
LEVITICUS 1:1 The LORD called to Moses, and spoke to him from the Tent of Meeting, saying,

The Greek version of the Septuagint, and the Vulgate Latin, have given the title of Leviticus to the third book of the Pentateuch, and the name has been retained in almost all the modern versions. The book was thus called because it treats principally of the laws and regulations of the Levites and priests in general. In Hebrew it is termed ויקרא *Vaiyikra*, "And he called," which is the first word in the book, and which, as in preceding cases, became the running title to the whole. It contains an account of the ceremonies to be observed in the offering of burnt-sacrifices; meat, peace, and sin-offerings; the consecration of priests, together with the institution of the three grand national festivals of the Jews, the Passover, Pentecost, and Tabernacles, with a great variety of other ecclesiastical matters. It seems to contain little more than the history of what passed during the eight days of the consecration of Aaron and his sons, though Archbishop Usher supposes that it comprises the history of the transactions of a whole month, viz., from April 21 to May 21, of the year of the world 2514, which answers to the first month of the second year after the departure from Egypt. As there are no data by which any chronological arrangement of the facts mentioned in it can be made, it would be useless to encumber the page with conjectures which, because uncertain, can answer no end to the serious reader for doctrine, reproof, or edification in righteousness. As the law was our schoolmaster unto Christ, the whole sacrificial system was intended to point out that Lamb of God, Christ Jesus, who takes away the sin of the world.

In reading over this book, this point should be kept particularly in view, as without this spiritual reference no interest can be excited by a perusal of the work. The principal events recorded in this book may be thus deduced in the order of the chapters: Moses having set up the tabernacle, as has been related in the conclusion of the preceding book; and the cloud of the Divine glory, the symbol of the presence of God, having rested upon it; God called to him out of this tabernacle, and delivered the laws and precepts contained in the first seven chapters.

In Leviticus 1 he prescribes every thing relative to the nature and quality of burnt offerings, and the ceremonies which should be observed, as well by the person who brought the sacrifice as by the priest who offered it.

In Leviticus 2. he treats of meat-offerings of fine flour with oil and frankincense; of cakes, and the oblations of first-fruits.

Leviticus 3. treats of peace-offerings, prescribes the ceremonies to be used in such offerings, and the parts which should be consumed by fire.

Leviticus 4. treats of the offerings made for sins of ignorance; for the sins of the priests, rulers, and of the common people.

Leviticus 5. treats of the sin of him who, being adjured as a witness, conceals his knowledge of a fact; the case of him who touches an unclean thing; of him who binds himself by a vow or an oath; and of trespass-offerings in cases of sacrilege, and in sins of ignorance.

Leviticus 6. treats of the trespass-offerings for sins knowingly committed; and of the offerings for the priests, the parts which should be consumed, and the parts which should be considered as the priests' portion.

And in Leviticus 7. the same subject is continued.

Leviticus 8. treats of the consecration of Aaron and his sons; their sin-offering; burnt-offering; ram of consecration; and the time during which these solemn rites should continue.

Leviticus 9. After Aaron and his sons were consecrated, on the eighth day they were commanded to offer sin-offerings and burnt-offerings for themselves and for the people, which they accordingly did, and Aaron and Moses having blessed the people, a fire came forth from before the Lord, and consumed the offering that was laid upon the altar.

Leviticus 10. Nadab and Abihu, the sons of Aaron, having offered strange fire before the Lord, are consumed; and the priests are forbidden the use of wine and all inebriating liquors.

Leviticus 11. treats of clean and unclean beasts, fishes, birds, and reptiles.

Leviticus 12. treats of the purification of women after child-birth, and the offerings they should present before the Lord.

Leviticus 13. prescribes the manner of discerning the infection of the leprosy in persons, garments, and houses.

Leviticus 14. prescribes the sacrifices and ceremonies which should be offered by those who were cleansed from the leprosy.

