

The History of Israel

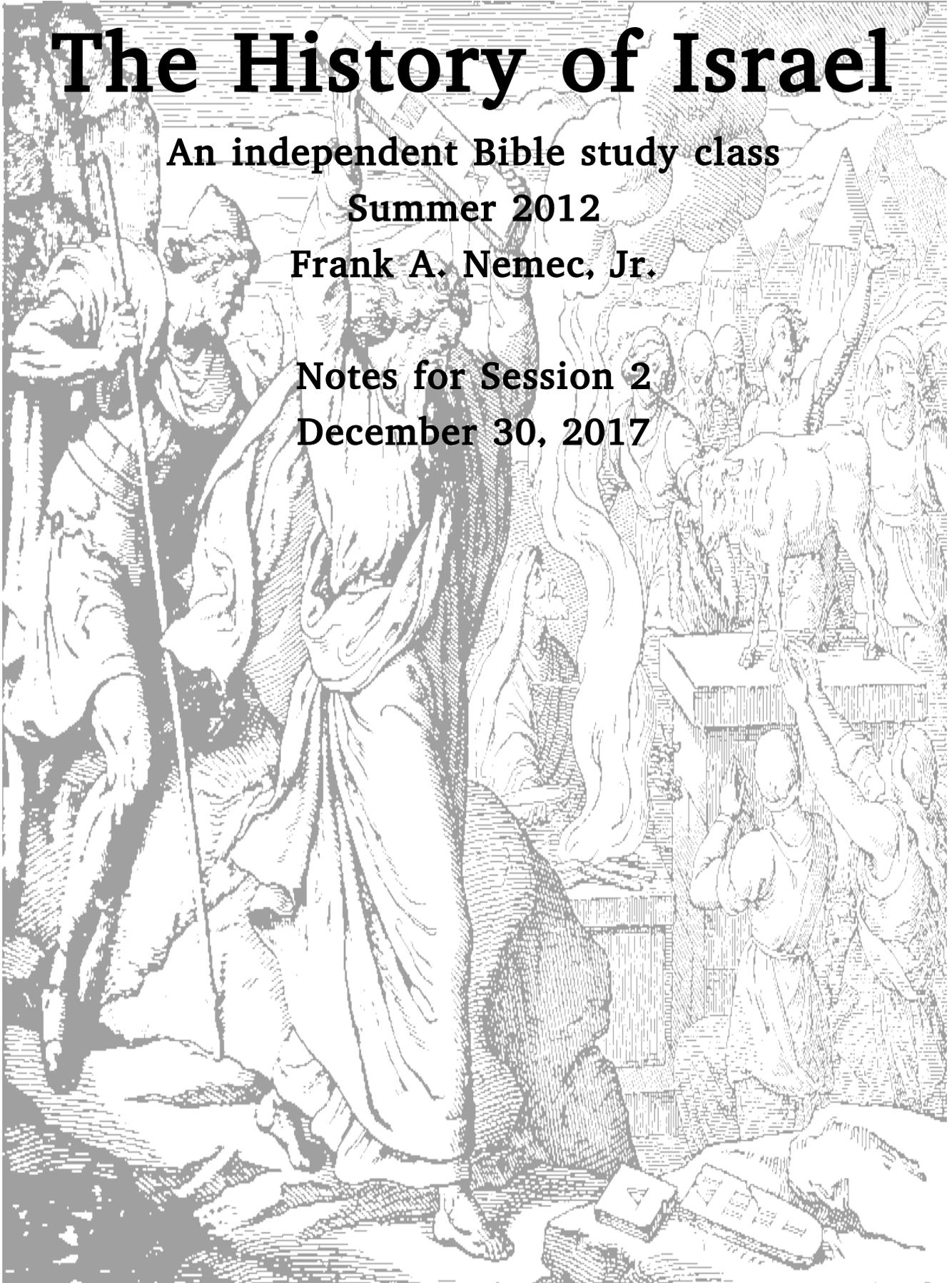
An independent Bible study class

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Notes for Session 2

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The class decided to include Leviticus, though it is only marginally related to the history. Please read it. It's Mosaic Law, in agonizing detail. This should not be surprising, since it's from the Priestly source. The literary genre is law.

