priests’ portion of food.²³⁴

(3) *Daily Grain Offering of the High Priest (6:19–23[6:12–16])*

¹⁹The LORD also said to Moses, ²⁰“This is the offering Aaron and his sons are to bring to the LORD on the day he is anointed: a tenth of an ephah of fine flour as a regular grain offering, half of it in the morning and half in the evening. ²¹Prepare it with oil on a griddle; bring it well-mixed and present the grain offering broken in pieces as an aroma pleasing to the LORD. ²²The son who is to succeed him as anointed priest shall prepare it. It is the LORD’s regular share and is to be burned completely. ²³Every grain offering of a priest shall be burned completely; it must not be eaten.”

6:19–21 This section on the daily offering of the high priest begins with the introductory phrase “The LORD also²³⁵ said to Moses” (6:19). The high priest’s daily grain offering was not addressed in Leviticus 2, which dealt with the voluntary grain offering of an Israelite and the role of the officiating priests. The daily offering (*minhâ tāmîd*), which was a tenth of an ephah of fine flour,²³⁶ was to commence on the day the high priest was anointed and was to continue as a perpetual high priest offering (6:20). This offering is also mentioned in Num 4:16 and 10:33[MT 34]. Thus this text supplements Exodus 29, a chapter that also deals with the ordination of the priests. The daily grain offering of the high priest is also referred to by Josephus and in the New Testament (Heb 7:27).²³⁷ The

²³³ Only here and in 6:26 is this holy area referred to as *hāšēr* (“courtyard”). Normally in Leviticus the area is called “the entrance of the Tent of Meeting.” Levine, *Leviticus*, 37. See also M. Rooker, *hāšēr*, in *NIDOTTE* 2:249–50.

²³⁴ See NIV marginal note, “Whoever touches them must be holy,” and Levine, *Leviticus*, 37–38. Haggai 2:10–13 is often cited as a supporting text for this interpretation, although in Haggai offerings that are *qōdeš qōdeš* (“most holy”) are not under discussion (Hag 2:10–13). For helpful discussion of this difficult verse see Hoffmann, *Leviticus*, 1:238–39, and Budd, *Leviticus*, 111–12.

²³⁵ The word “also” is not in the Hb. text. It has been added by the NIV translators apparently because of a decision not to make this formulaic expression the introduction of an entirely new paragraph, or pericope. Because the grain offering was the subject of the immediately preceding paragraph, this section on the grain offering of the high priest was not seen to be a new section but rather a continuation of the former.

²³⁶ A tenth of an ephah is a measure used in Lev 5:11; Num 28:5.

²³⁷ See Wenham, *Leviticus*, 122.

daily offering by the high priest illustrated the high priest's sinfulness and need for daily forgiveness. This contrasts with the ministry of Jesus Christ, who as the sinless Son of God needed to make only one sacrifice, but it was for the sins of others (Heb 7:27).

6:22–23 The high priest could not eat from this daily offering because it was made on his behalf. Instead it had to be offered to God and was completely consumed.²³⁸ A priest could only partake of an offering while functioning in his role as mediator on behalf of his people.

(4) Disposal of the Sin Offering (6:24–30 [6:17–23])

²⁴The LORD said to Moses, ²⁵“Say to Aaron and his sons: ‘These are the regulations for the sin offering: The sin offering is to be slaughtered before the LORD in the place the burnt offering is slaughtered; it is most holy. ²⁶The priest who offers it shall eat it; it is to be eaten in a holy place, in the courtyard of the Tent of Meeting. ²⁷Whatever touches any of the flesh will become holy, and if any of the blood is spattered on a garment, you must wash it in a holy place. ²⁸The clay pot the meat is cooked in must be broken; but if it is cooked in a bronze pot, the pot is to be scoured and rinsed with water. ²⁹Any male in a priest's family may eat it; it is most holy. ³⁰But any sin offering whose blood is brought into the Tent of Meeting to make atonement in the Holy Place must not be eaten; it must be burned.

As was noted above, this section begins with the fuller introductory formulae, which indicates a decisive break with the previous context. The offerings that are about to be discussed, the sin offering and the guilt offering, were involuntary offerings and hence of a different nature from the previously described offerings.

6:24–30 This section is primarily concerned with the eating of the sin offering. The priest who officiated at the sacrifice of the sin offering ate of it in the tabernacle courtyard (6:26). Since animals used as sin offerings from the herd were burned outside the camp (4:1–21), only those sin offerings from the flock must be in view in this section.

This paragraph also explains the procedure for cleaning or destroying objects that may have come into contact with the blood or with the sacrificial victim (6:27–28).²³⁹ If the garments became stained with blood during the sin offering, they had to be laundered and treated as though they had come into contact with uncleanness (11 :25,28,40; 15:5–8,10–11).

²³⁸ The Hb. word לְכֹלֵהוּ occurs as a nominal form with the meaning “entire” or “whole” offering. It is thus virtually synonymous to עֹלָה, “burnt offering,” and in fact the two words are parallel in Ps 51:19[21] (BDB, 483).

²³⁹ Lev 6:27 should be rendered, “Whoever touches any of the flesh must be holy (or in a holy state)” as in Lev 6:18 (Levine, *Leviticus*, 40).

Fragments of the sacrifice could not linger on other objects and thus take on a function contrary to the prescribed purpose of presenting such an offering.²⁴⁰ If part of the sacrifice adhered to an earthenware vessel, it had to be destroyed since the earthenware vessel was porous, which made it impossible to remove totally the blood or part of the victim.²⁴¹ After taking these precautions the officiating priest distributed the meat of the sin offering to his fellow male priests (6:29). If the animal's blood was required to be brought into the Holy Place, it was a violation of law eat the meat (6:30). Thus the sin offering of the high priest (4:1–12), of the congregation (4:13–21), and of the high priest and the congregation on the Day of Atonement (16:27) could not be eaten by the priests. Aaron was rebuked by Moses because he did not eat of the sin offering given at the inauguration of the priesthood (10:17).

(5) *Disposal of the Guilt Offering (7:1–10)*

¹“These are the regulations for the guilt offering, which is most holy: ²The guilt offering is to be slaughtered in the place where the burnt offering is slaughtered, and its blood is to be sprinkled against the altar on all sides. ³All its fat shall be offered: the fat tail and the fat that covers the inner parts, ⁴both kidneys with the fat on them near the loins, and the covering of the liver, which is to be removed with the kidneys. ⁵The priest shall burn them on the altar as an offering made to the LORD by fire. It is a guilt offering. ⁶Any male in a priest's family may eat it, but it must be eaten in a holy place; it is most holy.

⁷“The same law applies to both the sin offering and the guilt offering: They belong to the priest who makes atonement with them. ⁸The priest who offers a burnt offering for anyone may keep its hide for himself. ⁹Every grain offering baked in an oven or cooked in a pan or on a griddle belongs to the priest who offers it, ¹⁰and every grain offering, whether mixed with oil or dry, belongs equally to all the sons of Aaron.

7:1–10 The instructions for the disposal of the guilt offering include the location for the sacrifice (i.e., in the same place as the burnt offering; 7:2), the removal and burning of the fat (7:3–5), and the restriction of those who may partake of the offering to the males of Aaron's family (7:6). This information was intended for the priests, so it was not given in the earlier instructions for the laity regarding guilt offerings (5:14–6:7). There the focus was on making restitution for individual Israelites.²⁴² The overall procedure and disposal of the sacrifice as food for the priests was

²⁴⁰Levine, *Leviticus*, 40.

²⁴¹See 11QT 50:18–19 for the same practice (Milgrom, *Leviticus 1–16*, 405).

²⁴²Milgrom maintains that the offerer in fact only brought the money equivalent to the cost of the guilt offering (*Leviticus 1–16*, 409).

very much like that of the sin offering (7:7).²⁴³

After the prescribed provision from the guilt and sin offering is explained, the discussion moves to provisions from the burnt offering and the grain offering (7:8–10), once again because the earlier instruction was normally limited to the rights and responsibilities of the layman in the Israelite sacrificial system. Priests were given the privilege of retaining the hide from the burnt offering (7:8).²⁴⁴ In addition every grain offering baked or cooked would also be for the priests' consumption (7:9–10). What is specified here is that the officiating priest would have the first rights to these benefits. The matter of distribution of benefits among the priestly order is addressed elsewhere in the Bible (1 Chr 24; Luke 1:8–9) and in rabbinic literature (*b. Ta'an. 27a*).²⁴⁵

(6) *Disposal of the Fellowship Offering (7:11–21)*

11“These are the regulations for the fellowship offering a person may present to the LORD:

12“If he offers it as an expression of thankfulness, then along with this thank offering he is to offer cakes of bread made without yeast and mixed with oil, wafers made without yeast and spread with oil, and cakes of fine flour well-kneaded and mixed with oil. **13**Along with his fellowship offering of thanksgiving he is to present an offering with cakes of bread made with yeast. **14**He is to bring one of each kind as an offering, a contribution to the LORD; it belongs to the priest who sprinkles the blood of the fellowship offerings. **15**The meat of his fellowship offering of thanksgiving must be eaten on the day it is offered; he must leave none of it till morning.

16“If, however, his offering is the result of a vow or is a freewill offering, the sacrifice shall be eaten on the day he offers it, but anything left over may be eaten on the next day. **17**Any meat of the sacrifice left over till the third day must be burned up. **18**If any meat of the fellowship offering is eaten on the third day, it will not be accepted. It will not be credited to the one who offered it, for it is impure; the person who eats any of it will be held responsible.

19“Meat that touches anything ceremonially unclean must not be eaten; it must be burned up. As for other meat, anyone ceremonially clean may eat it. **20**But if anyone who is unclean eats any meat of the fellowship offering belonging to the LORD, that person must be cut off from his people. **21**If anyone touches something unclean—whether human uncleanness or an unclean animal or any unclean, detestable thing—and then eats any of the meat of the fellowship offering belonging to the LORD, that person must be cut off from his people.”

²⁴³ The sprinkling of the blood against the altar (7:2) and the description of the guilt offering as an offering made by fire (7:5) is all that distinguishes the guilt offering from the sin offering.

²⁴⁴ Only in the case of the sin offering was the skin or hide to be destroyed (Levine, *Leviticus*, 41).

²⁴⁵ Hartley, *Leviticus*, 99.

7:11–15 In this section the role of the priests in the various types of fellowship offerings is prescribed. As noted in the instruction in Leviticus 3, the main feature of the fellowship offering was that the layman was invited to participate in the eating of the sacrificial victim. Due to this fact alone it was essential that additional information be given to the priest about the carrying out of this unique offering. The first type of fellowship offering that is discussed is the *tôdâ* (“expression of thankfulness”).²⁴⁶ This voluntary offering was given as an expression of gratitude to God for his intervention, particularly for deliverance from peril.²⁴⁷

Here we learn in more detail that this offering involved the contribution²⁴⁸ of certain cakes in addition to the sacrificial animal. These cakes were to be given to the priest who handled the blood of the animal (7:12–14). Another important prescription mentioned for the first time with regard to the fellowship offering is that the animal was to be eaten in its entirety on the day it is presented (7:15). This fact is repeated in 19:5–8; 22:30. Eating of the meat on the day of the victim’s death was also observed at Israel’s three major festivals (Exod 23:14–18; 34:25; Deut 16:4). It was also the practice for the eating of the Passover (Exod 12:7–10) and the manna in the wilderness (Exod 16:19).

7:16–18 The offerings that accompanied vows or freewill offerings were to be eaten on the day the sacrifice was made. If the entire offering was not to be eaten right away, however, it could be consumed on the following day (7:16–17). If the meat was not eaten by the following day, the meat became desecrated.²⁴⁹ If any portion of this offering remained until the third day, it had to be burned.²⁵⁰ If a person were to eat of this offering (that had remained uneaten for three days), he would bear its iniquity

²⁴⁶The noun *תֹּדָתָא* is from the root *תָּדַת*, which as shown above means “to confess, praise.” The same distribution of meaning in the verb exists in the noun according to R. Alexander, who suggests that the *תֹּדָתָא* offering was presented to offer thanks to God or confession of sin. He believes the latter is at issue in 7:12–15 (*תֹּדָתָא* [*yādā*], *TWOT* 1:365).

²⁴⁷E.g., Pss 50:14–15; 107:21–22; Jonah 2:10. According to rabbinic tradition only this offering would continue in the Messianic Age, when the sacrificial system as a whole would be obsolete (Levine, *Leviticus*, 43).

²⁴⁸Hb. *תִּנְחֻמָּה* roughly parallels *תִּנְחֻמָּה* both as a general term for offerings as well as a term referring to offerings designated for a priest. The term designates grain products for the priest or levites (Lev 22:12; Num 5:9; 18:8,11,19,24,26–29), the thigh of animal sacrifices (Exod 29:27,28; Lev 7:34; 10:14,15; Num 6:20), materials for the tabernacle (Exod 25:2–3; 35:5,21,24; 36:3,6), the sanctuary tax (Exod 30:13–15), or the spoils of war offered to God (Num 31:29,41,52) (A. Bowling, *רָמָה* [*rām*], *TWOT* 2:838; Budd, *Leviticus*, 119–20).

²⁴⁹Thus Milgrom renders the meaning of *תִּנְחֻמָּה* as “desecrated meat” (*Leviticus 1–16*, 422). The word refers to unclean sacrificial flesh (Lev 19:7; Isa 65:4; Ezek 4:14), which may have become inedible by the third day.

²⁵⁰This concept of becoming contaminated on the third day may be the basis of Hosea’s statement in Hos 6:2.

(“be held responsible”). In other words, God would see to it that the offender was punished.²⁵¹ These fellowship offerings later may have been accompanied by the singing of a psalm to God (e.g., Ps 116:17–19).²⁵²

7:19–21 Continuing its discussion of what peace offerings could or could not be eaten, the text states that meat of the fellowship offering that had any contact with something unclean could not be eaten (17:19) and that an unclean person could not partake of the offering. If a person who was unclean ate the fellowship offering, he was to be “cut off” from his people (7:20–21).²⁵³ This judgment was a direct intervention of God. Nineteen offenses resulted in a person receiving the punishment of “being cut off” in the Old Testament. Offenses that resulted in the offender being “cut off” included violation of holy days (including the Sabbath), committing moral offenses, violating purity laws such as eating the blood, and failure to circumcise on the eighth day.²⁵⁴ The exact nature of the punishment has been much debated. The most commonly proposed punishments by scholars have included childlessness and premature death.²⁵⁵ The punishment was thus not carried out by a civil court but was the result of a direct judgment of God. This punishment is mentioned elsewhere in Leviticus in 7:25,27; 17:4,9,10,14; 18:29; 19:8; 20:3,5,6,17,18; 22:3; 23:29.

The motivation for presenting the fellowship offering was to express gratitude to God. The New Testament also emphasizes that gratitude is the Christian’s proper response to God’s provision (see Rom 1; Eph 5:20; Phil 4:6; Col 4:2). Moreover, in the partaking of the Lord’s Supper, which closely approximates the eating of the fellowship offering, the believer must not participate if unconfessed sin is in his life. Like the Israelite who ate the sacrifice in a state of uncleanness, the believer who partakes of the Lord’s Supper in an unworthy state may expect the direct judgment of God (1 Cor 11:27–32).

(7) *Eating of Fat and Blood (7:22–27)*

²²The LORD said to Moses, ²³“Say to the Israelites: ‘Do not eat any of the fat of cattle, sheep or goats. ²⁴The fat of an animal found dead or torn by wild animals may be used for any other purpose, but you must not eat it. ²⁵Anyone who eats the fat of an animal from which an offering by fire may be made to the

²⁵¹ Milgrom notes that the phrase אֲשֶׁר הָיָה אֵינָהּ אֵינָהּ אֵינָהּ indicates that the crime is against God and must be punished by him. It is not meted out by a human court (*Leviticus 1–16*, 422–23).

²⁵² Clements, “Leviticus,” 23.

²⁵³ The word תִּכָּוֶה, translated “detestable thing” (7:21), refers to water creatures in 11:10–12, birds of prey in 11:13, and to other animals in 11:20,23,41,42 (Budd, *Leviticus*, 123).

²⁵⁴ See Milgrom, *Leviticus 1–16*, 458; and Levine, *Leviticus*, 241–42.

²⁵⁵ For discussion of this issue see G. J. Wenham, “Leviticus,” *ISBE* 3:113, and Milgrom, *Leviticus 1–16*, 457–60.

LORD must be cut off from his people. ²⁶And wherever you live, you must not eat the blood of any bird or animal. ²⁷If anyone eats blood, that person must be cut off from his people.’”

7:22–27 In this paragraph there are two prescriptions which if violated resulted in the offender “being cut off” (7:25,27). The Israelites were admonished that they were not to eat the fat of sacrificial animals and that they were never to eat the blood since life belonged only to God (cf. Lev 17; Gen 9:4–6). The fear that blood might be consumed even applied to carcasses of animals because there would be uncertainty about whether all the blood was drained (17:24). The fat of the fellowship offering was prohibited to the Israelite because it was this portion that was to be the Lord’s (3:17). The fat laid upon the altar was an expression of offering the best to God.²⁵⁶ The fact that the eating of blood was universally prohibited while the prohibition of eating fat was restricted to a sacrificial animal may indicate that the fat of a nonsacrificial animal could be eaten (17:13).

(8) Priests’ Share of the Fellowship Offering (7:28–36)

²⁸The LORD said to Moses, ²⁹“Say to the Israelites: ‘Anyone who brings a fellowship offering to the LORD is to bring part of it as his sacrifice to the LORD. ³⁰With his own hands he is to bring the offering made to the LORD by fire; he is to bring the fat, together with the breast, and wave the breast before the LORD as a wave offering. ³¹The priest shall burn the fat on the altar, but the breast belongs to Aaron and his sons. ³²You are to give the right thigh of your fellowship offerings to the priest as a contribution. ³³The son of Aaron who offers the blood and the fat of the fellowship offering shall have the right thigh as his share. ³⁴From the fellowship offerings of the Israelites, I have taken the breast that is waved and the thigh that is presented and have given them to Aaron the priest and his sons as their regular share from the Israelites.’”

³⁵This is the portion of the offerings made to the LORD by fire that were allotted to Aaron and his sons on the day they were presented to serve the LORD as priests. ³⁶On the day they were anointed, the LORD commanded that the Israelites give this to them as their regular share for the generations to come.

7:28–36 We learn in this section for the first time that when the Israelite brought a fellowship offering to the Lord, the offerer was to separate the fat of the animal that was burned by the priest as well as the breast and right thigh of the sacrificial victim, which were to be priests’ portion (7:29–34).²⁵⁷ It was believed that the priest and the offerer placed their hands

²⁵⁶ Kaiser, “Leviticus,” 1052–53.

²⁵⁷ The phrase עֹלֵתָם קָדְשָׁם, “their regular share” (7:34), is used to describe the priests’ share in Exod 29:28; Lev 6:18; 10:13–15; 24:9; Num 18:8,11,19.

under the offering in elevating it before the Lord.²⁵⁸ The procedure, already legislated in Exod 29:24, was incorrectly carried out by the sons of Eli in 1 Sam 2:15–17.²⁵⁹ This section once again emphasizes the principle that those who are vocationally in “full-time” service for the Lord should receive their sustenance from God’s people. This truth is discussed in the New Testament in passages like Matt 10:10; 1 Cor 9:7–14; 1 Tim 5:18.

This section anticipates the next major division of Leviticus, “The Institution of the Priesthood,” when the summary statement in vv. 35–36 says these contributions are to take effect when Aaron and his sons are inaugurated. The summary statement thus concludes the section on the “Disposal of Offerings,” while the last two verses of Leviticus 7 conclude the entire first seven chapters.

8. Summary (7:37–38)

³⁷These, then, are the regulations for the burnt offering, the grain offering, the sin offering, the guilt offering, the ordination offering and the fellowship offering, ³⁸which the LORD gave Moses on Mount Sinai on the day he commanded the Israelites to bring their offerings to the LORD, in the Desert of Sinai.

7:37–38 These two verses close the first major section of the Book of Leviticus wherein the Lord revealed to Moses the proper instructions and procedure for carrying out the Israelite sacrificial system, both with regard to the people (1:2–6:7) and to the priests (6:8–7:36). This section forms an inclusio with the beginning of the book (1:1) by repeating the point that these instructions were given to Moses on Mount Sinai (1:1 with 7:37). They also function as a summary/conclusion by listing the various offerings of the Israelite sacrificial system.

The church of Jesus Christ must remain obedient to the proper worship of God today. The Corinthians were an example of an early church where believers were not obediently carrying out the proper worship of God. Paul admonished believers of all times that worship must be done in order (1 Cor 14:40). It is of note that Passover, which became the Lord’s Supper, the most celebrated event of Christian worship, is called a *seder* (“order”) by the Jews, which means that it was vitally important that it be carried out in accord with a prescribed procedure.

²⁵⁸ Many commentators now affirm that the action mentioned did not so much indicate a waving motion but rather simply an elevating of the gift to God (see J. Milgrom, “The Alleged Wave-Offering in Israel and in the Ancient Near East,” *IEJ* 22 [1972]: 33–38; Kaiser, “Leviticus,” 1054). For the discussion of the traditional interpretation of waving the offering, see Oehler, *Theology of the Old Testament*, 290–91.

²⁵⁹ Levine, *Leviticus*, 46.

II. THE INSTITUTION OF THE PRIESTHOOD (8:1–10:20)

1. The Ordination of Aaron and His Sons (8:1–36)
 - (1) Preparation for Ordination (8:1–9)
 - (2) Anointing of Tabernacle and Aaron (8:10–13)
 - (3) Sin Offering for the Altar (8:14–17)
 - (4) Ram for the Burnt Offering (8:18–21)
 - (5) Ram for the Ordination (8:22–30)
 - (6) Seven-Day Ordination (8:31–36)
2. The Priests Begin Their Ministry (9:1–24)
 - (1) Instructions on Sacrifices (9:1–4)
 - (2) Offering for Priests (9:5–14)
 - (3) Offering for the People (9:15–21)
 - (4) Blessing and Fire (9:22–24)
3. The Role of Priests in Israelite Religion (10:1–20)
 - (1) Nadab and Abihu Offer Unauthorized Fire (10:1–7)
 - (2) Role of the Priesthood (10:8–11)
 - (3) Proper Eating of the Offerings (10:12–20)
4. Conclusion

— II. THE INSTITUTION OF THE PRIESTHOOD (8:1–10:20) —

In Leviticus 1–7 the Israelite sacrificial procedures for the various kinds of sacrificial offerings were prescribed. For these sacrifices to be implemented correctly they needed to be properly maintained and managed. This administrative function was performed by the Aaronide priesthood, whose essential role was already evident in Leviticus 1–7. In this second major section of the Book of Leviticus the institution of the priesthood is officially established. More specifically, in Leviticus 8–10 the ordination of the priests, who are to have as a primary charge the maintenance of the tabernacle and offerings, is now described. The immediately preceding context, which outlined the sacrificial procedure (Lev 1–7), is critical to this discussion since these same sacrifices will play a role in the inauguration ceremony of the priesthood.

The inauguration and consecration of the priests is the fulfillment of the

instructions given in Exodus 29.¹ The movement from instruction to implementation (cp. Exod 28–29 with Lev 8) may also be observed in the instructions and implementation of the tabernacle itself in Exodus 25–31 and Exodus 35–40.² The entire sacrificial system prefigures the person and work of Jesus Christ, who would not only tabernacle among men (John 1:14) but who would become the Great High Priest of the Israelite priesthood (Heb 2:17; 3:1; 4:14,15; 5:5,10; 6:20; 7:26; 8:1; 9:11; [10:21]).

The mediatory role performed by a priest was a well-known occupation in the ancient Near East. This awareness among the Israelites is evident in the Bible itself, for the Hebrew word for priest, *kōhēn*, is also used in reference to Egyptian priests (Gen 41:45,50; 46:20; 47:26), Philistine priests (1 Sam 6:2), priests of Dagon (1 Sam 5:5), priests of Baal (2 Kgs 10:19), priests of Chemosh (Jer 48:7), and priests of Baal and Ashera (2 Chr 34:5). The concept of an intermediary who served a god would thus have been a familiar concept, although the call of Israel's priest to a holy or sanctified life in the ethical sphere would be an unknown concept among pagan religions.

Structurally Leviticus 8–10 divides into sixteen sections based on the occurrence of the repeated phrase “Moses did as the LORD commanded him” (8:4,5,9,13,17,21,29,34,36; 9:6,7,10,21; 10:7,13,15).³ This repeated refrain suggests that Moses typifies Jesus Christ, who as the leader of the people lived an entire life of perfect obedience. The writer to the Hebrews explicitly makes this connection (Heb 3:1–6).

The Israelite priesthood was made up of three groups of officiants: the high priest, ordinary priests, and the Levites. All the priests and Levites had to be proven descendants of Levi (*m. Mid.* 5:4; *m. Qidd.* 4:5).

Ordinary priests had to trace their lineage to Aaron (Exod 28:1,41; 29:9; Lev 1:5,7–8,11; Num 3:10; 18:7) and had to be free from physical defects.⁴ In addition to their role in the sacrificial system, they also summoned the Israelites to war and announced feasts (Num 10:1–10; 31:6). In the postexilic period the priests were organized into twenty-four groups that shared the temple service (1 Chr 24:1–19). The high priest had to trace his descent from Aaron through his son Eleazar. The high priest held a unique position with great responsibility (see Lev 16), and his importance is illustrated by the fact that his death marked the end of a historical epoch (Num 35:25,28,32).

¹R. L. Harris, “Leviticus,” EBC, vol. 2 (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1990), 559.

²The literary parallels between Exodus 29 and Leviticus 8 are extensive; see J. Milgrom, *Leviticus 1–16*, AB (New York: Doubleday, 1991), 545–49.

³The phrase occurs in Exod 40:16 and elsewhere in Exodus, suggesting a connection between the two books (see also Lev 16:34).

⁴See discussion in Lev 21.

The rest of the descendants of Levi, the Levites, also had a priestly function. They assisted the priests and carried out various duties at the sanctuary (Num 1:50; 3:28,32; 8:15; 31:30,47; 1 Chr 23:25–32), including at a later time instruction in the Law (Neh 8:7,9; 2 Chr 17:7–9; 35:3). The Levites were not ordained to their position in Leviticus but received their commission in Num 8:5–13.⁵ The holiness of the priesthood was recognized even by the powerful monarchies, who were reluctant to harm those of the priestly guild (1 Sam 22:17; 1 Kgs 2:26). The priests were called to a high echelon of holiness that demanded obedience in all areas of their lives.⁶

1. The Ordination of Aaron and His Sons (8:1–36)

(1) *Preparation for Ordination (8:1–9)*

¹The LORD said to Moses, ²“Bring Aaron and his sons, their garments, the anointing oil, the bull for the sin offering, the two rams and the basket containing bread made without yeast, ³and gather the entire assembly at the entrance to the Tent of Meeting.” ⁴Moses did as the LORD commanded him, and the assembly gathered at the entrance to the Tent of Meeting.

⁵Moses said to the assembly, “This is what the LORD has commanded to be done.” ⁶Then Moses brought Aaron and his sons forward and washed them with water. ⁷He put the tunic on Aaron, tied the sash around him, clothed him with the robe and put the ephod on him. He also tied the ephod to him by its skillfully woven waistband; so it was fastened on him. ⁸He placed the breastpiece on him and put the Urim and Thummim in the breastpiece. ⁹Then he placed the turban on Aaron’s head and set the gold plate, the sacred diadem, on the front of it, as the LORD commanded Moses.

8: 1–3 In this section Moses is directed by God to gather Aaron and his sons and the various materials to be used in the consecration process of the priesthood.⁷ These materials included priestly garments,⁸ anointing oil,⁹ the bull for the sin offering (see 4:1–35), the two rams, and the bas-

⁵For fuller treatment of the nature and role of Israelite priesthood, see R. Abba, “Priests and Levites,” *IBD* 3:876–79.

⁶J. J. Jenson, *Graded Holiness: A Key to the Priestly Conception of the World*, JSOTSup, 106 (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1992), 115.

⁷The Hb. noun כֹּהֵן, “priest,” occurs over seven hundred times in the OT. Some relate the term to the verb יָבַד, “to stand.” The priest stands before God as his servant (Abba, “Priests and Levites,” 877; C. L. Feinberg, “Priests and Levites,” *ZPEB* 4:853; and M. Jastrow, *A Dictionary of the Targumim, the Talmud Babli and Yerushalmi, and the Midrashic Literature*, 2 vols. [Brooklyn: P. Shalom, 1967], 1:615).

⁸The instructions for the priestly garments are given in Exodus 28; the making of the garments are described in Exod 39:1–31.

⁹The composition of the oil that was essentially olive oil is given in Exod 30:22–23.

ket containing bread without yeast (8:2).

8:4–6 After the material had been gathered, Moses assembled the congregation¹⁰ and washed Aaron and his sons with water. In ritualistic texts such as this one cleansing by water symbolizes cleansing or purification from sin: “The washing was intended to symbolize cleansing of heart for the duties that were so intimately related to the purity of the nation before God.”¹¹ Water is still used for purification in Christianity and Islam. The reference to being washed with water implies full immersion.¹²

8:7a After the symbolic cleansing ceremony Aaron becomes the sole object of the next procedure. Aaron was clothed with the special priestly garments, which are described in more detail here than in Exodus 28–39. The tunic (Exod 28:39), sash (Exod 28:39), headdress (Exod 28:39–40; 39:28), and breeches (Exod 28:42; 39:28) were common to priests, while the ephod, breastplate, robe, and crown were the sole attire of the high priest. The material for the garments of the priests corresponds to the material used for the curtain and veil of the tabernacle (Exod 26:1–6,31–37), which indicated not only a close association between them but also that the priesthood, like the tabernacle, was holy unto God.

8:7b–9 The ephod, an apronlike garment that extended from the waist down, was kept in place by shoulder straps and was a sacred garment of the high priest (Exod 28:6–14; 39:2–5).¹³ The most predominant thread woven into the ephod was gold.¹⁴

The high priestly breastpiece was worn on top of the ephod (Exod 28:5–14; 39:2–7) and was attached to it by gold cords on the shoulders of the ephod. These gold cords were attached to gold rings (Exod 28:22–27). The breastpiece was something like a pouch, nine or ten inches square.¹⁵ It had a total of twelve stones arranged in four rows set within it. On each stone was written the name of an Israelite tribe.¹⁶ The Urim and Thummim were inside the breastpiece pouch. In the ancient world the breastpiece was often

¹⁰ Hb. כָּל־יִשְׂרָאֵל refers here to the entire nation, including the women and children (Milgrom, *Leviticus 1–16*, 498).

¹¹ Feinberg, “Priests and Levites,” 854, 856.

¹² See Milgrom, *Leviticus 1–16*, 501.

¹³ The ephod is mentioned forty-eight times in the OT, which includes references to other ephods that may not have been the one designated for the high priest. E.g., Samuel (1 Sam 2:18), the priests of Nob (1 Sam 22:18), and David (2 Sam 6:14) all wore an ephod.

¹⁴ According to Jewish tradition, each thread of the ephod was composed of six blue strands, six purple strands, six scarlet strands, and six strands of fine linen with a thread of gold twisted in each of the six strands (*Yoma* 71b, 72a; Y. M. Grintz, “Ephod,” *EncJud* 6: 806).

¹⁵ Thus C. Meyers, “Breastpiece,” *ABD* 1:781.

¹⁶ The names of the tribes were also written on the two stones that were on the shoulder of the ephod (Exod 28:11; 39:6).

associated with royal attire and may have been considered the most important of the high priestly garments.¹⁷ It was made from the same material as the ephod (Exod 28:15). The breastpiece symbolized the unity of the nation, the dependence of the people on the person and ministry of the high priest, their presence before God as a beloved people, and the channel of the revelation of God's will. With it were the Urim and Thummim whereby the will of God was conveyed to the people (Exod 28:15–30).¹⁸

The breastpiece especially illustrated the representative character of the high priest, for he bore the name of the tribes of Israel and represented the nation as a whole when he entered the sanctuary of God (Exod 28:29).¹⁹ In this ministry the high priest typifies the work of Christ, who entered into the heavenly sanctuary on the part of his people and is an Advocate before the Father (Heb 2:17; 3:1; 4:14,15; 5:5,10; 6:20; 7:26; 8:1; 9:11[10:21]).

A massive amount of literature has been devoted to the meaning and purpose of the Urim and Thummim. The Urim and Thummim are mentioned seven times in the Old Testament (Exod 28:30; Lev 8:8; Num 27:21; Deut 33:8; 1 Sam 28:6; Ezra 2:63; Neh 7:65).²⁰ Many suggest they resembled modern dice, which were cast to the ground to obtain a yes or no answer from the Lord.²¹ Wolf argues that the occurrence of the phrase "dreams, Urim, and prophets" in 1 Sam 28:6 suggests that the determination of the will of God by the Urim and Thummim came through a personal revelation to the priestly intermediary.²² The apparent decrease in the frequency of the employment of the Urim and Thummim in biblical history may have been due to the fact that the role of the Israelite prophet made such a device unnecessary.²³ Because the ephod, breastpiece, and

¹⁷ Jenson, *Graded Holiness: A Key to the Priestly Conception of the World*, 126. The ephod was mentioned first in the lists of the priestly garments because it supported the breastpiece (*ibid.*, n. 1).

¹⁸ C. Feinberg, חֹשֶׁן (hōšēn), *TWOT* 1:332.

¹⁹ Abba, "Priests and Levites," 877.

²⁰ The Urim and Thummim may be implied in such passages as 1 Sam 14:36–37; 23:9–12; 30:7–8.

²¹ See E. Robertson, "The Urim and Tummin: What Were They?" *VT* 14 (1964) 69–72; E. Lipinski, "Urim and Tummin," *VT* 20 (1970): 496; N. H. Tur-Sinai, אורִים ותֻּמִּים *EM* 1:179–82, and H. Wolf, *An Introduction to the Old Testament Pentateuch* (Chicago: Moody, 1991), 171–72.

²² H. Wolf, אֲרֻמִּים (ʾārūm), *TWOT* 1:26. A tradition in rabbinic literature maintains that the actual revelatory sign came from the twelve stones that correspond to the Urim and Thummim. Josephus, e.g., maintained that the twelve stones would shine if Israel was to be successful in battle. According to the Talmud, letters of the tribal names would be illumined to spell out the will of God (*ibid.*).

²³ G. F. Oehler, *Theology of the Old Testament* (reprint, Minneapolis: Klock & Klock, 1978), 218–19.

Urim and Thummim were so closely connected in the priestly attire, the ephod might be all that was designated when divine direction was being sought from the Urim and Thummim (1 Sam 30:7–8; Judg 18:5).

Finally, Moses set the turban (Exod 28:39) with the sacred diadem on Aaron's head. The sacred diadem (*nēzer haqqōdeš*) placed on the front of the turban was evidently an engraved plate worn on the priest's forehead. The root *nzr*, which is also used in reference to the Nazirite (Num 6), denotes the fact that the priest was a consecrated person. The instructions for the last items of Aaron's attire, the turban and the sacred diadem (8:9), are given in Exod 28:4,36–38; 39:30–31.

(2) Anointing of Tabernacle and Aaron (8:10–13)

¹⁰Then Moses took the anointing oil and anointed the tabernacle and everything in it, and so consecrated them. ¹¹He sprinkled some of the oil on the altar seven times, anointing the altar and all its utensils and the basin with its stand, to consecrate them. ¹²He poured some of the anointing oil on Aaron's head and anointed him to consecrate him. ¹³Then he brought Aaron's sons forward, put tunics on them, tied sashes around them and put headbands on them, as the LORD commanded Moses.

8:10–13 After Aaron was appropriately attired, Moses anointed the items in the tabernacle²⁴ with oil and then sprinkled oil on the altar seven times (8:10–11).²⁵ Next Aaron himself was anointed,²⁶ and his sons were clothed in their priestly vestments (8:12–13). The anointing oil placed on Aaron probably indicated the empowerment of the Holy Spirit for the service of the Lord.²⁷ Kings received the Holy Spirit when they were anointed (1 Sam 10:1–6; 16:13), and the New Testament depicts Jesus' ministry commencing with the coming of the Holy Spirit (Matt 3:16; Mark 1:10; John 1:32). The noun form of the verb anoint, *māšiah*, "Christ," became in fact part of the title of Jesus, Jesus "Christ." Psalm 133:2 apparently refers to this momentous occasion of the anointing of Aaron, the high priest.

²⁴ Milgrom suggests that it was actually the inner curtains of the tent which were in view (*Leviticus 1–16*, 516).

²⁵ The altar appears to be the altar of burnt offering located near the door of the tabernacle.

²⁶ The anointing of the high priest's head recalls the anointing of a king to serve as ruler of the people (1 Sam 10:1; 2 Kgs 9:6). This connection between a royal figure and the high priest is reinforced by the fact that the garments of the high priest contain gold and purple, and the word for the priest's diadem (*nēzer*) also refers to a king's crown (2 Sam 1:10; 2 Kgs 11:12; Zech 9:16; Pss 89:39[Hb. 40]; 132:18; Prov 27:24; 2 Chr 23:11) (M. Stern, "Priests and Levities," *EncJud* 13:1074, and T. McComisky, *נֵזֶר* [*nēzer*], *TWOT* 2:567–68).

²⁷ See Wolf, *Pentateuch*, 173; W. C. Kaiser, "Leviticus," *IB* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1994), 1:1061; and Harris, "Leviticus," 561. The lampstand of Zech 4:2–6, which was fed with oil, is also a symbol of the Holy Spirit (*ibid.*).

(3) *Sin Offering for the Altar (8:14–17)*

¹⁴He then presented the bull for the sin offering, and Aaron and his sons laid their hands on its head. ¹⁵Moses slaughtered the bull and took some of the blood, and with his finger he put it on all the horns of the altar to purify the altar. He poured out the rest of the blood at the base of the altar. So he consecrated it to make atonement for it. ¹⁶Moses also took all the fat around the inner parts, the covering of the liver, and both kidneys and their fat, and burned it on the altar. ¹⁷But the bull with its hide and its flesh and its offal he burned up outside the camp, as the LORD commanded Moses.

8:14–17 After the anointing and investiture of the priests, a sin offering was made at the altar in the consecration ceremony. Aaron and his sons the priests laid their hands on the bull, which was subsequently slaughtered by Moses for the sin offering (8:14). The larger animal was also presented as a sin offering on behalf of the priesthood and the Israelite community at large in Leviticus 4. Moses next took the blood from the sacrificial victim and sprinkled it on the horns of the altar, which needed to be purified before it could become the place where expiation could be made (8:15).²⁸ After the rest of the blood was poured at the base of the altar Moses burned the fat, the inner parts, the covering of the liver, and the kidneys on the altar. Other parts of the animal were taken outside the camp (8:16–17). In this purification of the altar ceremony the sin offering followed the procedure prescribed for this offering in Leviticus 4.

(4) *Ram for the Burnt Offering (8:18–21)*

¹⁸He then presented the ram for the burnt offering, and Aaron and his sons laid their hands on its head. ¹⁹Then Moses slaughtered the ram and sprinkled the blood against the altar on all sides. ²⁰He cut the ram into pieces and burned the head, the pieces and the fat. ²¹He washed the inner parts and the legs with water and burned the whole ram on the altar as a burnt offering, a pleasing aroma, an offering made to the LORD by fire, as the LORD commanded Moses.

8:18–21 Next in the consecration ceremony Moses offered a ram for a burnt offering and sprinkled the blood of the victim against all sides of the altar after Aaron and his sons had placed their hands on the head of animal. The main features of the burnt offering are all repeated here, including the laying on of hands (8:18), the sprinkling of blood (8:19), the quartering of the victim (8:20), the washing of the parts (8:21a), and the complete consumption of the animal (8:21b; see 1:3–9). The effect of the

²⁸ See B. A. Levine, *Leviticus*, JPS (Philadelphia: The Jewish Publication Society, 1989), 52. The altar must be the altar of burnt offering because the anointing of the incense altar inside the tabernacle could only take place after the priests had been inaugurated to carry out this function (P. Budd, *Leviticus*, NCBC [Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1996], 137).

burnt offering was the same as the burnt offering in Leviticus 1 (1:9,13,17): “a pleasing aroma, an offering made to the LORD by fire” (8:21c). This offering, which was an act of worship to God, naturally followed the sin offering, which removed sin. The priest was now free to respond to God in worship.

(5) Ram for the Ordination (8:22–30)

²²He then presented the other ram, the ram for the ordination, and Aaron and his sons laid their hands on its head. ²³Moses slaughtered the ram and took some of its blood and put it on the lobe of Aaron’s right ear, on the thumb of his right hand and on the big toe of his right foot. ²⁴Moses also brought Aaron’s sons forward and put some of the blood on the lobes of their right ears, on the thumbs of their right hands and on the big toes of their right feet. Then he sprinkled blood against the altar on all sides. ²⁵He took the fat, the fat tail, all the fat around the inner parts, the covering of the liver, both kidneys and their fat and the right thigh. ²⁶Then from the basket of bread made without yeast, which was before the LORD, he took a cake of bread, and one made with oil, and a wafer; he put these on the fat portions and on the right thigh. ²⁷He put all these in the hands of Aaron and his sons and waved them before the LORD as a wave offering. ²⁸Then Moses took them from their hands and burned them on the altar on top of the burnt offering as an ordination offering, a pleasing aroma, an offering made to the LORD by fire. ²⁹He also took the breast—Moses’ share of the ordination ram—and waved it before the LORD as a wave offering, as the LORD commanded Moses.

³⁰Then Moses took some of the anointing oil and some of the blood from the altar and sprinkled them on Aaron and his garments and on his sons and their garments. So he consecrated Aaron and his garments and his sons and their garments.

8:22–24 The next sacrifice in the ordination of the priesthood should be viewed as the very essence of these sacrificial rites. This sacrifice, repeated continually in the biblical period, had the specific purpose of ordaining the priest for his office.²⁹ Here Moses presented a second ram, a ram of ordination (*millu’im*, 8:22). The word for ordination literally means “to fill” and is an abbreviated form of the expression “to fill the hands” (see 8:33).³⁰ “To fill the hand” is limited to the appointment of priests and those involved in carrying out the sacrificial ritual in the Old Testament. It meant to consecrate someone to divine service (Exod 28:41; 29; 32:29; Judg 17:5,12; 1 Kgs 13:33; Ezek 43:26) and required the recip-

²⁹W. Lasor, D. Hubbard, and F. Bush, *Old Testament Survey*, 2nd ed. (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1996), 86, and Budd, *Leviticus*, 139.

³⁰Notice in Lev 8:27 the ordination offering was placed in Aaron’s “hands,” or more literally “palms.” The biblical term כַּף (kaf) was selected to be the Modern Hebrew expression to designate one’s annual military obligation.

ient to be pure (2 Chr 29:31).³¹ The LXX often translates the Hebrew word *milluʿim* with the Greek word *teleioun*; this Greek word is used in the high priestly prayer in John 17 and in Heb 7:28; 9:9 in reference to Jesus the High Priest.³² Apparently the inauguration to the priesthood was accompanied by placing in the priest's hand something like a gift, a tithe, the Urim and Thummim, or something else distinctive of priestly service.³³

After the ram for ordination was brought forward, Aaron and his sons once again placed their hands upon the ram, and Moses slaughtered it (8:22b–23a). But in addition to the placing of the blood against the altar, the blood was placed upon Aaron and his sons. The blood was placed specifically on the priests' right ear lobe, thumb of right hand, and big toe of right foot (8:23b–24). The placing of the blood on these extremities corresponds to putting the blood on the horns of the altar (4:7,25) and indicates that the priest was entirely dedicated to the service of the Lord (cf. 14:17). Oehler comments on the possible significance about why these specific body parts were chosen: "The ear, because the priest must at all times hearken to the holy voice of God; the hand, because he must execute God's commands, and especially the priestly functions; the foot, because he must walk rightly and holy."³⁴

8:25–29 Moses then placed the bread without yeast upon the fat of the various inner parts of the animal and the right thigh (8:25–26). All of these offerings were then placed in the hands of Aaron and his sons. The offerings were then waved or raised before the Lord as a wave offering (*těnûpâ*)³⁵ (8:27). The next procedure required that these same items be placed back into Moses' hands and be burned on top of the burnt offering as an ordination offering (8:28). After burning the offering Moses then lifted the breast (*těnûpâ*) and presented it as a wave offering before the Lord. Leviticus 7:32 states that the right thigh of the heave offering belonged to the priest, but the right thigh of the ordination offering was not presented to the priest. In this ceremony of dedication it would have been inappropriate for the priest to eat and hence benefit personally from the offering.

8:30 After Moses waved the breast before the Lord, he sprinkled Aaron and his sons and their garments with a combination of oil and blood. Aaron and his sons were objects of sprinkling just as other holy

³¹ Levine, *Leviticus*, 53; A. Rainey, "Sacrifice," *EncJud* 14:605.

³² T. F. Torrance, "Consecration and Ordination," *SJT* 11 (1958): 229–30.

³³ Budd *Leviticus*, 132.

³⁴ Oehler, *Old Testament Theology*, 211. Similarly, see V. P. Hamilton, *Handbook on the Pentateuch* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1982), 266.

³⁵ Or "elevation offering" (NRSV). See commentary on Lev 7:34.

objects have also been purified with sprinkling (8:10–11). This association of the priests with the holy objects of the tabernacle speaks again of the intimate connection between the two.³⁶ It also alludes to the covenant making ceremony at Mount Sinai when the people of Israel and the altar as representative of God were sprinkled with blood (Exod 24:6–8). The three essential features of the ordination offering—the anointing of the bodily extremities; the offering of the grain and the thigh as a wave or elevation offering (*těnûpâ*); and the sprinkling of Aaron, his sons, and their garments with blood—distinguished this momentous occasion from other times of Israelite sacrifice. The ceremonies, depicted here in narrative at the commencement of the priestly service, became the pattern for ordaining priests in Israel.

(6) *Seven-Day Ordination (8:31–36)*

³¹Moses then said to Aaron and his sons, “Cook the meat at the entrance to the Tent of Meeting and eat it there with the bread from the basket of ordination offerings, as I commanded, saying, ‘Aaron and his sons are to eat it.’³² Then burn up the rest of the meat and the bread.³³ Do not leave the entrance to the Tent of Meeting for seven days, until the days of your ordination are completed, for your ordination will last seven days.³⁴ What has been done today was commanded by the LORD to make atonement for you.³⁵ You must stay at the entrance to the Tent of Meeting day and night for seven days and do what the LORD requires, so you will not die; for that is what I have been commanded.”³⁶ So Aaron and his sons did everything the LORD commanded through Moses.

8:31–36 In the final instruction of the ordination ceremony Aaron and his sons were ordered³⁷ to partake of the meat and bread and burn what was left over (8:31–32). Moses then told the priests to remain at the entrance of the tabernacle for seven days to complete the ordination (8:33–35). Although not explicitly stated, it should be assumed that the ordination sacrifice was repeated on each of the seven days to provide for the priests during this seven-day period (see Exod 29:33).³⁸ Meat and bread, as part of the ordination sacrifice, was prepared with the sacrifice on each of the seven days. The seven-day period of separation added to

³⁶ See comments on Lev 8:7a.

³⁷ Several of the ancient versions, including the LXX, the Peshitta (Syriac), and the Aramaic Targum read Moses’ statement as passive: “I was commanded” rather than “I commanded” (8:31). This reading would only involve a different vowel pattern in the verb with the identical consonants and may be preferable in the context since the instruction comes from Yahweh throughout.

³⁸ Other events in the OT wherein a seven-day period is prescribed include laws regarding birth (Lev 12; Gen 17), marriage (Gen 29:27), and mourning (Gen 50:10) (G. J. Wenham, *The Book of Leviticus*, NICOT [Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1979], 144).

the solemnity of the occasion as it marked the beginning of the priest's consecrated life of service to the Lord.³⁹

One of the purposes of the ordination ceremony was that atonement would be provided for the priests (8:34). At the very commencement of the priestly activity there was to be a reminder of the status of the priests as sinners in need of atonement to carry out their sacred responsibilities. God must use imperfect people to serve as leaders of his people. He does not demand perfection from those who are willing to serve him.⁴⁰

God's grace is particularly evident in Aaron's appointment to the high priesthood, for the very one who had been the chief sinner (Exod 32) now became the chief mediator for the people of God. Servants of God in all ages are in desperate need of the cleansing provided by God to be available and useful in his service. Believer-priests can still serve God today provided they be cleansed by means of the Holy Spirit and the Word (John 13:10; Eph 5:26; Titus 3:5; Heb 10:22).⁴¹ The contrast between the sinful lives of the high priests and the life and work of the Great High Priest, Jesus Christ, to which these priests pointed, was not lost to the writer of the Hebrews (Heb 9:7–14).

The final verse of chap. 8 returns to the historical narrative genre and records the fact that the priests, like Moses, responded with complete obedience to the Lord's command in the execution of the inauguration ceremony (8:36).

2. The Priests Begin Their Ministry (9:1–24)

(1) *Instructions on Sacrifices (9:1–4)*

¹On the eighth day Moses summoned Aaron and his sons and the elders of Israel. ²He said to Aaron, "Take a bull calf for your sin offering and a ram for your burnt offering, both without defect, and present them before the LORD. ³Then say to the Israelites: 'Take a male goat for a sin offering, a calf and a lamb—both a year old and without defect—for a burnt offering, ⁴and an ox and a ram for a fellowship offering to sacrifice before the LORD, together with a grain offering mixed with oil. For today the LORD will appear to you.'"

9:1 After the ordination ceremony commanded by the Lord was complete (Lev 8), the priests and the elders of Israel were instructed to offer separate sacrifices to the Lord. This instruction occurred on the eighth day, just one day after the seven-day ordination ceremony. The special focus on the eighth day following a seven-day sequence is common in the

³⁹ See J. E. Hartley, *Leviticus*, WBC (Dallas: Word, 1992), 116.

⁴⁰ Kaiser, "Leviticus," 1063.

⁴¹ *Ibid.*

Old Testament (Lev 12:2–3; Exod 22:10; 22:26–27; 14:8–10,21; 15:13–14; Num 6:9–10; 1 Kgs 8:65 LXX; Ezek 43:18–27; 1 Sam 16:10–11; 17:2; Mic 5:4; Eccl 11:2) and in Ugaritic literature.⁴²

9:2–4 Aaron was instructed to offer an unblemished calf⁴³ for his sin offering and an unblemished ram for a burnt offering (9:2). The Israelites, on the other hand, were not only to offer a sin offering and a burnt offering but were also to present a fellowship offering and a grain offering (9:3–4). The first offering for the priests and the laity was the sin offering, which provided the grounds for all other sacrifices since the sin offering focused on propitiation and expiation. The fact that the seven-day ordination ceremony already involved the provision of atonement for the priests (8:34) underscores the need for forgiveness in the service of God. Kaiser is certainly right when he states: “The closer one follows the Lord in obedience and service, the more conscious that person becomes of how short each individual falls from the holy standard of God.”⁴⁴

The holiness of Israel was related to a considerable degree to the faithfulness of the priests. Yet the priests, by the nature of their work and their close contact with the altar, were in a position where they, more easily than the congregation at large, could transgress the regulations established by God. It was all the more important, therefore, that atonement should be made for the priests by the presentation of special sin offerings. As in all the various arenas of the service of God, those who are nearest to him and carry the heaviest burden of spiritual responsibility are subject to the greatest temptations and may, more easily than others, bring dishonor to his name.⁴⁵

The sin offerings of the priests and the congregation were followed by the burnt offerings, which had as their primary emphasis the offerer’s complete dedication to God (Lev 1). Additional fellowship offerings and then the grain offerings were required for the congregation. The fellowship offering focused on communion with God (Lev 3); and the grain offering (Lev 2) symbolized the consecration of one’s efforts to God.⁴⁶ Although the preceding weeklong ceremony focused on the investiture of the priests, it was on the following eighth day that the Israelite cult officially began (see Exod 29:37). All sacrifices, with the single exception of

⁴² Milgrom, *Leviticus 1–16*, 571.

⁴³ Aaron’s first sacrifice of a calf (𐤀𐤊𐤍) for a sin offering would be a reminder of his heinous sin of presenting an idol in the shape of a calf at the very time the Law was revealed to Moses (Exod 32:4) (Wenham, *Leviticus*, 148).

⁴⁴ “Leviticus,” 1065.

⁴⁵ R. E. Clements, “Leviticus,” BBC (Nashville: Broadman, 1970), 27.

⁴⁶ See Kaiser, “Leviticus,” 1066.

the guilt offering, were presented.⁴⁷

The reason these offerings were to be offered on this day is stated in v. 4: “For today the LORD will appear to you.” The manifestation of the presence of God had specific relevance to this important day in Israel’s history when the sacrificial system officially began; the manifestation of God’s presence at the commencement of sacrificial offerings is a reminder that the goal of worship is to encounter God (see 9:22–24).⁴⁸

(2) *Offering for Priests (9:5–14)*

⁵They took the things Moses commanded to the front of the Tent of Meeting, and the entire assembly came near and stood before the LORD. ⁶Then Moses said, “This is what the LORD has commanded you to do, so that the glory of the LORD may appear to you.”

⁷Moses said to Aaron, “Come to the altar and sacrifice your sin offering and your burnt offering and make atonement for yourself and the people; sacrifice the offering that is for the people and make atonement for them, as the LORD has commanded.”

⁸So Aaron came to the altar and slaughtered the calf as a sin offering for himself. ⁹His sons brought the blood to him, and he dipped his finger into the blood and put it on the horns of the altar; the rest of the blood he poured out at the base of the altar. ¹⁰On the altar he burned the fat, the kidneys and the covering of the liver from the sin offering, as the LORD commanded Moses; ¹¹the flesh and the hide he burned up outside the camp.

¹²Then he slaughtered the burnt offering. His sons handed him the blood, and he sprinkled it against the altar on all sides. ¹³They handed him the burnt offering piece by piece, including the head, and he burned them on the altar. ¹⁴He washed the inner parts and the legs and burned them on top of the burnt offering on the altar.

9:5–6 After the instruction for the sacrifices on this special day all the animals that were offered were brought before the Tent of Meeting with the stated result “so that⁴⁹ the glory of the LORD may appear to you” (9:6). The repetition of the reference to the presence of the Lord in 9:4 and 9:6 suggests, as stated above, that the Lord’s presence was the desired result of the entire proceeding.

9:7–14 With the people assembled at the Tent of Meeting, Aaron was instructed by Moses to perform the sin offering and burnt offering sacrifices

⁴⁷The guilt offering was a private offering of the individual and thus would be inappropriate on this public occasion to commence the cult (Milgrom, *Leviticus 1–16*, 572).

⁴⁸Hartley, *Leviticus*, 123.

⁴⁹The use of the *waw* conjunction with the imperfect וַיֵּשׂ is used here to indicate purpose (IBHS § 39.2.1d).

for himself and for the entire congregation (9:7).⁵⁰ The rest of this section describes the sacrifice of the priests, while the people's offering is described in 9:15–21. There had already been a sin offering and a burnt offering for Aaron's consecration (8:14–21), but more was needed. Aaron slaughtered the calf for his own sin offering and placed the blood on the horns of the altar with the rest of the blood disposed at the base of the altar (9:8–9). As we learned from the instruction of the sin offering in Leviticus 4, the fat, the kidneys, and the covering of the liver were then burned with the flesh and the hide and were disposed of outside the camp (9:11). The sin offering focuses again on the priests' sinfulness, since this offering was not given for a specific sin according to the instructions of Leviticus 4 but for the general depravity of God's servants.⁵¹ Once the sin offering had been made for Aaron, he performed the rite of the burnt offering as he slaughtered the victim. Then with the aid of his sons he sprinkled the blood against the sides of the altar. Finally, the offering was burned upon the altar (9:12–14).

(3) Offering for the People (9:15–21)

¹⁵Aaron then brought the offering that was for the people. He took the goat for the people's sin offering and slaughtered it and offered it for a sin offering as he did with the first one.

¹⁶He brought the burnt offering and offered it in the prescribed way. ¹⁷He also brought the grain offering, took a handful of it and burned it on the altar in addition to the morning's burnt offering.

¹⁸He slaughtered the ox and the ram as the fellowship offering for the people. His sons handed him the blood, and he sprinkled it against the altar on all sides. ¹⁹But the fat portions of the ox and the ram—the fat tail, the layer of fat, the kidneys and the covering of the liver—²⁰these they laid on the breasts, and then Aaron burned the fat on the altar. ²¹Aaron waved the breasts and the right thigh before the LORD as a wave offering, as Moses commanded.

9:15–21 In the offering for the people Aaron administered the sin, burnt, grain, and fellowship offerings according to the prescribed instructions (9:15–20).⁵² Then Aaron offered the wave or elevation offering before the Lord (9:21). The order of the offerings is once again of importance. As Wiersbe asserts, "We must first deal with our sins before we can

⁵⁰ Aaron's leadership in offering sacrifices assumes the completion of the inauguration ceremony of Leviticus 8. Up to this point Moses had acted as priest, but after the ordination of chap. 8 Aaron now accepts his priestly role.

⁵¹ This might explain why the blood was not taken into the tabernacle but was smeared against the horns of the altar of burnt offering outside the tabernacle (thus E. J. Young, *An Introduction to the Old Testament* [Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1964], 77).

⁵² The last phrase of v. 17, "in addition to the morning's burnt offering," indicates not only that the context of Exodus 29 is assumed but that the prescribed offerings detailed in Exod 29:38–42 were already being observed in Israelite worship.

dedicate ourselves totally to the Lord; then we can enjoy fellowship with Him.”⁵³

(4) Blessing and Fire (9:22–24)

²²Then Aaron lifted his hands toward the people and blessed them. And having sacrificed the sin offering, the burnt offering and the fellowship offering, he stepped down.

²³Moses and Aaron then went into the Tent of Meeting. When they came out, they blessed the people; and the glory of the LORD appeared to all the people. ²⁴Fire came out from the presence of the LORD and consumed the burnt offering and the fat portions on the altar. And when all the people saw it, they shouted for joy and fell facedown.

9:22 After making these offerings on behalf of the people on the eighth day, Aaron blessed the people. On this most momentous occasion the word “blessed” occurs twice in the culmination of the inauguration of the priesthood for Israel (9:22,23). The verb *brk*, “to bless,” is used most frequently in the Old Testament to refer to the addition of descendants or to fertility when God is the subject of the verbal action.⁵⁴ God blesses by intensifying the natural processes, making them more productive than they normally would be.⁵⁵ When a human, in this case a priest, pronounces a blessing, the effectiveness of the blessing is not dependent upon the authority or power of the one who pronounces the blessing, nor upon the inherent power of the spoken word. This fact is apparent in contexts that pronounce a blessing formula (with the root *brk*) where God is expressly accredited as the sender of the blessing. For example, in the Aaronide blessing formula of Num 6:24–27, after the blessing is cited by the priest the text explicitly states that it is the Lord who blesses the people (Num 6:27).⁵⁶ Some scholars believe that both the blessing in Lev 9:22 and the blessing pronouncement in 9:23 constituted the prescribed priestly blessing of Num 6:24–27.⁵⁷ The announcement of blessing upon the people by the priest is part of the mediating role performed by the priests for the nation of Israel.⁵⁸

9:23 Next Moses and Aaron entered the Tent of Meeting together.

⁵³ W. Wiersbe, *Be Holy* (Wheaton: Victor, 1979), 37.

⁵⁴ See M. D. Cassuto, בְּרַךְ, *EM* 2:355, and K. Mathews, *Genesis 1–11:26*, NAC (Nashville: Broadman & Holman), 157–58.

⁵⁵ C. W. Mitchell, *The Meaning of Brk “To Bless” in the Old Testament* (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1987), 39.

⁵⁶ G. Wehmeier, בְּרַךְ *brk*, *THAT* 1:372. Similarly, Mitchell, *The Meaning of Brk*, 79.

⁵⁷ Mitchell, *The Meaning of Brk*, 97, and Harris, “Leviticus,” 565.

⁵⁸ For other blessings bestowed upon the gathered nation, see 2 Sam 6:17–19; 1 Kgs 8:55–61; 2 Chr 30:27.

Aaron's entrance into the sanctuary along with Moses not only symbolized Aaron's new role as a servant of the sanctuary but also demonstrated that the role of mediating for the people was being passed from Moses to Aaron. Upon emerging from the tabernacle Moses and Aaron blessed the people, and the glory of the Lord appeared to all the people. The Hebrew word for glory (*kābôd*) is from the root *kbd*, which denotes "heaviness" or "weightiness" and hence the extended meaning of "significance, superior value, distinction, splendor."⁵⁹ Westermann argues that the reference to the glory of the Lord should be understood here in connection with the occurrence of the phrase in Exod 24:15b–18; 40:35. In Exodus 24 the glory of the Lord rests on the mountain at Sinai. In Exodus 40 the glory of the Lord fills the tabernacle, indicating that the tabernacle has become a portable Sinai. The next appearance of the glory of the Lord in Leviticus 9 in the context of the inauguration of the priesthood indicates that God has established and approved the sacrificial system.⁶⁰

The glory of the Lord is often associated with the cloud and the tabernacle, both of which intimated the presence of God among the people (Exod 16:10; Num 16:42; Exod 40:34–38; Num 9:15–23; 10:11–12).⁶¹ Manifestations of God's glory demonstrate his desire to reveal himself and dwell among men. "God wishes to dwell with men, to have his reality and his splendor known to them."⁶² The verb *škn*,⁶³ "to dwell," is sometimes used in connection with glory in reference to the tabernacle (Exod 24:16; Ps 26:8). The glory of the Lord filled the tabernacle (Exod 40:34–35) and the temple (1 Kgs 8:11), and one day in the future it will fill the whole earth (Ps 72:19; Isa 6:3; Pss 57:5; 108:5; 113:4).⁶⁴ The manifestation of the glory of God throughout the whole earth in the future will represent a reconciliation of God and man, with life in the presence of God restored (Isa 40:5; 59:19; 60:1–22; 66:18–24).⁶⁵ For David the revelation of the glory of God was an indication of the victory of the kingdom of God (see Num 14:21; Hab 2:14; Ps 72:19).⁶⁶ The appearance of the Lord in glory was stated to be the goal of the inauguration ceremony in 9:4,6. The Lord's appearance was God's stamp of approval upon Aaron's benediction and upon the sacrificial complex just created.⁶⁷ It may also be of

⁵⁹ HALOT, 2:455, 457; BDB, 457; I. Heinaman, הַכְבוֹד, EM 4:4.

⁶⁰ C. Westermann, כִּבְד, THAT 1:808–9.

⁶¹ Budd, *Leviticus*, 147–48. Harris maintains that the manifestation of the glory of God is actually the same event as found in Exod 40:34 ("Leviticus," 565).

⁶² J. Oswalt, כְּבוֹד (*kābôd*), TWOT 1:427.

⁶³ From this root developed the concept of the "Shekinah Glory."

⁶⁴ G. H. Davies, "Glory," IDB 2:401.

⁶⁵ W. Eichrodt, *Theology of the Old Testament* (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1961), 2:31.

⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, 32.

⁶⁷ Wehmeier, בִּרְךְ, THAT 1:372, and Mitchell, *The Meaning of Brk*, 97.

significance that blessing follows the sacrifices made on behalf of the people. This illustrates the New Testament truth that every spiritual blessing comes to the Christian as a result of the sacrifice of Jesus Christ upon the cross.⁶⁸

9:24 Finally, fire from the Lord descended from heaven and consumed the burnt offering and the fat upon the altar.⁶⁹ Fire is often employed as a symbol of God's presence and work (see Exod 3:2; 19:18; Deut 4:24; Ps 18:8–14; Isa 33:14; Ezek 1:4; Mal 3:2). Fire also often indicates God's judgment as in Mal 3:2; Matt 3:11; Luke 3:16, but here it is used as an expression of joy, much as it is in Judg 13:15–21; 1 Kgs 18:38; and 2 Chr 7:1.⁷⁰ The appearance of the Lord with fire here is comparable to other great manifestations of God on such momentous occasions as God's appearance on Mount Sinai and at the dedication of Solomon's temple.

When the glory of the Lord appeared, the people responded with joy⁷¹ and bowed down to worship the Lord.⁷² It is significant that the first occurrence of the word "joy" in the Bible is in this context. The combination of worship with joy on this preeminent occasion and the frequent employment of the root *rānan* ("give a ringing cry") in response to God indicates that the highest mood of the Old Testament religion was one of joy.⁷³ The response to God's laws also was characterized by joy in later Judaism, according to Sanders.⁷⁴

The repeated affirmation (9:6,13) that God would appear to the people once the tabernacle structure and the priestly administration was intact is certainly a high point in the Pentateuchal narrative, particularly from Exodus 19 when the Israelites arrived at Mount Sinai onward. The coming of the presence of God is the focal point of worship for the Old Testament saint as well as the New Testament believer. As Hartley states, "The goal of worship in both testaments is to enter into God's presence."⁷⁵ At its basic nature worship is communion with God.⁷⁶ God's presence comes to

⁶⁸ Wiersbe, *Be Holy*, 37.

⁶⁹ Burnt offerings are also directly consumed by God in Judg 13:15–20; 1 Kgs 18:22–39; 1 Chr 21:26; and 2 Chr 7:1–3.

