

# LEVITICUS

**“The Way of Holiness”**

© Rev'd Andrew Klynsmith.  
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## ***1. Introduction***

### **A. Title and Contents**

Leviticus has the title in Hebrew, wayyiqra' , which means 'and He called', and which comes from the first word in the Hebrew text of the book. This Hebrew title then reminds us that this book has its place within the rest of the Torah, and is part of the flow of the narrative of Exodus through to Numbers. Leviticus fits then in salvation history, and is not separate from it. A diagrammatic representation of the journey from Egypt to the plains of Moab where preparations were made for entry into Canaan follows:

**JOURNEY 1**  
Exod. 13:17-19:2

**JOURNEY 2**  
Num. 10:11-12:16

**JOURNEY 3**  
Num. 20:22-21

<b>EGYPT</b>	<b>SINAI</b>	<b>KADESH</b>	<b>MOAB</b>
Exod.12:1-13:16 Passover laws	Exod. 19:3-Num. 10:10 Laws for life in covenant and for and worship at the Tabernacle.	Num. 13-20:21 Laws for life of the priesthood and the purifying of the people	Num. 22-36 Law for life in the promised land.

(At each of the locations, God reveals Himself to His people, And gives them laws to express the relationship that he has established with them. The institutions in Israel's life are then institutions given to express, and to ensure the continuing of, communion with the Holy God. It is interesting to note that the journey to each location is marked by the murmuring of the people against God and Moses.)

The English title of the book is derived from the Latin translation of the Greek Septuagint, and is fairly appropriate as it deals with priestly matters, and the priests were drawn from the tribe of Levi. In some ways it is a handbook for priests, but it is not exclusively for them. Chapters 8-10 focus particularly on the priestly ministry, as do some other parts (e.g. chh. 16-17, 21-22), but much of the book is addressed to the whole people of God, setting out the way in which they may worship God in holiness. (The first two verses of the chapters often indicate to whom the instruction is directed.)

### **B. Structure of the Book**

Section 1: The Purity of Worship in Israel (Chh. 1-17)

- (a) Sacrificial worship (1-7)
- (b) The role of the high priest (8-10)
- (c) The treatment of impurity (11-16)
- (d) The treatment of sacrificial abuses (17)

Section 2: The Holiness of the Israelites (Chh. 18-27)

- (a) Sexual offences (18)
- (b) The life of holiness (19-26)
- (c) Appendix on vows (27)

### **C. Authorship and Unity**

The composition of Leviticus, along with the other books of the Pentateuch, was ascribed uniformly by Jewish tradition to Moses, the lawgiver of Israel. Certainly the book claims to record what God revealed to Moses; but nowhere does it explicitly state that this is Moses' written record of what he heard. There is a variety of views about its literary origins today. Many would still hold that Leviticus is one of the oldest parts of the Scriptures, dating from the time of Moses. Many critical scholars put it one thousand years later, after Israel's return from exile. A number of Israeli scholars date it much earlier, but not as early as Moses. The latter two positions usually see the compiler of the book as relying on some preexisting sources or traditions, for example 'The Holiness Code' or 'The Priestly Torah'.

Each of the positions has its strong points and its weaknesses, and we would be foolish to allow any of our understanding of the text be dependent upon these understandings of its dating. There is much evidence that an earlier date than that suggested by the post-exilic school is required. Whether separate sources contributed to the book as a whole is not certain, but there is a clear larger logic and unity to the organisation of the book, as we have seen in the structural outline. G. Wenham is helpful in his comments here: 'The tentativeness of all attempts to discover sources in Leviticus must be underlined. Even if one admits their presence it does not necessarily follow that they ever circulated independently of each other. Analyses which purport to distinguish between an original source and the work of later redactors should be treated more warily still. We do not know enough about the development of Hebrew language, law, and religion to make the elaborate analyses offered in some works anything more than conjectures.'

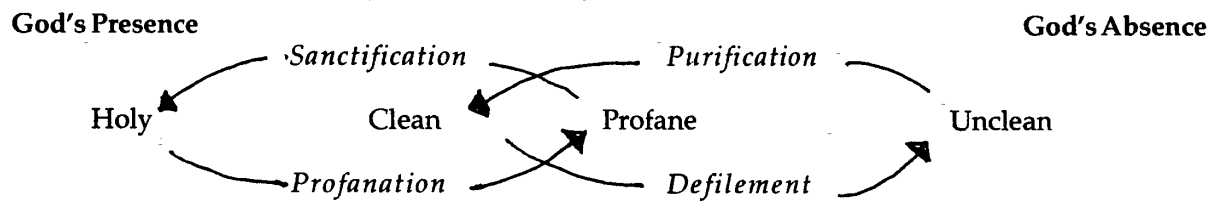
### **D. The Christian Value of Leviticus**

For many Christians Leviticus is that book you have to read to be able to say you have read the whole Bible. It may be seen as a collection of obscure and difficult to understand legislation with little relevance to modern life in Christ. Leviticus 19:18 is about the only part of the book that people know - without even knowing that they know it! It is often the last book we consider; it is interesting to note that it used to be the first book that Jewish children studied in the synagogue!

Leviticus forms part of the canon, the Christian Scriptures. Paul says in Romans 15:4, 'For whatever was written in former times was written for our instruction, that by steadfastness and by the encouragement of the scriptures we might have hope.' Jesus opened the whole of the Scriptures as the exposition of Himself on the Emmaus Road. What we hope to be enriched in, in these studies, is the abiding theological richness of Leviticus.

Over all, we can say that the legislation given by the Lord in Leviticus is to regulate the worship of the people of Israel, so that He can sanctify and bless them. The stress is on the purity of the people as the prerequisite for worship, and on the holiness of the people which is worship's consequence. Sacrificial worship is highlighted, for by the gift of the sacrifices, God purifies and sanctifies His people.

Holiness and purity are separate, but related, categories. Purity is also called cleanness; impurity is uncleanness. Holiness has its opposite in profanity, or commonness. John Kleinig illustrates these two related polarities this way:



Holiness is that state conferred to people or objects by the presence of God. Holy things or holy people were set aside for divine use. Common or profane is then not a derogatory term, but an indication that such items were for ordinary or common usage. Everything that is not holy is profane/common. (This state of commonness gets only one mention Leviticus in 10:10, although there are a number of ways in which Israel are warned against profaning holy things.) Common things could be either clean or unclean. Uncleanliness or impurity was totally incompatible with the presence of God, and so cleansing, purification had to take place before such an item could come into contact with God in a way which led to blessing. Contact between the Holy One and the unclean one lead to death. In creation nothing was initially holy or unclean - it was all very good, but still needed the sanctifying work of God to become holy. Clean profanity is the 'groundstate' of creation - holiness or uncleanness are variations from this starting point. The Sabbath day was the day of blessing and sanctification, and the extension of Eden's boundaries was the mandate given to the man and the woman ('...fill the earth...' understood rightly as fill the earth with the sanctity, communion and worship of the Lord found within Eden). Holiness was still to come, but planned for, and planned for the whole world (see Eph. 1:3ff).