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The Covenants

Religious thought of Israel was characterized by its **covenantal worldview**. This is how they understood their relationship to their god. The first two were in the literary form of royal grant treaties. They are unconditional promises by the superior power of benefits to the inferior power. The **Noahic Covenant** and **Abrahamic Covenant** are covered in Session 1.

The **Mosaic Covenant** is in the literary form of a **vassal suzerainty treaty**, most closely the Hittite form. The Wikipedia description seems clear and accurate, and matches the more scholarly sources I've read. Covenants of this form have been found as early as 2500 BCE, the Stele of the Vultures. A fragment of this is in the photo above. That's more than a thousand years before Mount Sinai. This form was also used in Mesopotamian/Sumerian treaties, perhaps including Ur.



The suzerain (superior) nation imposes requirements on the vassal nation. The contract offers benefits if the vassal keeps the terms, and cursings (penalties) if they don't. This is precisely how Israel viewed the Mosaic Covenant. One might say that Israel developed their idea of the covenant from the familiar Suzerainty treaty. Or one might say that an omniscient God chose to express his demands in a form the

people would understand. Choose according to your philosophical presuppositions. The more I learn about the Hittites, how they ruled their conquests, and how they related to their gods, the stronger this connection becomes. For more details, see notes on The Covenants in Notes for Sessions 1 and 2.

These literary forms were universally understood in the ANE. There was never a Hebrew empire. Their little plot of land along major trade routes was typically controlled by the local empires: Egyptian, Hittite, Assyrian, Babylonian, then later Greek and Roman. They lived under terms dictated by a conquering power.

Throughout these notes I mention texts expressing clearly the idea that the people are keeping the terms of the covenant, and that God is keeping his. The idea that the covenant is impossible to keep is purely a New Testament idea.

Key Bible Texts on the Covenants

This section lists key texts covering the covenants of Israel.

1. Genesis 9:8-19 Noahic Covenant (no more global flood)
2. Genesis 12:1-3, first statement of the Abrahamic Covenant. Note verse 4 which tells us Abram met the terms required of him. Be alert for this pattern. The covenants require certain actions from Israel and from God. The texts make frequent statements about when those actions are, or are not, done.
3. Genesis 15:4-5 One of several statements of the Abrahamic Covenant. Abram's offspring numbered as the stars in the heavens 3×10^{23} and see 22:18.
1. Genesis 17:2-8, "Behold, my covenant is with you, and you shall be the father of a multitude of nations. No longer shall your name be called Abram, but your name shall be Abraham, for I have made you the father of a multitude of nations. I will make you exceedingly fruitful, and I will make you into nations, and kings shall come from you. And I will establish my covenant between me and you and your offspring after you throughout their generations for an everlasting covenant, to be God to you and to your offspring after you. And I will give to you and to your offspring after you the land of your sojournings, all the land of Canaan, for an everlasting possession, and I will be their God." Here, the first mention of its henotheistic and eternal aspects, as well as the requirement of **circumcision**. Exodus 20:3 makes the henotheistic nature fully clear, as does Exodus 6:7, "I will take you to be my people, and I will be your God, and you shall know that I am the LORD your God." Perhaps this is the antecedent of the "**I am**" references, including Exodus 3:14. **Henotheism** is a theistic religious philosophy that recognizes the existence of many gods but requires exclusive devotion to only one. It is also described as **monolatry**, the worship of one. **Monotheism**, a later development, says that only one god exists.
2. Genesis 22:15-18 star numbering again, and "in your offspring shall all the nations of the earth be blessed."
3. Genesis 26:1-5:
 1. Now there was a famine in the land, besides the former famine that was in the days of Abraham. And Isaac went to Gerar to Abimelech king of the Philistines. And the LORD appeared to him and said, "Do not go down to Egypt; dwell in the land of which I shall tell you. Sojourn in this land, and I will be with you and will bless you, for to you and to your

offspring I will give all these lands, and I will establish the oath that I swore to Abraham your father. I will multiply your offspring as the stars of heaven and will give to your offspring all these lands. And in your offspring all the nations of the earth shall be blessed, because Abraham obeyed my voice and kept my charge, my commandments, my statutes, and my laws.”

