

Leviticus Introduction and Chapter 1- John Karmelich

1. Most of us have heard the cliché, “If you are going to do something, you might as well go all the way”. That describes a total commitment to some sort of action.
 - a) In many ways, that is a good summary of the Book of Leviticus.
 - b) The most common word used in this book is “Holiness”. It comes from the English word “wholeness”, which has to do with a “complete something”, as in a commitment.
 - c) Leviticus is probably the best book in the Old Testament on the topic of commitment. It is arguably the most misunderstood by Christians and is worth studying.
 - d) This reminds me to state my goal in writing these studies. These bible lessons are mainly designed for the Christian who thinks, “I believe in Jesus, now what do I do?” They are designed to stimulate and motivate the Christian to a better (closer) relationship with God and to give a better understanding of what God asks and requires of us as believers.
2. With that said, welcome to my study of the Book of Leviticus. First, some overview comments:
 - a) Who: The book was written by Moses. It is the third book of the bible. The first five were authored by Moses. If you have any doubts on that, Jesus quotes Leviticus and attributes it to Moses. If you don’t believe Jesus’ words, you have a much bigger problem than who is the author of this book. ☺ (For example, In Luke 5:14, Jesus refers to the ritual only described in Leviticus Chapter 14 and then states the author is Moses.)
 - b) When: The date is best estimated at about 1,445 BC. Scholars estimate the total time frame of the scope of the book at less than one month.
 - c) Where: In the desert area between Egypt and Israel, at the foot of Mt. Sinai. This was in the second year after the Israelites finished the Exodus out of Egypt.
 - d) What: The Israelites were still in the desert, where they would be for another 38 years. Moses went alone up into Mt. Sinai, where he received the 10 Commandments along with “The Law”. The classic joke is he also came down the mountain with a set of blueprints as Moses was given the instructions on how to build the tabernacle. After this tabernacle was built, God called Moses into this tabernacle where the instructions were given on how to worship God. These instructions encompass most of the Book of Leviticus.
 - e) Why: The main purpose of Leviticus is to show how God is to be worshipped. The previous book of the Bible was Exodus. The second half of Exodus was all about building a tabernacle for the purpose of a place to worship God. Leviticus is the “instruction manual” on worshipping God.
3. Let’s talk a little about Leviticus and Christians, as well as the emphasis of these studies:
 - a) Most Christians who try to read the bible straight through for the first time stumble on Leviticus. They read of sacrifices and rituals and don’t understand how any of this applies to their lives. Remember these two words: “word-pictures”. We remember word-pictures better than facts and figures. God knows that, and designed the bible to be full of stories and word-pictures to help our memory. Studying Leviticus is a little like staring closely at a mosaic. You can see the wonderful details, but one can miss the big picture by focusing too much on those details.
 - b) Some questions will naturally arise: Leviticus is full of animal sacrifices. Is Leviticus to be taken literally? Yes, God’s requirement of a blood sacrifice is still a requirement. Do we as Christians have to start offering sheep when we go to church on Sunday? No. ☺
 - c) Leviticus has a “historical context” as well as lessons for Christians on how to worship God. As we study Leviticus, we’ll discuss the historical aspects of these sacrifices. Understanding the stories will help one with the rest of the bible. There are hundreds of references to Leviticus all through the Old and New Testament.

