

*STUDY NOTES ON THE HOLY SCRIPTURES  
(with an Emphasis upon Composition Criticism  
to Identify Biblical Themes)*

*By Gary H. Everett*

*THE BOOK OF LEVITICUS  
February 2012 Edition*

All Scripture quotations in English are taken from the *King James Version* unless otherwise noted. Some words have been emphasized by the author of this commentary using bold or italics.

All Old Testament Scripture quotations in the Hebrew text are taken from *Biblia Hebraica Stuttgartensia: With Westminster Hebrew Morphology*, electronic ed., Stuttgart; Glenside PA: German Bible Society, Westminster Seminary, 1996, c1925, morphology c1991, in *Libronix Digital Library System*, v. 2.1c [CD-ROM] Bellingham, WA: Libronix Corp., 2000-2004.

All New Testament Scripture quotations in the Greek text are taken from *Greek New Testament, Fourth Revised Edition (with Morphology)*, eds. Kurt Aland, Matthew Black, Carlo M. Martini, Bruce M. Metzger, M. Robinson, and Allen Wikgren, Stuttgart: Deutsche Bibelgesellschaft (United Bible Societies), c1966, 1993, 2006, in *Libronix Digital Library System*, v. 2.1c [CD-ROM] Bellingham, WA: Libronix Corp., 2000-2004.

All Hebrew and Greek text for word studies are taken from James Strong in *The New Strong's Dictionary of Hebrew and Greek Words*, Nashville: Thomas Nelson, c1996, 1997, in *Libronix Digital Library System*, v. 2.1c [CD-ROM] Bellingham, WA: Libronix Corp., 2000-2004.

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***Foundational Theme - The Founding of the Nation of Israel  
by God's Foreknowledge and Divine Election***

Now when I passed by thee, and looked upon thee, behold, thy time was the time of love;  
and I spread my skirt over thee, and covered thy nakedness:  
yea, I swore unto thee, and entered into a covenant with thee,  
saith the Lord GOD, and thou becamest mine.  
Ezekiel 16:8

As it is written, Jacob have I loved, but Esau have I hated.  
Romans 9:13

***Structural Theme – Sanctification Thru Divine Service***

By the which will we are sanctified through the offering  
of the body of Jesus Christ once for all.  
Hebrews 10:10

***Imperative Theme – Israel Offers Themselves unto the Lord***

I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God,  
that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God,  
which is your reasonable service.  
Romans 12:1

## ABBREVIATIONS OF BIBLE VERSIONS

*LXX*                    *Septuaginta: With morphology*. Stuttgart: Deutsche Bibelgesellschaft, c1979, 1996. In *Libronix Digital Library System*, v. 2.1c [CD-ROM]. Bellingham, WA: Libronix Corp., 2000-2004.

## ABBREVIATIONS OF DICTIONARIES

*ISBE*                    Orr, James, editor. *International Standard Bible Encyclopedia*. Grand Rapids, Michigan: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., c1915, 1939. In *The Sword Project*, v. 1.5.11 [CD-ROM], Temple, AZ: CrossWire Bible Society, 1990-2008.

*Strong*                    Strong, James. *The New Strong's Dictionary of Hebrew and Greek Words*. Nashville: Thomas Nelson, c1996, 1997. In *Libronix Digital Library System*, v. 2.1c [CD-ROM]. Bellingham, WA: Libronix Corp., 2000-2004.

## INTRODUCTION

This introduction to the book of Leviticus will deal with its historical setting, literary style, and theological framework.<sup>1</sup>

### HISTORICAL SETTING

- I. The Title
- II. Historical Background
- III. Authorship
- IV. Date
- V. Recipients
- VI. Occasion

### LITERARY STYLE

### THEOLOGICAL FRAMEWORK

- VII. Purpose
- VIII. Thematic Scheme
- IX. Literary Structure
- X. Outline of the Book

## HISTORICAL SETTING

Each book of the Holy Scriptures is cloaked within a unique historical setting. An examination of this setting is useful in the interpretation of the book because it provides the context of the passage of Scripture under examination. The section on the historical setting of the book of Leviticus will provide a discussion on its title, historical background, authorship, date and place of writing, recipients, and occasion. This discussion supports the Jewish tradition that Moses was the author of the book of Leviticus, writing during the period of Israel's wilderness journey.

### I. The Title

There are a number of ancient titles associated with the book of Leviticus.

