

## Notes on the Pentateuch – No. 3

### The Book of Leviticus

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Leviticus is the center book of the five books of the Law of Moses, both numerically and by subject matter. Its name derives from the priestly tribe of Levi and literally means, “pertaining to the Levites.” It contains the system of laws (religious, ethical, criminal, and social) to be administered by the priests in Israel. It expounds upon the basic laws of the Ten Commandments, giving detailed application of them to specific cases.

Only the most extreme skeptics reject or question the authorship and authenticity of Leviticus. It contains over fifty references to Moses’ authorship and the New Testament adds further testimony. It contains 103 direct statements from Jehovah, more than any other book, by which He certifies that this is His Law and Israel must obey it. This book covers a period dated from the setting up of the tabernacle to the departure from Mount Sinai, about fifty days. Like all the books of Moses, it was written somewhere on the wilderness trek in about 1,500 BC. The purpose of Leviticus is to stress the absolute holiness of God and of sinful man’s continual need for cleansing to approach Him. The theme of the book is entirely in keeping with its purpose. It is designed to preserve Israel as a nation that is apart from other nations, serving God’s purpose. A good statement of this theme is in Leviticus 10:26: “Ye shall be holy unto me; for I the Lord am holy, and have set you apart from the peoples, that ye should be mine.” God’s purpose has not changed for those who are His people in modern times. To Christians, depicted as God’s “spiritual Israel” in the New Testament, Peter wrote: “But ye are an elect race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for God’s own possession...” (1 Pet. 2:9).

Leviticus is not light reading. It is almost altogether a book of legislation, with little narrative or history. One important historical event is emphasized. It is the record of Nadab and Abihu, two priests who assumed that doing things their way was just as acceptable as God’s way. God destroyed them for their folly (Lev. 10). This book contains many matters that are typical of Christ and His plan for man’s redemption from sin. The book of Hebrews in the New Testament is practically an inspired commentary on Leviticus, from which we learn that the Levitical system was but “a shadow of the good things to come” (Heb. 10:1).

[**Note:** I wrote this article for, and it was published in the “Bible Thoughts” Column for the *Hood County News*, Granbury, Texas, October 13, 1980.]

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