

LESSON 6 - LEVITICUS

In the first part of this lesson you will briefly survey the contents of the 27 chapters of the Book of Leviticus. In the second part of the lesson you will more closely study about the sacrifices and festivals God commanded through Moses in the Book of Leviticus. During the class you will also read key portions of Leviticus.



(PART A)

THE NAME OF THE BOOK

The third book of the Old Testament is called Leviticus in our English Bibles. The name is derived from Levi, one of the twelve sons of Jacob.

The descendants of Levi were set apart by God (Exo 32:29) to serve as priests and leaders of the worship life among the Children of Israel. However, not all Levites were priests. Only the Levites descended from Moses' brother Aaron could serve as priests. The book tells very much about the duties of the Levites, the descendants of Levi. Therefore, the book has been called "Leviticus," that is, the book relating to the work of the Levites.

However, the book is not for the Levites alone. God intended all of His Old Testament people to know and keep His law. Very often in the book Moses is told to speak the laws in Leviticus to all the people of Israel, not just to the Levites.

A BOOK OF OLD TESTAMENT LAWS

In the last lesson we learned about the three different kinds of laws that God gave to the Old Testament Jews, the Moral Law, the Ceremonial Law, and the Civil Law. The Book of Leviticus contains primarily Ceremonial Law, the laws regulating the worship life of the Jews. In Leviticus we read very much about such things as the various kinds of sacrifices that had to be made and about the various feasts and festivals that had to be observed.

We know that these Old Testament Ceremonial laws found in Leviticus were intended only for the Old Testament Jews. We might wonder why we should bother to learn about them today if they no longer apply to us New Testament Christians. Why study about them today? Because by studying them we can learn God's attitude toward sin; we can learn that sin must be paid for if we are to be at peace with God; we can learn that the sacrifices in Leviticus pointed forward to the Great Sacrifice of Christ which freed us from our sin. By studying the Book of Leviticus, we can also understand much better parts of the New Testament, especially the Book of Hebrews. The Book of Hebrews refers very often to things mentioned in Leviticus. We would have trouble understanding Hebrews if we did not know something about what Leviticus teaches.

THE MAIN DIVISIONS The Book of Leviticus can be divided into three main divisions:

1. Laws on Sacrifices and the Priesthood (1-10)
2. Laws on Purification (11-16)
3. Holiness Laws (17-27)

THE FIRST MAIN DIVISION

Chapters 1-10 of Leviticus record LAWS ON SACRIFICES AND THE PRIESTHOOD. In these chapters you can read about five types of offerings and how the priesthood was regulated.

THE SECOND MAIN DIVISION

Chapters 11-16 record LAWS ON PURIFICATION. By looking at the NIV headings you can see that these chapters speak about which foods were clean and unclean for the Jews. They speak also of purification after childbirth, regulations and cleansing for skin diseases, and the annual purification at the Day of Atonement.

THE THIRD MAIN DIVISION

Chapters 17-27 record various HOLINESS LAWS. Again look at the NIV headings and you will see that these chapters give laws recording such things as sexual relations, the lives of priests, and the various holy days and festivals. The punishments for disobedience to these laws are also recorded.

MEMORIZE THIS VERSE FROM LEVITICUS:

Lev. 19:2 **"Be holy because I, the Lord your God, am holy."**

MEMORIZE THE NUMBER OF THE CHAPTER FOR THESE THINGS IN LEVITICUS:

The various kinds of offerings	1-7
Clean and unclean food	11
The Day of Atonement	16

QUESTIONS:

1. From which son of Jacob does the third book of the Old Testament get its name?

2. Give the three main divisions for the Book of Leviticus, listing the chapter divisions also:

3. The Book of Leviticus contains primarily _____ Law.

4. For whom were the laws of Leviticus intended? _____

5. Give at least three reasons why we study the Book of Leviticus today.

6. From memory, write Lev. 19:2 _____.

THE SACRIFICES COMMANDED IN LEVITICUS

It is in chapters 1-7 that God commands the various kinds of sacrifices that were to be offered.

There are five general kinds of sacrifices that are mentioned. In each of the five kinds of sacrifices the basic idea is propitiation (satisfactory payment) for sins against God.

