



# Feb. 12<sup>th</sup> - Feb. 18<sup>th</sup>

## WEEK 7 HOW TO BE HOLY | LEVITICUS 1-27

Forty years in the wilderness between leaving Egypt and entering the Promised Land were a sort of training plan in how to become a holy nation.

God's good plans for Israel and the world involved much more than simply not being slaves. He desired to transform the freed slaves into the most loving, just, righteous people the world had ever seen. It was to be the ultimate ashes to glory story. In fact, they were to become such a special and impressive nation that the rest of the world would ask, "What is the secret to your success?" And to this they would respond, "Making Yahweh our king and living according to his good commands." In this way, they would truly be a kingdom of priests connecting the rest of the world to God.

So what did this calling entail exactly? What did it mean to be holy? First of all, holiness has simply to do with uniqueness, differentiation, and distinction. Israel was supposed to be an entirely unique nation: a people set apart to live in illuminating contrast to the rest of the world. This immediately begged the question - how? In what unique way were they to live?

That last question is what the many chapters of intensive prescriptions and rules throughout Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, and Deuteronomy catalogue. The Torah was to be their user's guide for how to live; they were to memorize it and pass it down to each successive generation. And believe it or not, it still has meaning and significance for how we are to live as God's chosen people today.



## Group Resources

Read: Skim Leviticus 1-7, 11-15, 18-20, 23-25; read Leviticus 16-17 entirely

Video: [Leviticus](#)

[Sacrifice and Atonement](#)

Sermon: Failure is Not an Option | God's Covenant Faithfulness

## Proposed Group Agenda (2 hrs)

Fellowship/Connection Time (30 min.)

Welcome & Opening Prayer (5 min.)

Warm Up (10 min.)

Video (15 min.)

Dig In (45 min.)

Grow (10 min.)

Closing Prayer (5 min.)



\* The individual reading plan for this week covers Numbers 11 - 30 and Psalms 43-49.



## Warm Up

### Discussion Value - Faith

Hebrews 11:1 defines faith as “confidence in what we hope for and assurance about what we do not see” (NIV). This is an excellent example of how Scripture gives us a definition, but leaves a bit of mystery. In the context of our House Church groups, practicing faith as a value means acting toward one another with an acute recognition of this mystery; remembering that none of us has all the answers and that we have to rely on and trust God in the midst of incomplete knowledge. Actively reminding ourselves that we are not God, and therefore not infallible or omniscient, also helps keep our interactions with others in the proper perspective. We are all riddled with ignorance, error, and falsehood in one way or another. In your time together, remember that no one has all the answers and that only God is a perfectly correct authority on any given matter. Give freedom and space for others to say and express their thoughts and ideas without racing to judgment or correction.

### Opening Question (choose one or more)

What thoughts or feelings did you notice come up as you read chapter after chapter of laws and regulations in Leviticus?

If the author of Leviticus wanted his hearers to come away with one thing, what do you think it was? Why did he work so hard to keep copious records and pass them along?

Can you recall one or two specific ways in which Israel was supposed to practice holiness? Why did those particular ways stand out to you?

# Dig In

Q. Read Exodus 40:33-35, Leviticus 1:1, and Numbers 1:1 aloud. How does Moses' inability to enter the tent of meeting demonstrate the problem between God and Israel? How do the first sentences of Leviticus and Numbers give us clues about the purpose of the book of Leviticus?

Key  
Theme

1

Exodus concluded with Moses completing the tabernacle to host God's presence, but unable to enter it.

A

This is a problem! The whole purpose was for Israel's priests to meet with God.

SEE THIS THEME IN  
EXODUS 25:8-9; 29:45-66

But Israel's sinful worship of the golden calf has damaged the relationship.

EXODUS 32

B

Moses not entering the tent on Israel's behalf shows the relationship still needs to be repaired in some way: How can rebellious Israel restore its relationship with God and live in His holy presence?

C

The book of Leviticus opens by highlighting this problem.

"THE LORD CALLED TO MOSES  
AND SPOKE TO HIM FROM THE  
TENT OF MEETING"

LEVITICUS 1:1

D

The next book of the Bible, Numbers, begins by showing this problem has been resolved.

