

OUTLINE STUDIES IN THE BOOKS OF THE OLD TESTAMENT

by

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CHAPTER FIVE

LEVITICUS

The chief design of this third book of Moses is indicated by its title. It is the handbook of the priests—their guide-book. Naturally it follows Exodus. The Tabernacle having been set up, and its services arranged, the duties of its ministers would next be defined. Like Exodus, Leviticus has three main topics: Sacrifice, priesthood, feast. Holiness is the key word; 17:11; 20:7, are the key verses.

Leviticus falls into two general parts:

- I. Access to God, chapters 1-16.
- II. Sanctification of the people, 17-27.

There are five sections in the book

1. Offerings, 1-7.
2. Consecration and investiture of the Priests, 8-10.
3. Holiness both of person and life, 11-15.
4. Atonement and righteousness, 16-22.
5. Feasts, 23-27.

That which strikes the reader of this book is the predominance of sin. The Levitical legislation is mainly occupied with it.

Sin, man's sin, sin before and after justification, is the secret of Judaism and the secret of the gospel: Face to face with the Mosaic ritual we are face to face with sin. God's holiness is another prominent feature of this book, He must punish sin; for His righteousness demands reparation for human guilt. In the sacrificing priest and in the blood that streams from the victim, in the fire that consumes it, in the ashes, in the water, in the incense and the prayer, in the distance between Himself and the people, in the darkness and loneliness of the Most Holy Place, His dwelling, we see the solemn portraiture of God's holiness, and His purpose to deal with sin according to its deserts.

The multiplicity of the rites with which this book is filled is proof of the insufficiency of such a system to take away sin. The continued round of sacrifices, the altar always wet with blood, brought sin to remembrance rather than judged and removed it, Hebrews 10:3. But we shall not forget that this book is largely prophetic. Its wondrous, complex typology announces the coming of One by whom all here prefigured shall have its complete fulfillment. Christ is the supreme center about which these ordinances turn; and they are luminous to us now because of the light He sheds upon them.

1. *The Sacrifices of Leviticus*, chapters 1-7.

They are pictures of the one offering of Christ. He is the sum of them. As no one of them was a perfect representation of Him and His work, five were instituted in order to set forth something of the perfection of His sacrifice. There are three parties to a sacrifice: the offerer, the priest and the offering.

- The priest acts as mediator.
- The priest and priestly action imply God and the sinner who are to be brought together in peace.
- The offering points unmistakably to sin done, and to the absolute need of expiation.
- The offerer is the offender who is regarded as identified with His sacrifice.

The main features of the sacrifices are substitution, imputation, death.

- By substitution is meant that the life of the victim is given for that of the offender.
- In imputation the punishment due the guilty party is charged or imputed to his sacrifice.
- This transference was symbolized by laying of the hands of the offerer on the head of the victim.
- Death was the execution of the penalty incurred by the offender.

In the application of sacrificial types we see all the elements just mentioned combined in the person and work of the Lord Jesus. He is at once the Priest, the Offerer, and the Victim.

- In His death there is priestly action, Hebrews 9:14; John 10:17, 18.
- His offering is Himself, Hebrews 10:10.
- He and those for whom He acts, are identified, John 10:11; Galatians 2:20.

The offerings of Leviticus are divided into two classes, viz: “**Sweet savour**,” which are three—burnt, meat, and peace offerings. The other classes were for expiation, viz: Sin and trespass offerings.

The burnt offering (Leviticus 1) heads the list because it had some of the distinctive features of all the others, and was the morning and evening sacrifice to God, Exodus 29:42.

- It was for acceptance and atonement, vss. 3, 4.
- It was wholly given to Him, and in it He had His satisfaction.
- It sets forth the devotedness of Jesus, His complete self-surrender to God, Ephesians 5:2.

= Its application to believers is in Romans 12:1, 2.

The meat-offering, which was vegetable, was the complement of the burnt offering (Leviticus 2), and seems never to have been presented alone save in the case of Cain. It followed a bloody sacrifice; it could not be accepted of itself.

- Cain came to the Lord with the fruits of the ground. He stood in nature. He refused to acknowledge himself a sinner needing atonement.
- Abel came as one under condemnation, but as one who knew of the provisions made for pardon.
- Abel came with blood. **“Without shedding of blood there is no remission,”** Hebrews 9:22.

