

INTRODUCTION TO 3rd BIBLEBOOK

LEVITICUS (April, 1444 B.C.)

A. The origin of the book of Leviticus	1
B. The division of the book of Leviticus	2
C. The difference between the Old Testament ceremonial laws and rituals and that of the heathen nations	3
D. The main messages of the book of Leviticus	5
E. Two principles in the book of Leviticus	7
F. The Messiah in the book of Leviticus	8

A. THE ORIGIN OF THE BOOK OF LEVITICUS.

1. The name of the book.

The Old Testament was originally written in the Hebrew language. In the Hebrew Bible, the first five books form a unity and each book is called by its first words. So in Hebrew, this book is called 'and he called' (Hebrew: wa-jiqra<), referring to the Lord's call of Moses. The oldest translation of the Hebrew Old Testament was in the Greek language. In the Greek translation this book is called 'Leviticon', referring to the Levitical priesthood¹.

2. The writer, the date and the place of writing.

From the book of Leviticus itself we discover the following two facts:

Leviticus was written by Moses. From the book of Leviticus it is clear that Israel was still living in tents in a camp and in the desert. Certain parts of the sacrifices had to be burned "outside the camp" (4:12; 14:8). People with infectious diseases had to live "outside the camp" until the priest had examined them and declared them healed (13:46; 14:3). The scapegoat, on which all the sins, wickedness and rebellion of the Israelites was lain, was released "outside the camp" in a solitary place in the desert (16:21-22). The Israelites were forbidden to make any sacrifices inside or outside the camp, except at "the tent of meeting" (17:3-4). From the book of Leviticus it is also clear that Israel was on its way to the land of Canaan where idolatrous and wicked nations lived (18:3,24). All these conditions point to the time when Moses led Israel to the Promised Land. Leviticus 26:46 and 27:34 clearly state that the regulations given in the book of Leviticus was given to Moses on Mount Sinai. Exodus 40:17 and Numbers 1:1 indicate that Israel stayed for one month at Mount Sinai. Thus we conclude that Leviticus was recorded by Moses in the month of April, 1444 B.C.

Leviticus had a few later additions by an editor. A few smaller parts in Leviticus describe conditions which probably existed later in an established society in Canaan rather than in the Sinai desert. For example, the following parts show that Israel was no more journeying in the desert, but was living in Canaan. Three times we read about social conditions found in established societies, in which the very poor were allowed to bring a *dove or a pigeon* as a sacrifice instead of a lamb (5:7-13), or in which people who did not possess animals gave a *sum of money* as a guilt offering (5:15). Three times we read about *the sanctuary shekel*, which should be distinguished from the ordinary shekel used among the Canaanite nations (5:15). Redeeming people from the special vows they made to the Lord may be done with a sum of money (27:1-13). Seven times we read about the differentiation made between the native-born Israelite and "*the alien living with you*" (19:34). Finally, Leviticus 25:32-34 speaks of '*the houses*' of the Levites living in '*the Levitical towns*'.

Other facts show that several parts were added to the book at a later time when new conditions made them necessary. For example, the regulations about infectious diseases in Leviticus 13 and 14 are interrupted by regulations about *clothing and houses contaminated with mildew*. Likewise, the regulations about not eating unclean foods in Leviticus 11 are interrupted by regulations about *not touching unclean things* (11:24-40). Likewise, the last part of Leviticus 18 seems to be an addition. Leviticus 18:1-24 contains commandments that forbid God's people to follow the evil practices of Egypt which they had left, and the evil practices of the land of Canaan which they had not yet entered. But Leviticus 18:25-29 uses the past tense and describes Israel as already living in the land of Canaan for a long time, because the Canaanite nations had already been destroyed or absorbed into the nation of Israel. It is clear that for the greatest part Moses is the writer of the book of Leviticus, but that some parts have been added by a later editor before the time of king Solomon in 971 B.C., because he built the temple between 968-961 B.C.

No matter whom God used to write the Bible, we Christians believe that the whole Bible has been inspired by the Holy Spirit. We base this on 2 Timothy 3:16 and 2 Peter 1:20-21.

