

LEVITICUS - A TEACHER'S GUIDE

THE CENTRAL QUESTION:

What does this book/story say to us about God?

This question may be broken down further as follows:

- a. Why did God do it/allow it?
 - b. Why did He record it for our study?
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1. What picture of God would you have if you had only the book of Leviticus? Is **anything** about God clearly revealed in this book or in the ceremonial law? What was the purpose of such a book?

Name: In Hebrew: *Wayyiqra'*, (pronounced va-YIK-rah) "and (he) called" - the first words of the book. Also called "the law of the priests" by Hebrews.

Greek LXX: *Leuitikon*, "Levitical (priesthood, or service)." The priestly tribe.

Latin: *Leviticus*

English: Leviticus

The first book to be studied by a Hebrew child. Almost never studied by Christians. Some 40 references in the NT.

Author: conservative scholars believe it was written by Moses.

Dating: Exodus 40:1,17: 2nd year, first month, first day: set up tabernacle or tent.

Numbers 1:1: 2nd year, second month, first day: begin the census.

Between these dates: Leviticus. March-April, 1445 BC

20 chapters in Leviticus begin: "the LORD spoke to Moses."

38 times that expression is used in the book.

More direct quotations from God than any other book.

Themes: **Holiness**: Leviticus 11:44,45: ⁴⁴ I am the LORD your God, and you must keep yourselves holy, because I am holy. ⁴⁵ I am the LORD who brought you out of Egypt so that I could be your God. You must be holy, because I am holy."

The basic words for **Holiness** (*qodesh, qadesh, qadosh*, Heb.) occur over 100 times in Leviticus and mean: **separate, distinct, unique, private possession.**

God is **set apart** from all things earthly, sinful, and wrong.

Humans are to live lives of **purity and obedience**.

To be holy means to be like God, to be like Jesus.

Atonement (Reconciliation): Leviticus 17:11

The verb "to make atonement" (*kaphar*, Heb.) occurs some 49 times; the noun form "atonement" (*kippurim*, Heb., plural) occurs 3 times. The basic idea inherent in these words is "**to cover, to make a covering.**"

The sacrifices of the Old Testament did not actually remove sins, "For *it is* not possible that the blood of bulls and goats could take away sins" (Heb. 10:4); rather, the Levitical offerings covered sins until Christ came as the perfect sacrifice to take away all the sins of the world (cf. 16:3, note; Rom. 3:25; Heb. 9:15).

The ceremonies in Leviticus were a sandbox model of the plan of salvation.

God's special people are to live separate and holy lives because they have been reconciled to God and are "at-one" with Him.

Such people will love their neighbors as they love themselves. Lev. 19:18

Leviticus 1-7 are the heart of the sacrificial system. Three things happen in the sacrificial system:

The sinner admits he is guilty and rightfully should die because of his sin.

The sinner ceremonially transfers his sins to the innocent sacrifice.

The sinner establishes a renewed relationship with God and God accepts the offering as representing the sinners true condition.

Leviticus includes many things which seem very strange to us:

Sacrifices for unintentional sins. Lev. 4

Elaborate ceremonies for cleansing and purification. Lev. 8-16.

A lot of details about sexual behaviors. (Lev. 12, 18, 20)

Laws about mildew in one's house. (Lev. 13:47-59; 14:33-56)

Nadab and Abihu are struck down by fire in the tabernacle and we are not even sure why! (Lev.

10)

Warnings against idols and other religions.

Blessings and curses: (Lev. 26,27)

Do sacrifices have any real meaning for us today? Are they everlasting? Lev. 16:29,31,34

Almost any open sin was to be punished by death.

Foreshadows the priestly work of Christ. Is one of the "most New Testament" of Old Testament books. See the New Testament book of Hebrews.

Leviticus was a mandate for the lives of the Hebrews in OT times, just as the Sermon on the Mount is a mandate for NT Christians.

A faithful observance of the laws and directions given in Leviticus would have prevented the downfall of the Hebrew nation. Jerusalem would be the capital of the world, and the Hebrew people would be God's holy people.

If Christians would faithfully observe the principles in the Sermon on the Mount we would be living now in the New Jerusalem. If only!?

God cares about every detail of our lives. He wants us to be a healthy, holy and happy people.

Jesus said that everything written in the Old Testament was about Him. (John 5:39,40; Luke 24:44) Paul said that it is profitable for our study. (2 Timothy 3:16,17) If we are able to understand the context in which it is said or written, it should tell us about the God who did such a thing in such a setting. Remember that the God of Leviticus is Jesus. (1 Corinthians 10:1-4)

2. Abraham married his sister, Isaac married the daughter of his first cousin, and Jacob married two of his cousins who were also sisters, Amram (Moses' father) married his aunt (Numbers 26:59), Reuben committed adultery with one of his father's wives, but yet Leviticus 18:6,8,9,11,18 and 20:11,17 forbids such marriages. How can God bless those who break His rules?

These two passages in Leviticus do not make pleasant reading. They are written like this because such a serious warning needed to be made. These types of marriages were common in the land of Canaan to which they were going. God wanted them to avoid any such practices. In earlier times, when many people, like Abraham were wandering herders, it was much more difficult to get to know a wide variety of other peoples, especially who were also worshipers of your God. Thus God often cooperated in the finding of wives for some of the patriarchs from among their relatives. The other choice was to choose a pagan wife and the results may have been worse! Compare Numbers 36:11.