## E. Some Useful Resources

### A. Commentaries

Gordon J Wenham, *The Book Of Leviticus*, in *The New International Commentary On The Old Testament* series, gen. ed. R. K. Harrison, William Eerdmans, Grand Rapids, Michigan, 1979.

R. K. Harrison, *Leviticus*, in Tyndale Old Testament Commentaries series, gen. ed. D. J. Wiseman, Inter-Varsity Press, Leicester, England, 1980.

John E. Hartley, *Leviticus*, in *Word Biblical Commentary*, OT ed. John D. W. Watts, Word Books, Dallas, Texas, 1992.

### B. Articles

*Lion Handbook to the Bible*, pp. 172-183

*The Interpreter's Dictionary of the Bible*, volume 3, pp. 117-122

*The International Standard Bible Encyclopaedia*, volume 3, pp. 110-117

John Kleinig, *Sharing In God's Holiness*, paper for Lutheran general Pastors' Conference, 1984

## ***2. Sacrificial Worship: Leviticus 1-7***

### **Structure of the chapters on the Laws for Sacrifice:**

- A. Instructions for the laity (1:1-5:26)
  - 1. The burnt offering - ch. 1
  - 2. The cereal offering - ch. 2
  - 3. The peace offering - ch.3
  - 4. The purification offering - 4:1-5:13
  - 5. The sin offering/the guilt offering - 5:14-6:7
- B. Instructions for the priests (6:8-7:38)
  - 1. The burnt offering - 6:8-13
  - 2. The cereal offering - 6:14-18
  - 3. The priest's cereal offering - 6:19-23
  - 4. The purification offering - 6:24-30
  - 5. The sin offering/the guilt offering - 7:1-10
  - 6. The peace offering - 7:11-36
  - 7. Summary - 7:37-38

### **Understanding the Theology of Sacrifice in Leviticus**

These chapters on sacrifice contain in various places with the words 'And the Lord said to Moses...' (1:1; 4:1; 5:14; 6:1,8,19,24; 7:22,28). These are very important words, even though we may be tempted to overlook them in the flow of reading. They tell us that this legislation comes to Moses from the Lord. In all the workings and purposes of the sacrifices that are set out, what is being accomplished is primarily the will of God. Sacrifice flows from God primarily, and not to him. It is given to us by Him to offer to Him. P. T. Forsyth said 'Sacrifice is the fruit, not the root, of grace.' The sacrifices of the people of Israel are not a ritual designed by them to placate God, but rather His gift to them that they may enjoy His holy presence. They do not earn grace; they exist as the gracious way of the Lord into holiness. Leviticus 17:11 says of the blood of sacrifice, 'I [i.e. the Lord] have given it for you upon the altar to make atonement for your souls.'

The sacrifices are the way by which the processes of cleansing and sanctification take place. Sin and disease lead to profanation of the holy and pollution of the clean; sacrifice can reverse this process. Hebrews 9:22 tells us 'Under the law almost everything is purified with blood, and without the shedding of blood there is no forgiveness of sins.' Where uncleanness caused by sin was left unatoned for by sacrifice, deaths were liable to occur. There are a number of places where the enormity of the sin led to instant judgment, so that it was impossible to offer sacrifice quickly enough to avert disaster (see for example Numbers 25.) It is not a coincidence that in these cases where a person died, there was no sacrifice needed to sanctify the rest of the people. His or her death nullified the need for an animal.

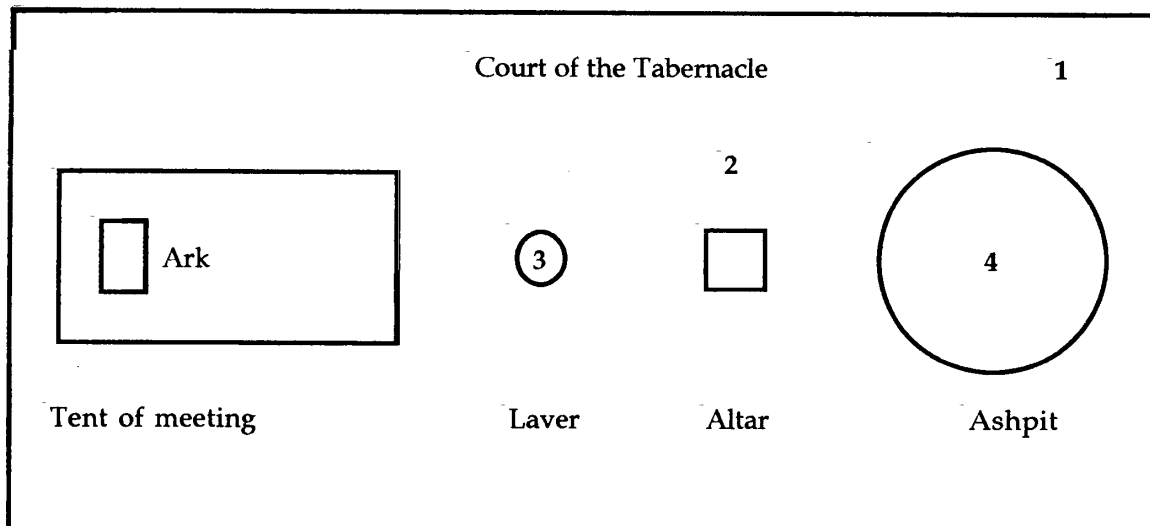
The shedding of blood then is of key importance in this process of cleansing and sanctification. It would seem clear, although it is debated keenly, that the blood of the animal stood for the shed blood of the offerer. The death of the animal substituted for the death of the offerer, a death which would have come had he come into the presence of God baldly as a sinner. It did this by serving to make atonement. The priest is said to make atonement by

means of the sacrifice ( e.g. 4:20,26,31,35). The actual meaning of the word in Hebrew, kipper, is a little difficult to ascertain with great precision. One possibility is that it is related to an Akkadian word meaning to wipe or cleanse. Or it could be related to the Hebrew word for ransom price. There may be the idea of covering and removing from sight involved in the word also. Whatever, atonement is that process by which the offerer of the sacrifice is brought into communion with the Holy Lord. Those sacrifices which do not involve the shedding of blood presupposed that communion with God, the enjoyment of His presence had been established already. This explains why in the priestly list of sacrifices the peace offerings come at the end of the list rather than third as in the list for the laity.

