

Bible Companion Commentary: Leviticus

Bible Companion Commentary, Volume 3

Duncan Heaster

Published by Carelinks, 2026.

While every precaution has been taken in the preparation of this book, the publisher assumes no responsibility for errors or omissions, or for damages resulting from the use of the information contained herein.

BIBLE COMPANION COMMENTARY: LEVITICUS

First edition. September 19, 2026.

Copyright © 2026 Duncan Heaster.

Written by Duncan Heaster.

BIBLE COMPANION
COMMENTARY: LEVITI-
CUS

LEVITICUS

PREFACE

This commentary is based around the New European Version of the Bible, which is generally printed with brief commentary on each chapter. This commentary is the hard copy of the more detailed commentary found on the *Bible Companion* app.

Are there errors of thought and intellectual process in these volumes? Surely there are. Let me know about them. But don't fail to see the wood for the trees. Never let the wonder of the simple, basic Gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ and His Kingdom become obscured by all the angst over correctly interpreting this or that Bible verse. Believe it, respond to it, be baptized into Him, and let the word become flesh in you as it was so supremely in Him.

If you would like to enable the NEV Bible and associated material to remain freely available, do consider making a donation to Carelinks. And please pray that our sending forth of God's word will bring back glory to His Name and that of His dear Son whom we serve.

Duncan Heaster

LEVITICUS CHAPTER 1

Lev 1:1 Yahweh called to Moses and spoke to him out of the Tent of Meeting, saying-

The style of Moses' writing in Num. 20:12-14 reveals this submerging of his own pain. He speaks of himself in the third person, omitting any personal reflection on his own feelings: "The Lord spake unto Moses... Because you believed me not... you shall not bring the congregation into the land... and Moses sent messengers from Kadesh unto the King of Edom...". Likewise all the references to "the Lord spake unto Moses" (Lev. 1:1). Moses submerged his own personality in writing his books. It could of course be argued that these are the words of a Divinely inspired editor. But consider this alternative.

Lev. 1:1 appears to follow straight on from the previous narrative in Exodus. It could be that all of Leviticus is an account of the words of Yahweh to the Levites during the eight days of consecration after the tabernacle was built. For the whole book specifically addresses the Levites, and how they were to conduct priestly work.

Lev 1:2 Speak to the children of Israel and tell them, 'When anyone of you offers an offering to Yahweh-

"Of you" means that the invitation to offer freewill offerings which now follows was limited to the community of Israel. But within them, "anyone" could offer- including women, who were typically excluded from such religious opportunities in the surrounding cults.

You shall offer your offering of the livestock, from the herd and from the flock-

They were not to keep some animals specially for sacrifice; they were to take the sacrificial animals out of the herd, just as the Lord Jesus was One taken out of the herd of humanity. We are to be living sacrifices (Rom. 12:1), not reserving just part of our lives for God. The Lord Jesus was the ultimate sacrifice, and He was taken out of the common herd of humanity, not preserved specially for His work. We also learn from this that they were not to hunt wild animals in order to offer them. They may well have become blemished in the process of being hunted and slain.

Lev 1:3 If his offering is a burnt offering from the herd, he shall offer a male without blemish-

No animal actually is without blemish. God recognizes that we will not attain perfection in this life, but we are to do our best towards it; and His love imputes righteousness to us, counting us as unblemished because of our status in Christ. For only Christ was the sacrifice totally without moral blemish (1 Pet. 1:19). The thoughtful Israelite would have perceived that all the animals offered were not totally without blemish- for none was, upon minute examination. The requirement for a male sacrifice was not because God considered the female gender inferior; rather was it because He was asking that they offer their most valuable animal to Him, and not their least valuable. And male animals were more valuable than female.

"Without blemish" was how Noah was (s.w. Gen. 6:9), and how God wished Abraham and all his seed to be (s.w. Gen. 17:1). We all fail to be perfect; blemishes remain. So

BIBLE COMPANION COMMENTARY: LEVITICUS 5

perhaps the idea was that the animal represented how the offerer wished to be; but it was only an animal, not a man. And therefore the thought would have arisen that it must surely look forward to some perfect, unblemished human who was the representative of all men. And that was the need which was met in the death of the Lord Jesus.

He shall offer it at the door of the Tent of Meeting, that he may be accepted before Yahweh-

The offerer personally was to bring it. It was not to be brought by someone else, for sacrifice was to involve personal engagement and not be performed as mere tokenistic ritual through a third party. And that is an abiding principle. The offerer firstly had to enter through the gate into the court, before approaching the altar. The height of the gate meant that most would had to bow their heads. Humility was the first requirement, and this is what made sacrifice acceptable.

Lev 1:4 He shall put his hand on the head of the burnt offering, and it shall be accepted for him to make atonement for him-

Putting the hand on the animal's head was to show that the animal represented the offerer. He showed thereby that he deserved to die, and wished to give his total life to God just as the animal would be totally offered to God. We see here God's principle of accepting us on the basis of the representative sacrifice of Christ; the equivalent of our putting our hand on the head of the sacrifice is the act of baptism into Christ and abiding "in Christ", He being our represen-

tative and we being His. The Hebrew means more to the effect of leaning on the head, as if a very intense act of identification was being made.

Lev 1:5 He shall slaughter the bull before Yahweh. Aaron's sons, the priests, shall present the blood and sprinkle the blood around on the altar that is at the door of the Tent of Meeting-

To sprinkle blood upon something didn't necessarily mean the object was forgiven. For an inanimate altar didn't need forgiving. The blood of the covenant was sprinkled (s.w.) upon the people as a sign of their involvement with the covenant process of salvation, rather than as a statement of their forgiveness (Ex. 24:8). Likewise with the sprinkling of the blood of the Passover lamb (2 Chron. 35:11). This was an act of identification rather than forgiveness of sin. The function of the altar was valid before God, or efficacious, because of its association with the blood of Christ; for the blood of the animals slain upon it couldn't bring salvation of itself, but only through God's way of looking at that blood is looking ahead to that of His Son (Heb. 10:4). And so the altar was associated with the blood which represented His blood.

Lev 1:6 He shall flay the burnt offering, and cut it into pieces-

Every part of our lives, including our most inward parts, are to be offered to God. The process of splitting the offering into its parts speaks of our self-examination, defining each part of our lives and offering them to God consciously.

BIBLE COMPANION COMMENTARY: LEVITICUS 7

Lev 1:7 The sons of Aaron the priest shall put fire on the altar, and lay wood in order on the fire-

In all the many commands about sacrifices, we must remember that God was not in need of them. If He were hungry, He would not tell *us* (Ps. 50:12). The legislation and concepts were therefore purely for our benefit, and that of His people at the time. We therefore need to discern the teaching.

Lev 1:8 and Aaron's sons, the priests, shall lay the pieces, the head, and the fat in order on the wood that is on the fire which is on the altar-

The wood was to be placed in order on the fire (Lev. 1:7), suggesting the use of several bits of wood to be laid in order, with the parts also laid in order upon them. This was as if each part of the Lord's life (and ours) had its own cross. We think of the sacrifice of the Lord Jesus upon the stake of wood, effectively done by the priests who arranged His crucifixion.

Lev 1:9 but its inward parts and its legs he shall wash with water. The priest shall burn the whole on the altar, for a burnt offering, an offering made by fire, of a pleasant aroma to Yahweh-

There is huge emphasis upon the "inward parts" in the regulations about sacrifices. Our inward parts and thoughts of the heart are laid open before God and should be offered to Him, not just the externalities which men see (Heb. 4:12). The same word is used of Sarah's laughing "within herself" (Gen. 18:12). The sacrifice of Christ was so perfect because His innermost thoughts were offered to God. And it is our thoughts when nobody else is watching

which are of the essence to God; "to be spiritually minded", as the New Testament expresses it. This is why Yahweh could not go up in "the midst" of Israel (Ex. 33:3; Num. 14:42; Dt. 1:42), because they didn't have Him in their midst. Thus to marry unbelievers would be a snare "in the midst of you" (Ex. 34:12), right in the inner mind which is what God seeks above all. David in the Psalms speaks of the "inward parts" of the human mind, which are critical in God's judgment of a person as wicked or righteous (e.g. Ps. 5:9; 36:1; 49:11 and Ps. 64:6, where "inward thought" is s.w. "inward parts"). It is those inward parts which were to be washed (Lev. 1:13), just as our innermost heart can be washed by the Spirit which is given at baptism. For this is the gift of the Spirit in the new covenant, whereby God's law is placed within our inward parts (s.w. Jer. 31:33; Ez. 36:26,27) by the God who can form the spirit of man in man's inward parts, the God who can work directly upon the human heart (Zech. 12:1).

Lev 1:10 If his offering is from the flock, from the sheep, or from the goats, for a burnt offering, he shall offer a male without blemish-

This looked ahead to the unblemished character of the Lord Jesus. The offering of sacrifices "without blemish" uses a word which is used about Abraham and Noah being "without blemish" (AV "perfect") before God (Gen. 6:9; 17:1). Although the word is used about the sacrifices, it is really more appropriate to persons- "you shall be perfect with Yahweh your God" (Dt. 18:13), "serve Him in sincerity (s.w. "without blemish")" (Josh. 24:14). The idea, therefore, was that the offerer was invited to see the animal as

BIBLE COMPANION COMMENTARY: LEVITICUS 9

representative of himself. Our lives too are to be as "living sacrifices" (Rom. 12:1). And yet in practical terms, no animal is without blemish. They were to give the best they could, and God would count it as without blemish; as He does with us. David frequently uses the term in the Psalms about himself and the "upright", even though he was far from unblemished in moral terms.

Lev 1:11 He shall kill it on the north side of the altar before Yahweh. Aaron's sons, the priests, shall sprinkle its blood around on the altar-

Golgotha was on the north side of Jerusalem, and all these sacrifices look ahead to the Lord's death there. The laver was on the west side of the altar, the place of ashes on the east (Lev. 1:16), and the approach to the altar from the south would have been up a slope to avoid approaching the altar by steps and uncovering nakedness. The north side would have been the only appropriate place for this. So there is an impressive corroboration of the records here, with this command to kill the animals on the north side of the altar.

Lev 1:12 He shall cut it into its pieces, with its head and its fat. The priest shall lay them in order on the wood that is on the fire which is on the altar-

The offerer "shall cut it into his pieces" (Heb.)- the pieces of the animal were the pieces of the offerer, so the ambiguous genitive suggests. The offerer was represented by the sacrifice. The parts were washed in the water (of the word) before the final crucifying of flesh. But the sacrifice also represented that of the Lord Jesus, as well as of the of-

ferer; for He on the cross was the representative of all God's people.

Lev 1:13 but the inward parts and the legs he shall wash with water. The priest shall offer the whole, and burn it on the altar-

This is picked up by Paul in Rom. 7 where he says that he delights in God's law after the inward man, or inwards. He sees himself as cut open and offered to God. All this provokes powerful self-examination. Does the zeal of God's house consume every part of the offering of our lives as we lay ourselves before Him at the Passover meal? Does it eat us up? Do our faces and words and way of speaking reflect the crucifixion of every part of our lives? Or does our triviality, our inability to spiritually concentrate our minds, our lack of sustained enthusiasm for the Lord's work reflect the fact that we are not like that animal as it lay dead and still in its parts on that altar, that we are not in the spirit of Christ. Our attitudes to money, holidays, relationships, standard of living, commitment to study of the word, zeal for preaching, all raise question marks in our minds. It is easy to take immediate refuge in the fact that salvation is through the grace of the Lord's sacrifice, not works. But before we go on to those sentiments, let us accept that we do all have an urgent need for improvement.

It is a burnt offering, an offering made by fire, of a pleasant aroma to Yahweh-

"A pleasant aroma" is a very common phrase. This concept is important to God. It first occurs in Gen. 8:21 where it means that God accepted Noah's sacrifice and vowed that the pole of saving mercy in His character was going to

triumph over that of necessary judgment. Under the new covenant, it is persons and not sacrifices or incense which are accepted as a "pleasant aroma" (Ez. 20:41). The word for "pleasant" means strong delight; this is how God's heart can be touched by genuine sacrifice. Those pleasing offerings represented us, the living sacrifices (Rom. 12:1). And so it is applied to us in 2 Cor. 2:15- if we are in Christ, we are counted as a pleasant aroma to God. The offering of ourselves to Him is nothing of itself, but because we are in Christ and counted as Him, we are a delight to God. Hence the colossal importance of being "in Christ". "Aroma" or "smell" is a form of the Hebrew word *ruach*, the word for spirit or breath. God discerns the spirit of sacrifices, that was what pleased Him rather than the burning flesh of animals. Our attitude of mind in sacrifice can touch Him. Sacrifice is therefore accepted, Paul says, according to what a person has to give, but the essence is the attitude of mind behind it. We think of the two coins sacrificed by the widow.

Lev 1:14 If his offering to Yahweh is a burnt offering of birds, then he shall offer his offering of turtledoves, or of young pigeons-

Those who couldn't afford larger animals could offer birds. But these regulations may also apply to those rituals which required a bird to be offered for all (Lev. 15:14,29; Num. 6:10). Even within the bird offerings there was a gradation. Turtledoves were larger than pigeons and more valuable, but they are only in Israel at certain times of the year (Song 2:12; Jer. 8:7); whereas pigeons are in Israel all year round, were easier to catch and were therefore cheaper.

The various possible levels within God's law reflect our opportunities to serve on different levels, just as the good soil of the sower parable brings forth different amounts. Some will make more of God's truth than others. The very existence of these levels, rather than a simple binary demand of obedience / disobedience, pass / fail, of itself inspires us to serve God as extensively as we can. For who can be a minimalist in response to His love.

Lev 1:15 The priest shall bring it to the altar, and wring off its head, and burn it on the altar; and its blood shall be drained out on the side of the altar-

Lev. 1:15 A.V. mg. stipulates that if the offering was a bird, "pinch off the head with the nail" - as if a nail used in the process, perhaps for nailing the parts to the wood (cp. the nailing of the Lord Jesus to the cross).

Lev 1:16 and he shall take away its crop with its filth, and throw it beside the altar on the east side, in the place of the ashes-

LXX describes the removal of the feathers, and apparently taking away "the crop with its filth" apparently sounds "as when made ready for cooking". The idea was that this was a meal being prepared, for the idea was that the offerer was eating with God. And despite the humble nature of the meal, God was eating with this offerer. For the altar was effectively the table of Yahweh. The east side was nearest to the exit to the court, so this was the logical place for any refuse to be placed. We marvel at the consistent internal corroboration of the Biblical record.

Lev 1:17 He shall tear it by its wings, but shall not divide it apart-

The tearing of the wings was equivalent to the dividing into parts of the larger sacrifices (Lev. 1:6,12). Only the small size of the bird precluded dividing it.

The priest shall burn it on the altar, on the wood that is on the fire. It is a burnt offering, an offering made by fire, of a pleasant aroma to Yahweh'

"A pleasant aroma" is a very common phrase. This concept is important to God. It first occurs in Gen. 8:21 where it means that God accepted Noah's sacrifice and vowed that the pole of saving mercy in His character was going to triumph over that of necessary judgment. Under the new covenant, it is persons and not sacrifices or incense which are accepted as a "pleasant aroma" (Ez. 20:41). The word for "pleasant" means strong delight; this is how God's heart can be touched by genuine sacrifice. Those pleasing offerings represented us, the living sacrifices (Rom. 12:1). And so it is applied to us in 2 Cor. 2:15- if we are in Christ, we are counted as a pleasant aroma to God. The offering of ourselves to Him is nothing of itself, but because we are in Christ and counted as Him, we are a delight to God. Hence the colossal importance of being "in Christ". "Aroma" or "smell" is a form of the Hebrew word *ruach*, the word for spirit or breath. God discerns the spirit of sacrifices, that was what pleased Him rather than the burning flesh of animals. Our attitude of mind in sacrifice can touch Him. Sacrifice is therefore accepted, Paul says, according to what a person has to give, but the essence is the attitude of mind behind it. We think of the two coins sacrificed by the widow.

LEVITICUS CHAPTER 2

Lev 2:1 'When anyone offers-

"Anyone", literally "any soul / person", is a term carefully chosen. For women as well as men were encouraged to offer- in contrast to the generally male based system of offerings in the surrounding religions. There is also no age limit- anyone and everyone was encouraged to offer, even a grain offering if they could not manage an animal.

An offering of a grain offering to Yahweh, his offering shall be of fine flour; and he shall pour oil on it, and put frankincense on it-

Frankincense was a type of incense which would have given a pleasing smell to the burning flour. This represented how pleased God was with the offering even of a handful of flour (:2). Small sacrifices please Him immensely. And they are what comprise daily life.

Lev 2:2 He shall bring it to Aaron's sons, the priests; and he shall take his handful of its fine flour, and of its oil, with all its frankincense; and the priest shall burn its memorial on the altar, an offering made by fire, of a pleasant aroma to Yahweh-

Paul writes often that he "makes mention" or 'remembers' his brethren in regular prayer (Rom. 1:9; Eph. 1:16; 1 Thess. 1:2; Philemon 4). The Greek *mneia* is the word used in the LXX for the "memorial" of the incense or the meal offering (Lev. 2:2,16; 6:15; 24:7), or the constant fire on the altar (Lev. 6:12,13). That fire, that flour, that incense, had to be carefully and consciously prepared; it had to be

the result of man's labour. And likewise, Paul seems to be saying, he first of all thought through the cases which he then presented to the Father.

Lev 2:3 That which is left of the grain offering shall be Aaron's and his sons'. It is a most holy thing of the offerings of Yahweh made by fire-

The language of "most holy" is juxtaposed against the fact that this was referring to a simple grain offering, a 'little something' offered by literally anyone within Israel (see on :1). But such tiny offerings were "most holy" to God; we think of the Lord's attitude to the widow offering her two small coins.

Lev 2:4 When you offer an offering of a grain offering baked in the oven, it shall be unleavened cakes of fine flour mixed with oil, or unleavened wafers anointed with oil-

God was pleased to accept just flour; but there was the opportunity to bake a cake from the flour and bring that to the altar. For the idea was that the altar was the table of Yahweh, and they were eating with Him. And you don't eat flour together at a meal table, you eat cakes. The various possible levels within God's law reflect our opportunities to serve on different levels, just as the good soil of the sower parable brings forth different amounts. Some will make more of God's truth than others. The very existence of these levels, rather than a simple binary demand of obedience / disobedience, pass / fail, of itself inspires us to serve God as extensively as we can. For who can be a minimalist in response to His love. See on :14.

Lev 2:5 If your offering is a grain offering baked in a pan, it shall be of unleavened fine flour, mixed with oil-

Paul writes of the church in Corinth that God has "tempered" the whole body together (1 Cor. 12:24). This is alluding to the way in which the unleavened cakes of flour were "mixed" or "tempered" with the oil (cp. the Spirit) in order to be an acceptable offering (Lev. 2:4,5; 7:10; 9:4 etc.). Paul has already likened his Corinthian ecclesia to a lump of unleavened flour (1 Cor. 5:7); he is now saying that they have been "tempered" together by the oil of God's Spirit. If we break apart from our brethren, we are breaking apart, or denying, that "tempering" of the body which God has made.