3. What do you think of all the ceremonies and sacrifices? What was actually accomplished by all that blood (Hebrews 9:16-10:4)? What did the ceremonial system do for the Jews? In Christ's day how were they observing these ceremonies? (Compare John 2:13-22; compare #b below) What meaning were they getting out of them? **Is there any explanation in Leviticus as to the meaning of each of the symbols and sacrifices?** For example, can you find a verse that says that the lamb represents or is a type of the Christ to come? Can we tell from the Biblical record what it was that they began to read into these services? (See Malachi 2:4-7) In the time of Christ, why were they offering sacrifices? If they understood the meaning of the ceremonial system, why didn't they recognize Christ? What does or should it mean to us? Or should we interpret Colossians 2:14 to mean that it was nailed to the cross and we shouldn't waste time studying it any more? Is there anything in the Bible that is without meaning for us at the present time? When we say that "All scripture, inspired of God, is profitable" (2 Timothy 3:16), do we really mean **all**, even Leviticus?

Jesus apparently intended for these records to be preserved for our benefit. (See #1) What did the on-looking universe learn from Leviticus? One of the major points of disagreement in the great controversy is over the question of whether or not sin actually leads to death. (Genesis 3:1-4) In the Biblical ceremonial system, almost every sin was somehow connected with a death. In analyzing the meaning of the whole ceremonial system in the book of Hebrews, the author (possibly Paul) suggests that: (Hebrews 10:1-4)

- a. The sacrifices are to remind us of our sins.
- b. The ceremonial system was only a shadow and not a true and faithful model of the true system.
- c. None of these sacrifices could actually take away sin.

Satan has claimed that God has lied to us about death being the result of sin. This would be a beginning of the complete answer to that accusation that would ultimately be given at Calvary. Has God told us the truth, and can He be trusted?

There is a lot to suggest that God expected cleanliness, purity and holiness.

There was an elaborate system for “dealing with sin.” It gave the people some idea of what God had in mind for dealing with their sins.

Although there is very little suggested by the book of Leviticus as to the meaning of the various ceremonies it is quite apparent that at least some of the prophets who wrote later understood much of the meaning. It is also apparent that many of the people misunderstood what was intended. (Isaiah 1:10-21; Amos 5:21-24; Psalms 51:1-19; Micah 6:1-8; Hosea 6:4-6; Jeremiah 3:15,16; 7:21-26; 31:31-34)

4. Were all these sacrifices necessary because, “without the shedding of blood there is no remission (forgiveness) of sin?” (Hebrews 9:22) Does this suggest that before the coming of Christ all these sacrifices were necessary since His blood had not yet been shed?

Read Hebrews 9:16-10:4. See #1 and #3 above. See also Ellen White comments #a-d.

5. **Why does God give us so much detail about the tabernacle, the offerings, even the clothing of the priests, and not give us any explanation about what it all means? How did God intend for those people to get the meaning of it all?** (For proof that a mere mechanical offering of sacrifices is not what God wants, look at Psalms 51:10-19; Isaiah 1:11-18, Jeremiah 7:21-26; 3:14-16; 31:31-34, Amos 5:21-24, Micah 6:1-8, Hosea 6:4-6, and Hebrews 10:1-4.) Is there any evidence that God made provision for the people to be instructed? All these sacrifices—even the death of Christ—are useless without the meaning. The death of Christ doesn’t just provide the “right” blood—it must be understood. If the death of Christ does not change us from rebels to understanding and trusting friends willing to listen and let God heal us, then His death has no real impact on us. Believing that there is some “magical” power in the blood is sometimes called “hematolatriy”.

It is very clear that later prophets did understand the meaning. So we must ask ourselves how they discovered it. Did they learn just by observing, many times, the ceremonies themselves? It is clear that Moses understood what God really wants of us in passages like Leviticus 19:18; Deuteronomy 6:4 and 10:12-22. It should have been clear that sin leads to death, even the death of innocent victims. It should have been clear that their sins were symbolically transported from them through the sin offerings and the work of the priests until they were placed on the head of the scapegoat and carried off into the wilderness to perish. This was to suggest that their sins, once forgiven, were permanently removed from them. We do not know if Moses was given additional instructions which he passed on to them but which were not written in his five books.

6. **What would you do if we suddenly discovered that we had misinterpreted some part of scripture, and God expected us to continue sacrificing animals? Could you take a lamb and confess your sins over it and then kill it?** In this context, what do you think is the meaning of the statement that “Christ is the Lamb, slain from the foundation of the world?” (Revelation 13:8; Compare Revelation 5:6,12; John 1:29,36) Did the people perceive the love of God in all of this?

This is a thought question. Each person needs to think it through on his own and answer it for himself.

7. There is a lot of evidence to suggest that butchers are brutalized by their constant killing. Don't you think that God knew that this would happen to the Israelites? How did God expect them to maintain their reverence for life? Does this partially explain their apparent casual attitude even toward human life?

