

THE MOSAIC COVENANT – PART 2

THE CONTENT OF THE MOSAIC COVENANT (CONT'D)

- The Mosaic Law was Israel's constitution with the Lord, the King
- Israel was to obey this law to enjoy the blessings of the Lord, her King in the mediatorial kingdom
- Three aspects of this Mosaic Law emerge:
 1. Moral – The character of God demonstrated in all of life
 2. Civil – The character of God demonstrated in a theocratic society
 3. Ceremonial – The character of God demonstrated in ceremonial worship
- The content of this law is primarily seen in Exodus: 1) Moral (Ex 20:1-26); 2) Civil (Ex 21:1-24:11); 3) Ceremonial (24:12-31:18)
- However, these categories are further expanded on and intermingled in the text of Leviticus – Deuteronomy

Leviticus

Intro

What they have:

Presence of God
Place to Worship

What they need:

Principles for Worship
Priests to lead worship

- Leviticus is God's instruction for his newly redeemed people, teaching them how to worship and obey him
- God would not permit them to worship in the ways of their Egyptian neighbors, nor would he tolerate Egyptian ideas about morality and sin
- In addition to principles for worship, God gave the Israelites priests to lead them in this worship
- “Though the covenant arrangement up to this point clearly specified the need for Israel, the vassal, to appear before her Lord on stated occasions and singled out first Moses and then the priesthood as mediators in this encounter, there yet remained the need to describe the nature of the tribute to be presented, the precise meaning and function of the priesthood, the definition of holiness and unholiness, and a more strict clarification of the places and times of pilgrimage to the dwelling place of the great King. This is the purpose of the book of Leviticus.”¹
- The priority in Leviticus is on the people's holiness and ceremonial cleanness

Leviticus 11:44-45 ~ For I am the Lord your God. Consecrate yourselves therefore, and be holy; for I am holy. And you shall not make yourselves unclean with any of the swarming things that swarm on the earth. For I am the Lord, who brought you up from the land of Egypt, to be your God; thus you shall be holy for I am holy

Leviticus 19:2 ~ Speak to all the congregation of the sons of Israel and say to them, ‘You shall be holy, for I the Lord your God am holy.’

Leviticus 20:7, 26 ~ You shall consecrate yourselves therefore and be holy, for I am the Lord your God... Thus you are to be holy to Me, for I the Lord am holy; and I have set you apart from the peoples to be Mine.

Leviticus 21:6, 8 ~ They shall be holy to their God and not profane the name of their God, for they present the offerings by fire to the Lord, the bread of their God; so they shall be holy... You shall consecrate him, therefore, for he offers the bread of your God; he shall be holy to you; for I the Lord, who sanctifies you, am holy.

¹ Roy Zuck, *Biblical Theology of the Old Testament*, 56.

- These verses show the critical importance of the holiness of God...which gave Israelites the most important motivation for living a holy life themselves
- The core ideas around which Leviticus develops are the holy character of God and the will of God for Israel's holiness
- In this book there is a continuing emphasis on personal holiness in response to the holiness of God
- On over 125 occasions, Leviticus indicts mankind for uncleanness and/or instructs on how to be purified
- "It must be insisted that the 'unclean' was not equated in the writer's mind with that which was dirty or forbidden. The teaching of this section of Scripture was *not* that cleanliness was next to godliness. That may be all well and good, but the word of the text was cleanness, not cleanliness. Simply put, cleanness meant the worshipper was *qualified* to meet Yahweh; 'unclean' signified that he lacked the necessary qualifications to come before the Lord...holiness in its positive aspect was a *wholeness*: a life entirely dedicated to God and set apart for His use."²

The Sacrificial System (Lev 1-6)