3. The character of the book.

Like Genesis and Exodus, Leviticus is the result of God's *revelation*. The book begins with the words, "The Lord called Moses and spoke to him from 'the tent of meeting'. He said, 'Speak to the Israelites and say to them'." Then the Lord gave Moses instructions concerning the sacrifices. No less than 38 times we read the statement, "the Lord said to Moses" or "the Lord said to Moses and Aaron". *No other book in the Bible is so full of direct messages from the Lord.*

B. THE DIVISION OF THE BOOK OF LEVITICUS

¹ Hebrews 7:11

The theme of Leviticus: **“God determines Israel’s approach to him, fellowship with him and worship of him.”**

The book of Leviticus may be divided into seven parts as follows:

1. Leviticus 1-7. The different offerings that Israel had to bring in order to have fellowship with God.

It regulates the circumstances under which each offering should be brought and the way in which it should be brought. There are five different kinds of offerings:

- the burnt offering
- the grain offering
- the peace (fellowship) offering
- the sin offering
- the guilt offering.

Leviticus 6:8 - 7:38 regulates what the priests should do and what their share of the offering is.

2. Leviticus 8-10. The priesthood in Israel.

It describes the ordination of the first priests, Aaron and his sons, into the priesthood and the tragic death of Aaron’s oldest two sons.

3. Leviticus 11-15. Ceremonial (ritual) cleanliness.

Israel must keep itself away from all ceremonial unclean things. Leviticus lists all kinds of food, which is regarded as ceremonially clean and unclean (chapter 11). It regulates how a person after childbirth may become ceremonially clean again (chapter 12). It regulates how people with infectious diseases, clothes and buildings that were contaminated by mildew, may again become ceremonially clean. There were rules against viral infection² (chapter 13-14). And it regulates how people, who have sexual emissions or show symptoms of having some kind of sexual disease, may again become ceremonially clean (chapter 15).

4. Leviticus 16-17. Bringing sacrifices: who and where.

Nobody, except the high priest on the Day of Atonement once a year, may appear before the Lord in ‘the Most Holy Place’ behind the curtain in front of the atonement cover on the ark (chapter 16). Nobody may sacrifice anywhere inside or outside the camp, except in front of the tent of meeting (chapter 17). This avoids idolatry. It also forbids the eating of blood.

5. Leviticus 18-20. Relationships towards family members, the neighbour and the alien living in the midst of Israel.

It lists very clearly all unlawful sexual relationships: incest, adultery, homosexuality, bestiality (chapter 18)³. It lists various laws of holiness, truthfulness and fairness towards the neighbour as well as laws forbidding all forms of spiritism, sorcery and occultism (chapter 19). It also lists the punishments for violating these laws, especially the punishments for idolatry, occultism, sexual perversion and rebellion against parents (chapter 20).

6. Leviticus 21-25. The ceremonial life of Israel: how to approach God in worship.

The purpose of the ceremonial law in the Old Testament was to teach God’s people how to approach God in worship.

The ceremonial law consisted:

- *holy people*: the priests and Levites
- *a holy place*: the Tent of Meeting and later the temple
- *holy times*: the Sabbath and festivals.
- *holy actions* like the animal and grain sacrifices, the first fruit of the harvest, the first-born son, tithes, ablutions, clean food and circumcision

This part of Leviticus gives laws for the priesthood (chapter 21) and for unacceptable sacrifices (chapter 22). It regulates Israel’s holy seasons (times) and yearly festivals.

There were five yearly festivals, namely: 1. the Passover and the Feast of Unleavened Bread, 2. the Feast of Weeks or Pentecost, 3. the Feast of Trumpets, 4. the Day of Atonement and 5. the Feast of Tabernacles. There is one weekly festival called the Sabbath and two seasonal festivals called the Sabbath Year, which occurred every seventh year, and the Year of Jubilee, which occurred every fiftieth year. To this section is added chapter 24, which gives additional regulations about the Tent of Meeting and especially about the death penalty and some laws of restitution when a person has caused damages.

² Viral infection (like Covid 19). 1. Wash your hands (Exodus 30:19). 2. Keep your distance and isolation (Leviticus 13:4-5). 3. Wear a face mask (Leviticus 13:45).

³ 1 Corinthians 6:9-11. Who will not inherit the Kingdom of God? The sexual immoral, idolators, adulterers, male prostitutes, homosexual offenders, thieves, the greedy, drunkards, slanderers, swindlers.

7. Leviticus 26-27. Rewards, punishments special vows.

Chapter 26 was originally intended to be the closing chapter and emphasises God's reward for obedience and God's punishment for disobedience. Chapter 27 is a later addition to the book giving laws about redeeming people who have made a special vow to the Lord.

C. THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN THE OLD TESTAMENT CEREMONIAL LAWS AND RITUALS AND THAT OF THE HEATHEN NATIONS.

Moral laws.