2. This shows that Abraham had already satisfied the human requirements of this covenant.
4. Exodus 19:5-6 a preliminary statement of the Mosaic Covenant, “Now therefore, if you will indeed obey my voice and keep my covenant, you shall be my treasured possession among all peoples, for all the earth is mine; and you shall be to me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation.” In verse 8, the people agree to be bound by this covenant.
5. Exodus 23:20-33 The bully big prother blessing. Prosperity, health, fertility. Repeated acceptance by the people.
6. Exodus 32:11-14 Moses saves Israel from destruction by invoking the covenant.
7. Deuteronomy 1:10, “The LORD your God has multiplied you, and behold, you are today as numerous as the stars of heaven.” proclaims that the population aspect of the Abrahamic covenant had been completed.
8. Joshua 24 shows a required renewal of Mosaic Covenant.

Questions to Guide Your Study

As you read the text, please keep these questions in mind. Keep a notebook at hand to record your observations and bring them to class.

1. Notice how each section is introduced and concluded; Ask these questions for each section:
 1. Who is speaking? To whom?
 2. Whom is being addressed? To whom do the instructions apply?
 3. What is the instruction?
 4. Why?
2. What are the major offerings and how are they described? Who provides them? Who offers them? How often? Which are required and which are voluntary? Who kills the animal? Who does the sacrifice? Who gets the leftovers?
3. Who were the priests and where did they function?
4. What's so special about blood?
5. What were the required feasts?
6. When you get there, how does chapter 26 relate to the covenant?
7. Any surprises? What did you learn that you did not expect?
8. Which activities and sacrifices are related to sin? How is the term atonement used?
9. Which are instructions to the people and which are just for the priests?
10. What does it mean to be clean or unclean? What difference does it make? How can something become clean or unclean?
11. As used in this book, what does holy mean?
12. Ask these questions at each new section:
 1. Who is speaking?
 2. To whom?
 3. Addressed to whom?
 4. Applies to whom?

5. What?
6. Why?
7. Exceptions?

Leviticus

Lev 1 seems to remove Aaron from the role of middle-man but keeps him as the patriarch of the priestly line. It shows Moses receiving these instructions at the tent of meeting, supporting Jewish tradition that Moses received some of the teachings of Torah at Mount Sinai and some at the tabernacle.

Whole Burnt Offerings: 1:2 seems to give only two choices, an animal from herd (likely oxen) or flock (sheep and goats), with slightly different treatment. The offerer does the killing. All these are domesticated, though the earliest domesticated animal is believed to be the pig. We have seen practically no mention of hunting. This shows at least the northern tribes were still nomadic herdsman. 1:3 Unblemished did not mean perfect. It was not an impossible standard. 1:14 allows an offering of birds, probably as a concession to the poor (5:7-10, 12:8, 14:21-32). In this case, the priest does the killing. We'll see later that these are offered every morning and every evening. This is enough for the whole people. Apparently the skins go to the priests. The outer layers of the tent of meeting were ram's skins and goat skins.

Grain Offerings: 2:1 describes a grain offering. Grain was likely the first domesticated plant, genetically engineered (actually, by selective breeding) for high density of nutritional energy. Corn may have been the earliest. Only part of the grain offering (the **memorial portion**) is burned. The rest (most of it) goes to the priests. Only that portion is described as **most holy**. 2:11 No **leaven or honey** in the offering. The honey surprised me, but perhaps it is forbidden because it is used in conjunction with the leaven (yeast) for fermentation of alcohol for beer. Salt, yes! Reread this chapter to see if these sacrifices were required (if at all) of each person or man of Israel, or just of Israel as a whole (more typical). More killing of animals.

Peace Offerings: Lev 3 Male and female. They offered the fat, blood, and some organs. Ritual sacrifices usually offered the parts people didn't eat. By implication, the priests get the rest of the meat. But Lev 19 seems to indicate that the offerer keeps the meat. Significance of the blood may be nothing more than that it represents the death of the animal.

Kinds of Sin

Be alert to what this author from the Priestly source means when he uses the word sin. I see two classes:

1. Ritual, violations of love Yahweh
 1. Sabbath – penalty is death, Ex 31:15
 2. others – sin offering
2. Moral or societal, violations of love they neighbor. I think it meant things earning jail time, not the pious displays of self-righteousness, bragging that I'm so sensitive to sin that I discovered four sins I committed today, and of course confessed them all.
 1. Restoration / restitution to the victim

2. Sacrifices to Yahweh

From the Jewish Encyclopedia, “Under the Jewish theocracy, wilful disregard of the positive, or wilful infraction of the negative, commands of God as proclaimed by Moses and interpreted by the Rabbis.”

