

THE BOOK OF LEVITICUS – LESSON 1

Introduction

Leviticus is one of the last books of the Bible most people read.

Why Study Leviticus?

- 1) Leviticus is full of symbolism. These symbols teach us things about God, Jesus, the Church and ourselves that we can't really understand any other way.
- 2) It shows us how terrible, destructive and pervasive sin is AND how much God hates it.
- 3) It demonstrates how vitally important blood is for the forgiveness of sins.
 - a) It teaches us more about Jesus' sacrifice than possibly any other book of the Bible.
 - b) It introduces, in a major way, the idea of a substitute taking the punishment for sin.
- 4) It teaches us to NEVER look at ANY sin in a cavalier way. SIN IS DEADLY SERIOUS. This is a major theme of Leviticus.
- 5) Leviticus teaches us about the priesthood. Since we are all called to be priests, this is something we need to understand.
- 6) It teaches us about God's love and forgiveness.
- 7) It teaches us about God's fierce judgement and wrath.
- 8) It teaches us about God's incredible holiness. Especially this: God's holiness is DANGEROUS.

The Context of Leviticus

"The Pentateuch" – Greek meaning "five scrolls"

"The Torah"- Hebrew meaning "instruction, teaching"

"The Five Books of Moses" – Moses traditionally thought to have written most of them.

The Pentateuch is to the Old Testament what the Gospels are to the New Testament. Without the Pentateuch, the rest of the OT has little meaning.

Genesis

Exodus

Leviticus

Numbers

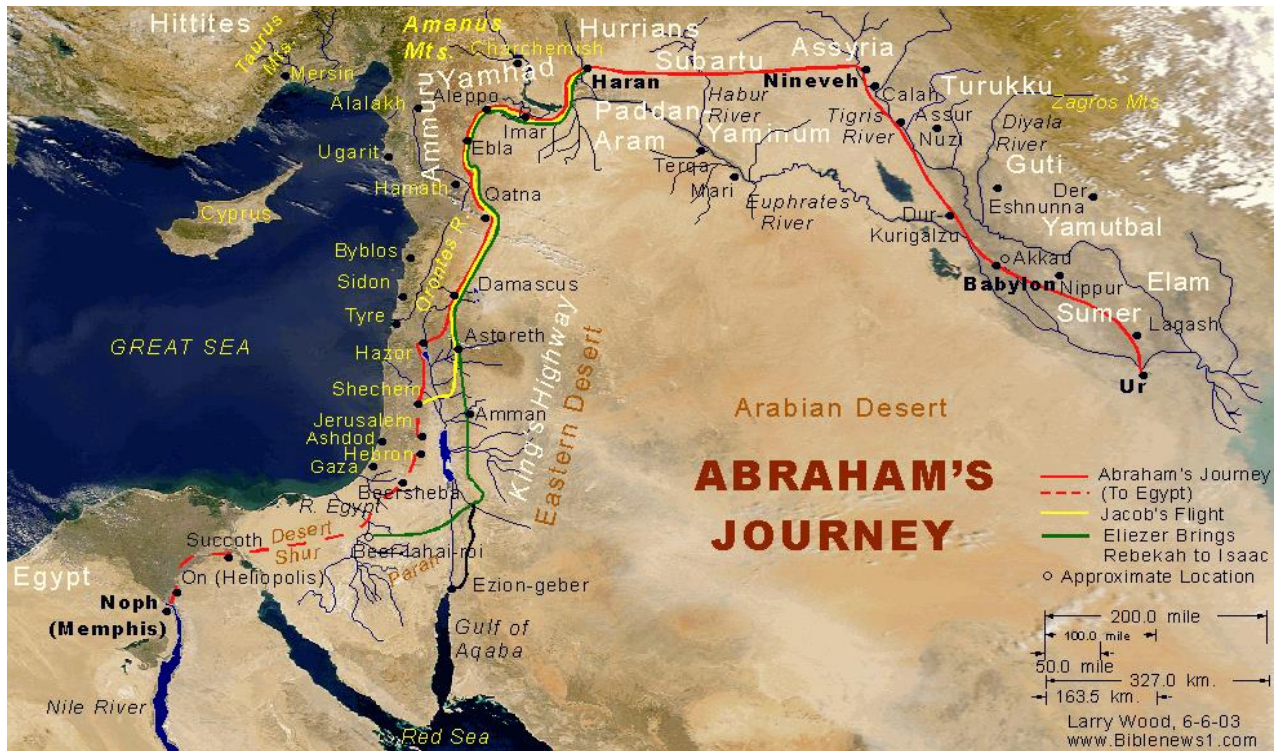
Deuteronomy

Leviticus is the central book of the Pentateuch. Some believe it serves as a literary "pivot" in the five book structure.

