

LONDON BIBLE COLLEGE
CORRESPONDENCE COURSE

Subject :

THE PENTATEUCH

By the

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LESSON X

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The Pentateuch

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LESSON X.

LEVITICUS (1)

I. SUBJECT AND DATE OF THE BOOK.

In contrast to the character of Exodus, in which nearly half the book is occupied by history, Leviticus consists of legislation, the historical incidents recorded being but few.

The notes of time defining the date of Leviticus are Exodus xl. 17 and Numbers ix. 3. Between these two verses there is an interval of a fortnight. This does not necessarily mean that all the laws of Leviticus were promulgated within the space of fourteen days, but rather that the history contained in Numbers is continuous with that of Exodus, with Leviticus as a parenthesis between them.

II. TITLE OF THE BOOK.

The title "Leviticus" is taken from the LXX. In the Hebrew Bible it is simply "And He called," that is, the first words of the book. This links it very closely with Exodus.

III. ANALYSIS OF THE BOOK.

Leviticus falls naturally into two parts, which may be divided as follows:—

- (1) Chapters i-xvi.
 - (i) Laws of sacrifice (i-vii).
 - (ii) Consecration of the priests (viii-x).
 - (iii) Clean and unclean animals; bodily defilement (xi-xv).
 - (iv) The Day of Atonement (xvi).

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- (2) Chapters xvii-xxvii.
- (i) Sanctification as to food, marriage, morals (xvii-xx).
 - (ii) Holiness of the priests and of the sacrifices (xxi-xxii).
 - (iii) The annual feasts and the daily worship (xxiii-xxiv).
 - (iv) The Sabbatical and Jubile years (xxv).
 - (v) A series of promises and warnings (xxvi).
 - (vi) An appendix of vows (xxvii).

The latter part of the book, from xvii-xxvii, is frequently called "The Law of Holiness."

IV. INSTRUCTIONS FOR SACRIFICE.

i: *The burnt offering.*

ii: *The meat offering.* This might better be termed the meal offering. In the A.V. meat is used for food in general, and not, as now, restricted to flesh food.

iii: *The peace offering.*

iv: *The sin offering.*

v: *The trespass offering.*

These sacrifices gave opportunities for the various members of the Israelite community to worship God.

The ideas connected with the offerings may be classed thus:—

The burnt offering	}	Consecration.
The meal offering		
The peace offering		Communion
The sin offering	}	Atonement
The trespass offering		

(a) **The Burnt Offering.**

might be taken from the herd, the flock, or the dovecot. The offering would correspond to the financial standing of the offerer. In the two former cases the victim was

to be slain by the offerer; but in the last case the priest himself was to kill the bird. It is tempting to connect this with the idea that probably the bird would often be a child's offering.

(b) **The Meal or Meat Offering.**

This consisted of materials taken from the household or appropriate to the household. It suggests irresistibly the work of the women.

Thus all kinds of people seem to have been thought of in these first two offerings, which expressed the idea of consecration to the service of Jehovah. Consecration is the attitude of soul which God looks for in all His people (cf. Rom. xii. 1).

(c) **The Peace Offering.**

The characteristic ceremony of the peace offering consisted in the eating of the flesh by the offerer in communion with the priest (vii. 32; cf. Luke xv. 23).

These first three sacrifices all receive the general name of "sweet savour offerings" (i. 9; ii. 2; iii. 5). They correspond to "gifts" in Hebrews v. 1; while the expiatory sacrifices that follow correspond to "sacrifices for sins." Only once is the sin offering designated as a sweet savour (iv. 31), and that when it concerns one of the common people.

(d) **The Sin and Trespass Offerings.**

It is not easy to mark the exact relationship between these two kinds of sacrifices. We may compare Zechariah xiii. 1: "sin and . . . uncleanness." Man has done wrong, and therefore is wrong. Forensically he is guilty: ceremonially he is defiled. He needs both forgiveness and cleansing. This double aspect of salvation is seen throughout the Bible (cf. I John i. 9). We may compare the language of the Book of Common Prayer: "He pardoneth and absolveth." The distinction between the sin and the trespass offering seems to be that the former has in view sin as guilt, the latter sin as injury.

The two sacrifices together were intended to have a twofold effect: first they were to be educative, and secondly effective. They were to be educative as leading the people to understand their sinfulness before God, and thus to result in a quickened moral sense. They were to be effective in the removal of guilt as between the sinner and God, and thus to open the way for the repair of the injury done to the sinner's fellow man. The effectiveness of the sacrifices did not lie in the actual blood shed (Heb. x. 4), but in the fact of the offerer's obedience to God's revealed will, and also that ultimately these sacrifices pointed onward to the cross of Calvary.