- d) My main purpose of teaching Leviticus is about how it applies to Christians today. There are prophetic ties to Jesus and there are applications to our daily lives.
 - i) God created us with a purpose: That purpose is to give glory to God. If He created us, He is in charge and we are not. He gave us free will so that our love for Him will not be robotic-like, but out of our own will. God desires a love relationship based on gratitude for providing a means for our salvation.
 - ii) Leviticus is the “how” book on giving glory to God. God is saying to people in effect, “I created you. I want to be with You forever out of My love for you. However, you people need to live by My rules, and not Yours. My rules are designed for you to live a happy and fulfilling life. They are designed for your own happiness. There are rules on getting together with Me.”
 - iii) Those rules did not originate in Leviticus, but this book is a good summary on the rules for worshipping God. There are references to animal sacrifices in both Genesis and Exodus. My point here is that the sacrificial laws did not start in Leviticus, but this book is a good summary of what God expects of us.
- 4. Leviticus spends a lot of time distinguishing what is required of “priests” and everyone else who is to follow God. This is a good time to discuss who are called to be a priest.
 - a) The nation of Israel started with a promise to Abraham. His grandson Jacob had 12 sons. Those 12 sons formed the 12 tribes of Israel. One of those 12 sons was named Levi. God said in effect, “All the children of Levi will be My priests and My representatives between Myself and the Israelites.” If you are of the tribe of Levi, you are a priest, end of issue. If you are not of the tribe of Levi, you may not be a priest, end of issue.” ☺ A classical pun is, “In order to be a priest, you had to have Levi genes (jeans)”.
 - b) In the last half of Exodus, God instructed Moses to build a tabernacle, which was the main working place for the priests. Moses was of the tribe of Levi. Moses’ brother Aaron was called to be the first High Priest. Aaron’s children were called to work inside this just-built tabernacle. Some Levite families were called to work the tabernacle and help transport it when it moved from place to place.
 - c) This is good moment to discuss the title of the book. The English word “Leviticus” obviously is tied to the tribe of Levi and the Levites as they were in charge of worshipping God. They were the representatives between God and the Israelites. The word Leviticus comes from the Latin and the Greek words for this book. The Hebrew title comes from the first word of the book “Vay-ik-rah” which means “And He called”.
- 5. Let me focus on that last word in my last sentence: “called”. The Hebrew title for this book emphasizes the fact that God “called” the Levites to be in charge of intercession between God and “man”. God called individuals to be His representatives as God’s official priests.
 - a) To understand “called” is to be picked. Let’s say you were an Israelite living at that time. Let’s say you were deeply religious and wanted to be a priest. If you were not of the tribe of Levi, “too bad”, as you were not called to be a priest.
 - b) Let’s say you were a Levite and had no interest in being a priest. Let’s say you wanted to start your own used camel business. ☹ Too bad, because you were called to be a priest and that’s that. All the Israelites were God’s chosen people, but God then specifically picked a subset of the Israelites to be His priests. That was “it”, no more and no less.
 - c) In the New Testament, it is a little different: All Christians are called to be priests.
 - i) “But you (All Christians) are a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people belonging to God, that you may declare the praises of him who called you out of darkness into his wonderful light. Once you were not a people, but now you are the people of God; once you had not received mercy, but now you have received mercy.” (1st Peter 2:9-10, NIV)
 - a) Peter is saying that Christians collectively form a single nation (Verse 10). Further, Peter says all Christians are called to be priests.

- ii) Here is another reference on the same topic: “To him (Jesus) who loves us (Christians) and has freed us from our sins by his blood, and has made us (Christians) to be a kingdom and priests to serve his God and Father – to him be glory and power for ever and ever! Amen. (Revelation 1:6-7 NIV)
 - a) The purpose of this verse in Revelation is also to show that Christians are called to be united in a single kingdom with Jesus as our king. That is why in the Gospels Jesus often refers to the “kingdom of God”. It refers to all Christians united with the common goal of giving glory to God the Father and Jesus, the Son of God.
 - b) The second thing to notice is that all Christians are priests in this verse. Unlike the Levites, all Christians are called to be priests.
 - iii) “You (Jesus) have made them (Christians) to be a kingdom and priests to serve our God (The Father), and they (Christians) will reign on the earth.” (Rev. 5:10 NIV)
 - iv) “Blessed and holy are those who have part in the first resurrection. The second death has no power over them, but they will be priests of God and of Christ and will reign with him for a thousand years.” (Rev 20:6 NIV)
 - d) This leads us back to the topic of being “called” by God: A “calling” is God saying to anyone and everyone, “I want to be with you forever. Accept Jesus’ payment for your sins and then you will know for sure you are called.” God is perfect and therefore has perfect knowledge. We don’t know which people on earth are “called”. We only know that if we do respond, then we are definitely “called” by God.
 - e) Finally, we get back to the original point of being “called” as a Christian. My point of this whole exercise is for one to understand that if you are ‘called’ to be a Christian; you are equally called to be a priest. It has nothing to do with wearing robes and calling each other “father”. ☺ Being a priest simply means that God desires that we as Christians intercede for one another. God desires that Christians work as a team. It is about working with each other to help each other grow in our relationship with God.
 - i) Christian husbands are to be “interceding priests” for their wives.
 - ii) Christian wives are to be “interceding priests” for their husbands.
 - iii) Christian parents are to be “interceding priests” for their children, or say, their elderly parents who are in need.
 - iv) Christians are to be “interceding priests” for those around them, particularly those who are part of their same church group.
 - v) Throughout Leviticus we’ll get into more specifics about the duties of a “priests”. My point here is to understand that we are to “personalize” this book and not just see it in its historical context.
6. I can’t end this discussion without a quick topic of the prophetic aspects of Leviticus as well.
- a) It is important for the Christian to study Leviticus to understand one’s duty as a Christian. God has lots of specifics on how we are to worship Him and how we are to serve one another. That is a key component of Leviticus.
 - b) As a Christian, one must also understand that Leviticus has lots of prophetic word-pictures that tie to Jesus himself. The first few chapters of Leviticus cover different types of sacrifices. These sacrifices tie to what Jesus did on the cross, and we’ll discuss each one as we go. We as Christians are not only to study the bible to learn our responsibilities, but to learn about God The Father himself and about Jesus himself. God wants us to have a good understanding of what the “cross” is all about. It makes us appreciate the event all the more. Leviticus gives us a detailed account of what God requires of all believers. The New Testament teaches us how Jesus fulfilled those sacrificial requirements. Since the requirements are now fulfilled, we are now “free” to worship God the way He wants us to, out of gratitude for Him “calling” us.