The Pentateuch is essentially an historical narrative of how the nation of Israel came to be. Leviticus is a central part of that historical narrative.

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The Historical Narrative



❖ Genesis 12

- God calls Abram, age 75, to go into the land of Caanan. God promises to...
 - Make Abram a great nation
 - To bless Abram
 - Make Abram's name great
 - Bless those who bless Abram, curse those who curse Abram
 - All nation will be blessed through Abram (Gal 3:8 Paul says this is the gospel being announced in advance.)

Genesis 12:7

7 The Lord appeared to Abram and said, "To your offspring (seed) I will give this land.

Galatians 3:16

16 The promises were spoken to Abraham and to his seed. The Scripture does not say "and to seeds," meaning many people, but "and to your seed," meaning one person, who is Christ.

- **It is not through Abraham's family that all nations would be blessed, but through Christ himself.**
- Abram leaves as God commands and takes his nephew Lot with him
- Because of a famine in Caanan, Abram goes to Egypt.
 - Abram lies to Pharoah about Sarai being his wife
 - Abram is kicked out of Egypt

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- ❖ Genesis 13
 - Abram and Lot separate. Lot ends up in Sodom.
- ❖ Genesis 14
 - War breaks out. A coalition of 5 kings led by the king of Sodom go to war against 4 kings led by the king of Elam. The king of Sodom's coalition is defeated and Lot is taken prisoner.
 - Abram arms his men and defeats the 4 king coalition and rescues Lot and all the prisoners.
 - Melchizedek, king of Salem (thought to be the ancient Jerusalem) meets Abram. Abram pays him a tenth of all he has. (Melchizedek symbolizes Christ – Heb 5 & 7)
- ❖ Genesis 15
 - God makes a covenant with Abram.
 - Abram asks God why he has no sons to be his heir.
 - God promises Abram that his descendants will be as numerous as the stars in the sky.
Genesis 15:6
⁶ Abram believed the Lord, and he credited it to him as righteousness. **Trust**
 - God requires Abram seal the covenant by sacrifice.
 - A heifer (cattle), goat and a ram, each three years old. Also a dove and a young pigeon.
 - ◆ Each of these foreshadows the sacrificial animals in Leviticus.
 - God foretells the enslavement in Egypt and the Exodus.
Genesis 15:13-14
13 Then the Lord said to him, "Know for certain that your descendants will be strangers in a country not their own, and they will be enslaved and mistreated four hundred years. 14 But I will punish the nation they serve as slaves, and afterward they will come out with great possessions."
- ❖ Genesis 16
 - Hagar and Ishmael
 - Abraham is about 86 when Ishmael is born
- ❖ Genesis 17
 - The covenant of Circumcision
 - God renames Abram ("exalted father") to Abraham ("father of a multitude")
 - Sarai is renamed Sarah.
 - God promises Abram a son through Sarah.
 - Abraham laughs at God's promise bcs he is 99 years old and Sarah is past menopause. Ishmael is about 14 years old.
 - God tells him to name the son to be born to him, Isaac ("he laughs").
 - Abraham obediently circumcises his entire company. (Wouldn't you like to have seen him explain THAT to the men!)
- ❖ Genesis 18
 - Three heavenly visitors call on Abraham. Evidently it is God and two angels.
 - God restates his promise that Sarah will bear him a son in one year.
 - Sarah laughs. She is confronted by God and lies about it. God tells her he knows that she was lying.
 - Abram bargains with God for Sodom and Gomorrah.