Lev 2:6 You shall cut it in pieces, and pour oil on it. It is a grain offering-

Every part of our lives, including our most inward parts, are to be offered to God. The process of splitting the offering into its parts speaks of our self-examination, defining each part of our lives and offering them to God consciously. This was taught in the dividing up of the offerings into pieces (see on Lev. 1:17).

Lev 2:7 If your offering is a grain offering of the pan, it shall be made of fine flour with oil-

The continual stress upon the usage of oil [*shehmen*] may look ahead to the *meshiach*, the Christ, the anointed one. All aspects of the offerings looked ahead to the Lord Jesus Christ. "The pan" is LXX "the hearth".

Lev 2:8 You shall bring the grain offering that is made of these things to Yahweh: and it shall be presented to the priest, and he shall bring it to the altar-

We note how it was the priest who was to place the sacrifices upon the altar. 1 Pet. 2:5 surely alludes to this; we are

"to offer up spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ" (cp. Rom. 15:16).

Lev 2:9 The priest shall take from the grain offering its memorial, and shall burn it on the altar, an offering made by fire, of a pleasant aroma to Yahweh-

"A pleasant aroma" is a very common phrase. This concept is important to God. It first occurs in Gen. 8:21 where it means that God accepted Noah's sacrifice and vowed that the pole of saving mercy in His character was going to triumph over that of necessary judgment. Under the new covenant, it is persons and not sacrifices or incense which are accepted as a "pleasant aroma" (Ez. 20:41). The word for "pleasant" means strong delight; this is how God's heart can be touched by genuine sacrifice. Those pleasing offerings represented us, the living sacrifices (Rom. 12:1). And so it is applied to us in 2 Cor. 2:15- if we are in Christ, we are counted as a pleasant aroma to God. The offering of ourselves to Him is nothing of itself, but because we are in Christ and counted as Him, we are a delight to God. Hence the colossal importance of being "in Christ". "Aroma" or "smell" is a form of the Hebrew word *ruach*, the word for spirit or breath. God discerns the spirit of sacrifices, that was what pleased Him rather than the burning flesh of animals. Our attitude of mind in sacrifice can touch Him. Sacrifice is therefore accepted, Paul says, according to what a person has to give, but the essence is the attitude of mind behind it. We think of the two coins sacrificed by the widow.

Lev 2:10 That which is left of the grain offering shall be Aaron's and his sons'. It is a thing most holy of the offerings of Yahweh made by fire-

The "most holy" nature of the humble grain offering is stressed (:3). The grain offering was just a little flour, a 'little something' offered by literally anyone within Israel (see on :1). But such tiny offerings were "most holy" to God; He has a particular interest in those 'little somethings' we offer to Him, and they are very holy to Him.

Lev 2:11 No grain offering, which you shall offer to Yahweh, shall be made with yeast; for you shall burn no yeast, nor any honey, as an offering made by fire to Yahweh-

Even though leaven was prohibited in offerings (Lev. 2:11), God was willing to accept a peace offering with leaven in it (Lev. 7:13). Yeast represented sin (1 Cor. 5:8). Honey and yeast would've made the grain pleasing to men; but the lesson was that what pleases people isn't what is necessarily pleasing to God. He wants a person as they are, from the heart, and wanted to teach that He wants us as we are without any element of fermentation (which yeast and honey produced). God wanted salt and not honey on His food; for the altar is presented as the table of Yahweh at which a man ate with his God. Honey was widely used in pagan sacrifices, and God wished to cut off all possibility of serving idols in the name of Yahweh worship. And yet this is what Israel did, despite His best efforts in this legislation to help them maintain a total separation between such kinds of worship.

Lev 2:12 As an offering of firstfruits you shall offer them to Yahweh: but they shall not ascend for a pleasant aroma on the altar-

The "them" refers to leaven and honey, which could be offered as firstfruit offerings (Lev. 23:17; 2 Chron. 31:5). But they were not to be burnt, but given to the priests. As noted on :11, leaven and honey are associated with fermentation and therefore moral corruption. We may discern here that less than perfect offerings are still welcomed and encouraged by God; such is His desire for engagement with man, and His wish to accept the imperfect offering we bring.

Lev 2:13 Every offering of your grain offering you shall season with salt; neither shall you allow the salt of the covenant of your God to be lacking from your grain offering. With all your offerings you shall offer salt-

The altar was understood as the table of Yahweh, where He ate together with the offerer. To eat bread and salt was a sign of fellowship and acceptance in covenant, and the presence of salt in the sacrifices was therefore insisted upon (Lev. 2:13). A "covenant of salt" was an eternal covenant (Num. 18:19). The reminder therefore was that our relationship with God is eternal, not a passing phase in our lives, nor just a mere religious crutch to help us get through this life. For truly, God is man's friend and accepts us at His table. The salt represents gracious speech (Col. 4:6) and peace with one another (Mk. 9:50); without these things, no matter how great our sacrifice, it cannot be accepted by God. Hence Jesus taught that we should not offer our sacrifices to God until we have done what we can to get at peace

with our brother (Mt. 5:24). Salt was a symbol of covenant relationship with God; yet in the NT this salt stands for love, peace and kind speaking the one to the other (Mk. 9:50; Col. 4:6). This is the result of true membership in covenant relationship; a true and abiding love for all others in covenant.

Lev 2:14 If you offer a grain offering of first fruits to Yahweh, you shall offer for the grain offering of your first fruits grain in the ear parched with fire, bruised grain of the fresh ear-

"Grain in the ear" is *Abib*, the month of Passover which was at the time of grain harvest. But "grain in the ear" is literally green ears; just before harvest, some of the immature grain could be offered as a freewill offering. This was an opportunity for higher level of devotion from those eager to show personal gratitude for redemption from Egypt in addition to the Passover. As discussed on :4, here was another opportunity to serve God on the highest level.

Lev 2:15 You shall put oil on it, and lay frankincense on it: it is a grain offering-

The incense gave the offering a sweet smell, portraying God's acceptance of it and how pleasing are such 'little things' of freewill sacrifice. The offering of the frankincense was therefore to teach the offerer this. And we must ever remember that God Himself was not in need of such sacrifices of incense. If He were hungry, He would not tell us (Ps. 50:12). The legislation and concepts were therefore purely for our benefit, and that of His people at the time. We therefore need to discern the teaching.

Lev 2:16 The priest shall burn as its memorial portion part of its crushed grain, and part of its oil, along with all its frankincense: it is an offering made by fire to Yahweh'-

The "memorial portion" of the offerings was to serve as a reminder to God, as it were, of the covenants which He "remembered". He of course doesn't forget His covenant but ever remembers it (Ps. 105:8 etc.), yet He is presented in human terms as having His memory rekindled, as it were, by human prayer, faith, situations and sacrifices so that He "remembers the covenant" (Gen. 8:1; 9:15; Ex. 2:24; 6:5; Lev. 26:42,45; Num. 10:9 and often). The regular sacrifices were such a "memorial" or 'reminder'- both to God and to His people. The place of prayer, regular sacrifice of giving, breaking of bread at the "memorial meeting" etc., are all equivalents for us under the new covenant.

LEVITICUS CHAPTER 3

Lev 3:1 If his offering is a sacrifice of peace offerings; if he offers it from the herd, whether male or female, he shall offer it without blemish before Yahweh-

This looked ahead to the unblemished character of the Lord Jesus. The offering of sacrifices "without blemish" uses a word which is used about Abraham and Noah being "without blemish" (AV "perfect") before God (Gen. 6:9; 17:1). Although the word is used about the sacrifices, it is really more appropriate to persons- "you shall be perfect with Yahweh your God" (Dt. 18:13), "serve Him in sincerity (s.w. "without blemish")" (Josh. 24:14). The idea, therefore, was that the offerer was invited to see the animal as representative of himself. Our lives too are to be as "living sacrifices" (Rom. 12:1). And yet in practical terms, no animal is without blemish. They were to give the best they could, and God would count it as without blemish; as He does with us. David frequently uses the term in the Psalms about himself and the "upright", even though he was far from unblemished in moral terms.

Lev 3:2 He shall lay his hand on the head of his offering-

An act of personal identity, looking forward to our acts of identity with the representative sacrifice of the Lord Jesus. Baptism, breaking bread and especially having His spirit and living His kind of life are all the equivalent in our times.

And kill it at the door of the Tent of Meeting: and Aaron's sons, the priests shall sprinkle the blood around on the altar-

To sprinkle blood upon something didn't necessarily mean the object was forgiven. For an inanimate altar didn't need forgiving. The blood of the covenant was sprinkled (s.w.) upon the people as a sign of their involvement with the covenant process of salvation, rather than as a statement of their forgiveness (Ex. 24:8). Likewise with the sprinkling of the blood of the Passover lamb (2 Chron. 35:11). This was an act of identification rather than forgiveness of sin. The function of the altar was valid before God, or efficacious, because of its association with the blood of Christ; for the blood of the animals slain upon it couldn't bring salvation of itself, but only through God's way of looking at that blood is looking ahead to that of His Son (Heb. 10:4). And so the altar was associated with the blood which represented His blood.

Lev 3:3 He shall offer of the sacrifice of peace offerings an offering made by fire to Yahweh; the fat

that covers the inner parts, and all the fat that is on the inward parts-

There is huge emphasis upon the "inward parts" in the regulations about sacrifices. Our inward parts and thoughts of the heart are laid open before God and should be offered to Him, not just the externalities which men see (Heb. 4:12). The same word is used of Sarah's laughing "within herself" (Gen. 18:12). The sacrifice of Christ was so perfect because His innermost thoughts were offered to God. And it is our thoughts when nobody else is watching which are of the essence to God; "to be spiritually minded", as the New Testament expresses it. This is why Yahweh could not go up in "the midst" of Israel (Ex. 33:3; Num. 14:42; Dt. 1:42), because they didn't have Him in their midst. Thus to marry unbelievers would be a snare "in the midst of you" (Ex. 34:12), right in the inner mind which is what God seeks above all. David in the Psalms speaks of the "inward parts" of the human mind, which are critical in God's judgment of a person as wicked or righteous (e.g. Ps. 5:9; 36:1; 49:11 and Ps. 64:6, where "inward thought" is s.w. "inward parts"). It is those inward parts which were to be washed (Lev. 1:13), just as our innermost heart can be washed by the Spirit which is given at baptism. For this is the gift of the Spirit in the new covenant, whereby God's law is placed

within our inward parts (s.w. Jer. 31:33; Ez. 36:26,27) by the God who can form the spirit of man in man's inward parts, the God who can work directly upon the human heart (Zech. 12:1).

Lev 3:4 and the two kidneys, and the fat that is on them, which is by the loins, and the cover on the liver, with the kidneys, he shall take away-

"Take away" is the word usually used for declining, refusing etc. The idea may be that these internal organs were not to be eaten by the priests, but were to be wholly offered to God. For our inner things are to be wholly His. See on :3.

Lev 3:5 Aaron's sons shall burn it on the altar on the burnt offering, which is on the wood that is on the fire-

The reference is to how the daily burnt offering was never to be overlooked, this was to be offered first, and then the voluntary peace offerings on top of that. Regular basic daily disciplines are so important in spiritual life. Any extra activity must not be allowed to take away from them.

It is an offering made by fire, of a pleasant aroma to Yahweh-

"A pleasant aroma" is a very common phrase. This concept is important to God. It first occurs in Gen. 8:21 where it means that God accepted Noah's sacrifice and vowed that the pole of saving mercy in His character was going to triumph over that of necessary judgment. Under the new covenant, it is persons and not sacrifices or incense which are accepted as a "pleasant aroma" (Ez. 20:41). The word for "pleasant" means strong delight; this is how God's heart can be touched by genuine sacrifice. Those pleasing offerings represented us, the living sacrifices (Rom. 12:1). And so it is applied to us in 2 Cor. 2:15- if we are in Christ, we are counted as a pleasant aroma to God. The offering of ourselves to Him is nothing of itself, but because we are in Christ and counted as Him, we are a delight to God. Hence the colossal importance of being "in Christ". "Aroma" or "smell" is a form of the Hebrew word *ruach*, the word for spirit or breath. God discerns the spirit of sacrifices, that was what pleased Him rather than the burning flesh of animals. Our attitude of mind in sacrifice can touch Him. Sacrifice is therefore accepted, Paul says, according to what a person has to give, but the essence is the attitude of mind behind it. We think of the two coins sacrificed by the widow.

Lev 3:6 If his offering for a sacrifice of peace offerings to Yahweh is from the flock; male or female, he shall offer it without blemish-

No animal actually is without blemish. God recognizes that we will not attain perfection in this life, but we are to do our best towards it; and His love imputes righteousness to us, counting us as unblemished because of our status in Christ. For only Christ was the sacrifice totally without moral blemish (1 Pet. 1:19).

Lev 3:7 If he offers a lamb for his offering, then he shall offer it before Yahweh-

Although peace offerings were completely voluntary, they were not to think that therefore they could not respect God's holiness and give Him that which was second best (:6) or offer it where they liked. Many of the sacrifices we make to God are likewise not compulsory, but the spirit of giving God the best which permeates the Law of Moses should remain with us. We may be able to deduce that peace offerings could be offered in other places, and there appear to be examples of that in later scripture; but if a lamb was offered, it must be "before Yahweh", seeing that the lamb particularly looked ahead to the sacrifice of the Lord Jesus "before Yahweh".

Lev 3:8 and he shall lay his hand on the head of his offering, and kill it before the Tent of Meeting: and Aaron's sons shall sprinkle its blood around on the altar-

To lay the hand upon is a phrase which means more than merely touching the head, but implies leaning upon or pushing upon. It is rendered "lean his hand [upon a wall]" (Am. 5:19). It was an act of very conscious identity. The same phrase is used of how God's hand upholds those who spiritually fall (Ps. 37:24). So we see the mutuality of relationship between God and man. We strongly place our hand upon the offering of the Lord Jesus, and God places His hand upon us. Paul may have this idea in view when he speaks of how he grabs hold of Jesus and is grabbed hold of by Jesus (Phil. 3:12); just as the Lord seized hold of Peter drowning in the lake, as Peter grabbed hold of Him. That incident surely was a mini parable of our redemption.

Lev 3:9 He shall offer from the sacrifice of peace offerings an offering made by fire to Yahweh; its fat, the entire tail fat, he shall take away close to the backbone; and the fat that covers the inwards, and all the fat that is on the inwards-

The idea is as in LXX "the fat [even] the fat tail" (as Lev. 3:9; 7:3). There were species of sheep

with a large fatty tail, which was considered in their culture to be a great delicacy. We see here how the law of Moses was limited in application to an immediate context, and was simply not intended to be a global law for all time. But the take away lesson is that we are to give to God whatever is for us, in our culture and worldview, the best and most desirous.

Lev 3:10 and the two kidneys, and the fat that is on them, which is by the loins, and the cover on the liver, with the kidneys, he shall take away-

"Take away" is the word usually used for declining, refusing etc. The idea may be that these internal organs were not to be eaten by the priests, but were to be wholly offered to God. For our inner things are to be wholly His. David came to understand that all the Mosaic emphasis upon the "kidneys" was because they represented the inner heart or mind. He often uses the word to describe his innermost thoughts (Ps. 7:9; 16:7; 26:2; 73:21; 139:13). Jeremiah likewise (Jer. 11:20; 12:2; 17:10; 20:12). The Hebrew for "kidneys" is a form of the word for "jewel"; for the innermost core thoughts of a person are so precious to God. Likewise the Hebrew for "liver" is literally 'that which he heaviest / most valuable'. For the innermost thoughts are the

weighty things to God. We see here the supreme importance of being spiritually minded.

Lev 3:11 The priest shall burn it on the altar: it is the food of the offering made by fire to Yahweh-

The metaphor invites us to see the altar as God's table, at which He as it were ate the sacrifices. At the breaking of bread service, we come to the table of the Lord (1 Cor. 10:21); the offering we bring is ourselves. And yet God has placed on the altar, on the table before us, the sacrifice of His Son, and invites us to eat with Him there. Eating with someone was understood as a sign of religious fellowship. At the breaking of bread, we are therefore celebrating our living fellowship with God Himself.

The peace offering was the "food (also translated "bread") of the offering made... unto the Lord" (Lev. 3:11). The peace offering was therefore God's food, or bread. Yet the offerer was invited to eat the bread of God. This implied that when the offerer sat down to eat the food, as it were, God was sitting with him, also eating of it. This was symbolized in human terms by the fact that the priest, as God's representative, ate part of the peace offering, while the offerer ate the other part. Presumably they sat down together to do this. The closeness of God which this implies is almost beyond our comprehension. We are in-

vited to see the exquisite beauty of true fellowship with God. The idea of eating the bread of God, the sacrifice which represents His son, and thereby having fellowship with Him, should send our minds forward to John 6. "The bread of God is He which comes down from heaven", i.e. our Lord Jesus (Jn. 6:33). Not for nothing do some Rabbis speak of 'eating Messiah' as an expression of the fellowship they hope to have with Him at His coming.

Lev 3:12 If his offering is a goat, then he shall offer it before Yahweh-

God is eager for fellowship with man, and wanted by all means to eat with man through the peace offerings. It seems there were various kinds of animals which could be used, in accordance with the possibilities of the offerer. The goat appears to be the lowest rank. The various possible levels within God's law reflect our opportunities to serve on different levels, just as the good soil of the sower parable brings forth different amounts. Some will make more of God's truth than others. The very existence of these levels, rather than a simple binary demand of obedience / disobedience, pass / fail, of itself inspires us to serve God as extensively as we can. For who can be a minimalist in response to His love.

Lev 3:13 and he shall lay his hand on its head, and kill it before the Tent of Meeting; and the sons of Aaron shall sprinkle its blood around on the altar-

David rejoiced in God's mercy to him, perhaps in the context of his sin with Bathsheba. He asks: "What shall I render unto the Lord for all his (spiritual) benefits toward me?". He decides that he will offer a peace offering: "I will offer to thee the sacrifice of thanksgiving (the peace offering; Lev. 7:12)... I will take the cup of salvation... I will pay my vows... in the presence of all his people... in the courts of the Lord's house". As we sit "before the Lord" at the memorial meeting, beholding the cross of Christ and the blood of Calvary, we should be intensely aware of God's great benefits towards us: our salvation assured, sin forgiven, peace with God. Our response should be to renew our vows joyfully, in the ecclesia, God's house, in the presence of His people, as we eat the peace offering, the sacrifice of thanksgiving. As the peace offering was to be offered publicly, "before the tabernacle of the congregation" (Lev. 3:13), so in the sight of each other we too renew our vows and express our peace with God. And if we are all at peace with God, we should therefore be at peace with each other.

Lev 3:14 He shall offer from it as his offering, an offering made by fire to Yahweh; the fat that covers the inward parts, and all the fat that is on the inward parts,-

The inward man of Rom. 7:22 is what is so important; yet the LXX in Lev. 3:14-16 uses the same word to describe the fat surrounding the intestines, which God appeared to so value in the sacrifices. It was not that He wanted that fat in itself; but rather He saw that fat as representing a man's essential spirituality, that which is developed close to the heart, unseen by others, but revealed after death.

Lev 3:15 and the two kidneys, and the fat that is on them, which is by the loins, and the cover on the liver, with the kidneys, he shall take away-

See on :10; the legislation is identical.