7. Leviticus Chapter 1, Verse 1: The LORD called to Moses and spoke to him from the Tent of Meeting. He said,
 - a) Let me sort of paraphrase and expand upon what is happening in Verse 1: God is saying, "OK, you Israelites have now finished building the tabernacle exactly as I have instructed you to build it in the Book of Exodus. So far, so good. ☺ The Book of Exodus is all about "redemption". I have redeemed you people to Myself. Now that you know you have been redeemed to me, it's time for the next step. I didn't just pick you people so I can stare at you for eternity or use you for target practice, ☺ I, God want to have a loving relationship with you! In order for me to do that, first we have to deal with sin. I am God and I am perfect. I can't just ignore your faults. We must deal with the sin so I can forgive you and so you won't feel guilty about the sin. That guilt blocks our relationship and I want it to alleviate the guilt so we can have a personal loving relationship."
 - b) Most of Leviticus is quotes by God himself. It is as if God told Moses to come into this Tent of Meeting (also called the Tabernacle) and bring a pen and a notebook. God then gave "dictation" for Moses to take down. Most of Leviticus is quotes by God.
 - c) The first Hebrew word in this book literally means, "And God called". There is a grammatical punctuation mark designed so that the end of Exodus is designed to connect to the first sentence of Leviticus. One can think of Leviticus as a "sequel" to Exodus.
 - i) God specifically called Moses to be his governmental leader to His people.
 - ii) God specifically choose the Levites to be His priests to the Israelites.
 - iii) God specifically choose you and me (Christians) to be "priests" (i.e., servants) of fellow Christians. To show biblical love is to put other's needs as a priority over one's own needs. That is what being a "priest" is all about.
 - iv) Just as God is calling Moses into this tent, so God is calling you and me into service to ministry.
 - v) Notice the first verse does not say, "And God picked up Moses by his head and threw him in the tabernacle to force him into submission". ☺ Moses volunteered to enter into this tabernacle. God calls us and it is our choice to submit.
8. Verse 2: "Speak to the Israelites and say to them: `When any of you brings an offering to the LORD, bring as your offering an animal from either the herd or the flock.
 - a) God's first words to Moses were "speak to the Israelites".
 - i) As opposed to "Hey Moses, go clean up your act first and then, and maybe then I'll tell you what to say to everyone else." ☺
 - ii) Moses will still commit sin. There are recorded sins by both Moses and the Israelites in the book of Numbers, which is the next book chronologically.
 - iii) My point here is the emphasis with God here is on how to deal with sin. Moses was first instructed to go tell the people in effect, "There is a way to deal with sin. There is a way for forgiveness. I as God understand you are not perfect and have the sin nature inside of you. The first thing I (God) am going to teach you Moses is to go tell others that there is a remedy available to deal with the sin problem.
 - iv) That idea is comparable to "The Great Commission" passage given by Jesus after He was resurrected (Matthew 28:19). Jesus told believers to go out in the world and preach the Gospel message. Jesus didn't say to go be perfect first. He didn't say to force the message upon others. Jesus just taught us to preach the message and let God worry about the results. Here in Leviticus, God is telling Moses to show the method on how to have forgiveness and a relationship with God. It is then up to individuals to choose to respond to that offer.
 - b) When people first discover or think about whether or not there is a "god", the standard question is "What does God want of me?" I am convinced there is a deep desire within humans to know that there is a god and to know that God will forgive them of their sins.