⁷⁰ Kaiser, "Leviticus," 1067.

⁷¹ The verb יָרַח according to BDB is an onomatopoeic word with the meaning "let out shouts of joy" or "to sing jubilantly" (BDB, 943).

⁷² "Fell facedown" (NIV) is literally "fell on their faces." This gesture indicates profound respect and often occurs as a response to a manifestation of God (Ezek 1:28; 3:23; 11:13; 43:2–3; 44:4; Dan 8:17).

⁷³ W. White, יָרַח (*rānan*), *TWOT* 2:851.

⁷⁴ E. P. Sanders, *Paul and Palestinian Judaism* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1977), 110–11.

⁷⁵ Hartley, *Leviticus*, 126.

⁷⁶ Kaiser, "Leviticus," 1067.

culminate and thus to confirm the establishment of the Israelite worship system. Moreover, now that atonement is made, God-honoring service may begin.

3. The Role of Priests in Israelite Religion (10:1–20)

Leviticus 9 ended on a spiritual high note as God displayed his approval of the priesthood and the Israelite sacrificial system by sending fire down from heaven (9:24). Leviticus 10 opens with the first official day of the operation of the cultic system. The sacrifice of Nadab and Abihu (10:1–7) and the failure of Eleazar and Abihu to partake of their portion of the sin offering (10:11–20) are depicted in narrative accounts. These incidents surround the threefold instruction for the priests (10:8–11). The Israelite priests were not to drink fermented drink, were to distinguish between the holy and profane, and were to instruct the Israelites in the decrees of the Lord. The central position this admonition occupies in the chapter, surrounded by historical narrative regarding the early activities and failures of the priests, suggests that it is the central focus of the chapter.

(1) *Nadab and Abihu Offer Unauthorized Fire (10:1–7)*

¹Aaron's sons Nadab and Abihu took their censers, put fire in them and added incense; and they offered unauthorized fire before the LORD, contrary to his command. ²So fire came out from the presence of the LORD and consumed them, and they died before the LORD. ³Moses then said to Aaron, "This is what the LORD spoke of when he said:

"Among those who approach me
I will show myself holy;
in the sight of all the people
I will be honored."

Aaron remained silent.

⁴Moses summoned Mishael and Elzaphan, sons of Aaron's uncle Uzziel, and said to them, "Come here; carry your cousins outside the camp, away from the front of the sanctuary." ⁵So they came and carried them, still in their tunics, outside the camp, as Moses ordered.

⁶Then Moses said to Aaron and his sons Eleazar and Ithamar, "Do not let your hair become unkempt, and do not tear your clothes, or you will die and the LORD will be angry with the whole community. But your relatives, all the house of Israel, may mourn for those the LORD has destroyed by fire. ⁷Do not leave the entrance to the Tent of Meeting or you will die, because the LORD's anointing oil is on you." So they did as Moses said.

10:1 On the first official day that the Israelite system was to be employed, Nadab and Abihu, sons of Aaron (Exod 6:23; 24:1–2; 28:1;

Num 3:2–4; 26:60; 1 Chr 6:3), failed to obey the proper practice God had commanded. The offense is specifically described as the offering of “strange fire” (ʿēš zārā) on the altar (10:1).⁷⁷ The nature of this “strange fire” has been widely debated throughout the ages by both Jewish and Christian commentators. The Jewish rabbis, for example, proposed twelve theories to explain Nadab’s and Abihu’s death.⁷⁸ The most commonly offered suggestions on the nature of the offense of Nadab and Abihu include: (1) penetrating too far into the sanctuary, (2) offering unauthorized coals from outside the temple area,⁷⁹ (3) offering incense that did not contain the proper ingredients,⁸⁰ and (4) offering incense at the wrong time of the day.⁸¹ Positions one, two, and three appear to have contextual support. Position one is supported from the text of Lev 16:1–2, where the sin of Nadab and Abihu is discussed in the context of Aaron entering into the Holy of Holies on the Day of Atonement. Aaron is warned that he is not to enter behind the curtain anytime he wants but only on the Day of Atonement. This admonition might indicate that the nature of Nadab and Abihu’s offense was precisely that they had entered into the Holy of Holies, and thus God took their lives.⁸² The immediate context of Leviticus 10, however, focuses on the nature of the fire itself that led to the violation. This is seen particularly by the relative pronoun ʾāšer, which immediately follows the expression “strange fire” (NIV, “unauthorized fire”), indicating that it is the nature of the fire that is at issue. Thus positions two or three appear to be the best options for the explanations of Nadab and Abihu’s death. Preference is given to position two because fire rather than incense seems to be the main concern of the violation in the context.⁸³ Further precision on the nature of the offense is not possible based on the evidence from the text.

10:2–3 If the exact nature of the “strange fire” is somewhat obscure,

⁷⁷ This incident is mentioned in Lev 16:1; Num 3:4; 26:61; 1 Chr 24:2.

⁷⁸ See Milgrom, *Leviticus 1–16*, 599, 633, and R. Kirschner, “The Rabbinic and Philonic Exegeses of the Nadab and Abihu Incident (Lev 10:1–6),” *JQR* 73 (1983): 375–93.

⁷⁹ See M. Haran, “The Uses of Incense in the Ancient Israelite Ritual,” *VT* 10 (1960): 115, and J. C. H. Laughlin, “The Strange Fire of Nadab and Abihu,” *JBL* 95.4 (1976): 561–62.

⁸⁰ See Exod 30:30–34 for the proper ingredients for the incense. This position is defended by H. Wolf, *An Introduction to the Old Testament Pentateuch* (Chicago: Moody, 1991), 174.

⁸¹ Wenham, *Leviticus*, 155. R. Gradwohl tries to see contradictions in the explanations of the death of Nadab and Abihu and attempts to show parallels between Nadab and Abihu, sons of Aaron, and Nadab son of Jeroboam (“Das ‘Fremde Feuer’ von Nadab und Abihu,” *ZAW* 75 [1963]: 288–96). For a critique of this approach see Introduction, pp. 28–30.

⁸² See Levine, *Leviticus*, 59, for a defense of this position.

⁸³ Budd maintains that the “strange fire” is actually fire kindled for the purpose of worshipping other deities. He finds support for his view based on the phrase “contrary to his command” (10:1), which is used in 7:31; 19:5 in the context of worshipping other gods (*Leviticus*, 150–51).

the fire of God's judgment is not. Leviticus 10:2 states that in response to this violation by Aaron's sons fire burst forth from the presence of the Lord and consumed the bodies of Nadab and Abihu. "They died before the LORD."⁸⁴ The fire mentioned in 10:2 is the same fire that came from the presence of God in 9:24 in celebration of the obedient priestly response to God's instructions for the inauguration of the priesthood. Here it is meted out in judgment as a response to disobedience. The Lord appears as a devouring fire as he does in Exod 24:17; Deut 5:22; Num 11:1; 16:35; 2 Kgs 1:10,12. Fire from heaven occurs twelve times in the Old Testament, six times in a beneficial way and six times in judgment.⁸⁵ The latter is certainly the contextual background for the statement in Heb 12:29: "God is a devouring fire." The serious consequence of Nadab and Abihu's disobedience is a reminder of how resolutely important the worship of God is to be for a believer's life. Calvin commented on this heinous act of disobedience and the necessity of God's strict judgment on this occasion:

If we reflect how holy a thing God's worship is, the enormity of the punishment will by no means offend us. Besides, it was necessary that their religion should be sanctified at its very commencement; for if God had suffered the sons of Aaron to transgress with impunity, they would have afterwards carelessly neglected the whole Law. This, therefore, was the reason of such great severity, that the priests should anxiously watch against all profanation.⁸⁶

Moreover, the priests had been warned that judgment would be the inevitable result if they were disobedient in their presentation of offerings to him (Exod 19:22). The worship of God should never be characterized by carelessness, especially by those who have a spiritual leadership role.

10:4-5 After it was evident that Nadab and Abihu had died, Mishael and Elzaphan (Exod 6:22), uncles to Nadab and Abihu, were commissioned by Moses to remove the bodies from the tabernacle precinct and take them outside the camp. This was necessary because priests were not

⁸⁴ That disobedience by a priest could result in death was mentioned in the immediately preceding context (8:35). Because the language is identical to the presentation of offerings that are made at the tabernacle (i.e., "before the LORD"), Philo interpreted the slaying of Nadab and Abihu as their giving up their bodies as a sacrifice in what he called a "divine exaltation by fire" (Kirschner, "The Rabbinic and Philonic Exegeses of the Nadab and Abihu Incident [Lev 10:1-6]," 375-93).

⁸⁵ See Lev 9:24; Judg 6:24; 13:20; 1 Chr 21:26; 2 Chr 7:2; and 1 Kgs 18:38 for the beneficial manifestations and Lev 10:1; Num 11:1; 16:35; Job 1:16; and 2 Kgs 1:10,12 for the detrimental manifestations (Milgrom, *Leviticus 1-16*, 599).

⁸⁶ J. Calvin, *Commentaries on the Last Books of Moses* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1979), 2:431.

to be contaminated by death (Lev 21:1–4).⁸⁷ It is of interest that it was the uncles of the deceased who removed the corpses in Amos 6:10, which may indicate that uncles played a special role in funeral proceedings.⁸⁸

10:6–7 After the removal of the corpses from the tabernacle precinct Aaron and his sons, the father and brothers of the victims, were commanded by Moses not to mourn⁸⁹ but to continue to minister as priests (see Lev 21:1–15). The mourning for the victims was to be done by the other relatives of Nadab and Abihu, for Aaron and his sons were not to let anything interrupt their service of the living God at the tabernacle. Because the anointing oil was upon them, they were forbidden to leave the entrance of the tabernacle (10:7; see 21:12). The Israelites were undoubtedly aware of the practices involved in the ceremonial lament for the dead throughout the ancient Near East (2 Sam 1:17–27). It was customary for relatives to conduct the lament before the burial (Gen 30:3–10); and the lament itself was often accompanied by weeping, wailing, beating the breast, and tearing the clothes (2 Sam 3:31; Isa 22:12; Ezek 27:29–32; Joel 1:13; 2:12–13).⁹⁰

Davies comments on parallels to the Nadab and Abihu incident and suggests the application the account should have for the nation of Israel:

The priestly fault so soon after the ordination must be seen in the light of similar stories. There is the Garden, but then the sin in the Garden; there is the release of Noah and all his family from the ark and the accompanying sacrifice, and then comes the story of his drunkenness. Similarly, at Sinai there is first the theophany and the covenant, but then the golden calf. So priestly trespass emerges immediately upon priestly ordination. Even priests can go wrong, and they can go wrong in the very aftermath of ordination. The story, then, is designed to warn and thus to save the ministry in Israel.⁹¹

⁸⁷ In Jerusalem today the mortuary at the Hadassah hospital has double doors, with one being permanently closed, as well as swinging doors at the entrance, which in effect always keeps the entrance closed. This prevents a priest from entering into the same room as a corpse and consequently allows him to visit the sick. Also, since part of the road from Jerusalem to Jericho was built over a cemetery on the Mount of Olives, priests are prohibited from traveling on the road (Stern, "Priests and Levites," 1089–90).

⁸⁸ Levine, *Leviticus*, 60.

⁸⁹ The period of mourning was to be a seven-day period (see Gen 50:10; 1 Sam 31:13). The same length of time for mourning was observed at Ugarit in Syria (T. Lewis, *Cults of the Dead in Ancient Israel and Ugarit*, HSM [Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1989], 171). One expression for mourning mentioned here is the "tearing" (Hb. $\square\text{ } \square\text{ } \square$) of clothes. This verb, which occurs only three times and exclusively in Leviticus, always has "clothes" ($\square\text{ } \square\text{ } \square$) as its object (10:6; 13:45; 21:10). Tradition suggests that the tearing of clothes was done along the seams of a garment (*m. Sot* 1:5; *b. Sot* 7a) (Levine, *Leviticus*, 60). "Unkempt hair" on the other hand is not associated with mourning, but see 21:10. According to rabbinic tradition the high priest was to have his hair cut once a week and an ordinary priest once a month (*b. San* 22b).

⁹⁰ E. Gerstenberger, *Leviticus*, OTL (Louisville: Westminster, 1993), 122.

⁹¹ G. Davies, "Leviticus," *IDB* 3:120.

(2) Role of the Priesthood (10:8–11)

⁸Then the LORD said to Aaron, ⁹“You and your sons are not to drink wine or other fermented drink whenever you go into the Tent of Meeting, or you will die. This is a lasting ordinance for the generations to come. ¹⁰You must distinguish between the holy and the common, between the unclean and the clean, ¹¹and you must teach the Israelites all the decrees the LORD has given them through Moses.”

10:8 This new paragraph begins with the common formulaic expression for the Lord’s revelation in Leviticus, this time with the recipient being Aaron instead of Moses. This is in fact is the only occurrence in Leviticus where Aaron is directly spoken to by the Lord. This encounter thus places the following instruction in the most solemn terms for the Israelite priesthood because it addresses the role of the priest in the Israelite religion. It also occupies the central section of the chapter, which indicates that this paragraph is of preeminent concern for priestly responsibility.

10:9 The first instruction given to Aaron and his sons was that they were not to partake of wine or fermented drink. The term *šēkār*, translated “fermented drink,” only occurs in combination with the term *yayin* (“wine”) in the Old Testament. It is a more general term than wine and may refer to any intoxicating drink made from grains, dates, or other types of fruits.⁹² The violation of this ordinance would result in death for the priest. This warning was surely received with undivided attentiveness coming on the heels of the transportation of Nadab and Abihu from the tabernacle.⁹³ A later violation of this statute in a prophetic text may be found in Isa 28:7–13.

Temperance is also to characterize spiritual leadership in the church of Jesus Christ (1 Tim 3:3,8; Titus 2:2–3). In modern-day terms this admonition would certainly apply to all substances that alter normal behavior and thus increase the possibility of neglecting God’s commands.⁹⁴

10:10 Abstention from alcoholic beverage may help to insure obedience to the next stated role of the priest: “to distinguish between the holy

⁹² Levine, *Leviticus*, 61, and Hartley, *Leviticus*, 135. Wine and fermented drink are also prohibited for those who have taken a Nazirite vow (Num 6:3). These fermented drinks were forbidden to those who were called to a special service although they were not as strong as fermented drinks are today. Distillation of drinks did not begin until Medieval times (Harris, “Leviticus,” 568).

⁹³ In fact, many commentators maintain that the admonition against drunkenness immediately after the death of Nadab and Abihu suggests that drunkenness may have a role in their not accurately adhering to God’s law (Wenham, *Leviticus*, 158; Harris, “Leviticus,” 567).

⁹⁴ G. Demarest, *Leviticus*, CC (Dallas: Word, 1990), 106.

and the common, between the clean and the unclean.”⁹⁵ Certainly a priest under the influence of alcohol would be impaired in his ability to make these distinctions accurately.

The concept of holiness in both the Old Testament and the New Testament is related to the idea of separation. In the realm of the “holy” are objects or people set apart for God’s use, while the profane are confined to that which is common or normal. This function of the priest anticipates the next major section of Leviticus, which has as its primary concern the distinction between the holy/profane and the clean/unclean (Lev 11–15).

10:11 The third function of the Israelite priest was that he was to teach the Israelites the laws given by Moses. Although this role is not commonly thought to be a function of the Israelite priest, there are numerous indications that this was his understood responsibility (see Deut 33:10; 2 Chr 15:3; 17:7; Ezra 7:25; Neh 8:7; Hos 4:6; Mic 3:11; Jer 18:18; Ezek 7:26; Mal 2:7). Second Chronicles 17:7 may be the best known illustration of this role. There it is recorded that in the time of Jehoshaphat the king sent the priests throughout the land to instruct the cities of Judah. Related to this latter function is the involvement of the priests in copying biblical manuscripts since most of the scribes were also priests.⁹⁶

(3) *Proper Eating of the Offerings (10:12–20)*

¹²Moses said to Aaron and his remaining sons, Eleazar and Ithamar, “Take the grain offering left over from the offerings made to the LORD by fire and eat it prepared without yeast beside the altar, for it is most holy. ¹³Eat it in a holy place, because it is your share and your sons’ share of the offerings made to the LORD by fire; for so I have been commanded. ¹⁴But you and your sons and your daughters may eat the breast that was waved and the thigh that was presented. Eat them in a ceremonially clean place; they have been given to you and your children as your share of the Israelites’ fellowship offerings. ¹⁵The thigh that was presented and the breast that was waved must be brought with the fat portions of the offerings made by fire, to be waved before the LORD as a wave offering. This will be the regular share for you and your children, as the LORD has commanded.”

¹⁶When Moses inquired about the goat of the sin offering and found that it had been burned up, he was angry with Eleazar and Ithamar, Aaron’s remain-

⁹⁵This function of the priesthood is also mentioned in Ezek 22:26. The phrase in Ezekiel reflects Hebrew language of a later stage than what is found in Leviticus. This indicates that Leviticus was written before Ezekiel, contrary to the opinion of many modern critical scholars (M. F. Rooker, *Biblical Hebrew in Transition: The Language of the Book of Ezekiel*, JSOTSup 90 [Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1990], 117–19). See Introduction, p. 36.

⁹⁶M. Bar-Ilan, “Part Two: Scribes and Books in the Late Second Commonwealth and Rabbinic Period,” in *Mikra*, ed. M. J. Mulder (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1988), 22.

ing sons, and asked, ¹⁷“Why didn’t you eat the sin offering in the sanctuary area? It is most holy; it was given to you to take away the guilt of the community by making atonement for them before the LORD. ¹⁸Since its blood was not taken into the Holy Place, you should have eaten the goat in the sanctuary area, as I commanded.”

¹⁹Aaron replied to Moses, “Today they sacrificed their sin offering and their burnt offering before the LORD, but such things as this have happened to me. Would the LORD have been pleased if I had eaten the sin offering today?”
²⁰When Moses heard this, he was satisfied.

10:12–15 In this section Moses addresses Aaron and his remaining sons, Eleazar and Ithamar, regarding the eating of the sacrifices offered on the eighth day of the inauguration of the priesthood (Lev 9). Apparently after the death of Nadab and Abihu the food on the altar had not been consumed.⁹⁷ Although of extreme importance, the central section describing the role of the priests was but an interlude in the narrative framework of this chapter. The priests were instructed that they could eat the grain offering (10:12–13; see 9:4) in a holy place⁹⁸ as their portion and that the wave offering could be eaten not only by the priests but by the priests’ sons and daughters in a ceremonially clean place (10:14–15).

10:16–18 As Moses continued to give instruction about the eating of the offerings in the inauguration ceremony, it became apparent that the meat of the sin offering had already been burned up and thus the prescribed consumption of this offering by the priests could not be carried out (10:16). Moses admonished Aaron’s sons Eleazar and Ithamar for not eating this offering (10:17–18). Earlier legislation had ruled that a sin offering brought to the priests on behalf of the people was to be eaten by the priests (6:26,29). Yet Aaron’s sons had failed to comply with this law regarding the eighth-day offering of the goat by the people (9:3,15). Moses explained that the priests should have recognized that they were to partake of this offering since the blood was not taken into the Holy Place. If the blood had been smeared inside the tent, the animal’s carcass was burned outside the camp (4:1–21). If the blood was smeared on the altar of burnt offering outside the Tent of Meeting, the victim was not burned outside the camp, and the priest was entitled to eat the meat (6:25–26). The priests were thus guilty of burning meat they should have eaten (10:16–18).⁹⁹

Since the blood was not brought to the outer part of the Tent of Meeting, the priests were supposed to eat the offering. The tension reflected in

⁹⁷ It should be noted that abstention from food was considered a proper response for mourning in Deut 26:14. But that text is not addressed to priests.

⁹⁸ I.e., the court of the tabernacle (Wenham, *Leviticus*, 159).

⁹⁹ Wenham, *Leviticus*, 159–60.

this narrative indicates that the eating of the offering by the priests was not an unimportant issue in the Israelite sacrificial system but an essential element in the offering of sacrifice (10:17).¹⁰⁰

10:19–20 Upon Moses' rebuke of the priests, Aaron responded by reminding Moses of the unique circumstance of this day, namely the death of his two sons. Aaron thus suggested that in light of these circumstances it would have been inappropriate for him to enjoy the food of these offerings. When Moses heard this response, he was satisfied¹⁰¹ that Aaron had responded in the appropriate way.

Aaron's proper response regarding the nonconsumption of the sin offering suggested that he was capable of carrying out the priestly mandate of "distinguishing the holy and the profane and the clean and the unclean" (10:10). Aaron was "actually doing the kind of thing that sons of Aaron were responsible for throughout Israel's history."¹⁰² Even though the refusal to eat of the offering was technically a violation of law, Aaron's attitude does not reflect that flagrant disobedience represented by the sin of Nadab and Abihu. Hence, God's response is different. Even though Aaron's sorrow was based on the just judgment of wickedness, God is sympathetic. The Lord comforts those who have lost loved ones even when death comes as a consequence of their own sinfulness.

4. Conclusion

The primary function of the Israelite priesthood was to maintain and if need be to reestablish the holiness of the elect people of God (Exod 28:38; Lev 10:7; Num 18:1).¹⁰³ Because they were called to a higher standard than the nonpriestly Israelites, the priests symbolized the purity and holiness of God.¹⁰⁴ As a Jew who was obedient to the law, Jesus paid respect to the priests of his day (Matt 8:4; 12:4–5; Mark 1:44; Luke 5:14; 17:14), though as the antitype to the entire institution he was often opposed by the priests. Even so the institution of the Israelite priesthood pointed to the work of Christ on behalf of man. The priesthood had become so central to the life and worship of the people of Israel that it was essential to their own self-understanding. The concept of the priesthood ministering to the nation was the theological matrix for the understanding of Christ's sacrificial death.¹⁰⁵

¹⁰⁰ Budd, *Leviticus*, 156.

¹⁰¹ Literally, "it was good in his eyes."

¹⁰² J. Sailhamer, *The Pentateuch as Narrative* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1992), 332.

¹⁰³ Abba, "Priests and Levites," 877.

¹⁰⁴ Feinberg, "Priests and Levites," 854.

¹⁰⁵ G. Demarest, *Leviticus*, 91.

The Old Testament priests were imperfect since being mortals (Heb 7:24) they had to offer sacrifice for themselves as well as for the Israelite people (Heb 5:3; 7:27).¹⁰⁶ Jesus on the other hand is able to save to the uttermost since he always lives to make intercession (Heb 7:25). “He has entered the heavenly not only to cleanse it with his own blood (Heb 9:12), but also ‘to appear in the presence of God on our behalf’ (Heb 9:24).”¹⁰⁷ The sacrificial system as well as the priesthood itself were mere shadows of the coming reality (Heb 10:1):

The Levitical priesthood along with sacrificial system which it maintains, finds its culmination and fulfillment in Christ. He is the great High Priest, one with the Father through his eternal sonship (Heb 1), yet by his incarnation identified with men (Heb 2:14–18; 4:15; 5:1–2,8–10). Hence he is the perfect Mediator of the New Covenant (Heb 7:23–28; 8:6–13; 9:15), who has once for all made atonement for sin (Heb 9:11–28; 10:11–18) and opened for man a new and living way into the presence of God (Heb 10:19–25).¹⁰⁸

Although he was a descendant of Judah rather than a member of the tribe of Levi, Jesus Christ is the Great High Priest. His exaltation to be the Great High Priest is patterned after the example of Melchizedek (Ps 110:4; Heb 7), to whom Abraham paid tribute (Gen 14:20) and who thus preceded in time the sons of Jacob. Melchizedek also serves as a type of Christ in that he was a royal figure in addition to being a priest. He was “king of Salem, priest of the Most High God” (Gen 14:18; Heb 7:1). The New Testament shows how this combination is uniquely true of Jesus Christ, the Son of God. The focus of the Gospels is that Jesus, a descendant of David from the tribe of Judah, is king, whereas the book of Hebrews proves that Jesus is the faithful High Priest.¹⁰⁹

Although it is true that all Christians are believer-priests (1 Pet 2:5,9), it should also be remembered that the Israelites, who were a kingdom of priests, still recognized the special role of the priesthood in leading the

¹⁰⁶ G. E. Ladd, *A Theology of the New Testament*, rev. ed. (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1993), 625.

¹⁰⁷ *Ibid.*, 627.

¹⁰⁸ Abba, “Priests and Levites,” 878.

¹⁰⁹ Moreover, the official commencement of the Israelite sacrificial system stressed the importance of the eighth day, the day after Sabbath (Lev 8:33). In the life of the Great High Priest, Jesus Christ, it was on the eighth day or Sunday, on which he inaugurated his great high priestly ministry when he was raised from the dead (Matt 28:1; Mark 16:2; Luke 24:1; John 20:1,19). Early church fathers such as Augustine, Barnabas, Clement of Alexandria, Origen, Cyprian, Bishop of Carthage, Hilary, Bishop of Poitiers, Ambrose, and Jerome noted the theological significance of the eighth day (S. Bacciocchi, *From Sabbath to Sunday: A Historical Investigation of the Rise of Sunday Observance in Early Christianity* [Rome: The Pontifical Gregorian University Press, 1977], 285–301).

people in the worship of God.¹¹⁰ In the same way God calls individuals to lead the church of God today who have specific roles and functions. All believers are called to a life of holiness, yet spiritual leaders are to exhibit a higher degree of separation or consecration unto God. Furthermore, the fact that the priests were “sons” of Aaron corresponds to the New Testament teaching regarding leadership in the church. Those who have the responsibility of spiritual leadership among the people of God as pastor or elder are to be from among the male members of the congregation (1 Tim 3:2).¹¹¹ Like the male priest it is the spiritual leader who is to have the responsibility to teach and have authority in the congregation (1 Tim 2:12). Normally this individual is officially recognized in Christian tradition by ordination.

Like the priest the pastor/elder is under greater restrictions. Just as the priest in the Old Testament could not imbibe in alcohol and was adorned with the holy garments that distinguished him from the people, so the pastor/elder is called to a consecrated life unto God (1 Tim 3:3; Titus 1:7).¹¹² All God’s people are to be holy (Lev 19:2; Eph 1:4; 1 Pet 1:16), yet holiness is to be demonstrated to an even greater degree by the recognized spiritual leaders: priests in the Old Testament and pastors in the church. They are to demonstrate an *intensified* holiness. Although all Christians are believer-priests, we are still called to submit to spiritual leaders and give the God-appointed leaders double honor (1 Tim 5:17).

Although there is no exact New Testament parallel to the Nadab and Abihu incident of Leviticus 10, it is noteworthy to point out the similarity of the severity of God’s judgment in the account of Ananias and Sapphira in Acts 5:1–11. Nadab and Abihu were slain after a great demonstration of the glory of the Lord, whereas Ananias and Sapphira were put to death by the Lord on the heels of the outbreak of the presence of God in establishing his church. Both of these events are potent reminders of God’s holiness. Furthermore, because this judgment is upon the priests, it is

¹¹⁰ There was a recognized esteem for those who had the responsibility of spiritual leadership (Heb 7:7).

¹¹¹ The NRSV’s translation “married only once” is a deliberate attempt to play down the responsibility of the man; the phrase reads “husband of one wife.” Note how the Hb. words for priest (כֹּהֵן) and minister (בְּנֵי־שָׂרֵי), both masculine singular nouns, are parallel in Isa 6:16; Jer 33:21–22; Joel 1:9,13; 2:17. There is not a feminine form with the root כָּהֵן to suggest that women carried out this priestly function in Israel. In postbiblical Hb. the feminine form occurs, but the context indicates that the term refers to a priest’s daughter (Jastrow, *Dictionary*, 1:615). When the Hb. שָׂרָף root is used to refer to a spiritual ministry in the OT, a male is always in view.

¹¹² Some early church fathers in fact equated OT priests and the high priest with the work of the Christian minister (1 Clem 40–44; Did 13:3; Tertullian, *On Baptism*, Hippolytus, Preface to *Refutation of All Heresies*) (D. Hubbard, “Priests and Levites,” *NBD*, 972).

another reminder that not many of the household of faith should endeavor to become teachers since these will be exposed to a more severe judgment when they violate God's standard (Jas 3:1). Demarest provides another noteworthy application:

We are obviously not expected to return to the particulars of the priestly worship of the tabernacle or the temple. The ancient liturgy need not be restored. But must we not struggle with questions regarding the form and intent of our services of worship? Does anything that makes people feel "good" qualify as desirable for worship? It is possible that some or much of what we call "contemporary" worship is really designed to produce effects within people rather than to worship God. Are some of our worship experiences more akin to the priestly tradition or to the arrogant spirits of Nadab and Abihu?¹¹³

The impurity of corpse contamination as well as the instruction regarding the role of the priests in distinguishing between the holy/profane and the clean/unclean prepares for the purity laws given in Leviticus 11–15.

¹¹³Demarest, *Leviticus*, 110.

III. LAWS OF PURITY (11:1–15:33)

1. Clean and Unclean Animals (11:1–47)
 - (1) Clean and Unclean Food (11:1–23)
 - (2) Pollution by Contamination (11:24–40)
 - (3) Conclusion of Clean and Unclean Animals (11:41–47)
 - (4) Conclusion
2. Purification after Childbirth (12:1–8)
 - (1) Birth of Son (12:1–4)
 - (2) Birth of Daughter (12:5)
 - (3) Sacrificial Offerings after Childbirth (12:6–8)
3. Skin Infections and Mildew (13:1–14:57)
 - (1) Infectious Skin Diseases (13:1–46)
 - (2) Mildew (13:47–59)
 - (3) Cleansing from Skin Infections (14:1–32)
 - (4) Cleansing from Mildew (14:33–53)
 - (5) Skin Infections and Mildew—A Summary (14:54–57)
4. Bodily Discharges (15:1–33)
 - (1) Abnormal Male Discharges (15:2–15)
 - (2) Normal Male Discharges (15:16–18)
 - (3) Normal Female Discharges (15:19–24)
 - (4) Abnormal Female Discharges (15:25–30)
 - (5) Conclusion on Discharges (15:31–33)
5. Conclusion on Purity Laws

III. LAWS OF PURITY (11:1–15:33)

In the previous section the Israelite priests were inaugurated to put the final component of the Israelite sacrificial system in place. At the end of the inauguration Aaron was commanded to lead the Israelites in distinguishing between the holy and profane and between the clean and the unclean (10:10). In Leviticus 11–15 the Lord instructs Moses and Aaron more specifically about what is considered to be clean and unclean.

The purity laws cannot be isolated from previous laws concerning instruction for bringing sacrifices (1:1–6:7), instruction for the priests in carrying out the sacrifices (6:8–9:24), and the inauguration of the priest-

hood (Lev 8–10). The ritual laws assume knowledge of the sacrificial system in that the sacrifices play a vital role in making a ritually unclean Israelite able to enter the camp and to have fellowship with other members of the covenant community.

The section begins with dietary laws (Lev 11) and then discusses childbirth (Lev 12), growths on skin and walls (Lev 13–14), and discharges from genitals (Lev 15).¹ Hartley has noted that apparently the rationale behind the order of these issues is the length of time for uncleanness. Violation of dietary laws would render one unclean for hours, childbirth uncleanness leaves one unclean for months, defilements on skin and walls results in uncleanness up to years, while the last listed impurity, that of genital discharge, results in uncleanness for a variety of times including hours, a week, years.² Being in a state of uncleanness was not necessarily due to sin,³ but it did prohibit an Israelite's contact with the tabernacle (and later the temple) and the cultic (sacrificial) system. Sexual intercourse, childbirth, and burial could make a person unclean, but these activities were not demeaning. Rather, they rendered a person unclean to prevent anyone in this condition from approaching the sanctuary. One apparent reason for this prohibition was that in other pagan religions these very activities were associated with pagan fertility rites and worship of the dead.⁴ People in the ancient world, including the Israelites, would have associated these activities with participation in pagan ritual.⁵ Consequently, a person involved in these activities could not enter the sanctuary.⁶ Application of this law is illustrated later in Israel's history when guards prevented the unclean from entering the temple precinct during the time of King Jehoiada (2 Chr 23:19).

The concern for cleanness for the Israelite was an essential part of his response to the holiness of God. Cleanness is thus related to holiness, but the two were not equivalent. "The clean is not necessarily holy, but the holy is always clean."⁷ On a rare occasion the purity laws could be suspended where there was a demonstration of repentance and heartfelt zeal (2 Chr 30:13–22).⁸ In Old Testament passages uncleanness is associated

¹ By dividing Leviticus 15 into four separate discharges (15:1–16, 17–18, 19–24, and 25–30) this section enumerates seven kinds of uncleanness (M. Cassuto, אֲרָרָהּ, *EM* 2: 882).

² J. E. Hartley, *Leviticus*, WBC (Dallas: Word, 1992), 137.

³ E. P. Sanders, *Jesus and Judaism* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1985), 183.

⁴ For a comprehensive discussion of the worship of the dead and evidence of the practice in ancient Israel, see T. Lewis, *Cults of the Dead in Ancient Israel and Ugarit*, HSM (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1989).

⁵ Hartley, *Leviticus*, 142–46.

⁶ H. Ringgren, אֲרָרָהּ *tāhar*, *THAT* 5:292.

⁷ J. E. Hartley, "Clean and Unclean," *ISBE* 1:720.

⁸ *Ibid.*

with prostitution and idolatry (Gen 34; Lev 18:24–30; Deut 24:4; Josh 22:17; Ps 106:39; Jer 2:7,23; 13:27; Ezek 22:4; 23:7,13,17; 24:13; 43:7; Hos 5:3; 6:10; Hag 2:13–14) as well as other sinful acts (Isa 6:5; 64:6; Ezek 36:17; Mic 2:10; Hag 2:13–14). This fact indicates that uncleanness was metaphorically used for sin in general, and as a result forgiveness of sin is described as cleansing (*thr*) from guilt (Ps 51; Jer 13:27; 33:8; Mal 3:3).⁹ At the of the present age Israel will be redeemed and all uncleanness will be excluded (Isa 35:8; 52:1; Rev 21:27).¹⁰

1. Clean and Unclean Animals (11:1–47)

Leviticus 11 divides into six sections, each introduced by the term “this” (*zōṣṭ* / *zeh*, 2:2,9,29,46) or “these” (*ʿelleh*, 2:13,24). These six sections may be divided into two major categories, that of clean and unclean animals (11:1–23) and that of pollution by contamination (11:24–47). This section of Leviticus 11–15 returns to the legal genre of Leviticus 1–7 from the previous narrative context of Leviticus 8–10.

(1) *Clean and Unclean Food (11:1–23)*

¹The LORD said to Moses and Aaron, ²“Say to the Israelites: ‘Of all the animals that live on land, these are the ones you may eat: ³You may eat any animal that has a split hoof completely divided and that chews the cud.

⁴“There are some that only chew the cud or only have a split hoof, but you must not eat them. The camel, though it chews the cud, does not have a split hoof; it is ceremonially unclean for you. ⁵The coney, though it chews the cud, does not have a split hoof; it is unclean for you. ⁶The rabbit, though it chews the cud, does not have a split hoof; it is unclean for you. ⁷And the pig, though it has a split hoof completely divided, does not chew the cud; it is unclean for you. ⁸You must not eat their meat or touch their carcasses; they are unclean for you.

⁹“Of all the creatures living in the water of the seas and the streams, you may eat any that have fins and scales. ¹⁰But all creatures in the seas or streams that do not have fins and scales—whether among all the swarming things or among all the other living creatures in the water—you are to detest. ¹¹And since you are to detest them, you must not eat their meat and you must detest their carcasses. ¹²Anything living in the water that does not have fins and scales is to be detestable to you.

⁹The same metaphorical use occurs in 1QH from the Dead Sea Scrolls (F. Maas, טהר *thr*, *THAT* 1:650, 652). Moreover, the use of the root נטף, “to disinfect” (*piel*), or “to be purified” (*hitpael*), for the process of purification from legal uncleanness (Lev 14:22; Num 19:2) suggests that the descriptions of sin are connected with the descriptions of uncleanness (M. H. Ben-Shammai, טהרה וטהרה *EM* 3:391).

¹⁰L. E. Toombs, *IDB* 1:647. Purity laws existed in other ANE countries as well, notably Egypt and Babylon (Ben-Shammai, *EM* 3:392–93).

¹³“These are the birds you are to detest and not eat because they are detestable: the eagle, the vulture, the black vulture, ¹⁴the red kite, any kind of black kite, ¹⁵any kind of raven, ¹⁶the horned owl, the screech owl, the gull, any kind of hawk, ¹⁷the little owl, the cormorant, the great owl, ¹⁸the white owl, the desert owl, the osprey, ¹⁹the stork, any kind of heron, the hoopoe and the bat.

²⁰“All flying insects that walk on all fours are to be detestable to you. ²¹There are, however, some winged creatures that walk on all fours that you may eat: those that have jointed legs for hopping on the ground. ²²Of these you may eat any kind of locust, katydid, cricket or grasshopper. ²³But all other winged creatures that have four legs you are to detest.

11:1–23 Leviticus 11 and Deuteronomy 14¹¹ contain most of the instruction that pertains to the Israelite dietary laws. Although most of the information from the biblical law comes from these two chapters, the concept of clean and unclean food was not new from the biblical perspective. As far back as the account of the flood story (Gen 7:2) there is a distinction made between the clean or unclean animals that were to go into the ark. Moreover, the fellowship offering was to be a clean animal, otherwise the worshiper would be rendered unclean once he ate the sacrifice. The same could be said about the animals sacrificed to God as part of the covenant ratification ceremony in Gen 15:9. Only clean animals could be offered in worship (see Gen 8:20). Furthermore, in many other Old Testament narratives and prophetic texts the understanding of these food laws is assumed (Judg 13:4,7,14; Isa 65:4; 66:17; Ezek 4:13,14; 33:25; Hos 9:3,4). While prohibitions against eating certain foods also existed in Egypt, Babylon, and Syria,¹² in Israel they were of critical importance. As Houston states:

The dietary laws have taken a central place in the self-understanding of Judaism throughout its history. While Jews have expressed their faithfulness to their God by the observance of all the laws, it is these, along with those of circumcision and the Sabbath, that have most conspicuously enabled them to express their identity as Jews over against their neighbors, to resist assimilation, and thereby to be faithful to the God who has called them to be “his special possession among all the nations that are on the earth.”¹³

Numerous proposals have been brought forth regarding the criteria for determining whether a particular animal was clean or unclean. The most

¹¹ J. Milgrom understands Leviticus 11 to be the primary statement on the dietary laws with Deuteronomy supplying an abridged version (*Leviticus 1–16*, AB [New York: Doubleday, 1991], 698–704).

¹² K. Chan, “You Shall Not Eat These Abominations: An Examination of Different Interpretations on Deuteronomy 14:3–20,” *East Asian Journal of Theology* 3 (1985): 95.

¹³ W. Houston, *Purity and Monotheism: Clean and Unclean Animals in Biblical Law*, JSOTSup 106 (Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1993), 13.

commonly proposed reasons for making these categorical distinctions among the animals involve symbolic, ethical, aesthetic, hygienic, morphological, and theological criteria.

The symbolic view, that the animals represent something else of a more practical or spiritual nature, is based on an allegorical interpretation. Philo, the great allegorist, advocated such a view. For him, for example, chewing the cud indicated contemplation and reflection while parting the hoof referred to making distinctions. This interpretation was not made in the New Testament, but it is evident in the early church in the *Letter of Barnabas* and is echoed by other more recent interpreters.¹⁴ This view should be dismissed because there is nothing to indicate an allegorical or typological interpretation in the text or in the rest of Scripture.¹⁵

The ethical explanation is based on the notion that the dietary laws would reduce the culinary possibilities for the Israelite and thereby reduce the number of times an animal would be slain. This restriction would consequently curb animal slaughter and thus teach the inviolability of all life.¹⁶ This view, which has been adopted by J. Milgrom, seems difficult to support from the textual data in Leviticus 11 and Deuteronomy 14, where reverence for life does not in any way appear to be an issue in the contexts.¹⁷

The aesthetic criterion for the dietary laws is based on the quality of an animal's appearance. A clean animal would be one that is aesthetically pleasant, while an unclean animal's appearance would so repulse anyone that it would could create disgust if found on an Israelite's dinner plate. Eichrodt concedes that this may be the explanation about why some animals are considered to be unclean.¹⁸ This argument would also be difficult to explain from the context, so it seems entirely subjective.

The hygienic explanation is based on the view that the Israelite dietary laws are God's way of protecting the Israelite from certain diseases. Foods that are harmful to personal health are unclean. This view is supported, it is argued, by God's promise that "none of the diseases of

¹⁴ A. Bonar, *A Commentary on the Book of Leviticus*, reprint ed. (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1978), 202–27.

¹⁵ For Philo's interpretation of the dietary laws of Leviticus 11, see Hartley, *Leviticus*, 143.

¹⁶ See J. Milgrom, "The Biblical Diet Laws as an Ethical System," *Int* 17 (1963): 291.

¹⁷ See D. P. Wright, "Observations on the Ethical Foundations of the Biblical Dietary Laws: A Response to Jacob Milgrom," in *Religion and Law: Biblical, Judaic and Islamic Perspectives*, ed. E. E. Firmage, B. Weiss, and J. Welch (Winona Lake: Eisenbrauns, 1990), 197.

¹⁸ W. Eichrodt, *Theology of the Old Testament* (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1961), 1:136. See also R. K. Yerkes, "The Unclean Animals of Leviticus 11 and Deuteronomy 14," *JQR* 14 (1923/24): 28; J. H. Raven, *The History of the Religion of Israel: An Old Testament Theology* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1979), 112, and E. Yamauchi, תַּמֵּ" (tāmē'), *TWOT* 1:350.

Egypt” would be visited upon the Israelites (Exod 15:26).¹⁹ Although many evangelicals have suggested that this is the valid reason animals were considered to be unclean, it faces a major difficulty when we explore how the dietary laws are dealt with in the New Testament. In the New Testament the dietary laws are rendered ineffective (Mark 7; see also 1 Tim 4:4–5). Calvin explains:

Those who imagine that God here had regard to their health, as if discharging the office of an Physician, pervert by their vain speculation the whole force and utility of this law. I allow, indeed, that the meats which God permits to be eaten are wholesome, and best adapted for food; but, both from the preface,—in which God admonished them that holiness was to be cultivated by the people whom He had chosen,—as also from the (subsequent) abolition of this law, it is sufficiently plain that this distinction of meats was a part of that elementary instruction under which God kept His ancient people. “Let no man therefore judge you (says Paul) in meat or in drink, which are a shadow of things to come; but the body is of Christ” (Col. ii. 16, 17).²⁰

If the hygienic law is the proper explanation for rendering foods unclean, one would have to ask why God is no longer concerned with the believer’s health, for he has now determined that these unhealthy foods may be consumed if one desires. Moreover, the assumption that the clean foods are in fact more healthy than the unclean ones is not decisive scientifically.²¹ The hygienic argument thus does not bear up under scrutiny.

The morphological explanation is a fairly new proposal that many modern commentators have endorsed as the proper explanation for distinguishing between the clean and the unclean in Leviticus 11. M. Douglas, in her work *Purity and Danger*,²² is credited with popularizing this view. The morphological explanation focuses on the information in the biblical text regarding the locomotion and digestive procedures of certain animals and concludes that the unclean animal is one that would depart from the normal locomotive and digestive habits of ordinary animals and thus be anomalous. Since these animals exhibited characteristics different from the more customary habits established in creation, the Israelites were to avoid them and

¹⁹For defense of this position, see W. F. Albright, *Yahweh and the Gods of Canaan* (Winona Lake: Eisenbrauns, 1968), 177–78; R. K. Harrison, *Leviticus: An Introduction and Commentary*, TOTC (Downers Grove: InterVarsity, 1980), and R. L. Harris, “Leviticus,” EBC (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1990), 2:569.

²⁰J. Calvin, *Commentaries on the Last Books of Moses* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1979), 2:60. Houston cites a number of NT scholars who maintain that the essence of Jesus’ saying in Mark 7 is not a denunciation of purity laws as much as a statement of their intended subordination to the command to be pure in heart (*Purity and Monotheism*, 275).

²¹G. J. Botterweck, חַזְרָה *hāzār*, TDOT 4:297, Chan, “You Shall Not Eat These Abominations,” 99.

²²M. Douglas, *Purity and Danger* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1966).

abstain from eating them.²³ This view also does not bear up, especially when one considers the fact that the clean and unclean animals were created by God. Therefore it would be difficult to suggest that his perfect design was to create these beings with *anomalies*.²⁴

The theological explanation suggests that unclean animals were those that were known to have played a role in pagan religion.²⁵ Rendering this type of an animal as unclean would be in effect a polemical statement against pagan beliefs. Moreover, observance of these laws of uncleanness would have a role to play in distinguishing the Israelite from the Gentiles. This argument appears to have merit, for the biblical writers often employ polemics in their writings that are sometimes concealed to modern readers. Further archaeological discoveries perhaps could support this view, but presently not enough is known to say confidently this explanation is the criteria for all the animals considered to be unclean. One difficulty that must be solved is the fact that some animals, such as the bull, were worshiped among Canaanite and Egyptian peoples and yet in the Bible were deemed clean animals for sacrifice and for food.²⁶

Part of the difficulty of determining the rationale behind the dietary laws is the fact that the reason they are given is not stated. Motivations are not provided, but the Israelite is to submit with obedience because these laws, like ethical laws, reflect the will of God for Israel and reflect God's character.²⁷ Thus the ultimate reason for these laws was simply that God commanded them. S. R. Hirsch captures the essence of these unique commands:

High above all human speculations stands the Torah, the law of Israel's life, eternal and immutable like the laws by which the planets move in the sky and the grain of seed grows in the soil. It is the same God Who laid down the law which Nature follows of necessity Who pronounced the law which Israel is

²³ A variation of this view is the behavioral view that argues that those animals which are predators and therefore exhibit a violent manner of life are considered unclean. These animals, which survive at the expense of others, demonstrate the violence that brought the flood (Gen 6:11) and would be constantly in contact with blood. These same animals in some manner also seem to impede human activity (P. Budd, *Leviticus*, NCBC [Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1996], 173).

²⁴ See M. P. Carroll's critique of Douglas's position ("One More Time: Leviticus Revisited," *Archives européennes de sociologie* 19 [1978]: 339-46).

²⁵ G. von Rad, *Old Testament Theology*, trans. D. M. G. Stalker, 2 vols. (New York: Harper & Row, 1962), 1:27, 209; Eichrodt, *Theology of the Old Testament*, 1:134-35; and Houston, *Purity and Monotheism*, 72. For evidence of the eating as well as veneration for the pig in Israel see U. Hübner, "Schweine, Schweineknöchen und ein Speiseverbot im Alten Israel," *VT* 39 (1989): 225-30.

²⁶ G. J. Wenham, "The Theology of Unclean Food," *EQ* 52-53 (1980-81): 7.

²⁷ B. Childs, *Old Testament Theology in a Canonical Context* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1985), 87. The classification of the dietary laws as "divine decrees" suggests that no explanation needs to be given (*Yoma* 67b) (H. Rabinowicz, "Dietary Laws," *EncJud* 6:42).

asked to follow of its own free will. And just as the laws of Nature are unchangeable—despite any opinion man may hold— so all speculations on the laws of the Torah can only be an enlightenment of our own minds, but never the cause of their validity; for the *causa causarum* of the laws of Nature as well as the laws of the Torah is—God.²⁸

With the present stage of our understanding the best explanation of the categorical distinction between clean and unclean is that these have been categories decreed by God to make Israel a holy nation.²⁹ Not only would the observance of these laws demonstrate Israel's distinctiveness from the other nations but it also would be an indication of their supreme commitment to their covenant with God.³⁰ When a Jew obeyed these laws, it would not be possible for him to share some kinds of food with his pagan neighbor, so food functioned as a barrier to their association. As Milgrom concludes, "The separation of the animals into the pure and the impure is both a model and a lesson for Israel to separate itself from the nations."³¹

In this regard the eating laws would be similar to the first law given to Adam and Eve not to eat of the tree of good and evil. There was nothing inherently evil about the tree, but it was off-limits simply because God had declared it to be so. The first law given by God was a dietary law.³² It should not be overlooked, however, that the foods considered clean were not only those appropriate for offering to God in sacrifice but were from among the domesticated, tame animals.³³ And since the offerer would often partake of the food himself in the sacrificial meal, there should be no sur-

²⁸ S. R. Hirsch, *Horeb*, cited in I. Grunfeld, *The Jewish Dietary Laws*, 2 vols. (New York: Soncino, 1972), 1:25. Similarly, see B. Childs, *Introduction to the Old Testament as Scripture* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1979), 186, and J. Milgrom, "Leviticus," *IDBS*, 543.

²⁹ Calvin, *Commentaries on the Last Book of Moses*, 2:61; D. Firmage, "The Biblical Dietary Laws and the Concept of Holiness," in *Studies in the Pentateuch*, VTSup, ed. J. A. Emerton (Leiden: Brill, 1990), 185; Grunfeld, *The Jewish Dietary Laws*, 1:31; Chan, "You Shall Not Eat These Abominations," 103; and Childs, *Old Testament Theology in a Canonical Context*, 88.

³⁰ Every time dietary laws are mentioned, there is a reference to holiness (Exod 22:30; Lev 11:44–45; 20:25–27; Deut 14:21). Note how animals that died could be given to foreigners or aliens but not to Israelites (Deut 14:21).

³¹ Milgrom, *Leviticus 1–16*, 689. The designated unclean animals were not inherently bad in themselves but were placed off-limits as to their use by the Israelites. God does not condemn his creation, yet he places certain animals off-limits to distinguish the Israelites (Calvin, *Commentaries on the Last Book of Moses*, 2:63).

³² As God classified the world at creation, so his holy people are to classify their world (H. Eilberg-Schwartz, "Creation and Classification in Judaism: From Priestly to Rabbinic Conceptions," *History of Religions* 26 [1987]: 362).

³³ R. K. Harrison, *Introduction to the Old Testament* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1969), 599, and Firmage, "The Biblical Dietary Laws and the Concept of Holiness," 186. In addition, any animals that were in any way associated with blood were considered unclean. This principle would be in harmony with the prohibition already stated (Lev 3:17; 7:26; see 17:10–15).

prise that what was appropriate for God would be appropriate for the worshiper. In this sense when the Israelite ate his food, he would be imitating God. This fact alone explains the connection between eating of clean food and holiness.³⁴

The animals of Leviticus 11 are classified into four basic divisions: (1) land animals (11:1–8); (2) water animals (11:9–12); (3) flying animals (11:13–23); and (4) swarming animals (11:29–31). These are the same basic categories of animals in the creation account (Gen 1:20–25), although the order of Leviticus 11 does not follow the sequence in which these animals were created.

PERMITTED LAND ANIMALS (11:1–8).³⁵ **11:1–8** In the first section of Leviticus 11 the land animals that could be consumed by the Israelites were limited to those that had a split hoof³⁶ and chewed the cud (11:3). The animals possessing these qualities may further be described as tame (or domesticated) and herbivorous.³⁷ The latter quality would keep the Israelite from having contact with blood even through an indirect manner. Leviticus 11:4a functions as a summary verse for the rest of this section, indicating that various animals that have only one of these features were still off-limits for the Israelite's diet. Verses 5–7 then illustrate those animals that could have one of the qualifications but not the other. These include the camel,³⁸ the coney,³⁹ the rabbit,⁴⁰ and the pig.⁴¹ Abhorrence for the pig is a common theme in biblical and postbiblical Jewish literature (Prov 11:22; *Ber.* 43b; *Šabb.* 129a; *Soṭa* 49b; *Ta'an.* 4:8; 68c; *Qidd.* 49b; *Bek.* 7:7).⁴² Leviticus 11:8 summarizes this section by

³⁴ Houston, *Purity and Monotheism*, 117, 123.

³⁵ For excellent discussions with helpful charts see J. Feliks, "Animals of the Bible and Talmud," *EncJud* 3:7–19, and Houston, *Purity and Monotheism*, 44–45.

³⁶ The phrase פְּרָסֹת שֵׁסַע וְשֵׁסַע תְּפָרְסֹת מִפְּרָסֹת פֶּל appears to refer to one feature (see H. J. Austel, שֵׁסַע [šāsāf], *TWOT* 2:944).

³⁷ V. P. Hamilton, פָּרָס (pāras), *TWOT* 2:736.

³⁸ Many critics have doubted that camels were used by Israelites in early times. This apprehension has been overturned through archaeological discovery (K. Kitchen, *Ancient Orient and the Old Testament* [Downers Grove: InterVarsity, 1966], 79–80, and J. Feliks, "Camel," *EncJud* 5:72).

³⁹ This animal is mentioned only rarely in the Bible (Deut 14:7; Ps 104:18; Prov 30:26).

⁴⁰ This animal is mentioned only here and in Deut 14:7.

⁴¹ The pig, which was a domesticated animal in ancient Canaan, has the distinction of being the only domesticated animal that has the split hoof but does not chew its cud (B. A. Levine, *Leviticus*, JPS [Philadelphia: The Jewish Publication Society, 1989], 67). There is evidence that the pig was venerated in pagan religions (W. Kornfeld, "Reine und Unreine Tiere im Alten Testament," *Kairos* 7 (1965): 137–38; A. Bailik and S. Ephraim, רִיזֵי EM 3:91–92; G. J. Botterweck, רִיזֵי ḥāzfr, *TDOT* 4:292–96; and Milgrom, *Leviticus 1–16*, 653) (see Isa 65:4; 66:3,17). During the time of Antiochus Epiphanes, many Jews preferred death to breaking their dietary laws when they were forced to eat pork (*1 Macc* 1:62–63; *2 Macc* 6:18).

⁴² See J. Feliks, "Pig," *EncJud* 13:506

stating that these animals which have only one of the features may not be eaten and adds the additional prescription that they are not even to be touched.⁴³ The animals that do not meet these qualifications and thus may be eaten are given in Deut 14:4–5. It should not escape our notice that animals that could be eaten—such as bulls, sheep, and goats—were used as sacrifices to God. Thus the Israelites must be distinct from other nations even in their diets.

PERMITTED WATER CREATURES (11:9–12). 11:9–12 The categories for creatures from the aquatic world that may be eaten are restricted to those animals that have both fins and scales (11:9). Israelites were to “detest”⁴⁴ water creatures that have neither fins nor scales. There is evidence that fish without scales were also avoided by the Romans and Egyptians.⁴⁵ These types of fish may have been regarded as scavengers, since they roamed the bottom of the sea. They were also the carriers of numerous parasites.⁴⁶ This section closes like the previous section regarding the permitted land animals by stressing the fact that the unclean of this category, animals not having fins or scales, are off-limits to the Israelite (11:12).⁴⁷

PERMITTED FLYING CREATURES (11:13–23).⁴⁸ 11:13–19 The link between this section and the previous one is the repeated occurrence of the term *šegeš*, “detest” (11:13,20,22). Those birds that are to be detested are enumerated. There does not appear to be a physical trait that distinguishes the clean from the unclean, although it may be observed that the prohibited birds could be classified as birds of prey. Many scholars maintain that it was the preying upon other animals with the real possibility that these animals would drink the blood of their victims that rendered

⁴³Notice how Eve adds this restriction to God’s original command (Gen 2:17) regarding the tree of the knowledge of good and evil in Gen 3:3.

⁴⁴Hb. $\gamma\pi\psi$ has the notion of detest in the sense of “detest as unclean.” This meaning is also prevalent in the Akk. cognate *šaqašū* (see KB, 1009). The root suggests disgust or abhorrence (Houston, *Purity and Monotheism*, 41). The cognate noun $\gamma\pi\psi$ is always used in association with idols (H. J. Austel, $\gamma\pi\psi$ (*šiqqēs*), *TWOT* 2:955).

⁴⁵G. J. Wenham, *The Book of Leviticus*, NICOT (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1979), 173–74.

⁴⁶Harris, “Leviticus,” 572.

⁴⁷Referring to animals as $\gamma\pi\psi$ $\psi\pi\psi$, “living creatures” (11:10), occurs elsewhere in Gen 1:20,24; 2:19; 9:10; 12:15; Lev 11:46.

⁴⁸The precise identification of these birds was a concern as early as the writing of the Talmud (J. A. Emerton, “Unclean Birds and the Origin of the Peshitta,” *JSS* 7 [1962]: 211) and remains a difficulty today (Grunfeld, *The Jewish Dietary Laws*, 1:10). Yet it should also be noted that the number of clean birds would be innumerable (Firmage, “The Biblical Dietary Laws and the Concept of Holiness,” 191). For a comprehensive discussion of the birds mentioned here see G. R. Driver, “Birds in the Old Testament. I. Birds in Law,” *PEQ* 87 (1955): 5–20, and id., “Birds in the Old Testament. II. Birds in Life,” *PEQ* 87 (1955): 127–40.

them unclean.⁴⁹ They would thus be viewed as off-limits to the Israelite either because they had ingested blood or because they had become involved in a practice that could be viewed as a violation of the law.

11:20–23 Flying insects were also detestable and hence could not be a food source for the Israelite (11:20). Exceptions to the rule were insects that had jointed legs for hopping. These included the locust, katydid, cricket, and grasshopper (11:21–22). The reasons for this distinction are not clear, and it may be remembered that locusts were the diet of John the Baptist in the wilderness (Matt 3:4; Mark 1:6). This paragraph closes as the two previous paragraphs did, by repeating the fact that the unclean animals in each category are unclean or detestable (11:23 with 11:8,12).

(2) *Pollution by Contamination (11:24–40)*

²⁴“You will make yourselves unclean by these; whoever touches their carcasses will be unclean till evening. ²⁵Whoever picks up one of their carcasses must wash his clothes, and he will be unclean till evening.

²⁶“Every animal that has a split hoof not completely divided or that does not chew the cud is unclean for you; whoever touches [the carcass of] any of them will be unclean. ²⁷Of all the animals that walk on all fours, those that walk on their paws are unclean for you; whoever touches their carcasses will be unclean till evening. ²⁸Anyone who picks up their carcasses must wash his clothes, and he will be unclean till evening. They are unclean for you.

²⁹“Of the animals that move about on the ground, these are unclean for you: the weasel, the rat, any kind of great lizard,³⁰ the gecko, the monitor lizard, the wall lizard, the skink and the chameleon. ³¹Of all those that move along the ground, these are unclean for you. Whoever touches them when they are dead will be unclean till evening. ³²When one of them dies and falls on something, that article, whatever its use, will be unclean, whether it is made of wood, cloth, hide or sackcloth. Put it in water; it will be unclean till evening, and then it will be clean. ³³If one of them falls into a clay pot, everything in it will be unclean, and you must break the pot. ³⁴Any food that could be eaten but has water on it from such a pot is unclean, and any liquid that could be drunk from it is unclean. ³⁵Anything that one of their carcasses falls on becomes unclean; an oven or cooking pot must be broken up. They are unclean, and you are to regard them as unclean. ³⁶A spring, however, or a cistern for collecting water remains clean, but anyone who touches one of these carcasses is unclean. ³⁷If a carcass falls on any seeds that are to be planted, they remain clean. ³⁸But if water has been put on the seed and a carcass falls on it, it is unclean for you.

³⁹“If an animal that you are allowed to eat dies, anyone who touches the car-

⁴⁹ See *m. Hul.* 3:6; Yerkes, “The Unclean Animals of Leviticus 11 and Deuteronomy 14,” 27; Levine, *Leviticus*, 68; Wenham, *Leviticus*, 174–75; W. Wiersbe, *Be Holy* (Wheaton: Victor, 1979), 45; Carroll, “One More Time: Leviticus Revisited,” 342; and Raven, *The History of the Religion of Israel*, 112.

cass will be unclean till evening.⁴⁰ Anyone who eats some of the carcass must wash his clothes, and he will be unclean till evening. Anyone who picks up the carcass must wash his clothes, and he will be unclean till evening.

CONTACT WITH CARCASSES (11:24–28). 11:24–28 In Lev 11:24 a new section begins as the discussion moves from the issue of which foods are permissible or not permissible in the Israelite diet to the related issue of contact with the animal carcasses. This contact made an individual ceremonially unclean. The section is concerned with delineating which carcasses constituted a person as unclean as well as the remedy for purification. A further criterion that made an animal unclean was that of “walking on their paws” (11:27).⁵⁰ Animals that would fit this category, such as a lion or a bear, were carnivorous and thus harmful to humans or possibly in competition with them for food.⁵¹ The purification for this contact involved the washing of clothes (11:25,28).⁵² A similar process was followed when an individual had contact with a human corpse (Num 19:19,21,22).⁵³

CARCASSES OF SWARMING ANIMALS (11:29–38). 11:29–31 Another category of unclean animals was the group of animals that moved close to the ground (11:29–30).⁵⁴ The person who touched their carcasses was unclean until the evening (11:31), as were those who touched the carcasses of other animals that were considered unclean (11:24,27).

11:32–36 Contact with the carcasses of the animals that move about on the ground not only contaminated humans but also articles of wood, cloth, hide, or sackcloth that came into contact with their dead bodies. Water removed the uncleanness of the objects just as it did for the Israelite who had touched the carcass (11:32).⁵⁵ There was to be a different remedy if the carcass came into contact with a vessel such as a clay pot, oven, or cooking pot.⁵⁶ Not only were the contents of the vessel rendered unclean but the entire vessel had to be broken (11:33,35). The reason this drastic measure

⁵⁰ The word for paws (פָּדָ) is often used for the human hand (Lev 8:27; 9:17; 14:15,16,17,18, 26,29,28).

⁵¹ Kornfeld, “Reine und Unrein Tiere im Alten Testament,” 134–47, and Budd, *Leviticus*, 165–66.

⁵² The washing of clothes in the purification process also occurs in Lev 14; 15; 17; Num 19.

⁵³ This law is what is behind the desire to take Jesus down from the cross after he had died. Leaving his corpse, it was believed, would defile the land (Deut 21:23).

⁵⁴ Again the reason that this category of animals would be considered unclean is not stated. The cursing of the ground in Gen 3 and the association of the ground with the grave or death are possible explanations. On the other hand, creatures that move close to the ground may be especially susceptible to contamination. The weasel (חֹמֶלֶט) is mentioned only here in the Bible.

⁵⁵ The root for clean (*thr*) is also the root for the Mishnaic tractate *Toharot*, the longest of the Mishnaic tractates, which focuses on cleanness and uncleanness.

⁵⁶ The “cooking pot,” Hb. צִיִּיִּיִּי, occurs only here in the OT. According to tradition it was like a cooking range, having two holes to hang two cooking pots (see Wenham, *Leviticus*, 179, n. 38).

had to be taken was because of the difficulty in removing all of the impurity from a vessel made with earthenware. On the other hand, a distinction was made with regard to a spring or a cistern that collected water (11:36). These vessels that contained a vast amount of water remained clean, possibly due to the devastating effect this would have on the people if this water source was placed off-limits given the fact that water was scarce.⁵⁷ The fact that this exception was made in regard to Israel's survival probably indicates once again that it is not something intrinsic to the nature of these animals that constitutes them as unclean, rather by following these laws Israel will be deemed to be distinct, that is holy, among the peoples of the earth.⁵⁸

11:37–38 Seeds that came into contact with a carcass remained clean unless they already had been watered, in which case they became unclean (11:38).⁵⁹ The reason for this distinction is unclear. Wenham believes the distinction may lie in the fact that the wet grain was being prepared for cooking while the dry grain was not.⁶⁰

CARCASSES OF CLEAN ANIMALS (11:39–40). **11:39–40** The rule regarding coming into contact with carcasses was not to be restricted to the unclean animals only. Anyone who touched the carcass of a clean animal, ate from the clean animal's carcass, or picked up the clean animal's carcass was unclean until the evening and had to wash his clothes.

(3) *Conclusion of Clean and Unclean Animals (11:41–47)*

⁴¹“Every creature that moves about on the ground is detestable; it is not to be eaten. ⁴²You are not to eat any creature that moves about on the ground, whether it moves on its belly or walks on all fours or on many feet; it is detestable. ⁴³Do not defile yourselves by any of these creatures. Do not make yourselves unclean by means of them or be made unclean by them. ⁴⁴I am the LORD your God; consecrate yourselves and be holy, because I am holy. Do not make yourselves unclean by any creature that moves about on the ground. ⁴⁵I am the LORD who brought you up out of Egypt to be your God; therefore be holy, because I am holy.

⁴⁶“These are the regulations concerning animals, birds, every living thing that moves in the water and every creature that moves about on the ground. ⁴⁷You must distinguish between the unclean and the clean, between living creatures that may be eaten and those that may not be eaten.”

⁵⁷Thus, Wenham, *Leviticus*, 179.

⁵⁸A. Jirku, on the other hand, maintains that all the animals in Lev 11:29–30 were used by the pagan Canaanites in their ritual offerings (“Leviticus 11: 29–33 im Lichte der Ugarit-Forschung,” *ZAW* 84 [1972]: 348).

⁵⁹The laws of Lev 11:32–38 became the basis of the Mishnaic tractate called *Kelim*, i.e., “vessels.”

⁶⁰Wenham, *Leviticus*, 180.