Leviticus 15. treats of certain uncleannesses in man and woman; and of their purifications.

Leviticus 16. treats of the solemn yearly expiation to be made for the sins of the priest and of the people, of the goat and bullock for a sacrifice, and of the scapegoat; all which should be offered annually on the tenth day of the seventh month.

Leviticus 17. The Israelites are commanded to offer all their sacrifices at the tabernacle; the eating of blood is prohibited, as also the flesh of those animals which die of themselves, and of those that are torn by dogs.

Leviticus 18. shows the different degrees within which marriages were not to be contracted, and prohibits various acts of impurity.

Leviticus 19. recapitulates a variety of laws which had been mentioned in the preceding book, (Exodus), and adds several new ones.

Leviticus 20. prohibits the consecration of their children to Molech, forbids their consulting wizards and those which had familiar spirits, and also a variety of incestuous and unnatural mixtures.

Leviticus 21. gives different ordinances concerning the mourning and marriages of priests, and prohibits those from the sacerdotal office who have certain personal defects.

Leviticus 22. treats of those infirmities and uncleannesses which rendered the priests unfit to officiate in sacred things, and lays down directions for the perfection of the sacrifices which should be offered to the Lord.

Leviticus 23. treats of the Sabbath and the great annual festivals - the passover, pentecost, feast of trumpets, day of atonement, and feast of tabernacles.

Leviticus 24. treats of the oil for the lamps, and the shew-bread; the law concerning which had already been given, see Exodus 25, etc.; mentions the case of the person who blasphemed God, and his punishment; lays down the law in cases of blasphemy and murder; and recapitulates the lex talionis, or law of like for like, prescribed Exodus 21.

Leviticus 25. recapitulates the law, given Exodus 23, relative to the Sabbatical year; prescribes the year of jubilee; and lays down a variety of statutes relative to mercy, kindness, benevolence, charity, etc.

Leviticus 26. prohibits idolatry, promises a great variety of blessings to the obedient, and threatens the disobedient with many and grievous curses.

Leviticus 27. treats of vows, of things devoted, and of the tithes which should be given for the service of the tabernacle.

No Chronological Table can be affixed to this book, as the transactions of it seem to have been included within the space of eight days, or of a month at the utmost, as we have already seen. And even some of the facts related here seem to have taken place previously to the erection of the tabernacle; nor is the order in which the others occurred so distinguished as to enable us to lay down the precise days in which they took place.

The Lord calls to Moses out of the tabernacle, and gives him directions concerning burnt-offerings of the beeve kind, Lev 1:1, Lev 1:2. The burnt-offering to be a male without blemish, Lev 1:3. The person bringing it to lay his hands upon its head, that it might be accepted for him, Lev 1:4. He is to kill, flay, and cut it in pieces, and bring the blood to the priests, that they might sprinkle it round about the altar, Lev 1:5, Lev 1:6. All the pieces to be laid upon the altar and burnt, Lev 1:7-9. Directions concerning offerings of the Smaller Cattle, such as sheep and goats, Lev 1:10-13. Directions concerning offerings of Fowls, such as doves and pigeons, Lev 1:14-17.

Verse 1

And the Lord called unto Moses - From the manner in which this book commences, it appears plainly to be a continuation or the preceding; and indeed the whole is but one law, though divided into five portions, and why thus divided is not easy to be conjectured. Previously to the erection of the tabernacle God had given no particular directions concerning the manner of offering the different kinds of sacrifices; but as soon as this Divine structure was established and consecrated, Jehovah took it as his dwelling place; described the rites and ceremonies which he would have observed in his worship, that his people might know what was best pleasing in his sight; and that, when thus worshipping him, they might have confidence that they pleased him, every thing being done according to his own directions. A consciousness of acting according to the revealed will of God gives strong confidence to an upright mind.

LEVITICUS 1:2 “Speak to the children of Israel, and tell them, ‘When anyone of you offers an offering to the LORD, you shall offer your offering of the livestock, from the herd and from the flock.