Both the grace and the holiness of God are reflected in the allowing of different animals for sacrifice. On the one hand, the holiness of God is shown in this: those who were leaders in Israel or who were particularly close to the Lord required more expensive or costly sacrifices (bulls, rams) to provide atonement; common people had a less costly alternative (female goat). The grace of God is shown in that those who were poor could offer smaller and less expensive sacrifices (pigeons, turtledoves, flour and oil) - their poverty was not to be a barrier to the receipt of his gift of atonement.

### The Burnt Offering

The sacrifices were very moving and impressive occasions. The worshipper did not sit passively in the service, but was actively involved in the offering of worship. He had to choose an unblemished animal, bring it to the sanctuary and present it to the Lord and identify with it through the laying on of hands (1), kill it on the north side of the altar and dismember it with his own hands (2), and then, while the priest burned it, prepare other parts by washing (3) and watch it be burnt before his very eyes. If the offering was a bird, he had to put its crop into the ashpit (4).



The purpose of the burnt offering is not given except in 1:3, 4 '...that he may be accepted before the Lord,....to make atonement for him' and in 16:24 and 14:20. Peace with God, acceptance by Him is the goal of this sacrifice. In the Psalms the idea of pleasing God is attached to burnt offerings. This atonement is for sin in a general sense rather than the purification of the tabernacle from infectious uncleanness. The burnt offering does not remove sin, but makes fellowship between God and sinners possible. It propitiates God's wrath

against sin. Occasionally burnt offerings could be offered in token of obedience or as thanksgiving. They could affirm faith and trust in the Lord, and love for Him, and the desire to please Him.

### **The Grain Offering**

This offering seems to presuppose peace with God, and may have functioned as a kind of thanksgiving or praise offering to the Lord. There are few clues in the text about this offering. The fact that it is eaten by the priests indicates that peace exists between the offerer and the Lord. It recognised the covenant of grace that existed between God and His people. Salt - the salt of the covenant - was to be offered with all cereal offerings. It was normally offered with frankincense and oil - signs of the joy of being with the Lord. Oil and frankincense were not used when the offering of grain was an offering of jealousy (Numbers 5:12ff). But there it is again an offering in relation to covenant and faithfulness - but in this case of the suspected breach of this faithfulness. The cereal offering also functioned as the provision of the staple food for the priests. Lack of thankfulness on the part of the people, and an ignoring of the covenant was a disaster for those who ministered before the Lord!

### **The Peace Offering**

The same animals as were used in the burnt offering are used here, except for the birds - perhaps because they wouldn't make much of a meal. The peace offering was offered in much the same way as the burnt offering up to the dismembering of the animal. Only the kidneys and fat from the intestines and the long lobe of the liver (and the tail of long tailed sheep) were burned on the altar. The priests received the skin, the breast and the right thigh. The ceremony concluded with the worshipper and his friends or family joining in a sacred meal to eat up the rest of the meat. The feast was held in the Lord's presence. Those who took part had to be ritually clean. These were joyous occasions, rejoicing in the cleansing and sanctifying work that He had done through the sacrifices.

**We will consider the purification and sin offerings next week.**

### ***3. Purification From Uncleanness***

#### **1. Understanding the Nature of Uncleanness**

Uncleanness is the converse of cleanness or purity and normality. Pure gold was called 'clean' gold (e.g. Exod. 25:11), and tests for skin blemishes could result in the verdict 'It is clean' - meaning 'It is normal, nothing to worry about.' (e.g. Lev. 11:25). Clean animals were those that travelled in a manner appropriate or normal to their class. So, fish with scales and fins were clean but those without these normal aids to propulsion were unclean (Lev. 11:9-11). Priests with some kind of physical deformity, though not called unclean, were forbidden to minister at the altar (Lev. 21:17-23). Uncleanness was then not always a moral issue, though it may involve moral issues.

There were things that were permanently unclean - e.g. some animals. But there were also things which, though intrinsically clean, could become unclean through contact with uncleanness. Uncleanness was contagious. Temporary uncleanness may result from contact with corpses, childbirth, disease, discharges, and various sins including illicit sexual intercourse and murder. There were degrees of uncleanness and this required different cleansing rituals. For example, slight uncleanness would result from marital intercourse, and required the couple to wash and to wait until the evening before returning into the community. At the other extreme, the uncleannesses of adultery, incest, homosexuality and bestiality required cleansing by execution. The method of death - stoning or spearing - indicated the seriousness of this uncleanness - no touching of the offender was allowed, to avoid contagion by the uncleanness.

When God saw all that He had made he declared that it was very good. This must be kept in mind when considering certain aspects of uncleanness. The sexual union of the man and the woman, and the whole gamut of animals are included here in this declaration. The selection of certain animals as being unclean may have some underlying logic, but at times it is a little hard to see this. It seems to an arbitrary selection to some degree. It may be that the Lord was setting a way of delineating the holiness of Israel in very physical and visible terms.

#### **2. The Purification Offering**

The RSV and the NIV speak of 'sin' offerings and 'guilt' offerings in 4:1-6:7 of Leviticus. Perhaps because of these similar terms they have been seen as similar kinds of sacrifices. They are in fact quite separate and distinct. The first, the sin offering, deals with the whole matter of uncleanness and brings purification; the second deals with matters of breach of faith with God and provides for a way of reparation. These two chapters deal with both these sacrifices and the laws concerning them are arranged in similar way, perhaps indicating that the idea of reparation was always linked to the fact of purification. In these chapters, the value of the animal is accorded a secondary place (cf. chapters 1-3), and the quality of the sin being atoned for is the distinctive feature in the arrangement. Inadvertent and deliberate is one of the main organising divisions. Also of importance is the status of the sinner who brings the offerings.

These chapters could be analysed as follows:

#### 4:1-5:13 Purification Offerings

##### 4:1-35 For inadvertent sins

4:2 general intro

4:3-21 blood sprinkled in the holy place

4:3-12 for the high priest

4:13-21 for the whole congregation

4:22-35 blood smeared on the main altar

4:22-26 for the tribal leader

4:27-31 for an ordinary person offering a goat

4:32-35 for an ordinary person offering a lamb

##### 5:1-13 For sins of omission (deliberate sins?)

5:1-6 offering a lamb or goat

5:7-10 offering a bird

5:11-13 offering flour

#### 5:14-6:7 Reparation Offerings

##### 5:14-19 For inadvertent sins

5:14-16 offence known

5:17-19 offence unknown

##### 6:1-7 For deliberate sins

The word for purification offering is *chatta't*. This word commonly means 'sin', but can also mean the guilt of sin, the penalty due to sin, and the offering which deals with sin. We have seen that other sacrifices dealt with sin, in that they atoned, and so this is not really best called the 'sin' offering. Purification is given through this offering, so enabling the presence of God with His people.

A wider variety of offerings was allowed here than for other sacrifices. Bulls, goats (male or female), lambs (female), doves, pigeons and grain offerings are all allowed. The ram or male lamb is never used.