11:41–47 Chapter 11 closes with a summary of the contents of the chapter as well as a final admonition to underscore the importance of distinguishing between the clean and the unclean. The reason the Israelites were to obey the dietary laws was that they were to be holy because they had been redeemed by God (11:45).⁶¹ This call to holiness is the climax of the chapter, for all the preceding contents of the chapter prepare for this final admonition.⁶² The concluding exhortation, which stresses Israel's relationship to God and the need for Israel to be holy, emphasizes the fact that it is not primarily (if at all) the physical health of the nation that is the reason for these instructions but rather their spiritual sanctification.⁶³

(4) Conclusion

The laws regarding the clean and unclean animals and foods of Leviticus 11 no longer have a function in the life of the believer according to the New Testament (esp. Mark 7:14–23;⁶⁴ Eph 2:11–21; Acts 10:9–16; 34–35).⁶⁵ The reason these laws are no longer in effect is that their purpose, which was to render Israel distinct from the other nations of the world, is no longer applicable. This purpose ended with the coming of Christ. The function of the law as a boundary between Israel and the nations is erased.⁶⁶ Since Gentiles have been incorporated into the people of God on equal footing with Jews, the dietary laws and the law of circumcision have lost their significance and are not mandated for the church.⁶⁷ Wenham nicely summarizes these truths:

The NT teaches that the OT food laws are no longer binding on the Christian. These laws symbolized God's choice of Israel. They served as constant reminders of God's electing grace. As he had limited his choice among the nations to Israel, so they for their part had to restrict their diet to certain animals. At every turn these laws reminded them of God's grace toward Israel. In the new era when salvation was open to all men, and Israel was no longer the only object of divine grace, the laws lost their particular significance. The distinction between clean and unclean foods is as obsolete as the distinction between Jew and Gentile. By rules of avoidance, holiness was given a physical expression in every encounter with the animal kingdom and at every meal. In a real sense, then,

⁶¹ The deliverance of the Israelites from Egypt is a refrain that also occurs in Lev 19:36; 22:33; 23:43; 25:38,42,45; 26:13,45.

⁶² E. Gerstenberger, *Leviticus*, OTL (Louisville: Westminster, 1993), 133.

⁶³ Similarly, see Calvin, *Commentaries on the Last Books of Moses*, 2:67.

⁶⁴ G. Demarest suggests that Mark 7:1–23 was the most controversial and shocking encounter Jesus ever had with the Pharisees (*Leviticus*, CC [Dallas: Word, 1990], 126).

⁶⁵ The Jerusalem council decreed that the Gentile converts should abstain from food offered to idols, from blood, from things strangled, and from sexual immorality.

⁶⁶ Houston, *Purity and Monotheism*, 14.

⁶⁷ See Wenham, "The Theology of Unclean Food," 14.

Jesus was drawing out the meaning of the symbolism of the Levitical laws in insisting that it was what comes out of man that defiles him, 'evil thoughts, murder, adultery, etc.'⁶⁸

The New Testament does employ the language of clean and unclean to refer to moral behavior; thus the principle of separation from what is unclean still stands. For example, immorality practiced by Gentiles is called uncleanness (Rom 6:19; 2 Cor 12:21; Eph 4:19; 5:3,5; 1 Thess 4:7).⁶⁹ This is particularly seen in 2 Cor 6:17, where Paul, alluding to Leviticus 11, reminds the readers not to touch unclean things in admonishing his readers to separate from sinfulness. This application is in harmony with the meaning and purpose of the dietary laws in Leviticus 11.⁷⁰ Like Israel, the church must be holy, or distinct from the world. The church does the most for the world when the church is least like the world.⁷¹

2. Purification after Childbirth (12:1–8)

In Leviticus 12 the laws of purification for a new mother are revealed. Although the experience of pain in birth (Ps 48:6; Isa 13:8; 42:14; Jer 6:24; 13:21; 22:23; 30:6; 48:41; 49:24; 50:43; Mic 4:9; John 16:21; Gal 4:19; 1 Thess 5:3; Rev 12:2)⁷² and the process of birth (Exod 1:16; 1 Sam 4:20) are frequently mentioned in the Bible, the discussion of the purification of birth is only mentioned in Leviticus 12.⁷³ The chapter divides into three sections: Purification after Birth of a Son (12:1–4), Purification after Birth of a Daughter (12:5), and Sacrificial Offerings after Childbirth (12:6–8). The reason purification needed to be made after childbirth is not given in the text. Some in fact find it curious in view of the fact that God gave man the mandate to be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth (Gen 1:28; 9:1,7; Lev 26:9; see Ps 127:3,5). Calvin believed that the existence of a depraved offspring in the womb created uncleanness.⁷⁴ While there may be truth to this assertion, a more likely explanation would be that it was the contact with the blood of childbirth that defiled. The latter explanation is supported by the fact that being in the menstrual state rendered one

⁶⁸ Wenham, *Leviticus*, 183–84. Wenham's statement that Israel was "the only object of divine grace" is overstated.

⁶⁹ See Hartley, *Leviticus*, 147.

⁷⁰ See V. S. Poythress, *The Shadow of the Cross in the Law of Moses* (Brentwood, Tenn.: Wolgemuth & Hyatt, 1991), 85–86.

⁷¹ A similar statement is attributed to G. C. Morgan (Wiersbe, *Be Holy*, 50).

⁷² The passages show that many of the references to the pain of giving birth are metaphorical for other experiences of difficulty.

⁷³ Ezek 16:4 does refer to the treatment of an infant after birth, but the issue of ritual purification addressed in Lev 12 is not mentioned.

⁷⁴ Calvin, *Commentaries on the Last Book of Moses*, 2:499.

unclean (Lev 15:19–24). The similarity of this condition to giving birth is explicitly made in the text (12:2).

The first section is introduced by the particle *kî*, normally translated “when,” while the verse discussing the birth of a daughter begins with the particle *ʾim* (“if”). This is the identical formula for the legislation in Leviticus 1–2 and 4–5. The third section, which provides the instructions for the offerings to be presented after the birth of sons or daughters, begins with the *waw* disjunctive.⁷⁵

(1) Birth of Son (12:1–4)⁷⁶

¹The LORD said to Moses, ²“Say to the Israelites: ‘A woman who becomes pregnant and gives birth to a son will be ceremonially unclean for seven days, just as she is unclean during her monthly period. ³On the eighth day the boy is to be circumcised. ⁴Then the woman must wait thirty-three days to be purified from her bleeding. She must not touch anything sacred or go to the sanctuary until the days of her purification are over.’”

12:1–4 After giving birth to a son, a new mother was ceremonially unclean for seven days (12:2).⁷⁷ On the eighth day after birth the baby boy was to be circumcised in obedience to Gen 17:12 (12:3). After the circumcision the new mother had to wait an additional thirty-three days to be purified from her bleeding (12:4).⁷⁸ During this period of time she was not to touch a holy object and had to avoid entering the tabernacle. The fact that she was prohibited from entering the temple during the state of impurity sheds light on what was the true nature of being in an impure state. The real disadvantage to being in a state of impurity was that the individual would not be able to enter into the tabernacle, so the person would be prevented from worshipping God with the covenant community.⁷⁹

While the reason giving birth to a child renders the mother unclean is not explained in the passage, the fact that the period of uncleanness is identical to that of menstruation suggests that the status of uncleanness resulted from the issue of blood associated with giving birth (Lev 12:2).

⁷⁵The conjunction also introduced a new section in Lev 2:11 (see GKC § 141e, 142d; and *IBHS* § 39.2.3).

⁷⁶The NIV translates הַיּוֹלֵדֶת וְיָלְדָה בֶּן, “becomes pregnant and gives birth” (Lev 12:2). The translation “becomes pregnant” is a rendering of יָלְדָה, lit., “she produces seed.” J. Sailhamer finds in this unusual expression possible connections to Gen 1 and 3 (*The Pentateuch as Narrative* [Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1992], 335–36).

⁷⁷The same length of time for impurity occurs after menstruation (Lev 15:19–24).

⁷⁸Milgrom maintains that it is implied in these rites that the period of impurity was terminated by the woman’s immersion in water (*Leviticus 1–16*, 746). H. K. Harrington argues that immersion was required for the purification of all biblical infirmities (*The Impurity Systems of Qumran and the Rabbis* [Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1993], 113–39).

⁷⁹See Sailhamer, *Pentateuch*, 334–35.

(2) *Birth of Daughter (12:5)*

⁵If she gives birth to a daughter, for two weeks the woman will be unclean, as during her period. Then she must wait sixty-six days to be purified from her bleeding.

12:5 The period of purification after the birth of a daughter was similar to that after the birth of a son, although the periods of uncleanness are longer. Instead of being unclean for one week, the mother was unclean for two weeks, and then had to wait an additional sixty-six days, instead of thirty-three days, to be purified from her bleeding.

Much discussion has surrounded the reason for the different periods of uncleanness that resulted after the birth of a son or a daughter. Common explanations include: (1) females were understood in some sense seen as inferior to males,⁸⁰ (2) the longer amount of time involved for the formation of the male and female embryo, (3) the fact that the blood discharges after the birth of a female last longer or have greater toxicity than they do after the birth of a male,⁸¹ and (4) the fact that women are associated with the pains of childbearing that comes as the punishment for sin.⁸² With regard to the uncleanness of the mother after the birth of the son being only one week as opposed to two, the difference of this length of time may be found in the text itself. The length of uncleanness after the birth of a son is interrupted by the command to carry out the circumcision on the eighth day.⁸³ If the mother were considered ceremonially unclean on the eighth day after the birth of her son, it would be conceivable that she would not be able to witness her own son's circumcision.

No consensus of interpretation has been reached regarding the greater length of time for a woman to be purified from her bleeding after the birth of a daughter. Perhaps Levine offers the best option when he suggests that the longer period after the birth of a daughter would reflect the fact that the daughter's own fertility and association with blood is anticipated. In addition the longer time for purification for the daughter may be an intentional polemic against the practices and viewpoints of the pagan religions of the

⁸⁰ A variation of this position would be the fact that female infants are smaller than males and thus would need a longer time of personal care from their mothers in order to survive (Harris, "Leviticus," 574).

⁸¹ D. I. Macht, "A Scientific Appreciation of Leviticus 12: 1-5," *JBL* 52 (1933): 253-60. P. P. Jenson maintains that the attempt to find medical reasons behind these purity laws is due to a modern imposition upon the biblical text (*Graded Holiness: A Key to the Priestly Conception of the World*, JSOTSup 106 [Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1992], 75-76).

⁸² See W. C. Kaiser, *Old Testament Ethics* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1983): 286-87; Hartley, *Leviticus*, 167-68; A. S. Hartom and M. D. Cassuto, "Leviticus," in *Torah, Prophets, Writings* (Tel-Aviv: Yavneh, 1977), 39 [in Hb.].

⁸³ Similarly, Calvin, *Commentaries on the Last Book of Moses*, 2:501.

ancient Near East. By excluding the mother from the tabernacle for a longer period after the birth of a female, a distance is created between fertility and the worship of God. This would communicate in strong terms that God was not at all subject to processes of procreation as were the deities in pagan beliefs, but he in fact is the one who blesses with new life.⁸⁴ Longer periods of uncleanness after the birth of a girl were also customary among the Greeks and various African peoples, including the Egyptians.⁸⁵

(3) *Sacrificial Offerings after Childbirth (12:6–8)*

⁶“When the days of her purification for a son or daughter are over, she is to bring to the priest at the entrance to the Tent of Meeting a year-old lamb for a burnt offering and a young pigeon or a dove for a sin offering. ⁷He shall offer them before the LORD to make atonement for her, and then she will be ceremonially clean from her flow of blood.

⁸“These are the regulations for the woman who gives birth to a boy or a girl. ⁸If she cannot afford a lamb, she is to bring two doves or two young pigeons, one for a burnt offering and the other for a sin offering. In this way the priest will make atonement for her, and she will be clean.”

12:6–7 Subsequent to the period of purification (after the birth of a son or a daughter), the new mother was to offer to the priest a year-old lamb for a burnt offering and a pigeon or dove for a sin offering at the tabernacle (12:6).⁸⁶ After the priest presented these offerings the new mother was atoned for and ceremonially clean from the flow of blood (12:7).

Though the passage states that the new mother presents these offerings to the priest to receive atonement, we should not consider the act of giving birth to be in any case a sinful act. This is supported from our passage in two ways. First of all, in the order of the offerings the burnt offering was offered first and then the sin offering followed. The order was reversed when sin was at issue. When an offering was made in response to the commission of sin, the sin offering preceded the burnt offering. The order of the offerings in Leviticus 12 suggests that the personal sin of the mother is not the issue.⁸⁷ Moreover, the result of the sacrifice renders the mother “clean”; it does not say that she is forgiven (see 4:20,26,31,35). The issue is thus not the sinfulness of the mother or of the process of giving birth; rather the issue seems to be that of the issuance of blood. Because life is in the blood (17:11), the loss of blood required some puri-

⁸⁴ Levine, *Leviticus*, 250.

⁸⁵ Mact, “A Scientific Appreciation of Leviticus 12: 1–5,” 254–55.

⁸⁶ These are the same offerings prescribed for an unnatural discharge of a woman in Lev 15:30. (The same birds are also optional offerings for the guilt offering if the worshiper was economically impoverished [5:7–10]).

⁸⁷ Kaiser, “Leviticus,” 1085.

fication to acknowledge the sanctity of life.⁸⁸

It should further be noted that the sacrifices for male and female infant are identical. This observation supports the view that the male and female infants as well as male and female adults were considered equal in value before God.

12:8 The chapter closes with an exception for those of the covenant community on the lower end of the socioeconomic ladder.⁸⁹ Rather than having to pay the expense of offering a lamb and a pigeon or dove, the poor could forego the more costly lamb by offering two doves or two pigeons, one for the burnt offering, the other for the sin offering.

After the birth of the Lord in the New Testament, Jesus was circumcised on the eighth day. Following his circumcision Mary offered two birds to declare her days of purification were completed. What is of interest here is not only that Mary carried out the prescription of the Law in perfect obedience but that she rendered the offering of the poor (Luke 2:21–24). This indicates that the Savior of the world, who created all that exists, not only humbled himself in becoming a man but was born in the most meager of circumstances in ancient Israel. Yet even for the poor like Jesus' parents, God was gracious, for the less expensive offerings achieved the same result—the new mother was atoned for and became clean.

3. Skin Infections and Mildew (13:1–14:57)

This new section is introduced by the divine revelation formula “The LORD said to Moses and Aaron” (13:1). The formula is repeated at 14:1⁹⁰ and 14:33, dividing this section on skin disease and mildew into three basic sections. Using this formula as the structural key, the first section covers the entire chapter of Leviticus 13, which provides the regulations for skin diseases (13:1–46) and for mildew (13:47–59), while the next two sections (14:1–32 and 14:33–53) provide instructions for the cleansing of skin diseases and for the cleansing of mildew respectively. Leviticus 14:54–57 functions as a summary for both chapters.

Structural indicators abound in Leviticus 13–14. The particle *kî* occurs in 13:2,9,16,18,24,29,31,38,40,42,47; 14:34, while *ʔim* occurs in 13:4,7,12, 21,23,26,28,35,37,41,53,56; 14:43,48. The summary at the end in 14:54–57 repeats the same information from the beginning of chap. 13 and thus clearly marks out these two chapters as a unit. Each section

⁸⁸ See Budd, *Leviticus*, 187.

⁸⁹ The section is introduced by the particle *ʔim* (Lev 12:8a), which is often used in Leviticus to introduce a subordinate type of clause.

⁹⁰ Lev 14:1 does not include Aaron in the introductory formula.

begins with a statement about the symptoms of the abnormality followed by an inspection by a priest. After the inspection a restatement of the symptoms and a diagnosis by the priest was followed with a decision about whether the individual was clean or unclean. On some occasions a one-week or two-week period of further analysis was necessary. The use of the same term *ṣāʿarat* to refer to skin diseases and mildew is further justification for understanding the content of Leviticus 13–14 as a unit. It also indicates that the meaning of the term is broader than the traditional translation, “leprosy.”

(1) *Infectious Skin Diseases (13:1–46)*

The beginning of this new section is clearly indicated by the divine speech formula, “The LORD said to Moses and Aaron” (13:1). Moreover, the instruction begins with the formula *ʿādām kî* (“when anyone”), which has occurred elsewhere in Leviticus at the beginning of new legislation. As has been observed in various occasions in Leviticus, the new sections begin with the particle *kî* (“when”) while subordinate issues are introduced by the particle *ʿim* (“if”).⁹¹

¹The LORD said to Moses and Aaron, ²“When anyone has a swelling or a rash or a bright spot on his skin that may become an infectious skin disease, he must be brought to Aaron the priest or to one of his sons who is a priest. ³The priest is to examine the sore on his skin, and if the hair in the sore has turned white and the sore appears to be more than skin deep, it is an infectious skin disease. When the priest examines him, he shall pronounce him ceremonially unclean. ⁴If the spot on his skin is white but does not appear to be more than skin deep and the hair in it has not turned white, the priest is to put the infected person in isolation for seven days. ⁵On the seventh day the priest is to examine him, and if he sees that the sore is unchanged and has not spread in the skin, he is to keep him in isolation another seven days. ⁶On the seventh day the priest is to examine him again, and if the sore has faded and has not spread in the skin, the priest shall pronounce him clean; it is only a rash. The man must wash his clothes, and he will be clean. ⁷But if the rash does spread in his skin after he has shown himself to the priest to be pronounced clean, he must appear before the priest again. ⁸The priest is to examine him, and if the rash has spread in the skin, he shall pronounce him unclean; it is an infectious disease.

SKIN ERUPTIONS (13:1–8). **13:1–8** The instruction in 13:1–8 provided the proper instruction for a person who developed a swelling,⁹² rash

⁹¹ See Lev 1, p. 79.

⁹² The noun רִשָּׁע is from the root רָשַׁע , which means “to lift,” hence swelling as a lifting up of the skin (BDB, 673).

(or scab),⁹³ or bright spot⁹⁴ that might lead to an infectious skin disease (13:2). The type of infectious disease is not specified but has often been associated with leprosy (Hansen's disease), since the noun *šāraʿat* was translated *lepra* in the LXX and thus "leprosy" in earlier English translations. The term was also defined as "leprosy" by the standard lexicon, BDB.⁹⁵ Most modern commentators and lexicographers have abandoned this translation, maintaining that the term refers to a number of infectious diseases.⁹⁶ The term would include leprosy, but it should not be restricted to it. The fear of this disease and its devastating effects are well represented in the Old Testament (Num 12:1–15; 2 Sam 3:29; 2 Kgs 7:3–15; 2 Chr 26:20–21).⁹⁷ The intent of Leviticus 13 was not to correctly diagnose specific dermatological conditions but rather to guide the priests in distinguishing infectious from noninfectious diseases of the skin.⁹⁸ No medication was prescribed; the only action that could be taken was quarantine (see 2 Kgs 15:5).

The person who developed the swelling, the rash, or the bright spot was to be examined by the priests. If the hair on the skin had turned white and the sore was below the surface of the skin, the priest declared the individual ceremonially unclean (13:3). If the infection was not below the

⁹³ The term only occurs in the OT in Lev 13:2; 14:56. The translation "scab" may be preferable since the noun קַרַח appears to be related to the root קַח , which means "to make scabby" (HALOT 2:764).

⁹⁴ Like קַרַח , the noun בִּרְהָרָה also occurs only in Leviticus 13–14.

⁹⁵ BDB, 863. The important term in this section according to the Mishnah was not the noun עֲרֵבָה but rather the noun נֶגַע (*negaʿ*) often translated "plague." The latter was borrowed from the title of the mishnaic tractate *Nega'im*, which is a commentary on the skin diseases of Leviticus 13–14. In keeping with the modern understanding that leprosy or Hansen's disease is not what is under discussion here, the rabbis also maintained that numerous types of skin abnormalities were being addressed in Leviticus 13 (see *m. Neg.* 1:4).

⁹⁶ See J. F. A. Sawyer, "A Note on the Etymology of *Šāraʿat*," *VT* 26 (1976): 242–43; K. P. C. A. Gramberg, "'Leprosy' and the Bible," *BT* 11 (1960): 22; R. G. Cochrane, *Biblical Leprosy*, 2nd. ed. (Great Britain: Tyndale, 1963), 8, 11; J. Wilkinson, "Leprosy and Leviticus: The Problem of Description and Identification," *SJT* 30 (1977): 153, 168; G. L. Archer, *Encyclopedia of Bible Difficulties* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1982), 127; R. K. Harrison, "Leprosy" in *New Testament Theology*, ed. C. Brown (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1967), 2:464. The term should also not be restricted to psoriasis (contra, E. V. Hulse, "The Nature of Biblical 'Leprosy' and the Use of Alternative Medical Terms in Modern Translations of the Bible," *PEQ* 107 [1975]: 103).

⁹⁷ The term *šāraʿat* is used in specific contexts for leprosy that God meteṣ out upon an individual for a specific offense (see Num 12:1–3; 2 Chr 26:29).

⁹⁸ G. R. Driver, "Leprosy," *Hastings Dictionary of the Bible* (New York: Scribner's, 1963), 577. Calvin rightly argues that without medical expertise the priest would depend upon the Spirit of God for insight in diagnosing a disease (*Commentaries on the Last Book of Moses*, 2:16). For an exhaustive study of medical practices in the ANE and Israel, see J. V. K. Wilson, "Medicine in the Land and Times of the Old Testament," in *Studies in the Period of David and Solomon and Other Essays*, ed. T. Ishida (Winona Lake: Eisenbrauns, 1982), 337–65.

surface of the skin and the hair had not turned white, the priest was to isolate the infected person for seven days (13:4; see Num 12:15). He was reexamined on the seventh day, and if the situation was unchanged, the priest examined him again after seven more days (13:5). If by this time the infection had abated⁹⁹ and had not spread, the individual was pronounced clean (13:6). If the infection spread after he had been pronounced clean, he must appear before the priest again. If the rash appeared again, he was pronounced unclean (13:7–8).

⁹“When anyone has an infectious skin disease, he must be brought to the priest. ¹⁰The priest is to examine him, and if there is a white swelling in the skin that has turned the hair white and if there is raw flesh in the swelling, ¹¹it is a chronic skin disease and the priest shall pronounce him unclean. He is not to put him in isolation, because he is already unclean.

¹²“If the disease breaks out all over his skin and, so far as the priest can see, it covers all the skin of the infected person from head to foot, ¹³the priest is to examine him, and if the disease has covered his whole body, he shall pronounce that person clean. Since it has all turned white, he is clean. ¹⁴But whenever raw flesh appears on him, he will be unclean. ¹⁵When the priest sees the raw flesh, he shall pronounce him unclean. The raw flesh is unclean; he has an infectious disease. ¹⁶Should the raw flesh change and turn white, he must go to the priest. ¹⁷The priest is to examine him, and if the sores have turned white, the priest shall pronounce the infected person clean; then he will be clean.

CHRONIC SKIN DISEASE (13:9–17). **13:9–17** Like the first case, the second case of infectious skin disease is introduced by the particle *kî* (“when”) in the phrase “when anyone” (13:9). The instruction in this paragraph was provided for the priests in dealing with those who had a chronic skin disease characterized by white hair and raw flesh¹⁰⁰ in the swelling (13:10–11). This person was to be pronounced unclean (13:11,14–15). If his entire body had turned white because of the disease or the raw flesh had turned white, he was to be considered clean (13:12–13,16–17). White skin indicated that a healing of the disease had taken place since the white skin would be new skin that had grown over the raw flesh.¹⁰¹

¹⁸“When someone has a boil on his skin and it heals, ¹⁹and in the place where the boil was, a white swelling or reddish-white spot appears, he must present himself to the priest. ²⁰The priest is to examine it, and if it appears to be more than skin deep and the hair in it has turned white, the priest shall pronounce him unclean. It is an infectious skin disease that has broken out where the boil

⁹⁹The infection had grown colorless or faded (J. N. Oswalt, כֶּהֵה [kēhē], *TWOT* 1:430).

¹⁰⁰Literally, “living flesh.” Hartley translates the phrase “an ulcerated tissue” (*Leviticus*, 171, 191).

¹⁰¹Levine, *Leviticus*, 78.

was. ²¹But if, when the priest examines it, there is no white hair in it and it is not more than skin deep and has faded, then the priest is to put him in isolation for seven days. ²²If it is spreading in the skin, the priest shall pronounce him unclean; it is infectious. ²³But if the spot is unchanged and has not spread, it is only a scar from the boil, and the priest shall pronounce him clean.

BOILS AND INFECTIOUS SKIN DISEASE (13:18–23). 13:18–23 The third case introduced by *kî* (when”) deals with possible complications with boils on the surface of the skin (13:18). The affliction of boils was experienced by Job and also was one of the ten plagues upon Egypt (Job 2:7; Exod 9:9–11). If after a boil had healed a white swelling or reddish-white spot appeared, an individual was examined by a priest. If the spot was below the surface of the skin and the hair in it had turned white, the man had an infectious disease and was unclean (13:19–20). If the man did not have these symptoms, he was to remain isolated for a period of seven days. If after this period of time the infection had spread, he was unclean; but if no spreading had occurred, he was pronounced clean (13:21–23).

²⁴“When someone has a burn on his skin and a reddish-white or white spot appears in the raw flesh of the burn, ²⁵the priest is to examine the spot, and if the hair in it has turned white, and it appears to be more than skin deep, it is an infectious disease that has broken out in the burn. The priest shall pronounce him unclean; it is an infectious skin disease. ²⁶But if the priest examines it and there is no white hair in the spot and if it is not more than skin deep and has faded, then the priest is to put him in isolation for seven days. ²⁷On the seventh day the priest is to examine him, and if it is spreading in the skin, the priest shall pronounce him unclean; it is an infectious skin disease. ²⁸If, however, the spot is unchanged and has not spread in the skin but has faded, it is a swelling from the burn, and the priest shall pronounce him clean; it is only a scar from the burn.

BURNS AND INFECTIOUS SKIN DISEASE (13:24–28). 13:24–28 The fourth case of infectious disease regarding burns follows the same procedure as that for boils (13:18–23). If the reddish-white or white spot appeared after a burn, the person was inspected by a priest and was pronounced unclean if the hair in the burn had turned white and the infection appeared to be below the surface of the skin (13:24–25). If these symptoms were absent the man was isolated. If after the seven-day isolation the infections had spread, the individual was declared to be unclean; if the growth had not spread, he was declared clean (13:26–28).

²⁹“If a man or woman has a sore on the head or on the chin, ³⁰the priest is to examine the sore, and if it appears to be more than skin deep and the hair in it is yellow and thin, the priest shall pronounce that person unclean; it is an itch, an infectious disease of the head or chin. ³¹But if, when the priest examines this kind of sore, it does not seem to be more than skin deep and there is no black

hair in it, then the priest is to put the infected person in isolation for seven days. ³²On the seventh day the priest is to examine the sore, and if the itch has not spread and there is no yellow hair in it and it does not appear to be more than skin deep, ³³he must be shaved except for the diseased area, and the priest is to keep him in isolation another seven days. ³⁴On the seventh day the priest is to examine the itch, and if it has not spread in the skin and appears to be no more than skin deep, the priest shall pronounce him clean. He must wash his clothes, and he will be clean. ³⁵But if the itch does spread in the skin after he is pronounced clean, ³⁶the priest is to examine him, and if the itch has spread in the skin, the priest does not need to look for yellow hair; the person is unclean. ³⁷If, however, in his judgment it is unchanged and black hair has grown in it, the itch is healed. He is clean, and the priest shall pronounce him clean.

SORES AND INFECTIOUS SKIN DISEASE (13:29–37). 13:29–37 The fifth case of infectious skin disease involved a sore (NIV, “itch”) on the head or chin. It is specified that the case pertains to both a “man or a woman” (13:29). The additional specification referring to the woman does not indicate that women were excluded from the previous cases but that rather because the following case involves specifically an infection on the beard it could be assumed that women were exempt. The text indicates that they were not. The same procedure for the other infections was to be followed for the sore on the head or chin with the additional requirement that if the sore had not spread after the seven day isolation period, the individual had to be shaved except for the infected area and remain in isolation for an additional seven days (13:31–33).¹⁰² If the sore had not spread after the additional seven day period the person was pronounced clean but must wash his clothes (13:34). But if the sore had spread after the time of isolation, as with the previous cases, the individual was considered unclean (13:35–36).

³⁸“When a man or woman has white spots on the skin, ³⁹the priest is to examine them, and if the spots are dull white, it is a harmless rash that has broken out on the skin; that person is clean.

RASHES AND INFECTIOUS SKIN DISEASE (13:38–39). 13:38–39 The sixth case of skin infection involves white spots on the skin. If the spots were a dull white, the rash¹⁰³ was not taken as serious and the person was pronounced clean.

⁴⁰“When a man has lost his hair and is bald, he is clean. ⁴¹If he has lost his hair from the front of his scalp and has a bald forehead, he is clean. ⁴²But if he

¹⁰²The hair of the infected area in this case is not white but yellow (Hb. כֹּהֵן). The term occurs only in Leviticus 13 in reference to hair (BDB, 843).

¹⁰³NASB translates “eczema.”

has a reddish-white sore on his bald head or forehead, it is an infectious disease breaking out on his head or forehead.⁴³ The priest is to examine him, and if the swollen sore on his head or forehead is reddish-white like an infectious skin disease,⁴⁴ the man is diseased and is unclean. The priest shall pronounce him unclean because of the sore on his head.

BALDNESS AND INFECTIOUS SKIN DISEASE (13:40–44). 13:40–44

The seventh case of infectious skin disease involved skin disease on the scalp that had resulted in baldness. Although baldness in itself does not render anyone unclean (13:40–41), baldness that resulted from reddish-white sores rendered an individual unclean (13:42–44). Baldness was often associated with mourning in the Old Testament (Lev 21:5; Deut 14:1; Isa 3:24; 15:2; Jer 16:6; 47:5; 48:37; Ezek 7:18; 27:31; Amos 8:10; Mic 1:16).

⁴⁵“The person with such an infectious disease must wear torn clothes, let his hair be unkempt, cover the lower part of his face and cry out, ‘Unclean! Unclean!’⁴⁶ As long as he has the infection he remains unclean. He must live alone; he must live outside the camp.

INFECTIOUS DISEASE—CONCLUSION (13:45–46) 13:45–46 The concluding section on infectious skin diseases refers to anyone who had been pronounced unclean from any one of the seven cases. The person declared unclean must wear torn clothes, let his hair be unkempt, cover the lower part of his face, and cry out “Unclean” (13:45).¹⁰⁴ These public displays are normally associated with mourning (10:6; 21:10).¹⁰⁵ In addition the person was to remain alone outside the camp (13:46). To be outside the camp (the area around the tabernacle and courtyard) was considered to be separated from God (Lev 10:4–5; Num 5:1–4; 12:14–15; 31:19–24; 2 Kgs 7:3–15) because the presence of God was in the camp (Num 5:3; Deut 23:14). Being outside the camp parallels the expulsion of Adam and Eve from the garden in Genesis 3. The execution of criminals took place outside the camp (Num 15:35–36). As Wenham observes, “It was little wonder that when a man was diagnosed as unclean he had to go into mourning.”¹⁰⁶ Yet from a public health point of view isolation was essential.¹⁰⁷

¹⁰⁴ Calvin claims that Jeremiah metaphorically applied this passage to Israel’s moral corruption in Lam 4:15 (*Commentaries on the Last Book of Moses*, 2:18).

¹⁰⁵ See Gen 37:34; 2 Sam 1:11; Num 14:6; 2 Kgs 22:1,19; Ezra 9:5; 2 Kgs 22:14; 19:1; Ezek 24:17,22; Mic 3:7 (Wenham, *Leviticus*, 200).

¹⁰⁶ Wenham, *Leviticus*, 200–201. Calvin sees an analogy of being banned outside the camp to church discipline, where restoration is not possible until the sinner, like the man with skin disease, must not be received again until penitence and commitment to a new life has been made (*Commentaries on the Last Book of Moses*, 2:25).

¹⁰⁷ Quarantine was imposed during the time of the bubonic plague of 1350, and still a quarter of Europe’s population died from the disease.

The infected person was isolated so that the disease might not spread. Moreover, the separation of the afflicted person from the tabernacle is analogous to the prohibition of blemished animals from the altar and the fact that physically defective priests were disqualified from God's service (Lev 21:17–23). To some degree these requirements illustrate the notion that wholeness was tantamount to holiness.¹⁰⁸ This concept may be the foundation for Paul's announcement that we are the temple of the Holy Spirit and we are to glorify God in our bodies (1 Cor 6:19).

(2) *Mildew (13:47–59)*

⁴⁷“If any clothing is contaminated with mildew—any woolen or linen clothing, ⁴⁸any woven or knitted material of linen or wool, any leather or anything made of leather— ⁴⁹and if the contamination in the clothing, or leather, or woven or knitted material, or any leather article, is greenish or reddish, it is a spreading mildew and must be shown to the priest. ⁵⁰The priest is to examine the mildew and isolate the affected article for seven days. ⁵¹On the seventh day he is to examine it, and if the mildew has spread in the clothing, or the woven or knitted material, or the leather, whatever its use, it is a destructive mildew; the article is unclean. ⁵²He must burn up the clothing, or the woven or knitted material of wool or linen, or any leather article that has the contamination in it, because the mildew is destructive; the article must be burned up.

⁵³“But if, when the priest examines it, the mildew has not spread in the clothing, or the woven or knitted material, or the leather article, ⁵⁴he shall order that the contaminated article be washed. Then he is to isolate it for another seven days. ⁵⁵After the affected article has been washed, the priest is to examine it, and if the mildew has not changed its appearance, even though it has not spread, it is unclean. Burn it with fire, whether the mildew has affected one side or the other. ⁵⁶If, when the priest examines it, the mildew has faded after the article has been washed, he is to tear the contaminated part out of the clothing, or the leather, or the woven or knitted material. ⁵⁷But if it reappears in the clothing, or in the woven or knitted material, or in the leather article, it is spreading, and whatever has the mildew must be burned with fire. ⁵⁸The clothing, or the woven or knitted material, or any leather article that has been washed and is rid of the mildew, must be washed again, and it will be clean.”

⁵⁹These are the regulations concerning contamination by mildew in woolen or linen clothing, woven or knitted material, or any leather article, for pronouncing them clean or unclean.

13:47–59 Beginning with 13:47 the discussion moves from infectious skin disease to mildew on articles of clothing. The subject matter changes, although the same phrase (*negac šarācat*) is used to describe the skin infection (13:2) as well as the mildew (13:47). One abnormality applies to the

¹⁰⁸Demarest, *Leviticus*, 138.

skin while the other applies to clothing material. The use of the same terminology to describe the two conditions also may account for the parallel procedures that had to be undertaken for the priestly examination of these conditions. As with the infectious skin disease, once the abnormality was detected, it was shown to the priest and then isolated for seven days (13:49–50). After the seven-day period the article was again examined by the priest, who would burn the entire garment if the mildew had spread since the last inspection (13:51–52). If the mildew had not spread, the article was to be washed and then isolated for another seven-day period (13:53–54). If upon reexamination by the priest after this seven-day period the mildew had not changed, it was unclean and was to be burned with fire. If after the seven-day period the mildew had faded, the affected area was to be torn out of the clothing. If mildew continued to spread in the clothing, it was burned (13:55–57).¹⁰⁹ If the mildew did not spread further after the affected part was torn from the clothing, it was to be washed again and was considered clean (13:58). The section closes with the summary statement that these are the regulations for ascertaining whether clothing articles should be considered clean or unclean (13:59).¹¹⁰

(3) *Cleansing from Skin Infections (14:1–32)*

Leviticus 14 parallels Leviticus 13 because it addresses the cleansing of infectious skin diseases and mildew. In Leviticus 13 the procedures for the priests regarding detection of infectious skin disease and mildew were outlined, while Leviticus 14 addresses the line of action given for the cleansing both of an individual who has become unclean and of a house in which mildew has been detected. Unique rituals accompanied both the cleansing of skin diseases and mildew, especially the killing of a bird over fresh water while releasing another bird to the open field.¹¹¹ Also the man to be cleansed had to bathe and shave his body. This cleansing and shaving indicated that he was healed from the skin disease. The chapter contains “the most extensive purificatory instruction in the Old Testament.”¹¹² Both of the sections of this chapter that pertain to cleansing of skin disease or of mildew begin with formula “The LORD said to Moses [and Aaron]” (14:1,33).

¹⁰⁹ Use of the Hb. terms *קִרְחַת* and *קִרְחַת* in v. 55 were the same terms used in the previous section in reference to the bald head and bald forehead respectively (13:42–43). The use of the parallel terminology metaphorically is not surprising since it was noted that the expressions for infectious skin disease and mildew were the same terms. The mildew on clothing is thus described by borrowing symptoms from infections on the skin.

¹¹⁰ Similar summations are found in 11:46–47; 14:57; and 15:32.

¹¹¹ This practice resembles the release of the scapegoat in Lev 16.

¹¹² Gerstenberger, *Leviticus*, 175.

¹The LORD said to Moses, ²“These are the regulations for the diseased person at the time of his ceremonial cleansing, when he is brought to the priest: ³The priest is to go outside the camp and examine him. If the person has been healed of his infectious skin disease, ⁴the priest shall order that two live clean birds and some cedar wood, scarlet yarn and hyssop be brought for the one to be cleansed. ⁵Then the priest shall order that one of the birds be killed over fresh water in a clay pot. ⁶He is then to take the live bird and dip it, together with the cedar wood, the scarlet yarn and the hyssop, into the blood of the bird that was killed over the fresh water. ⁷Seven times he shall sprinkle the one to be cleansed of the infectious disease and pronounce him clean. Then he is to release the live bird in the open fields.

⁸“The person to be cleansed must wash his clothes, shave off all his hair and bathe with water; then he will be ceremonially clean. After this he may come into the camp, but he must stay outside his tent for seven days. ⁹On the seventh day he must shave off all his hair; he must shave his head, his beard, his eyebrows and the rest of his hair. He must wash his clothes and bathe himself with water, and he will be clean.

ADMISSION OF UNCLEAN INTO CAMP (14:1–9). **14:1–7** The person who has been pronounced unclean and placed outside the camp may be readmitted to the camp by the procedure described in 14:1–9. The first step in reinstatement began outside the camp, where the priest reexamined the person with the infectious disease (14:3). If the person had been healed, two live clean birds, some cedar wood, scarlet yarn¹¹³ and hyssop¹¹⁴ were ordered for the cleansing ritual (14:4). The elements of wood, yarn, and hyssop, which do not occur in Leviticus apart from this context (see Num 19:6), were probably used for the sprinkling procedure.¹¹⁵ Next one of the two birds was killed over fresh¹¹⁶ water in a clay pot (Lev 14:5). The priest then dipped (see 4:6; 9:9) the live bird, the cedar wood, the scarlet yarn, and the hyssop into the blood of the slain bird. The unclean man was to be sprinkled seven times and the live bird released (14:6–7). This action probably indicated that the impurity had been carried away (see 16:10).

14:8–9 After the infected person had been pronounced clean, he washed his clothes, shaved off all his hair, and bathed with water. Now the

¹¹³This material was used for making the curtains and the veil of the tabernacle (Exod 25:4; 26:1,31; 28:5). Its color may have symbolized blood (Milgrom, *Leviticus* 1–16, 832).

¹¹⁴This woody plant, whose stalk branches out sideways with clusters of buds, was used for sprinkling the blood during the Passover (Exod 12:22). Besides the use of hyssop in this chapter (14:4,6,49,51–52) the branch was used for cleansing in Num 19:6,18 (see Heb 9:19). The offer of the hyssop plant to Christ at his death (John 19:29) possibly suggests the infinite purification that was being brought about at his sacrifice (H. Wolf, צִיִּטְוֹן [*ʿezōb*], *TWOT* 1:28).

¹¹⁵Harris, “Leviticus,” 582.

¹¹⁶Literally מֵי חַיִּים מֵי חַיִּים, “living water.” The phrase may refer to “running water” (thus, Gerstenberger, *Leviticus*, 176).

man was allowed to enter into the camp, but he stayed outside his personal tent seven more days (14:8). On the seventh day he shaved his head, his beard, his eyebrows, and the rest of his hair. He washed his clothes and bathed once more. After this he was considered clean (14:9).

¹⁰“On the eighth day he must bring two male lambs and one ewe lamb a year old, each without defect, along with three-tenths of an ephah of fine flour mixed with oil for a grain offering, and one log of oil. ¹¹The priest who pronounces him clean shall present both the one to be cleansed and his offerings before the LORD at the entrance to the Tent of Meeting.

¹²“Then the priest is to take one of the male lambs and offer it as a guilt offering, along with the log of oil; he shall wave them before the LORD as a wave offering. ¹³He is to slaughter the lamb in the holy place where the sin offering and the burnt offering are slaughtered. Like the sin offering, the guilt offering belongs to the priest; it is most holy. ¹⁴The priest is to take some of the blood of the guilt offering and put it on the lobe of the right ear of the one to be cleansed, on the thumb of his right hand and on the big toe of his right foot. ¹⁵The priest shall then take some of the log of oil, pour it in the palm of his own left hand, ¹⁶dip his right forefinger into the oil in his palm, and with his finger sprinkle some of it before the LORD seven times. ¹⁷The priest is to put some of the oil remaining in his palm on the lobe of the right ear of the one to be cleansed, on the thumb of his right hand and on the big toe of his right foot, on top of the blood of the guilt offering. ¹⁸The rest of the oil in his palm the priest shall put on the head of the one to be cleansed and make atonement for him before the LORD.

¹⁹“Then the priest is to sacrifice the sin offering and make atonement for the one to be cleansed from his uncleanness. After that, the priest shall slaughter the burnt offering ²⁰and offer it on the altar, together with the grain offering, and make atonement for him, and he will be clean.

PURIFICATION OFFERING FOR CURED SKIN INFECTION (14:10–20).
14:10–18 On the eighth day, ¹¹⁷ after the infected man had shaved off all his hair and bathed in water, he presented fine flour mixed with oil for a grain offering, a log ¹¹⁸ of oil, two male lambs, and a ewe lamb (14:10). The priest ¹¹⁹ then slaughtered a lamb as a guilt offering (14:11–13). It is not explicitly clear why a guilt offering would be offered in conjunction with the healing of a skin disorder. Some have suggested that since skin diseases were often meted out as punishment from the Lord (Num 12:10;

¹¹⁷The consecration of the priesthood, the dedication of the temple, and the Feast of Booths all last eight days as well (Lev 8:33; 9:1; 1 Kgs 8:66; 2 Chr 7:7–8; Lev 23:33–36) (Gerstenberger, *Leviticus*, 181).

¹¹⁸The log was a liquid measure approximately three-tenths of a liter (Levine, *Leviticus*, 86).

¹¹⁹The priest who performed this function is described as הַכֹּהֵן הַמְצַיֵּן, “the priest who pronounces him clean” (14:11). This qualification may indicate a division of priestly responsibilities (see Levine, *Leviticus*, 87).

2 Kgs 5:27; 15:5), the guilt offering was offered just in case the diseased person had contracted the disease as a judgment of God. In effect he would be trying to cover all his bases.¹²⁰ A preferred explanation is the one that maintains that the guilt offering was presented to compensate God for loss of service. That is, the offerings that accrued while the man was outside the camp placed him in debt to God, so the guilt offering was presented for reparation (see Lev 5).¹²¹ After the guilt offering was presented, the priest then placed some of the blood on the lobe of the right ear, on the thumb of the right hand, and on the big toe of the right foot of the person who contracted the skin disease (14:14). The priest then sprinkled some of the oil before the sanctuary seven times (14:15–16; see 4:6,17). Some of the remaining oil was placed on the lobe of the right ear, on the thumb of the right hand, and on the big toe of the right foot of the man with the disease (14:17). The rest of the oil was placed on the man's head to make atonement for him (14:18). This physical sprinkling on people resembled the inauguration of the priesthood in Leviticus 8–9 (esp. 8:23–24), which as noted in the discussion above was reminiscent of the sprinkling of the people in the covenant-making ceremony of Exodus 24.

14:19–20 Next the priest offered the other lamb as a sin offering, which was followed by a burnt offering with a grain offering. These offerings also provided atonement for the man with the infectious skin disease. The sin offering would put an individual in good standing with God, while the burnt offering and grain offering symbolized the renewed dedication of the worshiper and of his devotion to God.

PURIFICATION OFFERING OF THE IMPOVERISHED (14:21–32).
14:21–32 If the man who had contracted an infectious skin disease was poor, he was allowed to provide one male lamb for the guilt offering and only one-tenth of an ephah for a grain offering, and he could offer pigeons or doves for the sin and burnt offering. The priest, however, carried out the same procedure as he did for the person of adequate economic means. The same results of cleansing and atonement were achieved. The procedures in vv. 24–31 are virtually identical to the regulations of vv. 12–18 apart from the two doves substituted for two lambs and the reduction of the amount of ephah from three-tenths to one-tenth. Concessions to the poor were made earlier in Lev 1; 5:7–10,11–13.

The despair that resulted when one suspected that he may have contracted an infectious disease must have been intense. By contrast the joy of being declared clean was unspeakable. Demarest paints a beautiful picture of this experience:

¹²⁰ Even if this explanation is accepted as the appropriate one here, we still know from Scripture that not all sickness is caused by sin (cf. Job; Luke 13:1–5; John 9:1–7).

¹²¹ See Wenham, *Leviticus*, 210.

Imagine what it must have felt like to watch that lesion growing on your skin and to experience dread and helplessness as the symptoms persist. Feel the total despair as the priest diagnoses the condition as “unclean.” You say goodbye, you must assume for the last time ever, to your family, friends, and loved ones. For now you must live outside the camp—cut off from all but other “lepers,” removed from all of the normal aspects of daily life, and becoming, literally, God-forsaken. From now on, you awake every morning with no reason to get up, nothing to do, unneeded and uncared for by anyone. And then, beyond your wildest hopes and dreams, healing comes, the disease is arrested! Imagine the joy of returning to the camp, and now being restored to all the rights and privileges of being human again, to the high privilege of worshiping the living God again in the tabernacle with your friends and family. Renewed! Restored! What a celebration those services of cleansing must have been.¹²²

The movement of the cleansed man from outside the camp (14:3), to the camp (14:8), to the Tent of Meeting (14:11) is another way of describing the cleansed man’s full restoration.

(4) *Cleansing from Mildew (14:33–53)*

³³The LORD said to Moses and Aaron, ³⁴“When you enter the land of Canaan, which I am giving you as your possession, and I put a spreading mildew in a house in that land, ³⁵the owner of the house must go and tell the priest, ‘I have seen something that looks like mildew in my house.’ ³⁶The priest is to order the house to be emptied before he goes in to examine the mildew, so that nothing in the house will be pronounced unclean. After this the priest is to go in and inspect the house. ³⁷He is to examine the mildew on the walls, and if it has greenish or reddish depressions that appear to be deeper than the surface of the wall, ³⁸the priest shall go out the doorway of the house and close it up for seven days. ³⁹On the seventh day the priest shall return to inspect the house. If the mildew has spread on the walls, ⁴⁰he is to order that the contaminated stones be torn out and thrown into an unclean place outside the town. ⁴¹He must have all the inside walls of the house scraped and the material that is scraped off dumped into an unclean place outside the town. ⁴²Then they are to take other stones to replace these and take new clay and plaster the house.

RESTORATION OF A HOUSE WITH MILDEW (14:33–42). 14:33–42
In this section the discussion moves from cleansing an individual with an infectious skin disease to cleansing a home that appears to have mildew spreading inside. Both situations are described as *šārāʿat*. This reinforces the position stated earlier that the term cannot refer exclusively to leprosy. The same diagnosis accounts for the similarity of the treatment of each of these conditions.

After the priest was informed of the existence of mildew, he ordered all

¹²²Demarest, *Leviticus*, 154.

contents to be taken from the house, and then entered himself to conduct an examination (14:34–36). If the priest found greenish or reddish impressions¹²³ in the walls, the priest closed the house for seven days (14:37–38). If the mildew had spread by the seventh day, the priest ordered the affected stones to be taken out and put in an unclean place outside the town. All other parts of the walls of the house were to be scraped¹²⁴ and the scraped material consequently disposed of outside of town (14:39–40). New stones were then to be set in place of the discarded mildewed stones while the remaining stones were plastered (*ṭwh*)¹²⁵ (14:41–42).

43“If the mildew reappears in the house after the stones have been torn out and the house scraped and plastered, **44**the priest is to go and examine it and, if the mildew has spread in the house, it is a destructive mildew; the house is unclean. **45**It must be torn down—its stones, timbers and all the plaster—and taken out of the town to an unclean place.

46“Anyone who goes into the house while it is closed up will be unclean till evening. **47**Anyone who sleeps or eats in the house must wash his clothes.

48“But if the priest comes to examine it and the mildew has not spread after the house has been plastered, he shall pronounce the house clean, because the mildew is gone. **49**To purify the house he is to take two birds and some cedar wood, scarlet yarn and hyssop. **50**He shall kill one of the birds over fresh water in a clay pot. **51**Then he is to take the cedar wood, the hyssop, the scarlet yarn and the live bird, dip them into the blood of the dead bird and the fresh water, and sprinkle the house seven times. **52**He shall purify the house with the bird’s blood, the fresh water, the live bird, the cedar wood, the hyssop and the scarlet yarn. **53**Then he is to release the live bird in the open fields outside the town. In this way he will make atonement for the house, and it will be clean.”

REOCCURRENCE OF MILDEW (14:43–53). **14:43–47** If the mildew continued to spread, the house was unclean. The house was to be completely torn down¹²⁶ and all the ruin taken to the unclean place outside the city (14:43–45). Anyone who had any contact with the house was unclean, and if a person ate or slept in such a house, it was necessary for him to wash his clothes (14:46–47).

¹²³The term *שָׁקַעַר וְרָחַף* occurs only here in the OT. BDB relates the noun to a root that does not occur in the OT but has Semitic cognates with the meaning “be deep,” “come to the bottom” (BDB, 891). The Aramaic Targum translation “furrows” is in harmony with this meaning and reinforces the rendering given to the Hebrew noun.

¹²⁴The root *קָצַע* occurs only here in the OT. Levine notes that the Aramaic cognate means “to chisel, cut” and is used in connection with the work of a sculptor or craftsman (*Leviticus*, 90). This action corresponds to the shaving of the individual with the skin disease in 14:8–9.

¹²⁵Ezekiel uses this verb in his attack on false prophets whose words are like persons who whitewash a wall to give the appearance that all is in order (Ezek 13:10,14; 22:8).

¹²⁶The action of the Hb. verb *פָּרַס* (14:45) suggests utter destruction or razing of a building (Levine, *Leviticus*, 91).

14:48–53 If the mildew had not spread, the house was pronounced clean (14:48). Upon making this decision the priest took two birds, cedar wood,¹²⁷ scarlet yarn, and hyssop. One of the birds was killed over fresh water in a clay plot. The cedar wood, the hyssop, the scarlet yarn, and the live bird were then dipped into the blood of the dead bird with the fresh water. Next the house was sprinkled seven times by the priest (14:49–51). The house was thus purified and the live bird released to the open field. The house was atoned for and clean (14:52–53). This procedure is virtually identical to the one for the cleansing of the man who contracted the skin disease in 14:1–32. The difference lies in the fact that no sacrifices are offered for the building since the desired goal is for the buildings to be clean, not to have communion with God.¹²⁸ These regulations obviously do not apply to the time the Israelites were wandering in the wilderness but address the time when Israel will live in houses in Canaan (14:34).¹²⁹ The reference to Canaan as Israel's possession (*āḥûzâ*) given by God occurs in Gen 17:8; 48:4; Deut 32:49.

(5) Skin Infections and Mildew—A Summary (14:54–57)

⁵⁴These are the regulations for any infectious skin disease, for an itch, ⁵⁵for mildew in clothing or in a house, ⁵⁶and for a swelling, a rash or a bright spot, ⁵⁷to determine when something is clean or unclean.

These are the regulations for infectious skin diseases and mildew.

14:54–57 Leviticus 14:54–57 is a rather lengthy summary of the contents¹³⁰ of Leviticus 13–14 regarding the examination and treatment of infectious skin diseases and mildew either in clothing or in a house. To emphasize that these verses conclude the discussion on skin disease and mildew, the concluding statement (14:57b) repeats the fact that the regulations for skin diseases and mildew have been completed.

It should be noted in the discussion of Leviticus 13–14 that the priest, while being active in carrying out the rituals regarding the cleansing and healing of skin disease and mildew did not in any fashion “heal” these maladies. The priest merely functioned to monitor the situation since it

¹²⁷P. T. Crocker suggests that cedar wood was used in this ritual for the house because as the finest available wood for building it was a symbol that the home would no longer be subject to the corrupting fungus (“Archaeology, Mildew, and Leviticus 14,” *BurH* 26 [1990]: 9).

¹²⁸Wenham, *Leviticus*, 211.

¹²⁹There are similar laws from Mesopotamia regarding the removal of fungus from homes, although there the focus is on purifying the occupant of the home because his life was thought to be in danger (S. Meier, “House Fungus: Mesopotamia and Israel [Lev 14:33–53],” *RB* 96–2 [1989]: 184–92).

¹³⁰The expression *וְאֵת הַתּוֹרָה* or *וְאֵת הַחֻקִּים* is used frequently in Leviticus to refer to regulations (3:37; 12:7; 13:59; 14:32,54,57; 15:32).

was the designated role of the priest to distinguish between the clean and the unclean (10:10). The sufferer had little to do but wait for a cure from God as he was isolated outside the camp. If God healed him, then he could present himself to the priest (Matt 8:4; Luke 17:14). The purification ritual would take place only after the infection had been removed. By contrast in the New Testament, Jesus Christ, the great High Priest, sought out lepers, not to diagnose their malady or to quarantine them but to heal them. In this he showed himself to be more than a priest. Indeed, he revealed himself as God, who alone can heal. The healing of leprosy was recognized to be the result of divine power (Exod 4:6; 2 Kgs 5:8).¹³¹ In the New Testament Jesus touched the leper and then instructed him to show himself to the priest and offer for his cleansing what Moses had commanded (Matt 8:2–4; Mark 1:40–45; Luke 5:12–14; 17:14). And yet, although Jesus told lepers to observe the infectious skin laws prior to his crucifixion (Matt 8:4; Luke 17:14), in the new era of salvation, where it is recognized that Jesus is the fulfillment of the Israelite priesthood, these laws no longer apply. God is no longer working and preserving a single nation with a holy camp or centrally located holy place in the church age. These laws, as part of the ceremonial laws of God, laws given to preserve the nation of Israel, have served their purpose; they have been fulfilled.

Furthermore, since these conditions required guilt offerings, sin offerings, and burnt offerings, which are said to result in atonement, it is not surprising that these maladies became symbolic of sin.¹³² Physical disease became a metaphor for sin (Ps 147:3; Isa 1:5–6; Jer 8:2; 30:12; Mark 2:17),¹³³ and consequently cleansing is used metaphorically for the removal of spiritual disease (2 Cor 7:1). Cleansing becomes an aspect of Christ's atonement and forgiveness (Jas 4:8; Heb 10:21–22; 1 John 1:7,9). Moreover, in symbolizing sin the placement of the infected person outside the camp is reminiscent of the banishment of Adam and Eve from the garden once they had committed transgression.¹³⁴

¹³¹ E. A. Martens, שָׂרָאָת (šārāʿat), *TWOT* 2:777. The rabbis believed that only God could cure leprosy (H. L. Strack and P. Billerbeck, *Kommentar zum Neuen Testament aus Talmud und Midrash* [München: C. H. Beck'sche Verlagsbuchhandlung, 1928] 4:751, and L. Goppelt, *Typos: The Typological Interpretation of the Old Testament in the New* [Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1982], 70).

¹³² See V. P. Hamilton, *Handbook on the Pentateuch* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1982), 280.

¹³³ Observed by Wiersbe, *Be Holy*, 55.

¹³⁴ Wenham, *Leviticus*, 213. Similarly, Sailhamer argues that the ritual washings of the person with a skin disease correspond to the flood God used to cleanse the world from evil (*Pentateuch*, 337–38).

4. Bodily Discharges (15:1–33)

Leviticus 15, which deals with the purity laws regarding bodily discharges, divides into four sections, each beginning with the formula ׁלִשְׁׂאָׁ כִּי (“when [any] man/ woman”; 15:2,16,21,25). The sections of the chapter include abnormal discharges of men (15:2–15), normal discharges of men (15:16–18), normal discharges of women (15:19–24), and abnormal discharges of women (15:25–30). The chapter forms an inclusio with an AB-BA pattern with natural discharges occupying the central position.¹³⁵ A final summary marks the unit and closes the chapter (15:32–33).

The predominant term used for bodily discharge, the word *zôb*, is from the root *zûb*, which means “to flow, gush.”¹³⁶ The verb is used three ways in the Old Testament. It refers either to the flow of water including gushing from a rock (Pss 70:20; 105:41; Isa 48:21), the description of Israel as the land “flowing” with milk and honey (Exod 3:8,17; 13:5; 33:3; Deut 6:3; 11:9), or a discharge from the genito-urinary tract (Lev 15; 22:4; Num 5:2; 2 Sam 3:29).¹³⁷ The noun *zôb* occurs only in Leviticus 15. A tractate in the Mishnah based on the same root, *Zavim*, is concerned with the interpretation of the laws of Leviticus 15, as is the tractate *Niddah* from the noun *niddâ* (15:19).¹³⁸

(1) Abnormal Male Discharges (15:1–15)

¹The LORD said to Moses and Aaron, ²“Speak to the Israelites and say to them: ‘When any man has a bodily discharge, the discharge is unclean. ³Whether it continues flowing from his body or is blocked, it will make him unclean. This is how his discharge will bring about uncleanness:

⁴“Any bed the man with a discharge lies on will be unclean, and anything he sits on will be unclean. ⁵Anyone who touches his bed must wash his clothes and bathe with water, and he will be unclean till evening. ⁶Whoever sits on anything that the man with a discharge sat on must wash his clothes and bathe with

¹³⁵For a similar analysis see Hamilton, *Handbook*, 280. R. Whitekettle suggests an alternate division of the chapter, arguing for five sections with Lev 15:18 providing the fulcrum of the chapter. Sexual intercourse occupies the central position since it alone is concerned with “the ideal physiological function of the reproductive system” (“Leviticus 15.18 Reconsidered: Chiasm, Spatial Structure and the Body,” *JSOT* 49 [1991]: 37).

¹³⁶BDB, 264.

¹³⁷L. J. Wood, זָּב (*zûb*), *TWOT* 1:237.

¹³⁸As is the case with other purity laws, we are not told the reason these laws have been given to Israel. Douglas’s position that uncleanness comes from abnormality and Wenham’s explanation that the uncleanness results from a loss of body fluids are possible explanations, although they each have their difficulties (M. Douglas, *Purity and Danger* [London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1966], 51–57, and G. J. Wenham, “Why Does Sexual Intercourse Defile [Lev 15:18]?” *ZAW* 95 [1983]: 433–44). For criticism of these and other positions see the very helpful discussion by Jensen, *Graded Holiness*, 75–88.

water, and he will be unclean till evening.

⁷“Whoever touches the man who has a discharge must wash his clothes and bathe with water, and he will be unclean till evening.

⁸“If the man with the discharge spits on someone who is clean, that person must wash his clothes and bathe with water, and he will be unclean till evening.

⁹“Everything the man sits on when riding will be unclean, ¹⁰and whoever touches any of the things that were under him will be unclean till evening; whoever picks up those things must wash his clothes and bathe with water, and he will be unclean till evening.

¹¹“Anyone the man with a discharge touches without rinsing his hands with water must wash his clothes and bathe with water, and he will be unclean till evening.

¹²“A clay pot that the man touches must be broken, and any wooden article is to be rinsed with water.

¹³“When a man is cleansed from his discharge, he is to count off seven days for his ceremonial cleansing; he must wash his clothes and bathe himself with fresh water, and he will be clean. ¹⁴On the eighth day he must take two doves or two young pigeons and come before the LORD to the entrance to the Tent of Meeting and give them to the priest. ¹⁵The priest is to sacrifice them, the one for a sin offering and the other for a burnt offering. In this way he will make atonement before the LORD for the man because of his discharge.

15:1 We are alerted to the beginning of a new section in the ritual laws through the announcement of divine speech: “The LORD said to Moses and Aaron.”

15:2–10 The first bodily discharge discussed is a discharge from a man. We are told that such a genital¹³⁹ discharge was unclean (15:2). The exact nature of this discharge is not stated, although the most frequently suggested opinion is that it refers to gonorrhea.¹⁴⁰ Because the man from whom the discharge issued had contact with the discharge, he too was in a state of uncleanness (15:3).¹⁴¹ Anything the man touched became unclean, and anyone who touched the man (or anything he had touched) had to wash his clothes and bathe in water and remain in a state of uncleanness until the evening (15:4–6,9–10). If the man with the dis-

¹³⁹ Many experts suggest the Hb. noun *בשר*, lit. “body, flesh,” is used in this context as a sin Ezek 16:26; 23:20 as a euphemism for the genital organs (see TEV), hence the translation “genital” discharge. The *NIV Study Bible* note on this verse (p. 219) that the discharge would include diarrhea is ruled out. In Lev 15:19 the same term is used for the woman’s vagina (Levine, *Leviticus*, 207, n. 3; Wenham, *Leviticus*, 217–18).

¹⁴⁰ This rendering is supported by the LXX (Wenham, *Leviticus*, 217–18; Gerstenberger, *Leviticus*, 199).

¹⁴¹ The translation of 15:3 is difficult, and many scholars argue that the LXX has preserved the better reading (D. M. Freedman, “Variant Readings in the Levitical Scroll From Qumran Cave 11,” *CBQ* 36 [1974]: 528–29).

charge happened to spit on someone who was clean, this man had to wash his clothes and bathe in water (15:8).¹⁴²

15:11–12 If someone was touched by a man with a discharge who had not washed his hands, he had to wash his clothes and bathe in water. If a clay pot was touched by the man, it must be broken while a wooden article touched by the man would be washed with water (15:11–12; see 6:28; 11:33).

15:13–15 When the man with the discharge was healed (cleaned), he washed his clothes and bathed himself with fresh water and waited seven days (15:13). On the eighth day he offered two doves or two pigeons to the priest, who sacrificed one for a sin offering and one for a burnt offering, which provided atonement for the man with the discharge (15:14–15). The fact that the offerings were birds, often the offering of the poor who could not offer the larger animals, indicated that the uncleanness from a discharge was a less severe uncleanness than an uncleanness caused by an infectious skin disease.¹⁴³

(2) *Normal Male Discharges (15:16–18)*

¹⁶“When a man has an emission of semen, he must bathe his whole body with water, and he will be unclean till evening. ¹⁷Any clothing or leather that has semen on it must be washed with water, and it will be unclean till evening. ¹⁸When a man lies with a woman and there is an emission of semen, both must bathe with water, and they will be unclean till evening.

15:16–18 If a man had an emission of semen, he had to bathe his whole body in water and be unclean until evening (15:16).¹⁴⁴ If he lay with a woman¹⁴⁵ and there was an emission of semen, both he and the woman must bathe in water and be unclean until evening (15:18). Any clothing or leather that came into contact with the semen must be washed with water and was unclean until evening (15:17). The declaration of semen as unclean in this passage illustrates the sharp distinction between Israelite religion and the pagan religions of the ancient Near East. In pagan religion sexual activity among worshipers was believed to activate the gods into fertilizing the soil with rain. This activity was often performed within the sacred precincts of the pagan god’s shrine (see Hos 4:12–14). This practice and the mythological role of sex was shown to be ungodly by this legislation

¹⁴²Spitting often involves contempt (Num 12:14; Deut 25:9; Job 30:10; Isa 50:6).

¹⁴³Thus Wenham, *Leviticus*, 219.

¹⁴⁴A different phrase is used in Deut 23:10[Hb. 11] (מִקְרָה לְיָמָיו) in reference to a nocturnal emission.

¹⁴⁵“Lying with a woman” is a Hebrew euphemism for sexual intercourse as it is in English (see Lev 15:18,33; Gen 26:10; 20:15,16; 34:2,7; 35:22; 39:7,12,14; Exod 22:16; Num 5:19; Deut 22:22; 1 Sam 2:22; 2 Sam 11:4,11; 12:11,24; 13:14).

because sexual activity in fact placed one in the category of uncleanness. Thus it would be an abomination to engage in sexual activity in the tabernacle precinct (see 15:31).¹⁴⁶ This demythologizing of sex thus has a polemical role; the legislation does not indicate that sex was sinful and without value.¹⁴⁷

(3) *Normal Female Discharges (15:19–24)*

¹⁹“When a woman has her regular flow of blood, the impurity of her monthly period will last seven days, and anyone who touches her will be unclean till evening.

²⁰“Anything she lies on during her period will be unclean, and anything she sits on will be unclean. ²¹Whoever touches her bed must wash his clothes and bathe with water, and he will be unclean till evening. ²²Whoever touches anything she sits on must wash his clothes and bathe with water, and he will be unclean till evening. ²³Whether it is the bed or anything she was sitting on, when anyone touches it, he will be unclean till evening.

²⁴“If a man lies with her and her monthly flow touches him, he will be unclean for seven days; any bed he lies on will be unclean.

