

LEVITICUS

Eden to Exile Leader's Guide

John D. Morrison, PhD

OT LEADER'S GUIDE

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OT Leader's Guide: Leviticus

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OT19

Greetings! Welcome to our journey through the Old Testament from Eden to Exile! I am so excited about what we are going to learn together and how we are going to grow together as we read God's Word together in these next twelve months.

Our reading the New Testament in a year as a church was a much broader and deeper success than we ever imagined. We saw God work in individuals and in relationships as his Word was made a daily priority. God tells us that his Word is powerful to accomplish his purposes (Isaiah 55:10-11), and we saw that on full display last year.

We believe that all of God's Word is, as Paul tells us, "able to make you wise for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus" (2 Timothy 3:15). It is our commitment as a church to the whole counsel of God that has led us to read the Old Testament this year.

I am even more excited about this year because of a new and added "twist." Each week you'll read from the Old Testament, but you'll also find a devotional for the end of the week written by a member of our Lakewood Team. These devotionals will draw the connection between what you read each day and the New Testament. We are about to discover more regarding the unity of the Scriptures. God's Word tells us the one story of salvation freely offered through Jesus Christ.

Please keep current and encourage others to read along with you. I would love to hear your thoughts and impressions as you reflect on each day's reading. Please email me at tsmiley@lakewoodlife.org

We are blessed as a ministry to have such a talented, gifted, and doctrinally sound staff who each have the competency to lead us into a deeper understanding of God's Word. As you read their devotional thoughts and commentary, consider letting them know how their words have impacted your daily walk of faith.

Enjoy our journey from Eden to Exile!

Dr. Tom

INTRODUCTION

Leviticus is the central book of the Pentateuch, the first five books of the Bible. Not only is the book centrally placed, but Leviticus addresses the central concern of all of Scripture: God dwelling with his people. From creation to redemption to new creation, God is working to make a way to dwell with humanity.

Leviticus is distinct from the other five books of the Pentateuch, but together they reveal who the Lord is and how he works. These five books work in conjunction with one another to address these themes. As such, we begin reading Leviticus by considering how it continues in line with Genesis and Exodus to address how God will dwell with his people.

In Genesis, Adam and Eve walk with God. They dwell with him in the garden paradise, but then they fall from his presence due to their rebellion against him. Genesis 3-11 recounts how forsaking God's presence leads to ever-worsening sin on earth. Then in Genesis 12, God promises Abraham the hope of once again dwelling with him (Gen. 12:1-3; cf. Gal. 3:14). Genesis, however, ends with this chosen family in Egypt, far from the promised land and with their patriarch dying.

Exodus picks up this account in Egypt and tells how the Lord redeemed his people through the blood of the passover lamb and through the waters of the Red Sea. He accomplished this great redemption in order that he might dwell among his people (Exod. 29:45-46).

Genesis explains the *why* - the reason people are no longer in God's presence. Exodus explains the *where* - God will be particularly present in the tabernacle. Now, Leviticus explains the *how* - the way God's people may enter into his presence.

The bookends of Leviticus highlight that God alone can make a way for his people to dwell with him. Like a good moving setting up a sequel, Exodus ends with an unexpected plot twist that leaves the reader hanging. After all the emphasis on the tabernacle and God dwelling among his people, we read: "And Moses was not able to enter the tent of meeting because the cloud settled on it, and the

glory of the Lord filled the tabernacle” (Exodus 40:35). God’s glorious presence — the goal of the tabernacle — is the very thing that keeps Moses from drawing near to God. If Moses cannot draw near to God, then there remains no hope for anyone else to come into the Lord’s presence. Exodus ends with this question of how one can come before the Lord.

The first verse of Leviticus continues to highlight this separation. “The Lord called Moses and spoke to him from the tent of meeting” (Leviticus 1:1). God is in the tabernacle, in his dwelling place, but Moses is outside. The Lord calls to Moses from inside the tent and begins to explain the way into his presence: “Speak to the people of Israel and say to them, When any one of you brings an offering to the Lord, you shall bring your offering of livestock from the herd or from the flock” (Leviticus 1:2). From here, the Lord makes clear in Leviticus that he must be approached on his terms: through sacrifices and the priesthood that offers them. And, the Lord’s people will be a holy people, distinct from the nations around them.