They rapidly came to the conclusion that almost any open sin should be punished by death! (Joshua 1:16-18; Leviticus 24:10-23; Numbers 15:30-36; Exodus 21:12-17; 22:19,20; 31:14,15; 35:2; Leviticus 20:2-5,9-16,27; Numbers 1:51; 3:10,38; 18:7; 25:5; 35:16-21; Deuteronomy 13:5-18; 17:2-5,12; 18:20; 21:18-21; 22:20-25)

Look at the commandments and the associated death penalties:

Commandment	Death decree:
Exodus 20:3: Thou shalt have no other gods before me.	Exodus 22:20: Offering sacrifices to any other God than Yahweh Leviticus 20:2: Offering your child to Molech Numbers 25:5; Deuteronomy 17:2-5: Anyone worshiping Baal or any other "god" Deuteronomy 13:5: Any interpreter of dreams or prophet who turns you from Yahweh Deuteronomy 13:6-18: Anyone telling you to worship anyone except Yahweh Deuteronomy 18:20: Any prophet speaking in My name when I did not command him to do so or anyone prophesying in the name of any other "god"
Exodus 20:4-6: Thou shalt not make unto thee any graven image, or any likeness of any thing that is in heaven above, or that is in the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth: 5 Thou shalt not bow down thyself to them, nor serve them: for I the LORD thy God am a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children unto the third and fourth generation of them that hate me; 6 And shewing mercy unto thousands of them that love me, and keep my commandments.	Exodus 22:20: Offering sacrifices to any other God than Yahweh Leviticus 20:2: Offering your child to Molech Numbers 25:5; Deuteronomy 17:2-5: Anyone worshiping Baal or any other "god"
Exodus 20:7: Thou shalt not take the name of the LORD thy God in vain; for the LORD will not hold him guiltless that taketh his name in vain.	Exodus 21:17; Leviticus 24:10-23: Cursing Deuteronomy 18:20: Any prophet speaking in My name when I did not command him to do so or anyone prophesying in the name of any other "god"

Exodus 20:8-11: Remember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy. 9 Six days shalt thou labor, and do all thy work: 10 But the seventh day is the sabbath of the LORD thy God: in it thou shalt not do any work, thou, nor thy son, nor thy daughter, thy manservant, nor thy maidservant, nor thy cattle, nor thy stranger that is within thy gates: 11 For in six days the LORD made heaven and earth, the sea, and all that in them is, and rested the seventh day: wherefore the LORD blessed the sabbath day, and hallowed it.	Numbers 15:32-36: Gathering sticks on the Sabbath Exodus 31:14,15; 35:2: Doing any work on the Sabbath
Exodus 20:12: Honour thy father and thy mother: that thy days may be long upon the land which the LORD thy God giveth thee.	Exodus 21:15: Hitting one's father or mother Leviticus 20:9: Cursing one's father or mother Deuteronomy 21:18-21: Disobeying or rebelling against parents
Exodus 20:13 Thou shalt not kill.	Exodus 21:12,14; Leviticus 24:17,21; Numbers 35:16-21: Murder
Exodus 20:14 Thou shalt not commit adultery.	Leviticus 20:10-12; Deuteronomy 22:22,23-25: Adultery Leviticus 20:14: Marrying a woman and her mother Deuteronomy 22:20,21: Premarital sex Exodus 22:19; Leviticus 20:15,16: Sexual relations with an animal Leviticus 20:13: Homosexuality
Exodus 20:15:Thou shalt not steal.	Numbers 15:30,31: Any deliberate sin Exodus 21:16: Kidnaping
Exodus 20:16 Thou shalt not bear false witness against thy neighbor.	Deuteronomy 19:18-21
Exodus 20:17: Thou shalt not covet thy neighbor's house, thou shalt not covet thy neighbor's wife, nor his manservant, nor his maidservant, nor his ox, nor his ass, nor any thing that is thy neighbor's. (KJV)	

Other sins were also associated with death decrees:

Any deliberate sin: Numbers 15:30,31

Kidnaping: Exodus 21:16

Getting close to the Tent of Assembly if you are not a Levite: Numbers 1:51

Anyone not of Aaron's family trying to be priest: Numbers 3:10, 38

Any non-priest coming too near the sacred objects: Numbers 18:7

Anyone practicing "magic", "sorcery", or "witchcraft": Exodus 22:18

Anyone consulting the "spirits" of the dead: Leviticus 20:6,27

Anyone disobeying either the judge or the priest on duty: Deuteronomy 17:12

Any prophet speaking in My name when I did not command him to do so or anyone prophesying in the name of any other "god": Deuteronomy 18:20

Getting drunk and going to worship Yahweh if you are a priest: Leviticus 10:8,9

Homosexuality or having sex with an animal: Leviticus 20:13,15,16; Exodus 22:19; Deuteronomy 27:21

Failing to participate in the Passover without a good reason: Numbers 9:13

Failing to cleanse yourself in the proper way after being defiled: Leviticus 19:13

8. Today we have a ceremony that points back to what all these ceremonies pointed forward to (Luke 22:7-18), but we only drink unfermented grape juice and eat small unleavened wafers. Why didn't God come quietly down on Mt. Sinai, give the Sermon on the Mount, and introduce something like our communion service back then?

Even though God came down on Mt. Sinai with such awesome terror that the people were certain they were going to die (Exodus 20:18-20), and God stayed on top of the mountain in fire and smoke and cloud, it was only forty days later that they were dancing drunk and (probably) naked in a fertility cult ritual at the base of that same mountain! If God had come down and spoken softly to them they would not even have noticed that He was present. God gave them ceremonies that were not that much different from the ones that they had come to regard as religious ceremonies among the heathen. This was not ideal but it was easier for them to recognize such ceremonies as religious ceremonies. God had to work with what they were somewhat familiar with in order to get them to follow His guidance. Introducing things that were completely strange would have been rejected or misunderstood.