Lev 3:16 The priest shall burn them on the altar: it is the food of the offering made by fire, for a pleasant aroma; all the fat is Yahweh's-

The offerer put his hand on its head, thereby associating himself with it. In a sense, the animal therefore represented the offerer. But it had to be "without blemish" (Lev. 3:1), and to produce a "sweet savour" when burnt (Lev. 3:16). But how are we to offer ourselves as an unblemished

sacrifice? We are surely each aware of our desperate sinfulness. The answer is in the fact that the language of the peace offering sacrifice is applied to Jesus. "He is our peace" (Eph. 2:14), our peace offering by metonymy (in the same way as Christ was made "sin" for us, i.e. a sin offering). He is the unblemished animal (1 Pet. 1:19), and if we are in Christ, we too will be counted as being without spot and blemish (Eph. 5:27). We ought to know whether we are in Christ. If we are, we will be seen by God as just as pure as He is.

Lev 3:17 It shall be a perpetual statute throughout your generations in all your dwellings, that you shall eat neither fat nor blood'-

The fat was understood as the best part of the animal, although today for health reasons we tend to consider the meat to be of more interest than the fat. They were to give to God that which they perceived to be the most valuable and not keep it for themselves, within the frames of understanding and perception within which they then lived. They were not to indulge themselves on what seemed best to them, but to offer it to God. And that principle applies to us.

LEVITICUS CHAPTER 4

Lev 4:1 Yahweh spoke to Moses, saying-

God spoke to Moses, who then spoke to the Israelites (:2). He is presented as mediator between God and man, looking ahead to the greater prophet like him, Messiah, the Lord Jesus.

Lev 4:2 Speak to the children of Israel, saying, 'If anyone sins unintentionally, in any of the things which Yahweh has commanded not to be done, and does any one of them-

We note that the legislation about the cities of refuge likewise reflected God's special concern about unintentional sin. He recognizes that there are different kinds of sin. And in this we see His sensitivity, for the other legal codes at the time saw everything in black and white terms of obedience or disobedience to legal statutes. The word for "unintentionally" is s.w. 'deceived' (Job 12:16). It could be that God also recognizes that some are deceived into sin, and therefore treats those who lead into sin more severely than those who are led into sin. Likewise the New Testament condemns false teachers, but seems to be more accepting of the falsely taught, the misguided.

Lev 4:3 if the anointed priest sins so as to bring guilt on the people, then let him offer for his sin, which he has sinned, a young bull without blemish to Yahweh for a sin offering-

Sins of ignorance still needed to be atoned for. Sin is a felt offence against God, whether or not we were aware of it at the time. If we accidentally step on someone's foot and they don't tell us about it until tomorrow, it doesn't mean

that we didn't hurt them at the time. The sins we committed before baptism, in ignorance, were still felt by God and need atonement- which is available freely through being "in Christ". David asked to be forgiven for the sins he committed which he didn't know about (Ps. 19:12 cp. Ps. 90:8). We should pray the same. But this means we are asking for forgiveness for sin which we haven't specifically repented of. We should likewise forgive others for their sins which although *we* so clearly feel them, they themselves don't realize they have committed them. We can, if we wish, insist that we shall only forgive those who repent to us of their sins. But the problem with that approach is that *as* we forgive others, the basis we choose upon which to relate to them, so we will be forgiven (Mt. 6:12). If we trust we are forgiven for sins we aren't conscious of, even though they are very clear to God and felt by Him, then we ought to forgive others for their sins even when they don't perceive (at this point in their spiritual journey) that they have sinned.

Lev 4:4 He shall bring the bull to the door of the Tent of Meeting before Yahweh; and he shall lay his hand on the head of the bull, and kill the bull before Yahweh-

To lay the hand upon is a phrase which means more than merely touching the head, but implies leaning upon or pushing upon. It is rendered "lean his hand [upon a wall]" (Am. 5:19). It was an act of very conscious identity. The same phrase is used of how God's hand upholds those who spiritually fall (Ps. 37:24). So we see the mutuality of relationship between God and man. We strongly place our hand upon the offering of the Lord Jesus, and God places

His hand upon us. Paul may have this idea in view when he speaks of how he grabs hold of Jesus and is grabbed hold of by Jesus (Phil. 3:12); just as the Lord seized hold of Peter drowning in the lake, as Peter grabbed hold of Him. That incident surely was a mini parable of our redemption.

Lev 4:5 The anointed priest shall take some of the blood of the bull, and bring it to the Tent of Meeting-

‘Christ’ means ‘the anointed one’, and so Jewish minds would have associated ‘Jesus Christ’ with the priest who saves [‘Jesus’ means ‘Yahweh’s salvation’].

Lev 4:6 The priest shall dip his finger in the blood, and sprinkle some of the blood seven times before Yahweh, before the veil of the sanctuary-

The blood of the sin offering was to be sprinkled “before the LORD, before the veil” (Lev. 4:6,17). Yet the veil was a symbol of the flesh of the Lord Jesus at the time of His dying. At the time of the sprinkling of blood when the sin offering was made, the veil [the flesh of the Lord Jesus] was identifiable with Yahweh Himself. The blood of the offerings was poured out “before Yahweh” (Lev. 4:15 etc.), pointing forward to how God Himself, from so physically far away, “came down” so that the blood shedding of His Son was done as it were in His presence. And who is to say that the theophany that afternoon, of earthquake and thick darkness, was not the personal presence of Yahweh, hovering above crucifixion hill? Over the mercy seat (a symbol of the Lord Jesus in Hebrews), between the cherubim where the blood was sprinkled, “there I will meet with thee, and I will commune with thee” (Ex. 25:22). There we see the

essence of God, and there in the cross we hear the essential word and message of God made flesh.

The sprinkling of the blood of the sacrifices around the altar is mentioned several times, but only for the sin offering do we read that the priest was to sprinkle it with his finger. This perhaps pointed forward to how there was to be a very personal connection between the priest and the atonement made for others, just as there was between the Lord Jesus and the atonement He made for us. The blood would presumably have made the priest unclean and unable to further officiate, again looking forward to the ending of the priestly function through the blood of the Lord Jesus.

Lev 4:7 The priest shall put some of the blood on the horns of the altar of sweet incense before Yahweh, which is in the Tent of Meeting-

The sweetness of the incense speaks of how pleasing is prayer to God; for incense represents prayer later in the Bible. But that acceptability and pleasure is dependent upon confession of sin, and the sacrifice of the blood of the Lord Jesus.

And he shall pour out all of the rest of the blood of the bull at the base of the altar of burnt offering, which is at the door of the Tent of Meeting-

We think of the blood of Christ trickling down the stake to the ground.

Lev 4:8 He shall take all the fat of the bull of the sin offering off of it: the fat that covers the inward parts, and all the fat that is on the inward parts-

There is huge emphasis upon the "inward parts" in the regulations about sacrifices. Our inward parts and thoughts of the heart are laid open before God and should be offered to Him, not just the externalities which men see (Heb. 4:12). The same word is used of Sarah's laughing "within herself" (Gen. 18:12). The sacrifice of Christ was so perfect because His innermost thoughts were offered to God. And it is our thoughts when nobody else is watching which are of the essence to God; "to be spiritually minded", as the New Testament expresses it. This is why Yahweh could not go up in "the midst" of Israel (Ex. 33:3; Num. 14:42; Dt. 1:42), because they didn't have Him in their midst. Thus to marry unbelievers would be a snare "in the midst of you" (Ex. 34:12), right in the inner mind which is what God seeks above all. David in the Psalms speaks of the "inward parts" of the human mind, which are critical in God's judgment of a person as wicked or righteous (e.g. Ps. 5:9; 36:1; 49:11 and Ps. 64:6, where "inward thought" is s.w. "inward parts"). It is those inward parts which were to be washed (Lev. 1:13), just as our innermost heart can be washed by the Spirit which is given at baptism. For this is the gift of the Spirit in the new covenant, whereby God's law is placed within our inward parts (s.w. Jer. 31:33; Ez. 36:26,27) by the God who can form the spirit of man in man's inward parts, the God who can work directly upon the human heart (Zech. 12:1).

Lev 4:9 and the two kidneys, and the fat that is on them, which is by the loins, and the cover on the liver, with the kidneys, he shall take away-

"Take away" is the word usually used for declining, refusing etc. The idea may be that these internal organs were not to be eaten by the priests, but were to be wholly offered to God. For our inner things are to be wholly His. David came to understand that all the Mosaic emphasis upon the "kidneys" was because they represented the inner heart or mind. He often uses the word to describe his innermost thoughts (Ps. 7:9; 16:7; 26:2; 73:21; 139:13). Jeremiah likewise (Jer. 11:20; 12:2; 17:10; 20:12). The Hebrew for "kidneys" is a form of the word for "jewel"; for the innermost core thoughts of a person are so precious to God. Likewise the Hebrew for "liver" is literally 'that which heaviest / most valuable'. For the innermost thoughts are the weighty things to God. We see here the supreme importance of being spiritually minded.

Lev 4:10 as it is taken off of the bull of the sacrifice of peace offerings. The priest shall burn them on the altar of burnt offering-

The emphasized similarity with the peace offering was because the idea of the sin offering was to restore peace with God.

Lev 4:11 The bull's skin, all its flesh, with its head, and with its legs, its inward parts, and its dung-

The idea is, "the whole bull" (:12). In the same way as we cannot choose to live in isolation from the Father and Son, so we cannot separate ourselves from others who bear the same Name. The Scribe well understood all this: "There is one God... and to love him... and to love his neighbour as himself, is more than all whole burnt offerings and sacrifices" (Mk. 12:32,33). Those whole offerings represented

the whole body of Israel (Lev. 4:7-15). The Scribe understood that those offerings taught that all Israel were unified together on account of their bearing the same Name of Yahweh. We must love others who bear that Name "as ourselves", so intense is the unity between us.

Lev 4:12 even the whole bull shall he carry forth outside the camp to a clean place, where the ashes are poured out, and burn it on wood with fire. Where the ashes are poured out it shall be burned-

The Lord Jesus suffered and died, shedding the blood of atonement, "outside the camp" (Heb. 13:13). We are bidden go forth to the Lord Jesus "outside the camp", just as those who "sought Yahweh" did when there was no tabernacle (Ex. 33:7). The people watching Moses as he walked out to it, without the camp, therefore looks ahead to a faithless Israel lining the via Dolorosa and watching the Lord walk out to His place of crucifixion. And we are to get behind Him and follow Him there, stepping out from the mass of Israel. As the Lord Jesus suffered "outside the camp", so various parts of the Mosaic sacrifices were to be burnt there (Lev. 4:12,21; 8:17; 9:11; 16:27); and yet it was the blood of those sacrifices which achieved atonement (Heb. 13:11; Num. 19:3,9). "Outside the camp" was the place of excluded, condemned sinners (Lev. 13:46; 24:14; Num. 5:3,4; 15:35,36; 31:13,19), and it was here that the Lord Jesus died, in identification with us.

Lev 4:13 If the whole congregation of Israel sins, and the thing is hidden from the eyes of the assembly, and they have done any of the things which Yahweh has commanded not to be done, and are guilty-

LXX "and they should do one thing forbidden of any of the commands of the Lord". James may have this in mind when he says that obeying all the law but breaking just one commandment will lead to condemnation (James 2:10). His argument becomes all the more powerful if he is alluding here, for the point is then made that this holds true even if that one commandment is broken in ignorance. Clearly the only way to justification with God is through faith in the Lord Jesus.

Lev 4:14 when the sin in which they have sinned is known, then the assembly shall offer a young bull for a sin offering, and bring it before the Tent of Meeting-

The closest historical example of this is when Josiah discovered the book of the law, and realized that Israel were guilty of disobedience in ignorance. But he did far more than follow the ritual prescribed here. See on Lev. 6:5. Again we see how the Mosaic law was not a chain, a wearisome and limiting leash upon man, but rather a springboard to using personal initiative to respond to the principles taught- often to a far greater extent than mere obedience to the letter of the law. We see this in the way Boaz interpreted the Levirate law, and also the laws about allowing gleaning.

Lev 4:15 The elders of the congregation shall lay their hands on the head of the bull before Yahweh; and the bull shall be killed before Yahweh-

Before the priests who represented God. God Himself is in Heaven, but His representatives on earth are functionally Him to other people. We must therefore watch our be-

haviour and who we are, because we who have been baptized into His Name are His representatives on earth.

Lev 4:16 The anointed priest shall bring of the blood of the bull to the Tent of Meeting-

The sins of ignorance were the only offerings where the offering was to be brought to the tent of meeting, to be taken beyond the altar of burnt offering. It emphasized the gravity of what had been done; that God was especially interested in how man responds once he becomes aware of his failures. And that is an abiding principle.

Lev 4:17 and the priest shall dip his finger in the blood, and sprinkle it seven times before Yahweh, before the veil-

This describes the priest as sprinkling the blood "before the LORD, even before the veil". This implies that the veil and the "LORD" were associated, as if the Angel, the 'LORD', was just behind the veil, i.e. in the Most Holy. See on Ps. 78:60. The rending of the veil at the Lord's death therefore as it were displayed God Himself to men.

Lev 4:18 He shall put some of the blood on the horns of the altar which is before Yahweh, that is in the Tent of Meeting; and the rest of the blood he shall pour out at the base of the altar of burnt offering, which is at the door of the Tent of Meeting-

The altar in view is that of incense (as in :7). The ritual of the offering was very similar to that for the high priest if he personally realized he had sinned. Perhaps there is to be deduced the idea that the high priest was representative of all Israel. They were in him, and he was in them. This looks ahead to the representative nature of the Lord's sac-

rifice and relationship with His people; as a representative and not a substitute.

Lev 4:19 All its fat he shall take from it, and burn it on the altar-

If the sacrifice was to be treated as the high priest's sin offering (:20), we can assume this included the kidneys etc.; see on :9.

Lev 4:20 Thus shall he do with the bull; as he did with the bull of the sin offering, so shall he do with this; and the priest shall make atonement for them, and they shall be forgiven-

Again and again the point is made- atonement and forgiveness was still required even for sins of ignorance. The hurt to God had still been caused. Repentance was still needed. Otherwise there would be a disinterest in learning God's ways, a preference to remain in ignorance. Whereas once we grasp that sins of ignorance are still culpable sins, we will rather be motivated to learn all we can of God's ways. If we love God, we will want to please Him, we will want to know what He wishes from us, we will desire to learn His ways.

Lev 4:21 He shall carry forth the bull outside the camp, and burn it as he burned the first bull. It is the sin offering for the assembly-

He needed help to carry an entire bull, hence LXX "they shall carry forth the calf whole without the camp".

Lev 4:22 When a ruler sins, and unwittingly does any one of all the things which Yahweh his God has commanded not to be done, and is guilty-

Again we note that guilt is still reckoned even for past sins of ignorance. See on :20. We don't read "If a ruler sins...", but "when". This ought to have warned Israel against desiring a human king; they were being reminded that all human leadership has feet of clay, and leaders sin.

Lev 4:23 if his sin, in which he has sinned, is made known to him-

The double emphasis that he "has sinned" must be noted; ignorance doesn't work some kind of automatic atonement for sin. See on :20. "Is made known to him" could suggest he has his sin pointed out to him. We think of the situation with king Uzziah in 2 Chron. 26:18.

He shall bring as his offering a goat, a male without blemish-

No animal actually is without blemish. God recognizes that we will not attain perfection in this life, but we are to do our best towards it; and His love imputes righteousness to us, counting us as unblemished because of our status in Christ. For only Christ was the sacrifice totally without moral blemish (1 Pet. 1:19).

Lev 4:24 He shall lay his hand on the head of the goat, and kill it in the place where they kill the burnt offering before Yahweh. It is a sin offering-

For "lay his hand", see on :4. The scenario presented here is quite counter instinctive, especially in the societies of those days. You didn't point out sin to a leader (:23), and he typically would be proud and angry rather than humbly penitent.

Lev 4:25 The priest shall take some of the blood of the sin offering with his finger, and put it on the horns of the altar

of burnt offering. He shall pour out the rest of its blood at the base of the altar of burnt offering-

On one level, God surely foreknew that the scenario here described, whereby leaders of Israel humbly accepted rebuke and followed this ritual, was just not going to happen. And yet the whole legislation was given because this was God's hope. We think of all the detailed legislation of Ez. 40-48 for the exiles, in order that they might restore the temple. But it was not obeyed. This is one of the most tragic dimensions of God- setting up so much potential which is wasted. Perhaps David alludes to this legislation when he laments that there was no sacrifice prescribed for a king who had sinned as he had; for his sins were not those of ignorance but of presumption.

Lev 4:26 All its fat he shall burn on the altar, like the fat of the sacrifice of peace offerings; and the priest shall make atonement for him concerning his sin, and he will be forgiven-

The record of the sin offering in Lev. 4:10,26,31,35 stresses an impressive four times that the animal was to be prepared and offered in a similar way to the peace offerings, (e.g.) "as the fat is taken away from the peace offering". This serves to emphasize the link between the two sacrifices; the peace offering was in gratitude and rejoicing for the peace of sins forgiven. For this reason it was totally voluntary.

Lev 4:27 If anyone of the common people sins unwittingly, in doing any of the things which Yahweh has commanded not to be done, and is guilty-

LXX "and they should do one thing forbidden of any of the commands of the Lord". See on :13. "The common people" is literally 'the people of the land / *eretz*', a phrase

which usually refers to the non-Israelite peoples within the land promised to Abraham (Gen. 23:7; 42:6; Num. 13:18,28; 14:9; Dt. 28:10; Josh. 4:24; 1 Kings 8:43,53; 1 Chron. 5:25 etc.). This would be the likely understanding of the phrase here (and in Lev. 20:2,4).

Lev 4:28 if his sin, which he has sinned, is made known to him, then he shall bring for his offering a goat, a female without blemish, for his sin which he has sinned-

The ruler was to offer a male, but the common person was to offer a female. It may simply be because female animals cost less, and the ruler was to realize that he had greater responsibility in his failure and needed to show this in the kind of sacrifice he made.

Lev 4:29 He shall lay his hand on the head of the sin offering, and kill the sin offering in the place of burnt offering-

The person had to personally kill the animal, not delegate it to a priest or someone else. It would've been an unpleasant experience, but designed to teach the seriousness of sin. 'This animal has done nothing wrong; it's *me* who ought to be dying for my sin' would've been the thought of all sensitive, spiritually minded people who did this. And this is our thought as we survey the cross with the son of God dying upon it for our sins.

Lev 4:30 The priest shall take some of its blood with his finger, and put it on the horns of the altar of burnt offering; and the rest of its blood he shall pour out at the base of the altar-

Because the altar represented the Lord Jesus (Heb. 13:10), it has been wrongly argued that these rituals speak of the cleansing of the nature of the Lord Jesus by His own

death. This runs far too close to making the Lord Jesus a sinner who needed reconciliation with God; whereas His perfect character made Him for ever "one" with His Father, both before and after His death. Rather I suggest the blood of the sin offering was placed on the altar (and other items) in order to demonstrate how they achieved any forgiveness of sin. They only functioned in practice through their identification with the blood of Christ, represented by that of the bull slain as a sin offering. It is impossible that the blood of a bull could take away sin; it only functioned in this way insofar as God foresaw the blood of His Son (Heb. 10:4). The horns of the altar were perceived as the place of salvation for sinners (1 Kings 1:51; 2:28). But this was only finally to be true through the power of the blood of Christ. This idea was taught by the daubing of sin offering blood on the horns of the altar- as an act of identification of the altar with the blood, rather than to somehow make the metal of an unclean altar now clean. The whole system was dedicated to God, and accepted by Him, only through its association with the future blood of the Lord Jesus.

