



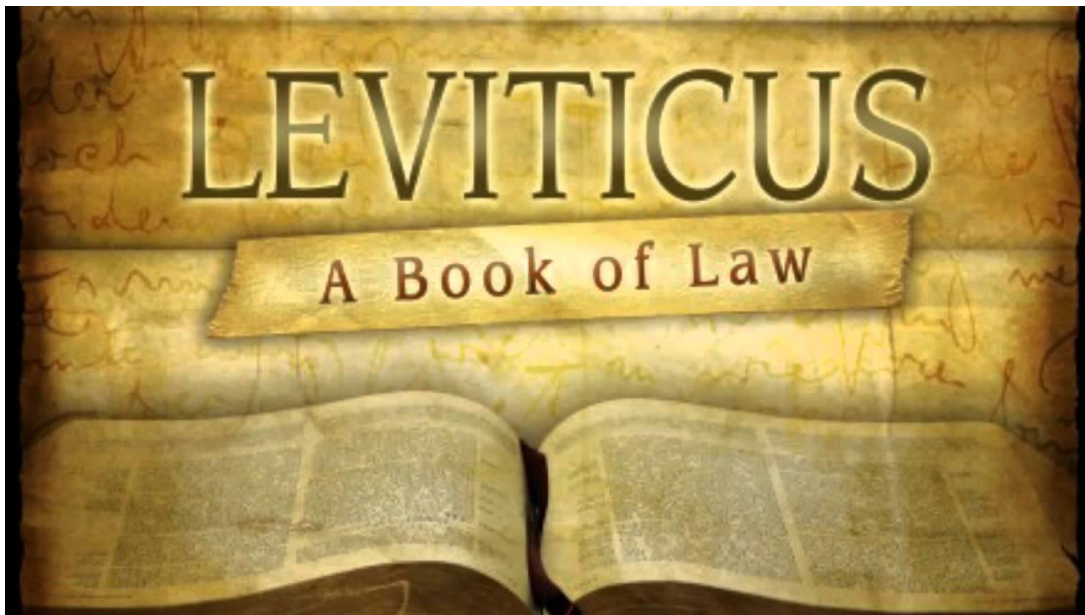
## **My Drift**

**Title: Bible – The Book of Leviticus**

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### **Where and when does the Book of Leviticus take place?**

Leviticus takes place during the month or month-and-a-half between the completion of the Tabernacle (Exodus 40:17) and the Israelites' departure from Mount Sinai (Numbers 1:1, 10:11).

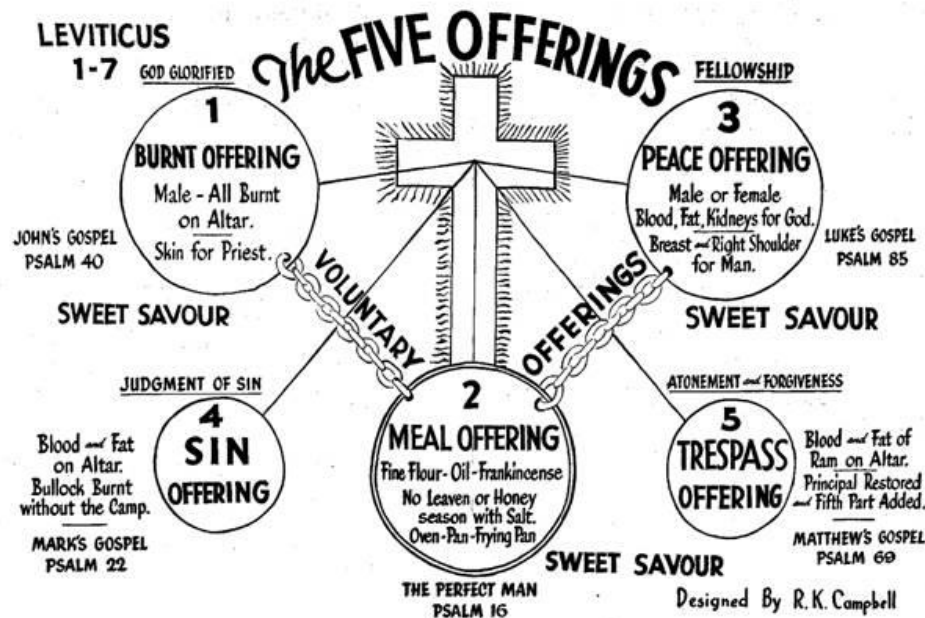
### **Brief Summary of the Book of Leviticus**