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- ❖ Genesis 19
 - God destroys Sodom and Gomorrah
 - Lot's wife turned into a pillar of salt
 - Lots daughters have sex with him to produce heirs to preserve their family line.
 - Older daughter bears Moab from whom came the Moabites.
 - Younger daughter bears Ben-Ammi from whom came the Ammonites.
- ❖ Genesis 20
 - Abraham lies a 2nd time about Sarah being his wife, this time to Abimelech. God intervenes again.
- ❖ Genesis 21
 - Isaac is born
 - Ishmael and Hagar are sent away
- ❖ Genesis 22
 - Abraham tested. God commands him to sacrifice Isaac in the region of Moriah at a mountain God will point out.
 - Abraham obeys and heads to Moriah.
 - God stops Abraham before he kills Isaac. God concludes the following...
 - Genesis 22:12-18*
 - 12 "Do not lay a hand on the boy," he said. "Do not do anything to him. Now I know that you fear God, because you have not withheld from me your son, your only son."*
 - 13 Abraham looked up and there in a thicket he saw a ram caught by its horns. He went over and took the ram and sacrificed it as a burnt offering instead of his son. 14 So Abraham called that place The Lord Will Provide. And to this day it is said, "On the mountain of the Lord it will be provided."*
 - 15 The angel of the Lord called to Abraham from heaven a second time¹⁶ and said, "I swear by myself, declares the Lord, that because you have done this and have not withheld your son, your only son, 17 I will surely bless you and make your descendants as numerous as the stars in the sky and as the sand on the seashore. Your descendants will take possession of the cities of their enemies, 18 and through your offspring all nations on earth will be blessed, because you have obeyed me."*
 - Mount Moriah is the same mountain on which Solomon built the Temple. Many believe it is the very same spot where Abraham brought Isaac.
- ❖ Genesis 23-50
 - Sarah dies at the age of 127
 - Isaac gets a wife, Rebecca
 - Abraham dies at the age of 175
 - Rebecca bears twins, Esau and Jacob
 - Jacob bears 12 sons who will be the 12 tribes of Israel
 - Jacob wrestles with God and is renamed "Israel" ("wrestles with God")
 - Joseph is sold by his brothers and ends up in Egypt.
 - Joseph eventually becomes 2nd in command to Pharaoh
 - Because of a famine Jacob and all of Joseph's brothers and sisters come to live in Egypt
 - Genesis 50 ends with the death of Joseph and all of Israel's family in Egypt.

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- God begins to fulfill the prophecy he gave to Abraham in Genesis 15

Genesis 15:13-14

13 Then the Lord said to him, “Know for certain that your descendants will be strangers in a country not their own, and they will be enslaved and mistreated four hundred years. 14 But I will punish the nation they serve as slaves, and afterward they will come out with great possessions.

Exodus

❖ Exodus 1 – 18

- Roughly 400 years have passed since the end of Genesis
 - Israelites now in cruel state of slavery. They cry out to God for deliverance.
 - No laws. No commandments. No Scriptures. All they had was the oral traditions/accounts of that occurred in Genesis (not yet written) handed down to them.
 - Pharaoh arose who did not know Joseph. Saw Israel’s incredible numbers (over 2M) as a threat
 - Orders all newborn Israelite boys to be killed
 - Moses’ parents save him by putting him in a basket in the Nile
 - Moses rescued by Pharaoh’s daughter and raised in Pharaoh’s household
 - How ironic! The savior of Israel was raised by the Pharaoh who tried to kill him!
 - Moses grows up and begins to relate to his own people.
 - At age 40 he kills an Egyptian who is mistreating an Israelite.
 - He flees to Midian. He stays there another 40 years, gets married and minds his own business.
 - God calls him from the burning bush at age 80.
 - Moses reluctantly returns to Egypt to deliver Israel as God commands.
 - Moses confronts Pharaoh and commands he let the Israelites go.
 - Pharaoh refuses. 9 terrible plagues ensue.
 - The 10th plague ushers in the Passover
 - The Passover – Lamb’s blood on the door posts of the Israelites.
 - The Destroying Angel kills the first born of all Egypt, including the firstborn of all the livestock.
 - Pharaoh lets the people go
 - The Egyptians give the Israelites silver, gold, cattle, sheep, etc. They leave Egypt with great possessions.
- Genesis 15:13-14*
- 13 Then the Lord said to him, “Know for certain that your descendants will be strangers in a country not their own, and they will be enslaved and mistreated four hundred years. 14 But I will punish the nation they serve as slaves, and afterward they will come out with great possessions.*
- Israel is led out into the wilderness, 2M strong.
 - God leads them into what looks like a trap, against the Red Sea.
 - Pharaoh changes his mind and marshals his army to pursue
 - God’s presence protects Israel
 - God opens the Red Sea for Israel to escape
 - God kills Pharaoh and all his army in the Red Sea

