

# *The Book of Leviticus*

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## Section Outline

- I. **Sacrificial System (Leviticus 1–7)**
- II. **Ministry of the Priesthood (Leviticus 8–10)**
- III. **Laws of Purification (Leviticus 11–15)**
- IV. **Day of Atonement (Leviticus 16)**
- V. **Covenant Ordinances (Leviticus 17–24)**
  - A. **Sanctity of Blood (chapt. 17)**
  - B. **Sanctity of Marriage (chapt. 18)**
  - C. **Sanctity of Societal Ethics (chapt. 19)**
  - D. **Sanctity of Justice (chapt. 20)**

## B. **Sanctity of Marriage (18:1-30)**

*Lewdness* (*zimmah*: 18:17; 19:29; 20:14): That which is shameful and infamous behavior. Especially applied to fornication and incest.

*Abomination* (*to'evah*: 18:22, 27, 29): That which is detestable, loathed, abhorrent, and offensive; an atrocity.

*Perversion* (*tevel*: 18:23; 20:12): That which is a contamination or confusion. Used only of bestiality and incest.

### 1. **Biblical Foundation (18:1-5)**

- Divine authority expressed in the identity of the Lord (vv. 1-2). See vv. 4, 6, 21, 30.
- Israel must be doers of the Law of Moses (vv. 3-5).
  - ✓ It is a matter of covenant loyalty, not just sound advice.

- ✓ This is what Paul meant as “the works of the law” (Rom 3:20; Gal 2:16; 3:2, 5). Such works do not save from sin or bring forgiveness (Titus 3:5; Phil 3:8-11).
- ✓ Cp. Ephesians 2:8-10; 2 Timothy 3:16-17; James 1:22.
- ✓ Obedience produces progressive sanctification (see John 17:17).
- ✓ Ephesians 5:25-27.

## 2. Prohibition of Marriage with Close Relations (18:6-18)

- ❑ Mother (v.7), step-mother (v. 8), sister or step-sister (v. 9), grand-daughter (v. 10), half-sister (v. 11), aunt (vv. 12-14), daughter-in-law (v. 15), sister-in-law (v. 16), step-daughter or step-grand-daughter (v. 17), sister-in-law as concubine (v. 18).

## 3. Prohibition of Other Sexual Relations (18:19-23)

- ❑ During menstruation (v. 19; 15:19-30). Uncleanness disqualifying from access and service to God in the Tabernacle (cf. 15:31; 20:18). Willful disregard changes the situation from mere contamination to outright rebellion against God.
- ❑ Adultery (v. 20; cf. 20:10).
- ❑ Child sacrifice or prostitution (v. 21; cf. 20:2-5).
- ❑ Homosexuality (v. 22; cf. 20:13).
- ❑ Bestiality (v. 23; cf. 20:15-16).

## 4. Restatement of Biblical Foundation (18:24-30)

- ❑ God removed the inhabitants of the land of Canaan for such sins (vv. 24-25; see Gen 15:16).
- ❑ If Israel acts like the Canaanites, God also will remove them from the land (vv. 26-28).
- ❑ These are capital crimes against God (v. 29; see chapt. 20).
- ❑ Divine authority expressed in the identity of the Lord (v. 30; cp. vv. 1-2). This inclusio brackets the entire chapter.

## C. Sanctity of Societal Ethics (19:1-37)

“The chapter provides a ‘rapid panoramic tour’ of what it means to be holy.”

— Allen P. Ross, *Holiness to the LORD* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Baker Academic, 2002), 351.

### 1. Call to Holiness as Summary of the Law and Levitical Sacrifices (19:1-8)

- ❑ Holiness is the goal of the Ten Commandments (vv. 1-4).
  - ✓ See 1 Peter 1:15-16.
- ❑ Holiness is the goal of the levitical sacrifices (vv. 5-8). The “peace (or, fellowship) offering” is the culmination of levitical ritual indicating fellowship both with God and with man.
  - ✓ See 7:11-38. These were the last offerings God prescribed.