The offerings encouraged the sinner not to rely upon his own conscience, but upon God's omniscience for an appraisal of his position.

Both the sin and trespass offerings have in view sins committed through ignorance (iv. 2, 13, 22, 27; v. 4, 17). No offering is specified for sins of presumption.

Four classes of people are provided for in the sin offering: (1) The priest (iv. 3); (2) The whole congregation (iv. 13); (3) The rulers (iv. 22); and (4) The common people (iv. 27). And the ritual of the sin offering is varied in each case.

Observe the emphatic declaration concerning the sin offering. It is most holy (vi. 25).

It was to be burned without the camp (iv. 12, 21). Even in cases where this is not specified it is probably to be understood. This was intended first to indicate the removal of the sin from the camp, and secondly because an unholy camp was no place for a holy sin offering (cf. Heb. xiii. 12). The typological reference to Jesus Christ is exact.

It has been urged that there must have been a deep sense of sin underlying this whole sacrificial system, and that such a sense of sin must have been the product of a slowly developing national conscience. This

consideration has carried with it the corollary that the whole Levitical system dates not from the time of Moses but from the period of the Exile. Thus *Hastings' Bible Dictionary* sums up its article on Leviticus by saying: "As a whole, Leviticus is the mirror of the Second Temple and its system." As to this, it may fairly be replied that any developed moral consciousness in Jewry was the result, and not the cause of the law (cf. Rom. iii. 20: "By the law is the knowledge of sin"). Similarly, the ideals of the Gospel have not emerged as the result of the work of the human conscience, but have been God's revelation to man.

The following classes of trespass are named: (1) Personal (v. 1-13); (2) Spiritual (v. 14-16); (3) Social (v. 17-vi. 7).

V. TYPOLOGY OF THE OFFERINGS.

It is to be noted further that all the five offerings mentioned in chapters i-vi were not only intended to regulate the life of the Israelite, they were also foreshadowings of the work of the Messiah when He should come. This latter relationship seems to have determined the order in which they were presented.

- (a) The burnt offering typifies the Lord Jesus as wholly consecrated to do the Father's will.
- (b) The meal offering typifies the quiet home years at Nazareth.
- (c) The peace offering sets forth His continuous communion with the Father.
- (d) The sin and trespass offerings give the issue of the first three in His becoming the propitiation for sins.

VI. THE LAW OF THE OFFERINGS.

This section (vi. 8-vii. 38) gives special instructions to the priests as to the carrying out of the duties devolving upon them in connection with the sacrifices (vi. 9).

vii. 37: “*consecrations.*” Literally, “*fillings.*” The term may be explained from the phrase “to fill the hand,” and is used to convey the idea of investiture to the priesthood. To fill the hand for the Lord is to provide something to offer to Him.

The five sacrifices reveal in type God’s provision to enable Himself, without derogation to His character, to continue in a relationship of grace with a people sinful and still very largely destitute of the results of God’s working in character and conduct.

In type they reveal also God’s solution of the same problem as it presents itself in the Christian Church.

Notwithstanding, these sacrifices could not make the offerers perfect as pertaining to the conscience (Heb. ix. 9). The blood of bulls and of goats could never take away sins (Heb. x. 4). The forgiveness of sin which the sacrifices procured was only a passing by of offences through the forbearance of God (Rom. iii. 25), in anticipation of the true sacrifice of Christ.

So also the sanctification and fellowship set forth in the burnt and meal and peace offerings pointed onward to the blessedness that grows out of the righteousness of faith.

VII. CONSECRATION OF THE PRIESTS.

(a) **Steps in the Process (viii).**

- (i) Washing (ver. 6).
- (ii) Clothing of Aaron (vers. 7-9).
- (iii) Pouring the oil upon Aaron (ver. 12).
Upon him only was the oil poured. Thus in his person Aaron typified Christ (John iii. 34; Heb. i. 9).
- (iv) Clothing of Aaron’s sons (ver. 13).
- (v) The sin offering (vers. 14-17).
- (vi) The burnt offering (vers. 18-21).

(vii) The consecration offering (ver. 22). The priests anointed with the blood (vers. 23; 24).

(viii) The wave offering (vers. 25-29).

(ix) The sprinkling of the priests (ver. 30).

(x) The eating of the sacrifice (vers. 31-32).

This chapter shows how meticulously Moses carried out the instructions already recorded in Exodus xxix. Moses in this acted for Jehovah. The priests presented their bodies (Rom. xii. 1).

(b) **The Entrance of Aaron and his Sons upon their Office (ix).**

The personal investiture having been completed, the way was now open for Aaron and his sons to be inducted to their office.