**A. The Ancient Jewish Title “And He Called”** – Henry Swete says ancient Jews titled the five books of the Pentateuch, Proverbs, and Lamentations by identifying a key word in the opening verses.<sup>2</sup> The Hebrew title for Leviticus was “Wikra” (וִיקְרָא), which comes from the opening word of this book, meaning “and he called.” Origen (c. 185 – c. 254) testifies to the use of this title by the Jews in his day.<sup>3</sup> Jerome (A.D. 342 to 420) was familiar with this title as well.<sup>4</sup> The title (וִיקְרָא) can be found in the standard work *Biblia Hebraica Stuttgartensia*.<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Someone may associate these three categories with Hermann Gunkel's well-known three-fold approach to form criticism when categorizing the genre found within the book of Psalms: (1) “a common setting in life,” (2) “thoughts and mood,” (3) “literary forms.” In addition, the *Word Biblical Commentary* uses “Form/Structure/Setting” preceding each commentary section. Although such similarities were not intentional, but rather coincidental, the author was aware of them and found encouragement from them when assigning the three-fold scheme of historical setting, literary style, and theological framework to his introductory material. See Hermann Gunkel, *The Psalms: A Form-Critical Introduction*, trans. Thomas M. Horner, in *Biblical Series*, vol. 19, ed. John Reumann (Philadelphia, Pennsylvania: Fortress Press, 1967), 10; see also *Word Biblical Commentary*, eds. Bruce M. Metzger, David A. Hubbard, and Glenn W. Barker (Dallas, Texas: Word Incorporated, 1989-2007).

<sup>2</sup>Henry B. Swete, *An Introduction to Old Testament in Greek* (Cambridge: University Press, 1902), 214.

<sup>3</sup>Eusebius, the early Church historian, writes, “Leviticus, Wikra, ‘And he called’;” Eusebius, *Ecclesiastical History* 6.25.1-2, trans. Arthur C. McGiffert under the title *The Church History of Eusebius*, in *A Select Library of Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers of the Christian Church, A New Series*, vol 1, eds. Henry Wace and Philip Schaff (Oxford: Parker and Company, c1890, 1905), 272-3.

<sup>4</sup>Jerome says, “the third, Vaieera, that is Leviticus;” See Jerome, “Prefaces to the Books of the Vulgate Version of the Old Testament: The Books of Samuel and Kings,” trans. W. H. Freemantle, in *A Select Library of*

**B. The Modern English Title “Leviticus”** – Today, English bibles use the title “Leviticus,” which finds its origin in the Greek title used in the LXX “Λευιτικὸν (βιβλίον),” which means, “matters pertaining to the Levites.” Philo (20 B.C – A.D. 50) called the book by its Greek name Λευιτικὸν or Λευιτικὴ βιβλίον.<sup>6</sup> The Greek title was known by Melito, bishop of Sardis (d. c. 190).<sup>7</sup> The Vulgate uses the Latin title “Leviticus (liber),”<sup>8</sup> from which the English title is derived.<sup>9</sup> Since the title “Leviticus” is used as far back as the LXX, Henry Swete and George Gray believe this title is “of Alexandrian and pre-Christian origin.”<sup>10</sup> This title reflects the contents of the book, which discussing duties of the Levitical priests.

**C. Other Titles - “The Law of the Priests”** - In the Talmud the Rabbis call the book by the titles (הַכֹּהֲנִים תּוֹרַת) “Law of the Priests,” and (סֵפֶר תּוֹרַת קִרְבָּנוֹת) “Book of the Law of Offerings.”<sup>11</sup>

## II. Historical Background

### III. Authorship

See Introduction to the Pentateuch.

### IV. Date

See Introduction to the Pentateuch.

### V. Recipients

See Introduction to the Pentateuch.

### VI. Occasion

## LITERARY STYLE

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*Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers of the Christian Church*, Second Series, vol. 6, eds. Henry Wace and Philip Schaff (New York: The Christian Literature Company, 1893), 489-90.

<sup>5</sup>*Biblia Hebraica Stuttgartensia*, eds. A. Alt, O. Eißfeldt, P. Kahle, and R. Kittle (Stuttgart: Deutsche Bibelstiftung, c1967-77).

<sup>6</sup>Henry B. Swete, *An Introduction to Old Testament in Greek* (Cambridge: University Press, 1902), 215; Herbert E. Ryle, *Philo and Holy Scripture* (London: Macmillan and Company, 1895), xxii-xxiii.