The rite was much the same as for the other sacrifices initially. The worshipper selected and brought the animal to the entrance of the tent of meeting, laid his hand upon its head, stated why he had brought the sacrifice and killed it. The differences emerge after this. Some of the blood was kept in a basin, while the rest was poured out at the base of the altar. The kept blood was applied in different ways, according to the degree of status/holiness of the offeror. The fat portions of the offering were burned on the altar of sacrifice, as a soothing aroma for the Lord. The rest of the animal was disposed of in different ways, according to the holiness of the offeror. A priest's animal, or the animal offered for the whole community, was taken outside the camp of Israel and burned beside the ash heap. A common person's animal was given to the priests to eat.

These offerings were offered for purification on both private occasions and in public, liturgical festivals (see Numbers 28-29). Less frequent occasions for this sacrifice included the dedication of priests, the altar, and the Levites, and on the completion of a Nazirite's vow. Cleansing from childbirth and from a skin disease or bodily discharge were marked by this sacrifice. Leviticus 4-5 covers the more general situations in which this offering was to be presented. Inadvertent sin, accidental and sin through forgetting were covered by this offering. High-handed sin was not covered by it.

The purification offering actually removed the contaminating sin from the offerer. The burnt offering was the primary atoning sacrifice, which reconciled the sinner with his Creator. The purification offering removed the uncleanness which sin had brought. It meant that this contaminating defilement was no longer present in the camp, and so could not defile the Tabernacle or the people. The Day of Atonement ritual particularly was about the purification of the Tabernacle and its furnishings from the contamination of uncleanness from the uncleannesses of the people of Israel (Lev. 16:19.)

In that ritual, two male goats and a bull are offered for purification offerings, and two rams for burnt offerings. One goat is selected by lot and offered as a sin offering for the people, and the bull for the priests. The blood of these slain animals is used to purify the tabernacle furnishings. The other goat of the purification offering is presented alive before the Lord, and the sins of the people of Israel are confessed over it - the sins are 'put upon the head of the live goat' - and that goat is taken and released into the wilderness. There is a physical removing of sin and its uncleanness to the place of the unclean. This live goat is said to be for Azazel (16:8,10,26). This is hard to understand. Some see Azazel as being a demon who lived in the wilderness; some others believe it may mean complete destruction; others believe it may mean 'rocky precipice'. Whatever (I favour the idea of complete destruction), the same basic idea underscores all three solutions - sin is removed with its contaminating uncleanness, and it does no more defilement in Israel.

The shed blood of Christ has fulfilled all that the purification offering was given for, and done more, It purifies the heart and mind from the pollution of sin. But more, in the Cross of Christ, the wilderness place has itself been purified. Christ has gone to the place of utter abandonment, so that there is no longer any uncleanness lurking to resurface for the Christian person. The Temple Curtain's breaking open meant that the way of purity and holiness to the Father's bosom was established. there is no longer any need to sacrifice for purification. The blood of Jesus goes on making us clean from all sin.

### **The Reparation Offering**

This offering is called in the RSV and NIV the guilt offering. Perhaps, as we will see, it is better called the reparation or compensation offering.

Only an unblemished ram or male lamb could be offered. The ritual description is much briefer here than with the other sacrifices. The worshipper brought his unblemished animal to the altar, probably laid hands on it as he confessed his sin, and then killed it there. The blood was thrown against the altar. The fat and entrails were burned. The flesh was cooked and eaten by the priests in a holy place.

Situations requiring this offering included sinning inadvertently against the Lord's property. This may included holy food meant for the priests only, failing to fulfil a vow or dedication promise, failing to present the tithe. In each case an item which was for the Lord's use has been used in a common way. The penalty for such a sin required the restoration to the priesthood what would have been theirs, and the payment of a 20% penalty, as well as the offering of the reparation animal.

Another situation in which this offering was to be made was the deliberate breach of faith against the Lord of swearing falsely, deceiving, extortion, with regard to a neighbour's

property. It is striking that such sins could receive forgiveness, given the deliberate or 1°highhanded nature of the sin. It would seem that this atonement was possible where there was evidence of true repentance, demonstrated by remorse, full restitution and confession of sin. 6:4 speaks of the one who has sinned 'and become guilty' - which may well mean the one who cannot bear or cover his guilt, but who has to confess it as it weighs heavily upon him. in this way it is different to the law in Exodus 22:6ff, where it seems that the person is found guilty on the basis of evidence in a trial. In that case the cost of restitution is to pay twice as much, not the extra fifth and a ram required here. This law then encouraged honesty and confession.

## ***4. The Ministry of Priests***

### **The Ministry of the Priests in Leviticus**

In Leviticus, the two chief areas of concern for the priests were (a) the ministry of sacrifice and (b) the distinguishing between things that were clean and unclean, and holy and common. With regard to the ministry of sacrifice, the priests had to:

(a) ensure that the fire on the altar of sacrifice was kept burning at all times (6:9,12,13), and dispose appropriately of the ashes (6:10-11).

In Isaiah 6, the prophet is taken in a vision into the presence of the Lord in all His majestic holiness. That holiness, particularly the confession of that holiness by the angels, confronts him with his and his people's uncleanness, particularly the uncleanness of his and their lips. He is purified to speak to the people the message of God's judgment by the coal taken from the altar which stands there in the presence of God.

Calvin understood this command to the priests as ensuring the perpetuation of the fire that the Lord Himself lit at the first burnt offerings in the Tabernacle (9:24) (and later also in the Temple - see 2Chron. 7:1). The tabernacle altar then is a continual reminder of the unending, all-consuming fire of God's holiness. Because it was associated with propitiatory sacrifice, the fire was also a constant reminder of the need for sacrifice, and of God's continued gracious provision of the sacrifice to reconcile His people to Him.

The ashes were dealt with by the officiating priest. When removing the ashes from the altar, a most holy furnishing, he was to wear the priestly garments, but when taking them from the Tabernacle to a clean place outside the camp, he was to wear other garments. The holy and the common must not be confused.

(b) arrange and burn the sacrifices on the altar (6:12,14-15,22, 7:3-5,11-12 etc.)

There was orderliness about the way in which the priests were to carry out the worship. Scrupulous attention to detail and exact obedience to the ritual law were expected in both priest and worshipper. Failure to attend to this meant that 'the man who offered it will not be accepted' (7:18). The worship of God's people was not their initiative, but God's divinely appointed way. The obedience of the sacrifice was really submission to grace, God's appointed method of atonement - and the obedience was the desired part of sacrifice, for it was the obedience of faith - cf. Psalm 40:6-8, 50:7-15, 51:15-19. Calvin says, 'Since God prefers obedience to all sacrifices, he was unwilling that anything should remain doubtful as to the external rites, which were not otherwise of great importance; that they might learn to observe precisely, and with most exact care, whatever the law commanded, and that they should not obtrude anything of themselves.'

