



דִּבֶּר אֶל-כָּל-עֵדָת בְּנֵי-יִשְׂרָאֵל
"Speak to the entire assembly of Israel"

וַאֲמַרְתָּ אֲלֵהֶם קְדוֹשִׁים תִּהְיוּ
and say to them, "Be holy,

כִּי קְדוֹשׁ אֲנִי יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵיכֶם:
because I the LORD your God am holy" Leviticus 19:2

Leviticus

4 Studies on the book of Leviticus and its application to life

before you begin...

Read the introduction pages at the start of your first study together. That way we will all be on the same page! Then do *the study*. Ensure there is time enough to dig into the *interact* section of the study. If people in your group prepare it will make light work of these parts. Make sure there's still plenty of time to *pray* at the end! Sounds like a lot of work doesn't it... don't worry—it's a great thing to be spending our time on!

Here are a few tips to help your small group grow together:

Pray... prayer is the place to start for our groups and we should do it even when we are not meeting together. We should pray that under God's strength our group would grow in its love for God and each other. Pray for the relationships within the group and the witness of the group to the church family and to those outside the church

Participate... it's so great when people feel comfortable discussing their faith with other believers. Don't feel like you don't know enough to say something, all input is great for group life and the group is a great place to get your questions answered. Likewise, make sure you allow space for other people to participate in the group, especially quieter members! Sometimes silence feels painful and we feel like we need to fill it—but maybe if the more talkative among us wait—we might have somebody fill that silence for us.

Prioritize... did you know it's really important to meet together with other Christians regularly, listening to God's word, praying together and sharing our lives? Not only is it the sort of thing we want to prioritize to ensure we're standing firm in our faith—but turning up each week is a huge encouragement to others too.

Prepare... This will make the study a more fruitful experience for everyone. You'll know the questions you need answered and you might be able to share some new insight you've had with the group. It doesn't take long—but it can make a big difference to the life of the group.



Introduction to Leviticus

The name “Leviticus” means “about the Levites”. The Levites—sons of Levi—were the assistant-priests of Israel. Leviticus is a book about their duties, and the laws and regulations that governed ancient Israel’s temple worship, and their life in the promised land. So what relevance does Leviticus have for us?

A quick Look Forward...

In this series, we’re going to see that it’s important to let the New Testament guide our understanding of the Old Testament. We are NOT the ancient Israelites. Rather, we are Gentiles-outsiders—who are late arrivals on the scene. The laws and regulations which governed the ancient Levites are not for us. So, why read a book like Leviticus? Let’s take a look at what the New Testament says about people like us:

1 Peter 2:4-5

As you come to him, the living Stone-- rejected by men but chosen by God and precious to him-- 5 you also, like living stones, are being built into a spiritual house to be a holy priesthood, offering spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ.

- what are we being “built into a spiritual house” TO BE as a we come to Jesus Christ (the living stone)?
- What do you think our sacrifices will look like? (they wont be sheep and goats!)

1 Peter 2:9-10

But you are a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people belonging to God, that you may declare the praises of him who called you out of darkness into his wonderful light. 10 Once you were not a people, but now you are the people of God; once you had not received mercy, but now you have received mercy.

- what is our task as God’s priests?

As we consider the rules and regulations for the Priests and Levites of Israel, we’ll be learning something of what it means to serve a Holy god. The God we serve is the same God... his Holiness hasn’t changed. But we’ll see that the coming of Jesus as the FINAL sacrifice has changed things for us—profoundly!

The shape of Leviticus

As you read Leviticus, you’ll notice clear divisions between the issues covered. Flip through the chapters, and notice the overall structure, which looks like this:-

- Chapters 1-7 the five main offerings to God—rules for sacrifices
- Chapters 8-10 the priesthood gets started... badly!
- Chapters 11-15 keeping clean
- Chapters 16-17 Atonement Day and the tabernacle

Chapter 18	life/sex—being different to Egypt
Chapters 19-20	Wholly holy—being like God
Chapters 21-23	holy priests, holy feasts
Chapter 24	God means business—an example of punishment
Chapter 25	Jubilee—slaves set free
Chapter 26	How long in the land? Depends on Israelite obedience
Chapter 27	rules for redemption

Leviticus is made up of a series of 33 statements God made to Moses, who was to pass them on to the people of Israel. The phrase, “the Lord said to Moses...” introduces each new section. Did you notice the phrase as you read through the book? You’ll see them easily... e.g. 4:1, 5:14, 6:1, 6:8 etc

In these studies, we’ll be looking at key areas like:

1. sacrifice and priesthood chs 1-10
2. keeping clean chs 11-15
3. being holy ch 16
4. the year of jubilee ch 25

One of the best things about reading Leviticus is that it’s brutally simple. If it sometimes seems like you’re reading a book written for an ancient nomadic herdsman with no morality—you’re right! The rules in Leviticus are simple and strict, and as we’ll see, they’re designed to teach a very simple truth...