Lev 4:31 All its fat he shall take away, like the fat is taken away from off of the sacrifice of peace offerings; and the priest shall burn it on the altar for a pleasant aroma to Yahweh; and the priest shall make atonement for him, and he will be forgiven-

"A pleasant aroma" is a very common phrase. This concept is important to God. It first occurs in Gen. 8:21 where it means that God accepted Noah's sacrifice and vowed that the pole of saving mercy in His character was going to triumph over that of necessary judgment. Under the new

covenant, it is persons and not sacrifices or incense which are accepted as a "pleasant aroma" (Ez. 20:41). The word for "pleasant" means strong delight; this is how God's heart can be touched by genuine sacrifice. Those pleasing offerings represented us, the living sacrifices (Rom. 12:1). And so it is applied to us in 2 Cor. 2:15- if we are in Christ, we are counted as a pleasant aroma to God. The offering of ourselves to Him is nothing of itself, but because we are in Christ and counted as Him, we are a delight to God. Hence the colossal importance of being "in Christ". "Aroma" or "smell" is a form of the Hebrew word *ruach*, the word for spirit or breath. God discerns the spirit of sacrifices, that was what pleased Him rather than the burning flesh of animals. Our attitude of mind in sacrifice can touch Him. Sacrifice is therefore accepted, Paul says, according to what a person has to give, but the essence is the attitude of mind behind it. We think of the two coins sacrificed by the widow.

Lev 4:32 If he brings a lamb as his offering for a sin offering, he shall bring a female without blemish-

For "*female*" see on :28. This looked ahead to the unblemished character of the Lord Jesus. The offering of sacrifices "without blemish" uses a word which is used about Abraham and Noah being "without blemish" (AV "perfect") before God (Gen. 6:9; 17:1). Although the word is used about the sacrifices, it is really more appropriate to persons- "you shall be perfect with Yahweh your God" (Dt. 18:13), "serve Him in sincerity (s.w. "without blemish")" (Josh. 24:14). The idea, therefore, was that the offerer was invited to see the animal as representative of himself. Our

lives too are to be as "living sacrifices" (Rom. 12:1). And yet in practical terms, no animal is without blemish. They were to give the best they could, and God would count it as without blemish; as He does with us. David frequently uses the term in the Psalms about himself and the "upright", even though he was far from unblemished in moral terms.

Lev 4:33 He shall lay his hand on the head of the sin offering, and kill it for a sin offering in the place where they kill the burnt offering-

Many of the offerers would never have killed an animal. The experience would have been traumatic for some of them, and a powerful lesson in the effect of sin, even if committed unwittingly.

Lev 4:34 The priest shall take some of the blood of the sin offering with his finger, and put it on the horns of the altar of burnt offering; and all the rest of its blood he shall pour out at the base of the altar-

"The base of the altar" points ahead to the significance of the blood at the foot of the cross of the Lord Jesus.

Lev 4:35 All its fat he shall take away, like the fat of the lamb is taken away from the sacrifice of peace offerings; and the priest shall burn them on the altar, on the offerings of Yahweh made by fire; and the priest shall make atonement for him concerning his sin that he has sinned, and he will be forgiven'-

The sin of crucifying the Lord Jesus is very generously presented as a sin of ignorance by the Lord's saying that "they know not what they do", confirmed by Peter's appeal to repent although "Through ignorance you did it" (Lk. 23:34; Acts 3:17). Repentance was therefore encouraged

on the basis of having had sin made known to them. And the offering for that sin had already been made, in the Lord's death. Their sin of [apparent] ignorance was therefore in fact the forgiveness for their sin- if they actualized it by recognition and repentance.

LEVITICUS CHAPTER 5

Lev 5:1 'If anyone sins, in that he hears the a legal call to testify, he being a witness, whether he has seen or known, if he doesn't speak, then he shall bear his iniquity-

Sins of omission, of turning a blind eye, are just as culpable as sins of commission. If we are witnesses, we will bear witness; we will naturally. We have to; and note how Lev. 5:1 taught that it was a sin not to bear witness / testify when one had been a witness. This may well be consciously alluded to in the language of witness which we have in Lk. 24:48. We each have the witness of the Lord's resurrection in ourselves (1 Jn. 5:10).

Lev 5:2 Or if anyone touches any unclean thing, whether it is the carcass of an unclean animal, or the carcass of unclean livestock, or the carcass of unclean creeping things, and it is hidden from him, and he is unclean, then he shall be guilty-

Haggai comments that it was easier to be made unclean than to be made clean; touching holy things didn't impart holiness to a person, whereas touching unclean things made people unclean (Hag. 2:11-14). It's easy to be made unspiritual by association with unspiritual things, the things which are dead, which have no spiritual life in them, which are going nowhere- hence Paul alludes to this by saying "Touch not the unclean thing" in the context of appealing for believers to quit worldly associations (2 Cor. 6:17). However, on the other hand, this is no proof for the wrong idea of 'guilt by association'. The Lord Jesus touched lepers in order to heal them.

Lev 5:3 Or if he touches the uncleanness of man, whatever his uncleanness is with which he is unclean, and it is hidden from him; when he knows of it, then he shall be guilty-

Sins of ignorance still needed to be atoned for. Sin is a felt offence against God, whether or not we were aware of it at the time. If we accidentally step on someone's foot and they don't tell us about it until tomorrow, it doesn't mean that we didn't hurt them at the time. The sins we committed before baptism, in ignorance, were still felt by God and need atonement- which is available freely through being "in Christ". David asked to be forgiven for the sins he committed which he didn't know about (Ps. 19:12 cp. Ps. 90:8). We should pray the same. But this means we are asking for forgiveness for sin which we haven't specifically repented of. We should likewise forgive others for their sins which although *we* so clearly feel them, they themselves don't realize they have committed them. We can, if we wish, insist that we shall only forgive those who repent to us of their sins. But the problem with that approach is that *as* we forgive others, the basis we choose upon which to relate to them, so we will be forgiven (Mt. 6:12). If we trust we are forgiven for sins we aren't conscious of, even though they are very clear to God and felt by Him, then we ought to forgive others for their sins even when they don't perceive (at this point in their spiritual journey) that they have sinned.

Lev 5:4 Or if anyone swears rashly with his lips to do evil, or to do good, whatever it is that a man might utter rashly with an oath, and it is hidden from him; when he knows of it, then he shall be guilty of one of these-

LXX speaks in harsher terms of the man who swears rashly: "That unrighteous soul, which determines with his lips to do evil or to do good...". The idea would be that even a desire to do good was rendered unrighteous through the huge sin of swearing rashly. It would seem that Jephthah's rash vow falls in this category. He need not have performed it, had he been aware of the legislation here. Or perhaps he intentionally chose not to perform it. Maybe he rose up to a higher level than the following the letter of the law here; or maybe like Saul wishing to slay his son Jonathan, there was a death wish against his daughter. These questions are intentionally left open in the inspired text, as there is some designed benefit from our reflection upon them.

Lev 5:5 It shall be, when he is guilty of one of these, he shall confess that in which he has sinned-

The normal Hebrew word translated "praise" is also translated "confess" in the context of confessing sin (Lev. 5:5; 16:21; 26:40; Num. 5:7). Contrition of heart because of appreciating our own failures is therefore one way of praising Yahweh's Name. So often does the word "praise" occur in the context of praising the *Name* of Yahweh, or the praising of "the God of Israel", i.e. Yahweh. Praise is related to the realization that sin has been forgiven. Hezekiah's praise on realizing God's mercy to him was expressed in a desire to walk in quiet fellowship with God for the rest of his life. There is no suggestion that praise was some kind of ecstatic exuberance of emotion

Lev 5:6 and he shall bring his trespass offering to Yahweh for his sin which he has sinned, a female from the flock, a

lamb or a goat, for a sin offering; and the priest shall make atonement for him concerning his sin-

"His sin... he has sinned... his sin" labours the fact that sins of ignorance are really sin. And must be dealt with. It emphasized the gravity of what had been done; that God was especially interested in how man responds once he becomes aware of his failures. And that is an abiding principle.

Lev 5:7 If he can't afford a lamb, then he shall bring his trespass offering for that in which he has sinned, two turtle-doves, or two young pigeons, to Yahweh; one for a sin offering, and the other for a burnt offering-

AV "His trespass which he hath committed" labours the point that sin of ignorance really is still sin. The usual order of the description of the offerings is sin offering, then burnt offering [speaking of dedication promised after the receipt of forgiveness] and then the peace offering, celebrating peace with God through forgiveness and commitment to the dedicated life, spoken of in the burnt offering.

Lev 5:8 He shall bring them to the priest, who shall first offer the one which is for the sin offering, and wring off its head from its neck, but shall not sever it completely-

A.V. mg. stipulates that if the offering was a bird, "pinch off the head with the nail" - as if a nail used in the process, perhaps for nailing the parts to the wood (cp. the nailing of the Lord Jesus to the cross).

Lev 5:9 He shall sprinkle some of the blood of the sin offering on the side of the altar; and the rest of the blood shall be drained out at the base of the altar. It is a sin offering-

"The base of the altar" points ahead to the significance of the blood at the foot of the cross of the Lord Jesus. See on Lev. 4:30.

Lev 5:10 He shall offer the second for a burnt offering, according to the ordinance; and the priest shall make atonement for him concerning his sin which he has sinned, and he shall be forgiven-

The sin offering always preceded the burnt offering, which represented dedication to God. Before we can acceptably dedicate ourselves to God in any enterprise or aspect of our lives, we must first be right with God, cleansed from our sins; for good works alone cannot compensate for the sin we have committed.

Lev 5:11 But if he can't afford two turtledoves, or two young pigeons, then he shall bring his offering for that in which he has sinned, the tenth part of an ephah of fine flour for a sin offering. He shall put no oil on it, neither shall he put any frankincense on it, for it is a sin offering-

Even within the bird offerings there was a gradation. Turtledoves were larger than pigeons and more valuable, but they are only in Israel at certain times of the year (Song 2:12; Jer. 8:7); whereas pigeons are in Israel all year round, were easier to catch and were therefore cheaper. The various possible levels within God's law reflect our opportunities to serve on different levels, just as the good soil of the sower parable brings forth different amounts. Some will make more of God's truth than others. The very existence of these levels, rather than a simple binary demand of obedience / disobedience, pass / fail, of itself inspires us to

serve God as extensively as we can. For who can be a minimalist in response to His love.

Lev 5:12 He shall bring it to the priest, and the priest shall take his handful of it as the memorial portion, and burn it on the altar, on the offerings of Yahweh made by fire. It is a sin offering-

The "memorial portion" of the offerings was to serve as a reminder to God, as it were, of the covenants which He "remembered". He of course doesn't forget His covenant but ever remembers it (Ps. 105:8 etc.), yet He is presented in human terms as having His memory rekindled, as it were, by human prayer, faith, situations and sacrifices so that He "remembers the covenant" (Gen. 8:1; 9:15; Ex. 2:24; 6:5; Lev. 26:42,45; Num. 10:9 and often). The regular sacrifices were such a "memorial" or 'reminder'- both to God and to His people. The place of prayer, regular sacrifice of giving, breaking of bread at the "memorial meeting" etc., are all equivalents for us under the new covenant.

Lev 5:13 The priest shall make atonement for him concerning his sin that he has sinned in any of these things, and he will be forgiven; and the rest shall be the priest's, as the grain offering-

God thirsts for relationship with us, and doesn't want human poverty to mean that we can't get atonement. In Bible times, religion was the hobby of the wealthy; yet God wants relationship with all. Although it was a principle that shedding of blood was required for forgiveness of sins (Heb. 9:22), God was prepared to allow a non-blood sacrifice if this was all a person had to offer. Aware of this, Heb. 9:22 says that "*almost* all things" under the Law were

cleansed by the shedding of blood- but not literally all, because the writer knew that there was this possibility of offering flour offerings instead of the required animal. The fact God is prepared to make concessions to human weakness shouldn't lead us to any spirit of minimalism in how we consider sin or the standards of God's holiness.

Lev 5:14 Yahweh spoke to Moses, saying-

As explained on Lev. 1:1, Leviticus is largely teachings specifically addressed to the Levites, so the unwitting sin with "holy things" (:15) refers specifically to the Levites making unintentional errors.

Lev 5:15 If anyone commits a trespass, and sins unwittingly, in the holy things of Yahweh; then he shall bring his trespass offering to Yahweh, a ram without blemish from the flock, according to your estimation in silver by shekels, after the shekel of the sanctuary, for a trespass offering-

No animal actually is without blemish. God recognizes that we will not attain perfection in this life, but we are to do our best towards it; and His love imputes righteousness to us, counting us as unblemished because of our status in Christ. For only Christ was the sacrifice totally without moral blemish (1 Pet. 1:19).

Lev 5:16 He shall make restitution for that which he has done wrong in the holy thing, and shall add a fifth part to it, and give it to the priest; and the priest shall make atonement for him with the ram of the trespass offering, and he will be forgiven-

"Done wrong" is "for the harm that he has done". I find this wonderful; a sin of ignorance, an unintentional mishandling of Divine things, causes "harm"- to the sensi-

tive soul of God Himself. A French proverb says that to understand all (as God does) is to forgive all; but it also means to be hurt by all so much the more. Just as little children assume their parents are insensitive and mere rocks of strength and provision, so we can fail to appreciate our Heavenly Father's sensitivity. Love, promises, covenant relationship, feeling for others, revealing yourself to the object of your love- this is all part of what it means for this sensitive God to enter covenant relationship with us. See on Lev. 19:12.

Lev 5:17 If anyone sins, and does any of the things which Yahweh has commanded not to be done; though he didn't know it, yet he is guilty, and shall bear his iniquity-

The Lord Jesus Christ knew from Isaiah 53 that He was to bear Israel's sins, that the judgments for their sins were to fall upon Him. Israel 'bore their iniquities' by being condemned for them (Num. 14:34,35; Lev. 5:17; 20:17); to be a sin bearer was therefore to be one condemned. To die in punishment for your sin was to bear you sin. There is a difference between sin, and sin being laid upon a person. Num. 12:11 brings this out: "Lay not the sin upon us... wherein we have sinned". The idea of sin being laid upon a person therefore refers to condemnation for sin. Our sin being laid upon Jesus therefore means that He was treated *as if* He were a condemned sinner. He briefly endured within Him the torment of soul which the condemned will feel.

Lev 5:18 He shall bring a ram without blemish from of the flock, according to your estimation, for a trespass offering, to the priest; and the priest shall make atonement for him-

This looked ahead to the unblemished character of the Lord Jesus. The offering of sacrifices "without blemish" uses a word which is used about Abraham and Noah being "without blemish" (AV "perfect") before God (Gen. 6:9; 17:1). Although the word is used about the sacrifices, it is really more appropriate to persons- "you shall be perfect with Yahweh your God" (Dt. 18:13), "serve Him in sincerity (s.w. "without blemish")" (Josh. 24:14). The idea, therefore, was that the offerer was invited to see the animal as representative of himself. Our lives too are to be as "living sacrifices" (Rom. 12:1). And yet in practical terms, no animal is without blemish. They were to give the best they could, and God would count it as without blemish; as He does with us. David frequently uses the term in the Psalms about himself and the "upright", even though he was far from unblemished in moral terms.

Israel were not to grow some crops, or raise some animals, just for God, and others for themselves. They were not to make this difference. They were to give Him e.g. lambs "out of their flock"; not enforcing a difference between that which is for God and that which is for ourselves. In other words, they were not to make a difference between spiritual and personal life; it is us, our daily lives and situations, which God wishes to be part of.

Concerning the thing in which he sinned and didn't know it, and he will be forgiven-

We note that the legislation about the cities of refuge likewise reflected God's special concern about unintentional sin. He recognizes that there are different kinds of sin. And in this we see His sensitivity, for the other legal

codes at the time saw everything in black and white terms of obedience or disobedience to legal statutes. The word for "didn't know it" or "unintentionally" is s.w. 'deceived' (Job 12:16). It could be that God also recognizes that some are deceived into sin, and therefore treats those who lead into sin more severely than those who are led into sin. Likewise the New Testament condemns false teachers, but seems to be more acceptive of the falsely taught, the misguided.

Lev 5:19 It is a trespass offering. He is certainly guilty before Yahweh'-

"Certainly guilty" continues the great emphasis upon the fact that atonement and forgiveness was still required even for sins of ignorance. The hurt to God had still been caused. Repentance was still needed. Otherwise there would be a disinterest in learning God's ways, a preference to remain in ignorance. Whereas once we grasp that sins of ignorance are still culpable sins, we will rather be motivated to learn all we can of God's ways. If we love God, we will want to please Him, we will want to know what He wishes from us, we will desire to learn His ways.

LEVITICUS CHAPTER 6

Lev 6:1 Yahweh spoke to Moses, saying-

We will read now about theft and fraud (:2-7), and then the text goes straight on to speak of burnt offerings (:8,9). Perhaps the connection in thought is that these words have specifically in view the temptation to steal from others and then offer the stolen goods as an offering to Yahweh- which is exactly the problem addressed in Is. 61:8. So it clearly was a problem in Israel. See on :7. The principle is that we are not to offer to Yahweh that which cost us nothing (1 Sam. 24:24) and that is the abiding take away lesson.

Lev 6:2 'If anyone sins, and commits a trespass against Yahweh, and deals falsely with his neighbour in a matter of deposit, or of bargain, or of robbery, or has oppressed his neighbour-

The oppression in view is things like not paying him his hire every day (Dt. 24:14,15; Lev. 19:13). "Oppress" is the same word translated "deceive"; to not oppress others through deceiving them would elicit the heaviest judgment from God, when the person realized the deception and cried to God because of it (Dt. 24:15). Deceiving / oppressing a neighbour was a sin against Yahweh (Lev. 6:2 s.w.), because He has a special interest in the poor. And His law reflects that. We should likewise have such a special interest, rather than ever seeking to analyze why people are poor. Fraud and oppression were Israel's experience in Egypt. Constantly, the law of Moses urges them to remem-

ber their spiritual biography, and this awareness is intended to elicit grace to others, never treating them as Israel were treated in Egypt. Our lives before baptism were lived as it were in Egypt (1 Cor. 10:1,2), and so the principle applies to us too.

Lev 6:3 or has found that which was lost, and dealt falsely therein, and swearing to a lie; in any of all these things that a man does, sinning therein-

"Found that which was lost" is the phrase quoted by the Lord Jesus in His parables of the lost sheep and coin (Lk. 15:6). He had engaged with these same words which we are reading. Finding the lost was to be a source of open joy, rather than being used secretly for personal advantage and benefit. And so it is with all pastoral work in finding the lost.

Lev 6:4 then it shall be, if he has sinned, and is guilty, he shall restore that which he took by robbery, or the thing which he has gotten by oppression, or the deposit which was committed to him, or the lost thing which he found-

Robbery was effectively what the exaggeration, mind games, manipulation, white lies and deceitful dealing of :2 was reckoned as. These things creep in so easily into any business dealings between people; and God sees them as robbery.