9. Were these laws, which we often call "the law of Moses" (Daniel 9:11; Malachi 4:4; Matthew 19:7, 22:24; Mark 7:10; John 1:17), actually thought up by Moses, or were they given by God? (Leviticus 26:46; 27:34) Doesn't 1 Corinthians 10:4 suggest that Christ was actually the One who gave these regulations? Why then did He say what He said about these ceremonies when He was here in person? (Compare Matthew 5-7)

These ceremonies were intended for a primitive group of people who had recently come out of a very pagan environment and slavery. God's ideal was to speak to His friends face-to-face as He spoke to Moses. (Exodus 33:11; Numbers 12:6-8) But God recognized that they needed a "sandbox demonstration" of the plan of salvation. Jesus and the later prophets were seeking to get the people to grow up in their spiritual experience.

10. Today Christians look forward to, even long for, the coming of "the kingdom of God" where God will be the true ruler. How would you feel living under the rules given by God himself in Exodus through Deuteronomy where **murderers** (Exodus 21:12; Leviticus 24:17,21), **thieves** (Exodus 21:16), **adulterers** (Leviticus 18-20), **people who use bad language** (Leviticus 24:16), **people who disrespect their parents** (Exodus 21:15,17; Leviticus 20:9), **Sabbath-breakers** (Exodus 31:14,15; 35:2; Numbers 15:32-36), **idolaters** (Leviticus 19:2-5; Deuteronomy 17:2-6), **false prophets** (Deuteronomy 13:5), **mediums** (Leviticus 20:27) **even people who can't control their animals** (Exodus 21:29), or are **immoral** (Exodus 22:16; Leviticus 20:15) or **homosexual** (Leviticus 20:13) or **rebellious** (Joshua 1:18) are killed on the spot? Is this the way God wants to rule His people? How did they feel about being ruled like this (Joshua 1:18)?

This was the kind of language they used themselves and this was the kind of language they could understand. It was certainly not the kind of kingdom that God wants to preside over for eternity. God must speak to people where they are in their understanding. This is another part of God's effort to convince His children that sin is serious! See #7 above.

11. Is there any value for us in looking back to see how God chose to reveal Himself to a bunch of escaped ex-slaves at the foot of Mt. Sinai? Is it important for us to understand the difference between the sin offering, the guilt offering, and the cleansing offering? Do we need to know about the blood, the fat, the kidneys, and the thigh, etc.?

See the handout: Leviticus #3 - **Sacrificial Offerings**

If all Scripture is supposed to be "profitable" (2 Timothy 3:16,17) then it must include the book of Leviticus. It is important for us to see how far **God is willing to stoop down** to reach rebellious

humans. It is also important for us to see that **He never takes sin lightly**. Since we are not today offering animal sacrifices it is perhaps less important for us to know the details of each sacrifice, but we should have an understanding of the overall picture of what God is trying to do in this book.

12. What is the meaning and purpose of “An eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth?” (Exodus 21:24,25; Leviticus 24:20, Compare Deuteronomy 19:21; see Matthew 5:38-42) Do you think this was ever God’s ideal?

See **Exodus Teacher’s Guide** question #21. God’s ideal is always that people live together with Him in love and harmony. This can only happen where people do what is right because they believe that it is right. Remember that God’s original plan was for us all to be living in the garden of Eden!

13. Why did God feel it was necessary to send fire down out of heaven to burn to death Nadab and Abihu? (Leviticus 10:1-11; Numbers 3:4) What was so bad about what they did? Is this what God would really like to do when we are irreverent? Is this His ideal? Was this the Father or the Son? (See 1 Corinthians 10:4) Might this lead one to worship God out of fear? Were these deaths a natural result of their sins? Don’t you imagine that the Devil mocks God for having to do this to his children? Do these methods help God to win friends that He can speak quietly to like Moses and Elijah? After one of these experiences could you say with conviction that there is no need to be afraid of God? If God put all sinners to death there would be no one left, so why does He seem to make such an issue of irreverence?

This was obviously a severe punishment for sin. It should be compared with the stories of **the flood** (Genesis 6-8); **Sodom and Gomorrah** (Genesis 19:23-25), **Lot’s wife** (Genesis 19:26), **Er and Onan** (Genesis 38:6-10), **the first born in Egypt** (Exodus 12:29,30), the slaughter after **the golden calf experience** (Exodus 32:25-29), the stoning of **Achan’s family** (Joshua 7), the people of **Beth-Shemesh** (1 Samuel 6:19), the **Israelites after David numbered them** (2 Samuel 24:15), **the she-bears** (2 Kings 2:23-25), **Korah, Dathan, and Abiram** (Numbers 16:1-35), **Uzzah** (2 Samuel 6:6 compare 1 Chronicles 13:9-14; 26:4,5), **Mt. Carmel** (1 Kings 18), **the 185,000 Assyrians** (2 Kings 19:35), **Ananias and Sapphira** (Acts 5:1-11), and **the third angel’s message** (Revelation 14:9-11). God uses very dramatic methods and very strong language at times. He does this because we are acting like small children and He doesn’t want to lose us. When we are noisy, He must raise His voice. When we are irreverent He does serious things to warn us of the consequences of irreverence. It is not safe to talk about any of these serious occasions unless you have some understanding of what God is really like from the rest of the ‘66’. And certainly no one should give the third angel’s message without such an understanding!

