

Leviticus

1. Name – The Hebrew name means “And he called”, from the opening words. The name *Leviticus* comes from the Vulgate (Latin translation), which used the Septuagint name, meaning “pertaining to the Levites.”
2. Author and date– Moses wrote Leviticus, with later, minor editing under divine inspiration. See handout on Pentateuch for details. The essential content was finished by Moses’ death around 1400 BC and finalized by 1000 BC.
3. Character – Leviticus is a historical narrative that unfolds the purity and ritual laws and their origin. Much of the book is a presentation of the law itself. The book does not have the literary sophistication of the other books of the Pentateuch; its primary characteristic is a straightforward communication of information for priests and laypeople alike concerning living and worshiping before a holy God.
4. Major themes and importance – these themes lay a foundation for understanding God’s character as well as Christ’s work of salvation.
 - a. Holiness of God
 - i. “I am the LORD your God.” (18:2, 4, 5; 19:3-4, 10; 20:7)
 - ii. “Therefore be holy, because I am holy.” (11:45, 19:2, 20:26)
 - iii. Sinners must approach God through sacrifice.
 - iv. Sinners need the intercession of priests.
 - v. Sinners need to maintain purity and a distinction from the world.
 - b. Sacrificial system – the sacrifice of Christ cannot be fully understood apart from the groundwork laid here in the sacrificial system and priesthood (see Hebrews).
 - i. Burnt offering – expiation (atoning, or making amends, for sin)
 - ii. Grain offering – emphasized giving of gift to the sovereign Lord of the covenant
 - iii. Fellowship (peace) offering – for fellowship between the worshiper and God and a celebration of that relationship.
 - iv. Purification offering – deals with the removal of sin, particularly unintentional sin (see Numbers 15:22-31).
 - v. Guilt offering – deals with the removal of sin, particularly in relation to offenses against “things of the Lord”.
 - c. Priesthood – the priests were necessary as mediators between God and sinful people and served both as a barrier between the two, as servants to direct the people in their worship duties, and as representatives of the people before God.
 - d. Purity – purity laws are given that deal both with moral issues and with ritual issues relating to diet and ceremonial purity. It is often difficult to separate the moral from the ceremonial or to understand their purpose. However, Christ declared formerly unclean foods clean, so it is dubious to think these laws were primarily about health. A better alternative is to understand them as 1) arbitrarily setting them apart from the nations and 2) picturing moral purity by examples of wholeness in the natural realm.
5. Structure (Hendriksen):
 - a. How the sinner attains fellowship with Jehovah 1-16
 - i. Oblation (offerings) 1-7
 - ii. Mediation (priestly) 8-10
 - iii. Separation (clean and unclean) 11-15
 - iv. Expiation (the day of atonement) 16
 - b. How the believer maintains fellowship with Jehovah 17-27
 - i. Sanctification (holiness in all areas of life) 17-22
 - ii. Celebration (religious festivals) 23-25
 - iii. Ratification (promises and threats) 26-27
6. References:
 - a. *An Introduction to the Old Testament*, R. B. Dillard and T. Longman III, Zondervan, 1994.
 - b. *Survey of the Bible*, 4th revised ed., W. Hendriksen, Baker, 1976.