I continue to look for clear definitions and delineations of these words as used by these authors. I fear these meanings have become muddled with the passing of time.

Sin Offerings: 4:2 **unintentional!** Repeated emphasis that only an anointed priest will do. It's a closed union shop. That means Aaron and his four sons offered all the sacrifices for all of Israel. Even if that were really a million people at this time, five priests was enough. Their idea of sin was clearly not that of some modern Christians, saying everyone sins many times a day. New here, and unique to Judaism, are sacrifices for the purpose of **atonement**, for forgiveness of transgressions against a moral law. But as I note elsewhere, look at all the references to atonement to see if it really always refers to sin. Other peer religions offer sacrifices just because they are required, and don't even incorporate any moral law. More gruesome animal slaughter. This is a racket! The more people think they have sinned, the more income the priests get! Now I see the motivation for Calvin and Paul to teach the total depravity of man. Chapter 4 concludes with the effect of all the sin offerings. “And the priest shall make atonement for him for the sin which he has committed, and he shall be forgiven.” Lev 5:16 requires restitution. 5:17 Ignorance of the law is no excuse. Lev 6 seems to transition to **intentional sin** like deceit, robbery, oppression, and swearing falsely. 6:8 might be instructions for the sin offerings or might be for all the burnt offerings. 6:12 speaks of a fire burning continually on the altar. This forms part of the imagery in later apocalyptic literature. Males only. 6:18, “Whatever touches them [male descendants of Aaron] shall **become holy**.” 6:23 The priests can't eat their own offerings. 6:26 makes clear that the priests eat the sin offerings, but they must eat it in a holy place.

Time for a quiz

From what we have read so far, who brings offerings? Who offers the sacrifices? Anyone else? Are they all animals? Are they all for sin? How are they offered? (Wave offerings appear shortly.) Are all required? What happens with the stuff brought as offerings?

Guilt Offerings: 7 also called trespass offering. It's not clear how it differs from the sin offerings, but it seems to be more serious. Perhaps it's for violations which harm another person. Are these intentional? 7:19 talks unclean things, but we still don't know which those are. That comes later. “... that person shall be cut off from his people.” What does this mean? Ostracism? Isolation from his family? Eviction from Israel? Is God threatening premature death? Is God demanding capital punishment? Texts demanding capital punishment (like Leviticus 20) use very clear language. That's one reason I think this isn't talking about death. I think it is demanding (or justifying) persecution of people who put Israel at risk for being judged by God as breaking the covenant. Societies have all kinds of ways of pressuring its members into conformity with its behavioral norms. That's what I suspect this means. 7:22 prohibits eating the fat of a certain class of animal. 7:25 tells us what those animals have in common. **Waving the offering** reminds me of the first century meat offered to idols. These offerings are summarized at the end of Lev 7.

Lev 8 looks like the actual consecration ceremony. 8:8 Aaron (and perhaps also his sons) are told were to keep the **Urim and Thummim** we heard about in Exodus 28:30, though there they seemed to be for

Aaron exclusively. The class had agreed to postpone discussion of them until we see them used. Here, I'll at least list references. Deut 33:8, Numbers 27:21, 1 Samuel 14:41 and 28:6, Ezra 2:63, and Nehemiah 7:65, and perhaps also 1 Samuel 23:9 and 30:7-8. 8:35 another 'do or die' ultimatum. Lev 9 closes with a demonstration of the glory and fire. Deuteronomy 21:5 and Numbers 6:23-27 show the possible nature of these blessings of the people.

Microcosm of Ancient Jewish Philosophy

Leviticus 8-9 display a central idea of the philosophy of ancient Israel in microcosm. To this point, Leviticus has covered rules for the sacrifices required of Israel. Chapter 8 shows the consecration of the priests actually happening. It takes 7 days (completeness). The chapter ends with a declaration that "Aaron and his sons did all the things that the LORD commanded by Moses." The very next day (chapter 9) shows a complete representative set of sacrifices. Moses tells the congregation, "This is the thing that the LORD commanded you to do, that the glory of the LORD may appear to you." The chapter concludes by showing that's exactly what happened. The message is cause and effect. Do the sacrifices and get the blessings. These chapters are written (or told to the listener) as evidence that the covenant works. It's described the way results of a science experiment would be described. Acceptance of this as evidence requires acceptance of this text as true. The message is that God has accepted the sacrifices.