Nadab and Abihu were apparently drunk and ignoring God’s directions by trying out some new incense in the tabernacle. One of God’s major challenges throughout human history is to get reverence without fear. “All who serve me must respect my holiness; I will reveal my glory to my people”. (Leviticus 10:3, *GNB*) Since reverence for God is the beginning of wisdom (Job 28:28; Proverbs 1:7; 9:10) it is essential that we respect Him. When people don’t respect Him they don’t even pay attention! When God does something dramatic as in these cases, God gets their attention for sure, but mixed with fear. The Bible is a history of God’s various attempts at balancing reverent understanding and fear. He wants to speak to us quietly, as He did to Moses on the mount face-to-face (Exodus 33:11; Numbers 12:6-8), or Elijah on the same mount (1 Kings 19) but if we are not paying attention, then God sometimes must do something dramatic as a lesson to all the people.

As we observe God “stooping down” to communicate with these people at their level, shouldn’t we respect God even more, and seek to follow His example as we try to explain the gospel to others? What God wanted at this point in history was holiness, sanity, order, purity, and reverence. The nations around were worshiping crocodiles, beetles, lice, flies, Molech (the hollow god who “expected” children to be offered in his red hot hands), and Dagon (the fish god). Look at what we know about Dagon from 1 Samuel 5 & 6. The ark had been captured from the Israelites when the two sons of Eli, thinking of it as a “good luck charm” took it into battle and lost it. It was taken down to one of the Philistine cities and placed in the temple of Dagon the fish god as if to thank Dagon for helping them conquer the Israelites. In the morning, the priests of Dagon came in and Dagon had fallen off his stand onto his face on the floor. They quickly picked him up and propped him up so they

could pray to him, "Dear God Dagon, Father of Baal, Bless us. Thank you for helping us to conquer Israel and their "God" in the battle yesterday, etc." The next night they left the ark in front of Dagon again, and when the priests came in in the morning they found that Dagon had not only fallen off his stand, but had been shattered into several pieces. So they picked him up and cemented him together and then they put him back on his stand, and prayed, "Dear God Dagon, Father of Baal, All Powerful One, Bless us, and protect us, etc." How stupid can one be! No wonder it helped to be drunk when you worshiped such gods! Being drunk also seemed to help them "speak in tongues", and carry on many of their other fertility cult practices. The true God is trying to say to the Israelites that He is not like these other "gods".

God has gone out of His way to distinguish His form of worship from all the others around. Isn't it obvious why God says, "Don't come drunk into My Presence"? (see Leviticus 10:8) This is the reason for the Nadab and Abihu story. It wasn't just that they mixed up their own concoction of incense. They were being totally irreverent. And then they staggered drunk into the tabernacle. God, who no doubt hated to do such a thing, felt it was necessary because of the setting, to speak out very forcefully against this disdain for His directions, and it says, "Suddenly the Lord sent fire, and it burned them to death there in the presence of the Lord." (Leviticus 10:2) In effect, what they had tried to do was mix a few pagan customs into their religious services. When you look back at those pagan religions, they included the most unspeakable acts of immorality and even bestiality, so God warns against all that in Leviticus 18 & 20. Notice even the suggestion that the priests dress in such a way that when they climbed the steps, they would still be modest before the kneeling worshipers. (Exodus 20:26; 28:42) All these little details say something about God. It is not just that God wanted to demonstrate His authority in governing every moment of their lives. He wanted to keep them from even the first steps in following heathen practices.

There are some who want to believe that God never puts to sleep any of His children in the "sleep death" which we call the first death. They seek to understand all the passages mentioned above by suggesting that when God gives some kind of signal to the Devil, the Devil delights in destroying anyone whom God will allow him to destroy. While we might applaud their desire to put God in the best possible light, this argument doesn't remove full moral responsibility from God in any case. If God knows in advance that anyone who is handed over to the Devil will be killed immediately, then God, by the very act of handing them over, is condemning them to death.

We must also remember that every one of these people who have died is going to rise again, either in the first resurrection or the second. (John 5:28,29; 1 Corinthians 15:22) The same compassionate Judge that will judge each of us will judge them. Whether or not their lives were shortened by some unnatural event, they will be judged with all the love that God shows for every one of His children. If there is any way He can save them He will. Even though some of these individuals committed some serious sins, there are no verses in the Bible that say that they will be automatically condemned to eternal destruction. There were some very young children who died in the flood and among the firstborn of Egypt. We have no evidence that they were all wicked.

Another possibility that has been suggested is that God hands them over to the Devil to do with as he pleases. In such a case, don't you think that the Devil would have at least once refused to do what God had predicted would happen, thus making God into a "false prophet?" God predicted that the firstborn of Egypt would die on a certain date. (Exodus 4:23; 11:5; 12:12,29; 13:5) Don't you think the Devil, if he were given the opportunity, would have liked to prevent this final plague and the subsequent departure of God's people from Egypt?

See also ***The Final End of Sin and Sinners***, sections II - VI.