Verse 2

Bring an offering - The word קרבן korban, from קרב karab, to approach or draw near, signifies an offering or gift by which a person had access unto God: and this receives light from the universal custom that prevails in the east, no man being permitted to approach the presence of a superior without a present or gift; and the offering thus brought was called korban, which properly means the introduction-offering, or offering of access. This custom has been often referred to in the preceding books. See also Leviticus 7.

Of the cattle - הבהמה habbehemah, animals of the beeve kind, such as the bull, heifer, bullock, and calf; and restrained to these alone by the term herd, בקר bakar, which, from its general use in the Levitical writings, is known to refer to the ox, heifer, etc. And therefore other animals of the beeve kind were excluded.

Of the flock - צאן tson. Sheep and Goats; for we have already seen that this term implies both kinds; and we know, from its use, that no other animal of the smaller clean domestic quadrupeds is intended, as no other animal of this class, besides the sheep and goat, was ever offered in sacrifice to God. The animals mentioned in this chapter as proper for sacrifice are the very same which God commanded Abraham to offer; see Gen 15:9. And thus it is evident that God delivered to the patriarchs an epitome of that law which was afterwards given in detail to Moses, the essence of which consisted in its sacrifices; and those sacrifices were of clean animals, the most perfect, useful, and healthy, of all that are brought under the immediate government and influence of man. Gross-feeding and ferocious animals were all excluded, as were also all birds of prey. In the pagan worship it was widely different; for although the ox was esteemed among them, according to Livy, as the major hostia; and according to Pliny, the victima optima, et laudatis sima deorum placatio, Plin. Hist. Nat., lib. viii., c. 45, "the chief sacrifice and the most availing offering which could be made to the gods;" yet obscene fowls and ravenous beasts, according to the nature of their deities, were frequently offered in sacrifice. Thus they sacrificed horses to the Sun, wolves to Mars, asses to Priapus, swine to Ceres, dogs to Hecate, etc., etc. But in the worship of God all these were declared unclean, and only the three following kinds of Quadrupeds were commanded to be sacrificed:

1. The bull or ox, the cow or heifer, and the calf.
2. The he-goat, she-goat, and the kid.
3. The ram, the ewe, and the lamb.

Among Fowls, only pigeons and turtle-doves were commanded to be offered, except in the case of cleansing the leper, mentioned Lev 14:4, where two clean birds, generally supposed to be sparrows or other small birds, though of what species is not well known, are specified.

Fish were not offered, because they could not be readily brought to the tabernacle alive.

LEVITICUS 1:3 "If his offering is a burnt offering from the herd, he shall offer a male without defect. He shall offer it at the door of the Tent of Meeting, that he may be accepted before the LORD.

Verse 3

Burnt-sacrifice - The most important of all the sacrifices offered to God; called by the Septuagint ὀλοκαυτωμα, because it was wholly consumed, which was not the case in any other offering. See on Leviticus 7 (note).

His own voluntary will - לרצונו lirtsono, to gain himself acceptance before the Lord: in this way all the versions appear to have understood the original words, and the connection in which they stand obviously requires this meaning.

LEVITICUS 1:4 He shall lay his hand on the head of the burnt offering, and it shall be accepted for him to make atonement for him.

Verse 4

He shall put his hand upon the head of the burnt-offering - By the imposition of hands the person bringing the victim acknowledged,

1. The sacrifice as his own.
2. That he offered it as an atonement for his sins.
3. That he was worthy of death because he had sinned, having forfeited his life by breaking the law.
4. That he entreated God to accept the life of the innocent animal in place of his own.
5. And all this, to be done profitably, must have respect to Him whose life, in the fullness of time, should be made a sacrifice for sin.
6. The blood was to be sprinkled round about upon the altar, Lev 1:5, as by the sprinkling of blood the atonement was made; for the blood was the life of the beast, and it was always supposed that life went to redeem life.