In the book of Leviticus, God establishes the moral and purity laws that serve to set Israel apart from other nations. God graciously provides a way for people to live in his presence.

### **The five Main Themes of Leviticus**

- the offering of sacrifices (chapters 1-7)
- principles of the priesthood (chapter 8-10)
- distinguishing between unclean and clean (chapters 11-15)
- day of atonement (chapter 16)
- and living a life of holiness (chapters 17-27)

## Laws or Rules for the Offering of Sacrifices (Chapters 1-7)



These laws for animal sacrifices to the Lord seem a little barbaric and bloody to most people's way of thinking now days. Maybe back when the bible was written it was okay and the way things were done. Regardless, large numbers of animals (mostly cattle and sheep) were sacrificed.

For example, here is what Leviticus 1 says about Burnt Offerings:

*1 The 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 anyone among you brings an offering to the Lord, bring as your offering an animal from either the herd or the flock'".*

*3 If the offering is a burnt offering from the herd, you are to offer a male without defect. You must present it at the entrance to the tent of meeting so that it will be acceptable to the Lord. 4 You are to lay your hand on the head of the burnt offering, and it will be accepted on your behalf to make atonement for you. 5 You are to slaughter the young bull before the Lord, and then Aaron's sons the priests shall bring the blood and splash it against the sides of the altar at the entrance to the tent of meeting. 6 You are to skin the burnt offering and cut it into pieces. 7 The sons of Aaron the priest are to put fire on the altar and arrange wood on the fire. 8 Then Aaron's sons the priests shall arrange the pieces, including the head and the fat, on the wood that is burning on the altar. 9 You are to wash the internal organs and the legs with water, and the priest is to burn all of it on the altar. It is a burnt offering, a food offering, an aroma pleasing to the Lord.*



**Altar where the Burnt Offerings are prepared for God.**

God commanded the nation of Israel to perform numerous sacrifices according to certain procedures. First, the animal had to be spotless. Second, the person offering the sacrifice had to identify with the animal. Third, the person offering the animal had to inflict death upon it. When done in faith, this sacrifice provided a temporary covering of sins. Another sacrifice called for on the Day of Atonement, described in Leviticus 16, demonstrates forgiveness and the removal of sin. The high priest was to take two male goats for a sin offering. One of the goats was sacrificed as a sin offering for the people of Israel (Leviticus 16:15), while the other goat was released into the wilderness (Leviticus 16:20-22). The sin offering provided forgiveness, while the other goat provided the removal of sin.

In summation, animal sacrifices were commanded by God so that the individual could experience forgiveness of sin. The animal served as a substitute—that is, the animal died in place of the sinner, but only temporarily, which is why the sacrifices needed to be offered over and over. **Animal sacrifices have stopped with Jesus Christ.** Jesus Christ was the ultimate sacrificial substitute once for all time (Hebrews 7:27) and is now the only mediator between God and humanity (1 Timothy 2:5). Animal sacrifices foreshadowed Christ's sacrifice on our behalf. The only basis on which an animal sacrifice could provide forgiveness of sins is Christ who would sacrifice Himself for our sins, providing the forgiveness that animal sacrifices could only illustrate and foreshadow.

