

Leviticus

Original Historical Setting

Author: Moses

Date: Written around 15th century B.C.

Audience: Israelites camped around Mt. Sinai

Occasion: The permanent preservation for Israel of the oral commands given by God to Moses

Timeline:

~1445 B.C. – Ten Commandments given

~1445 B.C. – Consecration of Aaron and the priests

World Events that occur simultaneously

~1500 B.C. – Hindu writings (Vedas) begin

Genre/Literary style

Ancient laws with a little narrative

Features and Structure

- Leviticus can be divided into two main parts:
 - 1) **Ch 1-17** (the *basis* of fellowship-sacrifice)
 - 2) **Ch 18-27** (the *obligations* of fellowship-separation)
- In **Ch 1-17** you can see the progression of the focus on **offerings** that are to be made (**1-7**), the **priests** who offer them (**8-10**), on behalf of the **people** for cleansing (**11-16**), on the **altar** (**17**).
- Make note of the **5 Offerings** that are described in each of the **1st five chapters**
- In **Ch 18-27** you can see the regulations for the **people** (**18-20**), the **priests** (**21-22**), the **feasts** (**23-24**) and the land of **Canaan** (**25-27**).
- Make note of the **7 Feasts** that are described in **Ch 23**.

Key text(s)

11:45 – God, “Be holy, for I am holy.”

19:18 – You shall love your neighbor as yourself.

26:12-13 – God repeats His pledge that He would dwell with the people, He would be their God, and they would know that He was the Lord their God Who brought them out of Egypt

What to look for

- Notice that by laying out these rituals and rules for Israel, God is telling the people they are to be holy—a nation separated from sinful practices and devoted to Him. In this way Israel becomes a witness to the world, testifying that God is holy and deserves our obedience.
- Since we are reading the Bible through you can see more clearly that in Genesis we glimpse God’s remedy for man’s sin—the seed of the woman; in Exodus God’s answer to man’s cry—the blood of the Lamb; in Leviticus God’s provision for man’s need—a Priest, a Sacrifice, and an Altar.

Interesting facts

- The Liberty Bell is engraved with words that describe the trumpet blast signaling the release of slaves at the start of Jubilee, the celebration occurring every 50 years. It comes from Lev. 25:10 and reads: “Proclaim liberty throughout the land unto all the inhabitants, thereof.”
- The idea of a scapegoat--a person who takes the blame for others--comes from Leviticus. On Yom Kippur (Day of Atonement) the high priest puts his hands on the head of a goat, symbolically transferring the nation’s sins to the animal. Then he has the goat led into the desert to die. As the goat departs so does Israel’s sin.
- Holiness is mentioned more times in Leviticus than any other book of the Bible (152 times).
- Leviticus Jones played Neb in the 1916 movie version of the Jules Verne novel, *20,000 Leagues Under the Sea*.