14. Why did God give them such a list of clean and unclean animals (Leviticus 11; Deuteronomy 14) if He knew that meat of any kind wasn't good for them? Why didn't He simply say that the best foods are the fruits, nuts, and grains that He gave Adam and Eve, (Genesis 1:29) but if they needed more than this they could eat the vegetables that were given later? (Genesis 3:18) What is the purpose of all the rules about "uncleanness?" (Leviticus 5:2,3; 7:19-21; 10:10; 11; 13:1-15:33) Why does having a baby girl make you more unclean (or at least for a longer time) than having a baby boy? What was God trying to tell them through the elaborate ceremonies for cleansing?

There are two major lists of clean and unclean meats given by Moses: Leviticus 11 and Deuteronomy 14. In neither place does God spell out the reasons or principles for determining that any particular animal is “clean” or “unclean.” Nor does He tell us whether these lists are for ceremonial purposes or health purposes. Furthermore, many of the animals and birds that are mentioned cannot be identified for sure in our day.

The passages seem primarily concerned with helping an ordinary person to identify those creatures that God did not want them to eat. Simple rules were given for separating the clean from the unclean. It should be obvious that “chewing the cud” and “having a split hoof” doesn’t have any immediate **causal** relationship to whether the meat is safe to eat.

The people clearly had a desire for meat and this led to several disastrous episodes. (Numbers 11; 21:4-9) It also seems clear that God did not want them to eat meat!! In the beginning, God no doubt gave Adam and Eve a marvelous variety of wonderful fruits, nuts and grains to eat. It is not clear why He asked the children of Israel to eat essentially one food for forty years! But where did they get all the animals, flour, wine, and olive oil that were needed for the sacrifices at the tabernacle? If these items were all available, weren’t they eating them, at least occasionally? It is important to realize that God cares about what happens to us and wants us to be healthy, happy and holy. He would not ask us to abstain from anything that is for our best good.

It is also important to realize that God is very much interested in our bodies and our physical, mental and social health as well as our spiritual health. It was never God’s idea that we “mortify the body” to benefit the soul as some religious groups have suggested.

The Bible suggests that “as a man thinks in his heart, so is he.” (Proverbs 23:7) The mind is not just an ethereal essence, it is a function that takes place in the brain and is therefore very much affected by the condition of the rest of our body. It has also been said that we are what we eat and drink. It is very obvious that the thinking of a drunk man has been affected by his alcohol. People with ulcers and upset stomachs tend not to be in their best moods or thinking capacities.

Jews have come to be known as an intelligent, healthy people. This is at least partly because of the directions about food given by God that many of them still follow. Many of these health rules given so long ago have been corroborated by modern medical and nutritional science.

It is very interesting to note that God also forbade them to eat meat with the blood or fat still in it or attached to it. (Genesis 9:4; Leviticus 3:17; 7:22-27; 17:10-16; 19:26; Deuteronomy 12:16,23-25; 15:23; 1 Samuel 14:31-35; Acts 15:20,29; 21:25; compare Ezekiel 33:25; Zechariah 9:7) The blood, and to a lesser degree the fat was considered to be the life of the animal. Thus it belonged only to God who gave the life. This apparently came about because when someone or an animal was accidentally killed, it was usually the blood and the fat that seemed to come out first. Many ancient peoples including the Hebrews, the Akkadians, and the Canaanites suggest in their poetry that blood equals life. From a health point of view it is clear that blood and fat are the most dangerous parts of the meat. It is also clear that those are the parts that carry the waste matter that gives meat its flavor. Is God saying that they are to eat meat only as needed for nourishment and not to learn to like it for its flavor? This would certainly be a much healthier approach than what is done in our day!

God forbade the people to eat of many of the “unclean” animals because they carried parasites or other diseases transmissible to man. Other foods were no doubt forbidden because their flesh was not a healthy diet. In a day when people did a great deal more physical exercise by walking wherever they had to go and doing almost all labor by hand, there was not the same concern about avoiding cholesterol and fat in the diet as there might be today.

In Genesis 9:1-4 and 11:10-26 (contrast Genesis 5) it is apparent that after God permitted the descendants of Noah to eat flesh food their lives were shortened precipitously. Whether this was a direct result of the flesh eating we do not know. When God agreed on one occasion to allow the children of Israel to eat the quail that He sent, many of them became seriously ill and many died. Whether this was because the meat was somehow not healthy, or they simply ate too much of it when they had not been used to such a diet, or whether they did not have means to preserve it properly for eating later, it clearly had a disastrous effect.

Modern science has demonstrated repeatedly that man does not need to eat meat to have good health. In fact, we would be healthier if we avoided meat completely. All endurance athletes follow this practice for all practical purposes. In our day, most of us would be healthier if we also avoided

the “milk and honey” (cholesterol and sugar) that were promised to the people in the land where they were going!!

In ancient times, they did not have all the medical knowledge that we depend on so much today. There was no public health department to make sure that the food they ate, the water they drank, and even their environment were healthy. For this reason, God had to give rules that each person could apply personally to avoid anything that might lead to sickness or death. It was not always possible to know when a woman was bleeding vaginally whether this was her monthly period or whether she had some sexually-transmitted disease. As we have now learned from the AIDS epidemic, she would be much more likely to contract certain STD's when she was bleeding. With no antibiotics or diagnostic tests available it was safest thus for her to avoid sexual intercourse at any time when she was having a “discharge” of any kind.