God is absolutely holy to the very core, without mixture or variation. You should be too!

As we’ll see, the things we learn about God’s holiness are just as important for us as they were for the people of Israel. But because of Jesus, the way we approach God has changed.

Riding the time line

As we work through Leviticus, we’ll notice a number of ways that the arrival of Jesus on the scene changes the way we apply these ancient regulations to ourselves. Studying Leviticus will teach us a lot about the way to use the Old Testament. We need to learn the right method for approaching the Old Testament. The Jehovah’s Witnesses for example, refuse to have blood transfusions because of the regulations in Leviticus that prohibit eating blood. Are they right or wrong? How will we know? It’s important to work at understanding and applying the Old Testament “Christianly”. There are three helpful guidelines that you will notice as we study Leviticus... and that will help just as much with the rest of the Old Testament.

1. Follow the time line... make sure you don’t STAY in the Old Testament. God has revealed MORE since then (why stop part-way through the story).
2. Always ask... how is this changed or fulfilled by the coming of Jesus? (he claimed that he came to fulfill all the scriptures!)
3. As you do the above, make sure you let the way Jesus fulfils or changes something from the Old Testament make a real difference.

1 approaching a holy God



The sacrifices of Leviticus—in all their detail—teach us about the holiness of God



study

In Exodus, the Israelites are given laws for living under God's rule. Leviticus assumes they won't keep them! It assumes that they're sinners. The regulations show us both God's holiness and his mercy. Sin against a Holy god is serious—it requires the shedding of blood. But in mercy, God provides a way that sin can be covered.

Read Leviticus 1

1. Why do you think the burnt offering from the herd or flock must be “without defect”? (verse 3, 10)
2. Why do you think the person bringing the offering must “lay his hand on the head”? (verse 4) What will the result be?
3. From the description, how would you define “atonement”? (verse 4)
4. What role did the priests have? Why was the priest needed?
5. If you were poor, you were only required to sacrifice a bird (verse 14). How does this hint at the fact that this system was really about what was going on in the heart of the offerer?

Leviticus 2-5

6. Flip through chapters 2 to 5, looking at the sub headings to list the other types of offering. See if you can work out the purpose of each one, and fill in this chart:

chapter	offering name	reason
1	Burnt offering	v9, v13, v17
2	Grain offering	v2, v9,
3	Fellowship offering	v1, v5, v16, v17
4:1-5:13	Sin offering	v20, v21, v24, v26, v31, v35, 5:10, 13
5:14	Guilt offering	V16, 17

7. Revise by reading Leviticus 5:5-6. Fill in the gaps in the progression...
Sin > G _____ > Confession > S _____ > Atonement



The trouble with the sacrificial system was that, as time went by, the rituals of sacrifice became merely... rituals.

interact

Read **Psalm 51:16-17**. What was God REALLY looking for from his people?

Read **Malachi 1:6-11**. By the end of the Old Testament, what had gone wrong with the sacrificial system?

As we seek to apply Leviticus to us, the book of Hebrews is a good place to look—it has been called a ‘commentary’ on Leviticus, describing how Jesus Christ has perfectly fulfilled all its sacrifices.

Read **Hebrews 9:11-15**. What is the difference between what the blood of goats and bulls achieved for the Israelites, and what the blood of Christ has achieved for us?

According to **Hebrews 10:23-24**, what response should we make to his sacrifice?

Discuss areas of your life where your response to Christ needs attention to help you move towards holiness rather than away from it.



What can we pray in response to what we have learned?

prayer

What can we pray for each other?

What can we pray for our community?

What can we pray for our world?

2

the great un-stainer



the point

Everything in Israel's life was defined as clean or unclean—and these had to be separated. The unclean cannot touch the holy... except at the cost of life!



study

As they get ready to enter God's promised land, the Israelites have some serious lessons to learn about living with a HOLY GOD. Every part of life in the promised land is designed to teach Israel about God's holiness. Every day, in everything they touch and do, they are reminded that they cannot approach God in a casual way. Clean and unclean must be separated. The unclean cannot touch the holy... except at the cost of life! Why might people just assume these days that "God's me mate"?

Read Leviticus 11:1-25

1. How many times do the words “unclean” and “detestable” appear in these verses?
2. What are the rules for deciding what's clean and what's not?
3. What is the result of eating—or even touching an unclean animal?
4. It's not just animals that are clean or unclean. It's people too! Browse through chapter 12 & 13 and list a few of the reasons people can be declared CLEAN or UNCLEAR.
5. Even clothes, fabrics and the walls of your house could be divided into “clean” and “unclean” (e.g. 13:47-52!). What's the usual way people or things move from being UNCLEAR to CLEAN (see Leviticus 14:19-21 & 49-52)?
6. *Everything in life is defined as either clean (holy) or unclean. And the most important rule was... the UNCLEAR can never come into contact with the HOLY. In everyday life, almost every Israelite would have experienced what it was like to be “unclean”. Imagine it was you. How would you feel?*
7. According to Leviticus 16:30 & 17:11 what was required to make the unclean CLEAN?