15:19–24 The concluding verse of the previous paragraph introduced the woman whose discharges now become the subject of the remainder of the chapter. The first issue is the impurity that resulted from a woman’s monthly period.¹⁴⁸ During menstruation the woman’s state of impurity lasted for seven days, and anyone who touched her was unclean until evening (15:19). Whatever the woman touched during this seven-day period was unclean, and whoever touched anything she touched was unclean until evening (15:20–23). If a man had sexual intercourse with a woman during her time of uncleanness, he was unclean as long as she was unclean—seven days (15:24). The term for menstruation was later used in the Bible to metaphorically describe Israel’s sins (2 Chr 29:5; Ezra 9:11; Ezek 36:17; Zech 13:1).¹⁴⁹

The prohibition of sexual intercourse during menstruation would certainly be one way of indicating that sexual involvement should not be an obsession in life. Restraint would have to play a part in sexual activity. The laws would also provide the woman a break from housework, caring for

¹⁴⁶ See Levine, *Leviticus*, 207, n. 10, and Hartley, *Leviticus*, 210.

¹⁴⁷ Hartley, “Clean and Unclean,” 721.

¹⁴⁸ The word translated “monthly period” is the term חֲדָשׁ, which is related to a root meaning “to cast, hurl, throw.” The term thus describes the physiological process of the flow of blood. The term occurred in Lev 12:2, which compared the impurity of giving birth to a son to the monthly period (see Levine, *Leviticus*, 97). The term *Niddah*, which is the title of a Mishnaic tractate, is the transliteration of this term. The tractate is a commentary on Lev 15:19–24.

¹⁴⁹ T. McComiskey, חֲדָשׁ (*niddā*), *TWOT* 2:556.

children, and marital relations.¹⁵⁰ For menstruation, as for the emission of semen, no sacrifices were required. The reason may be that these flows of bodily fluids were natural.¹⁵¹ Moreover, as Budd points out, “Early marriages and the demands of constant child-bearing may well have meant that menstruation was a less significant factor in the lives of women than it is today.”¹⁵² These laws, in addition to rendering the Israelites as a distinct nation, would undeniably provide a measure of good hygiene as well.¹⁵³

(4) *Abnormal Female Discharges (15:25–30)*

²⁵“When a woman has a discharge of blood for many days at a time other than her monthly period or has a discharge that continues beyond her period, she will be unclean as long as she has the discharge, just as in the days of her period. ²⁶Any bed she lies on while her discharge continues will be unclean, as is her bed during her monthly period, and anything she sits on will be unclean, as during her period. ²⁷Whoever touches them will be unclean; he must wash his clothes and bathe with water, and he will be unclean till evening.

²⁸“When she is cleansed from her discharge, she must count off seven days, and after that she will be ceremonially clean. ²⁹On the eighth day she must take two doves or two young pigeons and bring them to the priest at the entrance to the Tent of Meeting. ³⁰The priest is to sacrifice one for a sin offering and the other for a burnt offering. In this way he will make atonement for her before the LORD for the uncleanness of her discharge.

15:25–27 If a woman had a discharge unrelated to menstruation, she was unclean as long as the discharge might last (15:25). Anything the woman touched during this time was unclean, and whoever touched her became unclean. The person who came into contact with the woman washed his clothes and bathed with water and was unclean until evening (15:26–27).

15:28–30 After the discharge had ceased, the woman had to wait an additional seven days and was then ceremonially clean. On the eighth day she donated two doves or two pigeons to the priest for a sin offering and a burnt offering, the same offering for the man with a genital discharge in 15:13–15. The reason offerings had to be made for these discharges and not

¹⁵⁰ Harris, “Leviticus,” 586.

¹⁵¹ Hartley, *Leviticus*, 211–12.

¹⁵² Budd, *Leviticus*, 219. Consequently, only unmarried teenage girls would have been particularly affected by this law (Wenham, *Leviticus*, 223–24). But Gerstenberger speculates that the impurity associated with menstruation was the reason behind a woman’s exclusion from the priesthood (*Leviticus*, 207).

¹⁵³ The understanding of this law is critical for understanding the account of David’s affair with Bathsheba in 2 Sam 11. David observed Bathsheba purifying herself from her uncleanness *before* he lay with her (2 Sam 11:2,4). This indicates to the reader that once she conceived, there was no question about the identity of the father.

for the discharges of semen and menstruation was because they were considered abnormal.¹⁵⁴ This legal information gives the context of the account of the woman before Jesus in Mark 5:25–34.

(5) *Conclusion on Discharges (15:31–33)*

³¹“You must keep the Israelites separate from things that make them unclean, so they will not die in their uncleanness for defiling my dwelling place, which is among them.”

³²These are the regulations for a man with a discharge, for anyone made unclean by an emission of semen, ³³for a woman in her monthly period, for a man or a woman with a discharge, and for a man who lies with a woman who is ceremonially unclean.

15:31–33 At the conclusion of the discussion on bodily discharges God addresses Moses and Aaron as he did at the beginning of the chapter. The content of the Lord’s admonition is much like 10:10, which contained the charge to the priesthood regarding their function in Israelite society. Here the priests and Moses are warned that they must keep the Israelites separate¹⁵⁵ from anything that makes them unclean so the Israelites will not defile the tabernacle. Such a violation would result in death (15:31). This verse provides the theological underpinning for the understanding of the issue of clean and unclean. The verse indicates that it is not uncleanness brought about by discharges that evokes God’s punishment but failure to rectify the condition by which individuals would be permitted to enter God’s presence.¹⁵⁶ These conditions were thus not evil in themselves; they only prevented one from entering into the worship of God with other members of the covenant community. The presence of uncleanness in the tabernacle precinct would defile the dwelling place of God.¹⁵⁷ The last two verses of the chapter contain a list of the various conditions Leviticus 15 regulates (15:32–33).

Like the other ceremonial regulations, these laws of personal purity regarding genital discharges distinguished Israel from the other nations. Obedience to these laws would particularly work as a deterrent to intermarriage with other peoples who had no desire to subscribe to these sexual dictates.¹⁵⁸ It has already been observed that these regulations would exclude fertility rites and cultic prostitution (practices characteristic of Israel’s neighbors), particularly from the tabernacle precinct.

¹⁵⁴ Levine, *Leviticus*, 98.

¹⁵⁵ The only other place where the *hiphil* of the root נזר (*nzr*) occurs is in the context of the Nazirite vow (Num 6).

¹⁵⁶ Similarly, Levine, *Leviticus*, 98, and Sanders, *Jesus and Judaism*, 182, 184–85.

¹⁵⁷ See Sailhamer, *Pentateuch*, 340, and G. André, תַּמְעָז *tāmēz*, *TDOT* 5:337.

¹⁵⁸ See Wenham, *Leviticus*, 223.

As is true of other ceremonial laws, these laws on genital discharges no longer have the same function for New Testament believers since their purpose of distinguishing Israel from the Gentiles is no longer part of God's program in his kingdom work. The principle of sexual restraint, however, is often repeated in the New Testament. Paul in fact often closely associates uncleanness (*akatharsia*) with fornication (*porneia*) (2 Cor 12:20–21; Gal 5:19–21; Eph 5:3; Col 3:5).¹⁵⁹ There is no area of our lives from which God should be excluded.¹⁶⁰ These laws provide the background for New Testament passages such as Matt 9:20–22; Mark 5:25–34; Luke 8:43–48 and are the basis of the admonition in Heb 13:4.¹⁶¹

(6) Conclusion on Purity Laws

The purity laws, which included the dietary laws and the laws of uncleanness, played an important role in the life of the people of God in the Old Testament. These laws kept Israel distinct from its neighbors and thus contributed to its preservation.¹⁶² They were assiduously followed by the Jews (particularly in the NT period) until the destruction of the temple in A.D. 70.¹⁶³ With the coming of the Messiah in the fullness of time (Gal 4:4) and the subsequent commencement of the last days (1 Cor 10:11; Heb 1:2), these laws no longer have the same function. The purity laws, like other ceremonial laws of the Old Testament, have been fulfilled in Christ (Matt 5:17).

As for the dietary laws (Lev 11), the everyday occurrence of consuming a meal kept the Israelite conscientiously distinct and separate from the world. The dietary laws were taken very seriously by the Jews because this way of life had been commanded by God. Thus one can understand the resentment among many when the acclaimed Messiah seemed to ignore the current interpretation of these commands and thus had no scruples about sharing a meal with tax collectors and sinners (Matt 9:11; Mark 2:16; Luke 5:30; 7:34). As Hübner maintains that it was Jesus' seeming disregard for the laws concerning clean and unclean food that carried over into his kind of treatment of outcast individuals. When Jesus sat at the table with tax collectors and sinners (Mark 2:15–17; Luke 15:1–2), he provokingly rejected the boundary between what they thought was

¹⁵⁹Houston, *Purity and Monotheism*, 271.

¹⁶⁰Wiersbe, *Be Holy*, 67.

¹⁶¹Noted by Hartley, *Leviticus*, 214–15.

¹⁶²A primary reason for Israel to be preserved and nationally kept in tact was in order that the Messiah would come forth to restore all things and bless the world (Gen 12:3 with Gal 3:8).

¹⁶³Josephus, *Ant.* 3.9.5 § 268 (M. J. Selvidge, "Mark 5:25–34 and Leviticus 15:19–20: A Reaction to Restrictive Purity Regulations," *JBL* 103 [1984]: 621). The purity laws provide the proper theological background for the statement in John 18:28.

clean and what was unclean.¹⁶⁴

For the Jews of Jesus' day the authority of the Mosaic Law was at stake. But Jesus' behavior illustrates that with the coming of the Messiah, who fulfilled the ceremonial law (Matt 5:17), these laws are now obsolete for the believer. They have fulfilled their function in enabling Israel to be unique and thus are not to be followed literally by believers of the church today.¹⁶⁵ As Wenham explains:

With Christianity OT Judaism was universalized to embrace all mankind. It is of a piece with this transformation that the food laws were dropped by the Christian church. With the incorporation of the Gentiles into the church, Israel was no longer regarded as the unique covenant people (Gal 3:6–29; Eph 2:11–16). To drop the laws that symbolized the peculiar status of Israel was not merely convenient if Gentiles were to be converted, it was also a step of theological logic. If the wall of partition between Jews and Gentiles was broken down, the distinction between clean and unclean food should also have been abolished.¹⁶⁶

In Peter's vision in Acts 10, Peter was directed by the Lord to eat unclean food. Peter's interpretation of the meaning of this vision was that he was no longer to call a Gentile unclean (Acts 10:28). Later in his ministry Peter referred to this vision as the basis for his new attitude toward the Gentiles (Acts 11:5–9; 15:7–9). In the critical meeting of Acts 15 regarding the Gentiles' inclusion in the work of God, it was the food laws that were the particular sticking point. James concludes, based on the indisputable evidence of Gentile conversion, that the food laws, the laws that marked Israelite exclusion, were no longer in force.¹⁶⁷ These accounts from Acts are graphic illustrations of Paul's declaration that the wall of partition had been broken down (Eph 2:11–21).

Other laws of uncleanness, such as skin infection laws (Lev 13–14) and

¹⁶⁴H. Hübner, "Unclean and Clean (NT)," *ABD* 6:742. Paul's admonition for the Christian who finds himself married to a nonbeliever to remain in the marriage (1 Cor 7:12–14) illustrates the same point on a different issue.

¹⁶⁵There are Messianic Jews, particularly in Israel today, who sincerely maintain that because these purity laws are part of their heritage they are under obligation to obey them. Here the principles of 1 Cor 8 and Rom 14 apply, but Messianic believers should realize that they have no warrant to impose the observance of these laws upon other believers.

¹⁶⁶"The Theology of Unclean Food," 12. Wenham's statement reflects the teaching of the NT, but there is evidence early in church history that Christians adopted food laws similar to those found in Lev 11, as well as forbade sexual intercourse on certain occasions and baptism during menstruation (Hübner, "Unclean and Clean [NT]," 744).

¹⁶⁷See Wenham, "The Theology of Unclean Food," 14. Other purity laws were retained in the Apostolic Decree of Acts 15 (Houston, *Purity and Monotheism*, 268). There is a certain concession being made to OT cultic standard based on the authority of Moses (Acts 15:28–29; 21:25; Hübner, "Unclean and Clean [NT]," 744). Houston observes that the purity rules that are retained applied to strangers in the OT (Lev 17:8,10,13; 18:26; Houston, *Purity and Monotheism*, 261, 268).

discharges (Lev 12; 15), also have served their function and are no longer to be observed by New Testament believers. Once again Jesus is our example. In the account of the touching of the leper (Matt 8:1–4; Mark 1:40–45; Luke 5:12–15) and the woman with the issue of blood (Matt 9:20–22; Mark 5:25–34; Luke 8:43–48), Jesus' action indicates a change in the function of these laws. On the one hand Jesus reached out to touch an unclean person (Matt 8:3; Mark 1:41; Luke 5:13), whereas on the other hand he was touched by a person in an unclean state (Matt 9:20; Mark 5:25; Luke 8:43). Both of these actions caused one to be in a state of uncleanness as we have seen throughout Leviticus 11–15. The woman with an issue of blood and the leper conveyed defilement, and yet when they had contact with Jesus Christ, they were immediately cleansed. This immediate cleansing indicated that they did not transmit uncleanness since Jesus did not become defiled. These two events were further indications of Jesus' divinity, since only God can heal and forgive sins (Lev 11–15).¹⁶⁸

Holiness had a spatial dimension in the Old Testament, and contact of the unclean with the sanctuary was the ultimate defilement (15:31). When Jesus touched the leper and the woman touched the hem of his garment, these unclean individuals were in contact with the very presence of God (tabernacle/temple in OT), which would result in the most austere defilement. And yet Jesus' response on both occasions indicates that with his presence, with the presence of God incarnate in a human body, a change has occurred. The presence of God was no longer confined to a special hill in Jerusalem but stood in the midst of the people. Jesus did not become unclean in having contact with the unclean. The law regarding uncleanness was forever changed, for the fulfillment of the tabernacle/temple type had arrived in history. No longer do certain maladies place one outside the camp. The Messiah has fulfilled these laws and their function has changed.

Yet the principle behind the purity laws, the call to holiness, has not changed for the New Testament believer. Like the dietary laws the principle behind these laws of uncleanness is in effect. Holiness is to be practiced and demonstrated by those who are God's people today. Just as sacrifices have been fulfilled in Christ and we are to offer spiritual sacrifices, the laws of impurity have served their purpose; but the principles behind them are still to be carried out by those God has called. In Paul's charge for the Corinthian church to be holy (2 Cor 6:17) he admonishes them in the language of Leviticus: "Therefore come out from them and be separate, says the Lord. Touch no unclean thing, and I will receive you." Poythress comments on the significance of Paul's use of the levitical law:

¹⁶⁸In Luke 17:14 Jesus healed ten lepers without touching them.

Paul's use of the Old Testament here is quite in line with its real meaning. The disorders of unclean things in the Old Testament symbolically indicate the disorders of sin itself. ... Israel's separation from unclean foods also proclaims its obligation to be a uniquely holy nation, a kingdom of priests. In the Old Testament the principles of holiness and separation were temporarily expressed on a symbolic, physical level in the distinction between clean and unclean foods.¹⁶⁹

Since these laws of uncleanness were fulfilled with the coming of Christ and the inauguration of the kingdom of God, there has been a shift from the cultic to the ethical application of these laws in the New Testament (Matt 5:8; 1 Tim 1:5; 2 Tim 2:22; 1 Pet 1:22; Acts 15:9).¹⁷⁰ This change has Old Testament roots (Pss 24:4; 51:12). A similar shift is seen in the important covenant law of circumcision, which has new meaning in the New Testament (Rom 2:28–29; Col 2:11). Again, however, the spiritual significance of even this shift was not unknown in the Old Testament (Lev 26:41; Deut 10:16; 30:6; Jer 4:4).

The Pharisees overlooked the spiritual intent of these purity laws and overemphasized their ritual nature (Matt 23:23). For this they were denounced by Jesus Christ (Matt 15:10–20; 23:25–28).

The idea of the church being separate from the world as Israel was from the nations has relevance for believers today. It seems to have become the practice of modern evangelicals to diminish the differences between the church and the world in an unwise attempt to make the Christian faith more attractive to those outside the household of faith.¹⁷¹ Jesus' command to the church to be perfect as your Father in heaven is perfect (Matt 5:48) is harmonious with Israel's call to be holy as God is holy.¹⁷²

Another way the laws of uncleanness are fulfilled in the New Testament is in the matter of ritual cleansing through the use of water. The Old Testament cleansing agents foreshadow the cleansing of water baptism (Eph 5:25–26).¹⁷³ Baptism now signifies not removal of physical uncleanness but a good conscience before God through the resurrection of Jesus Christ (1 Pet 3:21). All believers are now cleansed, for God purifies the heart (Acts 15:9).

¹⁶⁹ Poythress, *The Shadow of Christ in the Law of Moses*, 85–86.

¹⁷⁰ A similar shift may be observed among the Essenes from Qumran, from whom John the Baptist emerged.

¹⁷¹ Demarest, *Leviticus*, 114.

¹⁷² R. Koch, "L'imatation de Dieu dans la morale de L'ancien testament," in *Studia moralia* 2 (1964): 86.

¹⁷³ As uncleanness represents sin or wickedness it must be removed by an eschatological purification through baptism (J. Neusner and B. D. Chilton, "Uncleanness: A Moral or an Ontological Category in the Early Centuries A.D.?" *BRR* 1 [1991]: 66).

IV. DAY OF ATONEMENT (16:1–34)

1. General Instructions for the Day of Atonement (16:1–10)
 - (1) High Priest Cannot Enter Holy Place at Will (16:1–2)
 - (2) High Priest Shall Prepare Offerings (16:3–6)
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5. Procedures after the Dispatch of the Scapegoat (16:23–28)
 - (1) Aaron Disrobes and Bathes (16:23–24a)
 - (2) Aaron Offers Burnt Offerings and the Fat of Sin Offerings (16:24b–25)
 - (3) The Designated Man, Sending of Scapegoat, and Disposal of Sin Offerings (16:26–28)
6. The Day of Atonement Is to Be a Permanent Statute (16:29–34)
 - (1) People Humble Themselves and Do No Work (16:29–31)
 - (2) Summary of Day of Atonement (16:32–34)
7. Conclusion of Day of Atonement

IV. DAY OF ATONEMENT (16:1–34)

Leviticus 16 regulates what is to take place on the Day of Atonement, although the title of this institution does not occur in the chapter. The

title Day of Atonement¹ is found in Lev 23:27 (*yôm hakkippurîm*) and Lev 23:28 (*yôm kippurîm*), literally “day of (the) atonements.” In contemporary usage it has commonly been called Yom Kippur. The day was the most solemn of all the Old Testament rituals. So significant was it that in later Jewish tradition it came to be called just that, “The Day” (*Yoma*). Sarna summarized the manifold significance of the day when he states:

Admission to the holy of Holies was barred to all except the high priest, and then he could enter it only once a year, on the Day of Atonement, to create a perfect and remarkable coalescence of the most sacred individual, the most sacred of space, the most sacred day of the year, and the most sacred rite.²

Leviticus 16 begins a new major section of the Book of Leviticus. The literary dependence on the previous revelation given to Moses, however, is everywhere apparent. The chapter presumes the content of the previous section, Leviticus 11–15, particularly 15:31, where uncleanness defiles the sanctuary. The Day of Atonement sacrifices purify the sanctuary from this defilement. As will be shown, one of the main accomplishments of the Day of Atonement is the purification of the tabernacle (16:15–19). But more than this, the Day of Atonement presumes the laws for sacrifice (Lev 1–7) and the role of the priesthood (Lev 8–10); laws from both of these sections are critical for the execution of the Day of Atonement rituals.

Many commentators have suggested that the purpose of Leviticus 16 should be restricted to cleansing the tabernacle from the pollutions that have accrued through the mistakes of the unclean and sinful Israelite worshippers.³ Yet while the furnishings of the tabernacle were purified once during the observance of the Day of Atonement ritual (16:20), atonement was made for the high priest four times (16:6,11,17,24) and for the people three times (16:10,17,24). Thus the forgiveness of the people is a critical part of the intent of the chapter, and one is justified in arguing that atonement for the high priest and the congregation is more the focal point of the chapter than the purification of the tabernacle. Moreover, since the uncleanness and sins of the people pollute the tabernacle, it would be essential for the people also to be purified if the tabernacle was to be cleansed; otherwise the taberna-

¹ According to Jewish tradition the following events occurred on the tenth of Tishri, the Day of Atonement: (1) Adam sinned and repented; (2) Abraham was circumcised; (3) Abraham offered up Isaac on the altar; (4) Moses made atonement for the sin of the golden calf; (5) Moses received the second tablets of the Law (G. F. Oehler, *Theology of the Old Testament* [reprint, Minneapolis: Klock & Klock, 1978], 326, and M. D. Herr, “Day of Atonement,” *Enc-Jud* 5:1382).

² N. Sarna, *Exploring Exodus* (New York: Schocken, 1986), 205.

³ B. A. Levine, *Leviticus*, JPS (Philadelphia: The Jewish Publication Society, 1989), 99–100 (see G. J. Wenham, *The Book of Leviticus*, NICOT [Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1979], 228).

cle would immediately become contaminated after it had been purified.⁴

Since Leviticus 16 occupies the central position in the book (and of the Law as a whole), it is the consummation of the previous fifteen chapters and provides the spiritual energy and motivation to carry out the imperatives of Leviticus 17–27.⁵ The chapter opens with a divine announcement (16:1) and closes with a record of the Israelites' compliance to the laws set forth (16:34), suggesting the chapter should be viewed as a unit. The offerings on this day included two rams as burnt offerings for the high priest and the congregation, a bull for the sin offering of the high priest, and two goats as sin offerings for the people.

1. General Instructions for the Day of Atonement (16:1–10)

(1) High Priest Cannot Enter Holy Place at Will (16:1–2)

¹The LORD spoke to Moses after the death of the two sons of Aaron who died when they approached the LORD. ²The LORD said to Moses: “Tell your brother Aaron not to come whenever he chooses into the Most Holy Place behind the curtain in front of the atonement cover on the ark, or else he will die, because I appear in the cloud over the atonement cover.

16:1–2 The new section begins with the divine announcement: “The LORD spoke to Moses.” Leviticus 16:1 opens the chapter with the Lord addressing Moses in a narrative fashion, thereby linking what is now to be prescribed with the Nadab and Abihu incident.⁶ Aaron is first notified that he cannot come into the most holy place whenever he desires (16:2).⁷ He may come into the very presence of God only on the designated day. An ordinary priest could not enter the Most Holy Place, but only the high priest on one day in the year. On that day, more than any other, the high priest would act as mediator between God and the people.

⁴The Mishnah alludes to the double role of purging the tabernacle and forgiving the people in *m. Šebu*. 1:6, where it is stated that the goat sacrificed in the holy of holies purges the sanctuary, and the scapegoat provides atonement for all the transgressions of the people.

⁵J. E. Hartley, *Leviticus*, WBC (Dallas: Word, 1992), 217.

⁶This connection to the incident of the death of Nadab and Abihu must in some way contribute to the overall purpose of the chapter. Thus one goal of the instruction is to insure that the high priest would not experience the sudden death that his two sons had experienced (Wenham, *Leviticus*, 236–37). This link with the narrative of Leviticus 10 is further evidence that Leviticus 11–15 should be viewed as an enclosed unit.

⁷For rabbinic tradition regarding the role of the priest and the Day of Atonement, see the mishnaic tractate *Yoma*. This tractate accurately describes how the ceremony was practiced by Jews in the Second Temple period. This premise is confirmed by the fact that many of the non-biblical customs described in the tractate are attested to by Barnabas and Tertullian (L. Grabbe, “The Scapegoat Tradition: A Study in Early Jewish Interpretation,” *JSJ* 18 [1987]: 166).

As the people's representative he had access into the presence of God.⁸ This was a foretaste to what has been fulfilled by the Son of God, for now believers who are in Christ have constant access to the very presence of God (Heb 4:14–16; 10:19–22).

(2) *High Priest Shall Prepare Offerings (16:3–6)*

³“This is how Aaron is to enter the sanctuary area: with a young bull for a sin offering and a ram for a burnt offering. ⁴He is to put on the sacred linen tunic, with linen undergarments next to his body; he is to tie the linen sash around him and put on the linen turban. These are sacred garments; so he must bathe himself with water before he puts them on. ⁵From the Israelite community he is to take two male goats for a sin offering and a ram for a burnt offering.

⁶“Aaron is to offer the bull for his own sin offering to make atonement for himself and his household.

16:3–4 When the high priest was allowed to come to the Most Holy Place,⁹ he presented a young bull (4:3,14) for a sin offering and a ram for a burnt offering (8:18; 9:2). This area of the tabernacle was called the “Most Holy Place” because in it resided the atonement cover (*hakkappōret*; 16:3). The noun *kappōret* is from the same root *kpr*, “to atone,” which indicates that this object was the place of atonement.¹⁰ The importance of the cover was due to its function as the place of expiation, not merely that it covered the ark.¹¹ As such it was the locus of God's presence, the site of God's condescension.¹²

Before the priest came to the Most Holy Place, however, he bathed himself with water and donned holy garments (16:4).¹³ These linen garments

⁸ The golden bells on the robe of the high priest (Exod 28:33–35) would alert the waiting Israelites of the high priest's every move.

⁹ Hb. שַׁרְיָתָה, *haqqōdēš*. The location of the Most Holy Place was behind the curtain (*pārōket*). This term is used in the OT exclusively to refer to the curtain that separated the Most Holy Place from the rest of the tabernacle or temple (Exod 26:31; 35:12; 39:24; 40:21; Num 4:5).

¹⁰ R. L. Harris, *הַכַּפֹּרֶת (kappōret)*, TWOT 1:453, and M. Jastrow, *הַכַּפֹּרֶת, A Dictionary of the Targumim, the Talmud Babli and Yerushalmi, and the Midrashic Literature*, 2 vols. (Brooklyn: P. Shalom, 1967), 1:658. M. Görg's suggestion that the term is borrowed from two Egyptian words and means the “sole of the foot” is problematic methodologically and has received little support (“Eine neue Deutung für *kappōret*,” ZAW 89 [1977]: 115–18).

¹¹ Levine, *Leviticus*, 100; Hartley, *Leviticus*, 234–35. See discussion on Atonement in Introduction, p. 51. For construction of the ark see Exod 25:10–22; 37:1–9. Heb 9:4–5 states that the ark contained three items: the golden jar of manna, Aaron's rod, and the tablets of the covenant.

¹² B. Janowski, *Sühne als Heilsgeschehen*, Wissenschaftlich Monographien zum Alten und Neuen Testament (Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchener Verlag, 1982), 347.

¹³ The events of 16:3–4 appear to be presented in a chronologically reversed order. This arrangement places special stress upon the first mentioned procedure, Aaron's sin offering and burnt offering in the Holy Place.

were not as elaborate as those the high priest might wear during his other priestly functions. These garments represent the abject state of the high priest in seeking expiation.¹⁴ That the garments indicated a contrite, reflective approach to the Most Holy Place by the high priest is reinforced by the sevenfold repetition in the passage that the high priest was bringing an offering “for himself” (16:6[2x],11[3x],17,24).

16:5–6 The high priest was also to take two male goats for a sin offering and a ram for a burnt offering.¹⁵ These offerings for the people were to be provided by the congregation and given to the high priest on the Day of Atonement. The bull Aaron offered was his own sin offering to make atonement for himself and his household (16:6). According to tradition he prayed the following prayer:

O God, I have committed iniquity, transgressed, and sinned before thee, I and my house. O God, forgive the iniquities and transgressions and sins which I have committed and transgressed and sinned before thee, I and my house, as it is written in the Law of thy servant Moses, *For on this day shall atonement be made for you to cleanse you; from all your sins shall ye be clean before the Lord* (Lev 16:30) (*Yoma* 3:8).¹⁶

Other Old Testament confessions of sin may be found in Ezra 9; Neh 1:5–11; Daniel 9; Psalm 106.

(3) *Sin Offering and the Scapegoat (16:7–10)*

⁷Then he is to take the two goats and present them before the LORD at the entrance to the Tent of Meeting. ⁸He is to cast lots for the two goats—one lot for the LORD and the other for the scapegoat. ⁹Aaron shall bring the goat whose lot falls to the LORD and sacrifice it for a sin offering. ¹⁰But the goat chosen by lot as the scapegoat shall be presented alive before the LORD to be used for making atonement by sending it into the desert as a scapegoat.

16:7–10 Next the high priest cast lots for the two goats, one for the Lord and one for the scapegoat (16:7–8). According to Gerstenberger, a yes-stone and a no-stone were placed in a container. The one that fell out first would provide the answer to the posed question.

Stuart, on the other hand, surmises that the lots were like dice that had

¹⁴Levine, *Leviticus*, 101, and P. P. Jenson, *Graded Holiness: A Key to the Priestly Conception of the World*, JSOTSup 106 (Sheffield: JSOT, 1992), 200. Kaiser argues that the putting aside of the more elaborate garments is a picture of the incarnation (“Leviticus,” 1114). Perhaps a better way of stating the possible significance here would be that the removal of clothes indicated that the high priest represents someone else.

¹⁵The sin offering for the entire Israelite community was the bull in 4:21. The sin offerings from the flock were designated for the individual who brought a sin offering. This indicates that the sin offering made on this special day was different from the normal sin offering.

¹⁶H. Danby, *The Mishnah* (London: Oxford University Press, 1933), 165.

alternately light and dark sides. Two dark sides up would indicate a no, while two light sides would mean yes. A light and a dark side would mean roll again.¹⁷ The goat designated for the Lord was to be sacrificed as a sin offering; the other was assigned to be sent to the wilderness (16:9–10).¹⁸

There is widespread discussion regarding the interpretation of the term “scapegoat” (Hb. *ʿāzāʾzēl*).¹⁹ Four major explanations have been proposed. First, it is argued that the word describes the goat’s function. The support for this view comes from the etymology of the word, the root *ʾzl*, meaning “go away,” and *ʿz*, meaning “goat,” thus together “the goat that departs.” From the combination of these two words comes the traditional English rendering “scapegoat,” which originated in the early English Tyndale translation in 1530. This understanding is supported by both the Septuagint and the Vulgate. The second position understands *ʿāzāʾzēl* to be an abstract noun meaning “entire removal.” The name thus would refer specifically to the theological concept that the goat’s departing into the wilderness never to be seen again pictures the entire removal of sin.²⁰ The third position, which gained wide acceptance in Jewish tradition, understands the *ʿāzāʾzēl* to refer to the location where the goat departed. Proponents of this view often argue that the first part of the word *ʿāzāʾzēl* is from the root *ʿzz*, meaning “strong, fierce,”²¹ which probably depicts the terrain of the goat’s destination. The fourth position understands *ʿāzāʾzēl* to refer to a demon in the wilderness. This view has gained recent popularity and is also supported by reference to a demon *ʿāzāʾzēl* in the intertestamental work of *I Enoch*.²² There is nothing in Scripture, however, to indicate that Satan or his demons carried out an atoning function.²³ Thus of these interpretations options one and three seem to have the strongest support. Of these two the context seems to best sup-

¹⁷ E. Gerstenberger, *Leviticus*, OTL (Louisville: Westminster, 1993), 219, and D. Stuart, *Hosea-Jonah*, WBC (Waco: Word), 459–60.

¹⁸ For lot casting in determining decisions, see Judg 20:9; 1 Chr 24:5; Jonah 1:7; Acts 1:26.

¹⁹ For fuller discussions see A. E. Cundall, “Azazel,” *ZPEB* 1:426–27; Feinberg, “The Scapegoat of Leviticus 16,” *BSac* 115 (1958): 332; Levine, *Leviticus*, 102; Wenham, *Leviticus*, 234–35 and, Hartley, *Leviticus*, 237–38.

²⁰ See W. Lasor, D. Hubbard, and F. Bush, *Old Testament Survey*, 1st ed. (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1982), 157. The Knox Translation, “one is for discharge,” appears to reflect this understanding.

²¹ The NEB translates “for the Precipice” (see Jastrow, *לְיַזְעַל*, *Dictionary*, 2:1060). H. Ringgren suggests that the original meaning of the term referred to a location (*Israelite Religion* [Philadelphia: Fortress, 1966], 173).

²² The CEV translates the term “to the demon Azazel.” Similarly, the Moffatt translation.

²³ G. Archer, *Encyclopedia of Bible Difficulties* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1982), 128. H. Tawil’s position that the scapegoat refers to the Canaanite god Mot may be likewise criticized (see “Azazel The Prince of the Steepe: A Comparative Study,” *ZAW* 92 [1980]: 43–59).

port position three. Note the parallel in Lev 16:8²⁴ and, more significantly, the phrase into *hammidbārâ*, “into the desert” (16:10), which appears to be an appositional explanation of *‘ăzā’zēl*. Regardless of the precise meaning of the term, the overall understanding of the passage is clear: the releasing of the goat indicated that the sins of the Israelites had been removed never to visit them again.

2. Offerings of the High Priest in the Holy Place (16:11–14)

(1) *Bull of the Sin Offering (16:11)*

¹¹“Aaron shall bring the bull for his own sin offering to make atonement for himself and his household, and he is to slaughter the bull for his own sin offering.

16:11 The first offering of the high priest was the sin offering for himself (16:11–14), which was followed by a sin offering for the people (16:15–20). The bull, the high priest’s sin offering, was also the designated animal for the sin offering of the high priest in Lev 4:3–12. The sin offering for Aaron is mentioned twice in one verse, which emphasizes the necessity of atonement being made for the high priest official at the commencement of this ceremony and contributing to the solemnity of this occasion.

(2) *High Priest Enters behind the Veil with Incense (16:12–13)*

¹²He is to take a censer full of burning coals from the altar before the LORD and two handfuls of finely ground fragrant incense and take them behind the curtain. ¹³He is to put the incense on the fire before the LORD, and the smoke of the incense will conceal the atonement cover above the Testimony, so that he will not die.

16:12–13 After Aaron presented the bull of his own sin offering and slaughtered it, he took burning coals²⁵ and incense behind the curtain (16:12). The purpose of the incense was either to conceal the atonement cover and thus protect the high priest, who would be standing close to the mercy seat (*kappôret*),²⁶ or, alternatively, to keep the high priest from seeing God (Exod 24:15–18; 33:18–21; Lev 16:13). The mercy seat is described here as being on the “testimony,” an abbreviation for the phrase “ark of the Testimony” (see Exod 16:34; 27:21; 30:6,36; Num 17:4,10). The

²⁴Many argue that the parallel best supports the demon view; the goats are allotted to personal beings. But this point is not airtight. The phrase “before the LORD” not only refers to the Lord’s presence but in context, to the Lord’s location, i.e., the tabernacle.

²⁵The coals were taken from the altar of burnt offering and brought into the tabernacle by the priest (Levine, *Leviticus*, 104).

²⁶Incense may have played a similar role in Num 17:11–13 (*ibid.*).

testimony refers to the tablets given to Moses that were placed inside the ark (Exod 31:18; 40:20).

(3) High Priest Sprinkles Blood on Mercy Seat (16:14)

¹⁴He is to take some of the bull's blood and with his finger sprinkle it on the front of the atonement cover; then he shall sprinkle some of it with his finger seven times before the atonement cover.

16:14 Aaron was to sprinkle the blood of the bull with his finger on the front of the mercy seat seven times. This transporting and sprinkling of blood in the Most Holy Place is the most unique feature of the Day of Atonement. This was the only occasion in which blood was brought into the Most Holy Place, which underscores the singular solemnity of this preeminent day. The mercy seat covered the ark, which contained the Ten Commandments, manna, and Aaron's rod (Heb 9:4–5). The narrative accounts surrounding these items stress the rebellion of the Israelites. Thus the cherubim looking down upon the mercy seat saw only the evidence of Israel's unfaithfulness. The blood on the mercy seat indicated that Israel's sin was atoned for by a substitutionary death.

3. Purification for the Tabernacle (16:15–19)

(1) Blood of Congregation's Goat Sprinkled on Mercy Seat (16:15)

¹⁵He shall then slaughter the goat for the sin offering for the people and take its blood behind the curtain and do with it as he did with the bull's blood: He shall sprinkle it on the atonement cover and in front of it.

16:15 Next Aaron slaughtered the goat for the sin offering of the people and took its blood behind the curtain and sprinkled it like the bull's blood on the atonement cover and in front of it.

(2) Purification for Holy Place and Tent of Meeting (16:16–17)

¹⁶In this way he will make atonement for the Most Holy Place because of the uncleanness and rebellion of the Israelites, whatever their sins have been. He is to do the same for the Tent of Meeting, which is among them in the midst of their uncleanness. ¹⁷No one is to be in the Tent of Meeting from the time Aaron goes in to make atonement in the Most Holy Place until he comes out, having made atonement for himself, his household and the whole community of Israel.

16:16–17 After the sin offering was given on behalf of the people, purification was made for various items inside the tabernacle. In this manner atonement was made for the Most Holy Place because of the uncleanness and rebellion of the Israelites (16:16a). The word *pešaʿ*, translated “rebellion” in the NIV, is the most grievous word for sin in the

Old Testament. The term refers to sin in its grossest manifestation. It indicates a breach of relationship²⁷ between two parties and was probably borrowed from the diplomatic realm, where it indicated a covenant-treaty violation.²⁸ The word thus indicates that a violation of the covenant has been perpetrated. This initial use of the word in Leviticus indicates that on the Day of Atonement not only were intentional sins atoned for but that the tabernacle was purified to allow God's presence to reside. The notion that atonement was to be made for purification is not introduced here for the first time. Purification resulting from atonement occurred in the context of the cleansing of the young mother in 12:8 and the person with a skin disease in 14:18–19. The unrestricted nature of forgiveness on this day indicates why the blood was to be carried so close to God's presence.²⁹

In the same manner atonement was to be made for the Tent of Meeting (16:16b). The various objects in the Tent of Meeting were to be sprinkled with the blood. No one was to be in the tabernacle when Aaron was presenting the atoning offering for himself, his household, and the Israelite community (16:17). "Under both testaments there is but one mediator between God and man (cf. 1 Tim 2:5)."³⁰

(3) *Purification for the Altar (16:18–19)*

18“Then he shall come out to the altar that is before the LORD and make atonement for it. He shall take some of the bull's blood and some of the goat's blood and put it on all the horns of the altar. **19**He shall sprinkle some of the blood on it with his finger seven times to cleanse it and to consecrate it from the uncleanness of the Israelites.

16:18–19 Next atonement was to be made for the burnt offering altar, for Aaron was to sprinkle blood on the altar seven times, thereby cleansing it from the uncleanness of the Israelites. Jenson has correctly noted the progression in the purification process. First the most holy object (mercy seat) was purified, then the Tent of Meeting (including the incense altar), and finally the altar of burnt offering, the most holy object in the court.³¹

²⁷ According to R. Knierim the essential meaning is “break (with).” This usage is illustrated in Exod 34:7; Lev 16:16; Num 14:18; 1 Kgs 8:50; Isa 43:25; 44:22; Mic 7:18; Ps 32:1 (פֶּשַׁע *pešaʿ*, THAT 2:491).

²⁸ G. H. Livingston, פֶּשַׁע (*pešaʿ*), TWOT 2:741.

²⁹ Hamilton, *Handbook*, 290.

³⁰ Wenham, *Leviticus*, 233.

³¹ P. P. Jenson, *Graded Holiness: A Key to the Priestly Conception of the World*, JSOTSup 106 (Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1992), 204.

4. Scapegoat (16:20–22)

(1) *Goat Sent to the Wilderness (16:20–21)*

²⁰“When Aaron has finished making atonement for the Most Holy Place, the Tent of Meeting and the altar, he shall bring forward the live goat. ²¹He is to lay both hands on the head of the live goat and confess over it all the wickedness and rebellion of the Israelites—all their sins—and put them on the goat’s head. He shall send the goat away into the desert in the care of a man appointed for the task.

16:20–21 After atonement was made for the Most Holy Place, the tabernacle, and the altar, Aaron laid his hands on the live goat, and confessed over it the wickedness and rebellion of the Israelites. He then sent the goat into the desert under the supervision of a designated man.³²

Another unique feature of the Day of Atonement emerges here. Instead of placing a single hand upon the sacrificial animal as in earlier contexts (1:4; 3:2,8,13; 4:4,24,29,33), here Aaron as the high priest places *both* of his hands upon the live goat (16:21). Zohar argues that this intensification is significant because it indicates that intentional sins are being transferred.³³ Moreover, unlike the sacrificial procedures described in Leviticus 1–7, it is Aaron, not the individual worshiper, who places his hand on the animal. Aaron, as the representative for the nation, mediates for the entire nation, and sin will be dealt with in the most thoroughgoing way. This is the second occurrence of the term for confession in the Book of Leviticus (see 5:5), though we must assume that confession played a critical role in the concept of atonement for the Israelites. The root meaning of *ydh* is “to throw, cast” and may carry the sense “to reveal oneself.”³⁴ It is clear from the context that the confession is to pertain primarily to the comprehensive nature of Israel’s sinfulness and subsequent need of forgiveness, since three separate terms for sin are mentioned in Lev 16:21.³⁵

According to the Mishnah, the high priest said the following prayer as he placed his hands upon the scapegoat:

O God, thy people, the House of Israel, have committed iniquity, transgressed, and sinned before thee. O God, forgive, I pray, the iniquities and transgressions and sins which thy people, the House of Israel, have committed and trans-

³² According to tradition, quite a commotion occurred when the goat began his journey to the solitary place. The goat was greeted along the way by people who would pull his wool, spit at him, and prick him (*Barn.* 7:8; *m. Yoma* 6:4).

³³ N. Zohar, “Repentance and Purification: The Significance and Semantics of תְּשׁוּבָה in the Pentateuch,” *JBL* 107/4 (1988): 615, n. 31. G. Anderson also believes that advertent sins are atoned for on the Day of Atonement (“Sacrifice and Sacrificial Offerings (OT),” *ABD* 5:879.

³⁴ See chap. I, p. 118.

³⁵ The same terms all occur in Ps 51:2–3 [Hb. 4–5].

gressed and sinned before thee; as it is written in the law of thy servant Moses, *For on this day shall atonement be made for you to cleanse you: from all your sins shall ye be clean before the Lord* (Lev 16:30; Yoma 6:2).³⁶

Perhaps the theology of confession is best stated in Prov 28:13: “He who conceals his sins does not prosper, but whoever confesses and renounces them finds mercy.” Other formal confessions in the Bible occur in Neh 9:1–38; Dan 9:4–19. After confession was made, the live goat³⁷ was sent out into the wilderness.

(2) Scapegoat Bears the Nations' Iniquities (16:22)

22“The goat will carry on itself all their sins to a solitary place; and the man shall release it in the desert.

16:22 The goat carried away all the sins of the Israelites. The destiny of the goat was to a solitary place (*gēzērā*).³⁸ According to Jewish tradition the goat was subsequently thrown over a cliff to prevent it from returning to camp carrying the sins of Israel.³⁹

In the Day of Atonement ceremony the first animal pictures the means for atonement, the shedding of blood in the sacrificial death.⁴⁰ The scapegoat pictures the effect of atonement, the removal of guilt. What is accomplished in the scapegoat ritual is expressed by David in the Psalms: “As far as east is from west, so far has he removed our transgressions from us” (Ps 103:12). Both these aspects of this special day have their fulfillment in the sacrifice of Christ on the cross. The scapegoat ritual also may have been in Isaiah’s mind when he described the suffering of the Suffering Servant as bearing griefs and sins (Isa 53:4,6). The term *nāšāʾ* used in Lev 16:22 in reference to the scapegoat’s “bearing” iniquities is used in the same sense in Isa 53:4,12.⁴¹

5. Procedures after the Dispatch of the Scapegoat (16:23–28)

(1) Aaron Disrobes and Bathes (16:23–24a)

23“Then Aaron is to go into the Tent of Meeting and take off the linen garments he put on before he entered the Most Holy Place, and he is to leave them

³⁶ Danby, *The Mishnah*, 169.

³⁷ The term נָשָׂא, “carry,” is often used to refer to removal or bearing of sin.

³⁸ J. Smith suggests the area was so designated because it was cut off from water or habitation (נֶזֶרַת [gēzērā], *TWOT* 1:158).

³⁹ See *m. Yoma* 6:6.

⁴⁰ According to F. Laubach, the references to the blood of Christ in the NT derive particularly from the blood sacrifice on the Day of Atonement (see “Blood,” in *NIDNTT*, 1:223).

⁴¹ The same truth is expressed by a different verb in Isa 53:6.

there. ²⁴He shall bathe himself with water in a holy place and put on his regular garments.

16:23–24a After Aaron finished his work on the Day of Atonement, he took off his linen garments in the tabernacle, bathed himself with water, and put on his more ornate garments.

(2) Aaron Offers Burnt Offerings and the Fat of Sin Offerings (16:24b–25)

Then he shall come out and sacrifice the burnt offering for himself and the burnt offering for the people, to make atonement for himself and for the people. ²⁵He shall also burn the fat of the sin offering on the altar.

Next Aaron offered the burnt offering for himself and for the people (16:24b). The instruction for the burnt offering here following the atonement offerings indicates that the burnt offering functions here much like an invocation.⁴² After the offering was made the fat of the sin offering was disposed of (16:25).

(3) The Designated Man, Sending of Scapegoat, and Disposal of Sin Offerings (16:26–28)

²⁶“The man who releases the goat as a scapegoat must wash his clothes and bathe himself with water; afterward he may come into the camp. ²⁷The bull and the goat for the sin offerings, whose blood was brought into the Most Holy Place to make atonement, must be taken outside the camp; their hides, flesh and offal are to be burned up. ²⁸The man who burns them must wash his clothes and bathe himself with water; afterward he may come into the camp.

16:26–28 The man who released the scapegoat could only enter the camp after he washed his clothes and bathed in water (16:26). The blood of the bull and goat sin offerings were taken outside the camp, and their hides, flesh, and offal were burned (16:27; see 4:11–12,21). Before the person responsible for this burning was allowed to return to the camp, he had to wash his clothes and bathe in water (16:28), just as did the man who took the goat out of the camp.

6. The Day of Atonement Is to Be a Permanent Statute (16:29–34)

(1) People Humble Themselves and Do No Work (16:29–31)

²⁹This is to be a lasting ordinance for you: On the tenth day of the seventh month you must deny yourselves and not do any work—whether native-born or an alien living among you—³⁰because on this day atonement will be made for

⁴²See Levine, *Leviticus*, 107.

you, to cleanse you. Then, before the LORD, you will be clean from all your sins.
³¹It is a sabbath of rest, and you must deny yourselves; it is a lasting ordinance.

16:29–31 The Day of Atonement was to take place on the tenth day of the seventh month and was designated a permanent statute (*ḥuqqat ʿōlam*).⁴³ On this day the Israelites denied themselves and abstained from work (16:29,31).⁴⁴ The admonition to “deny yourselves” (Hb. *ʿnh*) has been traditionally understood to refer to fasting.⁴⁵ This is thus the only fast day in the Mosaic Law. The Mishnah, on the other hand, listed four additional activities from which the Jews were to abstain: (1) bathing, (2) use of oil on body, (3) wearing shoes, and (4) sexual intercourse.⁴⁶ The term “affliction” (NIV, “deny yourselves”) was used to describe the affliction the Israelites experienced from the Egyptians (Gen 15:13; Exod 1:11). From this demonstration of self-denial, as well as the juxtaposition of personal affliction and atonement in this context (16:29–30), we find that contrition is indispensable for forgiveness. One who hopes to obtain forgiveness of sins from God must repent by humbling himself, acknowledging his sin, and renouncing it (2 Sam 12:13; 1 Kgs 21:27–29; Ps 32).⁴⁷

Those who were forbidden from work on this day included not only every Israelite but also every alien or sojourner (16:29) who may have taken up residence among the Israelites. Those who were in this category came either from the Egyptians who joined themselves to the Israelites at the Exodus (Exod 12:38,48) or, later, from the occupants of Canaan who aligned themselves with the Israelites (see also Josh 9:3–15; Ruth 1; 1 Sam 21:8; 2 Sam 11:11). These aliens often served as day laborers or artisans (Deut 24:14–15; 29:10). They were required, as we see in this text, to adhere to certain Israelite laws (Lev 17:10–16; 18:26; Num 19:2–10; Deut 16:11,14), including the observance of the Sabbath (Exod 20:10; Deut 5:14) and, if circumcised, Passover (Exod 12:48–49; Num 9:14). They, like the Israelites, were expected to be obedient to the Lord.⁴⁸ These laws regarding the strangers prefigure the conversion of Gentiles in Ezra 2:59–60 = Neh 7:61–62; Ezra 6:21; Neh 10:28–29; Isa 56:3; Zech 2:11; 8:20–23 and in the New Testament (Rom 11), when the term *gēr* became equivalent of a proselyte or a convert.⁴⁹

⁴³ This phrase occurs in Leviticus in 3:17; 7:36; 10:9; 17:7; 23:14,21,31,41; 24:3.

⁴⁴ Verse 31 refers to the day as *שַׁבְּתֵי יְהוָה*, “a sabbath of rest.” This phrase should be understood as a superlative, thus placing particular stress on the abstention from work on this day (Levine, *Leviticus*, 110).

⁴⁵ Isa 58:3,10; Ps 35:13 (see R. Martin-Achard, *ענה* *ʿnh* II, *THAT* 2:342).

⁴⁶ See *m. Yoma* 8:1.

⁴⁷ J. Milgrom, “Forgiveness,” *EncJud* 6:1433–34.

⁴⁸ For an excellent discussion see D. Lieber, “Strangers and Gentiles,” *EncJud* 15:419–21.

⁴⁹ Josephus, *Ag. Ap.*, 2 § 29.

Atonement was made for all the sins of the Israelites (16:30).⁵⁰ Later Jewish tradition affirms the comprehensiveness of forgiveness on the Day of the Atonement.⁵¹ According to *m. Šebu.* 1:6–7, the blood of the goat taken into the Most Holy Place purified the sanctuary, and the scapegoat made atonement for all other sin. The mention of atonement being made for the people immediately following the preceding context, which focused on the purification of the tabernacle and the Most Holy Place, shows the close connection between people and the tabernacle and the effects of the people’s rebellion and uncleanness upon the sanctuary (see Lev 15:31).

(2) Summary of Day of Atonement (16:32–34)

³²The priest who is anointed and ordained to succeed his father as high priest is to make atonement. He is to put on the sacred linen garments ³³and make atonement for the Most Holy Place, for the Tent of Meeting and the altar, and for the priests and all the people of the community.

³⁴“This is to be a lasting ordinance for you: Atonement is to be made once a year for all the sins of the Israelites.”

And it was done, as the LORD commanded Moses.

16:32–34 After the detailed description of what was to be performed on this special day, the text summarizes the main events which were to take place. The priest was reminded that on this occasion only he was to wear the linen garments. The text then lists the five objects of atonement on this day in order of holiness: the Most Holy Place, the Tent of Meeting, the altar, the priests, and the people (16:33). Once again special emphasis is placed upon the continual observance of this ordinance, for three times it is called a *hūqqat ‘ōlam*, a “permanent statute” (16:29,31,34; NIV, “lasting ordinance”).

7. Conclusion of Day of Atonement

The Day of Atonement, the most solemn day of the year in Judaism, was also extremely important for the writers of the New Testament.⁵² As

⁵⁰ C. L. Feinberg, “Atonement, Day of,” 413, and J. S. Kselman, “Forgiveness,” *ABD* 2:833. According to Jewish tradition if an Israelite wronged a fellow Israelite, he must seek forgiveness from the individual through repentance and, if need be, compensation. According to this view the Day of Atonement would deal with sins against God (see *t. Yoma* 4:9; *m. Yoma* 9:8; cited by Milgrom, *Leviticus 1–16*, 1057). The significance of Lev 16:30 in Jewish tradition is illustrated from the fact that this verse is cited as the foundation for the confessions for the high priest (*m. Yoma* 3:8) and for the congregation (*m. Yoma* 6:2).

⁵¹ E. P. Sanders, *Paul and Palestinian Judaism* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1977), 182.

⁵² See L. Morris, “The Day of Atonement and the Work of Christ,” *RTR* 14 (1955): 13. In the NT the Day is called “the Fast” (Acts 27:9).

Rylaarsdam has stated: "The New Testament passion narratives, the Letter to the Hebrews, and the writings of Paul are all in various ways under its impact."⁵³ The fulfillment of the Day of Atonement in Christ is the theme of the Book of Hebrews. For the writer to the Hebrews the Day of Atonement was a type of the atoning work of Jesus Christ that emphasized the perfection of Christ and the ultimate inadequacy of the Old Testament ritual.⁵⁴ Or as Feinberg states, the aim of Hebrews is "to demonstrate the fulfilling finality of the central event of the Scriptures, the atonement of Christ on Calvary."⁵⁵

The sacrifice of the sin offerings on the Day of Atonement corresponds to the sacrifice of Jesus Christ on a number of levels. Only the high priest could enter behind the veil on this special day (16:2,29). He entered an earthly sanctuary annually, which indicated that the daily, weekly, and monthly offerings already outlined in Leviticus were not sufficient to remove sin.⁵⁶ Jesus Christ entered the heavenly sanctuary, of which the tabernacle was but a copy, once for all (Heb 9:23–24). He entered once for all into the Most Holy Place with his own blood as the sin offering (Heb 9:12). Indeed, Laubauch believes that Leviticus 16 is critical to the understanding of the concept of the blood of Christ in the New Testament. He observes that the blood of Jesus Christ (1 Pet 1:2), the blood of Jesus (Heb 10:19; 1 John 1:7), the blood of Christ (1 Cor 10:16; Eph 2:13; Heb 9:14), the blood of the Lord (1 Cor 11:27), the blood of the Lamb (Rev 7:14; 12:11), occupies the central position in New Testament thought. The meaning of the blood, he argues, is derived particularly from the sacrifices of the Day of Atonement (Lev 16).⁵⁷

When Christ died on the cross, the veil of the temple that separated the Holy Place from the Most Holy Place was torn in two (Matt 27:51; Mark 15:38; Luke 23:45). This veil, which could only be entered into on the Day of Atonement (Lev 16:1–2), corresponds to the tearing of Jesus' flesh, whereby not just the high priest once a year but all now have access to the very presence of God (see Heb 10:19–22).

Other limitations of the Day of Atonement, however, are implied in the narrative; for it is emphasized that this ordinance is to be a permanent statute, that is, it is to be repeated every year. Moreover, there is great emphasis given to the fact that the high priest had to make an offering for

⁵³J. C. Rylaarsdam, "Atonement, Day of," *IDB* 1:313 (see also Feinberg, "Atonement, Day of," 414).

⁵⁴C. F. Pfeiffer, "Atonement, Day of," *NBD* 107.

⁵⁵Feinberg, "Atonement, Day of," 416. This quotation is accurate as far as it goes, but should we not assert that the atonement of Christ is the central event of world history?

⁵⁶Pfeiffer, "Atonement, Day of," 106.

⁵⁷Laubauch, "Blood," 223.

himself (seven times in the text). By contrast, Jesus Christ was the sinless High Priest who presented himself as a sacrifice once for all (Heb 10:10).

The sending of the scapegoat outside the camp also was fulfilled in Christ's death in that he too was sent outside the camp (Jerusalem) and took away the sins of his people (Heb 13:12).⁵⁸ Although reference to Christ as the antitype of the scapegoat is not mentioned specifically in the New Testament, the correspondence seems to be warranted. Reference to Christ as "being made sin for us" (2 Cor 5:21), "becoming a curse for us" (Gal 3:13), and appearing "to take away sins" (1 John 3:5) have been proposed as allusions to the scapegoat ritual.⁵⁹ Moreover, Ben-Shammai argues that the role of the scapegoat is carried out by the Suffering Servant of Isaiah 53 who bears the sins of many.⁶⁰ Since the New Testament writers clearly understood Isaiah 53 as referring to Christ's crucifixion, we have grounds for seeing typological significance for the scapegoat. The scapegoat was clearly understood to be a type of Christ in the epistle of Barnabas.⁶¹

There also has been much discussion regarding the possible typological significance of the reference to Christ as the *hilastērion*, "mercy seat" (Rom 3:25). The Hebrew term for "mercy seat," *kāppōret*, was normally translated by the term *hilastērios* in the LXX.

L. Morris denies any typological significance in the use of *hilastērion* in Rom 3:25 for two reasons. First, the Greek word does not have the article as it does in Heb 9:25, a clear reference to the mercy seat. Second, he implies that it would be trivial for a piece of furniture to have this important typological significance.⁶² The first argument, the lack of the article with *hilastērion*, seems too subtle and underestimates the technical nature of this term, which represented the most holy item of the entire tabernacle complex.⁶³ As for the second, Morris seems to forget that Christ is the antitype to the Old Testament tabernacle (John 1:14), and thus the most important article of the tabernacle can indeed lend itself to a typological interpretation. There is nothing wrong with associating Christ with an object like the

⁵⁸ For other church fathers who saw the typical import of the scapegoat (see G. Bush, *Notes, Critical and Practical on the Book of Leviticus* [reprint, Grand Rapids: James & Klock, 1976], 152) and especially, S. Lyonnet and L. Sabourin, *Sin, Redemption, and Sacrifice: A Biblical and Patristic Study* (Rome: Biblical Institute Press, 1970), 273–89.

⁵⁹ G. A. F. Knight, *Leviticus*, DSB (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1981), 89; L. Morris, "The Day of Atonement and the Work of Christ," 9; and C. Schultz, מְזִבְחֵי הַכֹּפָרִים ('zāzēl), *TWOT* 2:658. For a different view see Feinberg, "The Scapegoat," 333.

⁶⁰ M. Ben-Shammai, מְזִבְחֵי הַכֹּפָרִים, *EM* 4: 234.

⁶¹ E. G. Hinson, *The Early Church Fathers* (Nashville: Broadman, 1980), 105–6.

⁶² Morris, "The Day of Atonement and the Work of Christ," 10, and "The Meaning of ἱλαστήριον in Romans III. 25," *NTS* 2 (1955/56): 33–43

⁶³ Moo argues that there are grammatical grounds for the article's omission (D. Moo, *Romans 1–8* [Chicago: Moody, 1991], 234).

mercy seat. After all, Peter calls Christian believers a spiritual house (1 Pet 2:5). Morris's alternative is to interpret as "the means of propitiation."⁶⁴

D. Moo, on the other hand, argues that the reference to the mercy seat could not be Christ in Rom 3:25 because this would assume too much familiarity with the Old Testament Scriptures among the Roman Christians.⁶⁵ Given the fact that the Corinthian believers would have relatively the same level of Old Testament knowledge and yet Paul does not hesitate to make applications to their lives from the Old Testament, this argument also does bear up under scrutiny. In fact, Paul stated that the Old Testament revelation had been written down for the Corinthian church (1 Cor 10:11)! Moreover, the Romans must have had some awareness of the Jewish law, otherwise Romans 7 would be incomprehensible.⁶⁶

The use of this technical term *hilastērion* warrants the assertion that Paul is referring to Christ as the Old Testament mercy seat.⁶⁷ In the person of Jesus Christ we find the locus of propitiation. The mercy seat is then a type of Christ since the temple object was a mere shadow of the coming heavenly reality (Heb 10:1).

⁶⁴ L. Morris, *The Apostolic Preaching of the Cross* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1955), 172.

⁶⁵ Moo, *Romans 1-8*, 234.

⁶⁶ The positions taken by Morris and Moo seem to overlook the fact that the OT was the theological context for the NT. In interpreting the NT, the theological background from the OT is vital; Greek usage outside the LXX is of less value. The Ethiopian eunuch was not reading Homer; he was reading from the prophet Isaiah (Acts 8:28)!

⁶⁷ L. Goppelt, *Typos: The Typological Interpretation of the Old Testament in the New* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1982), 148-49, and F. Büchsel, "ἱλαστήριον," *TDNT* 3:321.

IV. LAWS OF HOLINESS (17:1–26:46)

1. Regulations Regarding Sacrifices and Blood (17:1–16)
 - (1) All Sacrifices Brought to the Tabernacle (17:2–9)
 - (2) Eating of Blood Prohibited (17:10–14)
 - (3) Carcasses and Contamination (17:15–16)
 - (4) Conclusion
2. Sexual Prohibitions (Lev 18:1–30)
 - (1) Israel Must Follow God's Laws (18:1–5)
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 - (3) Eat Peace Offerings before the Third Day (19:5–8)
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 - (5) Love Your Neighbor as Yourself (19:11–18)
 - (6) Prohibition of Mixtures (19:19)
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 - (9) Don't Imitate Pagans (19:26–28)
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 - (3) Possessing the Land (20:22–27)
 - (4) Conclusion
5. Regulations for Priests (Lev 21:1–22:33)
 - (1) Priest's Family Life (21:1–15)
 - (2) Priests with Defects (21:16–24)
 - (3) Eating within Priest's Family (22:1–16)
 - (4) Inappropriate Sacrifices (22:17–25)
 - (5) Appropriate Sacrifices (22:26–30)
 - (6) Concluding Exhortation (22:31–33)
 - (7) Conclusion

6. Appointed Festivals (23:1–44)
 - (1) Introduction to Festivals (23:1–2)
 - (2) Sabbath (23:3)
 - (3) Passover and Unleavened Bread (23:4–8)
 - (4) Firstfruits (23:9–14)
 - (5) Feast of Weeks (23:15–22)
 - (6) Feast of Trumpets (23:23–25)
 - (7) Day of Atonement (23:26–32)
 - (8) Feast of Tabernacles (23:33–44)
 - (9) Conclusion
7. Oil, Bread, Sanctuary (24:1–9)
 - (1) Lamps to Burn Continually (24:1–4)
 - (2) Twelve Cakes on the Golden Table (24:5–9)
 - (3) Conclusion
8. A Blasphemer Is Stoned (24:10–23)
 - (1) Blasphemer Placed in Custody (24:10–12)
 - (2) The Law of Blasphemy (24:13–16)
 - (3) Principle of Justice (24:17–22)
 - (4) Blasphemer Put to Death (24:23)
 - (5) Conclusion
9. The Sabbath Year and the Year of Jubilee (25:1–55)
 - (1) Introduction to Sabbath Rest and Jubilee (25:2–22)
 - (2) The Redemption of Property (25:23–38)
 - (3) The Redemption of a Slave (25:39–55)
 - (4) Conclusion
10. Blessings and Cursings (26:1–46)
 - (1) Idolatry and Sabbath (26:1–2)
 - (2) Blessings for Obedience (26:3–13)
 - (3) Cursings for Disobedience (26:14–39)
 - (4) God Will Remember (26:40–46)
 - (5) Conclusion

IV. LAWS OF HOLINESS (17:1–26:46)

It has long been recognized that Leviticus 17 begins a new section that addresses the everyday affairs and ethics of the Israelite community. And yet, the preceding contents of Leviticus 1–16 are presumed throughout.¹

¹E. J. Young, *An Introduction to Old Testament*, rev. ed. (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1964), 78.

In scholarly literature Leviticus 17–26 has been called the Holiness Code because of its demand for holiness on the part of the Israelites (19:2; 20:7,8,26; 21:6,8,15,23; 22:9,16,32).² As will be illustrated throughout this section, holiness addresses every aspect of life. That such an ethical or practical section would immediately follow the legislation for atonement is not surprising since this is often the pattern in biblical revelation, particularly in the New Testament (see Introduction). Although the dominant theme in Leviticus 1–16 might be encapsulated by the word *atonement*, the dominant word for the rest of the book is *holiness*. In the Old Testament as in the New Testament, a love for holiness and a desire to obey God are evidences of spiritual life.³ Holiness is especially to be demonstrated in relationship to one's fellow man. Leviticus 1–16 deals primarily with the issue of the proper relationship that is to exist between Israel and God; that is, how Israel is to love God with all its soul, mind, and strength. Leviticus 17–26, on the other hand, focuses primarily on how man is to remain in fellowship with his brother. Leviticus 17–26 is thus a commentary on the Golden Rule, "You shall love your neighbor as yourself."⁴

Whereas the contents of the previous sections were addressed to Moses or Aaron, beginning with Leviticus 17 the Lord addresses the community at large. The only exception is the priestly instructions of 21:1–22:33. Yet even here the theme of holiness for the nation is still dominant because the holiness of the priesthood was vital in maintaining the holiness of the nation at large.⁵

Another distinct feature of Leviticus 17–26 is that God addresses the nation in the first person, particularly in the phrase "I am the LORD your God." These words link the revelation of the divine will to the covenant at Mount Sinai (Exod 20:2a),⁶ the introduction to the laws of Israel. The expression also calls for a divine urgency on the part of Israel to comply to these commands. The phrase "I am the LORD your God" is "the final, most complete, and sovereign sentence of all scripture, without exception."⁷

The section contains ten individual units. This division is based both on

² A. Klostermann is credited with naming Leviticus 17–26 *Das Heilig-Keitsgesetz*, "The Law of Holiness."

³ W. Wiersbe, *Be Holy* (Wheaton: Victor, 1979) 77.

⁴ G. A. F. Knight, *Leviticus*, DSB (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1981), 100.

⁵ B. A. Levine, "Leviticus, Book of," *ABD* 4:316.

⁶ The second half of the introduction to the Decalogue, "who brought you out of the land of Egypt," is also prominent in this section (19:36; 22:33; 25:38; 26:13; see also 11:45).