Lev 10 begins with two sons of Aaron, **Nadab and Abihu**, offering 'unauthorized fire' and being killed by fire from Yahweh. At the very least, this follows the practice that goes back at least to the Hittites (and perhaps Mesopotamians) that ritual sacrifices must be pure. That is, offered exactly as required by the gods. See Exodus 30:9. The unauthorized fire could refer to practices their neighbors use to worship their gods. 10:9 suggests they may have been drunk. Moses taps his uncle for replacements. 10:6, 12 shows Aaron has not yet run out of sons. At least **Eleazar and Ithamar** remain. According to Exodus 6:23, that's all. Keep neat and tidy or I'll kill you. Remain under house arrest inside the tent of meeting or I'll kill you.

Lev 11 Finally the rules of **clean / unclean animals**. It makes paranoia look tame. The dietary restrictions seem to apply only to the people of Israel. See also Numbers 19:20 etc. I think these tabus may have been very ancient, perhaps from before people in the region began cooking their meat. Their original reasoning may be lost to antiquity. This reminds me of a story. Mom, why do you always cut off the ends of your roast? It's what my mom did, ask her. I don't know, ask my mom. Great-grandma, why? So it would fit in my pan.

Lev 12 a bit of gender bias. Lev 13-14 are about a skin disease called tsara'at (usually translated leprosy). It's a generic term, not Hansen's disease. Some of this is good medical observation and practice of quarantine.

Please read Leviticus 14 and note the ceremonial practices with no plausible medical benefit. Make your own decision. Is this **superstition** or not? In your own mind, make a case for your decision so that you can defend it to others.

Lev 14:21-32 is one of many places where the required sacrifice is adjusted by ability to pay. "From

each according to his ability, to each according to his need.” (Karl Marx, The Criticism of the Gotha Program, 1875). The rest of the ceremony is about the same. Next comes the cleansing of an infected house. It begins “When you come into the land of Canaan, which I give you for a possession,” which reminds us they are still wandering in the desert and have no houses. Perhaps until this point they never did have houses, just tents. The continuation is interesting. “and I put a case of leprous disease in a house in the land of your possession,” At least in this case, Yahweh claims credit for infecting the house. Some translations suggest Yahweh is responsible for the sign of the infection, not the infection itself. But he follows that with instructions for how to clean it up. 49-53 again seems superstition. Verse 53, “So he shall make atonement for the house, and it shall be clean.” is yet another indication that atonement is not just for sin.

Lev 15 is full of euphemisms about genital / sexual issues. “from his body” is often a euphemism for genitals. Again, I can't tell if it's superstition or medical practice regarding venereal diseases. Some strict Jewish sects (such as the Essenes) forbade sexual intercourse on a Sabbath. Compare this to Lev 18:19 and 20:18. To me, things like this chapter seem to show that atonement is not just for sin. It is first mentioned in Exodus 29:33.

Lev 16 talks about the whole **Day of Atonement**. 16:10 Azazel, with varying opinions about what it means. The best and most authoritative explanation I've found is here: http://www.chabad.org/parshah/article_cdo/aid/1846869/jewish/The-Scapegoat-Atonement-and-Purification.htm. I think its purpose is a psychological fresh start, a clean slate. We did some bad things this year, but we weren't conquered by yet another empire, and we're not all dead, so I guess we dodged the bullet. We do this ceremony so we can officially start the year with zero demerits. 6:29 It happens annually on the tenth day of the seventh month, forever. I also think this was one way of explaining why they were not promptly punished when they disobeyed Torah. If you obey Torah now, you will be blessed. Why do good things happen to bad people? This ritual day is called a Sabbath, though it does not always fall on Saturday. That meant that Sabbath restrictions were to be observed on this day also. The **Hebrew month** was a lunar month, beginning when the crescent moon was first visible at sunset. Later, different sects of Jews would argue about whether a particular month started on one day or the next. That was important, since it determined the timing of feasts and temple ceremonies. Some of the months were given Babylonian names. They occasionally added a 13th month to limit precession and keep the spring events in the spring. Lev 16:29 afflict yourselves: “This term expresses self-denial and self-mortification, connected with fasting and prayer.” (ESV notes) The chapter ends with another affirmation, “And Aaron did as the Lord commanded Moses.”, that it was not impossible.