(c) manipulate the blood of the sacrifice in the appropriate way for the sacrifice

In previous studies we have considered the differences of manner in which the blood was applied to different objects (drizzling, smearing or pouring) to indicate the degree of holiness, or proximity to the Lord.

(d) in accomplishing (b) and (c) the priest made atonement for the sinner, and so was the agent by which the forgiveness of the Lord came to that person

This is mentioned particularly often in Lev. 4-5, 14-15, and 16. We have looked at this matter in some detail previously, but will focus on a couple of aspects now.

In 16:29-31 the Israelites are commanded to make the Day of Atonement a day of affliction and rest from labour, because on this day is atonement made for them. Atonement is then a gift, and can not be worked for. The priestly ministry of atonement is primarily God's action. The command to 'afflict yourselves' is a rare one, and is linked in Isaiah 58:3 with fasting, and in Psalm 35:13-14 with a wider range of penitential acts (wearing sackcloth, bowing the head in prayer, fasting, mourning). We are reminded of the tax collector in Luke 18:9-14, who by his self-affliction indicated his utter emptiness of any self-righteousness and his complete dependence on God's propitiating of him.

It seems likely to many commentators from verses like 1:3-4 and 7:18 that the priest had the responsibility to declare to the offeror that atonement had been made (or not), the sacrifice accepted, and so forgiveness as being a reality for that person. The priestly ministry then included the ministry of the Word of God, speaking God's verdict to the person. This is particularly clear in the appearance of the High Priest from the Most Holy Place - although there is no indication that there was a word spoken at that point. We are reminded here of the declaration of Jesus just before he died, 'It is finished!' - that is, the work of atonement is done, the goal of reconciliation has been reached.

(e) ensure that he wore the appropriate garments for the ministry

The holy garments were reserved for the cleansing and sanctifying ministry. The nature of these garments is indicated in the chapter recording the ordination of Aaron and his sons. They included shirt and sash, cape, ephod (a kind of waistcoat or vest worn over the cape), breastplate (see Exod. 28:15ff), turban, and a gold rosette or ornament. The priests other than the High Priest wore linen robes, sashes, and caps. The High Priest had clothing which indicated the holiness of his office and ministry (e.g. the gold rosette) and other which indicated his representation of the people before the Lord - e.g. the breastplate. The robe of Jesus at his crucifixion, which was all of one piece (John 19:23), was like the cape of the High Priest in that regard (Exod. 28:31-35). The garments indicated that the priests were not serving out of their own worthiness or holiness, but in holiness conferred upon them by the Lord in His grace. (It is interesting to note then that Jesus is divested of his 'holy garment' before his sacrificial death - perhaps indicating that he was offering a better sacrifice than that of the Aaronic priesthood.)

(f) eat the most holy sacrifices in the holy place of the Tabernacle

(g) distinguish in Israel between the clean and the unclean, the holy and the common, and to teach Israel the statutes which the Lord had spoken to them through Moses

(h) the priests were restricted in their mourning

The priest in general was forbidden mourning, except in the case of nearest kin, and the high priest was forbidden even this mourning (21:1-6,10-12). To do this was to profane his office. Mourning may well have meant contact with the dead body, thus polluting a holy person. It is interesting that the priests' wives were not mentioned in the 'permitted' list. It may well be that it as she was one flesh with her husband that it was understood that she would be mourned. In Ezekiel 24, the prophet, who was also a priest, is forbidden the mourning of his wife's death. 21:4 probably refers to his mourning for his wife's relatives, and indicates it is prohibited.

## *5. The Institution of the Priesthood*

### **Leviticus 8-10 As A Whole**

This narrative section deals with a vital stage in the history of redemption. In the Sinai Covenant, Israel had been constituted as the people of God. This relationship, grounded in grace, conferred privileges and responsibilities. So long as Israel lived within the covenant, they were assured of God's blessing; but when they stepped outside of that covenant relationship they were in the judgment of God, the curse. The Tabernacle served as a permanent reminder to the people of the presence of the Lord who had called them to Himself, and spoke to them of His holiness and His grace. Yet a tabernacle without a ministry was pointless! Grace is not simply an attitude in God - it is His action in redeeming the world. The God of Israel does not simply care; He works to redeem. God can not simply forgive sins - in fact He could never simply do that; sin must be atoned for. Grace is a tangible reality which bears upon the world; it is God's action to save through the dealing with the sin of the world. And so the inauguration of the priestly ministry was a significant step in the life of God's people - the grace of God come among them!

The purpose of the sacred institutions is summed up in Exodus 29:43-36 - 'There I will meet with the people of Israel, and it shall be sanctified by my glory; I will consecrate the tent of meeting and the altar; Aaron also and his sons I will consecrate, to serve me as priests. And I will dwell among the people of Israel, and will be their God. And they shall know that I am the LORD their God, who brought them forth out of the land of Egypt that I might dwell among them; I am the LORD their God.'

Wenham points out structural similarities and contrast in chapters 8, 9 and 10 which I include below:

<b>Chapter 8</b>	<b>Chapter 9</b>	<b>Chapter 10</b>
1 The Lord tells M	2 M tells A 2 "Take"	1took not commanded
2 "Take"	5 took as commanded	2fire from the Lord (cf. 9:24)
4 M did as commanded	6 M says: "This is the thing"	3M says: "That is what"
5 M says: "This is the thing'	7 M says to A: "Draw near and do"	4M says to A's cousins: "Carry out A's sons"
6 M brings near A and his sons	8A offers his purification offering	6M says to A: "Do not tear clothes'
7 M clothes A	12 A offers his burnt offering	7Stay in sanctuary (cf. 8:33) anointing oil
12 M anoints A	15 A offers people's purification offering	8The Lord tells A
14 M offers purification offering	16 A offers people's .burnt offering	10 Distinguish holy, etc.
18 M offers burnt offering	18 A offers people's peace offering	12 M tells A and sons: "Eat in sanctuary"
22 M offers peace offering		
31 M tells A and sons: "Eat in sanctuary"		20 M satisfied
33 Stay in sanctuary	22 Blessing, fire from the Lord	

The regular pattern of the chapters, and the way that the pattern is disrupted in places, highlights a few important points. As we look at this structure, we see that chapters 8 and 9 are clearly chapters of human obedience to the divine initiative, whereas the narrative in 10 strikes us immediately as one of human initiative. All through chapters 8 and 9 we have the phrase, '...as the Lord commanded Moses...', or similar phrases (see 8:4,5,9,13,17,21,29,34,36; 9:6,7,10,21; also 10:7,13,15). Chapter 10 does not begin with a word of command from the Lord (as do 8 and 9) but with a human action of human origin.