See Clarke on Exo 29:10 (note). On the required perfection of the sacrifice see Clarke on Exo 12:5 (note). It has been sufficiently remarked by learned men that almost all the people of the earth had their burnt-offerings, on which also they placed the greatest dependence. It was a general maxim through the heathen world, that there was no other way to appease the incensed gods; and they sometimes even offered human sacrifices, from the supposition, as Caesar expresses it, that life was necessary to redeem life, and that the gods would be satisfied with nothing less. "Quod pro vita hominis nisi vita hominis redditur, non posse aliter deorum immortalium numen placari arbitrantur." - Com. de Bell. Gal., lib. vi. But this was not the case only with the Gauls, for we see, by Ovid, Fast., lib. vi., that it was a commonly received maxim among more polished people: - " - Pro parvo victima parva cadit.

Cor pro corde, precor, pro fibris sumite fibras.

Hanc animam vobis pro meliore damus."

See the whole of this passage in the above work, from ver. 135 to 163.

LEVITICUS 1:5 He shall kill the bull before the LORD. Aaron's sons, the priests, shall present the blood and sprinkle the blood around on the altar that is at the door of the Tent of Meeting.

LEVITICUS 1:6 He shall flay the burnt offering, and cut it into pieces.

Verse 6

He shall flay - Probably meaning the person who brought the sacrifice, who, according to some of the rabbins, killed, flayed, cut up, and washed the sacrifice, and then presented the parts and the blood to the priest, that he might burn the one, and sprinkle the other upon the altar. But it is

certain that the priests also, and the Levites, flayed the victims, and the priest had the skin to himself; see Lev 7:8, and 2Chr 29:34. The red heifer alone was not flayed, but the whole body, with the skin, etc., consumed with fire. See Num 19:5.

LEVITICUS 1:7 The sons of Aaron the priest shall put fire on the altar, and lay wood in order on the fire;

Verse 7

Put fire - The fire that came out of the tabernacle from before the Lord, and which was kept perpetually burning; see Lev 9:24. Nor was it lawful to use any other fire in the service of God. See the case of Nadab and Abihu, Leviticus 10 (note).

LEVITICUS 1:8 and Aaron's sons, the priests, shall lay the pieces, the head, and the fat in order on the wood that is on the fire which is on the altar;

Verse 8

The priests - shall lay the parts - The sacrifice was divided according to its larger joints.

1. After its blood was poured out, and the skin removed, the head was cut off.
2. They then opened it and took out the omentum, or caul, that invests the intestines.
3. They took out the intestines with the mesentery, and washed them well, as also the fat.
4. They then placed the four quarters upon the altar, covered them with the fat, laid the remains of the intestines upon them, and then laid the head above all.
5. The sacred fire was then applied, and the whole mass was consumed. This was the holocaust, or complete burnt-offering.

LEVITICUS 1:9 but its innards and its legs he shall wash with water. The priest shall burn all of it on the altar, for a burnt offering, an offering made by fire, of a pleasant aroma to the LORD.

Verse 9

An offering - of a sweet savor - אִשְׁשֵׁה רֵיחַ נִיחֹחַ ishshéh reiach nichoach, a fire-offering, an odour of rest, or, as the Septuagint express it, θυσία οσμῆ εὐωδίας, "a sacrifice for a sweet-smelling savor;" which place St. Paul had evidently in view when he wrote Eph 5:2 : "Christ hath loved us, and hath given himself for us an offering, καὶ θύσαν - εἰς οσμῆν εὐωδίας, and a sacrifice, for a sweet-smelling savor," where he uses the same terms as the Septuagint. Hence we find that the holocaust, or burnt-offering, typified the sacrifice and death of Christ for the sins of the world.

LEVITICUS 1:10 “If his offering is from the flock, from the sheep, or from the goats, for a burnt offering, he shall offer a male without defect.

Verse 10

His offering be of the flocks - See Clarke on Lev 1:2 (note).