Lev 17 emphasizes that the sacrificial system was a closed union shop. Only the designated priests were allowed to offer the sacrifices. Only the high priest was allowed to do certain things. This caste system was reflected in the architecture of the tabernacle, the later temple, and even their description of Mount Sinai. The first part of the chapter seems to suggest an offering must be made when any ox, lamb, or goat is killed. Perhaps that was true. I think it is more likely restricted to the killing of an animal for the purpose of sacrifice. I think the natural assumption upon seeing someone offering a sacrifice somewhere else would be that he's offering it to some other god. Jealous gods don't like that. 17:7 shows that the tribes formerly offered sacrifices to goat demons. I'm starting to look more into this. Compare with the Azazel. Don't do it any more, ever. If you're living in Israel, you may not

sacrifice to any other gods. Who are these “strangers who sojourn among them”? At the very least, it would be the slaves. 17:10 Don't eat blood. No blood pudding / blood sausage for Israel. It's ok to eat what dies on its own (probably not a good idea) or something torn apart by beasts, but when you do, you become unclean. Perhaps this is because the blood was not properly drained. Even sojourners among them must abide by these restrictions. They can't sacrifice to their own gods while they are among Israel.

What has the vast majority of the text so far discussed? Sacrifices. Slight mention of restitution seems incidental to the main subject of sacrifices. The other topics are skin disease and dietary restrictions. This is all ceremonial law.

Lev 18:1-5 begins with another strong demand for henotheism. The emphasis is on *my* rules. The rest of the chapter restricts **sexual intercourse** (note the euphemisms). For example, to “uncover the nakedness” of a man seems to mean to have sex with his wife. Though only verse 18 specifically mentions marriage, it is commonly believed that this whole section restricts marriage with close blood relatives and then close marriage-related relatives. Notice this: To whom are these instructions given? Who makes the sexual decisions? Except for 18:23, all these instructions are to men. Is there any OT example where a woman makes a marriage choice? It covers various close relationships like incest. 18:18 You can't marry your wife's sister while your wife is still alive. Recall the kinsman redeemer and also the NT question about whose wife will she be in the afterlife. You can't sacrifice your children to **Molech** (Moloch, an Ammonite god), but it doesn't prohibit sacrificing your children to Yahweh. The context of the Molech instruction suggests this is talking about sacrificing your children to service as temple prostitutes rather than sacrificing by fire. Recall that Israel didn't like the Ammonites, and insulted them by claiming less-than-honorable parentage for them via the scandal of Lot and his daughters in Genesis 19. Archaeology has found little or no evidence for Molech or of any bull-headed Phoenecian god. No male homosexuality and no bestiality. Doing these things would make you unclean and that would make the land unclean. 18:24 Interesting that foreigners who did these things made themselves and the land unclean. They had no reason to follow practices dictated by the God of Israel. Perhaps the main point is in verse 28, where God threatens to kick them [Israel] out of their land just as he kicked their predecessors out of the land. It is used as an excuse to evict them. This section concludes with the famous, concise henotheistic statement of the unification of the gods of the north and south: I am Yahweh your Elohim.



The demand of holiness in Lev 19 reinforces the henotheistic nature of the covenant. A common definition of **holy**, as used here, is set apart, unique, distinct. We see it expressed clearly in Lev 26:12, “And I will walk among you and will be your God, and you shall be my people.” No one else will be your god. No one else will be my people. This was a unique relationship in the ANE. Keep your distinctives by obeying Sabbaths. Worship me exclusively. This reminder includes reminders of a few key rules: revere parents; Sabbaths; no images.

I find some significant differences between the KJV and the ESV in this chapter. I think they are more than could be explained by translation, so I suspect differences in the textual base. Lev 19:5 Leftovers for one day only. They didn't have refrigeration, and I haven't seen any indication that they preserve by drying, salt, or anything else. If this was indeed a health or sanitation observation, the phrase “bear his iniquity” could mean suffer the natural consequences of his action. Since this is addressed to all the people of Israel, it seems to indicate that the meat of the peace offering stays with the offerer. This also reminds me of the NT meat offered to idols. 19:9 (with a tiny bit in 19:3) introduces **civil law**, the **Golden Rule**, love your neighbor as yourself. The fact that civil law is scattered among the **ceremonial law** shows that Israel was not making a point of any clear distinction between the two categories. Israel was required to obey all of it. Instead, it represents a summary, an abstraction, an encapsulation, a generalization of the law. I discuss this more in my Gospels notes on Matthew 22:36-40. Nearly all of the instructions require good treatment of fellow Israelites. Sojourners traveling with you receive less protection. Foreigners get no protection. Bleeding-heart liberals would be disappointed to read 19:15, which prohibits partiality either for or against the poor.