**I didn't find the first 7 chapters in the Book of Leviticus very interesting reading. Much of the text is repeated over and over again for each of the different offerings. Plus, I don't find animal and bird slaughtering a very appealing subject.**

### **Principles of the Priesthood (Chapter 8-10)**

Have you ever watched someone performing a very dangerous task and gone away smiling at the thought that this person is risking his neck, rather than you? There are several occupations that I would gladly pay someone else to do rather than to have to do it myself. One such task is that of washing windows on skyscrapers, another is painting bridges, like the Golden Gate Bridge in San Francisco. The other day I saw a brief news feature on the men who change the light bulbs on top of the 651-foot Reunion Tower in Dallas, Texas. More power (and more pay) to them! Anyone who wants to risk their life in such occupations has my full support.

Imagine that if you had lived in the days of Moses and the ancient Israelites, you would have felt the same way about those whose occupation was the priesthood. The two sons of Aaron, Nadab and Abihu, were struck dead for exercising their priestly duties in a way that dishonored God. While at the end of chapter 9 fire came down from heaven, consuming what was left of the people's sacrifice, at the beginning of chapter 10 fire came down from heaven, consuming two of Israel's priests. From this day forward, every Israelite looks upon the priesthood as a very dangerous occupation.

### **Why Did God Kill Nadab and Abihu in Leviticus 10?**

The priesthood looked promising for Nadab and Abihu. The holy God of Israel had personally set them apart to serve as priests (Ex. 28:1). Their family pedigree was rich and their preparation extensive (Lev. 8–10).

They were dressed in fresh robes and sashes (Lev. 8:7). The turban on their heads held a golden plate boasting “Holy to the LORD” (Lev. 8:9). Blood from their ordination offering was crusted on their ears, thumbs, and toes (Lev. 8:24). Their hearts were still awestruck from seeing the “fire [that] came out from before the LORD and consumed the burnt offering” (Lev. 9:24).



They were set apart to serve God, but not for long. The opening verses of Leviticus 10 read: Now Nadab and Abihu, the sons of Aaron, each took his censer and put fire in it and laid incense on it and offered unauthorized fire before the LORD, which he had not commanded them. And fire came out from before the LORD and consumed them, and they died before the LORD. (Lev. 10:1–2)



Their ordination processes likely lasted longer than their ministries. Their unauthorized fire was met with an unquenchable one. God killed them on the spot in dramatic fashion.

Scenes like these teach an important lesson: there are no small sins against a holy God.

### Rules for the priests

*21:1 The Lord said to Moses, 'Say this to the priests. They must not touch a dead body. That would make them unclean. 2 It may be the body of a person from their own family. The priest can touch the dead person if it is his mother or father. He can touch the dead person if it is his son or his daughter or his brother. 3 He can touch the dead person if it is his sister. But he must not touch her if she has a husband. 4 The priest must not touch a dead person who is married to a person of his family. That would make him unclean.*

*5 A priest must not cut all the hair from his head. He must not cut the sides of his beard. He must not cut his body. 6 A priest must be holy. He must not speak bad words about the Lord. He is the person who sacrifices the people's burnt offerings.*

*7 A priest must not marry a woman who has left her husband. He must not marry a woman if men have paid her to have sex with her. He must not marry a woman whose husband has sent her away. A priest must be holy. 8 A priest is holy because he sacrifices the people's offerings to God. A priest is holy because I, the Lord, am holy.*

*9 A priest's daughter must not have sex with men who pay her. That would make her unclean. She would take away her father's honor. If she does not obey, you must burn her in a fire.*

*10 They have poured special oil on the leader of the priests' head to show that he is greater than his brothers. He must wear special clothes. He must comb his hair. He must not tear his clothes. 11 He must not go into a room where there is a dead body. Even if it is the body of his parent, he must not go in. It will make him unclean. 12 He must not leave the house of God. He has the holy oil on his head. He must be separate. I am the Lord.*