Christ is the fulfillment of the meat-offering—the holy, spotless One. But it is only as He is apprehended as the sacrifice for sins that He becomes the food of the soul. Without passing through death He could not have been the meat-offering, John 12:24.

The peace-offering, (Leviticus 3) was a communion feast; the Lord, the priest, and the offerer had each his portion.

- The sin and trespass offerings (Leviticus 5) contemplated expiation.
- The bodies of the victims were burned without the camp, as if charged with sin and so judged and consumed, Hebrews 13:11, 12.
- It was the blood of the sin offering alone which was brought into the Most Holy Place, and sprinkled on the mercy seat, Leviticus 16:14.

Having made a perfect offering for sin Christ appears in the presence of God for us, Hebrews 9:11, 12, 24.

The sweet savour and the sin offerings are alike in this, that blood is the foundation of all right relationship with God. In both kinds the offerer and the victim are identified. They differ in this; the sweet savour was for acceptance and worship.

- In them what was presented unto God was grateful to Him,
- On the ground of it He and the worshiper communed together.
- In them sin is not the predominant idea. It is in the sin-sacrifice.

The essential feature in this last is propitiation. He who came with it came not so much a worshiper as a sinner—not for communion, but for pardon. He came to receive in the person of his substitute, the victim, the punishment due to his sin.

- In the sin offering the penalty is prominent:
- In the trespass offering ransom.
- In the first, expiation is prominent;
- In the second, satisfaction.

Both are fulfilled in Christ who was made sin for us, and who gave His life a ransom for many.

2. *Consecration of Aaron and his sons*, Leviticus 8. This ancient ceremony is full of significance.

The high priest and his sons were alike washed with water, vs. 6. Aaron was then anointed with the holy oil, the sons were not, vs. 12 (Oil is the emblem of the Spirit, I John 11:27; II Corinthians 1:21, 22). The sin offering was then slain and the blood sprinkled, vs. 15. Then the blood and the oil mingled were put on Aaron and the sons. Eminent type! Jesus was anointed with the Spirit before His sacrifice, the disciples not. After His death and resurrection, the Spirit was shed forth upon them, Acts 2; John 7 139; 16:7.

3. *Laws respecting food*, etc., chapter 11. Why should the great God occupy Himself with such matters?

(1) He is concerned in the physical well-being of His people. He has redeemed their bodies, and these are objects of His regard as well as the soul. Here is the best system of dietetics ever appointed.

(2) In their food and dress the Jews were to be a separate and “peculiar” people.

(3) They were to be holy. All the animals they were permitted to eat are of cleanly habits. Israel was taught holiness to the Lord in all things.

4. *Uncleanness, leprosy*, etc., chapters 12-15. These laws touch some delicate matters; but studied in a devout and reverent spirit they yield immense profit to the soul, Ruskin tells that his mother compelled him when a youth to read right through the Bible, even the difficult chapters of Leviticus; these especially held him in greatest restraint, and most influenced his life. The underlying truth in all is sin, its transmission, defilement, incurableness by man and God’s provision for its removal.

5. *Feasts*, chapters 23-25:19. There are eight of them (if we include the Day of Atonement), and they were designed to remind the people that they were God’s tenants-at-will;

- That the land was not theirs, but His;
- That their time was not theirs, but His;
- That their persons were not their own, but His.

Moreover, in the great jubilee, which was the fiftieth year, the sublime doctrine of earth’s final redemption, and its restoration to God, and its deliverance from the curse of sin, was constantly taught.

What a blessed day that will be when all the people of God even as to their bodies shall be delivered, when the lost inheritance shall be restored, and nature shall sing her glad song of redemption!

6. *Doctrine of the Redeemer*, chapter 25:24-55. This is a precious section of our book, for it is strikingly illustrative of the work of Christ as the Redeemer.

(1) The redeemer in Israel was to be one near of kin with him who was to be redeemed, vss. 25, 48. So Jesus, Hebrews 2:14-18.

(2) He was to redeem the person, 47-50; Ruth 4:4, 5. So Jesus has bought His people, First Corinthians 6:19, 20.

(3) He was to redeem the property that had been disposed away, vss. 25, 29. So, too, Christ hath redeemed for us our lost inheritance, I Peter 1:13-5.