Leviticus 18-20 contains various moral laws like those in the Ten Commandments. The moral laws stress living *a holy life!* Leviticus 19:2 says, "Be holy, because I, the Lord your God, am holy". The moral laws stress worshipping the living God. Psalm 115:8 says, "Those who make them (idols) will be like them, and so will all who trust in them." *You can always tell the character of someone's god by looking at the way that person worships, lives and relates to others.* The worship and life of the Canaanite nations were wicked, cruel and immoral. Their gods were also full of wickedness, cruelty and immorality. These gods demanded sacrifice of children and sponsored temple prostitution. In contrast the God of the Bible is alive, morally pure and holy. The God of the Bible demands that his people worship and live in accordance with his character!

Ceremonial laws.

Why did the Holy Spirit, who inspired the Bible, give a place to ceremonial laws and rituals which were also found in other nations in the world? The answer is that the Holy Spirit intended to teach God's people how to approach God in worship and life. The Holy Spirit intended to teach them that *the God of the Bible is the controlling centre of everything, that he is the final goal of every action on earth and that he is the Saviour of the whole man.*

What were the differences between the ceremonial laws and rituals of Israel and that of the other nations?

1. The Old Testament ceremonies were very different.

The Old Testament ceremonial (ritual) law of Israel regulated the worship of a holy God. Its purpose was to regulate how sinful man could approach and worship a holy God. While the religious ceremonies of the nations depended on *magical rites*, the Old Testament ceremonies *depended on the inner attitude of the heart*. Of course, God has the right and power to reject the offerings that people bring. God says in Isaiah 1:13, "Stop bringing meaningless offerings! Your incense is detestable to me." The value of the Old Testament offerings depended on *the attitude of the heart and the sincerity of behaviour!*

The Old Testament ceremonies consisted of four parts. There were laws with respect to *holy places* (the Tent of Meeting/tabernacle and later the temple). There were laws with respect to *holy people* like the priests and the Levites. There were laws with respect to *holy times (seasons)*, like the Sabbath, the festivals and the fasts. There were laws with respect to *holy actions*, like circumcision, ablutions, eating clean foods, bringing sacrifices, tithes and harvest offerings.

While *the religious life* was essentially a matter of the individual, *the rituals* were a matter of the whole community. Therefore the value of these rituals depended on the extent to which they were an expression of the sincere spiritual life of the individual!

- The prophet Moses (1527 - 1407 B.C.) teaches that God demands, "*Circumcise your hearts and do not be stiff-necked any longer!*"⁴
- The prophet Samuel (1060-1011 B.C.) teaches this truth when he says: "Does the Lord delight in burnt offerings and sacrifices as much as in *obeying the voice of the Lord?* To obey is better than sacrifice."⁵
- King David (1011- 971 B.C.) teaches this truth by saying: "You do not delight in sacrifice, or I would bring it; you do not take pleasure in burnt offerings. The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit; *a broken and contrite heart*, O God, you will not despise."⁶
- The Bible says, "Without faith it is impossible to please God"⁷.

The Old Testament religious ceremonies without a changed heart and without faith were completely useless!

2. The Old Testament Tent of Meeting or temple was very different.

While the temples of the nations were *places of idols*, the Old Testament Tent of Meeting or temple was *the dwelling of the living God amidst his people*. While despicable idols filled the temples and shrines of the nations, only the glory of the living God would once in a while descend visibly in a cloud on the Tent of Meeting.

In the Old Testament, the God of the Bible never acknowledged the existence of any other god. He says, "Before me no god was formed, nor will there be one after me. I am the LORD and apart from me there is no saviour"⁸.

⁴ Deuteronomy 10:16

⁵ 1 Samuel 15:22

⁶ Psalm 51:16-17

⁷ Hebrews 11:6

⁸ Isaiah 43:10-11

While millions of people every year flock to particular religious shrines and buildings in particular religious cities, the God of the Bible is not worshipped at any particular place on earth. After the first coming of Jesus Christ also the Old Testament temple had finished its purpose. Paul says “The God who made the world and everything in it is the Lord of heaven and earth and *does not live in temples built by hands*”.⁹

3. The Old Testament priests were very different.

While the priests of the nations were regarded as *loaded with magical powers to manipulate the gods*, the Old Testament priests were *only servants of the living God*. The priests of the heathen nations were regarded as people with visionary and magical powers. They were wonder-doctors or witch-doctors, or bearers of some secret, mysterious and magical knowledge. In contrast, the Old Testament priests were appointed by God to be *mediators between the people and God*.