Lev 6:5 or any thing about which he has sworn falsely; he shall restore it even in full, and shall add a fifth part more to it. To him to whom it belongs he shall give it, in the day of his being found guilty-

Broken relationships were to be restored as quickly as possible "in the day", so the restoration was to be made

immediately. In all human failure, reconciliation involves some level of restoration, be it verbal or material. Zacchaeus alludes to this when he says that he would restore four-fold that which he had stolen by deceit. This was far more than the "fifth part" required by the law (Lk. 19:8). Again we see how the Mosaic law was not a chain, a wearisome and limiting leash upon man, as if he were a dog ever miserably constrained from what he would like to do; but rather a springboard to using personal initiative to respond to the principles taught- often to a far greater extent than mere obedience to the letter of the law. We see this in the way Boaz interpreted the Levirate law, and also the laws about allowing gleaning. See Lev. 4:14 for another example.

Lev 6:6 He shall bring his trespass offering to Yahweh, a ram without blemish from the flock-

No animal actually is without blemish. God recognizes that we will not attain perfection in this life, but we are to do our best towards it; and His love imputes righteousness to us, counting us as unblemished because of our status in Christ. For only Christ was the sacrifice totally without moral blemish (1 Pet. 1:19). This looked ahead to the unblemished character of the Lord Jesus. The offering of sacrifices "without blemish" uses a word which is used about Abraham and Noah being "without blemish" (AV "perfect") before God (Gen. 6:9; 17:1). Although the word is used about the sacrifices, it is really more appropriate to persons- "you shall be perfect with Yahweh your God" (Dt. 18:13), "serve Him in sincerity (s.w. "without blemish")" (Josh. 24:14). The idea, therefore, was that the offerer was invited to see the animal as representative of himself. Our

lives too are to be as "living sacrifices" (Rom. 12:1). And yet in practical terms, no animal is without blemish. They were to give the best they could, and God would count it as without blemish; as He does with us. David frequently uses the term in the Psalms about himself and the "upright", even though he was far from unblemished in moral terms.

According to your estimation, for a trespass offering, to the priest-

This is a reminder that we are reading commandments addressed to the Levites. Many stolen things were in forms other than money, so they had to estimate what was a fifth amount of the value of the stolen sheep, or whatever.

Lev 6:7 The priest shall make atonement for him before Yahweh, and he will be forgiven concerning whatever he has done to become guilty'-

"To become guilty" could equally be translated "in the presentation of a sin offering". And this would connect with the suggestion on :1, that we may be here dealing specifically with a case of a person stealing from others in order to make the sin offering required for some earlier sin.

Lev 6:8 Yahweh spoke to Moses, saying-

See on :1 for the connection between the following laws of the burnt offering, and the preceding commandments about fraud.

Lev 6:9 Command Aaron and his sons, saying, 'This is the law of the burnt offering: the burnt offering shall be on the hearth on the altar all night until the morning; and the fire of the altar shall be kept burning on it-

The idea may be that there was not to be a moment, night or day, when the principle of sacrifice was not being

demonstrated. And this should feature in our lives. But the lamb specifically looked ahead to the Lord Jesus. There is a sense in which His sacrifice for us is eternally ongoing.

Lev 6:10 The priest shall put on his linen garment, and he shall put on his linen breeches upon his body; and he shall remove the ashes from where the fire has consumed the burnt offering on the altar, and he shall put them beside the altar-

This was the garment of Ex. 28:4,39,42 (see notes there). The entire body of believers are described as being figuratively clothed in linen at the Lord's return, in that it represents the imputed righteousness of the saints / believers (Rev. 19:8). The allusion to the 'clothing upon' of the nakedness of flesh at the Lord's return is clear; the same figure is found in 2 Cor. 5:4. But the implication is that we shall then be as ordained priests- we shall go forth into eternity to do the work of priesthood, helping others to come to Yahweh. Our experiences now, especially our frustrations in being unable to do or achieve this work, are all in order to prepare us for such an eternity.

Lev 6:11 He shall take off his garments, and put on other garments, and carry the ashes outside the camp to a clean place-

We think of the slain, sacrificed body of the Lord Jesus being removed to a clean place, buried outside the city of Jerusalem, wrapped in a clean linen cloth (cp. the garments of :10) and laid in a new tomb, wherein no man had been laid (Mt. 27:59), and therefore ritually clean.

Lev 6:12 The fire on the altar shall be kept burning on it, it shall not go out; and the priest shall burn wood on it every

morning: and he shall lay the burnt offering in order upon it, and shall burn on it the fat of the peace offerings-

The fire of the altar was ideally intended to be that kindled at the time of Lev. 9:24 when the tabernacle was consecrated. It was to be kept perpetually burning by the sacrifices being continually placed upon it, a lamb every morning and every evening.

Lev 6:13 Fire shall be kept burning on the altar continually; it shall not go out'-

There was fair emphasis on this, that always a lamb should be smouldering as a burnt offering to God. Our devotion to God, as a community of believers and as individuals, must be 24/7; it's not a matter of occasional flashes of devotion, weekly attendance at meetings etc. Whatever special devotions we make, our regular daily evening and morning prayers and devotions are to never to be missed. The fire which never went out or was 'quenched' is a double symbol. The phrase is used multiple times with reference to the wrath of God in condemning sinners; it is the basis of the idea of eternal fire which will not be quenched. Rather like the cup of wine from the Lord being a symbol of either condemnation or blessing. So we have a choice- be consumed by the eternal fire now as living sacrifices, or be consumed by it anyway at the last day.

Lev 6:14 'This is the law of the grain offering: the sons of Aaron shall offer it before Yahweh, before the altar-

The humblest offering, just some flour, was before Yahweh. He has a special interest in the offering of little things from little people; see on :17.

Lev 6:15 He shall take from there his handful of the fine flour of the grain offering, and of its oil, and all the frankincense which is on the grain offering, and shall burn it on the altar for a pleasant aroma, as its memorial, to Yahweh-

Frankincense was a type of incense which would have given a pleasing smell to the burning flour. This represented how pleased God was with the offering even of a handful of flour. Small sacrifices please Him immensely. And they are what comprise daily life.

The "memorial portion" of the offerings was to serve as a reminder to God, as it were, of the covenants which He "remembered". He of course doesn't forget His covenant but ever remembers it (Ps. 105:8 etc.), yet He is presented in human terms as having His memory rekindled, as it were, by human prayer, faith, situations and sacrifices so that He "remembers the covenant" (Gen. 8:1; 9:15; Ex. 2:24; 6:5; Lev. 26:42,45; Num. 10:9 and often). The regular sacrifices were such a "memorial" or 'reminder'- both to God and to His people. The place of prayer, regular sacrifice of giving, breaking of bread at the "memorial meeting" etc., are all equivalents for us under the new covenant.

Paul writes often that he "makes mention" or 'remembers' his brethren in regular prayer (Rom. 1:9; Eph. 1:16; 1 Thess. 1:2; Philemon 4). The Greek *mneia* is the word used in the LXX for the "memorial" of the incense or the meal offering (Lev. 2:2,16; 24:7), or the constant fire on the altar which was for a memorial (Lev. 6:15). That fire, that flour, that incense, had to be carefully and consciously prepared; it had to be the result of man's labour. And likewise, Paul

seems to be saying, he first of all thought through the cases which he then presented to the Father.

Lev 6:16 That which is left of it Aaron and his sons shall eat. It shall be eaten without yeast in a holy place. They shall eat it in the court of the Tent of Meeting-

The priests had no inheritance amongst Israel, they survived by eating parts of the offerings. Their eating of them represented God's 'eating' of the sacrifices, the altar being described as His table (Mal. 1:7,12), His acceptance of the offerer and fellowship with them- for eating what had been brought to you was a sign of acceptance and religious fellowship with the donor.

Lev 6:17 It shall not be baked with yeast. I have given it as their portion of my offerings made by fire. It is most holy, as the sin offering, and as the trespass offering-

The language of "most holy" is juxtaposed against the fact that this was referring to a simple grain offering, a 'little something' offered by literally anyone within Israel (see on Lev. 2:1). But such tiny offerings were "most holy" to God; we think of the Lord's attitude to the widow offering her two small coins.

Lev 6:18 Every male among the children of Aaron shall eat of it, as their portion forever throughout your generations, from the offerings of Yahweh made by fire. Whoever touches them shall be holy'-

This doesn't mean that holiness was transferred by touching them, for holiness cannot be spread like that (Hag. 2:11-13). Rather the idea is that the males who touched them must be ritually clean (Lev. 22:6,7). Perhaps we as the new priesthood are to learn from this that we

are to partake of the memorial bread and wine in a "clean" way, i.e. having examined ourselves and recognizing our uncleanness. For by a great paradox, that is what it means to be clean before God.

Lev 6:19 Yahweh spoke to Moses, saying-

The following commands were specifically for the day when Aaron was anointed; as discussed on Lev. 1:1,2, it seems all of Leviticus is aimed specifically in this context.

Lev 6:20 'This is the offering of Aaron and of his sons, which they shall offer to Yahweh in the day when he is anointed: the tenth part of an ephah of fine flour for a grain offering perpetually, half of it in the morning, and half of it in the evening-

An ephah is about 22 liters. "Perpetually" may refer specifically to the days of the consecration rituals for Aaron and his sons; see on Lev. 1:1. Roughly one kilogram of flour baked into a cake (:21) was to be offered every morning and evening. This relatively small, low value offering was perhaps to remind them of the supreme importance to God of small, regular sacrifices.

Lev 6:21 It shall be made with oil in a griddle. When it is soaked, you shall bring it in. You shall offer the grain offering in baked pieces-

The process of splitting the offering into its parts speaks of our self-examination, defining each part of our lives and offering them to God consciously. This was taught in the dividing up of the offerings into pieces (see on Lev. 1:17).

For a pleasant aroma to Yahweh-

"A pleasant aroma" is a very common phrase. This concept is important to God. It first occurs in Gen. 8:21 where it means that God accepted Noah's sacrifice and vowed that the pole of saving mercy in His character was going to triumph over that of necessary judgment. Under the new covenant, it is persons and not sacrifices or incense which are accepted as a "pleasant aroma" (Ez. 20:41). The word for "pleasant" means strong delight; this is how God's heart can be touched by genuine sacrifice. Those pleasing offerings represented us, the living sacrifices (Rom. 12:1). And so it is applied to us in 2 Cor. 2:15- if we are in Christ, we are counted as a pleasant aroma to God. The offering of ourselves to Him is nothing of itself, but because we are in Christ and counted as Him, we are a delight to God. Hence the colossal importance of being "in Christ". "Aroma" or "smell" is a form of the Hebrew word *ruach*, the word for spirit or breath. God discerns the spirit of sacrifices, that was what pleased Him rather than the burning flesh of animals. Our attitude of mind in sacrifice can touch Him. Sacrifice is therefore accepted, Paul says, according to what a person has to give, but the essence is the attitude of mind behind it. We think of the two coins sacrificed by the widow.

Lev 6:22 The anointed priest that will be in his place from among his sons shall offer it. By a statute forever, it shall be wholly burnt to Yahweh-

'Christ' means 'the anointed one', and so Jewish minds would have associated 'Jesus Christ' with the priest who saves ['Jesus' means 'Yahweh's salvation'].

Lev 6:23 Every grain offering of a priest shall be wholly burned. It shall not be eaten'-

Again we see that this refers specifically to the ritual of the dedication of the priests. For Lev. 7:9 is clear that generally, "Every grain offering that is baked in the oven, and all that is dressed in the pan, and on the griddle, shall be the priest's who offers it". The priests were not to eat parts of their own dedicatory offering, as they usually did with the offerings of others. We as the new priesthood (1 Pet. 2:5) shouldn't take any personal benefit from what we give to God, otherwise the concept of personal sacrifice to God is somewhat lacking in meaning. We are not to offer that which costs us nothing (1 Sam. 24:24). The priests were so used to dealing with the needs of others for atonement and acceptability with God- but they were not to forget that they too needed this, hence they too had to offer sacrifice. Our dealings with the unsaved world shouldn't lead us to forget our own personal need for reconciliation with God.

Lev 6:24 Yahweh spoke to Moses, saying-

God spoke to Moses, who then spoke to the Aaronites (:25). He is presented as mediator between God and man, looking ahead to the greater prophet like him, Messiah, the Lord Jesus.

Lev 6:25 Speak to Aaron and to his sons, saying, 'This is the law of the sin offering-

I suggest this refers to specific sin offering when Aaron was consecrated. See on :20,26.

In the place where the burnt offering is killed, the sin offering shall be killed before Yahweh. It is most holy-

That is, on the north side of the altar (Lev. 1:11). Golgotha was on the north side of Jerusalem, and all these sacrifices look ahead to the Lord's death there. The laver was on the west side of the altar, the place of ashes on the east (Lev. 1:16), and the approach to the altar from the south would have been up a slope to avoid approaching the altar by steps and uncovering nakedness. The north side would have been the only appropriate place for this. So there is an impressive corroboration of the records here, with this command to kill the animals on the north side of the altar.

Lev 6:26 The priest who offers it for sin shall eat it. It shall be eaten in a holy place, in the court of the Tent of Meeting-

It was not to be taken out of the court and eaten. And yet the priestly share of the offerings could usually be eaten by their families. So we are confirmed in understanding that this refers to a specific sin offering when Aaron was consecrated. See on :20,25.

Lev 6:27 Whatever shall touch its flesh shall be holy-

This doesn't mean that holiness was transferred by touching them, for holiness cannot be spread like that (Hag. 2:11-13). Rather the idea is that the males who touched them must be ritually clean (Lev. 22:6,7).

When there is any of its blood sprinkled on a garment, you shall wash that on which it was sprinkled in a holy place-

This makes us think of the blood sprinkled garments of the Lord Jesus which are prophesied in Gen. 49:11; Is. 63:3). This therefore was a terrible image for those steeped in Mosaic concepts, just as His invitation to drink His

blood. To accept His sacrifice meant a radical rethinking of Mosaic images.

Lev 6:28 But the earthen vessel in which it is boiled shall be broken; and if it is boiled in a bronze vessel, it shall be scoured, and rinsed in water-

Unglazed, porous pottery could have absorbed some of the blood, so it had to be destroyed. The water was presumably from the laver (Ex. 30:28). The Hebrew for "scoured" implies being made bright in the fire. The breaking of earthen vessels is an image used for the breaking of humanity. We hold God's truth, the blood of Christ, in earthen vessels (2 Cor. 4:7), which must be broken at the last day when our mortality is swallowed up. We are to pass through fire and water so that we will be eternally preserved.

Lev 6:29 Every male among the priests shall eat of it: it is most holy-

When the Lord Jesus presented Himself as the sin offering and invited His people to eat the symbol of it in the breaking of bread meeting, He was inviting us to see ourselves as a new priesthood (1 Pet. 2:5,9), no longer assuming some group of specialists would look after the spiritual concerns of others, but everyone, male and female, taking responsibility. This was a radical, difficult idea to accept for first century Jewish Christians, and it is hard for us today too, accustomed as we are to assigning responsibility to others rather than taking it ourselves.

Lev 6:30 No sin offering, of which any of the blood is brought into the Tent of Meeting to make atonement in the Holy Place, shall be eaten: it shall be burned with fire'-

What was in view were the sin offerings for the high priest and the whole congregation (Lev. 4:3,12-21), and the sin offering of the Day of Atonement (Lev. 16:27).

LEVITICUS CHAPTER 7

Lev 7:1 'This is the law of the trespass offering. It is most holy-

There's a difference between the trespass offering ["guilt offering"] and the sin offering, which is hard to define; and the terms are at times used interchangeably. It seems that the trespass offering was made when a specific sin had been done more consciously, whereas the sin offering was required when sin had been committed less consciously, or when a more general recognition of the fact we are sinners was required.

Lev 7:2 In the place where they kill the burnt offering, he shall kill the trespass offering; and its blood he shall sprinkle around on the altar-

To sprinkle blood upon something didn't necessarily mean the object was forgiven. For an inanimate altar didn't need forgiving. The blood of the covenant was sprinkled (s.w.) upon the people as a sign of their involvement with the covenant process of salvation, rather than as a statement of their forgiveness (Ex. 24:8). Likewise with the sprinkling of the blood of the Passover lamb (2 Chron. 35:11). This was an act of identification rather than forgiveness of sin. The function of the altar was valid before God, or efficacious, because of its association with the blood of Christ; for the blood of the animals slain upon it couldn't bring salvation of itself, but only through God's way of looking at that blood is looking ahead to that of His Son (Heb. 10:4). And so the altar was associated with the blood which represented His blood.

Lev 7:3 He shall offer all of its fat: the fat tail, and the fat that covers the inward parts-

There is special emphasis upon the fat, which was perceived as the best part of the animal, and the most covered inward parts. After recognizing our sin, we must be prepared to offer these to God. David understood the spirit of the trespass offering when after his sin with Bathsheba he offered to God his inward parts (Ps. 51:6).

The idea is as in LXX "the fact [even] the fat tail" (as Lev. 3:9). There were species of sheep with a large fatty tail, which was considered in their culture to be a great delicacy. We see here how the law of Moses was limited in application to an immediate context, and was simply not intended to be a global law for all time. But the take away lesson is that we are to give to God whatever is for us, in our culture and worldview, the best and most desirous.

Lev 7:4 and the two kidneys, and the fat that is on them, which is by the loins, and the cover on the liver, with the kidneys, shall he take away-

"Take away" is the word usually used for declining, refusing etc. The idea may be that these internal organs were not to be eaten by the priests, but were to be wholly offered to God. For our inner things are to be wholly His. David came to understand that all the Mosaic emphasis upon the "kidneys" was because they represented the inner heart or mind. He often uses the word to describe his innermost thoughts (Ps. 7:9; 16:7; 26:2; 73:21; 139:13). Jeremiah likewise (Jer. 11:20; 12:2; 17:10; 20:12). The Hebrew for "kidneys" is a form of the word for "jewel"; for the innermost core thoughts of a person are so precious to

God. Likewise the Hebrew for "liver" is literally 'that which heaviest / most valuable'. For the innermost thoughts are the weighty things to God. We see here the supreme importance of being spiritually minded.

Lev 7:5 and the priest shall burn them on the altar for an offering made by fire to Yahweh: it is a trespass offering-

"Burn" is literally 'to smoke'. The idea is that the offering of the inward parts went up to God; see on :4.

Lev 7:6 Every male among the priests may eat of it. It shall be eaten in a holy place. It is most holy-

The priests had no inheritance amongst Israel, they survived by eating parts of the offerings. Their eating of them represented God's 'eating' of the sacrifices, the altar being described as His table (Mal. 1:7,12), His acceptance of the offerer and fellowship with them- for eating what had been brought to you was a sign of acceptance and religious fellowship with the donor.

Lev 7:7 As is the sin offering, so is the trespass offering; there is one law for them. The priest who makes atonement with them shall have it-

It is commonly stated in the Mosaic law that the priest made atonement. Any thoughtful person would have soon concluded that indeed the blood of bulls and goats could not of itself atone for sin (Heb. 10:4). The role of the priest in bringing about the atonement was therefore critical. And yet they too were flawed. So this invited the spiritually minded to look forward to the coming of an ideal priest, the Lord Jesus.