Note the sequence of the offerings (vers. 3, 4). Expiation, consecration, communion, is the constant order in the life of the Christian as it was in the formal institution of the Levitical priest.

(c) **The Sanctification of the Priesthood by both the Act and the Word of God (x).**

On the very day of the consecration of the priests Aaron’s two eldest sons died. They had been highly privileged (Exodus xxiv. 1). Now they had been inducted to their holy office; and in the course of the solemn ceremonies they sinned and died. Compare the death of Ananias and Sapphira shortly after the experience of Pentecost (Acts v).

Their sin consisted in offering strange fire before the Lord. Just what this means is not explained. Verse 9 might suggest that drunkenness had been the occasion of the sin. It was evidently “will worship” (Col. ii. 23). The fire from Jehovah which signified His delight in the full obedience to His commands (ix. 24) slew these presumptuous men.

The incident would be a fresh illustration to Israel of the holiness and the awfulness of God.

VIII. CLEAN AND UNCLEAN.

xi: *Foods.* In considering the list of permissions and prohibitions we have to bear in mind the precariousness which still attaches to the identification of some of the creatures named. Speaking generally we may say that the lists broadly coincided with man's ideas of what is suitable or unsuitable, though we are not, of course, to measure any commandment of God by our appreciation of its suitability. Moreover, it is more and more recognised that the selections here made are of more than arbitrary value. The danger of the transmission of parasitic diseases is less in the case of those creatures whose flesh was permitted to be eaten than in the excluded forms.

Under this heading may also be included the prohibition of the eating of blood (Gen. ix. 4), which was again prohibited in the Mosaic law. This had a hygienic basis, and also it refers to the drink offerings of blood which formed part of certain heathen rituals (Psa. xvi. 4). It was thus a law of demarcation.

In Leviticus xix. 26 eating with the blood is bracketed with enchantments.

On this whole subject see the article on "Foods" by Professor Macalister in *Hastings' Bible Dictionary*.

xii: *Motherhood.*

xiii, xiv: *Leprosy.* A whole group of diseases is comprised under this head in the Bible. The element of uncleanness was associated with them in a special degree. In the New Testament the removal of other maladies is spoken of as healing, but the healing of leprosy is always called cleansing, except in Luke xvii. 15. In Leviticus there seem to be seven varieties of the disease to be distinguished.

In verses 12 and 13 of chapter xiii there is set forth the strange enactment that if the leprosy covered the whole of the sufferer's body, he is to be pronounced clean. It is probable that in such cases it was a form of psoriasis and not leprosy.

In verses 29 to 37 the reference appears to be to ringworm, a very contagious disease, but again not the true leprosy.

In all these examples of skin disease the simple directions given have in view the prevention of the spread of the malady.

Verses 47-59 refer to the plague of leprosy in a garment. In verse 47 the clothes mentioned are either linen or woollen. In verse 48 the flax or the wool from which garments were to be made is considered. The condition referred to is probably caused by a fungus or mildew. Where garments are worn for a long time, as they often are in the East, such growths are not unlikely.

Leprosy and the whole group of associated skin diseases is an apt type of sin, both on account of its loathsomeness and contagiousness. The law of the cleansing is specially concerned with the disease in its typical significance.

The purification prescribed in chapter xiv was divided into two parts, separated by a week's interval. The first act (vers. 2-8) set forth the restoration of the man, who had been regarded as dead, into the fellowship of the living members of the covenant nation. It therefore took place outside the camp. The second act (vers. 9-20) effected the leper's restoration to fellowship with Jehovah and his readmission to the sanctuary.

Typically, the ceremonial provided as follows:—

- (i) Verses 4-7: Justification, this idea being set forth by the two birds. On the one hand a death is involved; on the other hand the justified person is set free from the law of sin and death (cf. Rom. viii. 2).

- (ii) Verses 8, 9: Separation from all the old defilement.
- (iii) Verses 10-13, 19, 20: Reconciliation, seen in the burnt, meal and trespass offerings.
- (iv) Verses 14-18: Sanctification. The anointing with blood and with oil shows the personal appropriation of the expiation for the man and of the Spirit of God within the man.

It is significant that throughout this operation of cleansing the leper does nothing. The priest does it all. But, at the same time, the verbal forms referring to the leper himself are all in the reflexive mood. For instance, verse 4: "Him that is to be cleansed." Literally this is "him that is to cleanse himself." This indicates the leper's co-operation with the priest.

Verses 21-32 make special provision for the cleansing of the poor.