Tasks of the priests:

- Their first task was to preserve God’s Word, to guard God’s covenant, to teach God’s laws to the people¹⁰ and to bless the people¹¹.
- Their second task was to be righteous judges and make fair decisions in disputes.
In these two tasks the priests *represented God with the people*. They spoke on behalf of God to the people.
- Their third task was to bring the offerings of the people to God¹².
- Their fourth task was to worship God with songs and prayers and pray for the people to God.
In these two tasks the priests *represented the people with God*.

In the book of Genesis, Abraham still built his own altars and brought his own offerings to God¹³. But in the books of Exodus¹⁴ and Leviticus, these functions belonged only to the priests, who were appointed by God from the tribe of Levi. Although the ordinary people still brought their offerings to the tent of meeting, slaughtered, skinned and removed the intestines themselves (1:5), it is clear that the priests were appointed to actually present these offerings to the Lord.

4. The Old Testament offerings were very different.

The Old Testament offerings were not regarded as food for God. They were *only for the atonement of sin!* The nations often regarded their sacrifices as *food for their gods*. Israel still used ancient sacrificial terminology, like ‘a food-offering by fire’¹⁵ and ‘the Lord’s table’¹⁶. They added ‘salt’ to the meat offering and ‘oil’ to the flour offering, because some of the offerings became the share of the priests. But nowhere in the Old Testament do we find the idea that the God of the Bible needs our food. Acts 17:25 clearly teaches that the God who made the heavens and the earth “is *not served by human hands, as if he needed anything*, because he himself gives all men life and breath and everything else.”

The Old Testament offerings were not regarded as gifts to God. The nations often regarded their sacrifices as gifts to *appease their gods*. But the Old Testament teaches that the offerings were *not gifts of man to God, but rather were God’s gracious gifts to man*. God had graciously given the institution of sacrificing to man as the way in which sinful people could have access to God and fellowship with God. God had given the blood of creatures to *make atonement for man’s sins*. In Leviticus 17:11 we read, “For the life of a creature is in the blood, and *I have given it to you to make atonement for yourselves on the altar; it is the blood that makes atonement for one’s life.*” Therefore, the Old Testament offerings were not the result of man trying to climb up to the unknown God, but rather the way in which the God of the Bible came down to man to reconcile man to himself. The offerings were meant to teach man that *only by a death could man gain life* and a relationship with God. The Old Testament offerings were therefore the visible means of God’s grace.

The Old Testament offerings were not regarded to have magical power. The sacrifices of the nations were regarded to have magical power to *manipulate the gods* and to force reconciliation between the gods and people. The sacrifices of the nations could control the minds of their gods and the lack of sacrifices could make those gods very angry and revengeful. But in the Old Testament the offerings had no magical power at all. God instituted the offerings and controlled their functioning. Of course, God is able to show grace without any offerings. He did that after Israel had broken the covenant by making the golden calf¹⁷. He instituted the sacrifices to teach people that *without the shedding of blood there is no forgiveness* (17:11)¹⁸.

The Old Testament sacrifices were a shadow pointing forward to the sacrifice of atonement that Jesus Christ brought on the cross. The animal sacrifices were repeated daily because they only had prophetic symbolic effect. They pointed

⁹ Acts 17:24; Acts 7:48-49

¹⁰ Deuteronomy 33:9-10

¹¹ Deuteronomy 10:8

¹² Deuteronomy 33:10

¹³ Genesis 12:7

¹⁴ Exodus 28:1

¹⁵ Leviticus 3:11

¹⁶ Malachi 1:7

¹⁷ Exodus 32:30f

¹⁸ Hebrews 9:22

forward to the death of Jesus Christ on the cross to once for all time make atonement for sins. Hebrews 9:24-26 says, “Christ did not enter a man-made sanctuary that was only a copy of the true one; he entered heaven itself, now to appear for us in God’s presence.

Nor did he enter heaven to offer himself again and again, the way the high priest enters the Most Holy Place every year with blood that is not his own. Then Christ would have to suffer many times since the creation of the world. But now he has appeared once for all at the end of the ages to do away with sin by the sacrifice of himself.” Romans 3:25-26 says, “God presented him in his blood as a sacrifice of atonement (and this atonement is received) through faith. He did this to demonstrate his justice, because in his forbearance he had left the sins committed beforehand (during the Old Testament period) unpunished – he did it to demonstrate his justice at the present time, so as to be just and the one who justifies those who have faith in Jesus.”

5. The Old Testament people bringing offerings were very different.

While the bringing of sacrifices among the nations was *an exclusive privilege for kings and priests*, every person in the Old Testament could bring a sacrifice. Among the nations, often only their kings and priests were worthy of bringing sacrifices to their gods. This was because the king was regarded as related to his god and the priest was regarded as possessing secret knowledge to open the way to the gods.