The five kinds of sacrifices are:

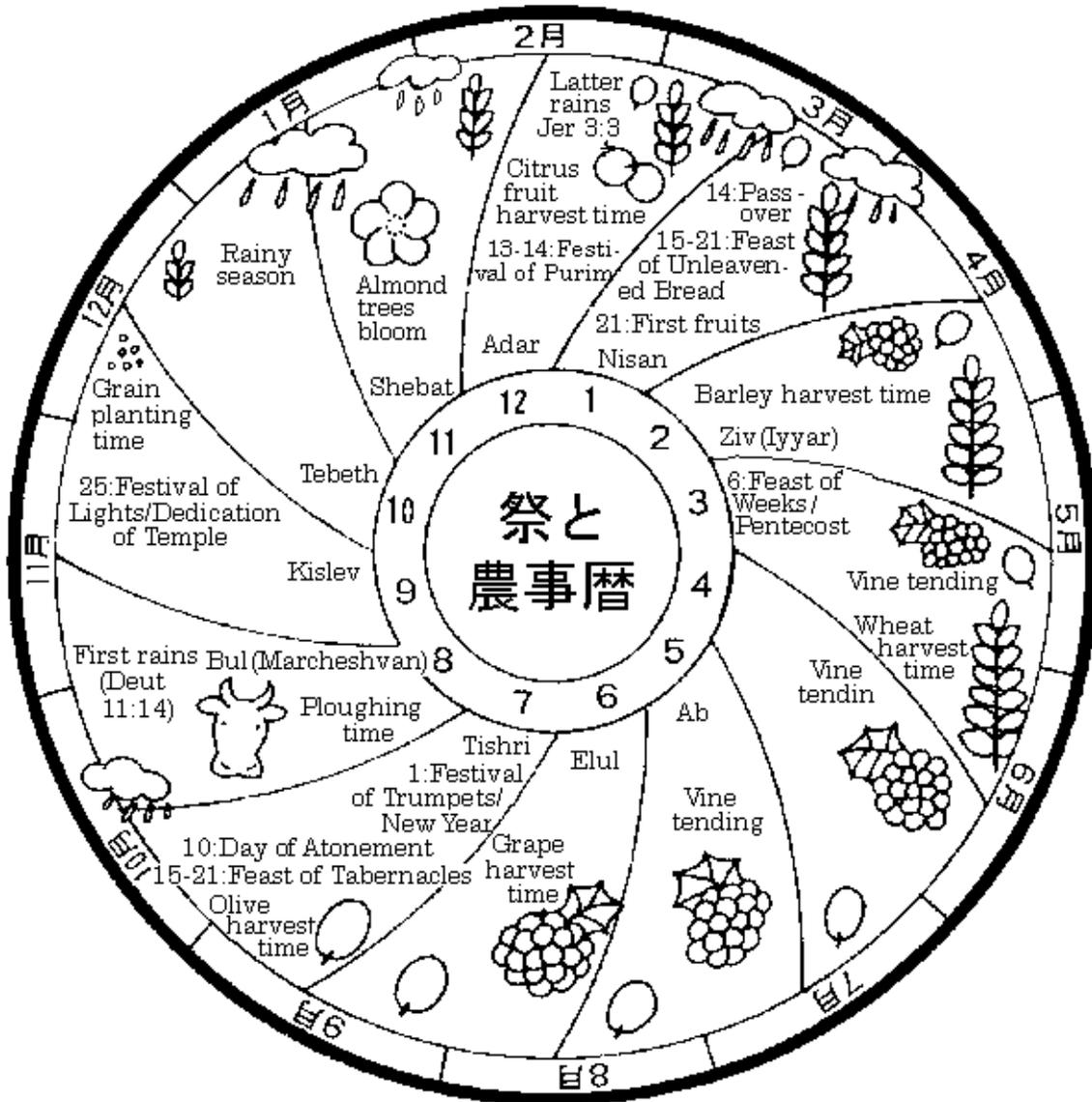
1. The Burnt Offering (see 1:1-17 and 6:8-13)
This is the only sacrifice in which the whole animal was burnt. Cattle, sheep, goats, or doves could be sacrificed. The animal had to be a male without defect. This sacrifice expressed devotion or dedication to God.
2. The Grain Offering (also called Meal Offering) (see 2:1-16 and 6:14-23)
The grain offering was an unbloody sacrifice of grain, flour, or cakes. Part of it was burnt and part of it was to be eaten by the priests.
3. The Fellowship Offering (also called Peace Offering) □ (מִזְבֵּחַ הַשְּׁלָמִים) (see 3:1-17 and 7:11-21)
An animal from the herd or the flock could be offered. It could be male or female. Part of it was burnt and part was eaten by the priests and offerers. This sacrifice expressed fellowship or peaceful communion with God.
4. The Sin Offering (see 4:1 - 5:13 and 6:24-30)
The following could be offered: bull, goat, sheep, dove or flour. This sacrifice was made on special occasions such as the Day of Atonement. Part of the animals were burnt and part eaten by the priests. The Sin Offering signified a restoring of the covenant relationship with God. Though the purpose was to atone for sin, only Christ's sacrifice could atone for sin (Heb 10:4-10)
5. The Guilt Offering (also called Trespass Offering) (see 5:14 - 6:7 and 7:1-10).
A ram was sacrificed. Part was burnt and part eaten by priests. This sacrifice was offered for specific sins with the idea that recompense must be made through the sacrifice to make good damage done to God's or a neighbor's possession. It did not atone for sin. It was brought because one recognized their sin and freely admitted their guilt before God