⁷ G. Davies, "Leviticus," *IDB* 3:121. God does not refer to himself in the first person in Leviticus 27.

the formula “The LORD said to Moses” on eight occasions (Lev 17:1; 18:1; 19:1; 20:1; 21:1; 23:1; 24:1; 25:1)⁸ and a clear change of content from 24:10, which addresses the treatment of the blasphemer, and 26:1, which begins the final section on blessings and cursings. The section appropriately begins with instruction regarding proper worship (17:1–9), and it clearly concludes with the blessings and cursings (26:3–46) Israel could expect based on their obedience or lack of obedience to God’s instructions. This arrangement is identical to the collection of laws in Deuteronomy, which begin with proper worship (Deut 12) and end with an epilogue that includes blessings and cursings (Deut 28–30). Otherwise, the arrangement of the laws does not necessarily follow a logical order. The same is true of other ancient Near Eastern law codes and of the other great law collections in the Bible (e.g., Exod 20–23; Deut 12–26).⁹

1. Regulations Regarding Sacrifices and Blood (17:1–16)

At first glance Leviticus 17 appears to be legislation like Leviticus 11. The main issue is not the mere eating of food, however, but the sacrificing of animals to demons (17:7). Thus the focus is not on dietary matters but rather the worship of God, particularly the violation of the First and Second Commandments by the commission of idolatry.¹⁰ The chapter is divided into three units based on content: All Sacrifices Brought to the Tabernacle (17:2–9), Eating of Blood Prohibited (17:10–14), and Carcasses and Contamination (17:15–16).¹¹

(1) All Sacrifices Brought to the Tabernacle (17:1–9)

¹The LORD said to Moses, ²“Speak to Aaron and his sons and to all the Israelites and say to them: ‘This is what the LORD has commanded: ³Any Israelite who sacrifices an ox, a lamb or a goat in the camp or outside of it ⁴instead of bringing it to the entrance to the Tent of Meeting to present it as an offering to

⁸ Lev 21:1 uses the verb אָמַר instead of the customary דָּבַר in the announcement formula. Although Lev 22:1 does have the standard formula, the section 21:1–22:33 is regarded as one unit since the recipients of the two units are the same. The two introductory formulae introduce the section containing the instruction to the priests instead of the congregation as a whole.

⁹ See O. Eissfeldt, *The Old Testament: An Introduction* (New York: Harper & Row, 1965), 234.

¹⁰ W. C. Kaiser, *Old Testament Ethics* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1983), 118.

¹¹ B. J. Schwartz divides the chapter into five sections (vv. 3–7; 8–9; 10–12; 13–14; 15–16). According to this division, the center section (17:10–12) regarding the partaking of blood states the primary principle of the passage as 17:3–9 lead up to it and 13–16 derive from it and implement it (“‘Profane’ Slaughter and the Integrity of the Priestly Code,” *Society of Biblical Literature Annual Meeting*, 1995, 1–2).

the LORD in front of the tabernacle of the LORD—that man shall be considered guilty of bloodshed; he has shed blood and must be cut off from his people.⁵ This is so the Israelites will bring to the LORD the sacrifices they are now making in the open fields. They must bring them to the priest, that is, to the LORD, at the entrance to the Tent of Meeting and sacrifice them as fellowship offerings.⁶ The priest is to sprinkle the blood against the altar of the LORD at the entrance to the Tent of Meeting and burn the fat as an aroma pleasing to the LORD.⁷ They must no longer offer any of their sacrifices to the goat idols to whom they prostitute themselves. This is to be a lasting ordinance for them and for the generations to come.⁸

⁸“Say to them: ‘Any Israelite or any alien living among them who offers a burnt offering or sacrifice⁹ and does not bring it to the entrance to the Tent of Meeting to sacrifice it to the LORD—that man must be cut off from his people.

PROHIBITION AGAINST SACRIFICE AWAY FROM THE TABERNACLE (17:1–4). 17:2–4 The instruction of Leviticus 17 concerns the prohibition of sacrificing fellowship offerings in a place other than the tabernacle. The man who committed such an offense or who made an offering away from the tabernacle would be cut off from his people (17:1–4,9). Many commentators argue that the legislation given in Leviticus 17 pertained to the time when Israel was in the wilderness and that what is actually being prohibited is any profane or nonsacrificial slaughter.¹² The legislation given in Deut 12:15, it is argued, superseded this temporary legislation allowing for profane slaughter since it addresses the Israelites in the plains of Moab just before they invade the promised land.

In the context of Leviticus 17, however, the offering of sacrifices is explicit (17:5,7,8). Indeed the technical term for sacrificing an animal, *šḥṭ*, is the term used in v. 3 (see 1:5; 3:2; 4:4; 14:13). This word never refers to the mere killing of an animal when it occurs in sacrificial contexts.¹³ In addition, there is no suggestion that this legislation will be authoritative for little more than a generation. On the contrary, the law is described as a lasting ordinance (17:7). What is at issue is not the prohibition of profane slaughter but the sacrificing of animals to the goat idol rather than to God.¹⁴

Failure to bring a sacrificial animal to the tabernacle resulted in the individual being “considered guilty of bloodshed” (17:4). The verb translated “considered” (*hšb*) normally means “to think” or “to account,” but

¹² See M. D. Cassuto, “אֲשֶׁר יִשְׁחַט,” *EM* 2:883; M. H. Segal *The Pentateuch: Its Composition and Its Authorship and Other Biblical Studies* (Jerusalem: At the Magnes Press, 1967), 52, and V. P. Hamilton, *Handbook on the Pentateuch* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1982), 300.

¹³ See B. A. Levine, *Leviticus*, JPS (Philadelphia: The Jewish Publication Society, 1989), 113.

¹⁴ Y. Kaufmann, *The Religion of Israel* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1960), 182.

it has an attested use of “be reckoned” or “be imputed” (Num 18:27,30; Ps 106:31; Prov 27:14).¹⁵ The idea may be that blood guiltiness is “imputed” to the man.¹⁶ The seriousness of this offense is underlined by the fact that the crime is called shedding blood (*dām šāpak*), a phrase used to describe the murder of a human being in Gen 9:6. The penalty for this offense also was severe, for it resulted in the violator being “cut off from his people.” As noted in Lev 7:20, this phrase probably refers to a premature death caused by a direct judgment of God against the perpetrator.¹⁷

PEACE OFFERINGS BROUGHT BEFORE THE LORD (17:5–7). **17:5–7** Verses 5–7 provide the reason for the previous regulation regarding the proper location for sacrifice. This connection is established by the introductory phrase *lēmaʿan ʾāšer*, literally, “in order that” (17:5). Thus the legislation sought to prevent sacrifices being made to goat idols instead of to the Lord.¹⁸ The word translated “goat idols” or “goat demons” is the Hebrew word *šāʿîr*, which normally is used for the male goat of the sin offering (Lev 4; 16) but was also used to refer to particular idols associated with apostasy in the time of Jeroboam (2 Chr 11:15) and Manasseh (2 Kgs 23:8).¹⁹ These idols may have been goat shaped, and Eichrodt argues that they were the Semitic counterparts to Greek satyrs, which were considered to have power over fertility.²⁰ Such an offense would be a violation of the First Commandment (Exod 20:3; Deut 5:7), which explains why the supreme punishment was meted out in Lev 17:4. The offense was equivalent to spiritual adultery (17:7). The Hebrew term *zānâ* literally refers to “going astray” and is most often employed in reference to an unfaithful wife.²¹ The term is used to describe such offenses as the apostasy of the worship of Molech and of consulting spiritists (Lev 20:5–6). Metaphorically the term applies to Israel’s unfaithfulness to the

¹⁵ BDB, 363 (see Lev 7:18). G. Von Rad sees in the use of this term a reference to the role of the priests in announcing final decisions in a spiritual matter; thus the possible background for Luke’s statement “he went down to his house justified” (Luke 18:14) reflected an official priestly announcement (*Old Testament Theology* [New York: Harper & Row, 1962], 1:379)

¹⁶ See K. Seybold, *חֲשָׁבָה ḥāšab*, *TDOT* 5:234.

¹⁷ G. J. Wenham, *The Book of Leviticus*, NICOT (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1979), 242–43.

¹⁸ Some have suggested that the origin of this idolatrous worship should be traced to Israel’s exposure to this god in Egypt (W. C. Kaiser, “Leviticus,” *IB* [Nashville: Abingdon, 1994], 1:1118).

¹⁹ R. L. Harris, *שָׂעִיר (šāʿîr)*, *TWOT* 2:881.

²⁰ W. Eichrodt, *Theology of the Old Testament*, OTL (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1961), 2:223–24. N. H. Snaith believes these beings were rain gods (“The Meaning of *שָׂעִיר*,” *VT* 25 [1975]: 115–18).

²¹ For a comprehensive treatment of unfaithfulness in both its literal and metaphorical sense throughout the Bible, see R. C. Ortlund, Jr., *Whoredom: God’s Unfaithful Wife in Biblical Theology* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1996).

Lord. The figurative use of adultery is common in the Bible (Exod 34:15–16; Deut 31:16; Judg 2:17; 8:27,33; Isa 57:3; Jer 2:20; 3:1; 5:7; Ezek 6:9; 16:15,16,17; 20:30; 23:3,19) and is the theme of the Book of Hosea (1:1; 2:5; 4:12,15; 9:1).²²

The proper procedure for the sacrifice of a peace offering is given in v. 6. The sprinkling of the blood against the altar and the burning of the fat are the primary distinguishing procedures of the peace offerings in Leviticus 3. The sprinkling of the blood against the altar contrasts with the shedding of the blood to the ground (17:4). It was permissible for mankind to eat meat provided the blood, which belongs to God, was drained (Gen 9:3–4). The proper place of the blood in sacrifice was to be for atonement.

BURNT OFFERINGS BROUGHT BEFORE THE LORD (17:8–9). 17:8–9

These two verses restate the principle regarding the location for the presentation of the offerings. All sacrificial offerings had to be brought to the tabernacle, that is, before the Lord (17:3–5). The law applied not only to the Israelite but also to the alien who may have lived among the Israelites at any time.

The word for alien, *gēr*, was used in the Old Testament often to refer to individual Israelites (Gen 12:10; 19:9; 20:1; 21:23–24; 26:3; 32:5[4]; 47:4,9) and the nation of Israelites (Exod 22:20; Deut 10:17–19). The alien who lived in the land of Israel after the conquest may have in fact been what we would call a proselyte. As such he was subject to many of the same Old Testament laws and regulations as the Israelite.²³ The impact of not being in the land made such an impression on Moses that he chose this root to name his son, *geršōm*, “Gershom.”

(2) *Eating of Blood Prohibited (17:10–14)*

¹⁰“Any Israelite or any alien living among them who eats any blood—I will set my face against that person who eats blood and will cut him off from his people. ¹¹For the life of a creature is in the blood, and I have given it to you to make atonement for yourselves on the altar; it is the blood that makes atonement for one’s life. ¹²Therefore I say to the Israelites, “None of you may eat blood, nor may an alien living among you eat blood.”

¹³“Any Israelite or any alien living among you who hunts any animal or bird that may be eaten must drain out the blood and cover it with earth, ¹⁴because the life of every creature is its blood. That is why I have said to the

²² P. Budd, *Leviticus*, NCBC (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1996), 246.

²³ See Exod 12:19,48–49; 20:10; 23:12; Lev 17:10,12,13; 18:26; 20:12; Num 9:14; 19:10; 35:15; Deut 31:12; Lev 16:29; Deut 1:16; 16:14; 24:17, 19; 27:19; 31:12 (D. Kellermann, גֵּר *gār*, TDOT 2:443–49; R. Martin-Achard, גֵּר *gār*, THAT 1:411; and H. G. Stigers, גֵּר [gār], TWOT 1:156).

Israelites, “You must not eat the blood of any creature, because the life of every creature is its blood; anyone who eats it must be cut off.”

LIFE IS IN THE BLOOD (17:10–11). **17:10–11** Not only is the Israelite and the stranger not to eat of any sacrifice made to demons, he must also not eat blood. The violation of this offense is just as serious as the previous one, for the violator was cut off from his people (17:10).²⁴ The reason for this prohibition is stated: “for the life²⁵ of a creature is in the blood”²⁶ and is the means of atonement (17:11). Blood and life are associated as lexical pairs and thus understood as parallel in meaning in Ugaritic and Akkadian as well as in Hebrew.²⁷ Because of this close association blood is considered the source of life,²⁸ and because blood represents life (Gen 9:4; Deut 12:23), it may expiate for life.²⁹ Because the life of a creature is in the blood, blood makes atonement for one’s life. One life is sacrificed for another. The shedding of substitutionary blood on the altar makes atonement, since the blood of the innocent victim was given for the life of the one who has sinned.³⁰

Most of the occurrences of the word “blood” in the Old Testament indicate a death by violence.³¹ The focal point of the mention of blood was thus not of blood flowing through the veins but rather on blood shed, which indicated that life had ended.³² This has implications for the occurrence of blood in the New Testament as well. As Harrison states:

In the Old Testament, atonement for human sin was obtained by the death of an acceptable substitute, rather than by its life, and this emphasis, which is basic to the Old Covenant, is carried over into the New Testament with specific reference to the work of Jesus Christ in the New Covenant. ... The sacrificial blood is associated with the death of the Savior (Heb 9:14), and the author of Hebrews makes it plain that the blood is associated with death rather than life (12:24). It seems evident, therefore, that sacrifices were effica-

²⁴ The phrase “I will set my face against that person” occurs also in Lev 20:3,6; 26:17; Ezek 14:8; 15:7 (Budd, *Leviticus*, 247).

²⁵ Hb. חַיָּוִת refers to “life-essence” or merely “life” (J. Milgrom, “A Prolegomenon to Leviticus 17:11,” *JBL* 90 [1971]: 150). It is used of both humans and animals.

²⁶ The preposition בְּ in the phrase בְּחַיָּוִת is a *beth essentiae* (Milgrom, “A Prolegomenon to Leviticus 17:11,” 149).

²⁷ S. D. Sperling, “Blood,” *ABD* 1: 761.

²⁸ H. Z. Hirshberg, בְּחַיָּוִת, *EM* 2:657.

²⁹ Thus Rashi (Levine, *Leviticus*, 115). The Greeks also believed blood to be the life force (F. Laubach, “Blood, Sprinkle, Strangled,” *NIDNTT* 1:220).

³⁰ J. R. W. Stott, *The Cross of Christ* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity, 1986), 138.

³¹ Of the 362 occurrences of בְּחַיָּוִת, “blood,” 203 refer to the occurrence of a violent death. This may be illustrated in the NT in Rom 5:9–10 (L. Morris, “Blood,” *NBD*, 145).

³² L. Morris, “The Biblical Use of the Term ‘Blood,’” *JTS* 3 (1952): 216–27; “The Biblical Use of the Term ‘Blood,’” *JTS* 6 (1955): 77–82; Stott, *The Cross of Christ*, 138.

cious through the death of the victim, and that blood indicates life given up in death, not life set free.³³

This verse is one of the clearest texts in the Bible describing the idea of expiation through substitution. God accepts the blood of the animal, which is the life of the animal, in place of human blood and human life.³⁴ In Jewish tradition atonement is possible only through the shedding of blood.³⁵ Since blood is sacrosanct, it is not available for human use; it belongs only to God, the giver of life. This evaluation of blood in the Old Testament was unique among the cultures of the ancient world.³⁶

BLOOD IS TO BE Poured OUT (17:12–14). 17:12–14 The prohibition against eating blood pertains to animals killed by hunting. Hunting was carried out by various means in the Old Testament, including the use of arrows, lances, swords, clubs, and pits and nets (Job 41:26–29; Isa 24:17–18; 51:20; Ezek 19:4,8; Pss 7:15[MT 16]; 140:5 [MT 6]). In addition numerous devices were used for catching birds (Job 18:8–10).³⁷ Because clean foods included wild game, we must assume that these animals were caught in the hunt (Deut 14:5). Hunting as sport was the privilege only of royal figures and nobles, as is illustrated in Assyrian, Phoenician, and Egyptian art.³⁸ Before a clean animal could be eaten, the blood had to be drained³⁹ and covered with earth because the life is in the blood. Covering the blood with soil may prevent the blood from being exposed to any subsequent defilement.⁴⁰ Failure to adhere to this law was to result in a premature death, for “anyone who eats it must be cut off” (17:14).

(3) *Carcasses and Contamination (17:15–16)*

15“Anyone, whether native-born or alien, who eats anything found dead or torn by wild animals must wash his clothes and bathe with water, and he will be ceremonially unclean till evening; then he will be clean. **16**But if he does not wash his clothes and bathe himself, he will be held responsible.”

³³R. K. Harrison, “Blood,” *ZPEB* 1:627.

³⁴See N. Kiuchi, *The Purification Offering in the Priestly Literature*, JSOTSup 56 (Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1987), 107; Levine, *Leviticus*, 115.

³⁵See *b. Yoma* 5a; cf *b. Zebah* 6a; *Menah* 93b; Heb 9:22 (J. E. Hartley, *Leviticus*, WBC [Dallas: Word, 1992], 273–74).

³⁶D. J. McCarthy, S. J., “The Symbolism of Blood and Sacrifice,” *JBL* 88 (1969): 166–76, and “Further Notes on the Symbolism of Blood and Sacrifice,” *JBL* 92 (1973): 205–10. The ancient Greeks did recognize the critical importance of blood for maintaining physical life (F. Laubach, ἀμῶ, *NIDNTT* 1:220).

³⁷A. Van Selms, “Hunting,” *ISBE* 2:783.

³⁸Herod the Great was also known as a hunter (L. E. Toombs, “Hunting,” *IDB* 2:663).

³⁹The Hb. root ךָשַׁף is the same verb used for pouring out the blood in the sin offering (Exod 29:1; Lev 4:7,18,25,30,34).

⁴⁰Budd, *Leviticus*, 249. Uncovered blood “cries out to God” (Gen 4:10).

17:15–16 If an Israelite⁴¹ or an alien ate an animal that had died naturally or had been killed by other beasts,⁴² he had to wash his clothes and be unclean until evening (17:15). The blood of a dead animal would certainly have coagulated; thus it would be impossible to avoid consuming blood if one were to eat of an animal that had died. This law is identical to Lev 11:40. The violator of this law bore his own guilt or responsibility (17:16).

(4) *Conclusion*

Given the preeminent role of the explicitly stated significance of blood in substitution and atonement in Lev 17:11, this passage is foundational for understanding the New Testament references to the blood of Christ providing atonement (Heb 9:22). But while the Old Testament sacrifices were only shadows, the substance was Christ (Heb 10:4).⁴³ Although this chapter is perhaps the strongest biblical statement prohibiting the consumption of blood, in the New Testament this is precisely what believers are invited to do, albeit in symbolic fashion. This difference may in some way account for how the early church, which was making the transition from God working through a specific nation of people to people of all nationalities, struggled with the application of Israel's legislative laws. For example, in Acts 15 the Jerusalem Council decided it best to recommend that Gentile converts adhere to some of the blood laws of Leviticus 17.⁴⁴ The foundation for the application of some of the levitical laws to Gentile believers is laid in Leviticus 17 (17:8,10,12–13), where aliens and strangers who identified themselves with the Israelites were admonished to heed these laws along with the native Israelite.

The laws of Leviticus 17 were also important for Judaism, for the prohibition against eating the blood became an important aspect of “Kosher” food. For food to be kosher the animal's carotid artery was cut, and the animal had to bleed for a designated amount of time. Moreover, “Jehovah's Witnesses” refuse to receive blood transfusions based upon the comments about blood in Leviticus 17.⁴⁵

⁴¹ Lit., “native born.” The noun פְּרָאִי is related to the root פָּרַא, meaning “to arise, rise up.” Thus the term refers to one who arises from his own native soil (G. Van Groningen, פְּרָאִי [zārah], *TWOT* 1:251–52).

⁴² Animals that die a natural death are frequently coupled with animals killed by other animals in the Bible (Lev 7:24; 11:39,40; 22:8; Deut 14:21; Ezek 4:14; 44:31).

⁴³ Stott, *The Cross of Christ*, 138.

⁴⁴ Some believers continued to abstain from blood as late as the third century A.D. (Wenham, *Leviticus*, 247).

⁴⁵ E. S. Gerstenberger, *Leviticus*, OTL (Louisville: John Knox, 1993), 243–44.

2. Sexual Prohibitions (18:1–30)

Leviticus 18 offers more specific legislation governing Israel's behavior. The observance of these laws would enable the Israelites to be a holy nation before God. The chapter is closely related to Leviticus 19–20, which addresses the moral laws of the Israelite community. Chapters 20 and 21 address regulations governing the priests. Many insist that Leviticus 18–20 be viewed as a unit, with 18:1–5 providing the general introduction and 20:22–26 forming the conclusion by calling Israel to holiness.⁴⁶ A unifying expression in Leviticus 18–20 is the repeated phrase "I am the LORD your God," which occurs almost fifty times in these three chapters.⁴⁷ Chapter 18 addresses Israel with prohibitions ("you shall not") while Leviticus 19 addresses the people ("you shall"). Thus Israel's responsibilities are stressed both negatively and positively.⁴⁸ That the laws are to apply particularly to their future life in Canaan is emphasized (18:3,24,25,28).

Leviticus 18 contains a series of commands primarily dealing with sexual prohibitions and incest. The chapter is the most complete and systematic treatment of these subjects in the Bible.⁴⁹ The section begins with the standard divine announcement formula, "The LORD said to Moses, 'Speak to the Israelites and say to them'" (18:1–2). The chapter is a unity, as is indicated by the references to pagan practices at the beginning (18:3) and the end of the chapter (18:24–30). Seven times in the introduction and conclusion the Israelites are commanded not to act as the other nations (see 18:3[2x],24,26,27,29,30). Also at certain strategic moments in the chapter the identification formula "I am the LORD [your God]" occurs (18:4,6,21). This self-identifying formula accentuates the fact that these commandments come from God, and God expects the Israelites to obey with great care, since it is the Lord's authority that stands behind these instructions. The phrase may also be a reminder of all that God had done for Israel and how he had chosen them.⁵⁰ Of the sexual sins mentioned in this chapter, incest and bestiality were generally condemned (with some exceptions) in Mesopotamian and Hittite civilizations,

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, 245.

⁴⁷ Kaiser, "Leviticus," 1124.

⁴⁸ Hamilton, *Handbook*, 301.

⁴⁹ Lev 20 repeats much of the information in Lev 18, and Deut 27:2–23 addresses some of the same issues (Levine, *Leviticus*, 118).

⁵⁰ Wenham, *Leviticus*, 251.

although homosexuality was not.⁵¹ Eichrodt is certainly correct when he argues that it was in the sexual realm particularly that the Israelites were aware of their differences with the Canaanites.⁵²

(1) Israel Must Follow God's Laws (18:1–5)

¹The LORD said to Moses, ²“Speak to the Israelites and say to them: ‘I am the LORD your God. ³You must not do as they do in Egypt, where you used to live, and you must not do as they do in the land of Canaan, where I am bringing you. Do not follow their practices. ⁴You must obey my laws and be careful to follow my decrees. I am the LORD your God. ⁵Keep my decrees and laws, for the man who obeys them will live by them. I am the LORD.

18:1–5 Leviticus 18:1–5 offers a general admonition to the Israelites to live holy lives by following God’s commandments and consequently not to engage in pagan practices.⁵³ This legislation sets boundaries for the nation in order that they may be holy. In addition Leviticus 18 defines specific boundaries for the family. This instruction is critical if the promise that Abraham was to be the ancestor of a great and mighty nation was to be fulfilled. A nation cannot exist if the family unit is not well defined, for the family is the foundation of society.⁵⁴ Sexual impulse is a potent desire. If gratified incestuously within the family, it blurs family lines and leads to the destruction of the family unit.⁵⁵ Proper response to these laws and the other legislations handed down to the Israelites holds the promise of providing an abundant life (18:5).⁵⁶ The latter verse has been interpreted as rewarding salvation to those who keep the commandments, a view in conflict with the doctrine of justification by faith. But VanGemeren has deduced the following truths when Lev 18:1–5 is read in con-

⁵¹In the Egyptian *Book of the Dead* there appears to be guilt associated with homosexuality, although in other texts the act is not condemned (M. Pope, “Homosexuality,” *IDBS*, 416). See also H. Hoffner, “Incest, Sodomy and Bestiality in the Ancient Near East,” in *Orient and Occident. Essays Presented to Cyrus H. Gordon on the Occasion of His Sixty-fifth Birthday*, ed. H. A. Hoffner [Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchener, 1973], 81–90).

⁵²Eichrodt, *Theology of the Old Testament*, 1:152, n. 1.

⁵³The phrase “Do not follow their practices” (NIV) is literally “Do not walk by their statutes” (18:3). The metaphor of life as a journey is a common one in the Bible (see Lev 26:3; Deut 5:33; Ps 1:0; Matt 7:13–14; John 8:12; Rom 13:13 (Wenham, *Leviticus*, 252, n. 15). God’s commandments direct a person down the right path and show the way a person should walk (see 1 Kgs 3:14; 9:4; Prov 2:20 [Levine, *Leviticus*, 119, 208, n. 5]).

⁵⁴Levine, *Leviticus*, xv.

⁵⁵T. Frymer-Kensky, “Law and Philosophy: The Case of Sex in the Bible,” *Semeia* 45 (1989): 92, 95.

⁵⁶P. House argues convincingly that in light of the broader context, where conditions for possessing the land are discussed (18:24–25), the abundant life alluded to in 18:5 should be understood as referring to the “blessed-filled living in the promised land” (*Old Testament Theology* [Downers Grove: InterVarsity, 1998], 149).

junction with Deut 30:1–21: (1) depraved human beings are justified only by the grace of regeneration; (2) justification is always by faith; (3) God has always demanded that his children love him wholeheartedly; and (4) the Law of God is always internalized by the people of faith.⁵⁷ The phrase “the man who obeys them will live by them” should thus be viewed as promising a meaningful, secure life for those who are faithful to God and who exhibit their faithfulness by obedience to the Law. Hence, the verse pertains more to sanctification than justification, as the repeated phrase “I am the LORD your God” makes plain (18:2,20). This phrase indicates that the Israelites already have a relationship with God; they are not called to obey in order to enter or initiate this relationship. This law provides the legal background for statements found in Ezekiel (Ezek 18:9; 20:11,13,21).⁵⁸

(2) *Sexual Regulations and the Family (18:6–18)*

6“No one is to approach any close relative to have sexual relations. I am the LORD.

7“Do not dishonor your father by having sexual relations with your mother. She is your mother; do not have relations with her.

8“Do not have sexual relations with your father’s wife; that would dishonor your father.

9“Do not have sexual relations with your sister, either your father’s daughter or your mother’s daughter, whether she was born in the same home or elsewhere.

10“Do not have sexual relations with your son’s daughter or your daughter’s daughter; that would dishonor you.

11“Do not have sexual relations with the daughter of your father’s wife, born to your father; she is your sister.

12“Do not have sexual relations with your father’s sister; she is your father’s close relative.

13“Do not have sexual relations with your mother’s sister, because she is your mother’s close relative.

14“Do not dishonor your father’s brother by approaching his wife to have sexual relations; she is your aunt.

15“Do not have sexual relations with your daughter-in-law. She is your son’s wife; do not have relations with her.

16“Do not have sexual relations with your brother’s wife; that would dis-

⁵⁷ W. VanGemeren, “Response to Wayne G. Strickland,” in *Law and Gospel: Five Views* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1993), 284–85.

⁵⁸ Paul’s argument that the keeping of the law is the result of justification rather than the means of justification is harmonious with what is stated in Lev 18:5 (see Wenham, *Leviticus*, 261; M. Greenberg, *Ezekiel*, AB [New York: Doubleday, 1983], 345). For full discussion see W. Kaiser, “Leviticus 18:5 and Paul: Do This and You Shall Live (Eternally?),” *JETS* 15, 1 (1971): 19–28.

honor your brother.

¹⁷“Do not have sexual relations with both a woman and her daughter. Do not have sexual relations with either her son’s daughter or her daughter’s daughter; they are her close relatives. That is wickedness.

¹⁸“Do not take your wife’s sister as a rival wife and have sexual relations with her while your wife is living.

18:6 Beginning in Lev 18:6 we find detailed prohibitions regarding incest.⁵⁹ Incest is the marriage of or sexual relations between two people who are too closely related.⁶⁰ Laws against incest exist in almost every culture.⁶¹ But the issue of incest in Israel was more problematic than in other cultures. This was due to two separate but related factors. First, the Israelites were not allowed to intermarry with foreigners, particularly the Canaanites. This obviously greatly reduced the number of possible marriage candidates. Second, the lands that a family or clan inherited were to remain inside the family or clan, necessitating that marriages take place between relatives. These two restrictions made incest laws indispensable. Sexual energies had to be subordinated to God’s will.⁶²

Leviticus 18:6 states the general principle that is more clearly spelled out in 18:7–18. As the general principle, the verse also contains the technical language that defines incest. The technical term is *šēʾer*, “close relative,” and the technical phrase is *lēgallôt ʿerwā* (“have sexual relations”). The technical term *šēʾer*, “close relative” or “flesh relation,” refers to consanguineal relations. The nuclear family is composed of six of these “close relatives”: mother, father, son, daughter, brother, and sister, as is indicated in 21:2 (where the term *šēʾer* is used).⁶³ An Israelite priest could come into contact only with the corpse of one of these six close relatives (21:2–3). The important phrase used in defining incest, *lēgallôt ʿerwā*, means literally to “uncover the nakedness.” Because the man and his wife are “one flesh,” to uncover the nakedness of one’s spouse in essence exposed his partner. After the fall of man nakedness was always associated with shame, which is a marked contrast to the state of Adam and Eve before the intrusion of sin (Gen 9:22,23; Isa 47:3; Ezek 16:37; Hos 2:9; Isa 3:17; Hab 3:13; Zeph 2:14; Lam 4:21). The

⁵⁹ For a comprehensive discussion of the biblical law in incest, see L. M. Epstein, *Marriage Laws in the Bible and the Talmud* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1942), 220–74.

⁶⁰ O. J. Baab, “Incest,” *IDB* 2:700.

⁶¹ C. Levi-Strauss, *The Elementary Structures of Kingship* (London: Eyre & Spottiswoode, 1969), 12 (cited by Gerstenberger, *Leviticus*, 249).

⁶² Levine, “Leviticus, Book of,” 316.

⁶³ See Levine, *Leviticus*, 118, and S. Rattray, “Marriage Rules, Kinship Terms and Family Structure in the Bible,” in *SBLSP* (Missoula, Mont.: Scholars Press, 1987), 542.

phrase is thus a euphemism for sexual intercourse.⁶⁴ The NIV accurately translates the phrase “to have sexual relations.”⁶⁵ Incestuous relations are described several times in Old Testament narrative texts (Gen 19:30–38; 20:12; 35:22; 49:4; 2 Sam 13:1–14).⁶⁶

18:7–18 Twelve illicit relations are mentioned.⁶⁷ Incestuous relations include those of a man with his mother (18:7), step-mother (18:8), sister or half-sister (18:9),⁶⁸ granddaughter (18:10), step-sister (18:11), paternal aunt (18:12), maternal aunt (18:13), paternal uncle’s wife (18:14), daughter-in-law (18:15), brother’s wife (18:16),⁶⁹ step-daughter or step-grand-daughter (18:17),⁷⁰ or wife’s sister (18:18).⁷¹ One salient feature throughout this discussion of prohibited sexual relationships is the equation of uncovering a woman’s nakedness with her husband’s nakedness. This concept seems to be consistent with the teaching that in the union of marriage the man and the woman become “one flesh” (Gen 2:24). The content of this section and related New Testament passages on marriage are understood by some to forbid polygamy.⁷²

As mentioned the need to understand the appropriate guidelines for sexual union among the Israelites was acute since the Israelites were forbidden to marry foreigners (e.g., Deut 7:3; Num 36). The group of rela-

⁶⁴ Gerstenberger, *Leviticus*, 247.

⁶⁵ The same phrase is used in describing the offense of Ham in Gen 9. In that passage, however, the emphasis is on what Ham “saw,” not what he carried out, so we are not to assume that he had any kind of sexual relationship with his father.

⁶⁶ According to *Jubilees* 4 it was necessary in some very rare cases to commit incest. It would have been unavoidable for Adam’s children.

⁶⁷ Twenty additional prohibitive relationships were developed in Jewish literature (*b. Yeb.* 21a). In Israel today anyone who has sexual relations with an unmarried girl under the age of twenty-one that is his wife’s or his own descendant is sentenced to five years in prison (H. Hermann, “Incest,” *EncJud* 8:1317–18).

⁶⁸ At certain times in ancient Egypt a royal marriage between a man and his sister took place. Also in Israelite history we note the marriage of Abraham with his half-sister Sarah. This shift in perspective, that what was once legal had become illegal, proves the antiquity of the patriarchal narratives (Hamilton, *Handbook*, 302–3).

⁶⁹ Deut 25:5–10 provides an exception to this principle if a brother is deceased and leaves no offspring.

⁷⁰ This offense is defined as “lewdness” (לְוָדָא). Other offenses described in this way are found in Judg 20:6; Lev 19:29; 20:14; Ps 119:150; Prov 24:9; Isa 32:7; Ezek 16:58; 23:48,49.

⁷¹ Jacob’s difficulties in marrying both Leah and Rachel illustrate the problems that arise in marrying sisters (Gen 29:23–30).

⁷² “Sister” in 18:18 may be understood as “another woman” (G. Archer, *A Survey of Old Testament Introduction*, rev. ed. [Chicago: Moody, 1994], 259, and Kaiser, *Old Testament Ethics*, 189). This prohibition of polygamy is supported by one of the Dead Sea Scroll biblical manuscripts on this passage (A. Tosato, “The Law of Leviticus 18:18: A Reexamination,” *CBQ* 46 [1984]: 200, 203).

tives the Israelite was forbidden to marry would largely coincide with the relatives who would have lived in a single household in ancient Israel.⁷³

(3) *General Sexual Guidelines (18:19–23)*

19“Do not approach a woman to have sexual relations during the uncleanness of her monthly period.

20“Do not have sexual relations with your neighbor’s wife and defile yourself with her.

21“Do not give any of your children to be sacrificed to Molech, for you must not profane the name of your God. I am the LORD.

22“Do not lie with a man as one lies with a woman; that is detestable.

23“Do not have sexual relations with an animal and defile yourself with it. A woman must not present herself to an animal to have sexual relations with it; that is a perversion.

Leviticus 18:19–23 deals primarily with sexual offenses outside the family. Five illicit offenses are addressed in this section. These crimes include sex during menstruation (18:19), adultery (18:20), offering of offspring to Molech (18:21), homosexuality (18:22), and bestiality (18:23).

SEXUAL RELATIONS PROHIBITED DURING MENSTRUATION (18:19).

18:19 The first illicit sexual relation is sexual intercourse during menstruation. Prohibition of sexual intercourse during menstruation is repeated from 15:24 (see also 20:18). The sacredness of blood (Lev 17) may be the reason sexual contact was forbidden during menstruation and thus was regarded as taboo. This law benefited the woman who has her lowest estrogen level during menstruation. If the husband was insensitive to his wife’s emotional state during menstruation difficulties may develop.

ADULTERY IS PROHIBITED (18:20). **18:20** Leviticus 18:20 prohibits adultery, that is, sexual intercourse between a man and his neighbor’s wife.⁷⁴ Adultery was also prohibited in Exod 20:14; Deut 5:18; John 8:2–5⁷⁵ and was punished by death for both of the guilty parties (Lev 20:10; Deut 22:22).⁷⁶ The seriousness of this offense results from the fact that

⁷³ Gerstenberger, *Leviticus*, 248.

⁷⁴ In the OT adultery is defined as sexual intercourse between a man and a married or betrothed woman. Intercourse between a man and an unattached woman was not viewed as serious and hence did not command the death penalty (Gen 34; Exod 22:16–17; Deut 22:28–29; Wenham, *Leviticus*, 258, n. 30).

⁷⁵ John 8 refers to the OT law, but capital punishment for this offense was not allowed by Roman law (G. Lambert, “Adultery,” *ZPEB* 1:66, and D. Field, “Adultery,” *Baker Encyclopedia of the Bible* 1:32).

⁷⁶ If a man only expected (but did not witness) the commission of adultery on the part of his wife, she had to undergo the ordeal described in Num 5:11–31.

the marriage relationship was instituted by God (Gen 2:18,24; Prov 2:17; 18:22; Mal 2:14).

Adultery is an assault on the nuclear family.⁷⁷ It was called “the great sin” in the ancient Near East.⁷⁸ The Israelites frequently were guilty of adultery, which brought on prophetic rebuke (Isa 57:3; Jer 5:7; 7:9; 13:27; Ezek 22:11; 33:26; Hos 4:2,13–14; Mal 3:5). The Book of Proverbs describes adultery as a senseless act that destroys a man (Prov 6:23–35; 7:6–27). Sexual intercourse with a female slave, on the other hand, was not a capital offense but required a guilt offering (Lev 19:20). Adultery was often used metaphorically in the Bible to refer to infidelity to the Lord (Jer 7:9; 23:10; Ezek 23:45; Rev 2:22). Israel, like a wife, was to be exclusively loyal to her husband.⁷⁹

NO OFFSPRING OFFERED TO MOLECH (18:21). **18:21** This verse prohibits the offering of Israelite offspring to Molech,⁸⁰ the recognized god of the Ammonites (1 Kgs 11:7). The placement of this prohibition in a context regarding appropriate sexual conduct is curious, although there is a term connection in the occurrence of the term “seed” (*zeraʿ*; 18:21 with 18:20). Noting that the context deals with sexual activity, many scholars have advocated a position reflected in Jewish tradition that what is involved here is Jewish parents offering their children to Molech to grow up as temple prostitutes.⁸¹ This may be an attempt, however, to avoid the utter horror of what seems to be the face value reading of the text, since it is well known that the worship of Molech involved human sacrifice.⁸²

⁷⁷ E. Goodfriend, “Adultery,” *ABD* 1: 82.

⁷⁸ J. Tigay, “Adultery,” *EncJud* 2:313, and J. Milgrom, “The Betrothed Slave-girl, Lev 19:20–22,” *ZAW* 89 (1997): 46. Egyptian sensitivity to this sin is seen in Gen 20:3–7; 26:9–11.

⁷⁹ That the relationship between God and Israel was like that of a marriage is the background for references to God’s jealousy (כַּבְּדֵם) for Israel (Exod 20:5; Deut 5:9).

⁸⁰ That the spelling מֹלֶכֶת, “Molech,” resulted from the combination of the consonants מֶלֶךְ, “king,” with the vowels of בִּשְׁמֵי, “shame,” is a popular notion in contemporary biblical scholarship. The view, however, is not supported by solid evidence (E. Tov, *Textual Criticism of the Hebrew Bible* [Minneapolis: Fortress, 1992], 267–68, n. 40, and M. Selman, “Sacrifice in the Ancient Near East,” in *Sacrifice in the Bible*, ed. R. Beckwith and M. Selman [Grand Rapids: Baker, 1995], 99–100).

⁸¹ See N. H. Snaith, “The Cult of Molech,” *VT* (1966): 124; M. Weinfeld, “Molech, Cult of,” *EncJud* 12, 232; G. Vermes, “Leviticus 18:21 in Ancient Jewish Bible Exegesis,” in *Studies in Aggadah, Targum and Jewish Liturgy in Memory of Joseph Heinemann*, ed. J. J. Petuchowski and E. Fleischer (Jerusalem: Magnes Press, 1981), 123. For this and other rabbinical views see J. Day, *Molech—A God of Human Sacrifice in the Old Testament* (Cambridge: University Press, 1989), 21–23. *Jubilees* 30:7–12 connects the sin of Molech with the intermarriage of children to foreigners.

⁸² Eissfeldt, *Introduction*, 234, 237; H. Ringgren, *Israelite Religion* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1966), 175; and A. R. W. Green, *The Role of Human Sacrifice in the Ancient Near East* (Scholars Press, 1975), 179–87.

Support for the interpretation that child sacrifice is what is in view is provided by 2 Kgs 23:10 and Jer 7:31. In these texts “burning” is equated with the expression to cause the children to “pass through the fire.”⁸³ Children passing through the fire also occurs in Deut 18:10; 2 Kgs 16:3; 17:17; 21:6; Ezek 20:31.⁸⁴ During the reign of Manasseh and Amon, Molech worship was practiced, and Manasseh sacrificed his own children (2 Chr 33:6).

The atrociousness of this act may be seen in the result that it profaned the name of the Lord (see Lev 19:12; 20:3; 21:6; 22:2,32; Jer 34:16; Ezek 20:39; 36:20–23; Amos 2:17; Mal 1:12). In the Bible the “name” was not just a label or a designation but represented the essence of the person and revealed his character (see Ps 9:10; 1 Sam 25:25).⁸⁵ Thus to profane the name of God was to profane his person. The suggestion that child sacrifice is not referred to here and that the phrase “passed through the fire” is used in a figurative role to refer to delivering of children to serve as prostitutes appears to be an attempt to avoid the suggestion that Israelites would offer the children as sacrifices.⁸⁶ Yet this position does have the advantage of support from the context, which is confined to sexual improprieties and for this reason is a defensible option. If it could be clearly demonstrated that offering of offspring to Molech included some sexual activity, this might be considered the strongest position.⁸⁷

HOMOSEXUALITY IS PROHIBITED (18:22). 18:22 The next prohibited sexual activity is homosexuality. This offense is characterized as an abomination (*tô'ēbā*),⁸⁸ a term that occurs five times in this context (18:22,26,27,29,30; 20:13). An abomination, a term especially frequent in the Book of Deuteronomy, refers to an act that is abhorrent or repugnant, such as idolatry and inappropriate worship of God (see Deut 7:25; 27:15; 17:10 12:31; 18:9–14).⁸⁹

⁸³ B. K. Waltke, “Molech,” *ZPEB* 4:269. See also G. Heider, “Molech,” *ABD* 4:896. The wording of Lev 18:21 omits the word “fire,” but it refers to the same concept.

⁸⁴ In Jer 32:35; Ezek 16:21; 20:26; 23:37 the practice of sacrificing children is attacked by the prophets.

⁸⁵ Jesus Christ manifested God’s name (John 17:6,26). To pray in Jesus name is to pray in harmony with his person, his purposes, his desires.

⁸⁶ It is true, however, that there is no evidence that children were singled out in the worship of Molech (M. Smith, “A Note on Burning Babies,” *JAOS* 40 [1975]: 478).

⁸⁷ R. E. Clements, “Leviticus,” *BBC* (Nashville: Broadman, 1970), 50. In a forthcoming article J. E. Miller argues that Molech sacrifice is related to fertility (“Notes on Leviticus 18,” *ZAW* 112 [2000]).

⁸⁸ The word *tô'ēbā* is viewed by many to have been borrowed into the Hebrew language from Egyptian influence.

⁸⁹ See M. Weinfeld, *Deuteronomy and the Deuteronomist School* (Winona Lake: Eisenbrauns, 1992), 323. Other offenses that are an abomination include human sacrifice (Deut 12:31), eating unclean animals (Deut 14:3–8), sacrificing defective animals (Deut 17:1), practicing occult activities (Deut 18:9–14), dishonesty in business (Deut 25:13–16), and ritual prostitution (1 Kgs 14:23–24).

Homosexuality is not to be viewed as a disease or a viable sexual lifestyle as it has been in some Western cultures. Rabbi Jakobovits has contrasted the recent tolerance of homosexuality with consistent Jewish interpretation of the Old Testament teaching:

Whereas the more liberal attitude found in some modern Christian circles is possibly due to the exaggerated importance Christians have traditionally accorded to the term “love,” Jewish law holds that no hedonistic ethic, even if called “love,” can justify the morality of homosexuality any more than it can legitimize adultery, incest, or polygamy, however genuinely such acts may be performed out of love and by mutual consent.⁹⁰

This moral teaching regarding this practice cannot be contextualized but should be viewed as normative morality. As Kaiser has well stated:

To prohibit homosexuality today, some would argue, would be like forbidding unclean meats. It is admitted, of course, that there is a category of temporary ceremonial laws, but I do not agree that homosexuality is among them. Nothing in its proscription points to or anticipates Christ, and the death penalty demanded for its violation places it in the moral realm and not in temporary legislation.⁹¹

The deep-rooted avoidance of homosexual activities probably was the reason that even cross-dressing was to be avoided (Deut 22:5). The sin of homosexuality is described in narrative passages such as Gen 19:5 and Judg 19:22–25, and it is rightly condemned in Lev 20:13; Rom 1:27; 1 Cor 6:9; Rev 22:15. Lesbianism⁹² is not mentioned in the Old Testament, but it was condemned in Talmudic law and in the New Testament (Rom 1:26–27). The penalty for homosexuality was death (Lev 20:13).⁹³

BESTIALITY IS PROHIBITED (18:23). 18:23 The last prohibited sexual practice is bestiality.⁹⁴ This activity is labeled a perversion (*tebel*). The term *tebel* is from the root *bll*, which means “to mix” and indicates that this sexual practice involves an improper mixing together of the different species, stepping over the boundaries God has established (Gen 1:1–2:3). The only other occurrence of the word occurs in regard to another sexual

⁹⁰I. Jakobovits, “Homosexuality,” *EncJud* 8:961–62.

⁹¹Kaiser, *Old Testament Ethics*, 114.

⁹²The term “lesbian” comes from Lesbos, the location of the poetess Sappho, who lived ca. 600 B.C. and was believed to be a homosexual (R. White, *EDT*, 528, and Levine, *Leviticus*, 123).

⁹³British law prescribed the death penalty for homosexuality until the nineteenth century (White, “Homosexuality,” 529). It was a punishable offense in German law until 1969 (Gerstenberger, *Leviticus*, 299).

⁹⁴This sin is also prohibited in Exod 22:19; Lev 20:15–16; Num 35:16–21; Deut 27:21. Some ANE civilizations also prohibited this practice with certain animals but not categorically as in Israelite law (Hartley, *Leviticus*, 297, and B. L. Eichler, “Bestiality,” *IDBS*, 96–97).

offense, that of sex relations with a daughter-in-law (Lev 20:12). Calvin has an insightful comment regarding this sexual perversion:

The beasts are satisfied with natural connexion; it is therefore a gross enormity that this distinction should be confounded by man endowed with reason; for what is the use of our judgment and intelligent faculties if it be not that greater self-restraint should exist in us than in the brute animals.⁹⁵

Bestiality, like homosexuality, received the death penalty as punishment (Exod 22:19; Lev 20:13,15–16; Deut 27:21).

(4) Defilement Brings Expulsion from the Land (18:24–30)

²⁴“Do not defile yourselves in any of these ways, because this is how the nations that I am going to drive out before you became defiled. ²⁵Even the land was defiled; so I punished it for its sin, and the land vomited out its inhabitants. ²⁶But you must keep my decrees and my laws. The native-born and the aliens living among you must not do any of these detestable things, ²⁷for all these things were done by the people who lived in the land before you, and the land became defiled. ²⁸And if you defile the land, it will vomit you out as it vomited out the nations that were before you.

²⁹“Everyone who does any of these detestable things—such persons must be cut off from their people. ³⁰Keep my requirements and do not follow any of the detestable customs that were practiced before you came and do not defile yourselves with them. I am the LORD your God.”

18:24–30 Leviticus 18:24–30 repeats the admonition from the beginning of the chapter that the Israelites are to be distinct from the world, particularly in the area of their sexual behavior. The pagan nations, notably the Canaanites, were guilty of performing the perversions listed in this chapter. Thus they were to receive just judgment for their sins (18:24–25,28). Since the chapter opened with the statement that the Israelites are soon to enter the land of Canaan (18:3), it is clear that the iniquity of the Amorite/Canaanite is now complete (Gen 15:16). The expulsion of the Canaanites is spoken of as though it had already happened (18:28). Yet if the Israelites become like the pagan nations, performing the same sexual perversions, they should expect no different fate from that of their predecessors in the land. The land will vomit (*qîʾ*) Israel out of the land just as the fish vomited (*qîʾ*) Jonah upon the seashore (Jonah 2:11); in other words, Israel will go into exile (18:25). This imagery indicates that nature itself takes vengeance upon crass moral deviation. The use of the word “vomit” to describe the people’s expulsion from the land particularly stressed the Lord’s repulsion at the people’s activity since vomiting is probably the most violent of all bodily reac-

⁹⁵ J. Calvin, *Commentaries on the Last Books of Moses* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1979), 3:73.

tions.⁹⁶ The reaction of the land to the nation's moral obedience suggests an interdependence of the people and the land.⁹⁷ Wright insightfully comments on the significance of the land of Palestine in Israel's life and worship:

The promise of land is a constituent part of God's covenant with Abraham; the Exodus is presented as God's first act in preparing to fulfill that promise; the law and covenant are given with a view to life in the land; the wilderness wanderings are "abnormal"—a punishment for cowardly failure to enter the land at the first opportunity. Beyond the Pentateuch, the land remains a primary theme: its capture and division in Joshua; the struggle to survive on it in Judges; the eventual complete control of the whole territory under David and Solomon; the prophetic protest at injustices perpetrated on the land; the Exile as divine judgment and the people's eventual restoration to the land as a token of a renewed relationship with God. And beside all this there are all kinds of laws, institutions, and cultic practices concerned with the use of the land.⁹⁸

Earlier (Lev 15:31), the Israelites were warned about the danger of defiling the tabernacle. Now the holiness of the tabernacle appears to be extended to the entirety of the Promised Land, where God's presence will abide.⁹⁹ Near the close of the chapter the Israelites are warned with a stated general principle that any Israelite or any other person who violates the commands will be cut off from their people (18:29).¹⁰⁰ Verse 30 contains a directive specifically addressed to the Israelites,¹⁰¹ warning them to obey God and shun the practices of the pagans. The chapter closes by emphasizing God's authority over their lives, "I am the LORD your God" (18:30).

(5) Conclusion

Although the laws in Leviticus 18 set forth moral/ceremonial principles,¹⁰² the sexual prohibitions enumerated are still in effect today. The New Testament echoes the teaching of Leviticus 18, for it also prohibits

⁹⁶ The same metaphor is used in Rev 3:16 (Stott, *The Cross of Christ*, 108).

⁹⁷ Levine, *Leviticus*, 123; H. Wolf, *An Introduction to the Old Testament Pentateuch* (Chicago: Moody, 1991), 179.

⁹⁸ C. Wright, *God's People in God's Land* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1990), 4. Wright argues that Israel's possession of the land was due to the fact that the nation was understood to be the Lord's firstborn son (Exod 4:22; *ibid.*, 15–23).

⁹⁹ See R. Averbeck, "Leviticus, Theology of," *NIDOTTE* 4:917.

¹⁰⁰ Reference to the people in the third person אֲשֶׁר לְכֹל אֲדָמָה may suggest that foreigners who remain in the land are also responsible for ridding themselves of those who practice such atrocities (Levine, *Leviticus*, 124).

¹⁰¹ There is a switch from the third person in 18:29 to the second person in 18:30.

¹⁰² Kaiser, "Leviticus," 1124.

incest (Mark 6:17–29;¹⁰³ 1 Cor 5:1–5), adultery (Rom 13:9; 1 Cor 6:9; Heb 13:4),¹⁰⁴ and homosexuality (Rom 1:27; 1 Cor 6:9–11; 1 Tim 1:10).¹⁰⁵ Furthermore, the principle that relationships outside of marriage are illicit is the foundational axiom of this chapter. This truth also seems to be the foundation of Jesus' teaching on divorce that a man should not divorce his wife and be joined to another since by marriage the two had become one flesh (Gen 2:24 with Matt 19:3–6).¹⁰⁶ As C. S. Lewis has stated: "Chastity is the most unpopular of the Christian virtues. There is no getting away from it: the old Christian rule is, 'Either marriage, with complete faithfulness to your partner, or else total abstinence.'" ¹⁰⁷ Sex outside of marriage detracts from what God intended sex to be. Thus, sexual infidelity inevitably disrupts the "one flesh" relationship (Gen 2:24; 1 Cor 6:16–17). Moreover, it is devastating to the entire family. As Kellogg noted: "Where there is incest or adultery, we may truly say the family is murdered; what murder is to the individual, that, precisely, are crimes of this class to the family."¹⁰⁸ Marriage is not just a civil arrangement; it is a divine institution!

Within the Old Testament itself Israel's rebellion was described by the metaphor of marital or sexual unfaithfulness. This is due in no small part to the fact that Israel was considered to be married to the Lord (Ezek 16). Like the Old Testament, the New Testament uses adultery as a figure for infidelity to God (Matt 12:39; 16:4; Mark 8:38).

3. A Lifestyle of Holiness (19:1–37)

Leviticus 19 has been called the highest development of ethics in the Old Testament.¹⁰⁹ This chapter perhaps better than any other in the Bible, explains what it meant for Israel to be a holy nation (Exod 19:6). The chapter stresses the interactive connection between responsibility to one's fellow man and religious piety, the two dimensions of life that were never meant to be separated.¹¹⁰

¹⁰³ John was imprisoned because of his rebuke of Herod for marrying his brother's wife (Matt 14:4; Mark 6:18), which was a clear violation of Lev 18:16; 20:21.

¹⁰⁴ The American Law Institute voted not to include adultery in its model penal code in 1955 (Lambert, "Adultery," 65).

¹⁰⁵ For an excellent study on the biblical teaching on homosexuality as well as a refutation of those who argue its viability in the church see R. B. Hays, *The Moral Vision of the New Testament* (San Francisco: Harper, 1996), 382–400.

¹⁰⁶ See Wenham, *Leviticus*, 260–61.

¹⁰⁷ C. S. Lewis, *Mere Christianity* (New York: Macmillan, 1952), 89.

¹⁰⁸ Kellogg, *The Book of Leviticus*, 426–27.

¹⁰⁹ J. West, *Introduction to the Old Testament* (New York: Macmillan, 1971), 156.

¹¹⁰ Levine, "Leviticus, Book of," 316.

That a new section begins with chap. 19 is apparent, given the characteristic formula of divine speech: "The LORD said to Moses" (19:1). Verses 1 and 2 form an introduction to the entire chapter by admonishing the Israelites to be holy because the Lord is holy (see Exod 19:4–6; Deut 7:6–8). Holiness is the sphere of purity unique only to God. From the human standpoint, it is the appropriate disposition that allows one to come into contact with God.¹¹¹ The chapter ends with the admonition to keep all of God's commands and to follow them. This structural arrangement suggests the essential equation of holiness and the observance of God's laws. The two major sections, 19:3–18 and 19:19–36, explain and specify what it means for the Israelites to be holy, but the order of the commands does not always follow what we might consider a logical order.¹¹² Nevertheless there is a symmetry between the two parts of the chapter as is illustrated by the repeated phrases in the two sections. Compare 19:3a with 19:30b, 19:3b with 19:30, 19:4a with 19:31b, 19:4c with 19:32c, 19:15a with 19:35a, 19:18c with 19:34b, 19:10a with 19:37a.¹¹³ Both of these two major sections contain the phrase "I am the LORD [your God]" seven times (19:3,4,9,12,14,16,18,25,28,30,31,32,33,35),¹¹⁴ each time appearing at the conclusion of each of the subsections within the major sections. In Leviticus 19 we find the most concentrated occurrence of this phrase in the entire Bible. The formula is not intended to introduce repeatedly one who is unknown but to remind the congregation that the one giving the laws is holy. Magonet has proposed another plausible analysis, dividing the chapter into five sections: 19:3–8, 19:9–18, 19:19–29, 19:30–31, and 19:32–36. The first and last sections deal with a person's relationship to God, the second and the fourth deal with one's relationship to his fellow man, and the third middle section deals with man's relationship with himself.¹¹⁵ Regardless, this chapter indicates the comprehensive nature of holiness as it is exhibited in the realms of both religious and social relationships.

The first major section of Leviticus 19 (19:3–18) contains various laws mostly of a moral character. Most of the Ten Commandments are in fact repeated in this section. The similarity of the content of Leviticus 20 and

¹¹¹ Gerstenberger, *Leviticus*, 282–83.

¹¹² This is not unusual since ancient law codes do not always follow a logical order (R. L. Harris, "Leviticus," EBC [Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1990], 2:602).

¹¹³ J. Magonet, "The Structure and Meaning of Leviticus 19," *HAR* 7 (1983): 151–52.

¹¹⁴ The phrase also occurs in Lev 19:37, which should be viewed as the conclusion to the entire chapter. Note the general statement to keep all of God's laws that marks the summation of the entire chapter.

¹¹⁵ Magonet, "The Structure and Meaning of Leviticus," 166.

the Ten Commandments from Exodus 20 may be observed as follows:¹¹⁶

Exodus 20	Leviticus 19
I am the LORD (v. 2)	vv. 3,4,9,12,14,16,18,25,28,30,31, 32,33,35,37
Graven images (vv. 4–6)	v. 4
God's name in vain (v. 7)	v. 12
Sabbath (vv. 8–12)	v. 3,30
Honor parents (v. 12)	v. 3
Murder (v. 13)	v. 16
Adultery (v. 14)	v. 29
Stealing (v. 15)	vv. 11,13,35–36
False witness (v. 16)	vv. 11,16
Coveting (v. 17)	vv. 18

(1) Holiness Commanded (19:1–2)

¹The LORD said to Moses, ²“Speak to the entire assembly of Israel and say to them: ‘Be holy because I, the LORD your God, am holy.

19:1–2 In vv. 1 and 2 of Leviticus 19 the Lord tells Moses to address the entire assembly of Israel and admonish them to be holy as God is holy. The root for “holy,” *qdš*, connotes the idea of separation, indicating that God is commanding the nation to be different from the nations around them. This call is no different from the command given to the Israelites upon their arrival at Mount Sinai when God commanded the Israelites to be a kingdom of priests and a holy nation (*[wəgōy qādōš]* Exod 19:6). The reason the Israelites are to be holy is because (*kī*) God himself is holy. Those who identify with the Lord are thus to represent him to the world by emulating this attribute.¹¹⁷ Thus every statement about the moral nature of God in the Bible carries the implied demand that the believer exhibit this same quality in daily living. It is thus not possible to divorce ethics and theology, since human morality is justified by the nature of God.¹¹⁸

Another feature of the holiness of God's people is noted by Eichrodt:

The holy God will not only to separate his elect out of the world for his service by sanctifying them—separation being the normal meaning of holiness, when predicated of Man—but also to see the immaculate purity of his own

¹¹⁶ See Levine, *Leviticus*, 124–25; Hartley, *Leviticus*, 310; and J. Morgenstern, “The Decalogue of the Holiness Code,” *HUCA* 26 (1955): 4–5.

¹¹⁷ Theologically this is normally called the principle of *imitatio dei*, “the imitation of God.”

¹¹⁸ Clements, “Leviticus,” 51.

nature, that which separates him from the sinful impurity of human living, reflected in a holy people.¹¹⁹

(2) Parents, Sabbath, Idolatry (19:3–4)

³“Each of you must respect his mother and father, and you must observe my Sabbaths. I am the LORD your God.

⁴“Do not turn to idols or make gods of cast metal for yourselves. I am the LORD your God.

FEAR OF PARENTS (19:3a). **19:3a** The first command in the first section is a command to “respect,” literally “fear” (*yrʔ*), one’s parents. The verb *yrʔ* (“to fear”) normally has God as its object, which underlines the devotion and reverence to be demonstrated to one’s parents. The fact that the first admonition regarding holiness entails how to treat one’s parents indicates that holiness begins in the home. The reverencing of parents should include the taking care of one’s parents when they are old as it probably does in the Ten Commandments.¹²⁰ Respect for one’s parents is a subject that receives a great amount of attention in the Book of Proverbs (1:8; 6:20; 10:1; 17:25; 23:22; 29:3).

KEEP THE SABBATH (19:3b). **19:3b** As honoring parents is the first response of holiness among human duties, so the keeping of the Sabbath is the first spiritual priority.¹²¹ The Sabbath law is the longest of the commands in the Ten Commandments, and the observance of the Sabbath was a special sign of the nation of Israel (Exod 31:13). Since the command to obey the Sabbath is based on creation (Gen 2:1–3), the rationale to refrain from work one day of the week may reflect on man’s inherent need for rest.

There have been only two occasions in history, during the French and Russian revolutions, when cultures attempted to organize themselves around a ten-day cycle instead of a seven-day cycle. Both of these attempts were abandoned because workers were not able to function properly working nine consecutive days. The Sabbath law not only recognizes man’s need to have a day of rest after a six-day work week but also to have a day set aside to draw near to God and discover the reason we work in the first place.¹²²

No rest leads to social disintegration and chaos.¹²³ The importance of

¹¹⁹ Eichrodt, *Theology of the Old Testament*, 2:373.

¹²⁰ Hartley, *Leviticus*, 313. The mother is placed before the father while in other contexts it is the father who is mentioned first (Exod 20:12; Prov 6:20; 23:2; 28:24). Gerstenberger argues that the order reflects the view that mothers play the major role in the religious socialization of the children (*Leviticus*, 265).

¹²¹ Wenham, *Leviticus*, 265. The OT refers to the Sabbath on 106 occasions.

¹²² Knight, *Leviticus*, 117.

¹²³ G. Demarest, *Leviticus*, CC (Dallas: Word, 1990), 216.

the Sabbath is also evident in Leviticus 23, where the Sabbath legislation occupies the first position in the discussion of Israel's worship calendar. The violation of this law also was singled out as the cause for Israel's exile from the land. The observance of the Sabbath has always been a defining law for the Jewish people. During the intertestamental period the Jews chose death rather than resisting the enemy on the Sabbath (*1 Macc* 2:31–38). This was because the observance of the Sabbath was viewed as “equal to all other precepts of the Torah” (*Exod Rabb* 25:12). Among some Jews the Sabbath day was considered a foretaste of the world to come.¹²⁴

TURN FROM IDOLATRY (19:4). **19:4** The last of the commands in this short section is the prohibition of idolatry. The English word for idolatry comes via Greek *eidololatria*, which is based on a root that relates to that which strikes the eye, that is, the external appearance. The word thus focuses on the external image of an idol.¹²⁵ The Hebrew word for idol is *ʿēlīl*. The meaning of the root *ʿll* is “to be weak, insufficient,” while the adjectival form of the root means to be “worthless.”¹²⁶ The meaning of the term would be intended to be a commentary on those who would find themselves engaging in the worship of idols. False gods promise far more than they can deliver. Moreover, the attempt to represent the Creator with an object of his creation limits him. Idolatry was prohibited in *Exod* 20:21; 34:17; *Lev* 26:1; *Deut* 4:15–19,25; 5:8. The manufacture of molten images was also prohibited. The “molten image” (*massēkā*) was made by casting¹²⁷ molten gold or silver into a mold and then shaping it with a tool (*Deut* 27:15; *Isa* 40:18–20). The term often occurs in the same context and is often parallel to *pesel*, “idol, image” (*Deut* 27:15; *Judg* 17–18; *Isa* 30:22; *Hab* 2:18; *Ps* 106:19; *Nah* 1:14). The molten image is frequently used for a carved image. The golden calf was a “molten image” (*Exod* 32:4,24) as were the idolatrous calves made by Jeroboam at Bethel and Dan (*1 Kgs* 14:9). The creation of a “molten image” was prohibited by the law (here; *Exod* 34:17; *Deut* 27:15) and was condemned by the prophets and later writers (*Isa* 30:22; 41:29; 42:17; 44:10; *Jer* 10:14; 51:17; *Hos* 13:2; *Hab* 2:18; *Ps* 106:19). Small bronze images of Baal and Resheph and other deities have been uncovered at different archaeological sites.¹²⁸

¹²⁴ E.g., Isaac Arama and *Hebrews* 4 (for the former, see L. Jacobs, “Sabbath,” *EncJud* 14:565). For a comprehensive survey of Jewish customs of Sabbath observance see Jacobs, “Sabbath,” 566–67.

¹²⁵ F. B. Huey, “Idolatry,” *ZPEB* 3:242.

¹²⁶ *BDB*, 47; *KBL*, 53f.; and von Rad, *Old Testament Theology*, 2:340.

¹²⁷ The noun is based on the root *נָסַק*, which means “to pour out” (C. Dohmen, *TDOT* 8:431–32, and M. W. Wilson, *נָסַק* [*nāsak*], *TWOT* 2:581–82).

¹²⁸ G. B. Cooke, “Molten Image,” *IDB* 3:423.

(3) *Eat Peace Offerings before the Third Day (19:5–8)*

⁵“When you sacrifice a fellowship offering to the LORD, sacrifice it in such a way that it will be accepted on your behalf. ⁶It shall be eaten on the day you sacrifice it or on the next day; anything left over until the third day must be burned up. ⁷If any of it is eaten on the third day, it is impure and will not be accepted. ⁸Whoever eats it will be held responsible because he has desecrated what is holy to the LORD; that person must be cut off from his people.