Burnt	Meal	Peace	Sin	Guilt
<i>Bull, male sheep, male goat, dove or young pigeon</i>	<i>Grain or Barley</i>	<i>Bull, lamb, or goat, male or female</i>	<i>Young bull-for priest or nation Male goat-for tribal leader Female goat or lamb-for layperson Dove, young pigeon-for poor person Flour-for very poor</i>	<i>Usually a ram</i>
<i>Voluntary worship</i>	<i>Optional offering accompanying burnt and fellowship offerings</i>	<i>Thank: for unexpected blessing Votive: for blessing or deliverance related to vow Freewill: to express thankful devotion without regard to specific blessing.</i>	<i>Unintentional sin against divine command by an individual or the entire nation</i>	<i>Misappropriation of that which belonged to another person.</i>
<i>Signified the worshiper's act of total dedication to God.</i>	<i>Signified dedication of everyday life to God in recognition of His covenant mercies.</i>	<i>The worshiper recognized the meat eaten as a token of God's covenant faithfulness.</i>	<i>Provided atonement and forgiveness for specific unintentional sins where no restitution was involved.</i>	<i>The ram was for forgiveness, with payment of restitution to the wronged party.</i>

- God clearly indicated that forgiveness and atonement was directly connected to the OT sacrificial system

Leviticus 1:4 ~ And he shall lay his hand on the head of the burnt offering, that it may be accepted for him to make atonement on his behalf

² Walter Kaiser, *Toward an Old Testament Theology*, 116.

Leviticus 4:20 ~ He shall also do with the bull just as he did with the bull of the sin offering; thus he shall do with it. So the priest shall make atonement for them, and they shall be forgiven.

Leviticus 17:11 ~ It is the blood by reason of the life that makes atonement.

- The question is, “What was the nature of this atonement and forgiveness and what part did the blood sacrifice have in obtaining that forgiveness and atonement?”

Hebrews 10:4 ~ For it is impossible for the blood of bulls and goats to take away sins.

- The value in the OT sacrifices was not that any sacrifice in itself actually paid for sin...the blood of an animal could never pay for the sin of any man...it was not an equal sacrifice
- Rather, the value in every OT sacrifice was what it pointed ahead to the final sacrifice of Christ on the cross

John 1:29 ~ Behold, the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world!

- The saving nature of the sacrifice was never inherent in the animal or the ritual; rather, it was validated by the future completed work of Christ
- Every legitimate sacrifice pointed ahead to the sacrifice of the perfect Lamb of God

Romans 3:25 ~ whom God displayed publicly as a propitiation in His blood through faith. This was to demonstrate His righteousness, because in the forbearance of God He passed over the sins previously committed;

- An OT believer's sins were not ultimately paid for until the cross
- As an OT saint demonstrated their faith in God's provision by obeying the sacrificial system, he graciously overlooked their sin, looking ahead to the only sufficient sacrifice, that of Christ himself

Hebrews 9:15 ~ And for this reason He is the mediator of a new covenant, in order that since a death has taken place for the redemption of the transgressions that were committed under the first covenant, those who have been called may receive the promise of the eternal inheritance.

- At the cross, the OT saint's sins were redeemed so that what they had been looking forward to became a reality
- In the overall sovereign plan of God, the coming sacrifice of Christ was a 100% reality...it was merely waiting the “fullness of time”
- Therefore, there was absolutely no tentativeness of the redemption of the OT believer's sins...at the cross, Christ paid for sins past, present and future
- Consequently, the OT believer could confidently obey God's commands and without hesitation depend on the promised atonement and forgiveness

Clean and Unclean Animals (Lev 11)

Land Animals (vv. 1-8)

- Only those land animals which are cloven-hoofed and chew the cud were to be considered clean
- Clean and therefore edible animals from this group are listed in the parallel passage in Deut 14:4-5: the ox, sheep, goat, deer, gazelle, roe deer, wild goat, ibex, antelope, and mountain sheep
- All others were inedible and unclean...the camel (v. 4), the rock badger (v. 5), and the rabbit (v. 6) were unclean because none of them have a split hoof (vv. 4-6)
- On the other hand, the pig was disqualified because it does not chew the cud

Water Animals (vv. 9-12)