## Chapter 8

In chapter 8, we find Moses acting as priest for Aaron and his sons. He undertakes the priestly activities prescribed in chapters 1-7: manipulating the blood (8:15,19,23), burning the fat pieces (8:16,20,28), receiving the priestly portion of the offering (8:29). Aaron and his sons take the roles assigned to the people in those sacrifices, such as laying their hands on the animals and killing them (8:14-15,18-19)?. Moses has himself stood in the presence of the Lord, and so is holy. Only holy things can make holy - and so Moses must act as priest in the ordination or consecration of Aaron and his sons for the priestly ministry.

But even Moses is one for whom blood must be shed, for whom forgiveness is needed - see Exodus 3:1-6, 4:24-26. In the ordination of the priests and in the consecration of the Tabernacle, there is a basic tension in the background: where does the initial holiness come from? In a world which is common at best, unclean at worst - defiled by sin and rebellion - where can anyone be found to consecrate or to cleanse? The answer in the background is that God Himself will provide the solution - that He will send the Holy One who can cleanse and consecrate. And so we understand the words of Gabriel to Mary, 'The Holy Spirit will come upon you and the power of the Most High will overshadow you; therefore the child to be born will be called holy, the Son of God.' (Luke 1:35) No wonder then either the terror of the demoniac in the synagogue when Jesus began his public ministry. Uncleaness of the vilest kind came into the presence of holiness: 'What have you to do with us, Jesus of Nazareth? Have you come to destroy us? I know who you are, the Holy One of God!' (Mark 1:21-28).

The rite for ordination is spelled out quite explicitly in Exodus 29, and only a brief reminder of what is needed to be done is provided here. The rites were to take one week. The ordination was to be before the whole congregation of the people of Israel. In part this may be to assure the whole people of the validity of Aaron's ministry. He had been implicated, though not an initiator, of the rebellion with the golden calf (see Exodus 32:1-6,15-24). His ordination, and the Lord's attestation to that ordination by fire, would have resolved any doubts the people may have had about the validity of his ministry. The validity of his ministry depended not primarily upon his own integrity but upon the grace of the Lord. In fact, his ministry was a proclamation itself of grace.

## Chapter 9

In chapter 9 we have a similar sequence of events as chapter 8, but this time Aaron occupies the centre stage as priest, offering sacrifices first for himself, and then for the people. Only as the properly consecrated high priest he is entitled to undertake these duties. His ministry is one which brings the blessing of the Lord to the people. That blessing is the presence of the Lord in His grace and glory, and is attested to by the fire which comes forth from the Lord and falls on the altar of sacrifice, consuming the offerings. (Note that last week I said that the

Lord lit the fire - this does not seem to be borne out by the text. The offerings were in the process of being burnt, when the fire from the Lord fully consumed them.)

Three other times in the Scriptures fire comes from the Lord as the sign of His approval and grace - at the announcing of the birth of Samson to Manoah and his wife (Judges 13:15ff), at the dedication of the Temple by Solomon (2Chronicles 7:1ff), and when Elijah confronted the prophets of Baal at Mount Carmel (1Kings 18:38ff). Each time, as here, the presence of the Lord in His holy glory leads the worshippers to throw themselves to the ground and to praise God. Here we are told they 'shouted' - a loud cry of utter joy. It is wholehearted worship. Such praise to the Lord for His works and His ways may be found, for example, in Isaiah 49:13, Jeremiah 31:7, Psalm 20:5, 33:1, 35:27, 59:16, 95:1.

Psalm 30 is a great song of thanksgiving and praise to God for His saving work, and ends with the line, 'You have turned for me my mourning into dancing; You have loosed my sackcloth and girded me with gladness, that my soul may praise You and not be silent. O Lord my God, I will give thanks to You for ever.' Silence is rarely referred to in Scriptures as the right response to the Lord's grace. It is seen at times as the right response to the Lord's judgment - see for example, Amos 5:13, or Zephaniah 1:7-10. It is also seen as the correct response to the wickedness of others, rather than angry and vengeful words - see for example Psalm 4:4, 37:4, 39:2. In Deuteronomy 27:9, the people are called to silence in order that they may hear the instruction of the Lord as they are His covenant people. The silence here is of their own chat, not their praise to the Lord. Always our speaking must be preceded by His Word and action.

Utter joy and utter awe - these two need always to be together in our worship. Awe without joy may easily be dread - fearful of God and unreceptive of His grace. Joy without awe may easily be wishful thinking, a refusal to meet with God as He really is, a way of keeping the Lord at arm's length, a determination to have a good time, with or without Him.

## **Chapter 10**

In contrast to the preceding chapters, Nadab and Abihu here offer unholy fire to the Lord. This is unholy because it is not prescribed by the Lord (10:1). It is the issue of initiative that determines its unholiness. These two have presumed that they can offer to the Lord a worship of their devising. They were priests and had been ordained and so, it may be assumed, were entitled to offer incense. But this offering is 'strange fire' or 'unholy fire'. What precisely the point of human initiative was is not made clear, although from Exodus 30:7-9 we may have a hint that it was offered at the wrong time of the day. Perhaps the coals were not taken from the altar of sacrifice as required (Leviticus 16:12).

Whereas before the fire was the sign of God's acceptance and grace, it here now became the sign and action of judgment (10:2). The Lord sent the fire immediately, and they died in His presence. They were consumed as the offerings had been consumed. By offering a worship of their own devising, they had sidestepped the holy way of grace, and such worship comes under the judgment of God. Moses brings the word of the Lord to the situation - 'I will show myself holy among those who are near me, and before all the people I will be glorified' (10:3). Moses's words may be loosely paraphrased, 'The closer a man is to God, the more attention he must pay to the holiness and glory of God.' Where he does not take that care, he may be sure that the Lord will do so Himself.

## *6. The Holiness of The Holy Lord's People (1)*

### **Leviticus 17-27**

Many scholars and commentators on Leviticus call this section the Holiness Code. In his commentary Gordon Wenham calls this Holiness Code, 'Prescriptions for Practical Holiness' which helps us understand a little better what is meant by the term. This is the way of holiness set out for Israel: not the way into holiness, but the way of the holiness into which they had been brought by the grace of God in the atoning sacrifices of the Tabernacle.

Where the Holiness Code begins is of some debate. Some scholars put chapter 17 with the previous section dealing with the Lord's establishment of His people as holy. This is largely based on language similarities. Others see it as the first section dealing with the people's practical holiness, due to thematic similarities with what follows. Wenham sees it as belonging to the Holiness Code, but also as providing a link between the section dealing with the sacrifices and the chapters to follow, as it relates to some matters of food and sacrifice.