19:5–8 After the prohibition of idolatry, the laws address the proper way of offering sacrifices, specifically the proper observance of the fellowship offering. It is not readily apparent why the fellowship offering is singled out here. Perhaps the reason lies in the fact that this is the offering where the individual Israelite (as seen in Lev 3 and 7:11–34) plays more of a major role in the sacrifice in that he, along with the priest, actually partakes of the offering. The offering could only be eaten when it was sacrificed or on the following day; the sacrifice was not to be eaten on the third day (19:6). Violation of this law resulted in a desecration of what is holy to the Lord,¹²⁹ and the offender was subject to a premature death (19:8). These laws repeat the commands regarding the fellowship offering in 7:16–18. The fact that the proper method of presenting an offering is included in the discussion of holiness indicates that holiness touches every dimension of an individual’s life.¹³⁰

(4) *Help the Needy and the Stranger (19:9–10)*

⁹“When you reap the harvest of your land, do not reap to the very edges of your field or gather the gleanings of your harvest. ¹⁰Do not go over your vineyard a second time or pick up the grapes that have fallen. Leave them for the poor and the alien. I am the LORD your God.

19:9–10 The next section of laws deal with aiding the poor. The Israelites were not to glean the corners of the field nor gather the gleanings of the harvest. The “gleanings” (*leqet*) designate those ears of corn or grain that were inadvertently dropped by the harvester; the worker was not to work his way back over the field but rather leave the food for the needy. The poor were thus provided for, but they had to come and glean the portions of the field themselves. This act of generosity was not a handout, but it was a means for those who were without property or who had fallen on bad times to be maintained (Ruth 2). By gleaning the corners and the leftovers of the field, the poor were spared the embarrass-

¹²⁹ See Lev 18:21. Profanation of the holy is an issue frequently addressed in Ezekiel (Ezek 7:21; 13:19; 20:13; 22:8; 23:38; 24:21; 28:7; 36:20; 44:7).

¹³⁰ Hartley, *Leviticus*, 313.

ment of asking for charity. What constituted a corner is not specified in the Law, but Jewish tradition set the minimum as one-sixtieth of a field.¹³¹ Regard for providing food for the poor is also mentioned in Exod 23:11; Lev 23:22; Deut 24:19 and is the underlying concern for the restoration of the land during the Year of Jubilee (Lev 25).¹³² The poor were also to receive a special tithe every third year (Deut 14:28–29; 26:12–15). God himself is characterized as one who cares for the poor and needy (Pss 132:15; 146:7). Hence a person characterized by greed, covetousness, or stinginess cannot be a holy person.¹³³

(5) *Love Your Neighbor as Yourself (19:11–18)*

¹¹“Do not steal.

“Do not lie.

“Do not deceive one another.

¹²“Do not swear falsely by my name and so profane the name of your God. I am the LORD.

¹³“Do not defraud your neighbor or rob him.

“Do not hold back the wages of a hired man overnight.

¹⁴“Do not curse the deaf or put a stumbling block in front of the blind, but fear your God. I am the LORD.

¹⁵“Do not pervert justice; do not show partiality to the poor or favoritism to the great, but judge your neighbor fairly.

¹⁶“Do not go about spreading slander among your people.

“Do not do anything that endangers your neighbor’s life. I am the LORD.

¹⁷“Do not hate your brother in your heart. Rebuke your neighbor frankly so you will not share in his guilt.

¹⁸“Do not seek revenge or bear a grudge against one of your people, but love your neighbor as yourself. I am the LORD.

STEALING, FALSE SWEARING PROHIBITED (19:11–12). **19:11–12**

The next subsection of laws begins with a call not to pervert justice whether for the advantaged or the disadvantaged. Though the Old Testament has much to say about aid to the poor (e.g., 19:9–10), it is wrong for this attitude to carry over in the realm of the legal system.

The Israelite was also not to swear falsely and thereby profane God’s name (19:12). Budd believes that this law was not directed toward a legal context but spoke to the issue of keeping promises or oaths.¹³⁴ If his

¹³¹ *M. Pe’ah* 1:1–2. The name of the Mishnaic tractate is derived from the biblical term פִּנְיָה in our passage, meaning “corner.” For the history of the Jewish observation of this law, see I. Grunfeld, *The Jewish Dietary Laws* (New York: Soncino, 1972), 2:75–82.

¹³² See also Prov 14:31; Amos 5:12; Eph 4:28; 1 Thess 4:12; 1 Tim 6:17–19; Jas 1:27; 2:14–17; 1 John 3:17.

¹³³ Kaiser, *Ethics*, 120.

¹³⁴ Budd, *Leviticus*, 274.

interpretation is accurate, the law addresses what is at issue in the Third Commandment, taking the name of the Lord in vain (Exod 20:7; Deut 5:11).¹³⁵

BE RESPECTFUL OF OTHERS (19:13–14). 19:13–14 The Israelite was also not to oppress his neighbor (19:13). Oppression may take on one of various forms, including the withholding of daily wages (see Deut 24:15). This subsection of laws also addresses the proper treatment of the handicapped (19:14). The Israelite was not to “curse” the deaf. The root of the word “curse” (*qll*) means “to make light of, slight.” The word occurs 128 times in the Old Testament and is semantically opposite the root *kbd*, which means “to make heavy” and by extension “to honor.”¹³⁶ Those who “make light of” Abraham (*qll*) God will curse (*ʔrr*, Gen 12:3). These laws should be taken as general principles. They are not limited to the specific situations listed here. As Fee and Stuart have noted:

It is fairly obvious that such laws are not exhaustive, however. Look closely, for example, at the harvesting welfare laws in verses 9 and 10. Note that only field crops (wheat, barley, etc.) and grapes are actually mentioned. Does that mean that if you raised sheep or harvested figs or olives, you were under no obligation to share your produce with the poor and resident alien? ... The statements in the law were intended as a reliable guide with general applicability—not a technical description of all possible conditions one could imagine. Likewise, if you harmed a dumb person, or one crippled or retarded, would you still have kept the command of verse 14? Certainly not. The “deaf” and the “blind” are merely selected examples of all persons whose physical weaknesses demand that they be respected rather than despised.¹³⁷

God looks after those who are disadvantaged even though the deaf may not be aware of those who curse them nor the blind of those who put obstacles in their way. One who fears God (19:4b)¹³⁸ will not mistreat the disadvantaged. The proper treatment of the poor is a subject of concern in legal (Exod 22:25; Lev 23:22; Deut 15:11; 24:12,14,15) and wisdom literature (Prov 14:21; 15:15; 31:20). In Deut 27:18 a man is cursed if he misleads a blind man.

BE IMPARTIAL (19:15). 19:15 Even though those who are disadvantaged are to be treated properly, no special favors are to be given to the poor in judicial settings (19:15; see Exod 23:3). All proceedings are to be characterized by justice, just as God is just (Job 36:3; Pss 85:10;

¹³⁵ Harris, “Leviticus,” 604.

¹³⁶ C. A. Keller, קלל *qll*, *TLOT* 3:1142.

¹³⁷ G. D. Fee and D. Stuart, *How to Read the Bible for All It's Worth*, 2nd ed. (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1993), 155. See also *b. Sanh.* 66a and “Blessing and Cursing,” *EncJud* 4, 1086.

¹³⁸ The fear of God is a motivation for obedience also in Lev 19:30,32; 25:17,36,43; Num 4:18–20.

89:14; 97:2; 119:42; Isa 42:6; 45:18,19; Jer 11:20; Hos 2:19).¹³⁹

HARBOR NO ILL FEELINGS (19:16–18). 19:16–18 The next laws deal with proper conduct in interpersonal relationships (19:16–18). The Israelite was not to spread slander¹⁴⁰ about others or do anything that would put a neighbor's life in jeopardy (19:16).¹⁴¹ One should not hate his brother but should rebuke him when he is in sin and thus not share in his guilt (19:17; Gen 21:25; Prov 9:8; 28:23; Job 40:2).¹⁴² This command may be the legal background behind God's commission to Ezekiel to act as a watchman. If Ezekiel did not warn his brothers who were in sin, God held him accountable, and he was subject to punishment (Ezek 3:18; 33:6,8). The word "rebuke" thus has an instructional connotation as seen in its use regarding children in Prov 3:12; 28:23. The corrective rebuke would not involve seeking revenge or bearing a grudge¹⁴³ but rather loving your neighbor as yourself (19:18).¹⁴⁴ Love for neighbor and coming to the aid of enemies is also included in other sections of Israel's legal code (Exod 23:4–5; Deut 22:1–4). Kellogg captures the connection between rebuke and love: "Most instructive it is to find it suggested by this order, as the best evidence of the absence of hate, and the truest expression of love to our neighbor, that when we see him doing wrong we rebuke him."¹⁴⁵ This statement, "love your neighbor as yourself," forms a climax to this first major section, and it was regarded by some as the central principle of the Law.¹⁴⁶ The significance of the verse is also

¹³⁹ Noted by Budd, *Leviticus*, 277.

¹⁴⁰ Hb. רָכַיִל is associated with betrayal and murder (Jer 6:28; Ezek 22:9). The noun is related to the verb that means to "go about," apparently in the context of trading and selling merchandise (W. White, רָכַל [*rākal*], *TWOT* 2:848).

¹⁴¹ The Hb. literally reads: "Do not stand on the blood of your neighbor." Three interpretations have been proposed: (1) Do not stand by while a neighbor's life is in danger. (2) Do not conspire against a neighbor. (3) Do not survive by means of or rely on a neighbor (Levine, *Leviticus*, 129).

¹⁴² For the history of interpretation of Lev 19:17, see J. Kugel, "On Hidden Hatred and Open Reproach: Early Exegesis of Leviticus 19:17," *HTR* 80 (1987): 43–61.

¹⁴³ The verb translated "bear a grudge" (נָטַר) is often used in agricultural contexts describing those who keep or guard a vineyard (Cant 1:6; 8:11–12). More related to the use of the verb in Lev 19:18 is the meaning of keeping one's anger or wrath (Nah 1:2; Ps 103:9; Jer 3:5,12; Amos 1:11; M. Wilson, נָטַר [*nāṭār*], *TWOT* 2:576).

¹⁴⁴ A. Malamat argues that as the phrase לְעֹזֵר parallels "help," in 2 Chr 19:2; so the main point in expressing love for a neighbor is that of assisting or being beneficial to the neighbor (*BAR* 16 [1990]: 50–51). The notion of "hate your enemy" in Matt 5:43 does not come from the OT but rather from Jewish sectarian beliefs (1 QS 1:4,10; 2:4–9; 1QM 4:1–2; 15:6; 1QH 5:4, see D. A. Carson, "Matthew," EBC [Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1984], 8:157).

¹⁴⁵ Kellogg, *Leviticus*, 401–2.

¹⁴⁶ Rabbi Akiba (see Levine, *Leviticus*, 130).

highlighted by the fact that Jesus and Paul both cited this verse as a summary of the duties one has to his fellow man (Matt 22:39–40; Rom 13:9).

(6) Prohibition of Mixtures (19:19)

¹⁹“Keep my decrees.

“Do not mate different kinds of animals.

“Do not plant your field with two kinds of seed.

“Do not wear clothing woven of two kinds of material.

19:19 The second major section of Leviticus 19 begins with the general phrase “keep my decrees” which is repeated at the end of the chapter as a summary statement thus marking off the passage Lev 19:19–37 as a large unit. Verse 19 prohibits improper mixing of animals, plants, or clothing. The rationale for these commandments is not provided. The root *šāʿaṭnēz* is defined in Deut 22:11 as a mixture of linen and wool. Hence Archer argues that the mixing of different materials typifies a commingling of the holy and the profane.¹⁴⁷ Similarly, Noordtzig maintains that since each plant or animal had its own life principle it was not to be mixed with another. Alden, on the other hand, argues that the term *šāʿaṭnēz* might refer to a web used in magic ceremonies.¹⁴⁸ A similar prohibition is found in Deut 22:5,9–11.

(7) Lying with a Slave Woman (19:20–22)¹⁴⁹

²⁰“If a man sleeps with a woman who is a slave girl promised to another man but who has not been ransomed or given her freedom, there must be due punishment. Yet they are not to be put to death, because she had not been freed.²¹The man, however, must bring a ram to the entrance to the Tent of Meeting for a guilt offering to the LORD.²²With the ram of the guilt offering the priest is to make atonement for him before the LORD for the sin he has committed, and his sin will be forgiven.

19:20–22 Verses 20–22 deal with a man who has sexual intercourse with a slave girl who had been promised¹⁵⁰ to another man (Exod 21:7–11;

¹⁴⁷ Archer, *Introduction*, 259.

¹⁴⁸ A. Noordtzig, *Leviticus*, BSC (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1982), 201; and R. Alden, *שָׂאֲטָנֵז* (*šāʿaṭnēz*), *NIDOTTE* 4:202. Knight maintains that wearing a garment of several pieces would be deleterious in inclement weather because the garment would be predisposed to unravel and thus come apart (*Leviticus*, 124). C. Carmichael’s argument that *שָׂאֲטָנֵז* refers to the garment of a prostitute is not convincing (“Forbidden Mixtures,” *VT* 32 [1982]: 406).

¹⁴⁹ Slaves were war captives (Num 31:7–12; Deut 20:10–11; 1 Kgs 20:39; 2 Chr 28:8–15), foreigners in Israel (1 Chr 2:34–35), minors who had been sold (Exod 21:7–11), or Israelites who had sold themselves (Exod 21:5–6; Lev 25:39–43; Deut 15:16–17) (I. Mendelsohn, “Slavery in the OT,” *IDB* 4:384).

¹⁵⁰ The root *שָׂאֲטָנֵז*, “to acquire,” occurs only here in the OT (BDB, 358). The word has been translated “acquired as a concubine” (TEV), but this rendering borders on being an interpretive translation.

22:16–17; Deut 22:23–27). Since she was still a slave, the guilty parties were not given the death penalty. Rather there was to be “due punishment”¹⁵¹ and the guilty man had to offer a guilt offering to the priest to atone for his sin. This punishment rendered the man guilty of adultery even though capital punishment was not prescribed.¹⁵² It is worth noting that only the man was considered blameworthy, not the female slave. Being a slave, the woman may have felt she had little recourse in resisting a male who was a free man and thus more powerful both in the social and economic spheres. That the free man must bear responsibility is suggested by the fact the female slave was not required to bring the guilt offering sacrifice.

(8) *Moratorium on Trees (19:23–25)*

²³“When you enter the land and plant any kind of fruit tree, regard its fruit as forbidden. For three years you are to consider it forbidden; it must not be eaten. ²⁴In the fourth year all its fruit will be holy, an offering of praise to the LORD. ²⁵But in the fifth year you may eat its fruit. In this way your harvest will be increased. I am the LORD your God.

19:23–25 The next series of laws deals with specific instructions for the Israelites when they first enter the land of Canaan. The fruit from newly planted trees was not to be eaten (NIV, “forbidden”)¹⁵³ during the first three years of Israelite occupation of Canaan (19:23).¹⁵⁴ During the fourth year the crops were to be dedicated to the Lord and thus again off-limits to human consumption (19:24). It was only in the fifth year that the fruit could be eaten (19:25).¹⁵⁵ The reason for this law is not stated, but it does reinforce to the Israelites that the land is the Lord’s and that he is giving it to them as a gift.

(9) *Don’t Imitate Pagans (19:26–28)*

²⁶“Do not eat any meat with the blood still in it.

¹⁵¹ The noun בְּקִרָּה occurs only here in the OT and is related to the verb בָּקַר, meaning “to inquire, seek.” BDB defines the noun as “punishment after examination (inquisition) (BDB, 134). The NRSV translated the term “inquiry.” The word probably refers to the financial payment imposed on the guilty man. This would be consistent with the nature of the guilt offering, which required recompense. Similarly, Exod 22:16–17 addresses the situation where a man seduces an unpledged free maiden.

¹⁵² J. Milgrom, “The Betrothed Slave-girl, Lev 19:20–22,” 49.

¹⁵³ Lit. “uncircumcised” (עָרְלִים). This term is often used metaphorically in the OT. E.g., the heart is referred to as uncircumcised in Deut 10:16 (see Rom 2:29).

¹⁵⁴ The prohibition of eating the produce of the tree is reminiscent of the First Commandment of the Bible, Gen 2:17.

¹⁵⁵ In the Code of Hammurabi #60 it was legislated that a gardener who was also a tenant could not eat of the fruit of his orchard until the fifth year, when he shared the produce with the owner.

“Do not practice divination or sorcery.

27“Do not cut the hair at the sides of your head or clip off the edges of your beard.

28“Do not cut your bodies for the dead or put tattoo marks on yourselves. I am the LORD.

19:26a The next series of laws continues to address how the Israelites were to conduct themselves when they occupied the land of Canaan. These laws deal primarily with Canaanite pagan practices, which the Israelites were to avoid.¹⁵⁶ First, they were commanded not to eat the flesh of a slaughtered animal with the blood still in it (*‘al haddām*).¹⁵⁷

19:26b Humans have always been naturally curious about the future, wondering whether blessings or dangers possibly await them. In the pagan world of the ancient Near East many believed that insight into the future was possible through divination and sorcery. Pagans often employed divination and sorcery to try to determine what events would soon transpire.¹⁵⁸ Divination and sorcery were widespread in the ancient Near East, particularly in Mesopotamia and Egypt.¹⁵⁹ Techniques of divining include lecomancy (Gen 44:5), belomancy (Ezek 21:26; Hos 4:12), and oneironancy (1 Sam 28:6; Gen 37:5–11; 41:1–36).

Magic and divination were practiced in civilizations that had contact with Israel in biblical times (Num 23:23; 1 Sam 6:2; Isa 44:25). These practices were categorically condemned in the Old Testament (Deut 18:10; 2 Kgs 17:17; 21:6; 2 Chr 33:6; Isa 2:6; 57:3; Jer 27:9). The Israelites had access to information about future events only if God chose to reveal this information to them. Thus revelation is diametrically opposed to divination. Also while revelation necessitates divine self-disclosure, in divination the initiative is taken by the diviner.¹⁶⁰ When the Israelites

¹⁵⁶ The section begins with a prohibition against eating the blood. The LXX reads the verse as stating, “You shall not eat on the mountains.” The LXX reading fits better into the context but is not supported by the external evidence. The reading reflects a phrase found in Ezek 18:6,11,15; 22:9. But there is some evidence that eating the blood was a pagan practice (Harris, “Leviticus,” 608).

¹⁵⁷ The interpretation of the difficult phrase is consistent with the LXX’s translation of לַעֲלֹת as “with.” Based on the fact that the preposition normally is rendered “over,” some have suggested that what is prohibited is eating over blood that has been spilled on the ground, i.e., instead of being brought to the altar. Others suggest that eating over the blood reflects a pagan rite (Milgrom, *EncJud* 4:1115, and S. Sperling, “Blood,” *ABD* 1:762). Another occurrence of the expression is found in 1 Sam 14:32.

¹⁵⁸ Magic differs from divination and sorcery in that magic is an attempt not to know the future but actually to manipulate powers to change events for good or bad. Divination and sorcery have often been associated with snakes and clouds because they have the same root letters as snakes (שׁוֹפָר) and clouds (עָנָן) in Hb.

¹⁵⁹ S. Ahituv, “Divination,” *EncJud* 6,112.

¹⁶⁰ B. O. Long, “Divination,” *IDBS*, 241–42.

had no revelation from God, they were to walk by faith and seek to obey his revealed will in the law.¹⁶¹

19:27–28 These two verses prohibit cutting the hair¹⁶² on the side of the head or the beard¹⁶³ and cutting the body¹⁶⁴ either for the dead or with tattoo marks.¹⁶⁵ These activities were practiced by pagans especially during times of mourning for the dead.¹⁶⁶ The Israelites were not to emulate pagan practices in this regard since they maintained a sacredness for life and for the human body.

(10) Miscellaneous Laws (19:29–37)

²⁹“Do not degrade your daughter by making her a prostitute, or the land will turn to prostitution and be filled with wickedness.

³⁰“Observe my Sabbaths and have reverence for my sanctuary. I am the LORD.

³¹“Do not turn to mediums or seek out spiritists, for you will be defiled by them. I am the LORD your God.

³²“Rise in the presence of the aged, show respect for the elderly and revere your God. I am the LORD.

³³“When an alien lives with you in your land, do not mistreat him. ³⁴The alien living with you must be treated as one of your native-born. Love him as yourself, for you were aliens in Egypt. I am the LORD your God.

³⁵“Do not use dishonest standards when measuring length, weight or quantity. ³⁶Use honest scales and honest weights, an honest ephah and an honest hin. I am the LORD your God, who brought you out of Egypt.

³⁷“Keep all my decrees and all my laws and follow them. I am the LORD.”

HARLOTRY AND SABBATHS (19:29–30). **19:29–30** In vv. 29–30 the Israelites are given three commands: (1) not to degrade their daughters by making them prostitutes,¹⁶⁷ (2) observance of the Sabbath Day, and (3) reverence for the sanctuary. Although these commands seem to

¹⁶¹ Wenham, *Leviticus*, 272. The Jewish Talmud contains accusations that Jesus employed sorcery (W. L. Liefeld, “Divination,” *ZPEB* 2:149).

¹⁶² Hair often had significance in religious practice (Lev 14:8–9; Num 6:5; Isa 22:12; Ezek 5:1–4; Amos 8:10; Micah 1:16).

¹⁶³ Orthodox Jews in Jerusalem and New York City continue to follow this law literally, for they allow the curls to grow down from their sideburns.

¹⁶⁴ Cutting the body in mourning rites is illustrated in Jer 16:6; 48:37 (e.g., see T. Lewis, *Cults of the Dead in Ancient Israel and Ugarit*, HSM [Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1989], 175).

¹⁶⁵ It is believed that ancient tattooing involved pricking the skin and inserting pigments (H. G. May, “Tattoo,” *IDB* 4:520, and L. M. Sweet and G. A. Gay, “Tattoo,” *ISBE* 4:739). The tattoo indicated that one was a slave to a particular deity (“Tattoo,” *EncJud* 15: 831–32).

¹⁶⁶ See von Rad, *Old Testament Theology*, 277; Deut 14:1; Isa 15:2; 22:12; Jer 16:6; Amos 8:10. See also 1 Kgs 18:28; Jer 41:5.

¹⁶⁷ Prostitution was often associated with idolatrous practices (Exod 34:16; Lev 17:7; Hos 4:10, 18; 5:3).

defy a unified classification, in Ezek 23:36–39 the Israelites in the exile were guilty of violating these same three laws.

DIVINATION (19:31). 19:31 The Israelites were not to turn to mediums¹⁶⁸ or spiritists¹⁶⁹ who sought communication with the dead. This was a common Canaanite practice (19:31; see Lev 20:6, 27; Deut 18:11; 1 Sam 28:3,9; 2 Kgs 21:6; 23:24; Isa 8:19; 19:3). The word “medium” (ʿōbōt) is used of the pit from which the spirits are called up, the spirit of the dead, or as here the necromancer.¹⁷⁰ The Septuagint nearly always translates ʿōb with the Greek word *eggastrimuthos*, “ventriloquist.”¹⁷¹ This translation may indicate a deception used on the part of the necromancer to deceive others into thinking he was actually calling up the dead.¹⁷² This command was violated by King Saul in 1 Sam 28:3–25.

ELDERLY, STRANGER, JUST BALANCES (19:32–37). 19:32–37 The final list of commands addresses respect for the elderly,¹⁷³ and the alien, as well as fair business practices. Respect for the elderly is essential for maintaining a decent society, so failure to respect and care for the aged indicates that a given culture is about to collapse (Isa 3:5).¹⁷⁴ Proper treatment of the alien¹⁷⁵ is a common theme in the Old Testament that often is juxtaposed, as in this context, to the reality that the Israelites themselves were once slaves in the land of Egypt (19:36; see Exod 22:21; 23:9; Deut 10:19; 24:17–18).

Honest business practices are also a common biblical theme (Deut 25:13–16; Prov 11:1; 16:11; 20:10,23; Hos 12:7; Mic 6:11). The Israelite priests apparently had the role of monitoring just measurements (Exod 30:13,24). Kaiser rightly asserts, “Holiness does not allow for dishonesty in the marketplace.”¹⁷⁶

The chapter closes with a call to obedience, which summarizes the

¹⁶⁸ Wenham maintains that the term מַדְבָּר, translated “mediums,” is a derogatory spelling of מַדְבָּר, “fathers,” and thus refers to the spirits of dead ancestors in the underworld (*Leviticus*, 134). Many argue that texts such as Lev 20:6,27; 21:5; Deut 14:1; 18:11; 26:14 refer to worshiping the dead (von Rad, *Old Testament Theology*, 208). The potential play on words would function as the transition to the next verse, which addresses the elderly.

¹⁶⁹ The Hb. word יָדַע only occurs with אֱלֹהִים in the Bible and is recognized to be from the root יָדַע, “to know.”

¹⁷⁰ Long, “Divination,” 242, and J. K. Kuemmerlin-McLean, “Magic (OT),” *ABD* 4:469.

¹⁷¹ LSJ, “εγγαστριμυθος,” 467.

¹⁷² See H. A. Hoffner, אֱוֹב (ʿōb), *TDOT* 1:133, and M. V. Van Pelt and W. C. Kaiser, אֱוֹב (ʿōb), *NIDOTTE* 1:303.

¹⁷³ The word indicates grey hair and hence old age (Gen 15:15; 25:8; 42:38; 44:29; Deut 32:25; Judg 8:32; Ruth 4:15; 1 Kgs 2:6,9; Ps 71:18; Prov 16:31; 20:29; Isa 46:4).

¹⁷⁴ See Levine, *Leviticus*, 134; Wenham, *Leviticus*, 273.

¹⁷⁵ Hb. גֵר never refers to natives of the land (Levine, *Leviticus*, 209, n. 47). It is probable that aliens among the Israelites (at least initially) were idolaters.

¹⁷⁶ Kaiser, “Leviticus,” 1135–36.

essence of the entire chapter (19:37). Although obedience is not the means to God's favor, it is the proper and necessary response to God's benevolence.

(II) Conclusion

Leviticus 19 is reflected both directly and indirectly in the teaching of the New Testament. Indirectly, the interdependence of holiness and love exhibited in this chapter is evident in the New Testament, particularly in 1 Peter. Moreover, James seems to have made conscious use of this chapter in his small epistle. L. K. Johnson has pointed out the parallels between Leviticus 19 and the Book of James:¹⁷⁷

Lev 19:2	Jas 5:12
Lev 19:13	Jas 5:4
Lev 19:15	Jas 2:1,9
Lev 19:16	Jas 4:11
Lev 19:17b	Jas 5:20
Lev 19:18a	Jas 5:9
Lev 19:18b	Jas 2:8

James considered the Ten Commandments and the law of love expressed in Lev 19:12–18 as the “Royal Law” (Jas 2:8) and the “Law of Liberty” (Jas 1:25; 2:12) by which Christians are to live.¹⁷⁸

Also what might be considered the theme of this chapter (if not all of the Torah), “You shall love your neighbor as yourself,” is repeated in the New Testament in Matt 19:19; 22:39; Mark 12:31; Luke 10:27; Rom 13:9; Gal 5:14; and Jas 2:8, illustrating the central role of this command for the people of God in any era. Moreover, the statement “be holy as I am holy” (Lev 19:2) corresponds to Matt 5:48, “Be perfect, therefore, as your heavenly Father is perfect.”¹⁷⁹

Other laws in this chapter, on the other hand, are time-bound and not directly applicable to believers in the church today. For example, the law of mixtures (19:18) was a law that had a role in differentiating Israel from other nations, while the law forbidding eating of the fruit of the land of Canaan until the fifth year (19:23–25) would be restricted to this unique event. But the context of the entire chapter connects faith and ethics, love and holiness; it thus illustrates truths still applicable to the Christian life today. In fact, “the religious life of faith must have ethical

¹⁷⁷ L. K. Johnson, “The Use of Leviticus 19 in the Letter of James,” *JBL* 101/3 (1982): 399.

¹⁷⁸ *Ibid.*, 401

¹⁷⁹ Carson, “Matthew,” 160.

outcomes if it makes a claim to authenticity.”¹⁸⁰ The people of God today, like the nation of Israel, are not completely defined by land borders or common language. It is their demonstration of ethics and holiness that characterizes their corporate identity.

4. Punishment for Holiness Violations (20:1–27)

Leviticus 20 is very similar in content to Leviticus 18. Many of the same sexual offenses listed in Leviticus 18 are repeated in Leviticus 20, but with Leviticus 20 more attention is given to the punishments which were to be meted out for these sexual violations.¹⁸¹ Also as in Leviticus 18 the worship of Molech is mentioned (18:21 with 20:1–5). Chapter 20 begins and concludes with a reference to pagan practices similar to the pattern of Leviticus 18. Another parallel between the two chapters is the promise that violation of this sexual code will result in the nation being expelled (lit., vomited) from the land (18:25–28; 20:22).

Although the content of Leviticus 18 and 20 is virtually identical, it is possible to make a distinction between the intended audiences of the chapters. Whereas Leviticus 18 addresses the would-be offender of a God-given decree, Leviticus 20 addresses the Israelite community, which was responsible for seeing that violations of Law receive their just reward.¹⁸² The seriousness of the offenses listed in Leviticus 20 is highlighted by the sevenfold repetition that a violator(s) of the laws “must be put to death,” *môt yûmât/û* (20:2,9,10,12,13,15,16). The repetition of much of the content of Leviticus 18 in Leviticus 20 stresses the gravity of the issues discussed, as does the twofold mentioning of the death penalty by stoning at the beginning (20:2) and end (20:27) of Leviticus 20. Both of these chapters focus on the connection between paganism and sexual degeneracy.¹⁸³

Unlike other ancient Near Eastern civilizations, in Israel crimes of a religious nature or against family life received the strongest punishment. This pattern contrasts with the cuneiform laws of the ancient Near East, where violations resulting in economic loss tended to be treated more severely. These laws run counter to the biblical ethic, which places more value on life than on material or possessions.

Some of the features of chap. 20 not found in chap. 18 occur in Leviti-

¹⁸⁰ Kaiser, “Leviticus,” 1132.

¹⁸¹ OT scholars note the difficulty of determining what type of laws appear here. Lev 8 contains apodictic law, similar to the Ten Commandments, while Lev 20 contains casuistic law. Only the law of sexual relations with the aunt (20:20) finds no parallel with Lev 18.

¹⁸² Clements, “Leviticus,” 54.

¹⁸³ Segal, *Pentateuch*, 53; Levine, *Leviticus*, 135.

cus 19—for example, reverence for parents (19:3; 20:9) and prohibition of divination and sorcery (19:31; 20:6,27). The structure of Leviticus 20 is as follows: Call to Avoid Pagan Practices (20:1–8), Protecting the Family (20:9–21), Possessing the Land (20:22–27).

(1) Don't Imitate Pagans (20:1–8)

¹The LORD said to Moses, ²“Say to the Israelites: ‘Any Israelite or any alien living in Israel who gives any of his children to Molech must be put to death. The people of the community are to stone him. ³I will set my face against that man and I will cut him off from his people; for by giving his children to Molech, he has defiled my sanctuary and profaned my holy name. ⁴If the people of the community close their eyes when that man gives one of his children to Molech and they fail to put him to death, ⁵I will set my face against that man and his family and will cut off from their people both him and all who follow him in prostituting themselves to Molech.

⁶“I will set my face against the person who turns to mediums and spiritists to prostitute himself by following them, and I will cut him off from his people.

⁷“Consecrate yourselves and be holy, because I am the LORD your God. ⁸Keep my decrees and follow them. I am the LORD, who makes you holy.

The Israelites were to shun the pagan practices of offering children to Molech (20:1–5) and seeking to understand the future through mediums and spiritists (20:6–8).

OFFERING TO MOLECH (20:1–5). **20:1–2** Offering of children to Molech was previously mentioned in Leviticus (18:21). There the offense was equated with profaning God’s name. Here the punishment for this crime is proscribed. Any Israelite or stranger living in the land who offered his child to Molech was to be put to death by stoning (20:2).¹⁸⁴ Offering children to Molech not only involved horrendous treatment of one’s offspring but also constituted idolatry in that the offering was a sacrifice being made to a pagan god.¹⁸⁵ Other offenses that required death by stoning included blasphemy (Lev 24:16; 1 Kgs 21:9–14), violation of the Sabbath (Num 15:35–36), idolatry (Deut 17:2–7; 21:21), prophesying in the name of another god (Deut 13:1–5), divination (Lev 20:27), promiscuity (Deut 22:21), rape of a betrothed virgin (Deut 22:24), filial insubordination (Deut 21:18–21), violation of a ban (Josh 7:25), and owning a goring ox (Exod 21:28–29). Although the reason this offense calls for stoning is not stated, it may be assumed that death by stoning would accentuate the community’s intolerance of these offenses

¹⁸⁴ According to Levine the expression בָּרוּחַ יְיָ, “he shall be put to death,” refers to execution by human hands (see Exod 21:15–17,29) (Levine *Leviticus*, 136).

¹⁸⁵ See Lev 18:21; Deut 18:10; 2 Kgs 23:10; 2 Kgs 16:3 (*ibid.*, 258).

and serve as a deterrent for future crimes.¹⁸⁶ The offense would be carried out by the congregation (Lev 24:14; Num 15:32–36; Josh 7:22), demonstrating the solidarity of the covenant community in response to sin.¹⁸⁷ In most circumstances it would be performed outside the camp (Lev 24:14; Deut 22:24; 1 Kgs 21:13). Stoning was still carried out during New Testament times (Matt 21:35; 23:37; John 10:31; Acts 14:5; 7:58–60).

20:3–5 The reason for this severe punishment is that offering children to Molech defiled God’s sanctuary and profaned his name (20:3; see 19:8,12). The putting to death of the criminal is equated with being “cut off” in 20:3 and 20:5 as a way to describe what awaits those who should have been put to death. The offense is so great that the Lord actively seeks the death of the one who would commit such an offense if the covenant community failed to be obedient by putting the perpetrator to death (20:4–5). The stated involvement of the Lord in carrying out this punishment lends support to the view that the penalty of being “cut off” involved the intervention of the Lord in bringing about a premature death. Not only would the perpetrators of the violation be subject to death, but their family members (*mišpāhā*)¹⁸⁸ would be subject to punishment as well. The purity of the sanctuary would be jeopardized by any offense that aroused God’s wrath because the sanctuary was the special place of God’s presence (20:3).

MEDIUMS AND SPIRITISTS (20:6–8). **20:6–8** The death penalty was also the punishment for consulting mediums and spiritists. By seeking mediums and spiritists the Israelites would be imitating a pagan lifestyle, which is described as “prostituting oneself” (20:5–6). The root meaning “commit fornication,” “prostitute oneself,” is *zānā*, which is used in sexual contexts for marital infidelity but is used here and elsewhere in the Old Testament as a metaphor for the infidelity that results from the worship of other gods (see 19:9). The metaphor is particularly meaningful because the relationship of Israel to the Lord is one of a covenant relationship. The Hebrew word *bērīt* (“covenant”), which defines Israel’s relationship to God, is used in fact for the marriage relationship (Prov 2:17; Mal 2:14). The same imagery is used in the New Testament in reference to Christ’s relationship to the church (1 Cor 6:15–20; 2 Cor 11:2; Eph 5:22–23).

¹⁸⁶ Wenham, *Leviticus*, 277. The Mishnah allows for the presentation of new evidence in favor of the offender shortly before the stoning is to take place. The procedure is described in *m. Sanh.* 6:1–4.

¹⁸⁷ A. Hill, *קלף (rgm)*, *NIDOTTE* 3:1050.

¹⁸⁸ According to Wright the term *הַקְּבִיּוֹת* should be viewed as smaller than the tribal unit but larger than a single family. He prefers to translate the term “kin group” (*God’s People in God’s Land*, 48–49).

(2) Protecting the Family (20:9–21)

9“**If anyone curses his father or mother, he must be put to death. He has cursed his father or his mother, and his blood will be on his own head.**

10“**If a man commits adultery with another man’s wife—with the wife of his neighbor—both the adulterer and the adulteress must be put to death.**

11“**If a man sleeps with his father’s wife, he has dishonored his father. Both the man and the woman must be put to death; their blood will be on their own heads.**

12“**If a man sleeps with his daughter-in-law, both of them must be put to death. What they have done is a perversion; their blood will be on their own heads.**

13“**If a man lies with a man as one lies with a woman, both of them have done what is detestable. They must be put to death; their blood will be on their own heads.**

14“**If a man marries both a woman and her mother, it is wicked. Both he and they must be burned in the fire, so that no wickedness will be among you.**

15“**If a man has sexual relations with an animal, he must be put to death, and you must kill the animal.**

16“**If a woman approaches an animal to have sexual relations with it, kill both the woman and the animal. They must be put to death; their blood will be on their own heads.**

17“**If a man marries his sister, the daughter of either his father or his mother, and they have sexual relations, it is a disgrace. They must be cut off before the eyes of their people. He has dishonored his sister and will be held responsible.**

18“**If a man lies with a woman during her monthly period and has sexual relations with her, he has exposed the source of her flow, and she has also uncovered it. Both of them must be cut off from their people.**

19“**Do not have sexual relations with the sister of either your mother or your father, for that would dishonor a close relative; both of you would be held responsible.**

20“**If a man sleeps with his aunt, he has dishonored his uncle. They will be held responsible; they will die childless.**

21“**If a man marries his brother’s wife, it is an act of impurity; he has dishonored his brother. They will be childless.**

After the admonition to be holy as God is holy is invoked in 20:7–8 (the theme of Lev 17–27),¹⁸⁹ the instruction turns to the consequences for the sexual sins listed in Leviticus 18.¹⁹⁰

CURSING PARENTS (20:9). 20:9 In every one of these offenses the central issue is proper conduct within the family unit. It is not surprising

¹⁸⁹The expression “keep my decrees and follow them” is also found in 18:4,30; 19:19,37; 20:22; 22:31.

¹⁹⁰Reference to sexual relations with the granddaughter, however, is omitted (see 18:10).

that the legislation begins with the role of one's relationship to his parents. Anyone who would curse (see Exod 21:17)¹⁹¹ either of his parents was to be put to death.¹⁹²

SEXUAL OFFENSES (20:10–21). **20:10–13** The offenses of adultery (20:10), incest with the father's wife (20:11), incest with a daughter-in-law (20:12), and homosexuality (20:13) all receive the same punishment—both guilty parties were to be put to death.

20:14 A different punishment was to be given for the man who married both a woman and her mother. Here the punishment was death by burning for all three of the guilty parties (20:14). It is not clear why burning was the prescribed mode of punishment for this offense although other sexual offenses receive the same punishment (Gen 38:24; Lev 21:9). Because it was specified that the method of punishment was to be burning in this case, we should assume that death by stoning was the prescribed method in the other capital cases in this context.

20:15–16 In the case of the sin of bestiality it is important that both the one who committed this crime and the animal involved were to be put to death. According to Jewish tradition the reason the animal was to be put to death was because the sight of the animal would have been a constant reminder of the heinous crime.¹⁹³ Although the manner in which the death penalty was to be carried out is not stated, it was most likely stoning, the common mode of execution.

20:17–21 Verse 17 begins a series of sexual offenses that do not carry the formulaic judgment "they must be put to death," the formula that predominates in the previous part of the chapter (20:10–14).¹⁹⁴ Rather, this section employs the expressions "they must be cut off" (20:17,18), "they will be held responsible" (20:17,19,20), and "they will die/be childless" (20:20,21). These offenses include incest with a half-sister (20:17), sexual relations with a menstruate woman (20:18), incest with an aunt (20:19–20), and adultery with the wife of a biological brother (20:21). Dying childless was regarded as a tragedy in biblical times (Gen 30:1–2; Ps 127:3–5) and in many cultures today. In a sense

¹⁹¹The Hb. word קלל literally means "to make light of" and is thus the antonym of כבד, "to make heavy," i.e., "to honor" (see 19:4; 24:11,14,15,23). Because cursing may have involved magic, what is involved here may be a pagan ritual to make the wording of the curse effective (Harris, "Leviticus," 612).

¹⁹²See also Deut 21:18–21. Normal discipline of an Israelite child would not lead to death (Prov 19:18). The Hb. word for "blood" often connotes that a capital crime has been committed and that the death penalty is warranted (Gen 42:22; Num 35:27; Lev 20:11–13,16,27; Josh 2:19; Ezek 3:18; 18:13 [Levine, *Leviticus*, 137, and Gerstenberger, *Leviticus*, 294]).

¹⁹³See *m. Sanh.* 7:4.

¹⁹⁴Lev 20:14 has a slight variation; there the method was burning rather than the general description of being put to death.

dying childless was a form of death because the guilty party's name became extinct. As Calvin stated:

The penalty of childlessness corresponds with the crime, for it is just that those should be exterminated in barrenness from the world, who endeavored to corrupt the holy race of Abraham with their adulterous seed.¹⁹⁵

However, since being childless may be deemed less severe than being "put to death" (20:10–14) or being "cut off" (29:17–19),¹⁹⁶ many scholars maintain that this offense was thought to be less severe than other forms of incest.¹⁹⁷

(3) *Possessing the Land (20:22–27)*

²²“Keep all my decrees and laws and follow them, so that the land where I am bringing you to live may not vomit you out. ²³You must not live according to the customs of the nations I am going to drive out before you. Because they did all these things, I abhorred them. ²⁴But I said to you, “You will possess their land; I will give it to you as an inheritance, a land flowing with milk and honey.” I am the LORD your God, who has set you apart from the nations.

²⁵“You must therefore make a distinction between clean and unclean animals and between unclean and clean birds. Do not defile yourselves by any animal or bird or anything that moves along the ground—those which I have set apart as unclean for you. ²⁶You are to be holy to me because I, the LORD, am holy, and I have set you apart from the nations to be my own.

²⁷“A man or woman who is a medium or spiritist among you must be put to death. You are to stone them; their blood will be on their own heads.”

20:22–27 In this section particular attention is given to the relationship of Israel's obedience to the occupation of the land of Canaan. The section thus has much in common with the concluding section of Leviticus 18 (18:24–30). Failure to obey God put the Israelites in the position of being abhorred (*quš*) by the Lord (20:23). The land itself would not be able to tolerate disobedience, for it would spew Israel from the land (20:22). Because God is giving the land,¹⁹⁸ it is stated again that the Israelites were to be different from the nations since they were to distinguish between the clean and the unclean (see Lev 11–15). In observing these differences the Israelites imitate God (i.e., become holy, 20:26a),

¹⁹⁵ J. Calvin, *Commentaries on the Last Books of Moses* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1979), 3:108. Henry VIII of England appealed to Lev 20:21 as grounds for his divorce with Catherine.

¹⁹⁶ Because “bearing one's guilt” is associated with “being cut off” in 20:17, it is safe to assume that the penalty in 20:19 is the same as in 20:17. There the offender “bears his guilt” as in 20:17, but the statement “being cut off” is not repeated. Unnecessary repetition is avoided.

¹⁹⁷ P. P. Jenson, *Graded Holiness: A Key to the Priestly Conception of the World*, JSOTSup, 106 [Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1992], 144.

¹⁹⁸ Lev 23:10; 25:2,38; Deut 1:8,20,25,35,36,39; 2:12; 3:18; 4:1,21,38,40; 5:16,31 (Budd, *Leviticus*, 297). The “land flowing with milk and honey” is a description of Canaan (Exod 3:8).

for God distinguished Israel from the other nations (20:25a,26b). Israel should obey the dietary laws to be distinct from other nations as well (20:25b). But to remain in the land the Israelites not only had to be separate from the pagan nations but pure. This purity included refusing to consult a medium or spirit to ascertain what lay in the future. The penalty for disobedience resulted in “their blood on their own heads” (20:27; see 20:9,11,12,13,16). The phrase “blood on their heads” draws attention to the seriousness of the offense and is to be equated with the death penalty, which is the stated punishment for these offenses in this chapter.

(4) Conclusion

The first commandment in this passage that required the death penalty, the cursing of parents, is repeated by Jesus in the New Testament in his interaction with the Pharisees (Matt 15:4; Mark 7:10). Under Roman law Israel could not carry out this punishment. Since it is part of Israel’s civil law, this punishment is no longer applicable for the Christian today. The moral principle and the respect one should have for one’s parents is not abrogated, however, and is reinforced by the Lord and by Paul (Eph 6:2). As moral laws the sexual offenses are still applicable during the age of the church, though like the crime of cursing of parents the capital punishments for these offenses were limited to the time when God’s people constituted a redeemed theocratic nation (John 8:1–11). Thus the capital punishments for these sexual offenses were not intended to be executed beyond Israel.

5. Regulations for Priests (21:1–22:33)

These two chapters differ from the other chapters of this section in that the regulations given are primarily directed toward the priests. This section thus supplements Leviticus 8–10. The primary issues addressed are the qualifications of the priesthood and the proper eating by the priests of the donations given by the Israelites. Although all the Israelites are called to holiness, there is an even greater degree of separation that must characterize those who are priests for the nation of Israel. Those who bear the vessels of the Lord in any age must exemplify unqualified holiness.¹⁹⁹ The threefold degree of holiness among the Israelites—the people, the priests, and the high priest—corresponds to the gradation of holiness in the tabernacle—the outer court, the Holy Place, the Most Holy Place.²⁰⁰

¹⁹⁹ Hamilton, *Handbook*, 304.

²⁰⁰ Kaiser, “Leviticus,” 1147.

The section is rich with formulae including the common expressions “the LORD said to Moses” (21:1,16; 22:1,17,26), “I am the LORD” (21:12; 22:2,3,8,30,31,33), and the unique expression “I am the LORD who makes you/him/them holy” (21:8,15,23; 22:9,16,32).²⁰¹ The uniqueness of this expression contributes to its significance and thus it is legitimate to view the occurrence of the statement as a closing proclamation of the various literary units.²⁰² The major structural divider, however, is the introductory formula “The LORD said to Moses,” which indicates the beginning of each section. The paragraphs should be divided as follows: Priest’s Family Life (21:1–15), Defects and Priesthood (21:16–24), Eating within Priest’s Family (22:1–16), Inappropriate Sacrifices (22:17–25), and Appropriate Sacrifices (22:26–33). The final section (22:31–33) contains three formulaic expressions to climactically close this unit.

(1) *Priest’s Family Life (21:1–15)*

¹The LORD said to Moses, “Speak to the priests, the sons of Aaron, and say to them: ‘A priest must not make himself ceremonially unclean for any of his people who die, ²except for a close relative, such as his mother or father, his son or daughter, his brother, ³or an unmarried sister who is dependent on him since she has no husband—for her he may make himself unclean. ⁴He must not make himself unclean for people related to him by marriage, and so defile himself.

⁵“Priests must not shave their heads or shave off the edges of their beards or cut their bodies. ⁶They must be holy to their God and must not profane the name of their God. Because they present the offerings made to the LORD by fire, the food of their God, they are to be holy.

⁷“They must not marry women defiled by prostitution or divorced from their husbands, because priests are holy to their God. ⁸Regard them as holy, because they offer up the food of your God. Consider them holy, because I the LORD am holy—I who make you holy.

⁹“If a priest’s daughter defiles herself by becoming a prostitute, she disgraces her father; she must be burned in the fire.

¹⁰“The high priest, the one among his brothers who has had the anointing oil poured on his head and who has been ordained to wear the priestly garments, must not let his hair become unkempt or tear his clothes. ¹¹He must not enter a place where there is a dead body. He must not make himself unclean, even for his father or mother, ¹²nor leave the sanctuary of his God or desecrate it, because he has been dedicated by the anointing oil of his God. I am the LORD.

¹³“The woman he marries must be a virgin. ¹⁴He must not marry a widow, a divorced woman, or a woman defiled by prostitution, but only a virgin from his own people, ¹⁵so he will not defile his offspring among his people. I am the LORD, who makes him holy.”

²⁰¹The only other occurrence of this expression is in 20:8.

²⁰²Thus Wenham, *Leviticus*, 289.

PRIESTS AND THE DEAD (21:1–6). **21:1–6** The first regulation for the priest pertained to which dead relatives²⁰³ of the priest rendered him ceremonially unclean (see 11:8,11,24,25,27,32,35,39,40). Specifically, the law delineated in what cases contact with a corpse would render the priest ceremonially unclean. Gerstenberger comments on the reasons the priests especially had to avoid contact with the dead: “Anything dead is laden with the power of death, and for that reason it does, in a special way, render a thing or person “impure,” that is, incapable of dealing with the holy, the power of life itself.”²⁰⁴ Thus by coming in contact with the dead a priest would stand in danger of being in a state of defilement. It is equally conceivable that the prohibition of the priesthood to be involved in funerary activities was to avoid sanctioning the cults of the dead.²⁰⁵ The priest could only come into contact with the corpse of a close relative,²⁰⁶ which is defined as one’s mother, father, son, daughter, brother, or an unmarried²⁰⁷ sister (21:2–3). The same six relatives are repeated in Ezek 44:25, a text that echoes the legislation of this section. The priest could come into contact with the corpse of a relative to whom he is related by marriage (21:4). This avoidance of contact with the dead should be understood as a polemic against the widespread worship of the dead among Israel’s neighbors.²⁰⁸ Administering funerals, even for one’s wife, was not the priest’s responsibility. The laws regarding contact with a corpse by the congregation of the Israelites is addressed in Num 19:10–22. Touching a dead body rendered one unclean for seven days (Num 19:11).

Priests were also not to shave their heads or beards or slash their bodies (21:5). The practice of shaving the head, or making oneself bald, is also prohibited in Deut 14:1 and appears to be associated with pagan mourning rites (Isa 3:24; 15:2; Jer 47:5; 48:37; Ezek 7:18; 27:31; Amos 8:10; Mic 1:16). Shaving the edge of the beard and slashing the body were also prohibited in Lev 19:27–38.²⁰⁹ These activities were associated

²⁰³ The Hb. word **שֵׁפֶט** designates the dead person. The cognate noun refers to “gravestone, funerary monument” in other Semitic languages (T. Lewis, *Cults of the Dead in Ancient Israel and Ugarit*, HSM [Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1989], 162, n. 4).

²⁰⁴ Gerstenberger, *Leviticus*, 69.

²⁰⁵ Levine, “Leviticus, Book of,” 316.

²⁰⁶ See discussion of term **אָחִי** in Leviticus 18.

²⁰⁷ The Hb. noun **בְּתוּלָה** is normally translated “virgin.” G. J. Wenham argues that in this context the term should be rendered “a girl of marriageable age” (“Betulah: ‘A Girl of Marriageable Age,’” *VT* 22 [1972]: 347).

²⁰⁸ See Levine, *Leviticus*, 141. The frequent prohibition against imitating the practices involved with the cult of the dead possibly indicates that this was a source of particular temptation for the Israelites (von Rad, *Old Testament Theology*, 1:208, 277, and Lewis, *Cults of the Dead in Ancient Israel and Ugarit*).

²⁰⁹ See my comments on 19:27–28.

with pagan mourning rites and thus were to be shunned among the Israelite priesthood. The priests were not to defile themselves in this way, for they had the responsibility of presenting the sacrificial offerings to the Lord. These offerings are described as the “food of God” (see 21:8,17,21,22; 22:13,25), which is a metaphorical expression for the offerings (Ps 50:12–13). It is the priests who have the privilege of sharing this food (Lev 22:13). This was notably different from the pagan notions that the gods actually needed food for sustenance. According to Ringgren the gods were served two meals a day one in the morning and one in the evening. They were served foods such as meat, fish, fruit, honey, and drinks like milk and wine. Oftentimes a curtain would be drawn before the table of a god while he “ate.”²¹⁰

The Israelite priests had to be circumspect in all areas of their lives because they were holy, set apart unto God, and they alone had the awesome responsibility of presenting offerings to God (21:6).

PRIESTS AND WOMEN (21:7–9). **21:7–9** Priests are also prohibited from marrying prostitutes²¹¹ and divorcees (21:7). The noun “divorcee” is from the root *grš*, which denotes a separation between persons or groups. The term has the meaning of “drive away” and was used for driving Adam from the garden (Gen 3:24), but most often it was used for driving the Canaanites from the land (Exod 23:28,29,31; 33:2; Deut 33:27; Josh 24:12,18; Judg 2:3; 6:9; 1 Chr 17:21; Pss 78:55; 80:8[9]).²¹² The term is also used of divorce in Num 30:10; Ezek 44:22. In the Old Testament the rite of divorce was restricted to the man except on occasions when the man falsely accused his wife of premarital intercourse or when he had sexual relations with her prior to marriage (Deut 22:13–21,28–29). Since priests could marry widows,²¹³ the prohibition was designed to be a comment on the woman’s character rather than her sexual experience. Also since only in the case of the widow was the former sexual partner absent, the legislation must be addressing the question of paternity. There could be a question of a male son’s legitimacy for priesthood if his mother had been sexually active shortly before she married the priest.

If the daughter of a priest becomes a prostitute, it is a capital offense

²¹⁰ H. Ringgren, *Religions of the Ancient Near East* (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1973), 81.

²¹¹ The word translated “defiled,” מְקַדְּשֵׁי, is taken by M. Zipor to refer to a temple prostitute (“Restrictions on Marriage for Priests,” *Bib* 68 [1987]: 265–66). Budd argues that the expression might refer to a woman who may have been raped (Deut 22:25–27; *Leviticus*, 301).

²¹² See H. Stigers, גָּרַשׁ (*gāraš*), *TWOT* 1:173–74, and P. Els, גָּרַשׁ (*grš*), *NIDOTTE* 1:898–89. For a comprehensive discussion of divorce in rabbinic literature see B. Z. Schereschewsky, “Divorce,” *EncJud* 6, 125–35.

²¹³ Ezek 44:22 specifies the widow of a priest.

of death by burning (21:9). A priest who would allow a prostitute to reside under his roof would not be qualified to render decisions on behalf of the covenant community. This rare form of punishment was also suggested for prostitution in Genesis 38. This prohibition regarding the priest's daughter may also be a warning of apostasy, since pagan worship often involved cultic prostitution. The priest was not in any way to be associated with these evil practices because he was the designated vessel in the service of God (21:8).

HIGH PRIEST'S FAMILY (21:10–15). **21:10–12** The high priest was held to an even higher standard than an ordinary priest. The high priest, who is described as one having the anointing and special garments (8:30), was not to allow his hair to become unkempt or to tear his clothes (21:10; see 10:6). He was not even able to come into contact with the corpse of his father or his mother but had to be committed to maintaining the service of the tabernacle (21:11–12).

21:13–15 Unlike other priests the high priest could only marry a virgin (21:13–14). Abstinence from premarital sex on the part of the wife of the high priest would certainly say something about her character, although the legitimacy of the offspring to inherit the high priesthood may have been the greater concern (21:15).

(2) *Priests with Defects (21:16–24)*

¹⁶The LORD said to Moses, ¹⁷“Say to Aaron: ‘For the generations to come none of your descendants who has a defect may come near to offer the food of his God. ¹⁸No man who has any defect may come near: no man who is blind or lame, disfigured or deformed; ¹⁹no man with a crippled foot or hand, ²⁰or who is hunchbacked or dwarfed, or who has any eye defect, or who has festering or running sores or damaged testicles. ²¹No descendant of Aaron the priest who has any defect is to come near to present the offerings made to the LORD by fire. He has a defect; he must not come near to offer the food of his God. ²²He may eat the most holy food of his God, as well as the holy food; ²³yet because of his defect, he must not go near the curtain or approach the altar, and so desecrate my sanctuary. I am the LORD, who makes them holy.’”

²⁴So Moses told this to Aaron and his sons and to all the Israelites.

21:16–24 After the opening formula (21:16) this paragraph begins with the summary statement that a priest with a physical defect was unqualified for priestly service (21:17–18a). After the summary statement the passage delineates what type of defects render a priest unqualified (21:18b–20). Anyone from among the priesthood who had any of these defects was disqualified from presenting offerings to God (21:17, 18a, 21). The presence of a defect does not mean that the priest was cut off from the donations offered to the priests for his food, only that he could not

approach the tabernacle (21:22–23). The twelve physical abnormalities listed may be representative, although this passage comprises the most comprehensive discussion on the subject of defects in the Bible.²¹⁴ The word for “defect” was also used of those blemishes that disqualified an animal from being offered upon the altar (22:20,21,25; Num 19:2; Deut 15:21; 17:1).²¹⁵ Thus God’s perfection demanded the highest degree of perfection possible among those who minister and among the offerings that were presented to him.²¹⁶ This demand for perfection of both the priest and the offering was ultimately and uniquely fulfilled in the person of Jesus Christ, who as High Priest was not only unblemished and unstained (Heb 7:26), but as the sacrificial Lamb was a sacrifice without defect (1 Pet 1:19).

In intertestamental days Antigonus had the ears of the high priest Hyrcanus II (ca. 40 B.C.) cut off so that (because of this law) he would forever be disqualified from being high priest again.²¹⁷ In addition, Deut 23:1 refers to a physical defect that if it existed among the congregation at large would prohibit a man from enjoying participation in the covenant community.

(3) *Eating within Priest’s Family (22:1–16)*

¹The LORD said to Moses, ²“Tell Aaron and his sons to treat with respect the sacred offerings the Israelites consecrate to me, so they will not profane my holy name. I am the LORD.

³“Say to them: ‘For the generations to come, if any of your descendants is ceremonially unclean and yet comes near the sacred offerings that the Israelites consecrate to the LORD, that person must be cut off from my presence. I am the LORD.

⁴“If a descendant of Aaron has an infectious skin disease or a bodily discharge, he may not eat the sacred offerings until he is cleansed. He will also be unclean if he touches something defiled by a corpse or by anyone who has an emission of semen,⁵ or if he touches any crawling thing that makes him unclean, or any person who makes him unclean, whatever the uncleanness may be.⁶ The one who touches any such thing will be unclean till evening. He must not eat any of the sacred offerings unless he has bathed himself with water.⁷ When the sun goes down, he will be clean, and after that he may eat the sacred offerings, for they are his food.⁸ He must not eat anything found dead or torn by wild animals, and so become unclean through it. I am the LORD.

⁹“The priests are to keep my requirements so that they do not become guilty and die for treating them with contempt. I am the LORD, who makes them holy.

²¹⁴The twelve were expanded into 142 by the rabbis (*m. Bek. 7:1–7*).

²¹⁵A deformed sheep or cow could serve as a freewill offering (22:23).

²¹⁶R. K. Harrison and E. H. Merrill, מָאֵם (*mām*), *NIDOTTE* 2:870.

²¹⁷F. F. Bruce, *New Testament History* (New York: Doubleday, 1980), 14.

¹⁰“No one outside a priest’s family may eat the sacred offering, nor may the guest of a priest or his hired worker eat it. ¹¹But if a priest buys a slave with money, or if a slave is born in his household, that slave may eat his food. ¹²If a priest’s daughter marries anyone other than a priest, she may not eat any of the sacred contributions. ¹³But if a priest’s daughter becomes a widow or is divorced, yet has no children, and she returns to live in her father’s house as in her youth, she may eat of her father’s food. No unauthorized person, however, may eat any of it.

¹⁴“If anyone eats a sacred offering by mistake, he must make restitution to the priest for the offering and add a fifth of the value to it. ¹⁵The priests must not desecrate the sacred offerings the Israelites present to the LORD ¹⁶by allowing them to eat the sacred offerings and so bring upon them guilt requiring payment. I am the LORD, who makes them holy.”

UNCLEAN PRIEST MAY NOT EAT OFFERING (22:1–9). **22:1–3** In this section the priests are commanded not to come near the offerings in a state of uncleanness. Violation of this statute would result in being cut off from God’s presence (22:3; see 7:19–21). The priests are rather to treat the holy gifts with respect (22:2). The word translated “treat with respect” (*nzr*) is cognate to the noun from which we get the word “Nazirite,” thus the connotation “put away for separate use” or “treat as distinct.”

22:4–9 Verses 4–8 delineate the ways the priest may become unclean and the process of being restored.²¹⁸ The restoration procedure required two components: bathing oneself in water and waiting until evening (22:6). The seriousness of these violations is accentuated by the fact that the priest who disobeyed these specific regulations would be put to death (22:9). These contaminations and the ritual methods to remove the uncleanness were addressed in Leviticus 11–15. They are repeated here in reference to their specific application to the priesthood. The paragraph ends with the words: “I am the LORD, who makes them holy,” which also is the concluding comment for the other two sections of the chapter (22:16,32).

ONLY FAMILY OF PRIESTS MAY EAT OFFERINGS (22:10–16). **22:10–12** This section deals with the question of who may eat of the food offerings dedicated to the priests (Lev 6–7). No one outside the priest’s family could partake of the offerings made to the Lord, except for an acquired slave or a slave born in the priest’s household (22:10–11). Otherwise, those outside a priest’s family were prohibited from eating. The word *zār*, translated in the NIV “outside the family” (22:10), is

²¹⁸ One manner in which one became unclean was by contact with a corpse (22:4; see 21:1). The word translated “corpse” is the Hb. word *šēṭ*, which also refers to a corpse in Lev 19:28; Num 5:2; 9:6,7,10.

normally translated “stranger,” referring to someone outside the ethnic boundaries of Israel. The word was also used, however, of those who do not belong to the priesthood (Exod 29:33; Num 3:10,18; 17:5; 18:4,7). It may therefore be rendered “layman.”²¹⁹ The slave, who would be qualified to eat of a sacrifice probably was circumcised as a sign of his membership in the covenant. Daughters of priests who married laymen were also disqualified from partaking of a sacrificial meal (22:12).

22:13–16 A daughter of a priest who was widowed or divorced and childless could return to the home of her father and be qualified to partake of the sacred meals (22:13). The daughter would have the legal status she had before marriage, living under her father’s roof and dependent on her father for her livelihood (22:13). The daughter’s change of status indicated that the holiness of a priest extended throughout his household. A New Testament parallel pertains to those who reside in the home of believer priests (1 Cor 7:14). A person without connection to the priesthood who unintentionally ate the sacred meal by mistake had to make restitution and add a fifth, as was required in the guilt offering (22:14–16).

(4) *Inappropriate Sacrifices (22:17–25)*

¹⁷The LORD said to Moses, ¹⁸“Speak to Aaron and his sons and to all the Israelites and say to them: ‘If any of you—either an Israelite or an alien living in Israel—presents a gift for a burnt offering to the LORD, either to fulfill a vow or as a freewill offering, ¹⁹you must present a male without defect from the cattle, sheep or goats in order that it may be accepted on your behalf. ²⁰Do not bring anything with a defect, because it will not be accepted on your behalf. ²¹When anyone brings from the herd or flock a fellowship offering to the LORD to fulfill a special vow or as a freewill offering, it must be without defect or blemish to be acceptable. ²²Do not offer to the LORD the blind, the injured or the maimed, or anything with warts or festering or running sores. Do not place any of these on the altar as an offering made to the LORD by fire. ²³You may, however, present as a freewill offering an ox or a sheep that is deformed or stunted, but it will not be accepted in fulfillment of a vow. ²⁴You must not offer to the LORD an animal whose testicles are bruised, crushed, torn or cut. You must not do this in your own land, ²⁵and you must not accept such animals from the hand of a foreigner and offer them as the food of your God. They will not be accepted on your behalf, because they are deformed and have defects.’”

22:17–22 The instruction in this section repeats much of what is found in Leviticus 1–7 regarding the correct procedure to present burnt offerings and fellowship offerings to fulfill a vow to the Lord.²²⁰ This

²¹⁹L. A. Snijders, זָרִי/זָרָה *zār/zār* TDOT 5:55, and R. Martin-Achard, זָרִי *zār* TLOT 1:391.

²²⁰The use of the root to fulfill a vow is also attested in Num 15:3,8. For offerings to be acceptable in the sight of the Lord see 1:3–17; 7:18; 19:5; 22:21,29; 23:11.

section, however, supplements the earlier law because it focuses on those blemishes that would disqualify an animal from being a sacrifice. The animals, like the priests, must be without defect (22:19–22). To bring a defective gift to a superior would not only be ludicrous but insulting. This shared quality between the priest and the sacrificial offering accentuated the close relationship between the two. As noted above, the requirement that the priest and the animal be without defect foreshadowed the sacrifice of Christ, who was an unblemished high priest and sacrificial lamb (2 Cor 5:21; Heb. 4:14–15; 7:25–28; 1 Pet 2:22; 1 John 3:5; 8:46). As the head of the church he is purifying his bride so that she may become holy and without defect (Eph 1:4; 5:25–27; Col 1:22). As believer-priests (1 Pet 2:4–10; Rev 1:6; 5:10; 20:6) Christians are to conduct themselves with all purity (2 Pet 3:11–12, 14; Phil 1:10; 2:15; 1 Thess 5:12–23; Titus 2:11–14). Spiritual leaders are subject to an even stricter standard (1 Tim 3:1–13; Titus 1:5–9).²²¹ “Spiritual privilege and honor carry with them special obligations for holiness of life.”²²²

22:23–25 Deformed animals or stunted animals could be presented as a freewill offering if they were not in fulfillment of a vow (22:23). However, animals whose testicles were damaged were disqualified for the freewill offering (22:24–25).²²³ Only the very best is adequate for God.

(5) *Appropriate Sacrifices (22:26–30)*

²⁶The LORD said to Moses, ²⁷“When a calf, a lamb or a goat is born, it is to remain with its mother for seven days. From the eighth day on, it will be acceptable as an offering made to the LORD by fire. ²⁸Do not slaughter a cow or a sheep and its young on the same day.

²⁹“When you sacrifice a thank offering to the LORD, sacrifice it in such a way that it will be accepted on your behalf. ³⁰It must be eaten that same day; leave none of it till morning. I am the LORD.