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- Israel is saved. God tests them to see if they will trust in him.
 - Three days of no water. They finally find water and it is poisonous. They complain bitterly, in other words, they fail the test.
 - God purifies the water through Moses
 - God then leads them to a magnificent oasis in Elim where there were 12 springs and 70 palm trees.
- Israel leaves the beautiful oasis God provided and head into the desert as God commands.
 - God tests them again with little food. Israel fails the test again and complains.
 - God supplies quail
 - God supplies manna which appears Sunday through Friday, but not Saturday, the Sabbath Day.
- Israel sets out at God's command. God tests them again by not supplying water every day.
 - Israel fails the test yet again and grumbles against Moses.
 - God provides water from a rock.
- Israel fights the Amalekites (descendents of Esau)
 - Joshua leads the battle. Aaron and Hur hold up Moses arms.
 - Amalek is defeated.
- At his father-in-laws urging, Moses appoints judges over all of Israel.
- ❖ Exodus 19-41 At Mount Sinai
 - Exactly 3 months after leaving Egypt, Israel arrives at Sinai.
 - God appears on the mountain in thunder, lightning, fire, smoke and loud trumpet blasts. This display terrifies the Israelites, which was the point.
 - God calls Moses up the mountain. He speaks to Moses and tells him to go down and get Aaron.
 - After Moses goes down, God thunders the 10 commandments for all to hear.
 - God calls Moses back up the mountain and gives him several dozen more specific laws. These laws cover specific instances where the 10 commandment would be broken and what punishments would be required by lawbreakers.
 - God introduces three annual festivals that all Israelite men must physically attend.
 - Moses builds an altar and sacrifices bulls on it. He sprinkles the blood on the Israelites, reads the terms of the Covenant and confirms it with the people.
 - An extraordinary event occurs. God allows Moses, Aaron, Nadab, Abihu (Aaron's two oldest sons) and 70 elders to come and eat a meal right in front of the presence of God.
 - Moses then goes up on the mountain and God gives him the plans for the Tabernacle.
 - Moses tells the people to wait for his return
 - He is there for 40 days and 40 nights
 - The presence of God looked like a fire to the nation of Israel.
 - Israel grows impatient and decides Moses may not be coming back.
 - Aaron builds a golden calf
 - Breaks the 1st two commandments (No other gods, no idols)
 - Israel breaks the covenant they made with God within a few weeks
 - Moses comes down from the mountain and breaks the two stone tablets God had given him
 - He grinds the calf to dust, throughs it on the water and forces Israel to drink it
 - God decides he's going to kill all the Israelites and start over with Moses

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- Moses intercedes with God. God listens to him.
- Moses challenges the Israelites, “Whoever is for the Lord, come to me.”
 - The Levites rally to Moses side.
 - Moses commands them to strap on their swords and killing brother, friend and neighbor who had led the people into sin.
 - The Levites kill 3,000 of their fellow Israelites. (I’m sure Aaron was wondering when he would be next!)
 - Because of the Levites faithfulness to God that day, he set them apart to be his very own and serve him in this Temple.
- God tells Israel to leave and go to the Promise Land, but they will have to go alone because if he were to go with them, he might destroy them all because they are so sinful and rebellious.
- Moses intercedes again and pleads for God to go with them. God listens to Moses again and agrees.
- God allow Moses to see his actual back, but not his face.
- Moses goes back up the mountain. He gets more instruction and God writes a 2nd set of the 10 commandments on stone tablets for him. He is there for 40 days and 40 nights. He eats or drinks nothing. God’s presence is all he needs to survive.
- Moses instructs the Israelites to build the Tabernacle and all it’s articles. They obey.
- On the first day of the first month of the 2nd year (almost 1 year after leaving Egypt) Moses and the Israelites set up the Tabernacle in the exact pattern God showed Moses on the mountain.
- Exodus comes to a close with the glory of the Lord filling the Tabernacle.