"THE LORD SPOKE TO MOSES IN  
THE TENT OF MEETING IN THE  
DESERT OF SINAI"

NUMBERS 1:1

E

What happened?! Leviticus happened: God takes the initiative to provide a way to reconcile His relationship to rebellious Israel?

Leviticus is all about God's grace.



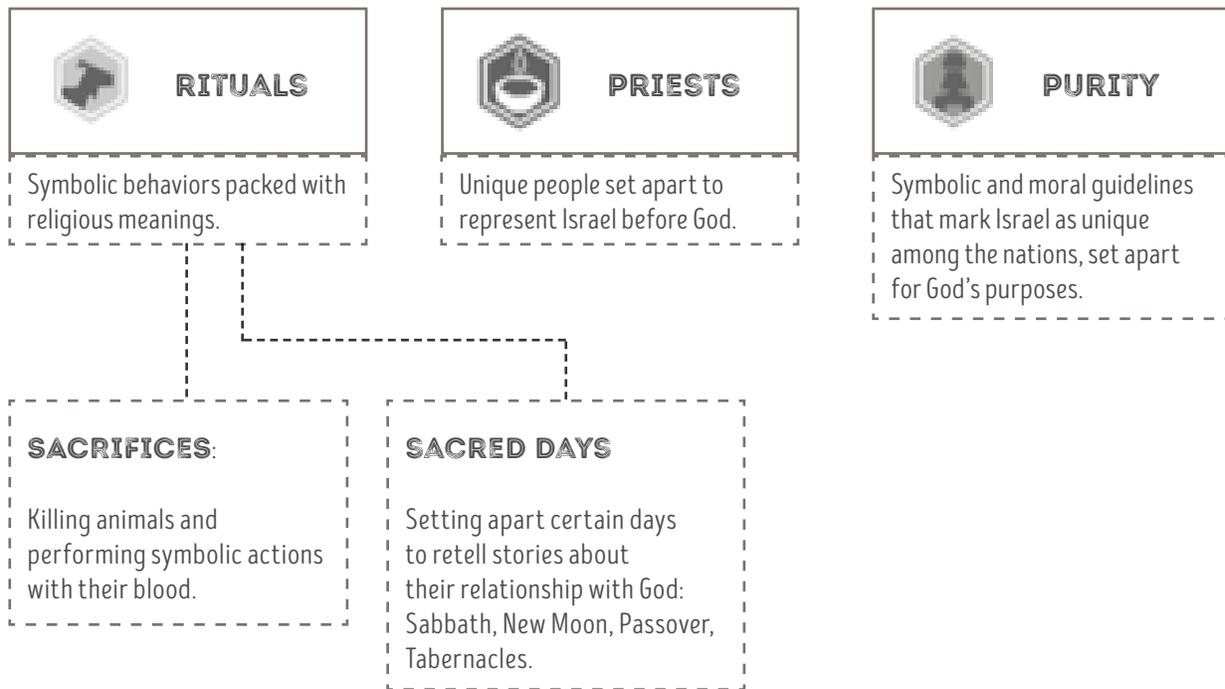
Q. The book of Leviticus has a very specific literary structure with a symmetrical design? Why do you think that is? Did God want Israel to know exactly how to restore their relationship with Him? What is significant about the placement of the Day of Atonement?

Key Theme  
**2**

The book of Leviticus has an amazing literary structure, with a symmetrical design.



The structure highlights three main solutions to the relational rupture between God and Israel:



Q. Skim Leviticus 1-7. Notice the different purposes of all five offerings. How do the Grain and Fellowship offerings express gratefulness to God?

Key  
Theme

3

There are 5 types of sacrifices described in Leviticus, each with a different meaning:

1

GRAIN  
OFFERING

2

FELLOWSHIP  
OFFERING

3

BURNT  
OFFERING

4

PURIFICATION  
OFFERING

5

RESTITUTION  
OFFERING

Two ways of saying "Thank You" to God by giving back a part of what He's given to you in produce and in flocks.

Three different ways of saying "I'm Sorry" to God for wrongs done to others or to God, resulting in forgiveness of sins.