22:26–30 This section offers additional information regarding sacrificing animals. For an animal to be sacrificed it had to be at least seven days old; however, it was forbidden to offer the young animal on the same day its mother was slaughtered (22:27–28).²²⁴ These laws may have had a polemical function against pagan practices or they may

²²¹ See Hartley, *Leviticus*, 351–52.

²²² Kaiser, “Leviticus,” 1150. See comments in chap. 3, esp. pp. 176–77.

²²³ V. P. Hamilton argues that v. 24 refers to various methods of castration (מַאֲכָה [māʾāk], *TWOT* 1:519).

²²⁴ Kaiser suggests that the reason the animal must be at least eight days old is that before this it was unfit for eating (“Leviticus,” 1152).

merely promote sensitivities and high regard for life.²²⁵ A similar law in Exod 22:30 states that animals are to be delivered up on the eighth day, perhaps to the tabernacle (see also Exod 23:19; 34:26; Deut 14:21).²²⁶ Finally, this section informs us that thank offerings had to be eaten on the day they were offered, and no residue of the offerings were to remain (22:29–30; see Lev 7:15; Exod 34:25).

(6) *Concluding Exhortation (22:31–33)*

31“Keep my commands and follow them. I am the LORD. **32**Do not profane my holy name. I must be acknowledged as holy by the Israelites. I am the LORD, who makes you holy **33**and who brought you out of Egypt to be your God. I am the LORD.”

22:31–33 The final section of Leviticus 22 functions as the conclusion for the entire section regarding the priests (21:1–22:30). The warning against profaning God’s name is repeated from Lev 19:12; 20:3; 21:6; 22:2. The foundation and motivation for obedience is the deliverance from Egypt, the formative saving event in the Old Testament.

(7) *Conclusion*

As the spiritual guides of the people of God, Israel’s leaders were to be without blemish and above reproach. The same principle applies to those who take the mantle of Christian leadership in the church today (1 Tim 3:2).²²⁷

One particular feature of holiness of the Israelite priesthood emphasized in this section is the avoidance of contact with the dead (21:1–6). This possibly formed part of the rationalization of the priest in the parable of the Good Samaritan, who avoided contact with the injured man (Luke 10:30–31).

The priests’ motivation to obey these commands is the fact that the God who lovingly gives these statutes is the same God who delivered the Israelites from the Egyptians (22:32–33). As the exodus event was the motivation for service for the Old Testament believer, so the sacrifice of Christ and the deliverance Christ’s death provided is the motivation for obedience and service in the New Testament (Rom 12:1–2).

²²⁵ Clements (“Leviticus,” 59) maintains the former premise while Kaiser (*Toward Old Testament Ethics*, 157) argues for the latter.

²²⁶ Gerstenberger, *Leviticus*, 331.

²²⁷ See the Christian application in the conclusion to Lev 8–10, “The Institution of the Priesthood,” p. 163.

6. Appointed Festivals (23:1–44)

This chapter is the most comprehensive legal discussion regarding the institution of the Israelite feasts in the Bible. Along with Numbers 28–29, this segment records necessary information about the time sacrifices were offered throughout the year. Other portions of Scripture that address the celebration of feasts include Exod 23:12–17; 34:21–24; and Deut 16:1–17. The Feasts of Purim and Hanukkah are not addressed in this chapter since these feasts celebrate events that occurred after Moses' time.

(1) *Introduction to Festivals (23:1–2)*

¹The LORD said to Moses, ²“Speak to the Israelites and say to them: ‘These are my appointed feasts, the appointed feasts of the LORD, which you are to proclaim as sacred assemblies.’”

23:1–2 The chapter begins with the introductory formula: “The LORD said to Moses” (23:1), while the remainder of the chapter provides information on the observance of the appointed feasts throughout the calendrical year (23:2). The chapter closes (23:44) with the declaration that Moses had announced the appointed feasts to the Israelites. Clearly the chapter is a unified whole.

The festivals are referred to as “appointed feasts” (*mōʿēd*; 23:2,4,37,44)²²⁸ and “sacred assemblies” (*miqrāʾ qōdeš*; 23:2,3,4,7,8,21,24,27,35,36,37).²²⁹ Apart from the use of the term in the conclusion to the chapter, each occurrence of “appointed feast” is juxtaposed with “sacred assembly.” Each occurrence of the term “sacred assembly” is accompanied by an explanation that work is prohibited, apart from the first occurrence of the term in the introduction. The appointed feasts and sacred assemblies were national celebrations. These festive occasions afforded opportunity for the Israelites to renew their allegiance to God and to promote national unity.²³⁰ The celebration of the annual feasts united the nation as they expressed their devotion to God for his past acts of goodness on their behalf.

²²⁸ Although the precise term does not occur with each of the festivals, it is to be understood from the summary comments of 23:2,37,44 that all the festivals should be described by this term. The word may refer to any designated time or place (Exod 9:5; Num 28:2; Pss 2; 102:13[14]; Jer 8:7; Hab 2:3). *Mōʿēd* appears in parallelism with מִקְרָא (Hos 9:5) and thus could refer to all religious assemblies. The term occurs 224 times in the OT with most of the occurrences in the phrase *ōhel mōʿēd*, “Tent of Meeting” (M. Soebo, מִשְׁכַּן מִקְרָא, *TLOT* 2:551, and T. Williams, מִשְׁכַּן מִקְרָא, *NIDOTTE* 2:485).

²²⁹ Later in Israel's history exposition of Scripture accompanied these sacred assemblies (see Neh 8–9).

²³⁰ Wolf, *Pentateuch*, 181.

The religious calendar coincided with the agricultural year, particularly in the celebration of the harvest. The feasts of Passover and Unleavened Bread were celebrated at the time of the barley harvest in the spring, while Pentecost was celebrated fifty days later in late spring/early summer during the time of the wheat harvest. The fall festivals of Trumpets, Day of Atonement, and Tabernacles during the seventh month (September/October) were celebrated in conjunction with the harvest of grapes, figs, and olives.²³¹

Familiar formulae, particularly the introductory formula “The LORD said to Moses,” introduce many of the paragraphs (e.g., 23:1,9,23,26,33) in Leviticus 23. The concluding formula “I am the LORD your God” occurs twice (23:22,43) and divides the chapter into two main parts: 23:1–22 addresses the spring festivals while 23:23–43 provides the proper procedures to be followed in the fall festivals. Another repeated phrase is “wherever you live” (23:14,17,21,31), which occurred earlier in 3:17; 7:26; 13:46. The import of the phrase would be that the celebration was to take place throughout the precincts at the homes of the Israelites, not just at the sanctuary.

The word *mô‘ēd*, “appointed feast,” refers to sacred times elsewhere in the Pentateuch (Exod 13:10; 23:15; 34:18; Num 10:10; 15:3; 29:39; Deut 31:10; see also Gen 1:14). The *miqrā’ qōdeš* (“sacred assemblies” or “holy convocations”) are special religious days, and on them no work was to be done.²³² The setting apart of these holy days did not indicate that other days were not important, but they did serve as a reminder that all time belonged to God. The unifying theme that acts as a thread tying all these occasions together was the mighty acts of God on Israel’s behalf.

(2) *Sabbath* (23:3)

³“There are six days when you may work, but the seventh day is a Sabbath of rest, a day of sacred assembly. You are not to do any work; wherever you live, it is a Sabbath to the LORD.

23:3 The first mentioned festival is the Sabbath,²³³ which was the most often celebrated feast (celebrated each week) and the one that forms

²³¹ Ibid.

²³² The word *mēlākā* (“work,” 23:3) in the command to prohibit work occurs throughout the chapter (23:7,8,21,25,35,36).

²³³ The Sabbath is called a *šabbat šabbātôn*, NIV “Sabbath of rest.” This phrase occurs elsewhere only in Exod 16:23; 31:15; 35:2; Lev 16:31; 25:4,5. There have been many attempts to suggest that the OT Sabbath was borrowed from another ANE country, but the connections have not been convincing. The Sabbath is associated with annual Israelite feasts also in Exod 23:12.

the basis for the remaining feasts. The fact that the Sabbath, the seventh day (Gen 2:3; Exod 16:26; 20:10; 31:15), is foundational is apparent from several observations. Archer has well summarized the significance of the number seven, which is derived from the ordained weekly cycle:

The religious year is dominated by the sacred number seven (symbolizing the perfect work of God). Hence (a) every seventh day is a holy sabbath; (b) every seventh year is a Sabbath year of rest for the crop-bearing land; (c) after seven sevens of years the fiftieth year is to be hallowed as a jubilee, in which all mortgaged lands are to be returned to the original family; (d) Passover is held at the end of the second heptad of Abib, on the evening of the fourteenth; (e) the Feast of Unleavened Bread is celebrated for the next seven days; (f) the Feast of Pentecost is celebrated after seven sevens of days following the offering of the wave-sheaf (hence on the "fiftieth" day); (g) the seventh month, Tishri, is especially sanctified by three holy observances: the Feast of Trumpets, the Day of Atonement, and the Feast of Tabernacles; (h) the Feast of Tabernacles is celebrated seven days (fifteenth to twenty-second of Tishri), plus an eighth day for the final convocation.²³⁴

In addition, there are seven feasts prescribed in Leviticus 23. During these festivals there are seven days of rest. Moreover, the preeminence of the Sabbath may be observed by the fact that elsewhere in the chapter the Hebrew word *mô'ēd*, "feast," refers only to annual events occurring at the same time each year, whereas the Sabbath is the only weekly observance. Finally, the significance of the Sabbath is evident in that most of the festivals observe days where no work is to be done, thus imitating Sabbath observance. The festivals are "Sabbath-like." Although the legislation for the Sabbath is given primarily in the Ten Commandments, there is evidence that its observance was recognized earlier by the Israelites (Exod 16:5,22).

Unlike in the Decalogue, there is no mention here of a motivation for keeping the Sabbath (e.g., Exod 20; Deut 5).²³⁵ It should be assumed, however, that these motivations were known to the Israelites. All that is stated here is the essence of the Sabbath command that the Israelite is to work for six days, but on the seventh day work was to cease.²³⁶ There was to be a hiatus from the normal routine of life when devotion should be given to spiritual matters. Or as Gispén states: "The goal of all work, its crown, is rest, the Sabbath before the Lord."²³⁷ Humans are not to be bound to endless toil. The Sabbath was meant to be a joyous occasion

²³⁴ Archer, *Introduction*, 259–60.

²³⁵ See also Exod 16:5–30; 35:3; Num 15:32.

²³⁶ The verb means "cease, desist, rest" (BDB, 991–92).

²³⁷ W. H. Gispén, *Het Boek Leviticus*, Commentaar op het OT (Kampen: Kok, 1950), 350. Cited by Wenham, *Leviticus*, 319.

(2 Kgs 4:23; Isa 58:13–14)²³⁸ of spiritual reflection with the whole heart, for it demarcated a weekly renewal of Israel's covenant relationship with God.²³⁹ Every seventh day the Israelite was to renounce any dominion over time and thereby his own autonomy. By doing so he acknowledged God's dominion over both time and his own life. Thus keeping the Sabbath was an expression of the recognition of God's sovereignty.²⁴⁰

What was to be observed on the Sabbath is expressed in Leviticus 23 in the simplest terms.²⁴¹ This contrasts with the Sabbath law in the Ten Commandments, where it is the longest of the ten laws. In Exod 20:8–11 the Israelite is motivated to obey the Sabbath because in doing so he imitates God, who worked six days in creating the world and rested on the seventh. In Deut 5:12–15 the motivation for keeping the Sabbath is to provide rest, especially for those working as servants. The Israelites were motivated to allow workers to rest by remembering that they too were once servants, yet God delivered them with an outstretched arm (Deut 5:15).²⁴² The extreme importance attached to Sabbath observance is found in the Book of Ezekiel, where the prophet places the blame for the exile of the Southern Kingdom in part on the Israelites' failure to keep the Sabbath (Ezek 22:8,26,31). Although Christians today are not commanded to keep the Sabbath (Rom 14:5–6; Col 2:16–17), the principle of resting one day in seven should be followed because God is ultimately in control of man's time.²⁴³ The Sabbath, together with circumcision and the dietary laws, uniquely functioned as signs separating Israel from the other nations (Exod 31:13–17)²⁴⁴ and contributed to their national identity. During the intertestamental period Antiochus Epiphanes sought to destroy the Israelites' identity by prohibiting circumcision and Sabbath Day observance (*1 Macc* 1:41–53; *2 Macc* 6:6).²⁴⁵

²³⁸ Reference to "wherever you live" (23:3) may indicate that the Sabbath is to be primarily observed in the home and not solely at the central sanctuary (Levine, *Leviticus*, 155).

²³⁹ H. H. P. Dressler, "The Sabbath in the Old Testament," in *From Sabbath to Lord's Day*, ed. D. Carson (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1982), 32.

²⁴⁰ M. Tsevat, "The Basic Meaning of the Biblical Sabbath," *ZAW* 84 (1972): 455.

²⁴¹ From Num 28:9,19 we learn that additional sacrifices were required for the nation on the Sabbath Day.

²⁴² The Rabbis argued that the maximum a person could walk on the Sabbath was limited to two thousand cubits based upon Num 35:2–5 (Acts 1:12; *m. Erub.* 4:1). For further discussion of what constituted work on the Sabbath see *m. Erub.*

²⁴³ See Wiersbe, *Be Holy*, 103.

²⁴⁴ See Introduction, pp. 66–67.

²⁴⁵ For an excellent summary of the typological use of the Sabbath in Jewish literature, see S. Bacchiocchi, "Sabbatical Typologies of Messianic Redemption," *Journal for the Study of Judaism in the Persian, Hellenistic, and Roman Period*, 17 (1986): 153–76.

(3) *Passover and Unleavened Bread (23:4–8)*

4“These are the LORD’s appointed feasts, the sacred assemblies you are to proclaim at their appointed times: 5The LORD’s Passover begins at twilight on the fourteenth day of the first month. 6On the fifteenth day of that month the LORD’s Feast of Unleavened Bread begins; for seven days you must eat bread made without yeast. 7On the first day hold a sacred assembly and do no regular work. 8For seven days present an offering made to the LORD by fire. And on the seventh day hold a sacred assembly and do no regular work.”

23:4–8 The Feast of Passover was to begin on the fourteenth day of the first month and was followed the next day by the Feast of Unleavened Bread (23:4–6). These two ceremonies were apparently combined at the beginning, for the passover lamb was to be eaten with unleavened bread (Exod 12:8). The verbal root of the noun translated “Passover” occurs only four times in the Old Testament (Exod 12:1,23,27; Isa 31:5). The root has been variously explained: “to have compassion,” “to protect,” “to skip over.”²⁴⁶ In Isa 31:5 the verb is parallel to the verb “to rescue,” which would harmonize well with the first or second options²⁴⁷ and would indicate that what was critical during the tenth plague was not the death angel’s “passing over” Israelites’ homes as much as the fact that God was displaying his compassion in protecting his people. The Passover was to begin *hā‘arbāyim*, “at twilight,” literally “between the evenings” (23:5). In Jewish tradition and in the New Testament this was understood to be about 3:00 P.M.,²⁴⁸ or alternatively between sunset and darkness (Deut 16:6).²⁴⁹ The phrase described the time of the evening sacrifice (Exod 29:29,41; Num 28:4,6). The celebration of the Passover distinguished Israel as a holy nation (Exod 19:6) and signified that the Israelites were the people of God.²⁵⁰

On the first day of the Feast²⁵¹ of Unleavened Bread no work was to be done, and a sacred assembly was to be held (23:7). The unleavened bread reminded the Israelites of the haste in which they left the land of Egypt. They were forced to begin their journey before the dough could rise. During this seven-day period only bread without yeast could be eaten. Again the prescriptions are brief, and prior revelation on the obser-

²⁴⁶ For discussion of the philology of the name see Segal, *The Hebrew Passover*.

²⁴⁷ See N. Sarna, *Exodus*, The JPS Torah Commentary (Philadelphia: The Jewish Publication Society, 1991), 56.

²⁴⁸ See *m. Pesah* 5:1. Wenham, *Leviticus*, 302, n. 3; Hartley, *Leviticus*, 384.

²⁴⁹ Budd, *Leviticus*, 320.

²⁵⁰ T. Alexander, “The Passover Sacrifice,” in *Sacrifice in the Bible*, ed. R. Beckwith and M. Selman (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1995), 18.

²⁵¹ The Hb. term פֶּסַח includes the idea of taking a pilgrimage, and the Arabic cognate *hajj* is used of Arabs’ annual pilgrimage to Mecca.

vance of this festival is assumed (e.g., Exod 12). The Jews celebrated the Passover on the first-year anniversary of the event (Num 9:1–14) as well as shortly after their entrance into the promised land (Josh 5:10–11). Jews who had fled to Egypt after the Babylonian exile (including Jeremiah, Jer 43) settled in the area of Elephentine, where they later sought (ca. 400 B.C.) permission to celebrate the Feast of Unleavened Bread. The celebration of Passover and Unleavened Bread marks the commencement of Israel's national existence; thus it corresponds to the celebration of Independence Day in the United States.

The celebration of the Passover underwent changes after worship came to be centralized in Jerusalem. When the celebration of the Passover was restricted to Jerusalem, the earlier customs of the slaying of the lamb by the head of the family and the sprinkling of the blood on the doorposts and lentels were no longer practiced.

(4) *Firstfruits (23:9–14)*

⁹The LORD said to Moses, ¹⁰“Speak to the Israelites and say to them: ‘When you enter the land I am going to give you and you reap its harvest, bring to the priest a sheaf of the first grain you harvest. ¹¹He is to wave the sheaf before the LORD so it will be accepted on your behalf; the priest is to wave it on the day after the Sabbath. ¹²On the day you wave the sheaf, you must sacrifice as a burnt offering to the LORD a lamb a year old without defect, ¹³together with its grain offering of two-tenths of an ephah of fine flour mixed with oil—an offering made to the LORD by fire, a pleasing aroma—and its drink offering of a quarter of a hin of wine. ¹⁴You must not eat any bread, or roasted or new grain, until the very day you bring this offering to your God. This is to be a lasting ordinance for the generations to come, wherever you live.

23:9–14 The next festive event in the Israelite calendar was the Feast of Firstfruits, which began the day after the Sabbath in the week of Unleavened Bread. On this day the Israelite presented a sheaf of the first grain of barley (23:9–11). The presentation of the first sheaf was representative of the entire crop, acknowledging that the yield came from the hand of God. God was to be honored with the firstfruits from the harvest to acknowledge that he graciously bestows blessings on the human race. The Israelite also presented sacrifices to the Lord on this day: a burnt offering, a grain offering of two-tenths of an ephah²⁵² of fine flour mixed with oil, and a drink offering of wine (23:12–13). Only after this offering was made could an Israelite partake of the new grain crop (23:14).²⁵³ Further discussion of the offering of the firstfruits may be found in Lev

²⁵² This offering was twice the normal amount of grain (Exod 29:40–41).

²⁵³ Wiersbe sees a parallel of this practice to Jesus' teaching in Matt 6:33 (*Be Holy*, 106).

2:14–16 and Deut 26:1–11. The offering of the first of the harvest to God was a way of reckoning the fact that the land belonged to God, and it was a token of his abundant blessing (Lev 20:24).

(5) *Feast of Weeks (23:15–22)*

¹⁵“From the day after the Sabbath, the day you brought the sheaf of the wave offering, count off seven full weeks. ¹⁶Count off fifty days up to the day after the seventh Sabbath, and then present an offering of new grain to the LORD. ¹⁷From wherever you live, bring two loaves made of two-tenths of an ephah of fine flour, baked with yeast, as a wave offering of firstfruits to the LORD. ¹⁸Present with this bread seven male lambs, each a year old and without defect, one young bull and two rams. They will be a burnt offering to the LORD, together with their grain offerings and drink offerings—an offering made by fire, an aroma pleasing to the LORD. ¹⁹Then sacrifice one male goat for a sin offering and two lambs, each a year old, for a fellowship offering. ²⁰The priest is to wave the two lambs before the LORD as a wave offering, together with the bread of the firstfruits. They are a sacred offering to the LORD for the priest. ²¹On that same day you are to proclaim a sacred assembly and do no regular work. This is to be a lasting ordinance for the generations to come, wherever you live.

²²“When you reap the harvest of your land, do not reap to the very edges of your field or gather the gleanings of your harvest. Leave them for the poor and the alien. I am the LORD your God.”

23:15–22 The Feast of Weeks (Pentecost) was to occur seven full weeks²⁵⁴ after the Feast of Firstfruits; thus it was named “Weeks” (23:15–16a). Coming seven weeks after the beginning of the Passover, the festival always fell on the first day of the week (Sunday).²⁵⁵ It was the only pilgrimage confined to a single day. The worshiper was to present a wave offering of two loaves of bread composed of two-tenths of an ephah of fine flour. In addition, along with seven male lambs, one bull and two rams were to be presented as a burnt offering to the Lord (23:16b–18). A male goat was to be sacrificed as a sin offering, and two male lambs were given for a fellowship offering (23:19–20).²⁵⁶ No work was to be done on this day (23:21). During the celebration of this feast the Israelites were to remember the poor, for they were reminded to leave

²⁵⁴ Literally, seven sabbaths. The Feast of Weeks, Pentecost, was also the day of the giving of the Law at Mount Sinai (Exod 19:1).

²⁵⁵ According to Levine, this method of marking time, which began Pentecost on a Sunday, eventually led to the concept of the week beginning on Sunday and ending on the Sabbath (“Leviticus, Book of,” 317).

²⁵⁶ This is the only occurrence where the fellowship offering is employed as part of a festive sacrifice. One notes the abundance of sacrificial offerings on this day in comparison, e.g., to the Feast of Unleavened Bread.

the corners of the field for the poor and the alien to glean (23:22; see 19:9–10). This last admonition could prove to be critical since the Feast of Weeks concludes the spring festivals and the next festival would not be for about four months. Caring for the poor is also a theme found in the New Testament (Acts 6:1; 11:29; 24:17; 1 Tim 4:9–10). Because the feasts have great typological significance and thus shed light on the understanding of the New Testament, Wiersbe argues that the four-month gap between Pentecost and the Feast of Trumpets represents the church age wherein believers are engaged in spiritual harvest (Matt 9:36–38) and await the sound of the trumpet (1 Cor 15:51–58; 1 Thess 4:13–18). The blast of the trumpet is the distinctive feature of the Feast of Trumpets.²⁵⁷

(6) Feast of Trumpets (23:23–25)²⁵⁸

²³The LORD said to Moses, ²⁴“Say to the Israelites: ‘On the first day of the seventh month you are to have a day of rest, a sacred assembly commemorated with trumpet blasts. ²⁵Do no regular work, but present an offering made to the LORD by fire.’”

23:23–25 Beginning with the Feast of Trumpets, regulations regarding the fall festivals are given. During the seventh month four additional Sabbaths were to be observed, which underscores the solemnity of this sacred month in the Israelite worship calendar. The one-day celebration of the Feast of Trumpets was to occur on the first day of the seventh month in which no work was to be done and an offering was made to the Lord. The day was accompanied by trumpet blasts.²⁵⁹ The Feast of Trumpets occurred on the first day of the seventh month and marked the end of one agricultural year and the beginning of another one.²⁶⁰ The offerings that accompanied this feast are given in Num 29:1–6.

(7) Day of Atonement (23:26–32)²⁶¹

²⁶The LORD said to Moses, ²⁷“The tenth day of this seventh month is the Day of Atonement. Hold a sacred assembly and deny yourselves, and present an offering made to the LORD by fire. ²⁸Do no work on that day, because it is the Day of Atonement, when atonement is made for you before the LORD your God.

²⁵⁷ Wiersbe, *Be Holy*, 108 (similarly, see D. Fuchs, *Israel’s Holy Days* [Neptune, N.J.: Loizeaux Brothers, 1985], 13).

²⁵⁸ Commonly referred to as Rosh Hashana, lit., “the beginning (head) of the year” (Ezek 40:1).

²⁵⁹ In Israel and in the ANE trumpet blasts were used to assemble masses of people for mass migration or for battle (see Levine, *Leviticus*, 160). It has been suggested that they were blown on the first of every month (Ps 81:3).

²⁶⁰ Wenham, *Leviticus*, 305.

²⁶¹ Commonly called Yom Kippur (see discussion of Lev 16).

²⁹Anyone who does not deny himself on that day must be cut off from his people.
³⁰I will destroy from among his people anyone who does any work on that day.
³¹You shall do no work at all. This is to be a lasting ordinance for the generations to come, wherever you live. ³²It is a sabbath of rest for you, and you must deny yourselves. From the evening of the ninth day of the month until the following evening you are to observe your sabbath.”

23:26–32 On the tenth day of the seventh month the Day of Atonement was to be celebrated. Unique to this celebration was the command that the Israelites “deny themselves” (mentioned three times, 23:27,29, 32). Three times the text repeats that no work was to be done on this day (23:28,30,31,32). The avoidance of work on the Day of Atonement is the main point in this discussion of the Day of Atonement. This legislation thus has the responsibility of the congregation in view rather than the priesthood as was the case in the fuller discussion in Leviticus 16. Failure to adhere to this law resulted in being cut off from fellow countrymen (23:29; see 7:20–21). The day begins in the evening, which is the reason Jews traditionally begin to observe the Sabbath on Friday at sundown (26:32).²⁶²

(8) *Feast of Tabernacles (23:33–44)*

³³The LORD said to Moses, ³⁴“Say to the Israelites: ‘On the fifteenth day of the seventh month the LORD’s Feast of Tabernacles begins, and it lasts for seven days. ³⁵The first day is a sacred assembly; do no regular work. ³⁶For seven days present offerings made to the LORD by fire, and on the eighth day hold a sacred assembly and present an offering made to the LORD by fire. It is the closing assembly; do no regular work.

³⁷(“These are the LORD’s appointed feasts, which you are to proclaim as sacred assemblies for bringing offerings made to the LORD by fire—the burnt offerings and grain offerings, sacrifices and drink offerings required for each day. ³⁸These offerings are in addition to those for the LORD’s Sabbaths and in addition to your gifts and whatever you have vowed and all the freewill offerings you give to the LORD.)

³⁹“So beginning with the fifteenth day of the seventh month, after you have gathered the crops of the land, celebrate the festival to the LORD for seven days; the first day is a day of rest, and the eighth day also is a day of rest. ⁴⁰On the first day you are to take choice fruit from the trees, and palm fronds, leafy branches and poplars, and rejoice before the LORD your God for seven days. ⁴¹Celebrate this as a festival to the LORD for seven days each year. This is to be

²⁶²This has been the traditional Jewish understanding of the beginning of a day and of the Sabbath in particular. Levine, on the other hand, maintains contrary to the consensus that only the Passover began in the evening while other festivals, including the Sabbath, began at dawn in biblical times (*Leviticus*, 161). The phrase עַרְבַּיְתָּא עַד עֹרְבַיְתָּא, lit., “from evening until evening,” occurs only here in the OT.

a lasting ordinance for the generations to come; celebrate it in the seventh month. ⁴²Live in booths for seven days: All native-born Israelites are to live in booths ⁴³so your descendants will know that I had the Israelites live in booths when I brought them out of Egypt. I am the LORD your God.”

⁴⁴So Moses announced to the Israelites the appointed feasts of the LORD.

23:33–38 Five days after the Day of Atonement, on the fifteenth day of the seventh month, the Feast of Tabernacles²⁶³ was celebrated. During this seven-day celebration no work was to be done on the first day or on the eighth day.²⁶⁴ In between the days of complete rest offerings were to be presented to the Lord on each day of the seven-day period (23:34–36). These offerings consisted of burnt offerings, grain offerings, and drink offerings each of the seven days in addition to the normal offerings (see Deut 16:16–17). These are the same offerings that were to be presented on the other feast days as well (Lev 23:37–38).

23:39–44 The description of the Feast of Booths in the previous section focused on the avoidance of work and the sacrifices to be offered.²⁶⁵ In this section the center of interest is on the distinctive feature of the feast, living in booths for the seven-day period of the celebration. On the first day of the feast the Israelite was to take fruit from the trees, palm fronds, leafy branches, and poplars (23:39–40a). Although not explicitly stated in the text, we should assume that the branches from these trees would be used for the making of wooden booths. The Israelites were to celebrate this occasion by living in booths during the entire seven-day period to remember the departure from Egypt and the long journey to Sinai (23:41–43). Throughout the entire duration of this feast, the Israelites were to rejoice in the Lord (23:40b). This was the only festival event in the Israelite calendar where rejoicing is commanded by God (see Deut 12:7,12,18; 14:26; 16:11,14; 26:11; 27:7). For this reason Levine maintains that it was the most prominent of the pilgrimage festivals.²⁶⁶ Josephus claimed that the Feast of Booths was the preeminent ancient Israelite celebration.²⁶⁷ The closing day

²⁶³ The Hb. word תִּכְוֹת from the root כָּוָה means “to cover over” and refers to the branches that covered over the Israelites when they lived in booths. The name תִּכְוֹת is also the name of the first stop by the Israelites upon their departure from Egypt (Exod 12:37; Num 33:5).

²⁶⁴ In this regard the Feast of Tabernacles resembles the Feast of Unleavened Bread. For activities on the eighth day of the Feast of Tabernacles in postexilic times see Neh 8:18; 2 Chr 7:9.

²⁶⁵ During the Feast of Tabernacles other festive activities are to be carried out in conjunction with additional sacrifices (Num 19:12–34). The burnt offerings alone during this celebration numbered seventy bulls.

²⁶⁶ Levine, *Leviticus*, 163.

of the festival was called the *‘ăṣeret* (see Num 29:35; Deut 16:8), which eventually signaled the closing of the annual feast cycle. The *‘ăṣeret* was celebrated on the 23rd of Tishri and came to be regarded later in Jewish history as a separate feast.²⁶⁸

As on the Passover and the Feast of Weeks, all men had to appear at the tabernacle/temple at the Feast of Tabernacles to give in proportion to how they had been blessed by the Lord (Exod 23:14–17; Deut 16:16–17). The mandatory reading of the Law every seven years to the congregation was a distinctive of the Feast of Tabernacles (Deut 31:10–13). Moreover, while the attendance at the Passover and Weeks celebration was apparently restricted to one day, the Israelite spent an entire week at the Feast of Tabernacles.²⁶⁹ Other references to the feast of booths occur in 2 Chr 8:18; Ezra 3:4; Neh 8:14–17; Zech 14:16,18,19. In the postexilic period Nehemiah complained that the festival had not been celebrated since the days Joshua (Neh 8:17). The festival is somewhat comparable to the American celebration of Thanksgiving.²⁷⁰

(9) Conclusion

The teaching and observation of the festivals in Leviticus 23 provided a salient context for the events of the New Testament and the life of Christ. As Wenham has stated: “Nowhere is the continuity between the testaments so clear as in the calendar.”²⁷¹ This continuity is perhaps no better illustrated than in the fact that the three festivals of Passover, Firstfruits, and Weeks were transformed into Good Friday, Easter, and Pentecost.²⁷² This correspondence indicates that these feasts had a preparatory role anticipating what would be accomplished in the coming of Christ, since they all, like the Old Testament sacrifices, pointed to him.

Christ is our Passover (1 Cor 5:7), who was sacrificed without a bone being broken (Exod 12:46; Num 9:12; John 19:32,33,36). In his resurrection Christ is the “firstfruits” of those who have died (1 Cor 15:20–23). The Day of Pentecost, the first harvest of the new age inaugurated by Christ (Acts 2), coincided with the Old Testament wheat festival. The

²⁶⁷ *Aniq.* VIII. iv. 1. Many other ceremonies were added to the celebration of tabernacles after it was instituted in Mosaic times, including a libation of water drawn from the fountain of Siloam (Jos., *Antiq.* III. x. 4; XIII. xiii. 5; *m. Sukk.*; cf. John 7:37–39).

²⁶⁸ The Jews celebrate on this day the annual reading of the Law in the synagogue; the celebration is called *הַחֲנֻכָּה הַלְלוּת הַתּוֹרָה*, “the joy of the Law.”

²⁶⁹ S. Schultz, *The Old Testament Speaks*, 3rd. ed. (San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1980), 72.

²⁷⁰ Wolf, *Pentateuch*, 182.

²⁷¹ Wenham, *Leviticus*, 306.

²⁷² Moreover, the NT frequently speaks of the spiritual condition and judgment of individuals as a harvest (Matt 9:37; Luke 10:2; John 4:35; Rev 14:15).

Feast of Tabernacles often associated with the reign of God in the Old Testament (Isa 52:7–13; Zech 12–14) awaits its fulfillment in the second coming of Christ, where a final ingathering will take place in the judgment of the world (Rev 14:18; 19:15).²⁷³

Leviticus 23 also prefigures two other very important New Testament themes. The frequent references to Sunday in Leviticus 23 (23:7,11,16, 35,36,39) mark it as a special holy day. The celebration of the Feast of Firstfruits on this day anticipates not only the resurrection of Christ in the new creation but the change of worship from Saturday to Sunday as well.²⁷⁴ Moreover, as noted above, a preeminent feature involved in these festivals was the cessation of work; they are all “Sabbath-like.” In the New Testament we learn that rest is provided for those who come to Christ (Matt 11:28–30; Heb 4:1–11). Thus these temporal celebrations were intended to direct our attention to the eternal joy that will come to all God’s people when they enter the final Sabbath rest.²⁷⁵

7. Oil, Bread, Sanctuary (24:1–9)

Leviticus 24 discusses two seemingly separate and unrelated issues: maintaining oil and bread in the tabernacle (24:1–9) and a case of blasphemy against the Lord (24:10–23). At first glance these subjects appear to be out of place because the chapter is sandwiched between festival legislations (Lev 23) and the regulations regarding the sabbatical year/Year of Jubilee (Lev 25). Two explanations for the placement of this chapter in this context have been proposed, one literary and one logical. Those who argue that the literary connection explains the placement of 24:1–9 after Leviticus 23 state that oil and bread, the concerns of 24:1–9, are products of the harvest, the celebrations that have just been reviewed in Leviticus 23.²⁷⁶ The logical connection between Leviticus 23 and 24:1–9 has been advocated by Gispén. According to Gispén the laws of 24:1–9 regarding the Holy Place come on the heels of the legislation regarding the festivals as a reminder of the fact that the worship of God through the regular sacrifices was to be carried out at all times, not just during the momentous occasions of the national festivals.²⁷⁷ This explanation appears to be the stronger of the two. The remainder of chap. 24 (24:10–23), which

²⁷³ This judgment is spoken of as a harvesting of grapes that were reaped at the time of the Feast of Tabernacles.

²⁷⁴ See Kaiser, “Leviticus,” 1161.

²⁷⁵ Kaiser, “Leviticus,” 1161.

²⁷⁶ A. S. Hartom and M. D. Cassuto, “Leviticus,” in *Torah, Prophets, Writings* (Tel-Aviv: Yavneh, 1977), 80 [in Hb.], and Kaiser, “Leviticus,” 1163.

²⁷⁷ See Wenham, *Leviticus*, 309.

addresses the incident of blasphemy, occurs after the instruction of Lev 24:1–9 simply because the events took place historically shortly after the instruction of the earlier part of the chapter. The event and its placement here underline the fact that the entire Book of Leviticus occurs in a narrative context. The occurrence of the introductory formulae of God addressing Moses in 24:1 and 24:13 is sequential.

(1) Lamps to Burn Continually (24:1–4)

¹The LORD said to Moses, ²“Command the Israelites to bring you clear oil of pressed olives for the light so that the lamps may be kept burning continually. ³Outside the curtain of the Testimony in the Tent of Meeting, Aaron is to tend the lamps before the LORD from evening till morning, continually. This is to be a lasting ordinance for the generations to come. ⁴The lamps on the pure gold lampstand before the LORD must be tended continually.

The first part of Leviticus 24 nicely divides into two sections, with reference to the provision of oil (24:1–4) and the provision of bread (24:5–9) within the tabernacle.

24:1–4 In the first paragraph of Leviticus 24 the Israelites are commanded to supply olive oil so that the lamps on the golden lampstand may be lit continually (24:2).²⁷⁸ Like Leviticus 8 this section is closely connected to the Book of Exodus. The plans for the structure of the lampstand are given in Exod 25:31–40 (see Num 3:31; 8:2–4) while the actual construction of the lampstand is described in Exod 37:17–24.²⁷⁹ The location of the lampstand is described as “outside the curtain of the testimony” (24:3a),²⁸⁰ which would have been on the south side of the tabernacle opposite the bread of presence. The “testimony” was a technical term for the Ten Commandments placed in the Ark (Exod 25:16; 40:20; Deut 10:2; 1 Kgs 8:9; Heb 9:4). This law for the perpetual kindling of lamps had been given to Moses earlier in Exod 27:20–21. Here the igniting of the lamps is actually being implemented. This practice was to be a *huqqat ‘ōlām*, “a lasting ordinance” or “perpetual statute” (24:3b). The phrase “lasting ordinance” refers to the unmitigating observance of this law in Israel’s history until its typological fulfillment in Christ was realized.²⁸¹

²⁷⁸ Levine thinks the use of the term *תָּמִיד*, translated “continually” (24:2,3,4), should be understood in the sense of “regularly” rather than “forever” (*Leviticus*, 164). Archaeologists have unearthed ancient replicas of these lampstands (see Levine, *Leviticus*, 165, and Wenham, *Leviticus*, 309). For a comprehensive treatment of reference to the Menorah in biblical and postbiblical literature, see D. Sperber, “The History of the Menorah,” *JJS* 16 (1965): 135–59.

²⁷⁹ For the temple lampstands see 1 Kgs 7:49.

²⁸⁰ This is the only OT occurrence of the phrase *לְפָנֵי הַתְּעֻדָה*, “outside the curtain of the testimony.”

²⁸¹ Calvin, *Commentaries on the Last Books of Moses*, 2:167.

Later in Israel's history the lampstand was in fact captured by Titus. On the arch of Titus the Roman soldiers are displayed carrying the lampstand from Jerusalem. The lampstand came to be one of the best known symbols of Judaism, and its depiction has been found on a coin from the reign of Antigonus (40–37 B.C.).²⁸²

(2) Twelve Cakes on the Golden Table (24:5–9)

⁵“Take fine flour and bake twelve loaves of bread, using two-tenths of an ephah for each loaf. ⁶Set them in two rows, six in each row, on the table of pure gold before the LORD. ⁷Along each row put some pure incense as a memorial portion to represent the bread and to be an offering made to the LORD by fire. ⁸This bread is to be set out before the LORD regularly, Sabbath after Sabbath, on behalf of the Israelites, as a lasting covenant. ⁹It belongs to Aaron and his sons, who are to eat it in a holy place, because it is a most holy part of their regular share of the offerings made to the LORD by fire.”

24:5–9 The Israelites were not only to provide oil but also bread²⁸³ for the sanctuary (Exod 25:30; 40:23). Twelve loaves, representing the twelve tribes of Israel, were to be baked and set in two rows, six in each row, on the table of showbread that stood before the Lord in the Holy Place (24:5–6; see 1 Chr 9:32; 23:29; 2 Chr 13:11; 29:18; Neh 10:34).²⁸⁴ Bread and pure incense were to be supplied each Sabbath (24:7–8).²⁸⁵ Josephus mentions that the bread was baked the day before the Sabbath and was unleavened.²⁸⁶ It was to be food for the priests (24:9). Later we find that the Kohathites specifically had the responsibility for the loaves of bread (1 Chr 9:32; 23:29). The bread, which was separated from the Holy of Holies only by a curtain, was closely associated with the covenant and was a symbol of fellowship with God (1 Sam 21:4[5]; Amos 4:5; Mark 14:22; John 6).²⁸⁷ The bread thus symbolized the covenant God had established with Israel (24:8).

Later in Israel's history David led his men in the eating of this consecrated bread when they were hungry (1 Sam 21:6). Jesus compared himself and his disciples with David and his companions. Like David he

²⁸²L. E. Toombs, “Lampstand,” *IDB* 3:65.

²⁸³The Eng. translation “shewbread” or “showbread” originated with the Tyndale English translation in A.D. 1530. For other references to the shewbread see Exod 25:30; Num 4:7; 2 Chr 2:4[5].

²⁸⁴After the table for the bread was taken by Antiochus Epiphanes (1 Macc 1:22), Judah Maccabeus brought a new one into the temple. It was this new table of showbread that was taken by Titus and brought to Rome (Josephus, *War* VII. v.5).

²⁸⁵The bread was to be placed on the table of pure gold (Exod 25:23–30; 37:10–16).

²⁸⁶*J. W. Ant.* 3.6 § 6; 3 10 § 7.

²⁸⁷Gerstenberger, *Leviticus*, 360.

made himself responsible for the apparent violation of the Law when his disciples gathered and ate on the Sabbath (Matt 12:1–8; Mark 2:23–28; Luke 6:1–5). “If David, who is a type of the righteous king, may even (on the Sabbath) take sacred bread (Lev 24:5–9) and give it to his hungry companions without being reproved, then certainly he who is ‘greater than Solomon’ may permit his hungry disciples to pick grain on the Sabbath.”²⁸⁸

(3) *Conclusion*

Lampstand imagery appears again in the Old Testament in Zech 4:2–7, where it represents the seven eyes of the Lord, and in the New Testament in Rev 1:12; 20:2:5, where it is a symbol of the church. Its location just outside the veil in the tabernacle associates this object with Israel’s worship. The two symbols of light and bread in Lev 24:1–9 were preparatory for the coming of Christ, for Jesus referred to himself as the Light of the world and the Bread of life (John 8:12; 9:5; 6:35,48).

8. A Blasphemer Is Stoned (24:10–23)

Shortly after Moses received the instruction for the proper maintenance for the lamp and the bread in the sanctuary, an incidence of blasphemy occurred in the Israelite camp. This historical interlude describes the carrying out of capital punishment for blasphemy and reminds us again that the Book of Leviticus was written within a narrative context. Moreover, in this passage we see an example of how specific situations provided the context for legal prescriptions given by God.

(1) *Blasphemer Placed in Custody (24:10–12)*

¹⁰Now the son of an Israelite mother and an Egyptian father went out among the Israelites, and a fight broke out in the camp between him and an Israelite. ¹¹The son of the Israelite woman blasphemed the Name with a curse; so they brought him to Moses. (His mother’s name was Shelomith, the daughter of Dibri the Danite.) ¹²They put him in custody until the will of the LORD should be made clear to them.

24:10–12 The narrative describes how the son of an Egyptian father and Israelite woman²⁸⁹ got into a fight with another man (apparently the child of Israelite parents). In the midst of the struggle the half-Egyptian

²⁸⁸ Goppelt, *Typos*, 86.

²⁸⁹ The article ׀ is not in the MT but does occur in 11QpaleoLev, which is supported by the LXX.

man blasphemed²⁹⁰ the name²⁹¹ of God with a curse (24:10–11).²⁹² In the Old Testament blasphemy can result from a flagrant act (Num 15:30), an insulting remark (Isa 37:6), or from cursing God (1 Sam 2:17; Neh 9:18).²⁹³ Although this was a violation of the earlier command (Exod 22:28[27]), this narrative reports the community's response to this scurrilous crime (similarly, Exod 21:17). The man was secluded until Moses learned from the Lord how he should deal with this situation (24:12), since the man was the son of a foreigner, not an actual member of the covenant community (Deut 23:7–8).²⁹⁴ The alien was protected by the Law (Exod 23:9), but he was also subject to it.

(2) *The Law of Blasphemy (24:13–16)*

¹³Then the LORD said to Moses: ¹⁴“Take the blasphemer outside the camp. All those who heard him are to lay their hands on his head, and the entire assembly is to stone him. ¹⁵Say to the Israelites: ‘If anyone curses his God, he will be held responsible; ¹⁶anyone who blasphemes the name of the LORD must be put to death. The entire assembly must stone him. Whether an alien or native-born, when he blasphemes the Name, he must be put to death.

24:13–16 God instructed Moses that all those who heard the man curse the name of God were to lay their hands upon his head.²⁹⁵ Concern

²⁹⁰ The verb קָבַח means “to pierce” as well as “to blaspheme,” as is evident in Lev 24:11,16 and in Job 3:8; Prov 11:26. Because of the disparate meaning of the root, BDB suggests that the verb in Lev 24 is actually from the root קָבַח, “utter a curse against, curse” (BDB, 866).

²⁹¹ It is clear from the expression הַיְהוָה אֱלֹהֵינוּ, “the name of the LORD,” in 24:16 that the name Yahweh, LORD, is what is in mind. The Jewish avoidance of uttering God's name is based on this verse. Referring to the LORD as “the name” became a practice in Jewish tradition and continues to be practiced today. To avoid the possibility of taking the LORD's name in vain, it has been commonplace to avoid attempting to pronounce הַיְהוָה and to read the generic word Adonay, Lord, in its place (see rabbinic discussion of what was involved in blaspheming the name in *m. Sanh* 7:5; *b. Sanh* 56a).

²⁹² The text is a narrative illustration of taking God's name in vain (Exod 20:7; Deut 5:11), which according to J. Weingreen refers to the mention of God's name without a good reason or purpose (“The Case of the Blasphemer [Leviticus XXIV 10ff.],” *ZAW* 22 [1972]: 121–22). The random use of God's name would desecrate his own holiness. The root קָלַל means “to make light of” and is the antonym to כָּבַד, “to make heavy,” or “honor” (see 19:14). The use here may refer to a showing of disrespect for God (H. C. Brichto, “Blessing and Cursing,” *EncJud* 4, 1085).

²⁹³ See Acts 19:37; Rev 16:9,11,21 (S. J. de Vries, “Blasphemy,” *IDB* 1:445).

²⁹⁴ On three other occasions Moses had to make a special plea to God to find out how he should proceed in a given situation (Num 9:6–14; 15:23–36; 27:1–11). Other examples of incarceration in the OT include Gen 40:3,7; 41:10; 42:17,19,30; Num 15:34; Jer 37:11–38:6.

²⁹⁵ It was customary for an Israelite to tear his clothes when he heard someone utter blasphemy (2 Kgs 18:37).

for the name of the Lord was expressed repeatedly in Leviticus 18–22 (18:21; 19:12; 20:3; 21:6; 22:2,32). The hearing of a blasphemous statement rendered one culpable, and thus those who overheard the curse had to identify with the offender by placing their hands upon him. The contamination of hearing the blasphemer was transferred back to the blasphemer.²⁹⁶ After those who heard the blasphemy had placed their hands upon the man, the entire assembly was to stone him to death (24:13–14).²⁹⁷ The execution of this punishment was to instruct the Israelites and was to serve as a warning (24:15–16). If God required a foreigner to be executed for this offense, he would certainly not tolerate its violation among the Israelites, who were his people and hence were identified with his name.

The fact that Moses had no prescribed legal precedent to deal with the case illustrates a theme noted earlier that the Old Testament law was not exhaustive nor comprehensive but often only offered principles for direction. By way of illustration, in the Book of Ruth the law of the redeemer and the levirate law are combined in ways not explicitly clear from the Old Testament.²⁹⁸ This account is reminiscent of the man who violated the Sabbath in Num 15:32–36 and the receiving of divine guidance to solve a complexity in Num 9:6–14; 27:1–11; 36:1–12.

(3) *Principle of Justice (24:17–22)*

¹⁷“If anyone takes the life of a human being, he must be put to death. ¹⁸Anyone who takes the life of someone’s animal must make restitution—life for life. ¹⁹If anyone injures his neighbor, whatever he has done must be done to him: ²⁰fracture for fracture, eye for eye, tooth for tooth. As he has injured the other, so he is to be injured. ²¹Whoever kills an animal must make restitution, but whoever kills a man must be put to death. ²²You are to have the same law for the alien and the native-born. I am the LORD your God.”

24:17–22 The discussion of the proper execution of the blasphemer is the transition to the next series of laws, which begins with the execution of a murderer (24:17). In fact, Clements argues that the reason for the following quotation (24:17–22) was solely because it contained the ruling of the death penalty.²⁹⁹ The central theme of this section is that of commensurate punishment for a crime, what has been called *lex talio-*

²⁹⁶ Thus J. Milgrom, “Leviticus,” *IDBS*, 544, and Wenham, *Leviticus*, 311.

²⁹⁷ The execution of the man outside the camp (the location of lepers [13:46]) would be to avoid corpse contamination. The resident aliens are thus to be treated with equity as in Exod 12:49; Lev 16:29; 17:15; 18:26; 19:34; Num 15:16 (Gerstenberger, *Leviticus*, 364).

²⁹⁸ See R. L. Hubbard, *The Book of Ruth*, NICOT (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1988), 52.

²⁹⁹ Clements, “Leviticus,” 64.

nis.³⁰⁰ Retribution was to be fair, not arbitrary (Judg 1:6–7 may be an example). An application of the principle may be found in Deut 19:16–19, where a false witness was to suffer the exact punishment that would have been rendered to the man against whom he had made accusation. The principle was not always carried out literally (see, however, Deut 25:11–12) except in the case of an offense like murder, where life must be given for a life since human beings are made in the image of God (see Num 35:31). Otherwise this principle was a guide to the Israelite judges that punishment should be fair and should fit the crime when crimes were perpetrated against animals or caused bodily injury. As a guide the *lex talionis* functioned as a judicial generalization. The punishment, apart from murder, would come in the form of compensation (*B. Qam.* 8:1). This distinction is seen explicitly in the different punishments for killing a man or an animal in Lev 24:17–18. The root *šlm*, “make restitution” (24:18), has in its semantic range in the *piel* stem the meaning of “be complete,” “make safe,” “make good” and consequently refers to a person who has to compensate to make good a loss for which he is responsible (Exod 21:34,36,37; 22:2–4,6,8,10–14).³⁰¹ For example, if a slave loses an eye, an eye of the one responsible is not to be plucked out but rather the slave is to be given his freedom as compensation for the eye (Exod 21:26). What is significant in this section is the high value of human life, which is illustrated by the fact that killing of an animal involved restitution but did not call for the death penalty (24:21). This distinction contradicts the views of animal rights activists who consider human beings merely a species more complex and higher up on the evolutionary scale.³⁰² The reason the *talion* is cited in this context apparently is to emphasize the seriousness of the offense of blasphemy, which would warrant capital punishment. Wenham has skillfully noted the symmetry in the inverted chiasm of vv. 16–22:³⁰³

- A resident alien and native Israelite (v. 16)
- B take a man’s life (v. 17)

³⁰⁰The principle is also found in the Code of Hammurabi, Middle Assyrian Laws, and in Roman law in the Twelve Tables (450 B.C.), although in the Code of Hammurabi the principle does not apply if the offended individual occupies a lower social class (J. M. Renger, “Lex Talionis,” *IDBS*, 545). For a helpful discussion see E. J. Fisher, “Explorations and Responses: *Lex Talionis* in the Bible and Rabbinic Literature,” *Journal of Ecumenical Studies* 19 (1982): 585–87.

³⁰¹BDB, 1022, and D. Daube, *Studies in Biblical Law* (Cambridge: University Press, 1947), 135–36.

³⁰²Jesus’ teaching that people are worth more than sparrows echoes the same truth (Matt 10:31; Luke 12:7).

³⁰³Wenham, *Leviticus*, 312.

- C take an animal's life (v. 18)
- D whatever he did, must be done to him (v. 19)
- D' whatever ..., must be done to him (v. 20)
- C' kill an animal (v. 21a)
- B' kill a man (v. 21b)
- A' resident alien and native Israelite (v. 22)

The prophets continued the theme of just recompense and commensurate punishment by arguing that retribution should be meted out “measure for measure” (Isa 3:11; Jer 17:10; 50:15; Ezek 7:8; Obad 15).³⁰⁴ Jesus’ reference to the principle of *lex talionis* in the Sermon on the Mount (Matt 5:38–39) was not a rejection of this principle. It was a correction of its misinterpretation. The principle of *lex talionis* was not to apply to personal vengeance but rather instructed that punishments should be appropriate to fit the crime. The principle was to be carried out in the legal sphere, not for personal grievances. The principle in fact replaces private revenge with the execution of appropriate law. The theological thrust of the principle provided the underpinnings for passages such as Acts 25:11; Rom 13:4; and 1 Pet 2:14,20. Moreover, in some ways Jesus’ statement “Do unto others as you would have them do unto you” (Matt 7:12; Luke 6:31) reflects the same theme.

(4) *Blasphemer Put to Death (24:23)*

23 Then Moses spoke to the Israelites, and they took the blasphemer outside the camp and stoned him. The Israelites did as the LORD commanded Moses.

24:23 Leviticus 24 ends with the Israelites stoning the blasphemer to death outside the camp. Although this form of punishment is thought to be harsh by many, we should be reminded of the teaching of this section that heinous deeds require equally heinous punishments. “The Bible doesn’t present capital punishment as ‘cure-all’ for crime. It presents it as a form of punishment that shows respect for law, for life, and for humans made in the image of God.”³⁰⁵ Moreover, to the degree that the stoning of the blasphemer parallels the execution of Nadab and Abihu (10:1–2), this incident teaches that God is as concerned about holiness and justice in the Israelite camp as he was in the tabernacle.

Another application from this section emerges from Moses’ response to the case of blasphemy. Moses did not act immediately. Instead he

³⁰⁴ E. Fisher, “*Lex Talionis* in the Bible and Rabbinic Tradition,” *Journal of Ecumenical Studies* 19 (1982): 585. The rabbis later somewhat abrogated the principle based on the assumption that no two individuals have exactly equal body parts (*b. B. Qam.* 83b).

³⁰⁵ Wiersbe, *Be Holy*, 121.

waited for a word from God. Believers of all ages need to seek God through prayer and in the Scriptures and to wait upon the Lord in seeking his will for how we are to respond in any situation.³⁰⁶

(5) *Conclusion*

Both Stephen (Acts) and Jesus (Matt 9:3; 26:63–65; Mark 2:7; 14:61–64; Luke 5:21; John 10:33,36) were executed on the false charge that they had uttered blasphemy. In truth it is blasphemy to revile Christ (Matt 27:39; Mark 15:29; Luke 22:65; 23:39). As de Vries writes, “Those who oppose the gospel (1 Tim 1:13; cf. Acts 26:11) and bring discredit to Christianity (Rom 2:24; 1 Tim 6:1; Titus 2:5; Jas 2:7; 2 Pet 2:2) are blaspheming God by their actions.”³⁰⁷

9. The Sabbath Year and the Year of Jubilee (25:1–55)

This new section begins with the divine formula “The LORD said to Moses,” with the added comment that God was addressing Moses from Mount Sinai.³⁰⁸ The final verse of Leviticus 25 alludes to the Exodus deliverance by mentioning that the Israelites were slaves in Egypt. This historical flashback underscores God’s act of redemption in their memory, for much of Leviticus 25 will depend on the favorable recollection of this deliverance to enable the Israelite to be fair and gracious with those who may have fallen on hard times (see 25:38,42,55). Thus the underlying theology of these verses is the concept “love your neighbor as yourself” (19:18).

After the introduction of v. 1 three distinct subjects are addressed in Leviticus 25. These include the introduction to Sabbath rest for the land and the Jubilee (25:2–22), the redemption of property (25:23–38), and the redemption of a slave (25:39–55).³⁰⁹ Major and minor sections conclude with the formulaic phrase “I am the LORD your God” (25:17,38,55). The essence of the first section concludes at 25:17. Verses 18–22 do not contain further instruction but only supplement the legislation, as if to address the anticipated objection that the people will not survive if they allow the land to lie fallow. The answer to this challenge is that God will provide. Similar theological reasons for obedience are apparent in the other two sections as well (25:35–38,55). This chapter is the only legislation on the subject of land ownership in the Pentateuch.

³⁰⁶ Similarly, *ibid.*, 118.

³⁰⁷ de Vries, “Blasphemy,” 445.

³⁰⁸ Reference to Mount Sinai occurs elsewhere in Leviticus only in 7:38; 26:46; 27:34.

³⁰⁹ See Kaiser, *OT Ethics*, 217.

(1) Introduction to Sabbath Rest and Jubilee (25:1–22)

¹The LORD said to Moses on Mount Sinai, ²“Speak to the Israelites and say to them: ‘When you enter the land I am going to give you, the land itself must observe a sabbath to the LORD. ³For six years sow your fields, and for six years prune your vineyards and gather their crops. ⁴But in the seventh year the land is to have a sabbath of rest, a sabbath to the LORD. Do not sow your fields or prune your vineyards. ⁵Do not reap what grows of itself or harvest the grapes of your untended vines. The land is to have a year of rest. ⁶Whatever the land yields during the sabbath year will be food for you—for yourself, your manservant and maidservant, and the hired worker and temporary resident who live among you, ⁷as well as for your livestock and the wild animals in your land. Whatever the land produces may be eaten.

⁸“Count off seven sabbaths of years—seven times seven years—so that the seven sabbaths of years amount to a period of forty-nine years. ⁹Then have the trumpet sounded everywhere on the tenth day of the seventh month; on the Day of Atonement sound the trumpet throughout your land. ¹⁰Consecrate the fiftieth year and proclaim liberty throughout the land to all its inhabitants. It shall be a jubilee for you; each one of you is to return to his family property and each to his own clan. ¹¹The fiftieth year shall be a jubilee for you; do not sow and do not reap what grows of itself or harvest the untended vines. ¹²For it is a jubilee and is to be holy for you; eat only what is taken directly from the fields.

¹³“In this Year of Jubilee everyone is to return to his own property.

¹⁴“If you sell land to one of your countrymen or buy any from him, do not take advantage of each other. ¹⁵You are to buy from your countryman on the basis of the number of years since the Jubilee. And he is to sell to you on the basis of the number of years left for harvesting crops. ¹⁶When the years are many, you are to increase the price, and when the years are few, you are to decrease the price, because what he is really selling you is the number of crops. ¹⁷Do not take advantage of each other, but fear your God. I am the LORD your God.

¹⁸“Follow my decrees and be careful to obey my laws, and you will live safely in the land. ¹⁹Then the land will yield its fruit, and you will eat your fill and live there in safety. ²⁰You may ask, “What will we eat in the seventh year if we do not plant or harvest our crops?” ²¹I will send you such a blessing in the sixth year that the land will yield enough for three years. ²²While you plant during the eighth year, you will eat from the old crop and will continue to eat from it until the harvest of the ninth year comes in.

A SABBATH FOR THE LAND (25:1–7). The first section addresses the issue of the sabbath year.³¹⁰ The sabbatical year for the land was based on the weekly sabbath (Exod 23:10–12) of seven days, since the

³¹⁰This passage contains more information than the parallel texts of Exod 23:10–11, which focuses on how this year meets the needs of the poor, and Deut 15:1–11, which focuses on the provision of the remission of debts with compensation.

number seven became the number of perfection from its use in Gen 2:2. Hence the sabbatical year was founded on the belief that time was created by God and that he gives six years (or days) to man but reserves the seventh for himself. Just as the people were to enjoy a seventh-day period of rest from their toils, the land was to have a seven-year period of rest from the sowing of crops. Thus the sabbath law was the underlying presupposition of this legislation and was based on the premise that the land³¹¹ had been given to the Israelites by God (23:2; 23:38; 20:22; 23:10; esp. 25:23). For this reason alone it deserved to be treated with proper care. This law was thus intimately connected to the Abrahamic promise that the seed of Abraham would be given the land of Canaan (cf. Gen 13:15).

25:1–7 The Israelite was to work his field for six successive years but was then to let the fields lie fallow (25:2–4).³¹² The Israelite³¹³ and his animals could eat what grew in the fields during the seventh year (25:5–7).³¹⁴ The sabbath for the land is also addressed in 26:34–35 and is designated as the year when the Law would be read to the entire nation during the Feast of Booths celebration (Deut 31:10–13). In 2 Chr 36:21 we find, however, that the observance of this law was generally neglected by the Israelites. As punishment the land had to lay desolate seventy years to make up for the sabbath years.³¹⁵ After the judgment of the exile, however, the jubilee was observed in the postexilic period (Neh 8:1–3,8; 10:31). In the intertestamental period Alexander the Great and Julius Caesar remitted Israel's taxes during sabbatical years,³¹⁶ and Judas Maccabeus was forced to give up the fortress of Beth-zur to the Syrians due to a famine, which occurred during a particular sabbatical year (*1 Macc* 6:49,53–54). Prophecies of a seventy-year exile assumed the understanding and existence of a sabbatical year (Isa 23:15; Jer 25:12;

³¹¹ "Land," ארץ, occurs twenty times in Lev 25.

³¹² Allowing the land to rest may have had the benefit of reducing the sodium in the soil (Levine, *Leviticus*, 170). To avoid violating the sabbatical year law in Israel today, every sabbatical year the land is ceremonially sold to an Arab. Since the land would thus be officially in foreign hands, the sabbatical year law would thus be inconsequential.

³¹³ The laws also apply to slaves (Exod 21). The temporary resident refers to a foreign resident (Levine, *Leviticus*, 170).

³¹⁴ The NIV translation "what grows of itself" (25:5) is a translation of the term אֲשֶׁר יִצְמַח (also 25:11). The use of the term in 2 Kgs 19:29 and Isa 37:20 suggests that Sennacherib's siege occurred during a sabbatical year, possibly followed by a Jubilee (M. Abegg, אֲשֶׁר יִצְמַח [*sāpiah*], *NIDOTTE* 3:280).

³¹⁵ The emancipation of slaves in Jer 34:12–16 occurred during a sabbatical year (N. Sarna, "Zedekiah's Emancipation of Slaves and the Sabbatical Year," *AOAT* 22 [1973]: 143–49).

³¹⁶ *J. W. Ant.* 11.8. § 6; 14.10 § 6.

29:10; Zech 1:12; Dan 9:2). In rabbinic literature there is the expectation that the Messiah could come to Israel during a sabbatical year. It was during a sabbatical year (A.D. 28–29) that John the Baptist began his ministry announcing Jesus Christ as the Messiah.³¹⁷

THE YEAR OF JUBILEE (25:8–22). **25:8–11** In addition to allowing the land to lie fallow every seventh year, the year after the seventh sabbatical year, the fiftieth year, was to be the Year of Jubilee, during which each person was to return to his personal property.³¹⁸ Thus when a series of seven years went through seven cycles (25:8), the following year, the fiftieth year called for a special celebration. The Year of Jubilee began with a trumpet blast on the Day of Atonement (25:9),³¹⁹ thereby proclaiming liberty³²⁰ to all the inhabitants of the land (25:10).³²¹ On this high holy day, when reconciliation with God was to become a national petition, the Israelites were likewise reminded to be properly restored to their brothers. Personal holiness must be carried out on the social plane on behalf of the disadvantaged. All Jews who for some reason or another had become enslaved to another Jew or were forced to sell personal property to someone in the preceding forty-nine-year period were automatically emancipated, and sold property was restored to its original owner. Slave laws in Exodus (Exod 21:2–6) and Deuteronomy (Deut 15:12–18) provide the option of a slave agreeing to remain with his master after six years of enslavement; in the Jubilee even that slave is set free. The resto-

³¹⁷B. Z. Wacholder, "Sabbatical Year," *IDBS*, 763. For the Messianic typology in rabbinic literature for the sabbatical year, see Bacchiocchi, "Sabbatical Typologies of Messianic Redemption," 170–71. For a comprehensive treatment and tabulation of the sabbatical years after Judah's exile, see Wacholder, "The Calendar of Sabbatical Cycles During the Second Temple and the Early Rabbinic Period," *HUCA* 44 (1973): 153–96.

³¹⁸That the Year of Jubilee allowed a person to return to his own property is the focus of the legislation since it is mentioned both in 25:10 and 25:13. Hb. הַיְיָ, "property," is from the root יָרָס, meaning "to grasp, take hold, take possession" (BDB, 28). For major interpretations of the Year of Jubilee, see Kaiser, *Old Testament Ethics*, 217–19. Many argue that it is not the fiftieth year that is meant but the seventh sabbatical year. This is apparently the view of the apocryphal *Book of Jubilees* written in the intertestamental period. Understanding the year as referring to the fiftieth year is more faithful to a face value reading of the text. Although it is not stated explicitly, we should assume that the Israelite priests played a major role in overseeing the land transfers.

³¹⁹The name Jubilee comes from the association of blowing the ram's horn (Exod 19:13; Josh 6:5) at the commencement of this fiftieth year. The name for a ram's horn *yōbēl* is the term from which we get the English word "Jubilee."

³²⁰Lev 25:10 is inscribed on the Liberty Bell in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, emphasizing the privilege of the right to personal property. The word "liberty" (Hb. לִירוּת) is from a verbal root לָרָר, which means "stream, flow abundantly" (BDB, 205). An Akk. cognate, *andurāru*, was used as a technical term indicating a remission of debts and an edict of release (R. North, לָרָר *dērôr*, *TDOT* 3:266).

³²¹They could return to their own clan or family (see n. 174 on 20:5).

ration of sold properties to the rightful owners indicated that the land of Canaan was ultimately God's land (Exod 15:13,17), and he could do with it as he wished. The restoring of the land to its original owner was also a protection for the weak; for the rich to dominate over the weak would be a violation of God's covenant. As in the sabbatical year (25:4–5), the Israelite was not to sow seed or gather crops during the Year of Jubilee (25:11).

25:12 Also as in the sabbatical year, the people could eat only what was taken from the fields. This year followed immediately after the seventh sabbatical year, which meant that the land lay fallow in the seventh sabbatical year as well as in the following Year of Jubilee.³²² Two fallow years in succession would have been a severe test of faith. The Israelites were called upon to trust totally in God and acknowledge in a profound way that he was the provider of the basic necessities of life. Other Old Testament texts that refer to the Jubilee include Isa 61:1; Jer 34:8,15,17; Ezek 46:17.