However, in the Old Testament the king was no more than any ordinary citizen. He was as it were taken from pasturing sheep in the field to pasture God’s people¹⁹. The king was subject to God’s Law just like all the other citizens in Israel. Also the priest in the Old Testament was nothing more than a member of an ordinary family, called by God “to minister in the Holy Place”²⁰. Leviticus 1:1-9 teaches clearly that in the Old Testament, the ordinary people knew God’s laws and ceremonies, brought an animal without defect to the entrance of the Tent of Meeting, laid their hand on the head of the animal to signify that it would make atonement for sin on their behalf, slaughtered it, skinned it and cut it into pieces.

6. The Old Testament ceremonial law was very different.

While the rituals of the nations were *the product of some priestly class* of people, the book of Leviticus was *God’s revelation*. While the rituals of the nations were often individual, family or clan rituals how to appease the gods, the ceremonial law was the same for the whole nation of Israel and taught people how to approach and worship God. While the anger of the gods of the nations was despotic and purely arbitrary, the wrath of the God of the Bible was caused only by disobedience and disrespect of God’s clearly revealed will that usually resulted in failing to live a holy life.

D. THE MAIN MESSAGES OF THE BOOK OF LEVITICUS.

1. Leviticus teaches the way how people in the Old Testament may approach, fellowship and worship the Lord.

The main goal and theme of Leviticus is regulating how God’s redeemed people may approach, fellowship and worship God. All the ceremonial laws are intended to prevent Israel from worshipping God in the abominable ways of the pagan nations. The offerings are never brought to idols. Everybody in Israel was forbidden to follow the detestable practices of these nations. The religious festivals had to be free from the drunkenness, orgies and revelry of these nations. The theme of Leviticus may be described in terms of Psalm 29:2, “Worship the Lord in the splendour of his holiness.” *The Old Testament ceremonial laws prepared God’s Old Testament people for the New Testament way of worshipping God.* John 4:24 teaches that the New Testament way of worship is not outwardly ceremonial, but inwardly “in spirit and in truth”.

2. Leviticus teaches that only God himself determines the way of access, fellowship and worship.

The book of Genesis teaches clearly that people have failed under all favourable conditions. All people need God as their Saviour!

The book of Exodus teaches clearly that God saves people only by his grace and mercy and not because people deserve it. Since access to God is made possible, the believer must maintain his access to God, fellowship with God and worship of God only in the specific way that God himself has commanded. People may not worship God in any way as they please, but must worship in the only way that God has prescribed.

The book of Leviticus regulates the way in which believers during the Old Testament period should have access to God, fellowship and worship God. *Therefore all the regulations with regard to the offerings and other rituals must originate with God and not with man. All religious rituals that are invented by man should be regarded as an attempt to establish some kind of self-justifying personal merit before God.* The Old Testament ceremonies prepared Israel to receive the coming Messiah, Jesus Christ. John 14:6 says that he would be the only way of uninhibited access to God.

3. Leviticus teaches that the way of access to God is only on the basis of substitutionary atonement.

The God of the Bible is a holy and righteous God. He hates wickedness and unholiness. He will not associate with people who are wicked and unholy. Therefore he has commanded the way how people during the Old Testament period

¹⁹ 2 Samuel 7:8

²⁰ Exodus 28:43

could maintain access to God. Israel as a community could maintain access to God only by offerings. By the shedding of the blood of a sacrifice, an innocent life was substituted for the forfeited life of the guilty person. The Old Testament ceremonies prepared Israel to receive the coming Messiah, Jesus Christ. Hebrews 9:12 says that by the shedding of his own blood Jesus Christ once for all obtained eternal redemption.

4. Leviticus teaches that the offerings to God in the Old Testament must be perfect.

No lamb or goat that had any kind of defect may be offered to the Lord.

- Nothing corrupt or liable to speedy decay may be presented as an offering to God. Therefore, leaven, honey and milk, which quickly caused decay, were excluded from the offerings to God. But salt, which preserves and gives taste, were added to the offerings to God²¹. Leaven and honey, which was a kind of syrup produced from fruit and dates, quickly ferments, and milk quickly sours.
- Animals like pigs were excluded, because in those days the pagan nations associated pigs with the worship of the gods of the nether world.
- Nothing impure may enter the holy presence of God. People with infectious diseases or wearing contaminated clothing were excluded. Clothing made of a mixture of different materials, such as wool and flax, were excluded, because they typified the mingling of the holy and the profane. All these perfect offerings in the Old Testament were intended to teach the Israelites that God is satisfied with nothing less than what is perfect.
- The Old Testament ceremonial laws prepared Israel to receive the coming Messiah, Jesus Christ. Hebrews 7:26,28 says that Jesus Christ is the only perfect human being who has ever lived. He “is holy, blameless, pure, set apart from sinners, exalted above the heavens, ... made perfect for ever!” Nothing but the perfect Jesus Christ could be the perfect sacrifice for the sins of the whole world.