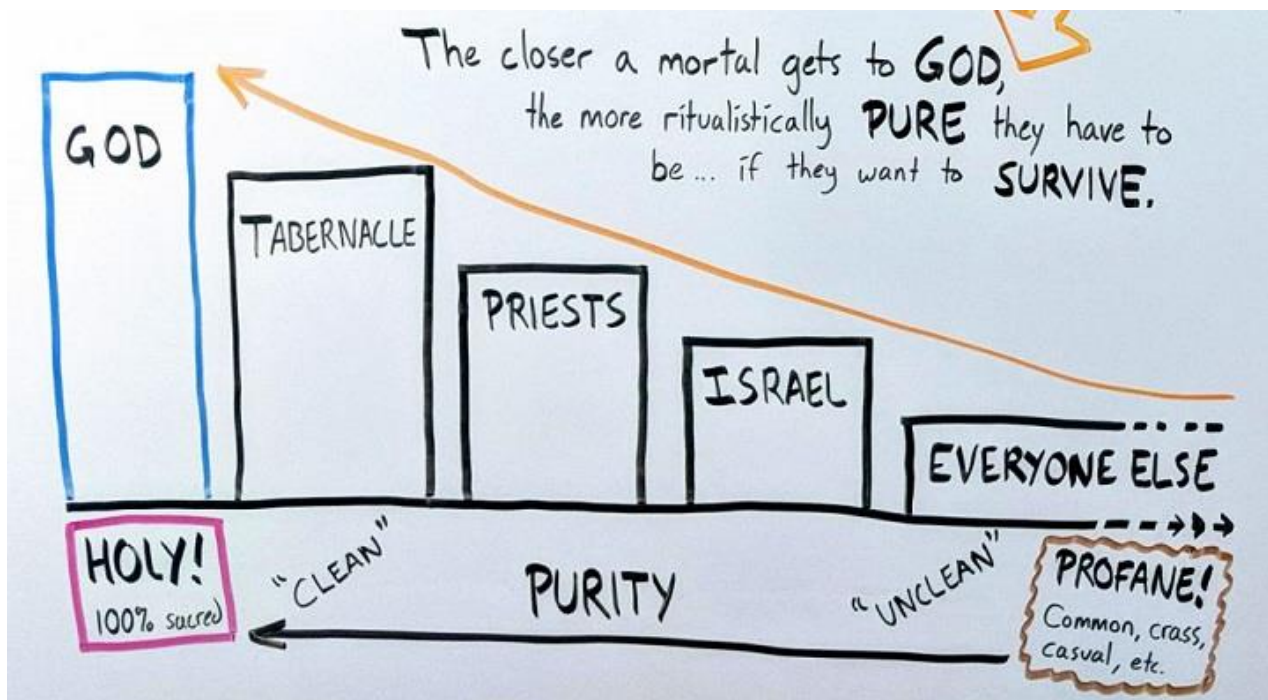
*13 The leader of the priests must marry a woman who has not had sex before. 14 The woman must not have had a husband who died. She must not have a husband that she has left. Men must not have paid to have sex with her. She must be a*

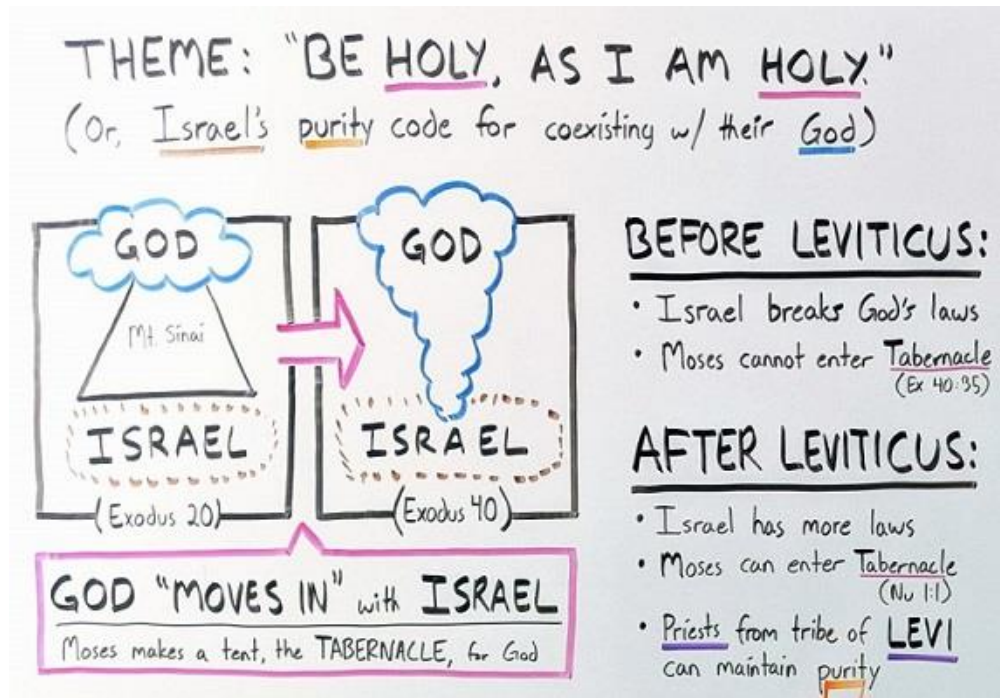
woman from Israel's people, 15 so that their children will be holy. I am the Lord. I make priests holy.'