The holiness of God's people is participation in His own holiness. And the Law of God is firstly revelation of the nature and being of God Himself. It is a law given not to be emulated from a distance, but to be lived in through fellowship with the Holy One. Holiness of life is a matter of participation, not emulation or appropriation. Appropriation of God's holiness takes holiness to be a kind of substance or virtue, rather than the very being of God Himself. To appropriate God's holiness (if you could!) leaves you at a distance from God, having holiness without Him. The only way of being holy is by being in the presence of God Himself and being one with Him.

The chapters of this section fairly well follow the arrangement of the material, which can be shown as follows:

- A ch. 17 Basic principles about sacrifice and food
- B ch. 18 Basic principles of sexual behaviour
- C. ch. 19 Principles of neighbourliness
- D. ch. 20 Capital and other grave crimes
- E. ch. 21 Rules for priests
- F. ch. 22 Rules for eating sacrifices
- G. ch. 23 Religious Festivals
- H. 24:1-9 Rules for the Tabernacle
- I. 24:10-23 A case of blasphemy
- J. ch. 25 Sabbatical and Jubilee years
- K. ch. 26 The blessing of obedience and curse of disobedience
- L. ch. 27 Redemption of votive gifts

This week and next we will consider some of these matters.

### **Chapter 17**

Verses 1 and 2 indicate that these rules are for all the people, with the oversight of the priests. Verses 3-7 prescribe that no domestic animal is to be killed outside the Tabernacle. The reason for this is given in verse 5: to bring to an end the practice of the people of sacrificing in the fields, and to ensure that it happens on the altar of the Lord. Verse 7 tells us that there was

a drift towards demonic worship in the wilderness. This plugs a potential loophole that a secret demon worshipper may have had to justify his worship.

The punishment for disregarding this prohibition is that '...bloodguilt shall be imputed to that man; he has shed blood; and that man shall be cut off from among his people' (v4). There are a number of ways in which this punishment has been understood. Some have thought that it means the offender is under capital punishment. Death does seem to be envisaged in the phrase, but some of the sins for which this penalty is invoked are secret and difficult to prosecute in a court (e.g. Exod. 30:38, Lev. 7:20-21). And at times we are told that the Lord himself will cut people off. Such a threat would be unnecessary if the death penalty was the mandatory way of exercising this punishment. Others believe that the punishment is excommunication, expulsion from the people of Israel. But again similar problems arise as with the previous explanation. Certainly this punishment is a serious one - and the threat of the punishment is that God Himself will intervene directly to punish the person. This threat then hovers over the person, constant and inescapable, waiting for the Lord's own time. This seems to be borne out by verse 10 of this chapter.

Verses 8-9 indicate that no burnt offering or sacrifice is to be offered outside the Tabernacle. The punishment is the same as previously. Verses 10-12 show that no blood is to be eaten, for the life is in the blood, and it has the particular and holy responsibility of making atonement on the altar. Verses 13-16 spell out what is to be done with game taken in hunting, not domestic animals. Again the eating of the blood is prohibited, but the place of eating is widened for there was no question that these animals would be offered as sacrifices. Also prescription for what to do with an animal that dies of natural causes, or killed by wild beast is given. The animal may be eaten, but may not have been drained completely of its blood, and so the person is temporarily unclean.

The prescription against eating/drinking the blood of animals was one of the few ritual obligations from the Old Testament enjoined on the early Church at the Council of Jerusalem in Acts 15:29 - '...that you abstain from what has been sacrificed to idols, and from blood, and from what is strangled, and from unchastity.' Of these prescriptions, unchastity (porneia) was never approved by the Lord (1Corinthians 5, Revelation 2:14) - and still are binding on Christian people. Yet, Paul allowed Christians to eat food offered to idols (1Cor. 8:1-6), so long as the meal does not take place in a pagan temple (1Cor. 10:14-22), and it is not misinterpreted by pagan friends (1Cor. 10:23-30), and it does not cause stumbling to a weaker Christian person (1Cor. 8:7-13). It seems likely then, that Paul did not view the eating of blood as something that was intrinsically wrong, but the key issues in this were those of love. (Because blood had been given to make atonement, and the blood of Christ had removed that necessity and function, the holiness of the blood was so removed and could be again used in common things.)

## ***7. The Holiness of The Holy Lord's People (2)***

### **A Note About The Law**

There has been a tradition in Christian approaches to the Old Testament Law to divide the law into three main areas: ceremonial, moral and civil. Ceremonial law deals with the regulation of worship (i.e. the sacrificial and ritual laws), moral law with the personal and corporate life of the people of God (e.g. the Ten Commandments), and civil law with the ordering of the society. Those who hold this view usually assert then that only the moral law is still binding on Christian people. There are some problems with this. Firstly, the New Testament itself does not seem to distinguish between different types of laws in this way. Secondly, it is difficult to draw the distinctions clearly - e.g., is the Sabbath a ritual or a moral law? Thirdly there is much interconnection between the areas, and so much of the civil law has its basis in the moral law. While there is some usefulness in this approach (and so it should not be dispensed with entirely), there may need to be a different approach in our overall understanding of the law.

Jesus Christ is God's first Word to us - he is in fact the Word of God from eternity become flesh to dwell among us (John 1:1-14) - and he is God's last Word to us, and so the full and complete revelation of God to us (Hebrews 1:1-4). Every other word of God is then bounded by Him. When Jesus opened the Scriptures to the disciples on the Emmaus road, he explained to them what was said in all the Scriptures concerning himself (Luke 24:25-27). The Law of God is part of the Scriptures of Christ. We must read the Law then in the light of Christ. He is the law of God incarnate. There are aspects of the Old Testament law which anticipated his coming and his ministry in a provisional way; there are aspects of the Old Testament law which anticipated his coming by looking to the one who would fully live it. So, none of the Old Testament law is done away with - all of it is binding on Christians, in as much as all of it finds its fulfilment (not replacement) in Christ. Romans 10:4 says, 'Christ is the end of the law that everyone who has faith may be justified.' The word for 'end' is *telos*, meaning 'goal' - where the Law had been leading and pointing all the time.

### **Chapter 18: The Holiness of God's People In Their Sexual Behaviour**

This chapter divides into four sections:

- 18:1-5 Exhortation to avoid the customs of the heathen, for Israel is the Lord's people.
- 18:6-18 A list of unions regarded as incestuous
- 18:19-23 Other Canaanite practices (mainly sexual) to be avoided
- 18:24-30 Warnings of the consequences of neglecting these rules.