5. Leviticus teaches that the purpose of fellowship and worship of God is love expressed in holiness.

In Leviticus 19:2 the Lord says to Moses, “Speak to the entire assembly of Israel and say to them: ‘Be holy, because I, the Lord your God, am holy.’” The word ‘*holy*’ means *to be set apart from* the sinful and rebellious world and *to be dedicated to* the worship and service of the one and only living God. God wants his own people to be like himself. God is holy and he wants his people to be holy. How is holiness expressed? Holiness is especially shown in the way the people of God relate to God and to their family members, their neighbours and to the aliens living in their midst. In short, holiness is shown in loving God and the neighbour. In Leviticus 19:18 God says, “Love your neighbour as yourself!”

Therefore the fundamental attitude of love is expressed in the following five ways of holiness:

- Love is expressed in holiness when you abstain from sexual immorality. In Leviticus chapter 18 and 20 we read that the people of God show their love in holiness when they abstain from every kind of sexual immorality and from anything that violates the marriage bond. Especially adultery, incest, homosexuality and bestiality are abominable to God. And God will certainly punish people who do these things.
 - In Leviticus 18:20 and 20:10 God says concerning *adultery*: “Do not have sexual relations with your neighbour’s wife and defile yourself with her. If a man commits adultery with another man’s wife, ... both the adulterer and the adulteress must be put to death.”
 - In Leviticus 18:6 and 20:17 God says concerning *incest*: “No one is to approach any close relative to have sexual relations. If a man ... has sexual relations with ... the daughter of either his father or his mother, it is a disgrace and they must be cut off before the eyes of their people.”
 - In Leviticus 18:22 and 20:13 God says concerning *homosexuality* “Do not lie with a man as one lies with a woman; that is detestable. If a man lies with a man as one lies with a woman, both of them has done what is detestable. They must be put to death.”
 - And in Leviticus 18:23 and 20:15 God says concerning *bestiality*: “Do not have sexual relations with an animal and defile yourself with it; that is a perversion. If a man has sexual relations with an animal, he must be put to death and you must kill the animal.”
 - In Leviticus 18:24 God warns: “Do not defile yourselves in any of these ways, because this is how the nations that I am going to drive out before you became defiled.” The reason why God punished the Canaanite nations was because they committed these sexual immoral sins.
- Love is expressed in holiness when you are honest and incorruptible. In Leviticus 19:11 and 16 God commands, “Do not steal. Do not lie. Do not deceive one another. Do not go about spreading slander among your people.”
- Love is expressed in holiness when you are fair and just. In Leviticus 19:13 and verse 35-36 God commands, “Do not defraud your neighbour or rob him. Do not hold back the wages of a hired man overnight. Do not use dishonest standards when measuring length, weight or quantity. Use honest scales and honest weights.” Unlike the common practice among the nations to cheat and bribe in business transactions, God commands his people to be different! God’s people should love their neighbour by never cheating and by never paying bribes or receiving bribes under any circumstances. In Leviticus 19:15 God commands, “Do not pervert justice; do not show partiality to the poor or favouritism towards the great, but judge your neighbour fairly.” The same is commanded in Deuteronomy 16:19, “Do not pervert justice ... Do not accept a bribe, for a bribe blinds the eyes of the wise and twists the words of the

²¹ Leviticus 2:13

righteous.” Unlike the common practice among the nations to influence decisions made in the court of justice by paying bribes to false witnesses and bribes to the judges, the people of God should love their neighbour by never perverting justice, by never showing favouritism to the rich and powerful and by never receiving or giving bribes!