(4) He was to avenge the brother on his enemies, Numbers 35:12. The “**avenger of blood**” seems to have been a near kinsman of the one injured. And Christ will in due time take vengeance on the enemies of His people, Deuteronomy 32:43; II Thessalonians 1:6-8.

7. Obedience, and disobedience, and their consequences, chapters 26, 27. The blessedness of obedience is first mentioned and commended, 26:1-13.

Disobedience and its sure punishment is next painted in the darkest hues, 26:14-39; but on repentance God will have pity and restore, 26:40-46. In this last section of the chapter there is a distinct prophecy of Israel’s final restoration and blessing,—“**I am the Lord.**”

Leviticus teaches the great doctrines of:

- Purity,
- Separation,
- Sanctification,
- Obedience,
- Service.

May it be ours to learn the priceless lesson!

Any study of Leviticus which omits the sixteenth chapter would be defective and unsatisfactory. Accordingly some brief notes are devoted to this very suggestive subject—the day of atonement in Israel.

In each of the first four books of the Bible there is one chapter which comes to us with peculiar force, to which we turn almost instinctively for typical instruction.

- Genesis 22, which records that strange and impressive scene, the offering of Isaac by his own father, is the first:
- Exodus 12, which contains the supreme doctrine of redemption by blood, is the second:
- Leviticus 16, the atonement chapter, is the third:
- Numbers 14, the chapter which narrates Israel’s unbelief and failure, is the fourth.

1. *Leviticus 17 stands alone.*

No mention is made elsewhere of what took place on that solemn day. It seems to be closely connected with the death of Nadab and Abihu, vs. 1. These two young men had died because of their disobedience and presumption. The priesthood had failed. The insufficiency of all that had been hitherto appointed was thus made manifest. And so the Day of Atonement was established as a still deeper display of God's grace and love, and of the inadequacy of Mosaic rites to take away sin.

2. *It was observed on the seventh day of the tenth month, and was to be a day of humiliation, vss. 29, 31.*

Affliction of soul answers to a contrition of heart. The people laid aside all secular employment. The sense of sin was to be deepened to its utmost intensity in the national mind and exhibited in appropriate forms of penitential grief. It was a day of godly sorrow working repentance.

3. *It occurred but once a year.*

As seven is the perfect number, so a year is a full and complete period. There is no time that does not fall within the year. It was the day of the Mosaic economy. It pointed to the supreme fact:—**“Christ was once offered to bear the sins of many,”** Hebrews 9:28 (the word for **“once”** is strong—***once for all***). There is no repetition of His sacrificial work. In the whole year of time there is but one atonement day, Romans 6:9, 10; Hebrews 9:26.

4. *The high priest.*

The day imposed upon him the most weighty duties. We are told that one week before the day came he left his own house and dwelt in the sanctuary. During the night preceding it he was denied sleep, and on the day itself he fasted until evening.

His dress was not that of **“beauty and glory”** which on other great festival occasions he wore, but one of pure linen, vs. 4. No gold glittered on his brow, nor tinkled in his steps, nor mingled its brilliancy with the royal colors of his robe. All was laid aside.

One cannot but think of the inspired description of the high priest's great antitype, the Lord Jesus, Philippians 2:6-11. He humbled Himself, put off His robes of glory when He came down into this world to offer Himself a sacrifice for sin. It was an earth-like garment He wore while He was here, though ever and anon He let it swing open for a little that the star of royalty over His heart might be seen!

It would seem, from vs. 17, that in the immediate acts of expiation Aaron was alone. He was neither to be accompanied nor assisted by any one. Striking type of Him who accomplished expiation for the sins of believers:

- **“Be not far from me, for trouble is near; for there is none to help,”** Psalm 22:11;
- **“Reproach hath broken my heart, and I am full of heaviness; and I looked for some to take pity, but there was none; and for comforters, but I found none,”** Psalm 49:20.

On the Day of Atonement in Israel, Aaron was alone, unassisted. On the day of Calvary Jesus was alone. All alone He wrestled in the garden; all alone He hung on the cross. Lover and friend were put far from Him: even the Father hid His face from His suffering Son. By Himself He made purification of sins, Hebrews 1:3.