The three "I'm sorry" offerings are all said to "provide atonement" for the sins of the one who offers it, so that they are "forgiven."

LEVITICUS 4:20, 26, 31, 35; 5:10, 13, 16, 18; 6:7



Q. Skim Leviticus 23 - 25. Notice the emphasis on calendar rhythms and how important they are to help God's people remember who they are and who God is. Do you have any rhythms of this kind in your life? Why or why not?

Key  
Theme

4

Israel was to keep a full calendar of sacred days, all of which were designed to help Israel remember who they are and who their God is.

#### ANNUAL SACRED DAYS

##### **PASSOVER**

(pesakh)

retells the story of the 10th plague and God's redemption of Israel from slavery in Egypt

LEVITICUS 23:4-8

##### **UNLEAVENED BREAD**

(khag khamotzi)

retelling the story of the last night in Egypt and the haste with which they left Egypt

LEVITICUS 23:4-8

##### **PENTECOST**

(shavu'ot)

50 days after Passover, another offering of the late spring harvest

LEVITICUS 23:15-22

##### **TABERNACLES**

(sukkot)

retelling the story of Israel's sojourn through the wilderness and God's provision for them

LEVITICUS 23:33-43

##### **FIRSTFRUITS**

(yom habbikurim)

retelling the story of God's gift of the promised land and its abundance by offering the first bits of the spring harvest

LEVITICUS 23:9-14

##### **DAY OF ATONEMENT**

(yom kippur)

an annual fast of repentance as the priests accomplished atonement of Israel's sins

LEVITICUS 23:26-32

And then also:

##### **TRUMPETS**

(yom ter'uah; also called yom hashanah=New Year)

marked the 1st day of the 7th month, beginning the final three year feasts of the year; it began a 10 day preparation for the next two feasts

LEVITICUS 23:23-25

##### **SABBATH YEAR**

...every seven years where there is no farming in the fields

LEVITICUS 25:1-7

##### **YEAR OF JUBILEE**

...every 49 years where all debts are canceled and any family land lost because of bankruptcy or debt is to be returned to the original owners.

LEVITICUS 25:8-55

##### **WEEKLY SABBATH**

LEVITICUS 23:1-3

##### **MONTHLY NEW MOON**

NUMBERS 10:10; 28:11-14

Q. Who were the Levites? What purpose did they serve? Why were they held to a higher standard of moral integrity and holiness than the rest of the Israelites? Why do you think this book was named after them?

Key  
Theme

5

The people Israel as a whole had demonstrated their own failure to keep covenant with Yahweh, and so needed a mediator, someone to represent them before God.

8-10



ORDINATION  
OF THE PRIESTS

God called the family of Aaron, from the tribe of Levi (one of the twelve sons of Jacob), to carry on this role: a special group of people who would offer the sacrifices and enter God's presence on behalf of Israel.

21-22



QUALIFICATION  
OF THE PRIESTS

8-10

Aaron and his sons are ordained as Israel's mediators who will enter God's presence on their behalf in an elaborate ceremony that marked them as holy. There's also a story of two priests who violate God's holiness and are destroyed by it (chapter 10): a haunting tale reminding us the seriousness of the problem caused by Israel's sin in the presence of God's holiness

21-22

The qualifications for being a priest involve a higher degree of moral integrity and holiness: kind of like the way the assistants to important governing officials are called to a unique kind of lifestyle appropriate to that role of service.



Q. Skim Leviticus 11 - 15. Notice that all the ways a person becomes “unclean,” are signs of mortality or death. How did these symbolic behaviors communicate something powerful about God’s holiness dwelling in the midst of Israel?

Q. Skim Leviticus 18 - 20. In these laws about moral purity, the emphasis is put on sexual purity and social justice. Notice how living by these laws would set Israel apart from all other nations (see especially Leviticus 18:1-5). Why do you think God calls his people to holiness in these areas specifically?