- Love is expressed in holiness when you protect life. In Leviticus 19:16 God commands, “Do not do anything that endangers your neighbour’s life.” And in Leviticus 19:14 God commands, “Do not curse the deaf or put a stumbling block in front of the blind.” Because the deaf cannot hear and the blind cannot see, the people of God should never do things that would prejudice the interests of the handicapped or in any way harm the handicapped. God’s people should especially be concerned with the needs of the handicapped, the aged, the widows and orphans, the poor and the oppressed.
- Love is expressed in holiness when you avoid every form of occultism. In Leviticus 19:26 and 31 God commands, “Do not practice divination or sorcery. Do not turn to mediums or seek out spiritism, for you will be defiled by them.” And in Leviticus 20:6 and 27 God warns that he will punish both the people who practice occultism and the people who consult the occultists. He says, “I will set my face against the person who turns to mediums and spiritists ... I will cut him off from his people. A man or woman who is a medium or spiritist among you must be put to death.” While modern man thinks that spiritism and other forms of occultism are harmless, God regards it as dangerous for man and detestable.

While in the Old Testament *love is especially expressed in holiness*, in the New Testament *love is especially expressed in obedience*. In John 14:21 and 23 Jesus Christ says, “Whoever has my commands and obeys them, he is the one who loves me. He who loves me will be loved by my Father, and I too will love him and show myself to him. If anyone loves me, he will obey my teaching. My Father will love him, and we will come to him and make our home with him.” In the New Testament, obedience includes holiness of life.

E. TWO PRINCIPLES IN THE BOOK OF LEVITICUS.

1. The principle of salvation for the whole man, body and soul/spirit.

The view of man’s soul in Israel determined their view of sin and salvation. The view of many people in the modern world is based on:

- The philosophy of Philo (20 B.C. – 45 A.D., Alexandria). Philo taught that man is a trinity: man has a spirit, a soul and a body. This view makes a further distinction between a man’s ‘spirit’ and ‘soul’, between his ‘spiritual’ life and his ‘soulish’ life. The spirit apprehends divine philosophy and the soul apprehends human philosophy.

This notion is popularised in the West by assigning specific functions to the spirit and separate functions to the soul and to the body. The functions of the spirit are said to be spiritual knowledge of a god and fellowship with that god, conscience, intuition and creativity. The functions of the soul are limited to thinking (the mind), to deciding and choosing (the will) and to feeling the different emotions (the heart). The functions of the body are reduced to the five senses: seeing, hearing, smelling, tasting and feeling. *This division is an over-simplification of reality and not biblical.*

- The neo-Platonic philosophy of Plotinus (269 A.D., Alexandria). Plotinus taught that man is a duality: man has a body and a soul (or a spirit). This view distinguishes between the body that is only physical and the soul that is only spiritual. Consequently man is able to keep his physical and psychological functions apart. This view was popular with the ancient cultures in the East (India) and the West (Greece). They believe that the functions of his body and the functions of his soul do not influence one another. Man could live one kind of life in his body and another kind of life in his soul. For example, he could live a carnal life in his body and simultaneously a religious life in his soul. Generally the soul is regarded as the essential being of man and the body is regarded as something evil. The spirit (or soul) is the prisoner of the body until it is set free from the body at death. The consequence is that only the soul is regarded as important and the physical body and all physical creation are regarded as unimportant. For example, it is important to go to church on Sunday and save your soul, but it is not important how you live the rest of the week in your body in this world. Historically this view has had disastrous influence on Christianity. *This division is not biblical.*

The teaching of the Bible is different. According to Genesis 2:7, man does not “have a soul”, but he “is a living soul”! *Man is a soul, that has two sides: a visible physical side and an invisible spiritual side!* Man is therefore a unity and not a duality. That is why also the New Testament teaches that a person without spiritual life is a *dead* person. This means that the invisible spiritual world influences not only his spiritual and psychological life, but also his physical life, like his health! The invisible spiritual world of God has influence on every aspect of man’s life. It affects the whole man! This also means that every aspect of man’s life can get involved in sin. *Sin affects a man’s spiritual, psychological, intellectual, volitional and physical sickness! And atonement and forgiveness of sin affects a man’s spiritual, psychological, intellectual, volitional and physical health!* In order to teach these truths to his own people, God made laws not only with respect to the spiritual aspects of man’s life, but also laws with respect to the physical aspects of man’s life. Laws with respect to the spiritual aspects of man are for example the offerings. And laws with respect to the physical aspects of man are for example the prohibitions to eat unclean food or to touch unclean things.

Therefore, the ceremonial (ritual) aspect of Israel's life served to teach man that *every aspect of human life is important for God and that God has come to save the whole man!* God has come to save man's spirit and man's body! Proverbs 11:30 says, "He who wins souls is wise". To win souls is to be concerned with both a person's spirit and a person's body.

2. The principle of perfection in the number 'seven'.

Leviticus teaches that the number *seven is a sacred number*. Because God completed the created universe in seven days and rested from his work of creation on the seventh day, therefore the number seven symbolises *the perfect work of God*.