LEVITICUS 1:11 He shall kill it on the north side of the altar before the LORD. Aaron’s sons, the priests, shall sprinkle its blood around on the altar.

LEVITICUS 1:12 He shall cut it into its pieces, with its head and its fat. The priest shall lay them in order on the wood that is on the fire which is on the altar,

Verse 12

Cut it into his pieces - See Clarke's note on Gen 15:10.

LEVITICUS 1:13 but the innards and the legs he shall wash with water. The priest shall offer the whole, and burn it on the altar. It is a burnt offering, an offering made by fire, of a pleasant aroma to the LORD.

LEVITICUS 1:14 “If his offering to the LORD is a burnt offering of birds, then he shall offer his offering of turtledoves, or of young pigeons.

LEVITICUS 1:15 The priest shall bring it to the altar, and wring off its head, and burn it on the altar; and its blood shall be drained out on the side of the altar;

LEVITICUS 1:16 and he shall take away its crop with its filth, and cast it beside the altar on the east part, in the place of the ashes.

Verse 16

Pluck away his crop with his feathers - In this sacrifice of fowls the head was violently wrung off, then the blood was poured out, then the feathers were plucked off, the breast was cut open, and the crop, stomach, and intestines taken out, and then the body was burnt. Though the bird was split up, yet it was not divided asunder. This circumstance is particularly remarked in Abram's sacrifice, Gen 15:10. See Clarke's note Gen 15:10. See Ainsworth. We have already seen, on Lev 1:2, that four kinds of animals might be made burnt-offerings to the Lord.

1. Neat cattle, such as bulls, oxen, cows, and calves.
2. He-goats, she-goats, and kids.
3. Rams, ewes, and lambs.
4. Pigeons and turtle-doves; and in one case, viz., the cleansing of the leper, sparrows or some small bird.

All these must be without spot or blemish - the most perfect of their respective kinds, and be wholly consumed by fire. The Rich were to bring the most costly; the Poor, those of least price. Even in this requisition of justice how much mercy was mingled! If a man could not bring a bullock or a heifer, a goat or a sheep, let him bring a calf, a kid, or a lamb. If he could not bring any of these because of his poverty, let him bring a turtle-dove, or a young pigeon, (see Lev 5:7); and it appears that in cases of extreme poverty, even a little meal or fine flour was accepted by the bountiful Lord as a sufficient oblation; see Lev 5:11. This brought down the benefits of the sacrificial service within the reach of the poorest of the poor; as we may take for granted that every person, however low in his circumstances, might be able to provide the tenth part of an ephah, about three quarts of meal, to make an offering for his soul unto the Lord. But every man must bring something; the law stooped to the lowest circumstances of the poorest of the people, but every man must sacrifice, because every man had sinned. Reader, what sort of a sacrifice dost thou bring to God? To Him thou owest thy whole body, soul, and substance; are all these consecrated to his service? Or has he the refuse of thy time, and the offal of thy estate? God requires thee to sacrifice as his providence has blessed thee. If thou have much, thou shouldst give liberally to God and the poor; If thou have but little, do thy diligence to give of that little. God's justice requires a measure of that which his mercy has bestowed. But remember that as thou hast sinned, thou needest a Savior. Jesus is that lamb without spot which has been offered to God for the sin of the world, and which thou must offer to him for thy sin; and it is only through Him that thou canst be accepted, even when thou dedicatest thy whole body, soul, and substance to thy Maker. Even when we present ourselves a living sacrifice to God, we are accepted for his sake who carried our sins, and bore our sorrows. Thanks be to God, the rich and the poor have equal access unto him through the Son of his love, and equal right to claim the benefits of the great sacrifice!

LEVITICUS 1:17 He shall tear it by its wings, but shall not divide it apart. The priest shall burn it on the altar, on the wood that is on the fire. It is a burnt offering, an offering made by fire, of a pleasant aroma to the LORD.