**2. Call to Love as Summary of the Law (19:9-18)**

- God prohibits deeds that demonstrate a lack of concern for one's fellow human being (vv. 9-16).
  - ✓ Dealing with the love and care of others is a natural topic following the peace/fellowship offerings.
- God demands love for one's fellow human beings (vv. 17-18).
  - ✓ See Matthew 22:37-39.
  - ✓ Compare Hebrews 13:15-16.

**3. Call to Holiness in the Details of the Law (19:19-32)**

- Note the introductory declaration ("You are to keep My statutes," v. 19).
- Note the possibility of atonement and forgiveness (vv. 21-22).
- Note the ultimate spiritual attitude is the fear of the LORD (vv. 31-32).
  - ✓ See 2 Corinthians 5:11.
  - ✓ Revelation 15:3-4.

**4. Call to Love in the Details of the Law (19:33-37)**

- Note the emphatic repetition of the command ("love") and its comparison ("as yourself") (vv. 18 and 34). Proves that "neighbor" (v. 18) includes all people, even strangers (vv. 33-34).
- Note the example applying even to the area of commerce or business (vv. 35-36).
- Note the inclusio created by vv. 19 and 37 (cp. 18:4-5, 26).

**D. Sanctity of Justice (20:1-27)**

Relationships between Chapters 18 and 20:

- ◆ Sins are introduced in chapter 18, but the penalties are included in chapter 20.
- ◆ Chapter 18 is apodictic ("Do not ..." = prohibition) while chapter 20 is casuistic ("If a man ..." = case law).
- ◆ Both chapters demonstrate the close connection between idolatry and immorality (especially sexual immorality).

**1. Punishment in Cases of Idolatry (20:1-8)**

- Idolatry is the ultimate rebellion against God and violation of His covenant.
- Progressive, daily holiness (sanctification) is the result of obedience to God's Word.

## 2. Punishment in Cases of Immorality (20:9-21)

- ❑ Immorality and sexual sin is the natural consequence of disobedience to or disrespect for one's parents (v. 9).
  - ✓ See Ephesians 6:1-3.
- ❑ Violations of God's laws are punished by direct capital punishment at the hands of fellow citizens (vv. 9-16; cp. vv. 4-5), by a premature death at the hands of God (vv. 17-19), and by childlessness (vv. 20-21).
  - ✓ In some cases God requires the community to expel the offender and to leave their demise to God (see 1 Cor 5:1-13; Heb 10:29-31).

## 3. How One Lives Does Make a Difference (20:22-27)

- ❑ The ultimate punishment for Israel as a whole will be exile from the Promised Land (v. 22; see 18:25-28).
- ❑ Israel is not to act like the heathen (v. 23; see 18:3).
- ❑ Since it makes a difference to God, it should make a difference to Israel—they are to be distinct from the heathen (vv. 24-26). Review the lesson outline for Leviticus 11–15.
- ❑ Note the close of the chapter returns where it began with the condemnation of idolatry (v. 27; see vv. 1-6). This *inclusio* re-emphasizes the spiritual crime of rebellion against God and violation of His covenant.

### Summary of Applications from Leviticus 18–20:

- We must obey the Word of God rather than conform ourselves to the practices of unbelievers (see Eph 4:17-24; Rom 12:1-2; James 1:22).
- Immorality is connected closely to idolatry, because both are outright rebellion against God and a practical denial of His lordship (see Eph 5:5; 1 Cor 6:9).
- Immorality also is connected closely to disobedience to or disrespect for parents (see 2 Tim 3:1-5).
- Love for one's fellow human being is absolutely inconsistent with immorality (see 1 Thess 4:1-12).
- Capital punishment for violation of God's teaching regarding holiness and love indicates the serious nature of disobedience (see Rom 6:23; 1 Cor 5:5; 1 John 5:16).

**Believers must avoid reverting to pagan practices.  
Churches must never approve of practices contrary to the Word of God.**