In the book of Leviticus, we often find the number seven. For example, the number seven occurs in the following. Every seventh day is the Sabbath, which is a day of rest and refreshment for man from his daily work²² and an opportunity to have a sacred assembly together with other believers²³. Every seventh year is a Sabbath Year, which is a year of rest for the crop bearing fields. After every seven Sabbath Years, the fiftieth year is the Year of Jubilee, which is a year in which all the mortgaged lands must be returned to the original family. The Passover Festival is held at the end of the second sevens of days, that is, on the 14th day of the month Abib in the evening. The Festival of Unleavened Bread is celebrated during the seven days following the Passover. The Feast of Weeks or Pentecost is celebrated seven weeks after bringing the sheaf of the wave offering, that is, on the fiftieth day. During the seventh month of the Jewish calendar, the month of Tishri, there are three important festivals: the Feast of Trumpets, the Day of Atonement and the Feast of Tabernacles. The Feast of Tabernacles is also celebrated for seven days.

God uses the number seven to remind man that whatever God does is perfect and whatever God requires is also nothing less than perfect. However, Israel could not obey God perfectly and so God used the law to drive Israel to the coming Saviour Jesus Christ. In the New Testament in Galatians 3:23-25 we read that God's people during the Old Testament period "were held prisoners by the law, locked up until faith should be revealed." The law was put in charge to lead them to Jesus Christ so that they might be justified by faith and not by the works of the law. And after Jesus Christ came and faith in him became possible, they are no longer under the supervision of the law.

F. THE MESSIAH IN THE BOOK OF LEVITICUS.

The ultimate purpose of the Old Testament ceremonial law and rituals was to point to the coming Messiah, Jesus Christ. *The nation of Israel and its ceremonies were only the means of God's revelation, but not the final goal of God's revelation.*

From the beginning God purposed that the means of revelation would fall away and make place for the goal of revelation, namely Jesus Christ. Romans 10:4 teaches that Jesus Christ "is the end of the law", or "the goal, the meaning and the substance of the law!"²⁴ *When Jesus Christ came, Israel as a people of God reached their final purpose.*

According to Romans 3:21 and Galatians 3:8, *the gospel* has been proclaimed during the Old Testament period. The substance of the gospel is the Messiah, Jesus Christ²⁵. He is foreshadowed in the Old Testament law. Colossians 2:17 says that the Old Testament laws were "a shadow of the things that were to come; the reality, however, is found in Jesus Christ". Thus, *when Israel accepted and obeyed the law, they accepted and obeyed Jesus Christ*. However, in order to understand Jesus Christ as the goal and substance of the Old Testament law, we should limit ourselves to the types in the Old Testament law that are explained in the New Testament as types that point forward to Jesus Christ.

1. The blood of the offerings is a type of the blood of Jesus Christ.

In Hebrews 9:12-14 we read, "Jesus Christ did not enter by means of the blood of goats and calves; but he entered the Most Holy Place once for all by his own blood, having obtained eternal redemption." And 1 John 1: 7 says, "The blood of Jesus, his Son, purifies us from all sin."

2. The sacrifices are types of the sacrifice of Christ on the cross.

In Hebrews 10:1-4 we read that the ceremonial law of the Old Testament was only "a shadow of the good things that were coming - not the realities themselves". The sacrifices in the Old Testament were repeated endlessly year after year, but could never make the people perfect. The worshippers were not really cleansed and still felt guilty for their sins. The real purpose and meaning of the Old Testament sacrifices was to remind the people of their sins and to convince them that they were sinners. The Bible teaches that it is impossible for the blood of bulls and goats to take away sins. Hebrews 9:26 and 10:10-18 teach clearly that the sacrifice of Jesus Christ once for all on the cross does away with sins, forgives sins and makes believers holy and perfect forever! After the sacrifice of Jesus Christ once for all, there is no longer any sacrifice for sin. *His sacrifice on the cross is the end of all other sacrifices in the world.*

3. The Day of Atonement is a type of the atonement that Christ made.

In 1 John 4:10 the Bible teaches us, "This is love: not that we loved God, but that he loved us and sent his Son as an atoning sacrifice for our sins." The word *atonement* means that Christ's death on the cross satisfied God's holy and righteous anger against all sin and unrighteousness, turned God's wrath away from the believer and took away his sins.

²² Exodus 23:12

²³ Leviticus 23:3

²⁴ Greek: telos

²⁵ 1 Corinthians 15:1-4