This chapter begins with a reaffirmation of the relationship between the Lord and His people (vv2,4), and a (hinted) recalling of the events of the Exodus, through a prohibition on following the ways of the Egyptians and the Canaanites (v3). The phrase 'I am the Lord your God' occurs 23 times in the book of Leviticus, and is mostly concentrated in chapters 18 and 19. The shorter phrase 'I am the Lord' occurs 18 times and is found in chapter 19 particularly as well as chapter 22, where the phrase 'I am the Lord who sanctifies you' occurs also, 6 times. The covenant nature of the Law is highlighted by this recurring refrain - it is like the drumbeat underneath all the law of the Holiness Code. Obedience to the law is the expression

of the holiness which the Lord has bestowed on His people in covenant grace. Chapter 18 shows us that the sexual life of God's people is an essential part of the expression of this holiness. This is so particularly because human marriage is given as a sign of the unending love of God for His people, and of the spiritual union between Christ and His Church. No wonder then that the drumbeat of covenant throbs so strongly in this chapter!

By obeying this law, the man or woman of God will find life (verse 5). Keeping the law is the pathway of divine blessing (not the way to it, but the way of it.) Chapter 26 with its blessings and curses indicates (i) the nature of the divine blessing which is in store for the obedient one (26:3-13), and (ii) shows what it means to turn from friendship with the Lord to enmity with Him and the judgments that follow in order to win the sinner back to covenant love (26:14-45).

### **Forbidden Marriage Relationships**

The chapter on sexual behaviour then takes up firstly the matter of forbidden marriage relationships. This tells us that that primary in the thinking of God's people about the matter of sexual behaviour is marriage - this is the home ground, the basis point of the whole discussion. It has been said with good reason that there is no such thing as sex in the Bible, only marriage. The rules in this chapter of Leviticus spell out when marriage is acceptable firstly, and then deal with the terrible possibility of sexual union outside of marriage.

The underlying presumption of this chapter is that a man will seek a partner among his own people. Elsewhere in the Scriptures marriages with non-Israelite women are firmly forbidden (e.g. Deuteronomy 7:3). The initiative in this matter of finding a wife is clearly with the man, and not with the woman. However a woman who consented to an illicit union was regarded as equally culpable and suffered the same penalty as her partner.

Verse 6 gives a general heading to the rules that follow - 'None of you shall approach any one of near kin to him to uncover nakedness. I am the Lord.' The rules of forbidden unions may be summarised as follows. A man may not marry his:

mother (18:7)	stepmother(18:8)	aunt (18:12,13)	aunt by marriage (18:14)
sister/half sister (18:9)	stepsister(18:11)	sister-in-law (18:16)	
	stepdaughter (18:17)	daughter-in-law (18:15)	
granddaughter (18:10)	step-granddaughter (18:17)		

Notable is the omission of the prohibition of marriage with one's daughter. It was probably already generally accepted that such a union was illicit (see Genesis 19:30ff). It was a relationship that was expressly forbidden in the laws of the Hittites and in the laws of Hammurabi. The regulations on incest here extend the prohibitions already accepted in other parts of the ancient Near East.

To uncover your mother's nakedness is to uncover your father's nakedness (v7); your granddaughter's nakedness is your own (v10). The underlying basis for these rules is that there is a blood link, either by birth or by marriage, between the two people. Marriage makes two persons a one-flesh union, so that they are in some ways extensions of one another, much

as children are of parents. Death did not nullify the fact that a person had been initiated through marriage into the family. The horizontal blood line established by the marriage remained. So, for example, marriage made a woman not simply a daughter-in-law, but a daughter of her husband's parents, and so she became a sister to her husband's brother. That is why she may not marry her brother-in-law if her husband should die. (This particular rule was modified in Deuteronomy 25:5ff, where a woman whose husband died before she had borne a son was to be married by her brother-in-law 'to perpetuate [the brother's] name' - and so in a sense he acted in the place of his dead brother.

### **Other Forbidden Practices**

Having established which relationships are, and which are not, acceptable for marriage, verses 19-23 deal with the prohibition of other Canaanite customs, particularly sexual union outside of marriage. Menstruation (18:19) was a time of uncleanness, and so forbidden. Adultery was forbidden. In the Old Testament adultery is defined as sexual intercourse with a married or betrothed woman by someone who was not her husband. Intercourse by a married man with an unmarried or unbetrothed woman was strongly disapproved of, but wasn't considered adulterous (Genesis 34:1-7, Exodus 22:16-17. This latter passage shows that marriage was the expectation if such an act took place. The rest of the Old Testament shows that true wisdom is found not through wide sexual experience (this is the way of folly, and ultimately destruction), but through the finding of a good wife, and in faithful and intimate union with her.)

18:21 speaks of devoting children to Molech by fire. There has been much discussion of this verse, and though a number ideas exist concerning what constitutes such an act of devotion, it seems most likely that it involved child sacrifice. (One other possibility which would fit this chapter's focus on sexual behaviour is that such an act of devotion was the giving of children to be trained as temple prostitutes in the Molech cult.) Such a terrible act would lead to the profanation of the Lord's name. We who have been baptised into the name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit are to act in such a way that the Lord's name is hallowed. To profane His name is to bear His name while involved in false worship; to hallow His name is to worship truly and obediently in life. Both cases seem to refer to the way the name of the Lord will be used by those who see the behaviour of the Lord's people.

Homosexuality is condemned in 18:22 as an abomination, i.e. something hateful or abhorrent to the Lord. This is very strong disapproval, and this condemnation is consistent throughout the Scriptures. Bestiality is likewise condemned (18:23).

The injunctions against incest, adultery, homosexuality and idolatry are all reinforced in the New Testament (e.g. 1Cor. 5:1f, Matt. 14:3, Rom. 13:9, 1Thess. 4:1-8, Matt. 5:31-21, 19:3-12 and Mark 10:2-12 Rom. 1:27, 1Cor. 6:9, and Rev. 2:14, just for starters!)

### **Warnings and Exhortations**

To engage in any of these prohibited acts is to defile yourself (18:24). That is, it is to negate and undo the gift of holiness given in the worship of Israel, and to return Israel not only to commonness but into the realm of the unclean. This would then defile the land which the Lord was giving to them. This in fact is what had happened with the Canaanites (18:24b-25,27-28) - their iniquity had defiled the land, and the Lord, whose land it was, caused the

land to vomit out its inhabitants. Also overshadowing this is the promise/threat (18:29) that the one who does these abominations shall be cut off from among their people (the direct intervention of the Lord in judgment.)

The chapter ends with the words, 'I am the Lord your God.' Not only is the threat of judgment meant to encourage obedience. The heartbeat of the whole chapter, of the whole law of God, is that the One to whom we belong is He who has rescued us from slavery, He who has cleansed us from our pollution, He who has brought us into the beauty of His own holy presence through the sanctifying blood, He who has bound us to Himself in an everlasting covenant, and He who has given the glorious gift of worshipping Him all our days. To defile ourselves is to move outside of all this blessing, to treat it as though it were nothing. How could we do such a thing?! We are the holy people of God; we are called to be holy just as our Father, our Redeemer from of old, is holy.