On the other side of Leviticus, Numbers 1:1 highlights the difference that God’s gracious provision of a way to him makes. “The Lord spoke to Moses in the wilderness of Sinai, in the tent of meeting, on the first day of the second month, in the second year after they had come out of the land of Egypt” (Numbers 1:1). The Lord now speaks to Moses *in* the tent of meeting. The tabernacle is no longer just God’s dwelling, now it is the tent of meeting, where the people can draw near to him even as they journey in the wilderness.

Key Themes

As Leviticus describes how the Lord makes a way for his people to meet with him, two key themes emerge that reinforce the need for and the graciousness of God’s making a way: holiness and atonement.

Holiness. God’s holiness speaks to both his distinctiveness as the one true God and to the purity of his moral character. He alone is God, and he always does what is right. In his holiness, God is like a consuming fire (Deut. 4:24; Heb. 12:29). Like the sun, God’s holiness is both powerful and pure., and like the sun it gives life but consumes anything that comes too close. God desires to dwell with his people,

but the tension is that his holiness consumes the impurity of human sin. In our sinfulness, we all are like Moses, waiting outside the tent lest we be consumed by God's holy presence.

Atonement. The resolution God provides to this tension of his holiness and his desire to live among his sinful people is atonement. The various sacrifices outlined throughout Leviticus serve as means of atonement, and the center of the book in chapters 16-17 is the great yearly feast called the Day of Atonement. The central goal of atonement is reconciliation. Atonement brings “at-one-ment” between the Lord and people. Leviticus sets forth how God reconciles humanity to himself as he uses sacrifices as the means of atonement. The Lord sets up these sacrifices as the way to pay for sin, to appease his wrath, and to purify from sin. God's people are called to hear his word and respond in faith by offering the sacrifices described in Leviticus.

Composition

The Lord speaks the words of Leviticus to Moses shortly after the construction of the tabernacle. This occurs during the first year of the Exodus while the people of Israel are camped at the base of Mount Sinai. In Exodus, the Lord spoke to Moses on Mount Sinai, but now the tabernacle has replaced the mountain as the place where God dwells with his people.

The New Testament affirms that Moses wrote Leviticus. Generally, the New Testament points to Moses as the author of the whole of the Pentateuch. More specifically, Luke cites legislation from Leviticus and refers to it as the Law of Moses (Luke 2:2). Paul cites Leviticus 18:5 and attributes it to Moses (Rom. 10:5). Jesus himself refers to regulations in Leviticus as being from Moses (e.g. Matt. 8:4).

Sacrifices

Leviticus details a number of sacrifices as the way God gave the Israelites to draw near to him. As Michael Morales explains, “Worship through sacrifice was a journey into the Presence of God. . . . The term ‘offering’ (*qorbān*) is built from the Hebrew root *qrḇ*, which means ‘to draw near.’” Worship through sacrifice is about drawing near to God. In the first seven chapters of Leviticus, the Lord gives Moses five sacrifices that the Israelites should offer: ascension (burnt)

offering, tribute offering, peace offering, purification (sin) offering, and reparation (guilt) offering.

Offerings in Leviticus	
Ascension (Burnt) Lev. 1:3-17	The entire animal is consumed by fire, showing full consecration to the Lord. A ‘sweet aroma pleasing to the Lord’ rises from this sacrifice, pointing to the appeasement of God’s wrath (Gen. 8:20-21; 2 Sam. 24:24-25; 2 Chrn. 3:1).
Tribute Lev. 2:1-16	This was a grain or cereal offering that expressed thankfulness and a desire to obey.
Peace Lev. 3:1-17	This is the only offering where the sacrificer joined in eating with the priests. This was a meal of communion in God’s presence.
Purification (Sin) Lev. 4:1-5:13	This sacrifice was about cleansing from the defilement of sin. The spreading of blood was central to this rite.
Reparation (Guilt) Lev. 5:14-26	This sacrifice signified the payment for sin. It demonstrated the satisfaction needed for sin.