- i) God created us with a need to worship Him. Just as we have a need for air and food, I am convinced all humans are created with a need to worship God. Many suppress that need or express that need in “unhealthy” ways. A purpose of Leviticus is to answer mankind’s question on what God requires of us and how we can approach God to have a relation with Him.
- ii) My point is God does give us a set of written instructions in effect that says, “There is a God. I as God do love you and care about you. I want to spend eternity with you. I do have way to for you to deal with your sins. It is a specific set of instructions that must be followed to the letter.”
- c) Now let’s talk about animal sacrifices themselves. Why are they necessary?
 - i) The first idea God is trying to get across is that He takes sin seriously. The root word of “sin” is that we “miss the mark” when doing what we are supposed to.
 - ii) God is trying to teach that there is a way to have forgiveness of sins. However, it is not cheap. One has to give up something valuable and kill it in a bloody manner. This shows that sin is “expensive” and it causes a “bloody mess”.
- d) Understand that animal sacrifices do not begin in Leviticus. There are examples of animal sacrifices by Abraham, Noah and Jacob in Genesis. I’m sure pagan religions of that day also had animal sacrifices to their gods. What is special about Leviticus is that “the” God desires and accepts certain types of animal sacrifices. These sacrifices are designed to teach us specific lessons about our sins and God’s nature about dealing with those sins.
- e) With all of that background out of the way, we can now get into the specifics of this verse. Understand that the first thing Leviticus deals with is how to deal with sin. The first part of the verse says, “When any of you brings an offering”:
 - i) Notice the verse does not say, “Only the High Priest shall bring an offering.”
 - ii) Notice the verse does not say, “Only the perfect person shall bring an offering.”
 - iii) Notice the verse does not say, “Your buddy can bring an offering for you.”
 - iv) My point here is that the offering is up to you and me, and no one else.
 - v) God is interested in anyone and everyone approaching Him as an individual to have a relationship with Him. God is “approachable” by anyone.
 - vi) Notice the word “when” in this verse. The idea is that God desires it to happen in order to have a relationship with Him, but God still does not violate free will.
- f) The rest of Verse 2 is, “bring as your offering an animal from either the herd or the flock”.
 - i) One has to remember that at this point in the history of Israel, they were a large group wandering through the desert. Their only source of income and trade was their livestock. To give one of their livestock was giving part of their income.
- g) Let’s talk a little about some of the word-pictures here:
 - i) God desired a “domesticated” animal. This is an animal that was trained, as opposed that ran wild in the woods. One could not go into the woods, hunt a wild animal and then bring it for a sacrifice.
 - ii) The word-picture here is that humans are “domesticated” in that we suppress our animal-urges in order to be of service to each other. We put other’s needs in front of our needs.
 - iii) As I go through Leviticus, I’m also going to show that all of the sacrifices discussed in the next several chapters all tie prophetically to Jesus payment for our sins. One of the key ideas to understand about the cross is that neither the Jews or the Romans are not responsible for killing Him. Jesus freely gave His life for our sins. As Chuck Smith put it, “If you want to blame someone for the death of Jesus, blame me, He died for my sins.” In that sense, Jesus was “domesticated” in that He freely gave up His instinctively desire to live in order to conform to God’s will.

9. Verse 3: If the offering is a burnt offering from the herd, he is to offer a male without defect. He must present it at the entrance to the Tent of Meeting so that it will be acceptable to the LORD.
- a) In the first two verses, only the word “offering” is used. Over the next several chapters, specific types of offerings are going to be discussed. The only type of offering discussed in Chapter 1 is the burnt offering. Here are some key points about a burnt offering:
 - i) A burnt offering is just that, it is to be 100% burned up.
 - ii) The idea is that “the whole thing” is given up to God. Nothing is spared.
 - b) So why is the burnt offering discussed first? I’m so glad you asked! ☺
 - i) When one gives their life over to Jesus, the idea is that everything one does, everything one owns now belongs to Jesus. It doesn’t mean a vow of poverty. It means that we live a God-centered life instead of a me-centered life. It means that we desire to do God’s will in every aspect of our lives.
 - ii) A burnt offering is an excellent word-picture of a “starting point”. It is about giving’s one’s life over to God. Imagine taking a valuable animal that one owns. One takes that animal to the altar and says in effect, “This animal represents me as a substitute. I give it “all” to God just as I desire to give all that I am to God.”
 - c) Let’s now tackle the verse itself: The first phrase says, “from the herd”.
 - i) It mentions that because God will make a provision for the poor people who can’t afford to own any animals. We’ll get to that in Verse 14. God is saying in effect here, “If you own livestock, and one does want to give their life to Me, I (God) do require one of your livestock as a sacrifice. If you are too poor to afford livestock, I still desire a relationship with you and I’ve provided a loophole in Verse 14.” ☺
 - d) Second phrase: “(The person making the offer) is to offer a male (animal) without defect.”
 - i) God’s first requirement of the animal itself is that it must be male.
 - a) When we get to other sacrifices in the next few chapters, the animal could be either male or female. For the burnt offering, it must be male.
 - b) Male animals are generally physically stronger. The idea is male animals are more valuable as a commodity. One is giving the best that one has.
 - ii) The second part of this phrase says, “without defect”.
 - a) In other word, one could not bring a crippled animal. Even say, a sheep with spots has less value as the wool is used to make clothing.
 - b) God desired an animal was to be as perfect and valuable as possible.
 - iii) The tie to Jesus: The “sinless” sacrifice was made on our behalf: Paul said, “For He (God the Father) made Him (Jesus) who knew no sin to be sin for us, that we might become the righteousness of God in Him.” (2nd Corinthians 5:21, NKJV).
 - a) My point is that the burnt offering ties to Jesus in that a “perfect” offering was made on our behalf. Christians do not have to bring an animal offering because this “law requirement” was fulfilled with Jesus. This law is still binding to Christians, but it was fulfilled on the cross.
 - e) The next phrase is “at the entrance to the Tent of Meeting”.
 - i) In other words, you couldn’t take the sacrifice to any old location you want. The sacrifice must be made at entrance to the tabernacle. The idea here is that if we desire to approach God, it must be on His terms and not ours.
 - ii) The next word-picture to grasp is the word “entrance”. This ties to the beginning of our relationship with God. Our relationship with God starts with a willing commitment to give our all to God. Our “all” is represented by a 100% burnt sacrifice. That is why the burnt offering is the first sacrifice described in Leviticus.
10. The final phrase of Verse 3 is, “it will be acceptable to the LORD”.
- a) This means it is possible to approach and appease God, but it must be done on His terms.
 - b) Verse 2 answers the great life question of “Can we as humans approach God?” God is saying yes, but God is also saying we must do it on His terms, and not ours.