- Only fish which have both fins and scales could be eaten
- All other seafood was *detestable* (a stronger word for “unclean,” v. 12) and could not be eaten

Flying Creatures (vv. 13-23)

- There was no broad rule given to determine what flying creatures were clean; rather, the Law indicated what flying creatures were prohibited
- Twenty species of birds (including the bat which is not strictly a bird) were forbidden...these are apparently birds of prey (which would thus violate the fundamental prohibition against eating flesh with blood in it)
- Though not named, clean birds that could be eaten were doves, pigeons, quail, and sparrows...the only edible flying insects were four species of locusts (11:22)

What was the purpose of clean and unclean animals?

1. Hygiene - some of the unclean animals were carriers of disease
2. Religious - some of the animals were considered unclean because of their association with pagan religions
3. Uniqueness - God designed most of the law to emphasize the separateness of Israel from the surrounding societies

Leprosy (Lev 13-14)

- What was leprosy? This term cannot be limited to the modern-day disfiguring disease by the same name, although it would have included Hansen’s disease.
- This biblical leprosy involved some disfiguring whiteness, but it did not necessarily disable the person
- Both OT and NT lepers went almost everywhere, indicating that this disease was not the leprosy of today that cripples
- A victim of this scaly disease was unclean as long as the infection was partial...once the body was covered with it, he was clean and could enter the place of worship (see vv. 12–17)...apparently, the complete covering meant the contagious period was over
- The laws for cases of leprosy had a twofold purpose...they were to protect the people from disease...but more importantly, they were to show by a vivid object lesson that God desired purity, holiness, and cleanness among his people...which could only ultimately come from Christ

Body Fluids (Lev 15)

- This chapter deals with bodily discharges and the purification necessary for those with them
 - Male discharges from disease and requiring sacrifices for purification (vv. 2-15)
 - Male discharges from normal secretions not requiring sacrifices (vv. 16-18)
 - Female discharges from normal monthly cycles not requiring sacrifices (vv. 19-24)
 - Female discharges from disease and requiring sacrifices for purification (vv. 25-30)
- “As a result of the Fall and subsequent Curse (Gen 3) humans have been left in a state of broken messiness in every conceivable way: physically, emotionally, and spiritually...Leviticus 15 presents our physical grossness and portrays a picture of how unavoidable our uncleanness is. The inevitable leakiness of our bodies is a reminder that simply being human makes us unacceptable to a pure, holy, clean God.”³
- Examples of bodily leakiness pointing to our uncleanness: sweat (associated with difficult work from the Fall)...and blood (associated with pain in child-bearing as a result of the Fall)

³ <https://thecripplegate.com/the-inevitable-messiness-of-being-human-pt-1/>

- Why these instructions about body fluids? → “The reason, I believe, God made us messy and then calls us unclean, is because he wants us to long to be fixed. He wants us to desire to be made perfect. He designed us to constantly be aware that our leaky bodies are broken, malfunctioning, marred by the Fall, even when they are in ‘perfect health.’ What we call perfect health simply means the bodily fluids are not escaping our bodies at an *unusual* rate. When nothing wet is embarrassingly darting out of our noses, oozing from our skins, or jail-breaking from other orifices without our sayso, that’s a good day for us. *It’s only natural, but natural is not perfect.*”⁴
- The conclusion: “So what do we do with all this? Thanks be to God that he made a way for us to be cleaned up. This hosing down was only temporarily in the Mosaic sacrificial system, but it served as a picture, a preview of forthcoming attractions. There will be a day of permanent perfection.”⁵

The Day of Atonement (Lev 16)