Leviticus 19:19, “You shall observe my statutes,” seems redundant. From chabad.org, ' [The term] מִצְוָה, “statutes,” refers to the decrees of the Divine King, which have no rationale.' Apparent limits on selective inter-breeding, or even crop mixing. This is an example of category confusion. It seems to forbid what Jacob did with Laban in Genesis 30. 19:17 What does it mean by hate? It should be the opposite of “reason frankly”. Throw away fruit for the tree's first 3 years. Forbidden is, literally, uncircumcised. The ESV notes compare this to a child before his 8th day. Offer the fruit the next year. After that, it's yours. Some ceremonial practices are stuck in here among the civil law. It is likely they all refer to Canaanite practices, emphasizing the requirements of distinctiveness and henotheism. By accepting the covenant, the people had already signed the blank check to do whatever their god told them to do. 19:18 makes clear that **your neighbor** means your own people, Israel. However, 19:33 extends at least some protections to sojourners. Similarly, the restrictions on vengeance apply only to your own people. But compare 19:33.

Jewish thought (see chabad.org) suggests this passage is about a specific instance of a Canaanite handmaid, partly a handmaid and partly a freed woman, betrothed to a Hebrew slave. She has been only partly redeemed, thus her marriage is only partly binding. It would be inappropriate for us to generalize from this specific case. “Assigned to” or “designated for” is a description of ownership and/or betrothal.

Leviticus 19 concludes with “I am Yahweh your Elohim” and uses it in some form 16 times in this chapter alone. The usage began in 11:44, and hammers the demand to separate yourselves. Lev 20 Israel is required to impose the **death penalty** for anyone who gives any children to Molech, curses father or mother, adultery, male homosexuality, bestiality, a medium (one who communicates with the dead), or necromancy (magic communication with the dead for divination, including things like examination of sheep entrails). Incest or intercourse with a woman during her menstrual period receive lesser punishment, cut off from your people, or childless. 20:27 imposes the death penalty for anyone who practices as a medium or necromancer, stronger than the penalty for consulting one in verse 6 and 19:31. That instruction ends with, “his blood is upon him.” That means the penalty of Genesis 9:6, “Whoever sheds the blood of man, by man shall his blood be shed,” does not apply to the

people imposing capital punishment. No one seems to know why this verse is here rather than immediately after verse 6.

Do you ever wonder why all the fuss about clean/unclean animals, people, and practices? Lev 20:25 answers that question.

Lev 21 prohibits priests from contact with the dead. Exceptions are made only for their closest relatives. 21:5-6 prohibits priests from adopting the mourning and burial practices of their neighboring tribes. Chief priests can't marry a prostitute, a defiled woman, or a divorced woman. By implication, others may. If a priest's daughter becomes a prostitute, the priests are ordered to burn her with fire. 21:10 places additional restrictions on a high priest. He can't let down his hair or tear his clothes (a symbol of mourning). He must marry a virgin of his own people (Israel). That's one way to make sure his children are actually descendants of Aaron. Clearly they did not believe in celibacy of the priesthood. 21:16 service limitations of an Aaronic descendant with a blemish (physical defect). They can still eat the food allowed for the priests. This sounds like their version of the ADA (Americans with Disabilities Act). The list of blemishes indirectly gives an idea of what they meant by an unblemished sacrificial animal.

Lev 22 limits access to holy things. A priest's guest or employee may not eat, but his purchased slave may. You can't steal from the priests. 22:17 rules on freewill offerings and offerings to fulfill vows. 22:26-28 seem puzzling, but again, they may refer to fertility ritual practices of their neighbors. The chapter ends with words difficult for us to appreciate or even understand. "I am Yahweh who sanctifies [separates] you, who brought you out of the land of Egypt, to be your Elohim: I am Yahweh." Remember it was Yahweh (not Elohim) who delivered Israel from Egypt.