5. *The offerings of the day:*

First, there was the sacrifice for the sins of the priestly family, vss. 6, 7, 11. The high priest could do nothing in the work of this great day until propitiation for himself and his house had been made, Hebrews 5:3; 9:7.

Next, the sin offering for the people which consisted of the two goats, and constituted the main features of the day. They were designed by lot, the one “**for the Lord,**” the other “**for Azazel,**” the scapegoat. The goat for the Lord was slain; the sins of the congregation were symbolically transferred from the people to the goat “**for Azazel,**” and solemnly put upon its head, after which it was led into the wilderness, and let go. Mindful of the variety of opinion that prevails as to the meaning of the expression “**for Azazel,**” the writer does not hesitate to express the belief that it signifies “*for removal,*” “*for the complete bearing away.*”

The two goats form but one offering. In vs. 15 the slain goat is described as a “**Sin offering for the people.**” Both animals were charged with the sins of the congregation; and the reason for the use of two instead of one, as in the ordinary sacrifice, is probably that given by Keil, viz., the physical impossibility of combining all the features that had to be set forth in the sin offering in one animal.

The cognate truths of atonement and remission are vividly taught in this sacrifice.

- The slain goat symbolizes the doctrine of atonement or covering of sins;
- The scapegoat their removal.
- God has His claims upon the sinner which must be met—the punishment of his guilt.
- The sinner has his needs likewise, viz., the putting away of his sin, its complete removal;
- This is wrought for him ceremonially by the dismissal of the goat into the wilderness, bearing the load of sins upon him.

The punishment of sin, the pardon of sin—these are the truths taught by the two goats. That it all has its fulfillment in Christ needs hardly to be said. The language of this chapter is carried over into later Scripture and applied to Him, Isaiah 53:6, 12; John 1: 29; II Corinthians 5:21; I Peter 2:24, etc.

6. *Entrance of the high priest into the most holy place.* Three times on this eventful day he passed through the veil into the Divine Presence, the Shekinah. The first was with the holy incense and the censer. The sacred room was clouded with the smoke from the burning incense. The smoke served as a thin veil between himself and the presence, “**that he die not,**” vss. 12, 13.

The second entrance was with the blood of his own sacrifice which he sprinkled seven times on and before the mercy seat.

Atonement was thus made for his own sins and those of his house—their trespasses were “**covered**” from the presence of the Lord. For the holy priesthood was involved in sin, was polluted and defiled, and nothing but the blood could cover the guilt.

The third entrance was with the blood of the slain goat, which was also sprinkled at the mercy seat; and when this third entrance had been made the priest returned to the holy place and sprinkled the united blood of the two sacrifices at the veil, and put of it on the horns of the golden altar, Exodus 30:10.

It was for:

- The rebellions against the government of God,
- For resistance to His grace,
- The transgressions,
- The iniquities,
- the unknown sins that had brought the holy house into such a state of moral pollution, which made expiation a necessity.

Atonement was made for the holy of holies, for the holy place, for the veil, for the golden altar, and for the brazen altar in the court. There was a call for blood everywhere in the sanctuary, and for all its parts, else the throne of God could not abide in Israel.

What a picture all this is of God’s estimate of sin, and of atonement for it! “**Without shedding of blood there is no remission.**” If God taught His people of the olden time the great doctrine of atonement by such a vivid object-lesson as this, how-is it possible, now that the true sacrifice has been offered for sin, how is it possible for a man, for any man, ever to be saved but by the blood?

7. No blood went into the presence of God into the most holy place but that of the sin-sacrifice; none other touched the mercy seat save this. Listen to that awful, tremendous word written by the inspired Paul: “**He hath made him to be sin for us who knew no sin, that we might be made the righteousness of God in him**”—made sin! Not only a sin offering, as some would have it; but sin! Montanus explains vs. 9 thus: “*And Aaron shall bring the goat upon which the Lord’s lot fell, and shall make it sin.*” If this be the real meaning of the verse, then we know something more of what Paul meant in II Corinthians 5:21. With His own blood Jesus has passed into heaven itself, now to appear in the presence of God for us, Hebrews 9:12, 24, etc. “**As far as east is from the west, so far hath He removed our transgressions from us,**” Psalm 103:12.

The one perfect offering has been made. The account of sin is canceled. The cry of wrath is hushed. Believe!

~ end of chapter 5 ~

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