<sup>7</sup>Eusebius writes, “I learned accurately the books of the Old Testament, and send them to thee as written below. Their names are as follows: Of Moses, five books: Genesis, Exodus, Numbers, Leviticus, Deuteronomy; Jesus Nave, Judges, Ruth; of Kings, four books; of Chronicles, two; the Psalms of David; the Proverbs of Solomon, Wisdom also, Ecclesiastes, Song of Songs, Job; of Prophets, Isaiah, Jeremiah; of the twelve prophets, one book; Daniel, Ezekiel, Esdras. From which also I have made the extracts, dividing them into six books.’ Such are the words of Melito.” Eusebius, *Ecclesiastical History* 4.26.14 trans. Arthur C. McGiffert under the title *The Church History of Eusebius*, in *A Select Library of Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers of the Christian Church*, A New Series, vol 1, eds. Henry Wace and Philip Schaff, (Oxford: Parker and Company, c1890, 1905), 206.

<sup>8</sup>*Biblia Sacra Juxta Vulgatam Clementinam*, ed. electronica (Bellingham, WA: Logos Research Systems, Inc., 2005), in *Libronix Digital Library System*, v. 2.1c [CD-ROM] (Bellingham, WA: Libronix Corp., 2000-2004).

<sup>9</sup>Frederic Gardiner, *Leviticus*, translated by John P. Lange, in *Lange’s Commentary on the Holy Scriptures*, vol. 2, editor Philip Schaff (New York: Charles Scribner’s Sons, 1876), 1.

<sup>10</sup>Henry B. Swete, *An Introduction to Old Testament in Greek* (Cambridge: University Press, 1902), 215; George B. Gray, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on Numbers*, in *The International Critical Commentary on the Holy Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments*, editors Charles A. Briggs, Samuel R. Driver, and Alfred Plummer (New York: Charles Scribner’s Sons, 1903), xxi.

<sup>11</sup>C. F. Keil and F. Delitzsch, *Pentateuch*, vol. 2, in *Biblical Commentary on the Old Testament*, trans. James Martin (Edinburgh: T & T Clarke, 1872), 262; John Gill references “T. Bab. Sanhedrin, fol. 103. 2.” See John Gill, *Leviticus*, in *John Gill’s Expositor*, in *e-Sword*, v. 7.7.7 [CD-ROM] (Franklin, Tennessee: e-Sword, 2000-2005), comments on introduction to Leviticus.

Within the historical setting of the children of Israel in the wilderness, the author of the book of Leviticus chose to write using the literary style of the law. Thus, the book of Leviticus is assigned to the literary genre called "law."

There are a number of characteristics about the book of Leviticus that distinguish it from the other books of the Old Testament canon. In the area of numerology, we will look at the number seven. In the area of biblical theology, we will look at Christ in the Levitical laws.

**A. Numerology: The Number Seven** - The Levitical laws are built around the number "seven." It is interesting to note how often this number is used throughout the Scriptures. God uses seven years to judge nations and kings of major sins:

Genesis 41:30, "And there shall arise after them seven years of famine; and all the plenty shall be forgotten in the land of Egypt; and the famine shall consume the land;"

2 Samuel 24:13, "So Gad came to David, and told him, and said unto him, Shall seven years of famine come unto thee in thy land? or wilt thou flee three months before thine enemies, while they pursue thee? or that there be three days' pestilence in thy land? now advise, and see what answer I shall return to him that sent me."

King Nebuchadnezzar was judged for seven years:

Daniel 4:16, "Let his heart be changed from man's, and let a beast's heart be given unto him; and let seven times pass over him."

God uses seven days to judge individuals of minor sins and uncleanness in the Scriptures.

Leviticus 12:2, "Speak unto the children of Israel, saying, If a woman have conceived seed, and born a man child: then she shall be unclean seven days; according to the days of the separation for her infirmity shall she be unclean."

Leviticus 15:24, "And if any man lie with her at all, and her flowers be upon him, he shall be unclean seven days; and all the bed whereon he lieth shall be unclean."

So, why does God judge a woman and her son for seven days after childbirth? Perhaps it is as a sign that every man is born into sin. This is why a man is not circumcised until the eighth day, because he is unclean for the first seven days of his life and is not allowed into the Temple.

**B. Biblical Theology: Christ in the Levitical Laws** - Several passages say that these statutes are forever. Yet, Jesus Christ fulfilled the Law and did away with the old Levitical priesthood. So, in a sense these statutes are fulfilled through our Lord Jesus Christ as He ministers in the Heavenly Sanctuary.