OLD TESTAMENT SACRIFICES AND HEATHEN SACRIFICES

Sacrificing was almost a universal practice among

ancient people. The sacrifices of Israel do have some similarities with those of their heathen neighbors. But it is important to remember that Israel's sacrifices were different in some important ways. They are different because:

1. The one true God commanded through Moses the sacrifices of the Old Testament. The heathens sacrificed to many false gods.
2. The sacrifices of Israel emphasize morality, that is, holy living. They emphasize the need for repentance and atonement when sin is present.
3. There is no magic, sorcery, or superstition present in the sacrificial system of Israel. These things were present among the heathen sacrifices.
4. The sacrifices of Israel were reverent and worshipful in tone. Heathen sacrifices often were associated with practices such as prostitution, orgies, and fertility rites. They often had a tone of frenzy.
5. While the heathens sometimes practiced human sacrifice, the sacrifices of Israel were of animals and non-living things.



THE JEWISH FESTIVALS

Chapters 16 and 23-24 tell of the various Jewish festivals commanded by God. The following is a brief review and description of the festivals:

THE SABBATH (see 23:3) Sabbath is a Hebrew word that means "rest." The seventh day (Saturday) of every week was to be a day of rest.

THE PASSOVER (see 24:5) The annual Passover was to remind the Children of Israel of how God had delivered them from slavery in Egypt. It was celebrated on the 14th of Nisan (the first month of the Jewish calendar, corresponding to our last part of March and first part of April).

THE FEAST OF UNLEAVENED BREAD (see 23:6-8) This feast began on the day after Passover and continued for seven days. The Jews ate bread without yeast (leaven) during this time. It too reminded them of their deliverance from Egypt.

THE FEAST OF FIRSTFRUITS (see 23:9-22)

was celebrated 50 days after Passover, therefore the Pentecost, which means "50th day." On this day the first-fruits of the harvest were offered to the Lord.

Other names for this feast are Feast of Weeks, Feast of Harvests, or Pentecost.

FEAST OF TRUMPETS (see 23:23-25)

This was celebrated on the first day of the seventh month (Tishri, our September or October). It was the Jewish New Year festival, since this day began the civil new year. From morning to evening horns and trumpets were blown. It was a day of rest.

DAY OF ATONEMENT (see chapters 16 and 23:26-32)

It was observed on the 10th of Tishri. This was the holiest day on the Jewish calendar. It was a day of repentance. Only on this day did the priest enter the Most Holy Place. Sacrifices and the ritual of the "scapegoat" were a part of this great day.

FEAST OF TABERNACLES (23:33-44)

The feast began on the 15th of Tishri and lasted for seven days. During this time the Jews lived in tabernacles (or tents) to remind themselves of how their forefathers wandered in the wilderness and lived in tents.

THE SABBATICAL YEAR (25:1-7)

Sabbatical year means "rest year." Every seventh year the land was to be put to rest; no planting could be done. Whatever the land produced by itself would serve as food.

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THE YEAR OF JUBILEE (see 25:8-55)

Every 50th year was to be a Year of Jubilee.

During this year the land rested, every Jewish servant was restored to liberty, and all land that had been sold went back to its original owner.