25:13–17 In vv. 13–17 the discussion returns to one of the unique features of the Jubilee—the return of property that has been sold. The sale of property had to be adjusted based on the number of years since the last Jubilee in order to determine the amount of produce that would have been collected (25:15–17). The greater number of years that remained until the Jubilee warranted a higher price, while the purchase closer to the time of the Jubilee would proportionately lower the price. The Israelites were not to take advantage of their countrymen but were to buy and sell on the basis of the number of years to the next Jubilee (25:14–15).

25:18–22 The close connection between the sabbatical year and the Year of Jubilee is seen in the discussion of vv. 18–22³²³ on the issue of how one might survive during the sabbatical year when one would not sow his crops. The answer again is that God will provide. God requires obedience, and if the people comply, they need not worry about what they will eat in the sabbatical year. The Lord will sustain and provide for them so that they live securely (25:18–19).³²⁴ If the Israelites are faithful, God will send such a blessing in the sixth year of the cycle that the

³²² Attempts to avoid the plain meaning of the text (e.g., that the years may not have been complete years) are not convincing (e.g., Wenham, *Leviticus*, 319).

³²³ The exhortation to follow God's decrees and obey his laws may be found in Lev 18:4–5,26; 19:19,37; 20:8,22.

³²⁴ The term “safely,” $\Pi\text{בָּטָח}$, is used in many contexts to illustrate the results of covenant blessing with the Lord (Gen 34:25; Deut 33:8; Ezek 28:26; 34:27 [Levine, *Leviticus*, 211, n. 18]) and by extension the transitory nature of security apart from God (Judg 18:7; Isa 47:8; Ezek 30:9 [J. Oswalt, $\Pi\text{בָּטָח}$ (*bāṭāh*), *TWOT* 1:102]).

land will yield enough food for three years. The yield would be so great that it would continue until two years after the sabbatical year (25:21–22). This promise of God's abundant blessing of food for which the Israelites do not toil is reminiscent of the provision of manna for the Sabbath day (Exod 16).

Acknowledging that ultimately God owns the land should have motivated the Israelites to refrain from cultivating the land in obedience to God. Taking a year off from work in the sabbatical year and two successive years when the seventh sabbatical year was followed by the Year of Jubilee would force the Israelite to reflect upon the Lord as provider of all. The provision of crops did not depend on man's labor but upon God as the sustainer. Work is relative, for if needs are to be met in life, God must provide.

(2) *The Redemption of Property (25:23–38)*

²³“The land must not be sold permanently, because the land is mine and you are but aliens and my tenants. ²⁴Throughout the country that you hold as a possession, you must provide for the redemption of the land.

²⁵“If one of your countrymen becomes poor and sells some of his property, his nearest relative is to come and redeem what his countryman has sold. ²⁶If, however, a man has no one to redeem it for him but he himself prospers and acquires sufficient means to redeem it, ²⁷he is to determine the value for the years since he sold it and refund the balance to the man to whom he sold it; he can then go back to his own property. ²⁸But if he does not acquire the means to repay him, what he sold will remain in the possession of the buyer until the Year of Jubilee. It will be returned in the Jubilee, and he can then go back to his property.

²⁹“If a man sells a house in a walled city, he retains the right of redemption a full year after its sale. During that time he may redeem it. ³⁰If it is not redeemed before a full year has passed, the house in the walled city shall belong permanently to the buyer and his descendants. It is not to be returned in the Jubilee. ³¹But houses in villages without walls around them are to be considered as open country. They can be redeemed, and they are to be returned in the Jubilee.

³²“The Levites always have the right to redeem their houses in the Levitical towns, which they possess. ³³So the property of the Levites is redeemable—that is, a house sold in any town they hold—and is to be returned in the Jubilee, because the houses in the towns of the Levites are their property among the Israelites. ³⁴But the pastureland belonging to their towns must not be sold; it is their permanent possession.

³⁵“If one of your countrymen becomes poor and is unable to support himself among you, help him as you would an alien or a temporary resident, so he can continue to live among you. ³⁶Do not take interest of any kind from him, but fear your God, so that your countryman may continue to live among you. ³⁷You

must not lend him money at interest or sell him food at a profit. ³⁸I am the LORD your God, who brought you out of Egypt to give you the land of Canaan and to be your God.

THE LAND IS GOD'S (25:23). **25:23** Beginning with v. 23 the sale of land and how to evaluate its worth by proximity to the Year of Jubilee is addressed. This forms an easy transition from the previous section, which regulated what was to happen to the land during the sabbatical years and in the Year of Jubilee. The theological statement undergirding this legislation is given in v. 23—the land belongs to the Lord. The statement regarding the ownership of the land explains the prohibition that opens the section: “The land must not be sold permanently” and indicates why the Israelites are but tenants of the land. The statement also explains why the nation should obey the previous laws regarding the sabbatical year and the Year of Jubilee. The fact that the land belongs to the Lord is assumed, since he is the one who has given the land to the Israelites. As owner he alone has title to the property; the Israelites are but aliens and tenants with a stewardship (1 Chr 29:15; Heb 11:13).³²⁵ Since the land was God's, it was to be used in accordance with his plan and policy. The Israelites do not possess the land because of their military prowess, neither may they dispose of the land at their own discretion.³²⁶ Land sales in Israel were thus not final but were more like leases.

LAND RETURNED (25:24–28). **25:24–28** Three possible outcomes are envisioned in vv. 24–28 regarding the sale of property by an impoverished Israelite: (1) the recovery of the property by the kinsman redeemer, (2) the buying back of the property by the seller himself, and (3) the return of the property during the Year of Jubilee. The various scenarios are introduced by the phrase “If one of your countrymen becomes poor” (25:25; see also 25:35,39,47). If economic loss or debt caused a man to sell his land, the nearest relative (*gōʾēl*) had the obligation to buy or redeem (*gāʾal*) the property for his impoverished relative.³²⁷

The “kinsman,” “near relative” (*gōʾēl*), was a close relative (25:48–49) who was under obligation to reclaim the land sold by his impoverished family member (25:25) and to redeem a relative who due to difficult

³²⁵R. Hubbard, “The Goʾel in Ancient Israel: Theological Reflections on an Israelite Institution,” *BBR* 1 (1991): 8, and Levine, “Leviticus, Book of,” 318.

³²⁶Levine, *Leviticus*, 172. This principle provides legal background to the narrative concerning Naboth's vineyard in 1 Kgs 21:1–16 (see v. 3) and accentuates the atrociousness of Ahab's actions.

³²⁷Hubbard may be correct when he suggests that the land was not actually sold, but the revenue of the land was purchased (25:14–15,27). The seller would receive the payment in advance just as he would if he sold the land (“The Goʾel in Ancient Israel,” 7).

times found himself enslaved to someone else (Lev 25:47–49). The kinsman redeemer also had the responsibility of carrying out the role of the avenging of blood (Num 35:12–19).³²⁸ Illustrations of the application of this law of redeeming property of an impoverished relative in Israel's history may be found in Ruth 4 and in Jer 32:7–14.³²⁹

If the poor man regained a measure of economic stability, he had the right to buy back his land at its fair market value (25:26–27).³³⁰ The opportunity for an individual to regain his land was to be maintained. The right of redemption could not be refused. Presumably he would pay back to the buyer the money he received minus the amount the purchaser had earned from the land since the sale.³³¹ The value of the property would decrease the closer they were to the next Jubilee. Otherwise the land would return to him during the Year of Jubilee, when the Lord himself performs the role of the nearest relative (25:28).³³² The legislation of Leviticus 25 went a long way in providing the socioeconomic basis for Israel's identity and preservation.

Because the *gō'ēl* was a close family member who had an obligation to deliver a family member in need, the term was rightly applied to God in the outworking of covenant relationship with Israel.³³³ God is described as Israel's father in Exod 4:22; in Isa 63:16 God is not only Israel's father but also *gō'ēl*. In Isa 54:5–8 God is Israel's husband and *gō'ēl*. Thus it was not at all a stretch to consider God as "Nearest of Kin" for all impoverished Israelites when the trumpet sounded at the time of the Jubilee. Oehler writes that:

The God who once redeemed His people from Egypt, and acquired as His possession, here appears again as a redeemer, to restore to the bondman his personal freedom, and to reendow the poor with the share allotted him in the inheritance of his people.³³⁴

Moreover, in that the *gō'ēl* helped to keep the family intact and thereby con-

³²⁸ R. Harris, *גא'ל (gā'al) TWOT* 1:144. Hubbard adds two additional responsibilities of the "kinsman": (1) the reception of a monetary restitution on behalf of a dead relative (Num 5:8) and (2) aiding relatives who are involved in lawsuits (Job 19:25; Ps 119:154; Prov 23:11; Jer 50:34; Lam 3:58) ("The Go'el in Ancient Israel," 5).

³²⁹ It must be assumed that Elimelech and Naomi sold their property before migrating to Moab (Ruth 1).

³³⁰ It is likely that the only way the man would require means to retain his property was through an inheritance (Hubbard, "The Go'el in Ancient Israel," 8).

³³¹ Hubbard, "The Go'el in Ancient Israel," 8.

³³² So Hartley, *Leviticus*, 443.

³³³ The verb *גא'ל* is used in reference to God's redemption of the Israelites in Exod 6:6; 15:3,13. In the Book of Isaiah the term is used exclusively of the Lord.

³³⁴ Oehler, *Theology of the Old Testament*, 343. See also Wright, *God's People in God's Land*, 125.

tributed to tribal unity, this institution kept the nation intact and in this way had a part to play in the coming of the Messiah.

WALLED CITIES, VILLAGES, LEVITES (25:29–34). **25:29–34** The sale of land within a walled city was different. The seller had one year to buy back the property, but after that it belonged to the buyer and his descendants (25:29–30). Houses in villages without walls were to be treated like the sale of land. They could be redeemed, but if not they revert back to the original owner at Jubilee (25:31). These houses must have been considered part of the field. The reason for this distinction apparently lies in the fact that houses within walled cities fell outside the jurisdiction of family property inheritance and were not critical for the economic survival of the family.³³⁵ This law did not apply to the Levites, who always had the option to buy back their houses (25:32). Their pastureland was never sold; it was their permanent possession (25:34). The cities of the Levites are discussed in Num 35:1–8; Josh 21:1–45; and 1 Chr 6:54–68.

NO USURY (25:35–38). **25:35–36** Israelites were admonished to aid those in need and not to take any interest from them.³³⁶ This law was unique in the ancient Near East, where usury was allowed everywhere although it was often regulated.³³⁷ A person who charged interest was neglecting his obligation to his fellow man, notably the poor.³³⁸ Israelites were encouraged to make loans to the destitute (Deut 15:1–2; Prov 14:21,31; 19:17; 28:8; Pss 26; 37:21; 112:5). The prophet Ezekiel listed usury as among the most serious crimes, including murder and adultery (Ezek 18:11–13; also Ezek 22:12). This law prohibiting usury was violated by the postexilic community (Neh 5:1–11).

25:37–38 In addition the Israelites were not to take advantage of fellow needy Israelites by selling food to them for a profit. The purpose of these laws was to prevent the complete devastation of those who fell on hard times and consequently went into debt. Other texts mention God's concern with those who are impoverished and in need (Exod 22:22–24, 25–27; 23:6). This same concern is illustrated in the New Testament (2 Cor 8:13–15; Gal 2:10; Jas 2:1–7).

³³⁵ Oehler, *Theology of the Old Testament*, 340.

³³⁶ The word תַּשְׁבֵּץ, "interest," is believed to be cognate with the root meaning "to bite." See also Exod 22:25; Deut 23:19–20; Ps 15:5; Prov 28:8; Ezek 18:8,13. According to H. Cohn תַּשְׁבֵּץ was the term for interest from the perspective of the debtor, and תַּרְבִּית or מִרְבִּית referred to the recovery of the debt from the standpoint of the creditor ("Usury," *EncJud* 16:28). The Israelite was allowed to charge interest to a foreigner (Deut 23:20).

³³⁷ See H. Gamoran, "The Biblical Law against Loans on Interest," *JNES* 30 (1971): 127–29, and R. P. Maloney, C.M., "Usury and Restrictions on Interest-Taking in the Ancient Near East," *CBQ* 36 (1974): 1–20.

³³⁸ Kaiser, *Old Testament Ethics*, 109.

(3) *The Redemption of a Slave (25:39–55)*

³⁹“If one of your countrymen becomes poor among you and sells himself to you, do not make him work as a slave. ⁴⁰He is to be treated as a hired worker or a temporary resident among you; he is to work for you until the Year of Jubilee. ⁴¹Then he and his children are to be released, and he will go back to his own clan and to the property of his forefathers. ⁴²Because the Israelites are my servants, whom I brought out of Egypt, they must not be sold as slaves. ⁴³Do not rule over them ruthlessly, but fear your God.

⁴⁴“Your male and female slaves are to come from the nations around you; from them you may buy slaves. ⁴⁵You may also buy some of the temporary residents living among you and members of their clans born in your country, and they will become your property. ⁴⁶You can will them to your children as inherited property and can make them slaves for life, but you must not rule over your fellow Israelites ruthlessly.

⁴⁷“If an alien or a temporary resident among you becomes rich and one of your countrymen becomes poor and sells himself to the alien living among you or to a member of the alien’s clan, ⁴⁸he retains the right of redemption after he has sold himself. One of his relatives may redeem him: ⁴⁹An uncle or a cousin or any blood relative in his clan may redeem him. Or if he prospers, he may redeem himself. ⁵⁰He and his buyer are to count the time from the year he sold himself up to the Year of Jubilee. The price for his release is to be based on the rate paid to a hired man for that number of years. ⁵¹If many years remain, he must pay for his redemption a larger share of the price paid for him. ⁵²If only a few years remain until the Year of Jubilee, he is to compute that and pay for his redemption accordingly. ⁵³He is to be treated as a man hired from year to year; you must see to it that his owner does not rule over him ruthlessly.

⁵⁴“Even if he is not redeemed in any of these ways, he and his children are to be released in the Year of Jubilee, ⁵⁵for the Israelites belong to me as servants. They are my servants, whom I brought out of Egypt. I am the LORD your God.

25:39–55 This section explains how a poor Israelite could be sold to another individual and remain a hired workman until the Year of Jubilee (25:39–41).³³⁹ Presumably one who had already surrendered his land for repayment of a debt now had to sell himself, for his ability to work becomes his only remaining asset.³⁴⁰ These hired workmen were not to be treated as slaves as the Israelites were treated when they were in Egypt (25:42–43). The only people who were candidates for slavery in Israel were those who were foreigners or temporary residents.³⁴¹ An Isra-

³³⁹ Wenham states that the selling of an individual to another resembled modern-day imprisonment. The Israelite system was more humane, however, because the poor man had the option of working off his debt and thus would not be cut off from society (*Leviticus*, 322).

³⁴⁰ Hubbard, “The Go’el in Ancient Israel,” 10.

³⁴¹ Vv. 45–46 contain the only use of the term נַחֲלָה (“property”) to refer to people. The term normally refers to possession of land (Gen 47:11,30; Lev 25:41 Josh 22:19).

elite who sold himself to an alien or a temporary resident could be redeemed by a relative or could redeem himself (25:47–49). The price of redemption is based on how soon the next Jubilee would occur (25:50–52). Because a foreigner was given this power, special attention must be given to how the Israelite was treated (25:53). The Israelite could not be treated as a slave but only as a *šākīr*, a hired man or day laborer (Deut 24:14–15). As in the identical circumstance when an Israelite had sold himself to one of his own countrymen and was not redeemed, he and his children had to be released in the Year of Jubilee (25:54–55). The methods of his release are identical to those of buying back his land (25:25–28). These laws indicate that the alien and resident alien were under the same legal authority and could not mistreat the Israelite, for the Israelites had already been mistreated by foreigners in the land of Egypt. The fact that the servitude of the Israelites has a negative connotation is evident from the frequent warning that the period of slavery was not to be characterized by severity (25:43,46,53), which may suggest that there is something intrinsically incongruous about the institution of slavery (Col 4:1).³⁴² God is not only owner of the land (25:23) but the Israelites are his possession (25:55). Consequently he has every right to dictate these laws regarding the rest for the land and the emancipation of his people—the two subjects of Leviticus 25. As Hubbard comments: “Specifically, he decrees limits on the human inclination toward greed and power. Since he owns Canaan, his policy is that families retain, not lose, their inherited land. Since he owns Israel, his policy is that his people never see perpetual slavery again.”³⁴³

These laws absolutely prohibited anyone from permanently selling his land or himself. If redemption was not possible, at least at the Jubilee both land and personal debts would be wiped clean. This restored equity among the Israelites and may to some extent reflect the harmony that existed at creation.³⁴⁴ Also the Year of the Jubilee “would have steered a course between the greedy excesses of unrestrained capitalism and the oppressive control of state communism.”³⁴⁵

The laws regarding the Year of Jubilee and apparently even the sabbat-

³⁴² Budd, *Leviticus*, 359. The use of the word *yš'*, “to go out,” in v. 54 is the same root used to describe the Exodus in v. 55. The redemption of the Israelite slave from his slavery becomes a reenactment of the Exodus event on a smaller scale (Hubbard, “The Go’el in Ancient Israel,” 11). This is reinforced by the fact that the repeated use of the term יָדָה, “severity,” would remind the Israelites of bondage in Egypt since the same term was used to depict their enslavement in Egypt (Exod 1:13).

³⁴³ Hubbard, “The Go’el in Ancient Israel,” 12.

³⁴⁴ Wenham, *Leviticus*, 317–18.

³⁴⁵ Demarest, *Leviticus*, 268.

ical year were not always obeyed. In fact, Judah's failure to keep the sabbatical year resulted in exile (2 Chr 36:21).³⁴⁶ According to Jewish tradition the sabbatical year laws were obeyed from the fourteenth year after the conquest by Joshua until the conquest by the Assyrian king Sennacherib around 700 B.C.³⁴⁷ Subsequent to this time there may have been an attempt to revive the obedience to this observance in Jer 34:8–15; Neh 10:31 and the intertestamental period (*1 Macc* 6:49,53).³⁴⁸

(4) Conclusion

The laws of the sabbatical year and the law of Jubilee in one sense provided both a spiritual and social control for the Israelites, for they would be reminded of their total dependence upon God and the Lord's ultimate ownership of the land each time they observed this law. Moreover, these laws would restrain one's desire to accumulate wealth at his brother's expense and thus place something other than God as most important in one's life. "Greed prevents a person from enjoying what he has, for it drives one to spend all one's energy on getting more."³⁴⁹

The sabbatical year and especially the Year of Jubilee became patterns or types for later acts of God. In Isa 61:1–3 it is to be noted that one feature of the work of the Messiah includes proclaiming "liberty" (*dērdōr*) to the captives. The word "liberty" is the same term found in Lev 25:10 in describing the Year of Jubilee. In the New Testament this passage is cited by Jesus to explain his mission at the beginning of his ministry in Luke 4:18–19.³⁵⁰ The liberty announced would include not only spiritual forgiveness but also remission of debt.³⁵¹ Jubilee imagery is also found in the New Testament in Acts 1:6; 3:21; and 4:34. Moreover, the trumpet blast at the commencement of the Jubilee may be a type for the trumpet announcing the return of Christ (Matt 24:31; 1 Cor 15:52; 1 Thess 4:16).

³⁴⁶ See E. Nerfield, "Socio-Economic Background of Yobel and Semitta," *Rivista Degli Studi Orientali* 33 (1958): 119. There is no evidence that the Year of the Jubilee was ever observed (S. Safrai, "Sabbatical Year and Jubilee," *EncJud* 14:580). Isa 37:30 may be an allusion to the Jubilee.

³⁴⁷ See S. B. Hoenig, "Sabbatical Years and the Year of Jubilee," *JQR* 59 (1969): 222, n. 1.

³⁴⁸ N. P. Lemche, "The Manumission of Slaves—The Fallow Year—The Sabbatical Year—The Jubel Year," *VT* 26 (1976): 57.

³⁴⁹ Hartley, *Leviticus*, 445. See also J. Raven, *The History of the Religion of Israel* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1979), 150.

³⁵⁰ Note how Jesus quotes Isa 61:1–2a but does not quote v. 2b, "and the day of vengeance of our God." The latter half of Isa 61:2 would apply to his second advent ministry. For the position that the sabbatical year and the Year of Jubilee also picture the time when the earth will return to Edenic conditions, see Oehler, *Theology of the Old Testament*, 342, and J. Sailhamer, *The Pentateuch as Narrative* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1992), 361.

³⁵¹ The use of ἀφεσις in the NT applies both to remission of sins and remission of debt.

The application of the Jubilee to the church today should perhaps be no different from its application to the people of God living under the Mosaic Law. The Law was to prevent the accumulation of ownership of property by a wealthy few and to legislate against a collective nationalism that usurped others' property. Also, since the land ultimately belonged to God, the law of Jubilee puts a check on a selfish estimation of the rights of property. The private ownership of the land, however, was and still is a stabilizing factor for the unifying of the family unit. These laws herald a recognition of God as sovereign over time, nature, and possessions.³⁵² And since the sabbatical year and the Year of Jubilee called for a complete trust in God, New Testament believers are also to recognize that the material gifts essential to life come from God. It is the believer's responsibility to trust, be obedient, and seek the rule of God in every arena of life (Matt 6:25–34). Believers look to God for our sustenance in due season (Ps 104:27).

10. Blessings and Cursings (26:1–46)

Although Leviticus 26 begins without any introduction or introductory formula, the contents of the chapter suggest such a dramatic shift in subject matter that it is permissible to view the chapter as a self-contained section of Leviticus 17–26.³⁵³ The chapter is united by the phrase "I am the LORD [your God]," which occurs in 26:1,2,13,44,45. The chapter naturally divides on the basis of the subject matter of its contents, for 26:3–13 addresses the rewards for obedience,³⁵⁴ 26:14–39 pertains to the judgments for disobedience, and the final section, 26:40–46, describes God's faithful and merciful response to his people in exile. The first two verses of the chapter address the issue of appropriate worship, both negatively and positively.

Leviticus 26 deals with the subject of blessings and cursings, a common feature of ancient Near Eastern treaty covenants.³⁵⁵ The blessings

³⁵² C. Wright, Jubilee, Year of," *ABD* 3:1028–29.

³⁵³ Cassuto argues that 26:1–2 should be understood as the conclusion of Lev 25 rather than the introduction to Lev 26 (אֲנִי יְהוָה, "I am the LORD," 878).

³⁵⁴ The theme of blessing for obedience, particularly that provided by God, in the sabbatical year (25:18–22) links Lev 25 with Lev 26.

³⁵⁵ E.g., see D. R. Hillers, *Treaty-Curses and the Old Testament Prophets* (Rome: Pontifical Biblical Institute, 1964). For the parallels between Lev 26, Deut 28, and literature from the ANE, see Levine, *Leviticus*, 278. In the ancient world words containing blessings and cursings were seen to be powerful and could not be abrogated unless there was cancellation by one more powerful (see Gen 27:13 Num 22:6; Judg 17:2). But in the Bible the word of man accomplished nothing apart from the will of God, for there is no fate outside the will of God (Cassuto, "ברכה וקללה," *EM* 2:357–58).

and cursings pertain to the realms of the city, the fields, fertility of the people, fertility of the land, fertility of the herds and flocks, and safe and successful journeys.³⁵⁶ The occurrence of a section on blessings and cursings after the laws have been given plays a critical role in the structure of the entire book, since they occur at the end of the book as a promise and a warning. Deuteronomy 28, a parallel listing of cursings and blessings, plays the identical role in the Book of Deuteronomy, as may Exod 23:20–33 in Exodus 20–23. The blessings for obedience and cursings for disobedience reflect the principle of the *lex talionis*, that a person should be justly recompensed for his actions. Moreover, appropriate compensation in 36:14–39 should be considered just based on the repeated formulaic expression “if you will not listen/accept correction” (26:14,18,21,23,27).³⁵⁷ This formula functions as an introduction to the subsections of the curse section in 26:14–39. Leviticus 26 is thus a unique chapter in the Book of Leviticus, for it is the only chapter that is neither legal nor ritualistic in nature.³⁵⁸

(1) *Idolatry and Sabbath (26:1–2)*

¹“Do not make idols or set up an image or a sacred stone for yourselves, and do not place a carved stone in your land to bow down before it. I am the LORD your God.

²“Observe my Sabbaths and have reverence for my sanctuary. I am the LORD.

26:1–2 Verses 1–2 address specific commands. The first is presented negatively as a prohibition, and the second is stated positively.

The Israelites were commanded not to make idols, images,³⁵⁹ or sacred stones,³⁶⁰ or to place a carved stone³⁶¹ in the land (26:1). This fourfold descrip-

³⁵⁶ Budd, *Leviticus*, 361.

³⁵⁷ Each of these phrases, apart from v. 23, contains the root שָׁמַע, “to hear, listen.” Verse 23 has the related root סָר, “to discipline, chasten, admonish” (BDB, 415–46).

³⁵⁸ Observed by Levine, *Leviticus*, 182.

³⁵⁹ The word translated image is the term מַצֵּבָה, related to the root חָצַב, meaning “to hew, hew into shape.” The image could be made from wood, stone, or metal (BDB, 820). The images are prohibited in Exod 20:4; Deut 4:16,23,25; 5:8. The term is used only here in Leviticus. For the term translated “idols,” see Lev 19:4.

³⁶⁰ Hb. מַצֵּבָה from the root נָצַב, meaning “to stand” (BDB, 662–63). These stones were sometimes associated with the religion of Canaan (Exod 23:24; 34:14).

³⁶¹ Hb. מַצֵּבָה is believed to be related to the verbal root שָׁחָה, meaning “look out, hope.” Thus the noun would refer to something visible, hence BDB “show-piece, figure” (BDB, 967 [similarly, KB, 571, 921]). The term is associated with Canaanite religion in Num 33:52. J. Mansur maintains that the “carved stone” always referred to the location of the worshiper before an idol (“מַצֵּבָה”), *Leshonenu* 24, 3 (1959–60): 181–82 [in Hb.]. Apostate priests had secret rooms in the temple where these stone-idols were kept at the time of the exile (Ezek 8:12).

tion of the making of idols is the most comprehensive concentration of references to image making in the Bible, thus ruling out any type of idol worship. Instead the Israelites were to observe the Sabbath and reverence the Lord's sanctuary (26:2). Both of these issues are addressed in the Ten Commandments, where they follow the same order as in Lev 26:1–2 (Exod 20:4–11; Deut 5:8–14). Both of these laws have to do with the proper worship of God. The placing of these laws on the proper worship of God at the beginning of the section on blessings and cursings indicates that the issue of blessings and cursings is intrinsically related to one's relationship and response to God. Young maintains that the two verses summarize the entire Law.³⁶²

(2) *Blessings for Obedience (26:3–13)*

3“If you follow my decrees and are careful to obey my commands, **4**I will send you rain in its season, and the ground will yield its crops and the trees of the field their fruit. **5**Your threshing will continue until grape harvest and the grape harvest will continue until planting, and you will eat all the food you want and live in safety in your land.

6“I will grant peace in the land, and you will lie down and no one will make you afraid. I will remove savage beasts from the land, and the sword will not pass through your country. **7**You will pursue your enemies, and they will fall by the sword before you. **8**Five of you will chase a hundred, and a hundred of you will chase ten thousand, and your enemies will fall by the sword before you.

9“I will look on you with favor and make you fruitful and increase your numbers, and I will keep my covenant with you. **10**You will still be eating last year's harvest when you will have to move it out to make room for the new. **11**I will put my dwelling place among you, and I will not abhor you. **12**I will walk among you and be your God, and you will be my people. **13**I am the LORD your God, who brought you out of Egypt so that you would no longer be slaves to the Egyptians; I broke the bars of your yoke and enabled you to walk with heads held high.

26:3–10 The first major section of Leviticus 26 delineates the blessings the nation will experience if the Israelites remain faithful to the Lord's commands.³⁶³ These blessings include agricultural prosperity (26:3–5,10),³⁶⁴ victory in battle (26:6–8),³⁶⁵ and population expansion (26:9a). Since these results

³⁶² Young, *Introduction*, 80.

³⁶³ The section begins with the phrase, “If you follow my decrees,” lit., “walk in my statutes” (26:3). Obedience to God is compared to walking in his laws in 18:4; 20:23; 1 Kgs 3:3; 2 Kgs 17:18–10; Ezek 20:19 (see Levine, *Leviticus*, 212, n. 2). In the NT the same result is to be effected by being obedient to the admonition “walk in the Spirit” (Gal 5:16).

³⁶⁴ Peace and prosperity are outcomes of being “blessed” (C. Mitchell, *The Meaning of Brk “To Bless” in the Old Testament* (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1983), 78. The superabundance of the land's productivity in 26:10 is similar to that of the abundant fertility of the land in the sabbatical year and the Year of Jubilee (25:22).

³⁶⁵ See Deut 32:30.

indicate the faithfulness of God on behalf of Israel, they may be seen to be summarized by the phrase “I will keep my covenant³⁶⁶ with you” (26:9b).

26:11–13 Verses 11–13 reiterate the essential nature of Israel’s relationship with God. This special relationship with God is the goal of the covenant,³⁶⁷ for the Lord takes up residence among the Israelites in the same way he does in the tabernacle. The apostle Paul cites the language of 26:12 to describe what it means for believers in the church to be marked as the temple of the living God (2 Cor 6:16). This intimate relationship with God is the primary blessing of life (Pss 4:8; 16:2,5; 63:3). Here this reality is expressed in the imagery of enslavement: “I broke the bars of your yoke” (26:13).³⁶⁸ Bars were a symbol of oppression, as is illustrated by the fact that bars were often tied to the neck of work animals (Jer 5:5; 26:2; 28:10–13). Thus the text offers the image of a slave bowed by an enormous burden. He suddenly has the weight removed, which expresses the establishment of Israel’s special relationship with God. The promise is similar to Adam’s experience in the garden and is used of God’s relationship with Enoch (Gen 5:22–24) and Abraham (Gen 17; see Jer 30:22; Ezek 11:20; Hos 2:23; Rom 9:26). Other blessings for obedience include long life in the promised land (Exod 20:12; Deut 4:40; 11:9; 30:20), blessing of children and fertility, and victory over enemies (Deut 28:1–8; Prov 3:2; 4:10).³⁶⁹ These blessings of life will find their ultimate fulfillment in the age to come when people will be saved from savage beasts (Ezek 34:25), will experience abundant rain and plentiful harvests (Ezek 34:26–27), will not experience any oppression (Ezek 36:10–11), and will become God’s people (Ezek 36:28).³⁷⁰ Similarly, Jesus stated that those who seek first the kingdom will also not lack of any of life’s necessities (Matt 6:25–34).

(3) *Cursings for Disobedience (26:14–39)*

¹⁴“But if you will not listen to me and carry out all these commands, ¹⁵and if you reject my decrees and abhor my laws and fail to carry out all my commands

³⁶⁶ The *hiphil* of קָנַח in the expression אֶת בְּרִיתִי אֲנִי מְקַיֵּם may refer to the inception of a covenant (Gen 6:18). For lexical and structural parallels between Lev 26:9–13 and Gen 17:4–8 and Exod 6:4–6, see N. Lohfink, “Die Abänderung der Theologies des Priesterlichen Geschichtswerks im Segen des Heiligkeitgesetzes,” AOAT, 131–32.

³⁶⁷ Hartley, *Leviticus*, 463. See Hos 1:9–10; 2:23; Jer 31:33; Ezek 36:28; Heb 8:10. The blessing of God’s walking among the people (26:12) reflects a return to conditions before the Fall (Gen 3:8). Reference to the covenant are frequent in this chapter (Lev 26:15,25,42,44,45).

³⁶⁸ The phrase “heads held high” (26:13) translates the term קָנַח, which occurs only here in the OT. This adverb is related to the verbal root meaning “arise, stand up, stand” (BDB, 877–79).

³⁶⁹ Oehler, *Theology of the Old Testament*, 196.

³⁷⁰ See Wenham, *Leviticus*, 329–30. The eschatology of Ezekiel is largely based on Lev 26 (Milgrom, “Leviticus,” 544).

and so violate my covenant, ¹⁶then I will do this to you: I will bring upon you sudden terror, wasting diseases and fever that will destroy your sight and drain away your life. You will plant seed in vain, because your enemies will eat it. ¹⁷I will set my face against you so that you will be defeated by your enemies; those who hate you will rule over you, and you will flee even when no one is pursuing you.

¹⁸“If after all this you will not listen to me, I will punish you for your sins seven times over. ¹⁹I will break down your stubborn pride and make the sky above you like iron and the ground beneath you like bronze. ²⁰Your strength will be spent in vain, because your soil will not yield its crops, nor will the trees of the land yield their fruit.

²¹“If you remain hostile toward me and refuse to listen to me, I will multiply your afflictions seven times over, as your sins deserve. ²²I will send wild animals against you, and they will rob you of your children, destroy your cattle and make you so few in number that your roads will be deserted.

²³“If in spite of these things you do not accept my correction but continue to be hostile toward me, ²⁴I myself will be hostile toward you and will afflict you for your sins seven times over. ²⁵And I will bring the sword upon you to avenge the breaking of the covenant. When you withdraw into your cities, I will send a plague among you, and you will be given into enemy hands. ²⁶When I cut off your supply of bread, ten women will be able to bake your bread in one oven, and they will dole out the bread by weight. You will eat, but you will not be satisfied.

²⁷“If in spite of this you still do not listen to me but continue to be hostile toward me, ²⁸then in my anger I will be hostile toward you, and I myself will punish you for your sins seven times over. ²⁹You will eat the flesh of your sons and the flesh of your daughters. ³⁰I will destroy your high places, cut down your incense altars and pile your dead bodies on the lifeless forms of your idols, and I will abhor you. ³¹I will turn your cities into ruins and lay waste your sanctuaries, and I will take no delight in the pleasing aroma of your offerings. ³²I will lay waste the land, so that your enemies who live there will be appalled. ³³I will scatter you among the nations and will draw out my sword and pursue you. Your land will be laid waste, and your cities will lie in ruins. ³⁴Then the land will enjoy its sabbath years all the time that it lies desolate and you are in the country of your enemies; then the land will rest and enjoy its sabbaths. ³⁵All the time that it lies desolate, the land will have the rest it did not have during the sabbaths you lived in it.

³⁶“As for those of you who are left, I will make their hearts so fearful in the lands of their enemies that the sound of a windblown leaf will put them to flight. They will run as though fleeing from the sword, and they will fall, even though no one is pursuing them. ³⁷They will stumble over one another as though fleeing from the sword, even though no one is pursuing them. So you will not be able to stand before your enemies. ³⁸You will perish among the nations; the land of your enemies will devour you. ³⁹Those of you who are left will waste away in the lands of their enemies because of their sins; also because of their fathers' sins they will waste away.

26:14–17 Beginning in v. 14 the subject turns to the judgment the Israelites will experience for disobedience.³⁷¹ Disobedience will result in the withdrawal of all God's blessings. This judgment section is about three times as long as the blessings section. The longer length of the oracles of judgment may indicate that the fear of punishment is a stronger motivation than the prospect of success.³⁷² The cursing sections are typically longer than the blessings sections in other ancient Near Eastern documents as well. If the Israelites fail to obey God's commands and thus violate God's covenant, various judgments will be executed against the nation. These judgments will include such punishments as terror,³⁷³ disease, blindness, military defeat, and paranoia (26:16–17).³⁷⁴ The verb translated "I will bring" (*pqd*) in the expression "I will bring upon you" is a technical term referring to divine intervention in response to obedience or disobedience to the covenant (26:16). The latter is clearly intended in this usage. The subsections of the cursings section are frequently introduced by the comment that if repentance is absent after God has disciplined, he will punish them sevenfold for their sins (26:21,24,28). The same sevenfold punishments typify the completeness of these judgments.³⁷⁵ The punishments will increase in intensity if Israel fails to respond.³⁷⁶ Levine has captured the progression of the downward spiral:

Israel's failure to obey results in sevenfold punishment (v. 18); Israel's coldness to God, in addition to its failure to obey, results in sevenfold punishment (v. 21); Israel's failure to be chastised, in addition to Israel's coldness to God, results in God's coldness toward Israel and sevenfold punishment (vv. 23–24);

³⁷¹ The *waw* disjunctive in the phrase וְאִם ("But if") introducing this section may be taken as introductory or preferably a contrastive *waw*. Regardless, it provides a structural clue to the beginning of a new section. Notice the corresponding introduction to the list of cursings in Deut 28:15.

³⁷² B. Levine, "The Epilogue to the Holiness Code: A Priestly Statement on the Destiny of Israel," in *Judaic Perspective on Ancient Israel*, ed. J. Neusner, B. Levine, and E. Frerichs (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1987), 10.

³⁷³ The term בְּהִלָּה occurs only in three additional contexts in the OT (Ps 78:33; Isa 65:23; Jer 15:8) and indicates sudden terror, if not sudden death. The verbal root (בָּהַל) is used to describe Saul's response when confronted with the supernatural in 1 Sam 28:21 (B. Otzen, בְּהִל *bhl*, TDOT 2:5, and M. Van Pelt and W. C. Kaiser, בָּהַל *bhl*, NIDOTTE 1:611).

³⁷⁴ The judgment of being overcome by enemies to the point of fleeing when no one is pursuing (26:17) is repeated in 26:38 and Prov 28:1.

³⁷⁵ A sevenfold judgment is common in the Bible. Examples are found in both the OT (Ps 79:12; and Prov 24:16) and the NT (Rev 15–16).

³⁷⁶ This escalation resembles the moral decline of Rom 1. The treatment of continued sin with escalated punishments distinguishes Lev 26 from Deut 28 (M. Greenberg, *Ezekiel 1–20*, AB [Garden City: Doubleday, 1983], 124).

Israel's failure to obey, in addition to Israel's coldness to God, results in God's coldness and sevenfold punishment (vv. 27–28).³⁷⁷

Underlying this increased judgment is God's continuous desire that these punishments lead Israel to repentance (see Deut 8:5; Prov 3:11–12). In a similar vein the New Testament mentions that the Lord disciplines those whom he loves (Heb 12:4–11).

26:18–39 If the Israelites fail to respond to the first series of punishments, God will plague the nation's agricultural output. The sky will become like iron and the ground like bronze (26:18–20). These metals, which represent the hardest metals, speak of the austere conditions of the sky and the ground. Conditions would be so severe that they would result in a lack of produce and a severe drought.³⁷⁸ If this judgment elicits no response, their children³⁷⁹ and their livestock will be taken from them by wild animals (26:21–22).³⁸⁰ The result will be a decrease in Israel's population. They will become few in number (Jer 10:24; Ezek 29:15). If they fail to repent after their children and livestock are taken, God will send the sword and famine against them (26:23–26).³⁸¹ God is equally as responsible for sending enemies to oppress Israel as he is in causing the productivity of the land to fail.

If the Israelites continue in their rebellion, God will send the curse of cannibalism, in which parents will eat the flesh of their children (26:27–29).³⁸² Even the sacrificial system, which has its most extensive biblical deliberation in the Book of Leviticus, will be of no avail if the people are in rebellion against God with their worship characterized as idolatry³⁸³ on high places (26:30–31). The people as a result will be scattered among the nations, and the land will become so desolate that it will be undesirable even to those who fought to obtain it (26:33). The term "scatter" (*zrh*) is borrowed from the agricultural realm, where it describes the winnowing process (Ruth 3:2; Isa 30:24; 41:16). The word is often

³⁷⁷ Levine, *Leviticus*, 276.

³⁷⁸ See Hartley, *Leviticus*, 465.

³⁷⁹ The Hb. root שכל always refers to the loss of offspring (BDB, 1013).

³⁸⁰ Devouring animals are mentioned as a curse in other treaties as well (Deut 28:38,39, 42). This curse was experienced in fact by the Northern Kingdom in 2 Kgs 17:25–26 and was threatened as a judgment for the Southern Kingdom in Ezek 5:17; 14:15,21. In the age to come the animal kingdom and man will be at peace (Isa 11:6–9; 35:9; Hos 2:18).

³⁸¹ The expression "ten women will be able to bake your bread in one oven" in v. 26 indicates that there would be little food to go around. In the curse section of the Tell-Fekherye inscription we find the curse "May one-hundred women bake bread in an oven, but let them not fill it!" (Levine, "The Epilogue to the Holiness Code," 23).

³⁸² See 2 Kgs 6:28–29; Lam 4:10.

³⁸³ The term גלגל־ים is derived from the root גלל, "to roll," possibly referring derogatorily to the idol as a pile of stones.

employed in the Old Testament in reference to the exile of people (1 Kgs 14:15; Pss 44:11; 106:27; Jer 31:10; Ezek 5:10,12; 12:14,15; 20:23; 22:15; Zech 2:2,4).³⁸⁴ Exile, the ultimate judgment, will allow the land to enjoy the sabbath years, which it would not have experienced when Israel was in a state of rebellion against God (26:34–35). This prediction did in fact come to fulfillment according to 2 Chr 36:21 (see Jer 25:11). The seventy-year Babylonian captivity allowed the land to enjoy its sabbath rests.³⁸⁵ While the promised land experiences rest, the Israelites will be experiencing great confusion and even death in foreign lands (26:36–39).

These are the rewards and punishments for the Israelites based on the degree of loyalty to the Mosaic Covenant. The wellbeing of the nation of Israel at any given time in their subsequent history would be defined in the terms of the teaching of Leviticus 26 and Deuteronomy 28.

One may note the symmetry between the blessings and cursings in this chapter:

Blessings

Fertile land (vv. 4–5,10)

Live in safety (v. 5)

Savage beasts removed (v. 6)

Sword removed (v. 6)

Victory over enemies (v. 7)

God's favor (v. 9)

Cursings

Unproductive land (vv. 16,19–20,26)

Live in foreign nation (v. 33)

Beasts will devour (v. 22)

Sword avenges (v. 25)

Defeated by enemies (vv. 17,25)

God's disfavor (v. 17)

The blessings and curses are presented in an ascending order, beginning with fruitfulness of the soil and terror of disease on one hand to experiencing the very presence of God or exile from the land and hence from God's presence on the other.³⁸⁶

(4) God Will Remember (26:40–46)

⁴⁰“But if they will confess their sins and the sins of their fathers—their treachery against me and their hostility toward me, ⁴¹which made me hostile toward them so that I sent them into the land of their enemies—then when their uncircumcised hearts are humbled and they pay for their sin, ⁴²I will remember my covenant with Jacob and my covenant with Isaac and my covenant with Abraham, and I will remember the land. ⁴³For the land will be deserted by them and will enjoy its sabbaths while it lies desolate without them. They will pay for

³⁸⁴ Budd, *Leviticus*, 373.

³⁸⁵ Wolf points out that according to the judgment of 2 Chr 36:21 Israel failed to observe more than half of the sabbatical years between the entrance into the land (ca. 1400 B.C.) and the Babylonian exile (586 B.C.; *Pentateuch*, 183).

³⁸⁶ See Segal, *Pentateuch*, 56. The cursings may in this sense follow the pattern of the ten plagues.

their sins because they rejected my laws and abhorred my decrees. ⁴⁴Yet in spite of this, when they are in the land of their enemies, I will not reject them or abhor them so as to destroy them completely, breaking my covenant with them. I am the LORD their God. ⁴⁵But for their sake I will remember the covenant with their ancestors whom I brought out of Egypt in the sight of the nations to be their God. I am the LORD.”

⁴⁶These are the decrees, the laws and the regulations that the LORD established on Mount Sinai between himself and the Israelites through Moses.

26:40–46 After the Israelites have experienced the devastating judgment of exile, they may turn to the Lord and confess (see 5:5; 16:21) their treachery.³⁸⁷ This indication of repentance would have to involve turning to God with their whole being (Deut 30:2; also Deut 4:25–31). God will remember his covenant promises made to their forefathers and to the land (26:42–43,45). All during the time of exile and judgment he will not allow the Israelites to be destroyed completely (26:44). The Israelites must respond with repentance and confession when their uncircumcised hearts are humbled (*knʿ*)³⁸⁸ (26:41). They must recognize that their punishment is deserved before restoration and forgiveness can be experienced.³⁸⁹ The theological underpinnings for this truth stem from the promises in Gen 12:1–3; 15:18–21 (see Rom 11:28–29). Similar reflections occur in Deut 30:20; 1 Kgs 8:46–53; Neh 1:8–9. God will remember the Abrahamic promises even though Israel has not obeyed the stipulations of the Mosaic Law.³⁹⁰ This restoration upon repentance did in fact occur when the Israelites repented and turned to God while in exile in Babylon (Dan 9:1–19). In fact Lev 26:32–45 should be understood as a preview of the history of Israel that includes the experiences of apostasy, exile, and restoration.³⁹¹

The summation of the levitical laws in 26:46 is reminiscent of 7:37–38, which also concluded a major section of Leviticus. Even though judgment must come, God’s graciousness certainly underlies the entire announcement of judgment.

³⁸⁷ The term תַּעַל (teʿal) refers to treachery, which endangers a relationship and indicates “disloyalty, infidelity” (*HALOT* 2:613).

³⁸⁸ See the use of this verb in 1 Kgs 21:29; 2 Kgs 22:19; 2 Chr 7:14; 12:6–7. For the metaphor of the uncircumcised heart as one in rebellion against God, see Deut 10:16; 30:6; Jer 4:4; 9:25; Rom 2:28–29.

³⁸⁹ A similar pattern is found in Exod 2:24; 3:7–17, where God responds to the pain of the Israelites, although in that context the suffering is undeserved.

³⁹⁰ See Hartley, *Leviticus*, 470–71 for an excellent discussion of the interaction between the Abrahamic and Mosaic covenants in this passage.

³⁹¹ Archer, *Introduction*, 258.

(5) Conclusion

The experience of blessings and cursings based upon covenant loyalty has general application for the church today. Jesus often spoke of judgment to come (Matt 5:19; 6:23), and Paul mentioned that those who partake of the Lord's Supper in an unworthy manner would experience judgment (1 Cor 11:30). For the Christian obedience is the key to blessing (Jas 1:22–25). As Patrick notes, "A host of blessings is the prospect for an obedient people."³⁹² Some of Christ's teaching concerning the coming tribulation may allude to the cursings of Leviticus 26 and Deuteronomy 28, but Leviticus 26 states that Israel will not be rejected, a theme Paul also reiterates (Rom 11:26).

Some Christians believe that these same laws of Leviticus 26 and Deuteronomy 28 apply specifically to individuals today and should be claimed by believers. Note in the context, however, that the blessings are applied corporately to the nation of Israel.³⁹³ If the nation at large was faithful, God would bring blessing and fertility to the soil. The text does not indicate that one man who was faithful would have rain on his land and his rebellious neighbor would experience drought.³⁹⁴ Yet it is still true that one reaps what one sows (Gal 6:7). Also, the tendency to forget God in times of prosperity (which would precede the coming of the curses) is still a temptation for the people of God. Moreover, those who find themselves in sin and who may be experiencing God's discipline may confess their sin to God (1 John 1:19). This passage and the teaching of the New Testament testify to God's willingness to forgive. God's curses and judgment are not his final word. God wants to restore his people (Lev 26:40–45).³⁹⁵ Both the Old Testament and the New place a premium on heartfelt repentance for restoration and reconciliation to God.

³⁹²D. Patrick, *Old Testament Law* (Atlanta: John Knox, 1985), 124. The blessings of Lev 26 thus might form the theological background to Jesus' statement regarding the "abundant life" (John 10:10).

³⁹³See Wiersbe, *Be Holy*, 139.

³⁹⁴In truth, the philosophy behind the modern health-and-wealth community differs little from ancient pagan fertility religions (see D. Block, *Judges, Ruth*, NAC [Nashville: Broadman & Holman, 1999], 71, n. 193).

³⁹⁵Kaiser, *Old Testament Ethics*, 78.

VI. VOWS AND TITHES (27:1–34)

1. Regulation of Vows (27:1–29)
 - (1) Human Valuations for Vows (27:2–8)
 - (2) Animal Valuations for Vows (27:9–13)
 - (3) Inanimate Objects and Vows (27:14–25)
 - (4) Vow Qualifications (27:26–29)
2. Regulation of Tithes (27:30–33)
3. Conclusion
4. Conclusion of Leviticus (27:34)

VI. VOWS AND TITHES (27:1–34)

The last chapter of the Book of Leviticus deals with vows and dedications made to the Lord (see Num 30:1–16).¹ These vows were above and beyond the normal sacrificial offerings as described in Leviticus 1–7. They were not commanded in the Law since the decision to make a vow was a personal one (Ps 50:14), expressing willing devotion. These gifts would be vowed to the Lord as a special offering of thanksgiving (cf. 1 Sam 1:28; Pss 50:14; 61:9; 65:1; 66:13; 116:14,18; Jonah 2:9). It was not a sin to refrain from making a vow (Deut 23:22), but once a vow was made, it had to be kept (Deut 23:21–23; Num 30:2; Eccl 5:4–6). Substitutions could be made, however, and it was this possibility of making a substitution that distinguished the vow from the sacrificial offering made on the altar. Money, often the value of the offering plus a fifth, could be provided in place of the vow if the original vow was to be revoked. Vows were made throughout Israel's history (Gen 28:20–22; Num 21:2; Judg 11:30–40; 2 Sam 15:7–8),² often in times of distress. They were a means whereby the tabernacle was to be funded.

The vows and the dedications in this chapter follow the same structure of other sections of Leviticus. The main section opens with the phrase *ʔiš ki* (“if a man”; 27:2,14), while the subsections begin with the phrase (*wē*)*ʔim* (“and if”; 27:4,5,6,7,8,9,11,13,15,16,17,18,19,20,22,27,31).

¹J. Sailhamer finds ten laws in the chapter that correspond to the Ten Commandments (*The Pentateuch as Narrative* [Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1992], 365–67).

²T. W. Cartledge, “Vow,” *ISBE* 4:998.

The first section addresses human vows (27:2–8), the second animal vows (27:9–13), and the third the vowing of inanimate objects (27:14–25). The chapter opens with the standard introductory phrase “The LORD said to Moses” (27:1). The Jubilee Year, which was a major subject of Leviticus 25, was important in the calculation of vows (27:17,18,21,23,24).

1. Regulation of Vows (27:1–29)

(1) *Human Valuations for Vows (27:1–8)*

¹The LORD said to Moses, ²“Speak to the Israelites and say to them: ‘If anyone makes a special vow to dedicate persons to the LORD by giving equivalent values, ³set the value of a male between the ages of twenty and sixty at fifty shekels of silver, according to the sanctuary shekel; ⁴and if it is a female, set her value at thirty shekels. ⁵If it is a person between the ages of five and twenty, set the value of a male at twenty shekels and of a female at ten shekels. ⁶If it is a person between one month and five years, set the value of a male at five shekels of silver and that of a female at three shekels of silver. ⁷If it is a person sixty years old or more, set the value of a male at fifteen shekels and of a female at ten shekels. ⁸If anyone making the vow is too poor to pay the specified amount, he is to present the person to the priest, who will set the value for him according to what the man making the vow can afford.

27:1–8 In Lev 27:2–8 the nature of the vow addresses the dedication of an individual to the Lord. The prices (values)³ of the individuals should be understood as representing either the wage of a worker (which was a shekel a month in the biblical period)⁴ or the relative worth of the value of the person’s services in the tabernacle. If the services included heavy manual labor in working with sacrificial animals or in transporting the tabernacle, it is easy to see why young men would be given higher value.⁵ Wenham argues that the value of the individual was apparently based on the value of slaves of either sex at various ages.⁶ Dedicating a person to the Lord may very well have involved the taking of a Nazirite vow (Num 6:1–21).⁷ As in other passages of Leviticus, 27:8 offers exceptions for the poor if a person had

³For the use כֶּבֶד, “value,” see discussion of 5:15,18,25 and the numerous occurrences in Lev 27. The expression is used to refer to a monetary payment (2 Kgs 12:5–6).

⁴G. J. Wenham, *The Book of Leviticus*, NICOT (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1979), 338.

⁵W. C. Kaiser, *Old Testament Ethics* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1983), 206–7. See also C. Myers, “Procreation, Production, and Protection: Male–Female Balance in Early Israel,” *JAAR* 51 (1983): 585; R. Wakely, כֶּבֶד (*ndr*) *NIDOTTE* 3:39–40, and 1 Sam 1:9–11.

⁶See G. J. Wenham, “Leviticus 27:2–8 and the Price of Slaves,” *ZAW* 90 (1978): 264–65. P. Budd suggests that the different values reflect the differing monetary worth of men and women in ancient times (*Leviticus*, NCBC [Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1996], 381).

⁷Budd, *Leviticus*, 380.

been vowed and then found himself too poor to make good on the payment (1; 5:7,11; 14:21).

(2) *Animal Valuations for Vows (27:9–13)*

⁹“If what he vowed is an animal that is acceptable as an offering to the LORD, such an animal given to the LORD becomes holy. ¹⁰He must not exchange it or substitute a good one for a bad one, or a bad one for a good one; if he should substitute one animal for another, both it and the substitute become holy. ¹¹If what he vowed is a ceremonially unclean animal—one that is not acceptable as an offering to the LORD—the animal must be presented to the priest, ¹²who will judge its quality as good or bad. Whatever value the priest then sets, that is what it will be. ¹³If the owner wishes to redeem the animal, he must add a fifth to its value.

27:9–13 Animals could also become candidates for vows. They became holy, that is, set apart, and could not be exchanged for another animal (27:9–10).⁸ The value of an unclean animal was determined by the priest and was to reflect its market value (27:11–12).⁹ If an unclean animal happened to be vowed, it could be redeemed at a value of 20 percent above its worth (27:13). It should be recalled that the additional 20 percent was the compensation made in the case of one who was presenting a guilt offering (5:16; 6:5). The dedication of an unclean animal may have been intended to be an actual monetary contribution rather than the literal presentation of an unclean animal, or perhaps unclean animals could have been used for transportation by the priesthood.

(3) *Inanimate Objects and Vows (27:14–25)*

¹⁴“If a man dedicates his house as something holy to the LORD, the priest will judge its quality as good or bad. Whatever value the priest then sets, so it will remain. ¹⁵If the man who dedicates his house redeems it, he must add a fifth to its value, and the house will again become his.

¹⁶“If a man dedicates to the LORD part of his family land, its value is to be set according to the amount of seed required for it—fifty shekels of silver to a homer of barley seed. ¹⁷If he dedicates his field during the Year of Jubilee, the value that has been set remains. ¹⁸But if he dedicates his field after the Jubilee, the priest will determine the value according to the number of years that remain until the next Year of Jubilee, and its set value will be reduced. ¹⁹If the man who dedicates the field wishes to redeem it, he must add a fifth to its value, and the field will again become his. ²⁰If, however, he does not redeem the field, or if he has sold it to

⁸The word translated “exchange” (תִּגְדֹּל) has this meaning in Gen 31:7,41; 35:2; Ps 102:26 (BDB, 322). This law was expressly violated in the postexilic period and was addressed by the prophet Malachi (Mal 1:13–14).

⁹Thus Budd, *Leviticus*, 383.

someone else, it can never be redeemed. ²¹When the field is released in the Jubilee, it will become holy, like a field devoted to the LORD; it will become the property of the priests.

²²“If a man dedicates to the LORD a field he has bought, which is not part of his family land, ²³the priest will determine its value up to the Year of Jubilee, and the man must pay its value on that day as something holy to the LORD. ²⁴In the Year of Jubilee the field will revert to the person from whom he bought it, the one whose land it was. ²⁵Every value is to be set according to the sanctuary shekel, twenty gerahs to the shekel.

27:14–25 Nonliving objects that may be dedicated¹⁰ to the Lord are addressed in vv. 14–25. These dedications include houses (27:14–15),¹¹ part of family land (27:16–21), and fields not part of family land (27:22–25).

A house that had been dedicated could be repurchased by its owner if the owner paid the full value of the house plus 20 percent, as in the case of a dedicated animal (27:15; see 27:13). The value of the family land that had been dedicated was determined by how much seed was required to sow the field¹² or by the amount of grain the land would yield.¹³ If the vow took place in the Jubilee, the redemption price must be the full value of the land (27:17), otherwise the calculation of the value was reduced based on the time until the Jubilee (27:18). If the owner has not redeemed the field by the next Jubilee by paying its value plus 20 percent or if he has sold the land, it becomes the Lord’s property in possession of the priests. It is devoted to the Lord (27:19–21). Land bought from someone else may be dedicated, but it was returned to the original owner in the Year of Jubilee (27:22–25; see Lev 25).

(4) *Vow Qualifications (27:26–29)*

²⁶“No one, however, may dedicate the firstborn of an animal, since the firstborn already belongs to the LORD; whether an ox or a sheep, it is the LORD’s. ²⁷If it is one of the unclean animals, he may buy it back at its set value, adding a fifth of the value to it. If he does not redeem it, it is to be sold at its set value.

²⁸“But nothing that a man owns and devotes to the LORD—whether man or animal or family land—may be sold or redeemed; everything so devoted is most holy to the LORD.

²⁹“No person devoted to destruction may be ransomed; he must be put to death.

¹⁰ Lit., שֶׁ־קִדְּשׁוֹ (“made holy”).

¹¹ Wenham maintains that these houses were not part of the family estate but should rather be understood as town houses, see 25:29–30 (*Leviticus*, 339).

¹² Or the seed that is harvested (thus Wenham, *Leviticus*, 340, n. 8). The term מִן־הַאֲדָמָה, “family land” (NIV), occurs four additional times in this chapter (27:21,22,24,28). The term was used in 14:34 and 25:10.

¹³ Budd, *Leviticus*, 384.

27:26–29 Qualifications for vows are listed in vv. 26–29. Firstborn animals were not candidates for dedication to the Lord because they were already dedicated to him (27:26). If the firstborn happened to be an unclean animal, the worshiper could redeem¹⁴ the animal at its value plus 20 percent (27:27; see Num 18:15). The dedication of the firstborn was rooted in the Passover event (Exod 13:2; Num 3:13; 8:17–18).

Anything that a man had “devoted” (*herem*) was an exception, since it, like the firstborn of clean animals, was the Lord’s possession (27:28). The root *hāram*, which occurs five times in 27:28–29, was either used of something to be destroyed or reserved for exclusive use in the sanctuary. The term was used to describe the complete destruction of the Canaanites in holy war (Num 21:2–3; Josh 6:21; 8:26; 10:1,28). Illustrations of items dedicated completely to God may be found in Josh 6:17 and Mic 4:13. The term was also used to delineate someone or something as a permanent and definitive offering to the Lord.¹⁵ Thus devoting or surrendering something to God meant devoting that item to the service of God or subjecting it to utter destruction.¹⁶

Anything that had been devoted to the Lord was not to be redeemed or have anything else substituted for it. These items were for the priests or the sanctuary and were not to be sold (Num 18:14; Ezek 44:29). The same applied to the individual who was thus dedicated; he was to be put to death (*hāram*, 27:29). Those who qualify as devoted to death are those who had been captured in battle (Num 31:7,13–17) or had committed murder (Num 35:31–34).¹⁷ Saul’s sin was that he refused to carry out the execution of captured enemies (1 Sam 15:3,18). Animals or humans “devoted” (*hrm*) are in a different category from items that are dedicated (*qdš*, 27:9–10,14–16,18–19, 21–23,26) to the Lord.

2. Regulation of Tithes (27:30–33)

30“A tithe of everything from the land, whether grain from the soil or fruit from the trees, belongs to the LORD; it is holy to the LORD. **31**If a man redeems any of his tithe, he must add a fifth of the value to it. **32**The entire tithe of the herd and flock—every tenth animal that passes under the shepherd’s rod—will be holy to the LORD. **33**He must not pick out the good from the bad or make any substitu-

¹⁴Only in Lev 27:27,29 is the root פדה used instead of גאל, which is used elsewhere in Leviticus. פדה was used in reference to redemption of the firstborn in Exod 13:13; 34:20.

¹⁵Hb. הִרְמָה means to “consecrate something or someone as a permanent and definitive offering for the sanctuary; in war, it meant to consecrate a city and its inhabitants to destruction” (N. Lohfink, “הִרְמָה *hāram*; הִרְמָה *hērem*,” *TDOT* 5:188). In v. 28 we find the former connotation, while the latter meaning is found in v. 29. See also C. Brekelmans, הִרְמָה *hērem*, *TLOT* 2:474–77.

¹⁶J. A. Naude’, הִרְמָה (*hrm* I), *NIDOTTE* 2:277.

¹⁷Budd, *Leviticus*, 388.

tion. If he does make a substitution, both the animal and its substitute become holy and cannot be redeemed.”

27:30–33 In addressing what may be vowed, dedicated, or devoted to the Lord, the instruction finally turns to the tithe, for the tithe pertains to everything from the land (27:30). The word “tithe” (*ma’āšēr*) is related to the number “ten” (*ešer*) and thus refers to a tenth. The concept of a tithe was not a new one for the Israelites, since we observe the practice before the giving of the Law (Gen 14:20; 28:20–22). Thus what we have in Leviticus 27 is a systematization of an earlier practice.¹⁸ In these texts from Genesis, as is the case also in this legislation from Leviticus, the tithe is taken from among the animal possessions (see Deut 12:17; 14:23).

There were three tithes for the ancient Israelites: (1) the general tithe (Lev 27), (2) the tithe of the sacred meal with the Levite (Deut 14:22–27), and (3) the tithe paid every three years to the poor (Deut 14:28–29). This text addresses the general tithe.¹⁹ Apparently the tithe was determined by counting every tenth animal that passed under the shepherd’s rod (27:32). This counting method appears to be the basis of Jer 33:13 and Ezek 20:37. The tithe was taken to maintain the Levites (Num 18:21–24), who in turn tithed their gifts to the priests (Num 18:25–32). The subject of tithes is addressed in Neh 10:38–39; 13:5,12; 2 Chr 31:5–6,12. In Amos 4:4 the people placed an imbalanced value on the giving of the tithe, while in Mal 3:8–10 they neglected it. As with vows, the tithed items could be repurchased based on the value of the object plus 20 percent (27:31).

3. Conclusion

The issue of paying vows is related to the overall concerns of Leviticus, for the paying of vows often is associated with and parallel to praising God (Pss 22:26; 61:9[8]; 63:2[1]) or making a praise offering.²⁰ This practice was assumed in the New Testament (Matt 23:23; Acts 18:18; 21:23), yet vows were abused when they were used to escape other obligations (Matt 15:3–9; Mark 7:9–13).²¹ Like the Israelites, Christians are called to be holy, and holiness pertains to all of one’s life, since all one’s possessions are actually from

¹⁸J. Raven, *The History of the Religion of Israel* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1979), 118.

¹⁹I.e., the tithe paid to the Levites who in turn tithed their portion to the priests (Num 18:21). R. Averbeck argues that Num 18 deals with the issue of the tithe from the perspective of the Levites and priests, while Deut 14 views the tithe from the perspective of the nation as a whole (מַעֲשֵׂר [ma’āšēr], *NIDOTTE* 2:1041). The giving of the tithe was practiced by many ancient cultures (R. White, “Tithe, Tithing,” *Baker Encyclopedia of the Bible*, 2:2071).

²⁰J. E. Hartley, *Leviticus*, WBC (Dallas: Word, 1992), 487.

²¹The attitude Jesus confronts may be reflected in *m. Ma’as* 1:1. In *Midrash Gen. Rab.* 1:6 the rabbis listed the tithe as one of the foundations upon which the world was created.

the Lord. In fact, it could be argued that the Christian is called to a higher ethical plane. As Kaiser noted with regard to the tithe:

Our conclusion must be that if a tenth was the minimal amount under the law, how can Christians do any less? Perhaps we should consider not how little but how much we can give, seeing how richly blessed we are in Christ.²²

The theology of tithing is found in Deut 26:10–15. Proportionate giving is the subject of 2 Corinthians 8 and 9. Giving of at least a tithe is a way of expressing that everything we own comes from God.²³ Those who make this their practice receive back far more than the sacrifices they make!

(5) *Conclusion of Leviticus (27:34)*

³⁴These are the commands the LORD gave Moses on Mount Sinai for the Israelites.

27:34 The Book of Leviticus ends with the statement that the commands God gave to Moses on Mount Sinai have come to an end. All the statutes that were given to Israel in their covenant relationship with the Lord were now recorded. This statement thus functions as the conclusion of both the statutes and the options, the latter of which had been the subject only of Leviticus 27. Thus this statement announces the completion of the contents of the whole book.²⁴ All the statutes contained in the Book of Leviticus are those the Lord “gave” (lit., “commanded”) to Moses.

²²W. C. Kaiser, “Leviticus,” *IB* (Nashville: Abingdon, 1994), 1:1192.

²³In A.D. 180 Irenaeus contrasted tithing with the greater generosity of those who have the Christian hope” (*Against Heresies*, 4.34; White, “Tithe, Tithing,” 1072).

²⁴M. D. Cassuto, “תְּשִׁיבָה,” *EM* 2:887, and M. H. Segal, *Introduction to the Bible*, 2 vols. (Jerusalem: Kiryat Sepher, 1964), 1:94[in Hb.]. For similar endings in Leviticus see 7:37–38; 26:46.

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