Other rules regarding “uncleanness” are also clearly for the purpose of preventing the transmission of communicable diseases. Contact with the dead could easily put one at risk for serious disease. While we cannot explain all of the details for each command which God gave, it is reasonable to assume that God had a good reason for them and someday He will make that clear to them and to us!

15. In what way were the sins transferred to the lamb, to the priest, to the tabernacle, and finally to the scapegoat? Is it even possible to transfer sins or guilt? What is the true nature of sin?

As Paul says in Romans 8:3: “What the Law could not do, because human nature was weak, God did. He condemned sin in human nature by sending his own Son, who came with a nature like our sinful nature, to do away with sin.” (*GNB*) In other words, the ceremonial system did not actually remove sins or it would not have been necessary for Jesus to come and die. Furthermore, when comparing the old Jewish System with the true Sacrifice—Jesus, Himself—he says this in Hebrews 10:1-4,11,17,18:

“The Jewish Law is not a full and faithful model of the real things; it is only a faint outline of the good things to come. The same sacrifices are offered forever, year after year. How can the Law, then by means of these sacrifices make perfect the people who come to God? If the people worshipping God had really been purified from their sins, they would not feel guilty of sin any more, and all sacrifices would stop. As it is, however, the sacrifices serve year after year to remind people of their sins. For the blood of bulls and goats can never take away sins...Every Jewish priest performs his services every day and offers the same sacrifices many times; [Exodus 29:38] but these sacrifices can never take away sins...And then he says, ‘I will not remember their sins and evil deeds any longer.’ [Jeremiah 31:34] So when these have been forgiven, an offering to take away sins is no longer needed.” (*GNB*)

It was very clear in Paul's mind that sins were not removed by all these sacrifices. The sacrificial system was only a “faint outline” of the truth as it was demonstrated in the life and death of Jesus Christ. Please read the full story of Paul's comparison of the two systems as described in Hebrews 9 and 10.

In light of this hindsight you might ask, Why would God bother to set up this whole system in the first place? There are several possible explanations:

1. The children of Israel were looking for a system of sacrifice and worship that was at least somewhat familiar to them. Just as they had trouble with the “invisible God” on the top of Mt. Sinai and wanted the golden calf instead, they were looking for a system that they could understand somewhat in terms of what they had grown accustomed to from their pagan environment. God did not ask them to totally change their pattern of worship lest they reject His suggestions without even much consideration. People may not like the form of worship that they are currently engaged in, but they will tend to be very resistant to any radical change in it which comes too quickly.

2. As we noted when comparing the Code of Hammurabi and the Laws of God given through Moses, even these pagan systems of worship can be traced ultimately back to the true worship of God as established outside the garden of Eden. When an Israelite came to the sanctuary and confessed his sins onto the head of a lamb, he was saying that the lamb or goat or bull was now to take his place. (Leviticus 4) Then the sinner himself was to take the life of the victim representing himself. This was supposed to teach that sin reacts upon us and destroys us. Then after the

appropriate preparations are made, portions of the offering were to be placed on the altar of burnt offering. There it was consumed by the fire representing God's presence. This was supposed to teach them that sin cannot survive in God's presence. Unfortunately they tended to get the message that if you were willing to pay for your sins by offering a lamb then you could go ahead and live your life as you wanted.

3. God wanted them to get the very serious message that sin leads to death. See #3 and #4 above.

4. Later writers even in the Old Testament made it quite clear that God keeps a permanent record of sins. (Ecclesiastes 12:13,14; Ezekiel 18; 33:10-20) It should be obvious to us that if we can remember our past sins then our guardian angel can remember them, and God can remember them as well. God does not treat us well because He has forgotten that we ever were sinners, but because He chooses to ignore our past records in light of the changes that have taken place in our lives. (Jeremiah 31:34; Hebrews 10:17)

Sin is something that happens in people. There is no such thing as a commodity called "sin" that can be separated from a person and carried around or placed on the head of an animal. It follows then that the only way to "deal with sin" is to make a change in people and in their relation to their God. This change is so remarkable that God calls it a new birth. (John 3:3-8)

16. Be sure to read Leviticus 19! But even in this chapter why does God keep telling them, "do it because I say so!" Is this the best reason that God could find?

At this point in time, at the foot of Mt. Sinai, this was the reason that had the greatest force in their thinking. After seeing the demonstration of God's power and glory on the mountain, like little children they felt that they had better obey what He told them. (Exodus 19:8; 24:3,7) They were not ready for thinking at the higher moral levels yet.

17. What is implied by the expression, "an aroma pleasing to the Lord"? (Leviticus 1:9,13,17; 2:2,9,12, etc.) Why are leaven and yeast never to be offered on the altar? (Leviticus 2:12) Why did the Lord tell the children of Israel not to eat any fat or any blood? Would that be a good health rule even today? (Leviticus 3:17)

The true God is contrasted with idols several places in Scripture by the fact that He can smell! (Deuteronomy 4:28; Psalms 115:6; contrast Isaiah 1:13) But if the sacrifices are not given from a truly repentant and thankful heart they will do no good. (Leviticus 26:31) The "aroma" is only meaningful if it represents a humble person truly seeking forgiveness and fellowship that is "intelligent worship" (Romans 12:1,2) and will result in a transformation of the sinner. "It is the humble, grateful, reverential heart that makes the offering as a sweet-smelling savor, acceptable to God." *Our High Calling* 197

Yeast/leaven were regarded as symbols of sin. (Exodus 12:15,19; 13:7; 34:25; Leviticus 2:11; 6:17; 23:17; Deuteronomy 16:4) The blood represented the life which belongs to God, and God also claimed the fat. (Genesis 9:4; Leviticus 3:17; 17:10-16; 19:26; Deuteronomy 12:23-25; 1 Samuel 14:31-35) It is possible that since fat and blood are what give meat its flavor, God was specifically asking them to remove the blood and the fat so they would be less likely to develop a taste for meat. Clearly, as we now recognize from modern medical science, the blood and the fat are the most dangerous portions of the meat.