The High Priest's Clothing



NAMES AND WORDS TO REMEMBER

atonement - The verb "to atone" in the Hebrew means to "cover over." The word picture portrays "the blood of Jesus covering over our sins" so that God does not count them against us. By Jesus' atonement we have been reconciled to God, that is we have peace with God and are no longer His enemies (Rom 5:1).

propitiation- a noun which describes the act of calming God's wrath at sin by atoning for our sins. The translation of this word in the Septuagint is often the same word for the lid of the Ark of the Covenant, which is translated "Mercy Seat" ("Atonement Cover"). The High Priest would enter into the Most Holy Place of the Tabernacle once a year to make atonement for the sins of the people by sprinkling the blood of a bull onto the Mercy Seat, which symbolized God's throne and His presence among the people of Israel. (2 Sam 6:2, 1 Chron 13:6, Psa 80:1, 99:1)

covenant - a binding agreement between two parties. There are two types of covenants.

A **CONDITIONAL COVENANT** involves promises made by both

parties. The ruler or sovereign promises to do something if the person or people who are ruled over do something else. The promise of the land of Canaan as a place to live for Israel was a conditional promise. If they obeyed God and kept His covenant, then they would be blessed by God and would continue to live in the land. If they rebelled against God and broke His covenant, then they would be given over into the hands of their enemies and driven from the land (Deut 30:15-18). When a covenant was made, both parties received a copy of the terms of the contract. When God gave Moses the Law on two tablets of stone, it is thought that He was giving Moses both copies to put into the Ark of the Covenant.

AN UNCONDITIONAL COVENANT is a promise from one party that He will do something for the other party regardless what the other one does.

The Hebrew way of saying "Let's make a Covenant" is "Let's cut a covenant." They would cut animals in two and then if it was a conditional covenant they would both walk through the midst of the animals that had been cut in half. They swore to keep their end of the agreement and asked God to make them like the animal that had been cut in half if they did not faithfully keep their promise. Note that in Genesis 15, God made an "unconditional covenant" with Abraham. Only God passed through, giving Abraham the promise that the land of Canaan would be given to his descendants.

- sacrifice* - something offered by man to God
- moral* - having to do with right and wrong behavior
- civil* - having to do with government
- sabbath* - Hebrew word for "rest"
- Nisan* - the first month of the Jewish calendar, corresponds to the last part of March and first part of April
- leaven* - yeast
- unleavened bread* - bread made without yeast, bread that has not "risen"
- Pentecost* - "50th day" (after Passover), same as Feast of Firstfruits
- Tishri* - the seventh month of the Jewish calendar, corresponds to the last part of our September and first part of October
- Sabbatical Year* - year of rest for the land
- tabernacle* - tent
- scapegoat* - the goat that "carried" the sins of the people on Day of Atonement

AFTER THOROUGHLY REVIEWING YOUR LESSON, ANSWER THESE QUESTIONS WITHOUT CONSULTING YOUR LESSON. THEN GO BACK TO CHECK AND CORRECT ANSWERS:

1. List the five kinds of sacrifices or offerings that are commanded in Lev. 1-7:
2. The _____ was the only offering in which the whole animal was burnt.
3. In the other offerings, part of the animal or grain could be eaten by _____.

4. In each of the five kinds of sacrifices the basic idea was _____ for sins against God.
5. List at least three ways in which the sacrifices of the Jews were different from the sacrifices of other nations of their time:

6. Match the following:

- | | | |
|-------------------------------|------------|---|
| 1. tabernacle | | _____ celebrated on 14th of Nisan |
| 2. Nisan | | _____ means "rest" |
| 3. Tishri | | _____ yeast |
| 4. sabbath | | _____ having to do with government |
| 5. civil | wilderness | _____ carried the sins of the people into |
| 6. moral | | _____ every 50th year |
| 7. atonement | | _____ year of rest for the land |
| 8. leaven | | _____ the seventh month of the Jewish calendar |
| 9. covenant | | _____ another name for Pentecost |
| 10. propitiation | | _____ means "50th day" |
| 11. Pentecost | | _____ tent |
| 12. Passover | | _____ first month of Jewish calendar |
| 13. Feast of Unleavened Bread | | _____ having to do with right and wrong |
| 14. Feast of Firstfruits | | _____ calming God's wrath at sin by atonement |
| 15. Feast of trumpets | | _____ "covering over" sin with blood to pay for sin |
| 16. day of atonement | | _____ Jews lived in tents at this feast |
| 17. scapegoat | | _____ Jewish New Year Festival |
| 18. Feast of tabernacles | | _____ holiest day on the Jewish calendar |
| 19. Sabbatical Year | | _____ began the day after Passover |
| 20. Year of Jubilee | | _____ binding agreement between two parties |