The goal of these sacrifices is reconciliation with God. In these sacrifices, we see that God gracious allows a substitute in place of those who sin. The substitute must be without blemish, which signifies the moral purity needed to be with God.

Blood is another prominent feature in many of these sacrifices. In Leviticus 17:11, the Lord says, “The life of the flesh is in the blood.” This principle of the life being in the blood is key to understanding the role of blood in these sacrifices. The language of atonement speaks of both ransom and purification. The blood signifies that the sacrificer is offering one’s very life to God. Because life is in the blood, blood also serves as a cleansing agent. Sin brings death, but the life that is in the blood purifies from death. The sinfulness of humanity means that there can be no atonement without death.

New Testament Connection

Leviticus is about the holy God making a way for his people to dwell in his presence. In the New Testament, we learn that Jesus is “the

way, the truth, and the life” (John 14:6). He is the way to the Father. God the Father provides God the Son as the way for his people to draw near to him by God the Spirit. Jesus is the atoning sacrifice that reconciles the holy God and people. As people trust in the work of Christ, God reconciles them to himself and indwells them by the Holy Spirit.

LEVITICUS 1-6

OT19 WEEK 22

Discussion Questions

- Lev. 1:1-2 | Look at Exodus 40:35. Why is Moses unable to enter the tabernacle? Where is Moses in Lev. 1:1? Why is it significant that Lev. begins with the Lord telling Moses how the people may come into his presence.
- Lev. 1:4 | The word here for 'lay' should probably be understood as press down firmly. Between the hand pressing down and the fact that the animal "shall be accepted for him," what is going on in this passage? Why is it gracious that God provides a substitute for his people? How does substitution point forward to the NT?
- Lev. 1-7 | Why is blood such a central part of these sacrifices? Consider Lev. 17:11 and Heb. 9:22.
- Lev. 1-7 | What do these chapters reveal about who God is?

LEVITICUS 8-10, 21-22

OT19 WEEK 23

Discussion Questions

- Lev. 8-9 | Why were the priests so important for the worship of God in the Old Testament? What was their role in helping people draw near to God? Why did a 'kingdom of priests' (Exod. 19:6) need their own priests?
- Lev. 8-9 | Consider how Jesus's work as our high priest (Heb. 10:11-18) is greater than the work of Aaron and his sons? How does Jesus as our high priest give us even greater confidence that we can draw near to God?
- Lev. 10 | Why did the Lord kill Nadab and Abihu? What lessons can we learn from the fact that God is a God who must be approached in the way he outlined? Does this truth still apply on this side of the cross? Consider John 14:6.
- Lev. 21:8; 22:31-33 | How do these verses help explain the regulations in chapters 21-22? Why was it essential for the priests to be holy?

LEVITICUS 16-19, 23

OT19 WEEK 24

Discussion Questions

- Lev. 16:15-22 | What are the different fates of these two goats? How do these two goats signify what is necessary for sinful people to be reconciled to God?
- Lev. 17:10-11 | What does this passage teach about blood? How does its teaching on blood help explain the use of blood throughout so many of these sacrifices?
- Lev. 18:1-5 | Why were God's people to obey his rules? Why was it important for them to be distinct from the people around them? How are NT believers called to live distinct lives? How does the Holy Spirit empower believers to live in such a way?
- Lev. 19:17-18 | What is the motivation for obedience to these commands? How does God's character inform how we act. Consider how Jesus explains and applies this command in Luke 10:25-37.
- Lev. 23 | These are the annual feasts for the nation of Israel. How do annual celebrations in the church calendar help you remember what the Lord has done and praise him for it? How can you better help your family use these annual celebrations to focus on the Lord?



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