18. How can a person be held guilty for doing something that he didn't realize was wrong? (Leviticus 4:14,23,28; 5:1,3,4,17) Is this fair? (Compare Numbers 15:27-31; Deuteronomy 17:12; Psalms 19:13) Why was God so particular about all these Levitical rules?

God is here describing presumptuous, willful, blatant sins that are done in open defiance of God and His commands. The Hebrew says literally, "with a high hand", suggesting a total disdain of the consequences. The Bible describes sin as rebelliousness and if we persist in it not even God can heal us or save us.

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khart@llu.edu

Ellen White Quotes

- a. "The sacrificial offerings, and the priesthood of the Jewish system, were instituted to represent the death and mediatorial work of Christ. **All those ceremonies had no meaning, and no virtue, only as they related to Christ, who was himself the foundation of, and who brought into existence, the entire system.** The Lord had made known to Adam, Abel, Seth, Enoch, Noah, Abraham, and the ancient worthies, especially Moses, that the ceremonial system of sacrifices and the priesthood, of themselves, were not sufficient to secure the salvation of one soul.
"The system of sacrificial offerings pointed to Christ. Through these the ancient worthies saw Christ, and believed in him. **These were ordained of God to keep before the people the fearful separation which sin had made between God and man, requiring a mediating ministry.** Through Christ, the communication which was cut off because of Adam's transgression, was opened between God and the ruined sinner. The infinite sacrifice that Christ voluntarily made for man remains a mystery that angels cannot fully fathom." *Review and Herald* 12-17-1872 (1RH 114:3:3,4; 2SP 10,11; QOD 678)
- b. "As Jesus came into the temple, He took in the whole scene. He saw the unfair transactions. He saw the distress of the poor, who **thought** that without shedding of blood there would be no forgiveness for their sins." *The Desire of Ages* 157
- c. "If Adam had not transgressed the law of God, the ceremonial law would never have been instituted. The gospel of good news was first given to Adam in the declaration made to him that the seed of the woman should bruise the serpent's head; and it was handed down through successive generations to Noah, Abraham, and Moses. The knowledge of God's law, and the plan of salvation were imparted to Adam and Eve by Christ Himself. They carefully treasured the important lesson, and transmitted it by word of mouth, to their children, and children's children. Thus the knowledge of God's law was preserved." *1 Selected Messages* 230
- d. "If man had kept the law of God, as given to Adam after his fall, preserved by Noah, and observed by Abraham, there would have been no necessity for the ordinance of circumcision. And if the descendants of Abraham had kept the covenant, of which circumcision was a sign, they would never have been seduced into idolatry, nor would it have been necessary for them to suffer a life of bondage in Egypt; they would have kept God's law in mind, and there would have been no necessity for it to be proclaimed from Sinai or engraved upon the tables of stone. And had the people practiced the principles of the Ten Commandments, there would have been no need of the additional directions given to Moses." *3 Spiritual Gifts* 299 (1864); *1 Spirit of Prophecy* 264,265; *Patriarchs and Prophets* 364; *The Signs of the Times*, June 17, 1880
- e. "Offences punished with death.—I. The following offences also are mentioned in the law as liable to the punishment of death:
1. **Striking, or even reviling, a parent.** Ex. 21:15, 17.
 2. **Blasphemy.** Lev. 24:14, 16, 23.
 3. **Sabbath-breaking.** Ex. 31:14; 35:2; Num. 15:32-36.
 4. **Witchcraft, and false pretension to prophecy.** Ex. 22:18; Lev. 20:27; Deut. 13:5; 18:20.
 5. **Adultery.** Lev. 20:10; Deut. 22:22.
 6. **Unchastity.** Lev. 21:9; Deut. 22:21, 23.
 7. **Rape.** Deut. 22:25.
 8. **Incestuous and unnatural connections.** Ex. 22:19; Lev. 20:11, 14, 16.
 9. **Manstealing (Kidnaping).** Ex. 21:16; Deut. 24:7.
 10. **Idolatry, actual or virtual, in any shape.** Lev. 20:2; Deut. 13:6, 10, 15; 17:2-7; see Josh. 7 and 22:20 and Num. 25:8.
 11. **False witness in certain cases.** Deut. 19:16, 19.

II. But there is a large number of offences, some of them included in this list, which are named in the law as involving the penalty of "cutting off from the people." On the meaning of this expression some controversy has arisen. There are altogether thirty-six or thirty-seven cases in the Pentateuch in which this formula is used. We may perhaps conclude that the primary meaning of "cutting off" is a sentence of death to be executed in some cases without remission, but in others voidable—(1) by immediate atonement on the offender's part; (2) by direct interposition of the Almighty, *i.e.*, a sentence of death always "recorded," but not always executed." (*Smith's Bible Dictionary*, article on "punishments")