Lev 7:8 The priest who offers any man's burnt offering, even the priest shall have for himself the skin of the burnt offering which he has offered-

This skin could be eaten, or used to make clothes or other items from the hide. "Skin" is s.w. "leather". But it had been burnt, so we wonder whether there was any practical benefit from having it. Perhaps it was solely in order to teach the priests that they were themselves sinful, like Adam, who was given the skin of the first offering.

Lev 7:9 Every grain offering that is baked in the oven, and all that is dressed in the pan, and on the griddle, shall be the priest's who offers it-

We wonder whether these methods of preparing the grain offering refer to the usage of the fire on the altar in order to prepare it, either by frying or baking. The "pan" would therefore be one of the "pans" which are described as utensils for use in the sanctuary. For not all visitors to the sanctuary would have a home nearby where there was an oven for them to prepare it before they arrived.

Lev 7:10 Every grain offering, mixed with oil or dry, belongs to all the sons of Aaron, one as well as another-

God has "tempered" the whole body together (1 Cor. 12:24). This is alluding to the way in which the unleavened cakes of flour were "mixed" or "tempered" with the oil (cp. the Spirit) in order to be an acceptable offering (Lev. 2:4,5; 7:10; 9:4 etc.). Paul has already likened his Corinthian ecclesia to a lump of unleavened flour (1 Cor. 5:7); he is now saying that they have been "tempered" together by the oil of God's Spirit. If we break apart from our brethren, we are

breaking apart, or denying, that "tempering" of the body which God has made.

Lev 7:11 This is the law of the sacrifice of peace offerings, which one shall offer to Yahweh-

Peace offerings were voluntary, but they were still regulated. Our desire to serve God on our own initiative doesn't mean that we can ignore His principles and totally do our own thing.

Lev 7:12 If he offers it for a thanksgiving, then he shall offer with the sacrifice of thanksgiving unleavened loaves mixed with oil, and unleavened wafers anointed with oil, and cakes mixed with oil-

The idea is, "for a thanksgiving offering". Continually we should offer this sacrifice of praise (Heb. 13:15), the thankfulness that wells up from knowing we are forgiven, the joy born of regular, meaningful repentance. And we do this "by" or 'on account of' the sacrifice of Jesus for us, which enables this forgiveness and thereby repentance (Heb. 13:12,15). This "sacrifice of praise" is alluded to in Jer. 33:11, which describes our offering "the sacrifice of praise... for his mercy" at the beginning of the Kingdom. Praise will [and does] bring forth sacrifice / action. Yet "praise" here is the same Hebrew word translated "thanksgiving"; and the sacrifice of thanksgiving was the peace offering, a commemoration of our free conscience and the peace of sin forgiven (Lev. 7:12-15). If we seriously confess our sins and believe in forgiveness, we should be experiencing a foretaste of the praise we will be offering at the start of the Kingdom, as we embark upon eternity.

The Hebrew for "thanksgiving" is rendered "confession" (of sin) in Ezra 10:11. We see that the peace offering was linked with confession of sin. It is significant that after Manasseh's marvellous confession of sin (is there any greater encouragement as to the possibility of repentance than his case?), he then offered peace offerings (2 Chron. 29:31). In Hezekiah's time, all those who were of a "free heart" offered "thank offerings", i.e. peace offerings (2 Chron. 29:31 cp. Lev. 7:12), after they had consecrated themselves. The free conscience that comes from realistic re-dedication was reflected in making the peace offering. Coming to the breaking of bread should have a like motivation.

David rejoiced in God's mercy to him, perhaps in the context of his sin with Bathsheba. He asks: "What shall I render unto the Lord for all his (spiritual) benefits toward me?". He decides that he will offer a peace offering: "I will offer to thee the sacrifice of thanksgiving (the peace offering; Lev. 7:12)... I will take the cup of salvation... I will pay my vows... in the presence of all his people... in the courts of the Lord's house". As we sit "before the Lord" at the memorial meeting, beholding the cross of Christ and the blood of Calvary, we should be intensely aware of God's great benefits towards us: our salvation assured, sin forgiven, peace with God. Our response should be to renew our vows joyfully, in the ecclesia, God's house, in the presence of His people, as we eat the peace offering, the sacrifice of thanksgiving. As the peace offering was to be offered publicly, "before the tabernacle of the congregation" (Lev. 3:13), so in the sight of each other we too renew our vows and express

our peace with God. And if we are all at peace with God, we should therefore be at peace with each other.

Lev 7:13 With loaves of leavened bread he shall offer his offering with the sacrifice of his peace offerings for thanksgiving-

Even though leaven was prohibited in offerings (Lev. 2:11), God was willing to accept a peace offering with leaven in it (Lev. 7:13). And for a freewill offering, He would accept a deformed animal (Lev. 22:23), even though this was against His *preferred principle* of absolute perfection in offerings. There was no atonement without the shedding of blood; and yet for the very poor, God would accept a non-blood sacrifice. This all reflected the zeal of God to accept fallen men. Or perhaps the idea was that despite the presence of our flesh and moral weakness, represented by the leaven, man can still be at peace with God. For none of us reach perfect sinlessness, but we can still find peace with God.

Lev 7:14 Of it he shall offer one loaf out of each offering for a gift offering to Yahweh. It shall be the priest's who sprinkles the blood of the peace offerings-

LXX "And he shall bring one of all his gifts, a separate offering to the Lord: it shall belong to the priest who pours forth the blood of the peace-offering". GNB "You shall present one part of each kind of bread as a special contribution to the LORD". The reference is to the three kinds of bread listed in :12.

Lev 7:15 The flesh of the sacrifice of his peace offerings for thanksgiving shall be eaten on the day of his offering. He shall not leave any of it until the morning-

The law of the peace offerings was designed so as to encourage the person who decided to make such a freewill offering to execute immediately- they were to eat it the same day they offered it, and the sacrifice would be totally unacceptable if it was killed but left for some days (Lev. 19:5-7). If we have an impulse to respond to the Lord, we should respond to it immediately. This isn't mere impetuosity. It's a spirit of always having an immediacy of response, which empowers us to overcome the procrastination which holds us back so much.

Lev 7:16 But if the sacrifice of his offering is a vow, or a freewill offering, it shall be eaten on the day that he offers his sacrifice; and on the next day what remains of it shall be eaten-

The Hebrew word here for "freewill" carries the idea of spontaneity. This is the clear implication of its usage in places like Ex. 35:27; 36:3; Jud. 5:2,9; 1 Chron. 29:5,9; 2 Chron. 35:8; Ps. 54:6. There is a strong sense of immediate emotion attached to the word (Hos. 14:4). And there was a major emphasis in the law of Moses upon freewill offerings (Lev. 7:16; 22:18,21,23; 23:38; Num. 15:3; 29:39; Dt. 12:6,17; 16:10; 23:23). The other legal codes of the nations around Israel were all about rituals; whereas Yahweh's law encouraged spontaneous giving as part of the way of Yahweh. For He is not a God of rituals, but of relationship. The way of the Spirit is the same today; spontaneous, emotional, personal response to God's grace, responding to Him on our own initiative and in our own way, in addition to obeying His specific requirements.

Lev 7:17 but what remains of the flesh of the sacrifice on the third day shall be burned with fire-

As noted on :15,16, the spontaneous desire to offer a peace offering was not to be spun out over a period of days. The condemnation for doing so was severe (:18). This chapter will go on to warn against various ways of using the peace offering for the benefit of the offerer. One such idea may have been to kill meat and eat it over three days, and then claim this was a peace offering- when actually it involved eating meat which the offerer wanted to eat anyway. So the warning is against using voluntary offerings [in whatever way] as a front for doing our own thing, offering what cost us very little, and only appearing to others to have a great religious devotion.

Lev 7:18 If any of the flesh of the sacrifice of his peace offerings is eaten on the third day, it will not be accepted, neither shall it be imputed to him who offers it. It will be an abomination, and the soul who eats any of it will bear his iniquity'-

The Septuagint uses the word translated "imputed" in the NT with regard to sacrifices [symbolic of Christ's death on the cross] being "reckoned" to a person (Lev. 7:18; Num. 18:27,30); and of Shimei asking David not to "reckon" his guilt to him, to judge him not according to the obvious facts of the case (2 Sam. 19:20). The Old Testament is at pains to stress that Yahweh will *not* justify the guilty (Ex. 23:7; Is. 5:23; Prov. 17:15). This is where the unique significance of Jesus comes in. Because of *Him*, His death and our faith in it, our being in Him, God can justify the wicked in that they have died with Christ in baptism

(Rom. 6:3-5), they are no longer, they are only "in Christ", for them "to live is Christ". They are counted as in Him, and in this way sinners end up justified.

Lev 7:19 'The flesh that touches any unclean thing shall not be eaten. It shall be burned with fire. As for the flesh, everyone who is clean may eat it-

The fact someone had made the freewill decision to offer a peace offering didn't mean they could eat it unclean, or that they could allow the meat of the offering to be unclean. This ancient regulation is strikingly relevant to the modern mindset, to the effect that if I make a voluntary donation to my church, I am somehow justified to live and carry on as I wish, regardless of God's basic moral demands.

Lev 7:20 but the soul who eats of the flesh of the sacrifice of peace offerings that belongs to Yahweh, having his uncleanness on him, that soul shall be cut off from his people-

See on :19. Being "cut off from Israel" may not mean that the person must be slain. For then the phrase "cut off from the earth" would have been used (as in Prov. 2:22 and often). The idea is that the person who ate leaven (Ex. 12:15) or was not circumcised (Gen. 17:14) was excluded from the community of God's people because they had broken or despised the covenant which made them His people. But there is no record of Israel keeping a list of 'cut off from Israel' Israelites and excluding them from keeping the feasts. So we conclude this means that God would consider such persons as cut off from His people. He would do the cutting off, and not men. In His book, they were "cut off". But there was no legal nor practical mechanism provided to Israel to manage the 'cutting off from Israel' of

those who despised the covenant. The cutting off was done in God's eyes, in Heaven's record, and the Israelites were intended to continue to fellowship with such persons at the feasts. This is a strong argument for an open table, and for not seeking to make church excommunication the equivalent of this cutting off of the disobedient from the people of Israel. This explains why being "cut off from Israel" is the punishment stated for doing things which man could not see and judge- secretly breaking the Sabbath (Ex. 31:14), eating peace offerings whilst being unclean (Lev. 7:20- for how were others to know whether someone had touched the unclean, or was experiencing an unclean bodily emission), eating meat with blood still in it (Lev. 17:10,14), not adequately humbling the soul (Lev. 23:29), not keeping Passover (Num. 9:13), being presumptuous (Num. 15:30,31- only God can judge that), not washing after touching a dead body (Num. 19:13,20). This is why Lev. 20:6 makes it explicit that "I [Yahweh personally] will set My face against that person, and will cut him off from among his people". It is Yahweh who does the cutting off and not men (also 1 Sam. 2:33).

The peace offering was a voluntary sacrifice. But this didn't mean that the offerer could be careless, or think that having made a special sacrifice to God somehow made his uncleanness of no significance. Taking the initiative in serving God is good, but it shouldn't make us think that we are somehow above God's principles and can be unclean in other aspects of our lives.

It was not allowed for unclean offerers to eat peace offerings (Lev. 7:20), nor could Levites or priests approach

to the sacrifices whilst unclean (Lev. 22:3). But there is no statement that the offerer had to be clean, indeed Dt. 12:22 says that some sacrifices could be eaten by the offerer whilst unclean. We see here God's willingness to by all means accept the offerer of sacrifice.

Lev 7:21 When anyone touches any unclean thing, the uncleanness of man, or an unclean animal, or any unclean abomination, and eats some of the flesh of the sacrifice of peace offerings, which belong to Yahweh, that soul shall be cut off from his people'

The peace offering was one of the many antecedents of the memorial meeting. Once the offerer had dedicated himself to making it, he was condemned if he didn't then do it, and yet also condemned if he ate it unclean (Lev. 7:18,20). So a man *had* to either cleanse himself, or be condemned. There was no get out, no third road. The man who ate the holy things in a state of uncleanness had to die; his eating would load him with the condemnation of his sins (Lev. 22:3,16 AV mg.). This is surely the source for our possibility of "eating... condemnation" to ourselves by partaking of the breaking of bread in an unworthy manner. And so it is with us as we face the emblems. We must do it, or we deny our covenant relationship. And yet if we do it in our uncleanness, we also deny that relationship. And thus the breaking of bread brings us up before the cross and throne of the Lord Jesus- even now. It brings us to a realistic self-examination. If we cannot examine ourselves and know that Christ is really in us, then we are reprobate; we "have failed" (2 Cor. 13:5 G.N.B.). Self-examination is therefore one of those barriers across our path in life which

makes us turn to the Kingdom or to the flesh. If we can't examine ourselves and see that Christ is in us and that we have therefore that great salvation in Him; we've failed.

Lev 7:22 Yahweh spoke to Moses, saying-

This section in :23-27 about not eating fat or blood is sandwiched between other legislation about peace offerings. So the idea may be that the peace offering was not to be used as an excuse to feast oneself on otherwise prohibited parts of the animal. Again, as noted on :19, the warning is against thinking that freewill, voluntary religious devotion can be used for our own personal pleasuring.

Lev 7:23 Speak to the children of Israel, saying, 'You shall eat no fat, of bull, or sheep, or goat-

These animals are those referred to in :25, animals "of which men offer an offering made by fire to Yahweh". This confirms the suggestion in :23 that we are reading of specific warnings about misusing the peace offering, the idea of voluntary devotion, in order to get around the need to give God the best.

Lev 7:24 The fat of that which dies of itself, and the fat of that which is torn of animals, may be used for any other service, but you shall in no way eat of it-

As noted on :23,24, the context is warning against misusing the spirit of the peace offering. The temptation was to use the fat of the bodies of animals which had died natural deaths, and eat this as a peace offering. This was a specific denial of the vital principle that we are not to offer sacrifice of that which costs us nothing (2 Sam. 24:24).

Lev 7:25 For whoever eats the fat of the animal, of which men offer an offering made by fire to Yahweh, even the soul who eats it shall be cut off from his people-

The fat and blood represented the best parts of life, and were to be given to God completely. The making of a voluntary sacrifice like the peace offering didn't mean that basic Divine principles could be bypassed, or His moral demands reversed. And we must beware of this mentality in our money oriented age, thinking that financial generosity to the church frees us from other basic moral obligations.

Lev 7:26 You shall not eat any blood, whether it is of bird or of animal, in any of your dwellings-

The blood was understood as representing life (Dt. 12:23; Lev. 17:11). We are not to take life to ourselves; not merely in that we aren't to murder, but we also aren't to assume that our lives, or any life, is in fact ours to use or dominate for ourselves. Our lives and those of others are God's, and we cannot take any life to ourselves. This principle cannot be gotten around by making a one time act of voluntary devotion to God, such as the peace offering was. The command not to eat of blood or fat was specifically in the context of the legislation about peace offerings; this entire section is about the peace offering (:37).

Lev 7:27 Whoever it is who eats any blood, that soul shall be cut off from his people'-

The blood represented the life (Lev. 17:11). The lesson was that life- both our own and that of others- is God's, and we shouldn't assume that we are our own masters. It is not for us to do what we wish with life- it is God's. Paradoxically, the person who thought they could eat blood, who

thought that life was theirs, would lose their life. The only way to live eternally is to give our life back to God who gave it to us. In baptism, we die with Christ, giving our lives to God as He did, but this must be an ongoing principle in our daily living, as we live not to ourselves but to Him (2 Cor. 5:15; 1 Pet. 4:2).

Lev 7:28 Yahweh spoke to Moses, saying-

These regulations continue the Divine warning against using the voluntary peace offering as a front for giving an appearance of sacrifice, when in fact the offerer was offering what cost them very little. Such spiritual pride, seen in Ananias and Sapphira, is so obnoxious to God.

Lev 7:29 Speak to the children of Israel, saying, 'He who offers the sacrifice of his peace offerings to Yahweh shall bring his offering to Yahweh out of the sacrifice of his peace offerings-

I suggest in the context of :30 that we are to read this as meaning he must bring the sacrifice of his *own* peace offerings. There was to be no fictive offering through paying someone else to do it. Relationship with God is personal and can only be celebrated between God and the individual. Yet the way of religion [not spirituality] is to get someone else to do our religious stuff for us.

Lev 7:30 With his own hands-

We cannot get others to do our worship and devotion to God for us. In this lies the grave error of the orthodox idea of a human priesthood who as it were do everything for us. We are to have a deeply personal relationship with God, with Christ as our only mediator (1 Tim. 2:5).

He shall bring the offerings of Yahweh made by fire. He shall bring the fat with the breast, that the breast may be waved for a wave offering before Yahweh-

The Hebrew word for "waved" means to lift up, to shake, to move to and fro. This style of offering meant that the offerer lifted up the sacrifice to God. The wave offerings were typically eaten by the priests, but first they had to be lifted up to God in recognition that they were being given ultimately to Him and not to the priests personally. The physical lifting up of the sacrifice through the air towards God could represent the ascension of Jesus as the perfect sacrifice to God. See on :32.

Lev 7:31 The priest shall burn the fat on the altar, but the breast shall be Aaron's and his sons'-

In addition, as for all offerings, "the front leg, the two jaw-bones, and the rough stomach of ruminants, in which the digestion is completed" was to be given to the priest (Dt. 18:3). These were thought to be the best parts of an animal; and additionally a leg (Lev. 7:32) and the breast (Lev. 7:31) of the offering were also to be given to the priest if it was a peace offering (Num. 18:11).

Lev 7:32 The right thigh you shall give to the priest for a heave offering out of the sacrifices of your peace offerings-

The portion to be waved was placed on the priests hands (Ex. 29:25), and then 'waved' or 'swung' towards the altar and then back- not from right to left. The idea was that the offerings were first given to God, recognizing they should be consumed on the altar to God; but then given back to the priest by God. So they ate them having first recognized that their food was really God's, all was of Him,

and He had given it back to them to eat. This should be our spirit in partaking of any food, as we are the new priesthood. Our prayers of thanks for daily food should include this feature. All things are God's and anything we 'offer' to Him is only giving Him what He has given to us (1 Chron. 29:14,16). See on :30.

Lev 7:33 He among the sons of Aaron who offers the blood of the peace offerings, and the fat, shall have the right thigh for a portion-

This could be a repetition of :33, but the Hebrew for "right thigh" is s.w. "leg" and "shoulder", so there may be a reference to two parts of the body.

Lev 7:34 For the waved breast and the heaved thigh I have taken from the children of Israel out of the sacrifices of their peace offerings, and have given them to Aaron the priest and to his sons as their portion forever from the children of Israel-

"Their portion" was the food, and not land on which food could be grown. The land was the portion Yahweh gave to the other tribes. Clearly the more peace offerings offered meant the more food for the Levites; for they took a significant proportion of the meat offered. But peace offerings were voluntary, and the number of them offered reflected the overall spirituality of the people, which in turn was a function of the work of the Levites in teaching them to be spiritually devoted to Yahweh.

Lev 7:35 This is the anointing portion of Aaron, and the anointing portion of his sons, out of the offerings of Yahweh made by fire, in the day when he presented them to minister to Yahweh in the priest's office-

GNB "This is the part of the food offered to the LORD that was given to Aaron and his sons on the day they were ordained as priests". Whilst the commandments about offerings in this chapter are all true in a general sense, they are mentioned in the book of Leviticus because the entire book was about the various offerings associated with the specific consecration of Aaron; see on Lev. 1:1. And that included peace offerings.