Hebrews 8:1, "Now of the things which we have spoken this is the sum: We have such a high priest, who is set on the right hand of the throne of the Majesty in the heavens; A minister of the sanctuary, and of the true tabernacle, which the Lord pitched, and not man."

## THEOLOGICAL FRAMEWORK

Based upon the historical setting and literary style of the book of Leviticus, an examination of the purpose, thematic scheme, and literary structure to this book of the Holy Scriptures will reveal its theological framework. This introductory section will sum up its theological framework in the form of an outline, which is then used to identify smaller units or pericopes within the book of Leviticus for preaching and teaching passages of Scripture while following the overriding message of the book. Following this outline allows the

minister of the Gospel of Jesus Christ to take his followers on a spiritual journey that brings them to the same destination that the author intended his readers to reach.

## **VII. Purpose**

## **VIII. Thematic Scheme**

The theme of the Holy Bible is the redemption of mankind by God the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. The foundational theme of the Old Testament is emphasis upon the office and ministry of God the Father in His divine plan of redemption by His foreknowledge and divine election of men. The Old Testament repeatedly established the fact of how God the Father has a plan of redemption and of how He continuously intervenes in the affairs of mankind in order to fulfill His plan of redemption. The theme of the Pentateuch is the establishment of the nation of Israel by God's foreknowledge and divine election as His chosen method of bringing redemption to mankind. It is this holy nation that will give birth to the Messiah who will again restore righteousness upon the earth.

We can easily see the theme of the book of Leviticus by examining the themes of the five books of the Pentateuch together. The theme of the book of Genesis is the origin of the nation of Israel, God's seed of righteousness, which He plans to use to accomplish the redemption of mankind. God will use several men who fulfilled their divine destinies to create the nation of Israel. These patriarchs, Adam, Noah, Abraham, Isaac, Jacob and Joseph, will play leading roles in preparing for the establishment of this nation in much the same way the Gospels and the book of Acts reveals the origin of the Church and how men like Jesus Christ, Peter, Stephen, Philip the evangelist and Paul the apostle played leading roles in the establishment of the early Church. Thus, the book of Genesis is structured around the genealogies of these men of righteousness in order to explain its theme of the lineage of the nation of Israel. As the first part of the book of Exodus emphasizes deliverance, so do the Gospels call us out and set us apart from the world. As the last part of the book of Exodus emphasizes the doctrines of the nation of Israel, so to the Pauline Epistles establish Church doctrine. As the book of Leviticus establishes the order of worship for the Israelites, so does the Pastoral Epistles establish Church order. As the book of Numbers explains the perseverance of the "church" in the wilderness, so do the Catholic Epistles of Hebrews, James and 1 Peter explain the perseverance of the Church. As the book of Deuteronomy is the second giving of the Law with stern warnings to persevere, so do the Catholic Epistles of 2 Peter, 1, 2, 3 John and Jude emphasize this same theme. Finally, the story of the conquest of Canaan in the book of Joshua is figurative of the Church entering into Heaven, as is emphasized in the book of Revelation. Note that we find two verses in the New Testament that allow us to look at the Old Testament in a figurative way of the Christian life.

Romans 15:4, "For whatsoever things were written aforetime were written for our learning, that we through patience and comfort of the scriptures might have hope."

1 Corinthians 10:11, "Now all these things happened unto them for ensamples: and they are written for our admonition, upon whom the ends of the world are come."

## **IX. Literary Structure**

The book of Leviticus is primarily made up of Levitical codes that the children of Israel were to implement into their religious worship system. There will be laws, or codes, concerning sacrificial offerings (1:1 to 7:38), rituals of consecration for the priests (8:1-36) and the people (9:1-24), dietary laws (11:1-47), purification laws (12:1 to 15:33), the Day of Atonement (16:1-34), and the lengthy commonly passage called the Holiness Code (17:1 to 27:34).

It is possible to see the three-fold nature of man reflected in the Levitical codes, whose purpose was to sanctify the whole man, spirit, body, and soul. The laws concerning sacrificial offerings and the consecration of the priests and the people reflect the dedication and sanctification of a person's heart towards the Lord (1:1 to 10:20). The dietary and purification laws reflect the sanctification of a person's body towards the



Lord (11:1 to 15:33). The Day of Atonement and Holiness Code reflect the sanctification of a person's mind towards the Lord (16:1 to 27:34).

## X. Outline of Book

Here is a proposed brief outline of the book of Leviticus organized by themes:

### Spiritual Sanctification

I. Laws of the Sacrificial Offerings (1:1 to 7:38) - Leviticus 1:1 to 7:38 deals with the laws for making five kinds of sacrificial offerings.