Lev 23 enumerates the appointed [required] feasts. Guess how many. This calendar was one of many distinctives of Israel. Sabbath; Passover; Firstfruits; Weeks; Trumpets; Day of Atonement; Booths. 23:22 "your land" refers to Canaan, Palestine, Judea, the promised land they had not yet received. The repeated expression "in all your dwellings" is likely an anachronism. By the time this was written (during or after the Babylonian captivity, Diaspora), Israel had the idea to continue to worship the God of Israel even when they were no longer in the land of Israel. The first is [in the ESV] a Sabbath, not the Sabbath. The name is derived from 'seventh'. A holy convocation is a set-apart public assembly. The harvest feasts include limitation on gleaning.

The Hebrew calendar was a lunar calendar, with each month beginning at the new crescent at sunset. Occasionally an extra month was added so the harvest feasts could stay around harvest time. With this in mind, on what day of the week did Passover begin?

Lev 24 specifies the eternal flame and the bread for the tabernacle. 24:10 This was apparently the first instance of blasphemy, already prohibited in Ex 20:7 and 22:28. Or this was the first instance by a mixed breed (Israelite mother and Egyptian father). It required divination by the seer. Yahweh spoke directly to Moses on the subject. All the congregation shall stone [any blasphemer] to death, including any sojourner. Definitely not full freedom of speech.

Lev 24:17 states the groundbreaking principle of **an eye for an eye**. Inflict on the perpetrator the harm he inflicted on you. But it prohibited escalation. That was social progress. Capital punishment is clearly prescribed for murder. The people did it.

Lev 25 The Sabbath Year; the Year of Jubilee – You can't plant or harvest, but you can eat the food. See also Isaiah 5:8. redemption of property; specific support and definition for the poor (“cannot maintain himself”). His status is a bit higher than that of a slave. You are required to support him. There are clear distinctions between an indentured servant (of Israel) and slaves you buy from neighboring tribes and sojourners. By implication, you can rule over the latter ruthlessly. Rules for redeeming an indentured servant. 25:14, 17 suggest the second greatest commandment, the Golden Rule. 25:20, 41 The 'brother' is a fellow Israelite. 25:26 But who can make idols? God. Who are those idols? Humans.

After a brief reminder about idols, images, and Sabbaths, Lev 26 moves on to the next section of the covenant in the style of the vassal suzerainty treaty: blessings for obedience. Compare to Deuteronomy 27-29. Look carefully at what Israel was legally entitled to expect. Next come the cursings for disobedience. This was the fodder for the prophetic worldview. If any of these bad things happen to you, you must have disobeyed. Read them carefully. It's nasty, but it's not hell fire and brimstone. All of the punishment is right here and now, right here on earth. The covenant closes with the summary, “These are the statutes and rules and laws that the Lord made between himself and the people of Israel through Moses on Mount Sinai.”

Lev 26:2 speaks of sanctuaries, referring back to Exodus 25:8.

Lev 27 appears to be an appendix, out of context with the rest of the book. From the ESV notes, it seems to be about a non-Levite who makes a dedication vow. They can't fulfill the vow by serving on the temple grounds, since they are not descendants of Aaron. So they pay money. This establishes the amount of money, calibrated to the price of a slave. It establishes a tithe and concludes with another closing summary.

Resources

Some of these are placed here so that the student will follow the instructions, read the texts, and get the answers from the texts. Yeah, I know, wishful thinking on my part.

Ch	Type	Who offers	Leftovers	M/F	Pleasing aroma?	For sin?	Required?
1	Burnt	All	none	M	Y	N	N
2	Grain	All	priests	---	Y	N	N
3	Peace/Fellowship	All	offerer	M/F	Y	N	N
4	Sin (unintentional)	Priest	burn outside	M bull	N	Y	Y
4		Congreg.	same	M bull	N	Y	Y
4		Leader	priests	M goat	N	Y	Y
4		Common man	priests	F goat or lamb	Y?	Y	Y
5	Silent witness	Anyone	priests	F lamb or goat or 2 birds or flour	N	Y	Y
5	Ceremonial	Anyone	priests	ram+restitution	N	Y	Y
6	Oppress neighbor	Anyone	priests	ram+1.2x restitution	N	Y	Y
7	Guilt	Anyone	priests	(whatever)	N	Y	Y