Lev 7:36 which Yahweh commanded to be given them of the children of Israel, in the day that He anointed them. It is their portion forever throughout their generations'-

See on :35. Yahweh anointed the priests (Lev. 7:36) - but in practice Moses did. Moses is one of greatest types of the Lord Jesus, in whom the Father was supremely manifested. Because of this, it is fitting that we should see a very high level of God manifestation in Moses. Indeed it seems that God was manifest in Moses to a greater degree than in any other Old Testament character.

Lev 7:37 This is the law of the burnt offering, of the grain offering, and of the sin offering, and of the trespass offering, and of the consecration, and of the sacrifice of peace offerings-

This whole chapter, therefore, has concerned the sacrifices. The apparent interjection in :23-27 about not eating blood or fat, especially of animals which were found dead after dying from natural causes, is therefore also in the context of the offerings. Much of the legislation is therefore aimed at stopping attempts at only appearing to offer sacrifice, when in fact the intention was to please themselves.

Lev 7:38 which Yahweh commanded Moses in Mount Sinai, in the day that he commanded the children of Israel to offer their offerings to Yahweh, in the wilderness of Sinai-

This indicates Moses' obedience to the commandment to teach Israel God's law. In the day that he received the commandments in Mount Sinai, he taught them to Israel in the wilderness of Sinai. It means that the very day he returned from the mountain to the wilderness, he immediately shared with them the commandments which he had been given. Those who truly sense the bear God's words will be urgent in sharing them with others.

LEVITICUS CHAPTER 8

Lev 8:1 Yahweh spoke to Moses, saying-

I suggested on Lev. 1:1 that perhaps the whole of Leviticus refers to the inauguration of Aaron and his sons. And the following passage is confirmation of that.

Lev 8:2 'Take Aaron and his sons with him, and the garments, and the anointing oil, and the bull of the sin offering, and the two rams, and the basket of unleavened bread-

We see here the usual progression from sin offering to burnt offering to peace offering. Conviction of sin leads to a desire to make complete dedication to God, which results in the peace with God celebrated in the peace offering [the reference of the unleavened bread in the basket]. So the priests were being convicted of their sin, so that their dedication to Yahweh's service was no mere ritual, but a from the heart desire to serve Him from gratitude for the forgiveness of sin.

Lev 8:3 and assemble all the congregation at the door of the Tent of Meeting'-

The entire congregation could not have fitted there, so we have here an example of the Hebraism whereby the entire group is put for representatives of that group. Thus we read of "all men" being saved, hearing the Gospel etc., when clearly 'representatives of' "all men" are in view.

Lev 8:4 Moses did as Yahweh commanded him; and the congregation was assembled at the door of the Tent of Meeting-

The Greek version of the Old Testament, the Septuagint [LXX], uses the word *ekklesia*, which is used in the New Testament for the church. The body of believers in Christ today are the equivalent of the Old Testament people of God, Israel.

Lev 8:5 Moses said to the congregation, This is the thing which Yahweh has commanded to be done-

The significance of this is that Aaron and his sons were declared the priests by Divine commandment. The later rebellion of Koran was effectively a disagreement with this commandment and Divine choice.

Lev 8:6 Moses brought Aaron and his sons, and washed them with water-

This washing with water looks ahead to baptism into Christ, by which we become the new priesthood (1 Pet. 2:5). Baptism is not therefore a mere statement of agreement with a denomination or set of theology. It is our inauguration to a life of dedicated service.

Lev 8:7 He put the coat on him, tied the sash on him, clothed him with the robe, put the ephod on him, and he tied the skilfully woven band of the ephod on him, and fastened it to him with it-

Clothing after washing in water (:6) looks ahead to our being clothed in the righteousness of the Lord Jesus after baptism. But it is so that we might then go forward and serve, ministering in the spirit of the Levites.

The commands relating to the rebuilt temple of Ez. 40-48 are expanded upon in Zechariah 3. There we read that Joshua the high priest was to be dressed first with the headpiece and then with the rest of the priestly garments

(Zech. 3:5). This is the reverse order to the Mosaic commands in Ex. 29:5-7 and Lev. 8:7-9- implying that this was to be a new kind of high priest. Likewise the two onyx stones and the twelve gemstones of the Mosaic breastplate are replaced by a singular stone for the restored high priest (Zech. 3:9). The religious system offered to the returned exiles was not at all a restoration of the Mosaic system. There are too many differences. The old covenant was broken by Israel and has been abrogated. There is no reason to think that these "weak and beggarly elements" will ever be revived; there is no need for it now that we have the new covenant.

Lev 8:8 He placed the breastplate on him; and in the breastplate he put the Urim and the Thummim-

LXX "The Manifestation and the Truth". These stones appear to have flashed out binary yes / no responses or judgments in response to issues brought before God; they were the means of the manifestation of His truth. This is how they were used on the occasions we will later read of them. This is perhaps why "Breastplate" is LXX "oracle", as if the judgment flashed out from the urim and thummim associated with the breastplate was God's word or oracle to His people. The urim and thummim are where the precious stones of the breastplate were (Ex. 28:29)- on the heart of the high priest. The answer of God concerning His people was on the heart of the Lord Jesus. The outcome of His judgment of us is so deeply in His heart.

Lev 8:9 He set the turban on his head; and on the turban, in front, he set the golden plate, the holy crown-

This is the plate of Ex. 28:36 "You shall make a plate of pure gold, and engrave on it, like the engravings of a signet, 'HOLY TO YAHWEH'". Most of the surrounding tabernacles featured quite a lot of noise- especially incantations and spoken formulas regarding the holiness of the god and shrine. There were few spoken words in the Mosaic rituals; "Holy to the Lord" was written upon the forehead of the High Priest rather than stated by incantations (GNB 'Dedicated to the LORD', LXX has "holiness of the Lord"). We could maybe go so far as to say that we see here the exaltation of God's written word, with all the faith and understanding which this requires, as opposed to the incantations of other worship systems. The plate or rosette on the High Priest's turban would've recalled pagan plates which warded off supposed demons; but this one spoke of "Holiness to Yahweh", again replacing the negative with the positive

As Yahweh commanded Moses-

The careful obedience of Moses is emphasized; by it he became a type of Christ who was totally obedient to God (Heb. 3:2,5). The early chapters of Exodus present Moses as not always obedient, often arguing back with God and trying to find ways around God's commandments to him. In this we see his spiritual growth. This growing acceptance of God's authority and eagerness to obey rather than find ways around His commandments should be a feature of our spiritual growth too.

Lev 8:10 Moses took the anointing oil, and anointed the tabernacle and all that was in it, and sanctified them-

‘Christ’ means ‘the anointed one’. All these anointed things were therefore symbolic of Him. He fulfilled their meaning in reality within His person, character and work.

Lev 8:11 He sprinkled it on the altar seven times, and anointed the altar and all its vessels, and the basin and its base, to sanctify them-

This pointed forward to the Lord Jesus, the Christ, the anointed one, through whom all the sacrifices were made ultimately meaningful. Without Him in the future, the whole system wouldn't have worked.

Lev 8:12 He poured some of the anointing oil on Aaron's head, and anointed him, to sanctify him-

The Septuagint word used for ‘anointing’ here occurs in the New Testament only in 1 Jn. 2:20,27, where we read that we have each been anointed. The idea of anointing was to signal the initiation of someone. I'd therefore be inclined to see 1 Jn. 2:20,27 as alluding to baptism; when we become in Christ, in the anointed, then as 2 Cor. 1:21 says, we too are anointed in a sense. We're given a specific mission and purpose. "The anointing that you received" would therefore refer to our commissioning at baptism. It seems to imply a one time act of being anointed / commissioned / inaugurated for service. Baptism isn't therefore merely an initiation into a community; it's a specific commissioning for active service, in ways which are unique to us. We do well to bring this point out to those we prepare for baptism. The words for ‘anointing’ are unique to 1 John but they occur in the LXX to describe the anointing / initiation of the priests, and of the tabernacle / dwelling place of God (e.g. Ex. 29:7; 35:14,28). John sees us as the

dwelling place / tabernacle of the Father, and specifically as the priests.

Ps. 133:1,2 allude here, and clearly understand the oil [which was poured abundantly so that it ran down all his clothing] as representing the blessings of the Holy Spirit: "See how good and how pleasant it is for brothers to live together in unity! It is like the precious oil on the head, that ran down on the beard, even Aaron's beard; that came down on the edge of his robes". Aaron the High Priest is here likened to the whole community of Israel. They were all anointed, they were united "in him" by the oil of the spirit, looking ahead to the idea of the body of believers being "in Christ", the anointed one, the High Priest.

Lev 8:13 Moses brought Aaron's sons, and clothed them with coats, and tied sashes on them, and put headbands on them; as Yahweh commanded Moses-

They were not to clothe themselves, but to be clothed by Moses. This may have been to remind Aaron that this was not of his doing, he was merely being used by God, manifest through Moses. But it would also have been to humble Moses, who might have been tempted to assume that he and *his* sons ought to be this new high priest figure and priesthood. For Aaron had consistently been spiritually inferior to Moses. But it was part of Moses' humbling process to make him array his brother as the High Priest and priests, and to realize that not his own sons, but those of his brother, were to be the priests. And so he ended up the humblest man (Num. 12:3). See on :29.

Lev 8:14 He brought the bull of the sin offering, and Aaron and his sons laid their hands on the head of the bull of the sin offering-

Whatever special work we embark upon for God, we should always be aware of our own weakness and need for forgiveness. Therefore the consecration of Aaron and his sons for their great work began with sin offerings; their dedication to the work of serving others was to be motivated by an awe at God's personal grace to them. And so it should be with us, as the new priesthood.

Lev 8:15 He killed it; and Moses took the blood, and put it around on the horns of the altar with his finger, and purified the altar, and poured out the blood at the base of the altar, and sanctified it, to make atonement for it-

The physical furniture of the tabernacle wasn't sinful of itself. It was cleansed in order to demonstrate that whatever humanly beautiful and impressive work we make for God, it is still shadowed by our own sinfulness. The whole system only functioned effectively because of how it looked ahead to the blood of the Lord Jesus. But "atonement *for* it" can as well be "atonement *upon* it". The preposition *al* is of very wide meaning, but generally means "upon", "over" or "above". The idea of 'cleansing' here surely requires the use of water and not blood. The same word is used of "purified / cleansed with water" (Num. 31:23). They were to offer a sin offering and after each sacrifice, they were to clean the altar, upon which atonement had been made. There is no idea here that inanimate objects are somehow sinful. The altar itself, like the Lord Jesus, was not sinful. It was a means to the end of atonement.

Lev 8:16 He took all the fat that was on the inward parts, and the cover of the liver, and the two kidneys, and their fat; and Moses burned it on the altar-

The idea may be that these internal organs were not to be eaten by the priests, but were to be wholly offered to God. For our inner things are to be wholly His. David came to understand that all the Mosaic emphasis upon the "kidneys" was because they represented the inner heart or mind. He often uses the word to describe his innermost thoughts (Ps. 7:9; 16:7; 26:2; 73:21; 139:13). Jeremiah likewise (Jer. 11:20; 12:2; 17:10; 20:12). The Hebrew for "kidneys" is a form of the word for "jewel"; for the innermost core thoughts of a person are so precious to God. Likewise the Hebrew for "liver" is literally 'that which he heaviest / most valuable'. For the innermost thoughts are the weighty things to God. We see here the supreme importance of being spiritually minded.

Lev 8:17 But the bull, and its skin, and its flesh, and its dung, he burned with fire outside the camp; as Yahweh commanded Moses-

The Lord Jesus suffered and died, shedding the blood of atonement, "outside the camp" (Heb. 13:13). We are bidden go forth to the Lord Jesus "outside the camp", just as those who "sought Yahweh" did when there was no tabernacle (Ex. 33:7). The people watching Moses as he walked out to it, without the camp, therefore looks ahead to a faithless Israel lining the via Dolorosa and watching the Lord walk out to His place of crucifixion. And we are to get behind Him and follow Him there, stepping out from the mass of Israel. As the Lord Jesus suffered "outside the

camp", so various parts of the Mosaic sacrifices were to be burnt there (Lev. 4:12,21; 8:17; 9:11; 16:27); and yet it was the blood of those sacrifices which achieved atonement (Heb. 13:11; Num. 19:3,9). "Outside the camp" was the place of excluded, condemned sinners (Lev. 13:46; 24:14; Num. 5:3,4; 15:35,36; 31:13,19), and it was here that the Lord Jesus died, in identification with us.

Lev 8:18 He presented the ram of the burnt offering: and Aaron and his sons laid their hands on the head of the ram-

To lay the hand upon is a phrase which means more than merely touching the head, but implies leaning upon or pushing upon. It is rendered "lean his hand [upon a wall]" (Am. 5:19). It was an act of very conscious identity. The same phrase is used of how God's hand upholds those who spiritually fall (Ps. 37:24). So we see the mutuality of relationship between God and man. We strongly place our hand upon the offering of the Lord Jesus, and God places His hand upon us. Paul may have this idea in view when he speaks of how he grabs hold of Jesus and is grabbed hold of by Jesus (Phil. 3:12); just as the Lord seized hold of Peter drowning in the lake, as Peter grabbed hold of Him. That incident surely was a mini parable of our redemption.

Lev 8:19 He killed it; and Moses sprinkled the blood around on the altar-

To sprinkle blood upon something didn't necessarily mean the object was forgiven. For an inanimate altar didn't need forgiving. The blood of the covenant was sprinkled (s.w.) upon the people as a sign of their involvement with the covenant process of salvation, rather than as a statement of their forgiveness (Ex. 24:8). Likewise with the

sprinkling of the blood of the Passover lamb (2 Chron. 35:11). This was an act of identification rather than forgiveness of sin. The function of the altar was valid before God, or efficacious, because of its association with the blood of Christ; for the blood of the animals slain upon it couldn't bring salvation of itself, but only through God's way of looking at that blood is looking ahead to that of His Son (Heb. 10:4). And so the altar was associated with the blood which represented His blood.

Lev 8:20 He cut the ram into its pieces; and Moses burned the head, and the pieces, and the fat-

We note the continual Mosaic requirement that sacrifices be cut into parts. Every part of our lives, including our most inward parts, are to be offered to God. The process of splitting the offering into its parts speaks of our self-examination, defining each part of our lives and offering them to God consciously.

Lev 8:21 He washed the inward parts and the legs with water; and Moses burned the whole ram on the altar. It was a burnt offering for a pleasant aroma. It was an offering made by fire to Yahweh; as Yahweh commanded Moses-

There is huge emphasis upon the "inward parts" in the regulations about sacrifices. Our inward parts and thoughts of the heart are laid open before God and should be offered to Him, not just the externalities which men see (Heb. 4:12). The same word is used of Sarah's laughing "within herself" (Gen. 18:12). The sacrifice of Christ was so perfect because His innermost thoughts were offered to God. And it is our thoughts when nobody else is watching which are of the essence to God; "to be spiritually mind-

ed", as the New Testament expresses it. This is why Yahweh could not go up in "the midst" of Israel (Ex. 33:3; Num. 14:42; Dt. 1:42), because they didn't have Him in their midst. Thus to marry unbelievers would be a snare "in the midst of you" (Ex. 34:12), right in the inner mind which is what God seeks above all. David in the Psalms speaks of the "inward parts" of the human mind, which are critical in God's judgment of a person as wicked or righteous (e.g. Ps. 5:9; 36:1; 49:11 and Ps. 64:6, where "inward thought" is s.w. "inward parts"). It is those inward parts which were to be washed (Lev. 1:13), just as our innermost heart can be washed by the Spirit which is given at baptism. For this is the gift of the Spirit in the new covenant, whereby God's law is placed within our inward parts (s.w. Jer. 31:33; Ez. 36:26,27) by the God who can form the spirit of man in man's inward parts, the God who can work directly upon the human heart (Zech. 12:1).

Lev 8:22 He presented the other ram, the ram of consecration: and Aaron and his sons laid their hands on the head of the ram-

This spoke of dedication or consecration to God after the sin offering. This is what should motivate service to God- personal conviction of sin and experience of forgiveness. This ensures our service is given in humility.

Putting the hand on the animal's head was to show that the animal represented the offerer. He showed thereby that he deserved to die, and wished to give his total life to God just as the animal would be totally offered to God. We see here God's principle of accepting us on the basis of the representative sacrifice of Christ; the equivalent of our putting

our hand on the head of the sacrifice is the act of baptism into Christ and abiding "in Christ", He being our representative and we being His. The Hebrew means more to the effect of leaning on the head, as if a very intense act of identification was being made.

Lev 8:23 He killed it; and Moses took some of its blood, and put it on the tip of Aaron's right ear, and on the thumb of his right hand, and on the great toe of his right foot-

As the blood of the ram had to be put on the ear, thumb and toe (Lev. 8:23), so the blood of Christ's atonement should transform and affect every aspect of our lives; our hearing [i.e. our perception], our doing and walking...

Lev 8:24 He brought Aaron's sons; and Moses put some of the blood on the tip of their right ear, and on the thumb of their right hand, and on the great toe of their right foot; and Moses sprinkled the blood around on the altar-

All our service to God is to be done with the awareness of the fact that Christ shed His blood for us- our way of hearing, all we do with our hands and where we go with our feet is to be influenced by our experience of His death for us.

Lev 8:25 He took the fat, and the fat tail, and all the fat that was on the inward parts, and the cover of the liver, and the two kidneys, and their fat, and the right thigh-

The idea is as in LXX "the fact [even] the fat tail" (as Lev. 3:9; 7:3). There were species of sheep with a large fatty tail, which was considered in their culture to be a great delicacy. We see here how the law of Moses was limited in application to an immediate context, and was simply not intended to be a global law for all time. But the take away

lesson is that we are to give to God whatever is for us, in our culture and worldview, the best and most desirous.

Lev 8:26 and out of the basket of unleavened bread, that was before Yahweh, he took one unleavened loaf, and one loaf of oiled bread, and one wafer, and placed them on the fat, and on the right thigh-

This was a form of peace offering. Having been convicted of sin, accepting forgiveness through the sin offering, we devote ourselves to God's service. That is what the burnt offering represented. And only after that comes the celebration of peace with God.

Lev 8:27 He put all these in Aaron's hands and in his sons' hands, and waved them for a wave offering before Yahweh-

The portion to be waved was placed on the priests hands (Ex. 29:25), and then 'waved' or 'swung' towards the altar and then back- not from right to left. The idea was that the offerings were first given to God, recognizing they should be consumed on the altar to God; but then given back to the priest by God. So they ate them having first recognized that their food was really God's, all was of Him, and He had given it back to them to eat. This should be our spirit in partaking of any food, as we are the new priesthood. Our prayers of thanks for daily food should include this feature. All things are God's and anything we 'offer' to Him is only giving Him what He has given to us (1 Chron. 29:14,16).