A. Burnt offerings (1:3-18) - All is burnt.

- |                   |          |
|-------------------|----------|
| 1. From the herd  | 1:3-9    |
| 2. From the flock | 1:10-13  |
| 3. Birds          | 1: 14-18 |

B. Grain Offering (Meat means cereal or meal) (2:1-16) - The Priest partakes of some.

- |                                   |         |
|-----------------------------------|---------|
| 1. Unbaked                        | 2:1-3   |
| 2. Baked in oven, griddled, a pan | 2:4-10  |
| 3. Unleaven                       | 2:11-12 |
| 4. Salted                         | 2:13    |
| 5. Fresh grain                    | 2:14-16 |

C. Peace offerings (3:1-17)

- |               |         |
|---------------|---------|
| 1. From herd  | 3:1-5   |
| 2. From Flock | 3:6-11  |
| 3. A goat     | 3:12-17 |

D. Sin offerings (4:1-35) - Unintentional sins.

- |                              |          |
|------------------------------|----------|
| 1. of anointed priest        | 4:3-12   |
| 2. of the whole congregation | 4:13-21  |
| 3. of a leader               | 4:22- 26 |
| 4. of the common people      | 4:27-35  |

E. Guilt offerings (5:1 to 6:7)

- |                                |        |
|--------------------------------|--------|
| 1. how to sin                  | 5:1-5  |
| 2. of flock lamb or goat       | 5:6    |
| 3. 2 turtle doves or pigeons   | 5:7-10 |
| 4. 1/10 of ephah of fine flour | 5:11   |

F. Additional regulations for the five offerings (6:8 to 7:38)

- |                                 |         |
|---------------------------------|---------|
| 1. Burnt Offering               | 6:8-13  |
| 2. Cereal Offering              | 6:14-18 |
| 3. Sin Offering                 | 6:24-30 |
| 4. Guilt Offering               | 7:1-10  |
| 5. Peace Offering               | 7:11-21 |
| 6. Regulations on Blood/Fat     | 7:22-27 |
| 7. The Portions for the Priests | 7:28-36 |
| 8. Summary                      | 7:37-38 |

II. The Consecration of the Priests, the Temple and its Articles (8:1-36)

III. The Consecration of the People (9:1-24)

IV. The Punishment of Nadab and Abihu For Violating Temple Regulations (10:1-20)

### Physical Sanctification

V. Dietary Laws (11:1-47)

VI. Laws of Purification (12:1 to 15:33)

A. Consecration After Childbirth (12:1-8)

- B. The Law of the Leper & His Cleansing (13:1 to 14:57)
- C. The Law of Unclean Discharge (15:1-33)

**Mental Sanctification**

VII. The Day of Atonement (16:1-34)

VIII. The Holiness Code (17:1 to 27:34) – The final chapters of Leviticus are commonly referred to as “The Holiness Code.”

- A. Laws Concerning Blood (17:1-16)
- B. Laws Concerning Sexual Sins (18:1-30)
  - 1. Intro: Charge to Keep Commandments 18:1-5
  - 2. Sin of Incest 18:6-18
  - 3. Sin of Laying with woman in uncleanness 18:19
  - 4. Sin of Adultery 18:20
  - 5. Sin of Child Sacrificing 18:21
  - 6. Sin of Homosexuality 18:22
  - 7. Sin of Bestiality 18:23
  - 8. Conclusion: God’s Warning of Judgment 18:24-30
- C. Laws Concerning Witchcraft and Sexual Immorality (19:1 to 20:27)
- D. Priestly Codes (21:1 to 22:33)
- E. The Jewish Feasts (23:1-44)
  - 1. Introduction 23:1-2
  - 2. The Sabbath 23:3
  - 3. The Passover 23:4-8
  - 4. The Feast of Firstfruits 23:9-14
  - 5. The Feast of Weeks 23:15-22
  - 6. The Feast of Trumpets 23:23-25
  - 7. The Day of Atonement 23:26-32
  - 8. The Feast of Tabernacles 23:33-43
  - 9. Conclusion 23:44
- F. The Tabernacle Lamps and Shewbread (24:1-9)
- G. Laws Concerning Blasphemy (24:10-23)
- H. The Sabbath and Year of Jubilee (25:1-22)
- I. The Law of Redemption of Property (25:23-38)
- J. The Law Concerning Slavery (25:39-55)
- K. The Law of Blessings and Curses (26:1-46)
- L. The Law of Dedication (27:1-34)