11. Verse 4: He is to lay his hand on the head of the burnt offering, and it will be accepted on his behalf to make atonement for him.
 - a) In Verse 4, we start to get more details of the requirements for a burnt offering.
 - b) Next, it says, "He (the person making the sacrifice) is to lay his hand on the head of (the animal) of the burnt offering."
 - i) The idea here is that the person making the offering is to say in effect, "I own this animal. It belongs to me and it is valuable to me. I want to have a relationship with God. I want to dedicate my life to serving God. I understand that I am an imperfect human (i.e., a "sinner"). I offer this "perfect" sacrifice on my behalf. I put my hands on its head to identify myself with this sacrifice."
 - ii) Why don't we still do this today? The ultimate fulfillment of this sacrifice was Jesus on the cross. When we "identify ourselves" with Jesus, we are doing the equivalent of identifying ourselves with the ultimate perfect sacrifice.
 - iii) Why don't religious Jews still offer animal sacrifices? The short answer is in 70AD, the Roman Empire destroyed the Temple we associate with Jesus. The Jewish leadership got together around that time and decided in effect, that one commits their life to God through their dedication to God by their behavior. In summary, they stopped doing animal sacrifices as part of Judaism.
 - c) In Verse 4, it then says, "it (the animal sacrifice) will be accepted on His behalf".
 - i) Verse 3 says, "it will be acceptable to the LORD"
 - ii) God is trying to make it as clear as possible, that if we act in this prescribed manner, this is an acceptable way to approach God.
 - iii) The other thing to get across is that this is the only way to approach God. This doesn't change with Christianity. The only difference is we no longer have to bring a "perfect" animal as the perfect sacrifice has already been made on our behalf. Like these animal sacrifices, all we have to do is "identify ourselves" with that once and for all perfect sacrifice.
 - d) The final phrase says "make atonement for him"
 - i) The word atonement is best described as "at one with". The idea the sins are forgiven and we are now "at one with God" as the sins are forgiven.
 - ii) There is another key concept to understand here: The idea of atonement is that that the sins were "covered". It is as if God took our sins, threw them in a box and then closed the lid. With Jesus, the sins are taken away. To continue this illustration, with the animal sacrifices the sins are thrown in a box. With Jesus payment on the cross, the box is destroyed without a trace.
 - iii) "For it is not possible that the blood of bulls and goats could take away sins." (Hebrews 10:4 NKJV) Again, the idea is that these animal sacrifices "cover up" the sins, but they are not fully removed until the perfect sacrifice was made.
12. Verse 5: He is to slaughter the young bull before the LORD, and then Aaron's sons the priests shall bring the blood and sprinkle it against the altar on all sides at the entrance to the Tent of Meeting.
 - a) It's time to review the tabernacle structure itself:
 - i) There is a fenced off area that surrounds a large open area. Within this open area is a covered tent structure. This covered tent is divided into two parts.
 - ii) One part of the covered tent is called "The Holy of Holies". Only the High Priest entered this section, once a year on a holiday called "Yom Kippur" ("The day of atonement"). We'll discuss this more in Chapter 23 of Leviticus.
 - iii) The other part of the tent has a handful of furnished items. This included an altar for incense, a table for bread and a large oil-based candlestick. They each have purposes and we'll get to them later in Leviticus.