Right from the start, the Lord Jesus knew what his ultimate mission was! Read what happens in Mark 1:23-27 (and take careful note of the footnote in your NIV bible). The original word describing the Spirit is not “evil”... what is it? ...what effect does Jesus have?

Read Mark 1:40-44. Note that in Leviticus, touching someone who was unclean made YOU unclean. What happens when Jesus touches the leper, and what does it demonstrate?

Think back to question 7. Why is it that Jesus is able to make unclean things clean (how does he finally satisfy the regulations of Leviticus)?

The only way to shift the stains in our lives is to trust in Jesus. If this is true, list all the consequences for our lives...



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3 the day of atonement



The day of atonement was an annual reminder of how serious sin is. It is a pointer to the great thing Jesus has done for us in his once for all sacrifice.



On the day of Atonement Aaron was to go into the Most Holy Place. This was the inner section of the tabernacle (and later the temple), separated by a richly embroidered curtain. Inside this area, God chose to make his presence with his people visible in a hazy cloud above the Ark of the Covenant (the gold coated wooden chest which contained the stone tablets with commandments engraved on them). All the other sacrifices took place on the OUTSIDE of this curtain.

Read Leviticus 16:1-10

1. What incident are we reminded of in v1, and what warning is given to Aaron?
2. Usually, Aaron the High Priest wore very ornate robes. To the people of Israel, his clothes made him appear important, like a king. What do you think the plain linen clothes he wore on the day of atonement demonstrated?
3. Before Aaron can appear before God on behalf of the people, what does he have to do for himself and why?
4. Who, or what, was it that atoned for the sins of people?

Read Leviticus 16:11-34

5. In verses 2, 12, & 15 we are reminded that the atonement cover—the lid of the “ark of the covenant” is “behind the curtain” in the Most Holy Place. What happens there and why?
6. How does the ritual with the live goat in verses 21-22 show the effect of the atonement?
7. According to the summary in verses 29-34... how long will the people of Israel have to keep doing this? How often will they need to do it? What will the effect be?



According to Hebrews 6:19-20, another priest has “gone behind the curtain” for us. Who is this priest and what benefit do we have from what he has done?

Read Hebrews 9:24-29. Why don't we need to observe a Day of Atonement?

What present benefits and future benefits do we enjoy as those who trust in Jesus?

In what way does Leviticus help you to appreciate Jesus? How should you respond to him?



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4

jubilee



God gave the Israelites a “jubilee year” of forgiveness of debts, as a reminder that they belonged to him. Israel never kept the jubilee—Jesus came to bring its fulfillment.



Imagine a world where there was no debt. Imagine a world where nobody held grudges, but freely forgave. Imagine a world where people did not take advantage of one another’s hardships, but were always ready to help out. Imagine... the year of jubilee...

Read Leviticus 25

1. What was to happen every seventh year? What do you think was the reason for this?
2. What was to happen every 50th year? Why? (v 23 may help)
3. Why was it that an Israelite’s property couldn’t really be sold? (how is this different to modern Australia)
4. Why was it that an Israelite couldn’t really be sold into slavery? (see verse 42)
5. According to verses 38, 42 and 55, all these jubilee provisions had one thing in common. What was it?

While it sounds nice to have your debts forgiven every 50 years, it depends what side of the fence you’re on! If you were the one in debt, great! But, if you wanted to make money, this Jubilee ruined everything... Let’s look at what happened as years went by...

6. Read **Isaiah 3:13-15**. Why does God threaten to judge the rulers of his people?
7. Read **Amos 2:6-7**. What sort of place has Israel become?



God's redemption of the Israelites from slavery in Egypt was a "saving event" that was meant to shape every part of life in the promised land... especially the way his people treated one another! But because of their greed and hardness of heart, the people of Israel failed to respond. In fact, as far as we know, the Jubilee year was NEVER observed in the history of Israel. That sort of debt forgiveness was just too costly!...

The "year of God's favour" was another term sometimes used to describe the "year of Jubilee". What is Jesus claiming about himself in Luke 4:16-21?

According to Colossians 2:13-15, how has God treated us?

Read the parable of the unmerciful servant in Matthew 18:23-35.

- a) how should what God has done for us in Christ effect the way we treat one another?
- b) do you ever find this difficult? Why?
- c) why do you think we find it so hard to forgive others?
- d) How can we grow in our ability to forgive others, just as God has forgiven us?



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