16 The Lord said to Moses, 17 'Talk to Aaron. Say, "A priest who does not have a perfect body must not sacrifice the burnt offerings to God." This rule is for now and for all time. 18 A priest who cannot see must not sacrifice the food to God. A priest who cannot walk must not sacrifice food to God. A priest with a body that is the wrong shape must not offer food to God. 19 A priest with a hand that is the wrong shape must not offer food to God. A priest with a foot that is the wrong shape must not offer food to God. 20 A priest with a back that is not straight must not offer food to God. Neither must a priest who is very small offer a food gift. A priest who has an eye disease or a skin disease must not offer food to God. Neither must a priest offer food if his testicles are spoiled. 21 If a priest's son has something wrong with his body, he must not come near to the altar. He must not give the food offering to the Lord. 22 He can eat God's holy food and God's most holy food. 23 But none of Aaron's family who is not perfect can go near the holy curtain or the altar. He would make the holy places unclean. I am the Lord. I make them holy.'

24 Moses told all these rules to Aaron, to his sons and to all Israel's people.

### Distinguishing between Unclean and Clean (Chapters 11-15)





## Holiness

"Holy" means "set apart"—but it's a lot more involved than just being special. God is holy: far greater in love, goodness, power, and justice than humans. Until this point in the Bible, God has been a long way off from the people of earth. Although God has communicated with humans and in some cases even appeared to them privately (think Abraham's visitors in Genesis 18), he had yet to publicly manifest his presence on earth since the garden of Eden.

But all this has changed in Leviticus. God has made Israel his people: a people that now represent him on earth. He has now established his presence in the tabernacle, a portable holy place where God can dwell in the midst of his new nation.

But if people are going to live in the presence of God, some things will need to change. Because God is so "other" from the world, the people associated with him must become "others" too. **God is holy, and his people need to be holy as well.**

## Unclean and Clean

One way that the ancients understood holiness was in terms of whether something was "clean" or "unclean." This isn't the same as "good" or "bad." It's a sense of purity. Is something aligned with the God we are approaching? Or is it unaligned?

This wasn't specific to the people of Israel. People of most religions (past and present) have an understanding that there are ways that are appropriate and inappropriate when it comes to interacting with the divine. Those who work and live closest to a divine being are expected to abide by more stringent rules. The rules vary from religion to religion. We even see this within Christianity today: some faith traditions prefer married church leaders while others prefer celibate leaders.

This is a core theme to the book of Leviticus. When someone is operating in alignment with God's purity laws, they are "clean." When someone is out of bounds, they are "unclean." The book of Leviticus has a lot to say about how to stay clean and how to become clean again.

An important thing to note: Throughout the Pentateuch, Moses assumes that everyone will be unclean at some point. After all, everybody poops (Dt 23:12–14). The point is to live in a manner that respects the presence of God.