- iv) Outside the covered tent, but inside the fence line was a large “open patio”. There was only one entrance through this fence. The first thing one comes to when going through this entrance is a large “barbeque pit”. That is the “entrance to the Tent of Meeting”, which is being described here in Verse 5.
- v) Picture a guy coming here with his pet bull on a leash. ☺ He takes the bull to this fenced area of the tabernacle. The priests then meet the guy just inside the gate, in the patio area where the bull is slaughtered and burnt up on this barbeque pit.
- b) When the structure was first set up in Exodus, God ordained Aaron to be the first High Priest. This is Moses’ brother. Aaron’s oldest son was to be the next high priest after Aaron dies, and that lineage was to continue. The same way the oldest son of a king is next in line to be king, so the same system is to work for the High Priest.
 - i) This chapter has lots of references to “Aarons’ sons”. In this verse, Aaron’s sons sprinkle the blood of the animal on this altar.
 - ii) The idea here is that the “royal priestly line of Aaron” shall carry out these duties.
- c) With that picture in mind, we can now get back to the verse itself.
 - i) The bull is to be killed next to this “barbeque pit”.
 - ii) Notice that the bull-owner is to kill the bull himself. The idea is for us to take something valuable to us, and we ourselves are to make that sacrifice on our behalf. We, not the High Priests, are the ones who have to take the action to identify ourselves with this animal and actually kill the animal. By identifying ourselves with the animal, it is like saying, “I am willing to commit this perfect sacrifice on my behalf in order to deal with my sins.”
 - iii) The verse says the sons of the High Priest are then to sprinkle the blood all around this pit. The idea the Hebrew word “sprinkle” is stronger than we think of it. It is much more aggressive. It is to take lots of blood and thrust it against all the sides of the tabernacle.
 - iv) What’s the purpose of this ritual? The best thing I’ve read on this is that it is a public witness of one’s commitment to God. Since the blood is being placed on all sides of this burning altar, it is a public witness. It is showing that the person offering the bull is willing to commit their lives to serving God.
 - v) Jesus said, “Whoever acknowledges me before men, I will also acknowledge him before my Father in heaven”. (Matthew 10:32 NIV). If one wants “assurance” that one is accepted by Jesus, acknowledge Him as one’s savior before other people. This is why many churches require that people make a public, verbal commitment to Jesus in front of other public witnesses.
- d) Does all of this read like a bloody mess? That’s the idea. Our minds remember vivid word-pictures better than facts and figures. It reminds us how costly is the sin in our lives and how it must be completely “burnt up” in order to have that relationship with God.
 - i) Meanwhile, back at the slaughterhouse... ☺

13. Verse 6: He is to skin the burnt offering and cut it into pieces.

- a) The “He” is the bull-owner making the offering. Not only does the person making the offering have to kill the animal, but he then has to skin it and cut it in pieces.
- b) It is one thing if you or I just have to kill it and walk away. It is another if we would have to sit there for a while and cut it up. It is another reminder that sin is “bloody” and we have to deal with it.
- c) Why skin it? This is about cutting off the skin. Think of the synonym “flesh”. We associate the word “flesh” with our human nature. It is another reminder that it is our desire to do God’s will for our lives and not give in to our human desires. It is similar, in that sense to the ritual of circumcision. In that ritual, the foreskin is removed to symbolize the removal of our old “fleshy” lifestyle. In this burnt offering, the skin is also removed.
- d) The purpose for cutting the animal into pieces is discussed in Verse 8, coming up.