- This was the most important day of the entire year in Judaism...through this solemn ceremony they could approach Yahweh at the Tabernacle for another year
 1. Date – On the 10th day of the 7th month (Sept/Oct), Israel observed this most solemn holy day
 2. Person – Only the High Priest officiated on this day...all the remainder of the priests were identified with the congregation
 3. Preparation – The High Priest spent the 7 days prior to the Day of Atonement preparing
 4. Sacrifices – 1) Bull as a sin offering; 2) Ram as a burnt offering; 3) Two goats for a sin offering; 4) Ram for a burnt offering
 5. Entered the holy place three times – 1) With Incense; 2) With blood of the bull; 3) With the sacrificial goat
- This was the only day of the whole year when anyone was allowed in the Most Holy Place...when the high priest entered the most Holy Place he wore bells so that the people outside could tell he was still alive

The Atonement of the Blood (Lev 17:11)

Leviticus 17:11 ~ For the life of the flesh is in the blood, and I have given it to you on the altar to make atonement for your souls; for it is the blood by reason of the life that makes atonement.

- The context of this verse concerns the prohibition for eating blood...because blood was the vehicle by which God covered their sins, he wanted them to show respect for it and not drink it
- The atoning value of the blood was only because he had “given it” for that purpose
- The essence of the shedding of blood was that it referred to death...it was never enough to cut an animal and let it bleed...there was always a death which pointed ultimately to the Christ giving his blood for us
- In Christ’s death, there was no saving value in his physical blood...when he sacrificed his blood, he ultimately died which is the penalty for sin (Rom. 6:23)

Laws Governing Sexual Purity (Lev 18)

- Adultery (v. 20), homosexuality (v. 22), and bestiality (v. 23) were all prohibited

Various Laws (Lev 19)

- Wearing mixed fabrics was prohibited (v. 19)...cutting or shaving a beard was prohibited (v. 27)...getting tattoos was prohibited (v. 28)

⁴ <https://thecripplegate.com/the-messiness-of-being-human-pt-2-reprise/>

⁵ Ibid.

- Should v. 28 used to teach that tattoos are unbiblical? → “The immediate North & South context of the verse should provide a clear indication that an understanding of Leviticus’ place in the canon of Scripture is going to be a key. The verse below says don’t make your daughter a prostitute. I sure hope that still applies. But the verse above says you can’t trim your beard or the hair next to your ears. Ever been to an orthodox synagogue? The gents who congregate there (and keep the whole Mosaic Law—kudos for consistency) look a little different from those who attend the men’s breakfast at your church, right? If Christians don’t need to apply verse 27, then why do we have to obey v. 28 of the same chapter?...I’m confident we can all agree that the verses in Leviticus are not directly binding on the NT church in the same way that it was for Israel (Rom 10:4). So, Lev 19:28 gets a red card and is sent off the field as too old for this team.”⁶

Annual Feasts (Lev 23)

- The feasts were periodic appointments of Israel with the Lord for blessing and instruction:
 1. Object lessons encouraging them towards holiness
 2. Reminders of their covenant relationship with the Lord
 3. Uniting them through gathered worship

Sabbath and Jubilee Years (Lev 25)

- Just as the Israelites were to work six days and then rest on the Sabbath, so the land on which they lived was to be worked for six years (v. 3) and then allowed to rest on the seventh or sabbatical year (v. 4)
- Any spontaneous yield of the land could be consumed for food by anyone (not just the owner), but there was to be no organized harvest and no selling of the produce to others (vv. 6-7)
- So, for one-seventh of the time landowners and the landless were on an equal footing in living off the land
- The land of Israel was God’s property and his people were its tenants
- Therefore, the people’s land ownership (understood in this sense) was not to be exploited for the enrichment of some and the impoverishment of others
- All property (except in walled cities – see vv. 29-30) was to be restored to its original owners
- In addition, all Hebrew slaves were to be released to return to their family property
- Also, as during the preceding sabbatical year, the land was to enjoy a second straight year of rest (vv. 11-12)

Blessings and Curses Associated with the MC (Lev 26)

- vv. 3-13 = Blessings for Obedience
- vv. 14-39 = Curses for Disobedience
- vv. 40-46 = Promise of Restoration

⁶ <https://thecripplegate.com/tattoos-and-skin-deep-hermeneutics/>