Key  
Theme

## Laws about Purity



11-15



LAWS ABOUT  
RITUAL PURITY

Because Israel lived near God’s holiness, they were to reflect God’s own holiness and purity to the nations:

“YOU SHALL BE AS HOLY AS I AM HOLY”

Leviticus 11:45

18-20



LAWS ABOUT  
MORAL PURITY

### RITUAL PURITY

These are symbolic practices that reminded Israel that every part of their life was lived in God’s holy presence.

God is the author of life. Any contact with things connected to death, like dead bodies, skin disease, blood, bodily fluids, rendered a person impure, and thus unable to enter into God’s holy presence.

Being impure is not a sin, you simply have to wait a few days and take a bath before being pronounced “pure.”

What is wrong is barging into God’s holy presence when you are in an impure state. It’s a symbolic violation of God’s holiness.

### MORAL PURITY

Israel was called to a level of moral holiness that corresponded to God’s own goodness and set them apart from the other nations.

These areas of moral integrity focus on sexual integrity, social justice and right relationships within the family and community. Their moral lives were to correspond to God’s moral goodness.

Q. Read Leviticus 16-17. Imagine you were there witnessing this ritual. What insights would it give to your own sin and selfish decisions? What would you learn about God's character? Read the description of "atonement" and sacrifice in 17:11-12. How does it highlight both God's justice and mercy at the same time?

Key  
Theme

7

Once a year all the sins of Israel were atoned for by a critically important ritual

A

At the center of the book is a ritual day that addresses the relational rupture between God and Israel. The priest takes two goats, puts his hands on them, and confesses all the sins of Israel, symbolically "placing" the sin on all the animals

LEVITICUS 16:1-19

B

One animal is killed and its blood brought into the very hot spot of God's presence.

This symbol is explained in 17:11-12: when Israel wrongs God while living in His presence, it's so offensive that it deserves some kind of consequence.

God says He provides these sacrificial animals to take that consequence, by dying in their place.

C

And the second animal is another powerful symbol: it's cast out into the wilderness and symbolically "removes" the sin of Israel away forever. They are free from their sin.

LEVITICUS 16:20-22

D

These symbols are explained in chapter 17: These sacrifices are not Israel's efforts to appease an angry God. Rather, they are given by a gracious God who loves His people: He wants to show Israel just how serious and destructive their moral corruption really is as well as just how much He wants to save them and restore the relationship.

And that's what atonement means: covering over someone's wrongdoing, to restore the relationship.

LEVITICUS 17





# Where's Jesus?

Q. How does Leviticus point to the meaning and need of the sacrifice and priesthood of Jesus Christ?

Q. Are there any teachings of Jesus that point to how the prescriptions and laws in Leviticus still reveal how we are to live today?

A. Any of the verses that point to Jesus' teaching on moral, civil and ceremonial laws such as laws against idolatry and sabbath-breaking, or those found in Matthew 5, and Matthew 22:36-40 to name a few.

## Works Cited:

"God Speaks to Moses in the Tabernacle - Leviticus." Blue Letter Bible. Web. 8 Feb, 2017.

"Scapegoat - Leviticus." Blue Letter Bible. Web. 8 Feb, 2017.

Theme 5 | Arnold, Bill T., and Bryan Beyer. Encountering the Old Testament: A Christian Survey. Grand Rapids, Mich: Baker Books, 1999. Page 119 (excerpted).

Where's Jesus? | Arnold, Bill T., and Bryan Beyer. Encountering the Old Testament: A Christian Survey. Grand Rapids, Mich: Baker Books, 1999. Page 126 (excerpted).

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## Grow

These questions are designed to help you look at yourself, be aware and honest about who you are in light of your interaction with Scripture, and consider any appropriate actions.

Q. Did you notice yourself in disagreement with something that another member of the group said in the discussion time this week? Were you able to practice the value of faith (see Warm -up exercise) and trust that God is at work in their life? Why or why not?

Q. Try to imagine being in Israelite at this time. How would you have responded to some of these Levitical commands? Do you think you could have obeyed them? Why or why not?

Q. How does the book of Leviticus speak to you about reverence in worship, purity and your need for forgiveness?

Q. Today, you are God's representative; a man or woman set apart as an emblem of His divine grace and love on earth. Can the people around you (family, friends, co-workers) tell that you are set apart? Why or why not?