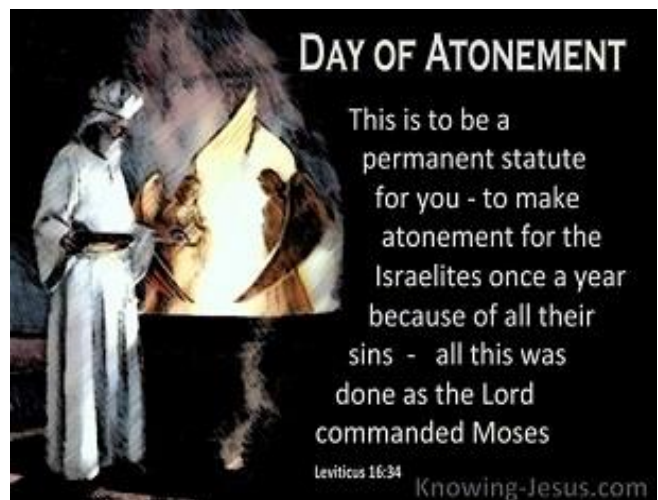
### **Day of Atonement (Chapter 16)**

The Day of Atonement is carried out by the high priest and it's the only sacred day in Israel's calendar that gets its own chapter in Leviticus. All of these ancient sacrifices and rituals symbolically accomplished a number of things: They were to deter/turn away Israel from sinning (repentance).

The Day of Atonement described in Leviticus 16 symbolized atonement for the sins of the whole Israelite nation and was a day when the entire house of Israel fasted and rested.

#### **The Day of Atonement** Leviticus 16

- Two goats were chosen (16:5-8)
- One was offered as a sacrifice, and the other was used as a scapegoat (16:8-10)
  - The first goat was sacrificed (16:15-16)
  - The second goat was sent into the wilderness bearing the sins of the people (16:20-22)
- The people were to afflict their souls (23:27-29)





## Living a Life of Holiness (Chapters 17-27)

### Leviticus Chapter 17-27: Holy Living

Chapter 17:	Blood, Life, Death
Chapter 18:	Sexual Sin and Perversion
Chapter 19:	Regulations for Life – Be Holy
Chapter 20:	Death Penalty Sins for God's Separated People
Chapter 21:	Regulations for Priests – Defilement
Chapter 22:	Regulations for Priests – Offerings
Chapter 23:	Annual Feasts
Chapter 24:	The Holy Place, Blasphemy, and Justice
Chapter 25:	Sabbath and Jubilee Years
Chapter 26:	Blessings or Cycles of Discipline
Chapter 27:	Free Will Offerings of Dedication

#### Some verses from above chapters:

*17:13 “Any Israelite or any foreigner residing among you who hunts any animal or bird that may be eaten must drain out the blood and cover it with earth, 14 because the life of every creature is its blood. That is why I have said to the 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.”*

*18:22 “Do not have sexual relations with a man as one does 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.*

*19:1 The 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. 3 “Each of you must respect your mother and father, and you must observe my Sabbaths. I am the Lord your God. 4 “Do not turn to idols or make metal gods for yourselves. I am the Lord your God.*

*20:9 “Anyone who curses their father or mother is to be put to death. Because they have cursed their father or mother, their blood will be on their 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 are to be put to death. 11 “If a man has sexual relations with his father’s wife, he has dishonored his father. Both the man and the woman are to be put to death; their blood will be on their own heads. 12 “If a man has sexual relations with his daughter-in-law, both of them*

*are to be put to death. What they have done is a perversion; their blood will be on their own heads. 13 “If a man has sexual relations with a man as one does with a woman, both of them have done what is detestable. They are to be put to death; their blood will be on their own heads.*

*21:13 “The woman he marries must be a virgin. 14 He must not marry a widow, a divorced woman, or a woman defiled by prostitution, but only a virgin from his own people, 15 so that he will not defile his offspring among his people. I am the Lord, who makes him holy.”*

*22:1 The 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.*

*23:1 The Lord said to Moses, 2 “Speak to the Israelites and say to them: ‘These are my appointed festivals, the appointed festivals of the Lord, which you are to proclaim as sacred assemblies. 3 “‘There are six days when you may work, but the seventh day is a day of sabbath rest, a day of sacred assembly. You are not to do any work; wherever you live, it is a sabbath to the Lord.*