14. Verse 7: The sons of Aaron the priest are to put fire on the altar and arrange wood on the fire.
- a) Among the duties of the high priests and their sons is to keep the barbeque pit fire going. They are to get wood and keep the fire burning.
 - b) "Fire" as it used in the bible, describes God "consuming" our sins, as He takes it upon himself. Fire is used as a picture of refinement. When silver is refined, it is heated and a worthless substance called dross, which attaches itself to silver, is removed. My point here is when you read of fire, think of it as God "consuming" the sin of our lives in order to draw us closer to Him and live a better life. We mature as Christians by confessing and "eliminating" the sins of our lives. It is symbolically tossed in a burning fire.
 - c) Back in the introduction to this chapter, I talked about how Christians are symbolically "priests" in that we are servants of God and He desires that we serve others. Here, the priests are helping others drawing closer to God by "keeping the fire warm". The job of the priests is to help those desiring to give their lives to God. The priests then assist them in turning the "sinful" part of their lives over to God. I'm not saying we are to go around and be the "sin police" in church. I'm saying we as Christians need to listen to others and be supportive of others as they try to deal with problems in life caused by sin.
 - i) Remember the "sinner" is offering the sacrifice. The priests are not forcing it out of the guy's hands. In that same sense, we need to spend time listening to others in need as opposed to trying to fix them. God is more than capable all by Himself of working on people's hearts. We, as "priests" need to be there to support them, and help them as God desires.
 - ii) Meanwhile, let's get back to the barbeque pit. Notice the person offering the sacrifice is always described as a "he". I'm guessing it ties to the fact that men love barbequing. ☺ I'm speculating that the real reason had to do with the fact this was a male-dominated culture and the man would offer it for His family.
15. Verse 8: Then Aaron's sons the priests shall arrange the pieces, including the head and the fat, on the burning wood that is on the altar.
- a) Now we have the cut up animal. The priests are to take the animal pieces and throw it on the grill. The head and the fat are specified in Verse 8. He is to wash the inner parts and the legs with water, and the priest is to burn all of it on the altar.
 - b) When we get to chapter 3, we'll spend more time discussing animal fat and sacrifices. In summary, fat is a positive word-picture as the best-tasting part of the meat was lined with fat. It has nothing to do with us being fat or skinny. It is a word picture of giving the best parts to God.
 - c) The "head" is another word picture. The animal's head is the primary location of the body. It ties to "leadership". The idea is to give up our leadership position to God. It is to say in effect, "I am no longer in charge of my life, God is."
16. Verse 9: He is to wash the inner parts and the legs with water, and the priest is to burn all of it on the altar. It is a burnt offering, an offering made by fire, an aroma pleasing to the LORD.
- a) Again, the "he" is the person making the offering. The next step is the person making the offering is wash the inner parts and wash the legs, and then those body parts are to be placed on the alter to be burnt.
 - b) My question is, "If all of these body parts are to be burnt up, what's the point of washing them prior to being burned?" Again, they are more word-pictures for us to contemplate.
 - i) Let's start with the inner parts. Remember the animal was skinned. The skin represents our "flesh" that is burnt up without washing and thrown on the fire.
 - ii) Again, the head was burnt up as it represents our leadership. We desire to turn our leadership position over to God.
 - iii) We also read that the fat, as in our "waste" was just thrown on the fire.

- c) What was left, as in not thrown on the fire just yet, are the inner parts of the animal and legs. Verse 9 says they must be washed prior to being put on the fire.
 - i) Our “inward guts” represents giving our lives to God.
 - ii) Our “legs” represents how we walk before God.
 - iii) These are the parts that are cleaned before turning being totally given up before God. Does that mean we have to “clean up our act” prior to coming to God? No. It is about our desire to change. It is about our desire to change our lives to be in conformity with God. By ceremonially cleaning the “inward parts of our life and our “walk” (legs) with God, we are saying it is our desire to change for the better.
 - d) Paul had a similar comment: “Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her to make her holy, cleansing her by the washing with water through the word, (Ephesians 5:25-26 NIV).
 - i) Notice that “washing” comes through the Word of God. It is symbolic how Jesus was the ultimate sacrifice of our cleansing. It can also be used to remind us that studying our bible teaches us how to behave in a way that is pleasing to God. In that sense, our study is a type of “washing”.
 - e) The offering description ends with “an aroma pleasing to the LORD.”
 - i) Visualize this whole animal being put on this barbeque pit. The smoke of the animal is rising up in the sky.
 - ii) Now picture a steak cooking on a barbeque. It has a wonderful pleasing aroma. The idea is as this smoke is rising to the sky, so the “pleasing aroma” is working its way up to heaven. We see the sweet smelling smoke rising to the sky and it is a word picture of the “smoke going up to heaven”.
 - iii) In other words, once we are done with this slaughter, we then can smell this wonderful aroma and watch the smoke go up to heaven. That pleasant aroma going up in the sky is a word-picture of God accepting our offer. Just as that aroma is pleasing to us, it is pleasing to God.
17. Verse 10: "If the offering is a burnt offering from the flock, from either the sheep or the goats, he is to offer a male without defect. ¹¹ He is to slaughter it at the north side of the altar before the LORD, and Aaron's sons the priests shall sprinkle its blood against the altar on all sides. ¹² He is to cut it into pieces, and the priest shall arrange them, including the head and the fat, on the burning wood that is on the altar. ¹³ He is to wash the inner parts and the legs with water, and the priest is to bring all of it and burn it on the altar. It is a burnt offering, an offering made by fire, an aroma pleasing to the LORD.
- a) I have good news at this point. We don't have to do a blow-by-blow detail of the next four verses. They are essentially a “repeat” of the last eight verses.
 - b) The key difference is instead of a bull, now we have a goat or a sheep being offered.
 - c) The idea here is “If you can't afford a bull, God is willing to accept a goat or a sheep.”
 - d) The rest of the requirements are the same. God saying in effect, “If you can't afford the expensive animal, I love you the same. I'll take a less expensive animal such as a goat or a sheep. The ritual and the results are the same. You are still forgiven of one's sins.
 - e) Like the bull offering, God is saying a “lower” domesticated animal is to be chosen.
18. Verse 14: “If the offering to the LORD is a burnt offering of birds, he is to offer a dove or a young pigeon. ¹⁵ The priest shall bring it to the altar, wring off the head and burn it on the altar; its blood shall be drained out on the side of the altar. ¹⁶ He is to remove the crop with its contents and throw it to the east side of the altar, where the ashes are. ¹⁷ He shall tear it open by the wings, not severing it completely, and then the priest shall burn it on the wood that is on the fire on the altar. It is a burnt offering, an offering made by fire, an aroma pleasing to the LORD.
- a) The last set of verses repeats the same ritual again, only this time with a bird.
 - b) It is God saying in effect, “Hey, if you can't afford a sheep or goat, I'll accept a bird.”