Leprosy in a house is also dealt with in chapter xiv (vers. 33-57), in anticipation of the time when Israel should have taken possession of Canaan and dwelt in houses. Professor Macalister says concerning this: "It is probable that this disease is the formation of a flocculent mass of calcium nitrate, such as often takes place when the gases set free from decaying animal matter act on the lime and plaster." The words, "I put," in verse 34, are a reminder that men owe not only their bodies and their health, but also their homes and general well-being to the Lord. It is also a declaration that all that befalls is under God's control.

xv: Personal regulations. These are partly hygienic and partly religious. They show that God is the God of all life, and that the most personal and private matters are to be brought consciously into relationship with Him. Uncleanliness was irreconcilable with the calling of Israel to be a holy nation among whom Jehovah, the Holy One, had His dwelling-place. Purification was

prescribed for all cases of need, and therefore a continuance in a state of uncleanness through neglect of the appropriate means really amounted to rebellion against God and His ordinances of grace. We may compare Dr. Bonar's great hymn :—

So shall no part of day or night
From sacredness be free;
But all my life in every part
Be fellowship with Thee.

IX. THE DAY OF ATONEMENT.

The giving of the law for this day had been anticipated in summary form (Exodus xxx. 10). Further references to the day are to be found in Leviticus xxiii. 26-32, Numbers xxix. 7-11 and the Epistle to the Hebrews. It also occurs as a note of time in Acts xxvii. 9. Apart from these passages no other reference to the Day of Atonement occurs either in the Old Testament or the New Testament.

It was the one fast day appointed by God for the people's regular observance. Its occurrence year by year served to emphasize the inadequacy of the Levitical offerings to take away sin. The Day of Atonement formed a sort of annual culmination of the sacrifices.

Its comprehensive character should be noted. An atonement had to be made for all the apparatus of the tabernacle worship. It proclaimed in outward sign the truth later put into words by Isaiah: "All our righteousnesses are as filthy rags" (Isa. lxiv. 6).

When other offerings were made the blood of the sacrifices was to be applied to the altar of burnt offering, etc. But on the Day of Atonement the blood was to be sprinkled in addition on the mercy seat itself (xvi. 15).

The special points to be noted in connection with the observance are:—

(a) **The Clothing of the High Priest.**

The elaborate robes usually worn by the high priest at the time of his ministrations were to be removed while he carried out these duties and were to be resumed only when they were finished (xvi. 23, 24). For the services of this day he was to be clad in garments all of white (xvi. 4).

(b) **His Entrance within the Vail.**

On this day only of all the year was the high priest to enter within the vail (xvi. 2). Not even he could enter in before Jehovah in his own right. It was on this one day that as Divinely appointed representative of the people he went in. The setting up of this further barrier between the Lord and the priesthood seems to have been brought about on the human side by the sin of Nadab and Abihu (xvi. 1).

(c) **The Scapegoat.**

The two goats together constitute the sin offering (xvi. 5). The one was to be sacrificed in the ordinary way (xvi. 9). The other goat, the second half of the sin offering, was to have all the iniquities of the children of Israel confessed over him, and was then to be sent away into the wilderness (xvi. 21). The scapegoat typifies the Saviour as bearing away the sin of the world (John i. 29). Jesus died, but rose again, and therefore it required the two goats to set forth His work in its completeness. In later times the Jews introduced the custom of killing the scapegoat by casting it from a crag in the desert. This alteration in the prescribed ritual showed their inability to understand the type.

The term *Azazel* (margin) has been a stumbling block to interpreters, as is shown by the many different explanations which have been offered. We may disregard all later Jewish mythological explanations, and

note simply the occurrence of the word in the present chapter, which is the only place in the Old Testament where it is found. No subordinate evil spirit could have been placed in antithesis to Jehovah as *Azazel* is here. We must, therefore, understand the name as an appellation of Satan himself in a similar way to that by which he is called *Beelzebub* in the New Testament. The Hebrew word is an intensive form of a verb which means to remove or drive away. As to exactly what is to be understood by this removing or driving away is not easy to define. It might be taken to indicate the divisive influence which the Devil exercises in driving men away from God (cf. Prov. xvi. 28 : "A whisperer separateth chief friends"). On the other hand, it might suggest the fact that the scapegoat separated their sins from the Israelites.

TEST X.

1. What is the typical significance of the five Levitical offerings? How do you account for the order in which they stand?
2. Explain "Azazel" with reference to its context.
3. Enumerate and analyse "the feasts of Jehovah."

The following books may be usefully consulted by the student:—

Commentary on the Pentateuch. KEIL and DELITZSCH.

Christ in the Levitical Offerings. J. R. CALDWELL.

The Tabernacle, the Priesthood and the Offerings.
H. SOLTAU.

Commentary on the Epistle to the Hebrews. WESTCOTT.

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