Leviticus

- 30 days pass

Numbers

- A few months go by

Deuteronomy

- Starts 39 years later after the end of numbers

Joshua

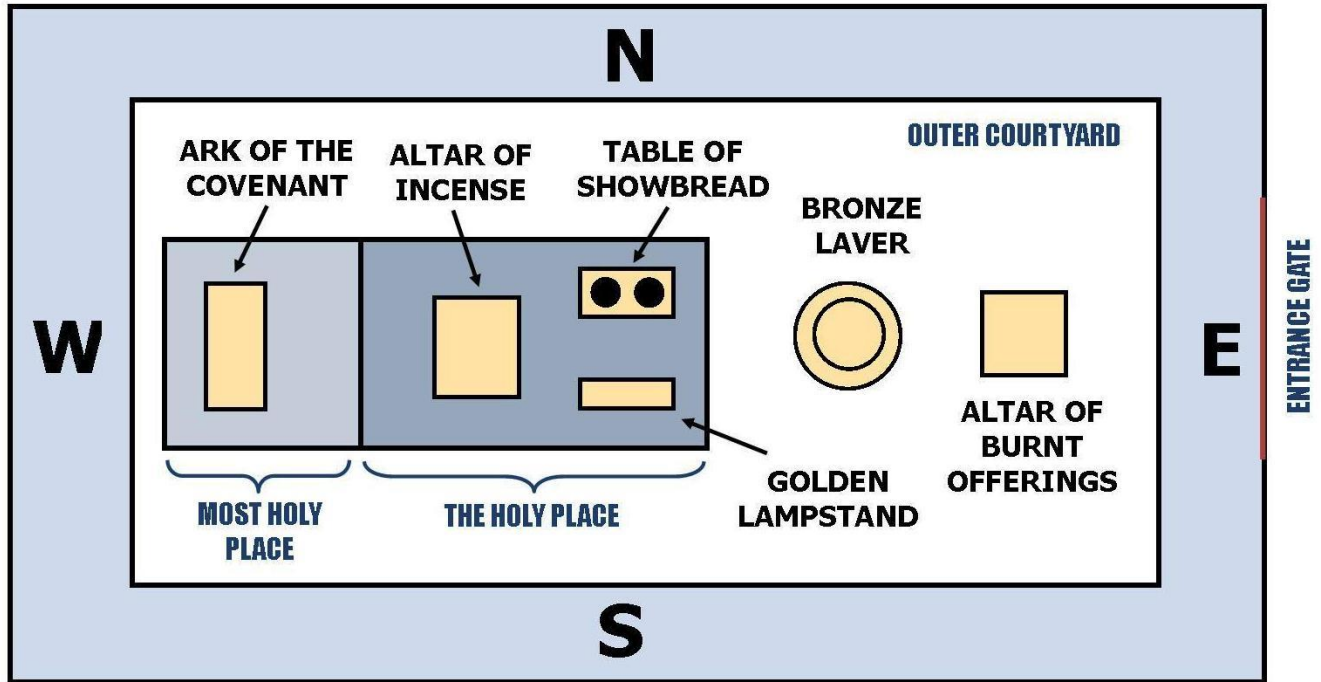
- Conquer the land

Judges

- Settle the land

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THE TABERNACLE OF MOSES (EXODUS 35-40)



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Homework – Watch a YouTube summary of the Pentateuch.

Go to YouTube. How?

If you have a computer: Open your browser and type in “youtube.com”

If you have a mobile phone: Download the YouTube app from Playstore (Android) or the Apple App Store.

Once YouTube is open, search for “The Bible Project Old Testament” in the YouTube search line.

The very first search feature at the top is “Read Through Scripture – Old Testament”. Click on that.

Watch the first seven videos, each averaging about 7 ½ minutes.

Genesis 1-11 (7:43)

Genesis 12-50 (8:08)

Exodus 1-18 (6:33)

Exodus 19-40 (6:27)

Leviticus (8:17)

Numbers (6:52)

Deuteronomy (7:49)

These provide a very nice overview of the historical context of the Pentateuch. I’ve found some factual errors in them but, on the whole, the mistakes are few and fairly benign. The videos themselves are simply brilliant communication and teaching tools. I’ve never seen anything like them.

Thanks to Josh Lutz and Peter Kuppler for pointing these out!