- c) There are some differences between the bird offering and the bull/goat/sheep offering, and I'll discuss why these are different. Some of them are simply practical reasons and some are symbolic word-pictures.
 - d) Now we can focus on the birds. First, notice the type of birds being offered:
 - i) The birds have to be either a dove or young pigeon. The only unique thing I know about these birds as they are passive in that they are not birds of prey. In that sense, they are as close to being "domesticated" as the other animals offered. I also know that doves "mate for life", and one can run with that analogy.
 - ii) Next, the bird is killed by wringing its head off. With the larger animals, it is not specified how the animal is killed, but it is usually by slicing the neck. Like the "head" comments about the bull I stated earlier, I believe the word-picture here is that the "head" (i.e., as in leader) is put on the altar the same way we offer up our "head" to God.
 - iii) The "crop" (Verse 16) is the pouch where birds initially store their food. (Think of a pelican's large mouth). This part is to be removed in the same sense that the "fat" is removed from the bull offerings. It is about eliminating the waste.
 - iv) The remainder is simply how the bird is to be put on the altar. It is to be torn open by the wings, but not severing it completely (Verse 17). The idea is the bird "as a whole" is to be offered on the altar, as well as the head. For the person who could only afford a bird, "all" of the bird is placed on the sacrificial altar, other than the "waste product" which is removed.
 - v) The main idea is that for the very poor who had no livestock, God provided a means where one can dedicate their life to serving God.
19. One last thing to get from the chapter as a whole and I'll wrap this up: Let's talk about the pattern of "first: bull sacrifices, second: goat/sheep sacrifices and third: bird sacrifices."
- a) These animals are listed on a declining economic scale. It is God saying, "Hey, if you can't afford a bull, I'll take a sheep or a goat. If you can't afford a sheep or a goat, go catch a bird and I'll take that."
 - b) One can also read this chapter in the sense, of "I'll take whatever you give me and use that as a starting point". It is as if the rest of our lives are a spiritual warfare between the desires of God for our lives versus our own personal desires. God desires to establish a "beach-head" within our lives for His "headquarters". If we are not willing to give him a large "bull" location in our heart, God will start with a small "bird-sized" location in our heart and work from there.
 - c) Confused? Let me explain further. When we first give our lives to God, we usually have no concept of what that means. It is only as we mature and go through the difficulties of life that we learn to trust God more and more. If God told us on "day one" all the things that were going to happen to our lives, I doubt any of us can accept it all. God is saying on day one, "Give me something to work with, and I'll take from there". Be willing to commit "something" to me. I'd love a "bull", but I'll take a "bird", just be willing to take that first step." The more you give to God, the more He is willing to give back. It just takes that first step, and that is what Chapter 1 of Leviticus is all about.
20. My introduction to Leviticus mentioned the cliché "giving it all you got". That is the idea of "If you are going to do something, you might as well go all the way". It is the idea of a commitment.
- a) These sacrifices, be it by "bull, sheep or bird", are all word-pictures of a symbolic gesture on our part to give all we have to God. It is the desire on our part to completely commit our lives to serving God.
 - b) Yes, there is far more to the Christian life than this day-one commitment. We'll get to that in the next few chapters. Before we can grow in our relationship with God, it starts with a commitment. We have to be willing to "give our all" on that sacrificial altar to God.

21. Let's pray: Father, Help us to conform to Your will in every aspect of our lives. You have prepared the ultimate sacrifice for us in Jesus and all we have to do is identify with that sacrifice for ourselves. Help us to do Your will in every aspect of our lives. Guide us through these lessons on Leviticus. Help us to properly interpret them and properly apply them to our lives. For we ask this in Jesus name, Amen.