*24:1 The 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. 3 Outside the curtain that shields the ark of the covenant law 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. 4 The lamps on the pure gold lampstand before the Lord must be tended continually.*

*25:1 The Lord said to Moses at 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. 3 For six years sow your fields, and for six years prune your vineyards and gather their crops. 4 But in the seventh year the land is to have a year of sabbath rest, a sabbath to the Lord. Do not sow your fields or prune your vineyards. 5 Do not reap what grows of itself or harvest the grapes of your untended vines. The land is to have a year of rest. 6 Whatever the land yields during the sabbath year will be food for you—for yourself, your male and female servants, and the hired worker and temporary resident who live among you, 7 as well as for your livestock and the wild animals in your land. Whatever the land produces may be eaten.*

*26:3 “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 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.*

*27:1 The Lord said to Moses, 2 “Speak to the Israelites and say to them: ‘If anyone makes a special vow to dedicate a person to the Lord by giving the equivalent value, 3 set the value of a male between the ages of twenty and sixty at fifty shekels[a] of silver, according to the sanctuary shekel[b]; 4 for a female, set her value at thirty shekels[c]; 5 for a person between the ages of five and twenty, set the value of a male at twenty shekels[d] and of a female at ten shekels[e]; 6 for a person between one month and five years, set the value of a male at five shekels[f] of silver and that of a female at three shekels[g] of silver; 7 for a person sixty years old or more, set the value of a male at fifteen shekels[h] and of a female at ten shekels. 8 If anyone making the vow is too poor to pay the specified amount, the person being dedicated is to be presented to the priest, who will set the value according to what the one making the vow can afford.*

### **What is the biblical definition of holiness?**

It calls all people of faith to live a life of holiness. Literally, holy living means that the Christian lives a life that is set apart, reserved to give glory to God. It is a life of discipline, focus, and attention to matters of righteous living.

### **What does the book of Leviticus tell us about holiness?**

Leviticus links every aspect of life to our ability to dwell with God. The Israelites were meant to be a people rooting out sin, defying death, and orbiting the LORD's holiness. Holiness is not asceticism, deprivation, or dourness—but a radical affirmation of life. Holiness is not passive, it does not draw back.

To say you are holy means that you have been set apart by God's grace for God's purpose. Your allegiance is no longer to the kingdom of your success and happiness, but to the progress of his kingdom of glory and grace.

### **What is a biblical example of holiness?**

Jesus heals the sick, raises the dead, and casts out demons. All of these acts are examples of God's holiness purifying the things it comes into contact with. Through all of these examples, we are able to piece together a compelling picture of the holiness of God.

### **How do you walk on the path of holiness?**

Holiness is motivated by the grace of God's love for us and requires the work of loving him by obeying his commands; God's love is freely offered in forgiveness and is a blessing promised on condition of obedience; loving him is a matter of the heart and the will.

#### **INSTRUCTIONS FOR HOLINESS (11-22)**

- 11-15, 17-22 - Living on earth makes us impure and unholy, but God wants a holy nation (19:1-2, 20:7-8)
  - Why?
    - Because God has separated them (20:25-26)
- 16 - Atonement is offered in the most holy place so God can dwell with a sinful people
- 17-20 describe sins that must be rejected to remain holy
- 21-22 give special rules to priests for their holiness

### **So, what do you think is the problem with the Book of Leviticus?**

Me and most other people reading the bible for the first time find the Book of Leviticus boring, not exciting, too bloody, and hard to understand.

**In Genesis, God created the Heavens and the Earth.**

**In Exodus, God parts the Red Sea.**

**In Leviticus, the only miracle or exciting part is when God kills priests Nadab and Abihu with a ball of fire from the sky.**

The Book of Leviticus is one of the most serious books of the Bible, in part because of the laws it imparts to followers. The purpose of Leviticus is to reveal the absolute holiness of God, and the conditions on which He may be approached.

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