Lev 8:28 Moses took them from their hands, and burned them on the altar on the burnt offering. They were a consecra-

tion for a pleasant aroma. It was an offering made by fire to Yahweh-

"A pleasant aroma" is a very common phrase. This concept is important to God. It first occurs in Gen. 8:21 where it means that God accepted Noah's sacrifice and vowed that the pole of saving mercy in His character was going to triumph over that of necessary judgment. Under the new covenant, it is persons and not sacrifices or incense which are accepted as a "pleasant aroma" (Ez. 20:41). The word for "pleasant" means strong delight; this is how God's heart can be touched by genuine sacrifice. Those pleasing offerings represented us, the living sacrifices (Rom. 12:1). And so it is applied to us in 2 Cor. 2:15- if we are in Christ, we are counted as a pleasant aroma to God. The offering of ourselves to Him is nothing of itself, but because we are in Christ and counted as Him, we are a delight to God. Hence the colossal importance of being "in Christ". "Aroma" or "smell" is a form of the Hebrew word *ruach*, the word for spirit or breath. God discerns the spirit of sacrifices, that was what pleased Him rather than the burning flesh of animals. Our attitude of mind in sacrifice can touch Him. Sacrifice is therefore accepted, Paul says, according to what a person has to give, but the essence is the attitude of mind behind it. We think of the two coins sacrificed by the widow.

Lev 8:29 Moses took the breast, and waved it for a wave offering before Yahweh. It was Moses' portion of the ram of consecration, as Yahweh commanded Moses-

I discussed on :13 how all this was very humbling for Moses. He had briefly been Israel's priest, and was therefore

allowed to have the portions of the sacrifices for himself. But now he was handing over the priesthood to Aaron and his sons.

Lev 8:30 Moses took some of the anointing oil, and some of the blood which was on the altar, and sprinkled it on Aaron, on his garments, and on his sons, and on his sons' garments with him, and sanctified Aaron, his garments, and his sons, and his sons' garments with him-

The Lord having His own clothes put back on Him meant that He would have been dressed in blood sprinkled garments for the walk to Golgotha. Again His holy mind would have been on the Messianic prophecies of Is. 63:3 about a Messiah with blood sprinkled garments lifted up in glorious victory. Or perhaps He saw the connection to Lev. 8:30, where the priests had to have blood sprinkled garments in order to begin their priestly work. This would have sent His mind to us, for whom He was interceding. Likewise when He perceived that His garment would not be rent, He would have joyfully perceived that He was indeed as the High Priest whose garment was not to be rent (Ex. 39:23).

Lev 8:31 Moses said to Aaron and to his sons, Boil the flesh at the door of the Tent of Meeting, and there eat it and the bread that is in the basket of consecration, as I commanded, saying, 'Aaron and his sons shall eat it'-

The peace offering was really a matter of voluntary desire, but in this special case of the inauguration of Aaron, it was commanded.

Lev 8:32 What remains of the flesh and of the bread you shall burn with fire-

This continues a major theme in the Mosaic law, that the sacrifices were to be eaten immediately and not left to be eaten over a longer period. The spontaneous desire to offer a peace offering was not to be spun out over a period of days. The condemnation for doing so was severe (Lev. 7:18). Lev. 7 warns against various ways of using the peace offering for the benefit of the offerer. One such idea may have been to kill meat and eat it over three days, and then claim this was a peace offering- when actually it involved eating meat which the offerer wanted to eat anyway. So the warning is against using voluntary offerings [in whatever way] as a front for doing our own thing, offering what cost us very little, and only appearing to others to have a great religious devotion.

Lev 8:33 You shall not go out from the door of the Tent of Meeting seven days, until the days of your consecration are fulfilled: for He shall consecrate you seven days-

This is the phrase used for not going out of the doors at Passover night, on pain of death (Ex. 12:22). They were to again realize that Israel's redemption from Egypt was theirs personally, and that redemption [like ours] had been in order to serve Yahweh. And that was what they were now doing.

Lev 8:34 What has been done this day, so Yahweh has commanded to do, to make atonement for you-

They were insistently reminded of their own need for atonement as they commenced the work of securing the atonement of others. In all our efforts for others we must bear this in mind.

Lev 8:35 You shall stay at the door of the Tent of Meeting day and night seven days, and keep Yahweh's command, that you don't die; for so I am commanded-

The calling to priesthood was not to be taken lightly. There was the death penalty for not remaining on duty during the seven days of their inauguration (Lev. 8:35), and it could be that Lev. 21:12 implies the same as a general principle. We cannot just resign our responsibilities; for we are called to the priesthood, our baptism and clothing in the righteousness of Christ was our calling and inauguration (see on Lev. 8:6,7). It is not for us to walk away from our calling. We are in this for life, serving until death, and then eternally in God's Kingdom.

Lev 8:36 Aaron and his sons did all the things which Yahweh commanded by Moses-

When Moses said "For so I am commanded" (:35), he really means 'Yahweh commands you through me'. In the preaching of God's word, we become identified with that word; our intimacy and connection with God becomes the greater as we preach His word through our own lips.

LEVITICUS CHAPTER 9

Lev 9:1 It happened on the eighth day, that Moses called Aaron and his sons, and the elders of Israel-

The sequence of sin offering, burnt offering and peace offering had been gone through before the seven days of inauguration (Lev. 8:35), as described in Lev. 8. But now they are repeated. Such was the importance of grasping the lessons involved; see on :2.

Lev 9:2 and he said to Aaron, Take a calf from the herd for a sin offering, and a ram for a burnt offering, without blemish, and offer them before Yahweh-

This repeats the usual progression from sin offering to burnt offering to peace offering, although in this case the equivalent of the peace offering was fire coming from Heaven in response to the sin and burnt offering. Conviction of sin leads to a desire to make complete dedication to God, which results in the peace with God celebrated in the peace offering. So the priests were being convicted of their sin, so that their dedication to Yahweh's service was no mere ritual, but a from the heart desire to serve Him from gratitude for the forgiveness of sin.

Lev 9:3 You shall speak to the children of Israel, saying, 'Take a male goat for a sin offering; and a calf and a lamb, both a year old, without blemish, for a burnt offering-

No animal actually is without blemish. God recognizes that we will not attain perfection in this life, but we are to do our best towards it; and His love imputes righteousness to us, counting us as unblemished because of our status

in Christ. For only Christ was the sacrifice totally without moral blemish (1 Pet. 1:19).

This looked ahead to the unblemished character of the Lord Jesus. The offering of sacrifices "without blemish" uses a word which is used about Abraham and Noah being "without blemish" (AV "perfect") before God (Gen. 6:9; 17:1). Although the word is used about the sacrifices, it is really more appropriate to persons- "you shall be perfect with Yahweh your God" (Dt. 18:13), "serve Him in sincerity (s.w. "without blemish")" (Josh. 24:14). The idea, therefore, was that the offerer was invited to see the animal as representative of himself. Our lives too are to be as "living sacrifices" (Rom. 12:1). And yet in practical terms, no animal is without blemish. They were to give the best they could, and God would count it as without blemish; as He does with us. David frequently uses the term in the Psalms about himself and the "upright", even though he was far from unblemished in moral terms.

This was to remind them that the Passover deliverance through the lamb was effectively ongoing. The Passover lamb was likewise to be a year old (Ex. 12:5). We too are to live constantly under the impression of the Lord's sacrifice and redemption of us. Israel were asked to use a lamb of the first year to record various times when they should be thankful for God's redemption of them in the events which comprise life (Lev. 9:3; 12:6; 23:12,18,19; Num. 6:12,14; 7:15,17,21; 28:3,9,11,19; 29:2,8,13). This was to continually recall to them the events of their great redemption through the Red Sea. And the essence of our redemption,

our baptism and salvation through the blood of the lamb, must likewise be brought ever before us.

Lev 9:4 and a bull and a ram for peace offerings, to sacrifice before Yahweh; and a grain offering mixed with oil-

The peace offerings are nearly always mentioned as coming after the sin offerings. The peace which they commemorate is spiritual peace with God due to forgiveness. See on :18. God has "tempered" the whole body together (1 Cor. 12:24). This is alluding to the way in which the unleavened cakes of flour were "mingled" or "tempered" with the oil (cp. the Spirit) in order to be an acceptable offering (Lev. 2:4,5; 7:10; 9:4 etc.). Paul has already likened his Corinthian ecclesia to a lump of unleavened flour (1 Cor. 5:7); he is now saying that they have been "tempered" together by the oil of God's Spirit. If we break apart from our brethren, we are breaking apart, or denying, that "tempering" of the body which God has made.

For today Yahweh appears to you'-

"The glory of the Lord became manifest before the whole people" (Heb.). It could be argued that when the fire came down and consumed the sacrifices when the tabernacle was established, this was the specific, one time fulfillment of Ex. 29:43 "There I will meet with the children of Israel; and the place shall be sanctified by My glory". The appearing of Yahweh to His people required that they made themselves right with Him through a sequence of offerings which dealt with their sin and made them acceptable to Him. We in our day are to live in daily expectation of God's appearing to us through the return of Christ; and

we too must ensure we are right with Him and can go to meet Him acceptably (Mt. 25:6).

Lev 9:5 They brought what Moses commanded before the Tent of Meeting: and all the congregation drew near and stood before Yahweh-

"Come near before Yahweh" is usually translated "offer [sacrifice] before Yahweh", and is translated that way multiple times. Although rarely (Ex. 16:9; Lev. 9:5) it is used of the congregation coming near before Yahweh. But the congregation didn't generally want to come before Yahweh, and so He chose just the Levites to come before Yahweh (Num. 8:10; 16:9 s.w.). It was God's intention that all Israel should be His servants, a nation of priests. But He changed and amended His approach, and chose just the Levites for this. We see here how open God is to change, so that by all means He may have relationship with His people. Under the new covenant, all believers are part of a royal priesthood (1 Pet. 2:5) as He initially intended even under the old covenant. And yet there is always the tendency to leave the priestly work to specialists rather than perceiving our personal call to do it.

Lev 9:6 Moses said, This is the thing which Yahweh commanded that you should do: and the glory of Yahweh shall appear to you-

The appearing of Yahweh's glory was conditional upon the recognition of sin which is being underlined in :7 and the subsequent rituals. We cannot perceive the wonder of His glory without conviction of our own sinfulness. For His glory is supremely seen in His forgiveness and grace to sinners.

Lev 9:7 Moses said to Aaron, Draw near to the altar, and offer your sin offering, and your burnt offering, and make atonement for yourself, and for the people; and offer the offering of the people, and make atonement for them as Yahweh commanded-

We sense a reticence within Aaron to accept the calling to priesthood and to make the sin offering. Perhaps he felt so much guilt over the sin of the golden calf; see on :8. Or perhaps the alcohol abuse of his sons we will meet in Lev. 10 was in fact known to him ahead of time. And we can identify with this reserve and struggle to really believe we have been forgiven and can move on in Divine service. Or perhaps he still clung to the idea that his sin with the golden calf was not really his fault and that he had been manipulated by the people.

Lev 9:8 So Aaron drew near to the altar, and killed the calf of the sin offering, which was for himself-

"For himself" suggests the calf was offered in recognition of his sin with the golden calf. See in :8. It is in my view mistaken to assume that Aaron's offering for himself somehow points forward to the Lord Jesus gaining forgiveness for His own nature. This isn't taught in the Bible. The Lord Jesus was perfect, harmless and undefiled- and yet He had human nature. All we posit about human nature we say about the Lord Jesus. It is no sin to be alive, to be human. It is actual, committed sin, in thought and action, which is the barrier between God and man. The character and person of the Lord Jesus is an endless challenge to us as to what is possible within human nature and for humanity.

Lev 9:9 The sons of Aaron presented the blood to him; and he dipped his finger in the blood, and put it on the horns of the altar, and poured out the blood at the base of the altar-

The sin offering involved putting the blood on the horns of the altar of incense in the holy place (Lev. 4:7,16-18) but it seems Aaron could not yet have access there, as Moses was still priest. Aaron could only be in the outer court, where the altar of burnt offering was, until he was fully ordained as high priest.

Lev 9:10 but the fat, and the kidneys, and the cover from the liver of the sin offering, he burned upon the altar; as Yahweh commanded Moses-

These internal organs were not to be eaten by the priests, but were to be wholly offered to God. For our inner things are to be wholly His. David came to understand that all the Mosaic emphasis upon the "kidneys" was because they represented the inner heart or mind. He often uses the word to describe his innermost thoughts (Ps. 7:9; 16:7; 26:2; 73:21; 139:13). Jeremiah likewise (Jer. 11:20; 12:2; 17:10; 20:12). The Hebrew for "kidneys" is a form of the word for "jewel"; for the innermost core thoughts of a person are so precious to God. Likewise the Hebrew for "liver" is literally 'that which he heaviest / most valuable'. For the innermost thoughts are the weighty things to God. We see here the supreme importance of being spiritually minded.

Lev 9:11 The flesh and the skin he burned with fire outside the camp-

The Lord Jesus suffered and died, shedding the blood of atonement, "outside the camp" (Heb. 13:13). We are bidden go forth to the Lord Jesus "outside the camp", just as

those who "sought Yahweh" did when there was no tabernacle (Ex. 33:7). The people watching Moses as he walked out to it, without the camp, therefore looks ahead to a faithless Israel lining the via Dolorosa and watching the Lord walk out to His place of crucifixion. And we are to get behind Him and follow Him there, stepping out from the mass of Israel. As the Lord Jesus suffered "outside the camp", so various parts of the Mosaic sacrifices were to be burnt there (Lev. 4:12,21; 8:17; 9:11; 16:27); and yet it was the blood of those sacrifices which achieved atonement (Heb. 13:11; Num. 19:3,9). "Outside the camp" was the place of excluded, condemned sinners (Lev. 13:46; 24:14; Num. 5:3,4; 15:35,36; 31:13,19), and it was here that the Lord Jesus died, in identification with us.

Lev 9:12 He killed the burnt offering; and Aaron's sons delivered the blood to him, and he sprinkled it around on the altar-

To sprinkle blood upon something didn't necessarily mean the object was forgiven. For an inanimate altar didn't need forgiving. The blood of the covenant was sprinkled (s.w.) upon the people as a sign of their involvement with the covenant process of salvation, rather than as a statement of their forgiveness (Ex. 24:8). Likewise with the sprinkling of the blood of the Passover lamb (2 Chron. 35:11). This was an act of identification rather than forgiveness of sin. The function of the altar was valid before God, or efficacious, because of its association with the blood of Christ; for the blood of the animals slain upon it couldn't bring salvation of itself, but only through God's way of looking at that blood is looking ahead to that of His

Son (Heb. 10:4). And so the altar was associated with the blood which represented His blood.

Lev 9:13 They delivered the burnt offering to him, piece by piece, and the head: and he burned them upon the altar-

We note the continual Mosaic requirement that sacrifices be cut into parts. Every part of our lives, including our most inward parts, are to be offered to God. The process of splitting the offering into its parts speaks of our self-examination, defining each part of our lives and offering them to God consciously.

Lev 9:14 He washed the inward parts and the legs, and burned them on the burnt offering on the altar-

See on :10. The Mosaic idea of washing the priests and inner parts of the sacrifices is alluded to in Eph. 5:26; the Lord died that "he might sanctify it, having cleansed it by the washing of water with the word". The Lord's death provided the water which cleanses and sanctifies; and that water which came from His death refers to the gift of the Holy Spirit (Jn. 4:14; 7:39). This was the significance of the water flowing from His side when He was crucified.

There is huge emphasis upon the "inward parts" in the regulations about sacrifices. Our inward parts and thoughts of the heart are laid open before God and should be offered to Him, not just the externalities which men see (Heb. 4:12). The same word is used of Sarah's laughing "within herself" (Gen. 18:12). The sacrifice of Christ was so perfect because His innermost thoughts were offered to God. And it is our thoughts when nobody else is watching which are of the essence to God; "to be spiritually minded", as the New Testament expresses it. This is why Yahweh

could not go up in "the midst" of Israel (Ex. 33:3; Num. 14:42; Dt. 1:42), because they didn't have Him in their midst. Thus to marry unbelievers would be a snare "in the midst of you" (Ex. 34:12), right in the inner mind which is what God seeks above all. David in the Psalms speaks of the "inward parts" of the human mind, which are critical in God's judgment of a person as wicked or righteous (e.g. Ps. 5:9; 36:1; 49:11 and Ps. 64:6, where "inward thought" is s.w. "inward parts"). It is those inward parts which were to be washed (Lev. 1:13), just as our innermost heart can be washed by the Spirit which is given at baptism. For this is the gift of the Spirit in the new covenant, whereby God's law is placed within our inward parts (s.w. Jer. 31:33; Ez. 36:26,27) by the God who can form the spirit of man in man's inward parts, the God who can work directly upon the human heart (Zech. 12:1).

Lev 9:15 He presented the people's offering, and took the goat of the sin offering which was for the people, and killed it, and offered it for sin, like the first-

Jesus spoke of the righteous as sheep and the sinners as goats (Mt. 25:33). A goat rather than a sheep was required because the goat was the representative of the sinful people; it was killed as a recognition by them that their sin deserved death. In baptism we make the same recognition—that I should die, and I identify myself with the dead body of Christ, and come alive again in Him.

Lev 9:16 He presented the burnt offering, and offered it according to the regulation-

Conviction of sin, taught by the sin offering, leads to a desire to make complete dedication to God, which results in the peace with God celebrated in the peace offering.

Lev 9:17 He presented the grain offering, and filled his hand from there, and burned it upon the altar, besides the burnt offering of the morning-

The stress upon "*he presented*" (:16,17) suggests that now Aaron is taking over from Moses as the high priest. We note that the daily burnt offering was never overlooked even when there were additional sacrifices required on that day. Likewise our basic daily devotions to God must never be allowed to slip regardless of whatever other work we are doing for the Lord.

Lev 9:18 He also killed the bull and the ram, the sacrifice of peace offerings, which was for the people; and Aaron's sons delivered to him the blood, which he sprinkled around on the altar-

The peace offerings are nearly always mentioned as coming after the sin offerings. The peace which they commemorate is spiritual peace with God due to forgiveness. The Law always lists the sacrifices in a specific order: sin offering, burnt offering, peace offering (e.g. Lev. 9:2-4). This may foreshadow the New Testament trio: "Grace, mercy and peace". Thus the peace offering is a result of having received mercy. Therefore we keep our peace offering, the memorial meeting, to recall the mercy which we have received. We do not specifically come there to find mercy. We do not need to break bread in order to be forgiven. Ps. 100:4,5 seems to allude to the peace offerings: "Enter into his gates (the peace offering was to be offered at the gate of

the tabernacle) with thanksgiving, and into his courts with praise: be thankful unto Him... for the Lord is good; his mercy is everlasting". The peace offering was "the sacrifice of thanksgiving, and in practice it was offered in thanks and praise of God's mercy towards human sin. In similar vein, Ps. 107:17- 21 exults in the wonder of God's mercy in forgiving men. The spirit told Israel to respond by making voluntary peace offerings: "Let them sacrifice the sacrifices of thanksgiving" (v.22), i.e. peace offerings (Lev. 7:12).

Lev 9:19 and the fat of the bull and of the ram, the fat tail, and that which covers the inward parts, and the kidneys, and the cover of the liver-

The idea is as in LXX "the fact [even] the fat tail" (as Lev. 3:9; 7:3). There were species of sheep with a large fatty tail, which was considered in their culture to be a great delicacy. We see here how the law of Moses was limited in application to an immediate context, and was simply not intended to be a global law for all time. But the take away lesson is that we are to give to God whatever is for us, in our culture and worldview, the best and most desirous.

Lev 9:20 and they put the fat upon the breasts, and he burned the fat on the altar-

The fire which burned up the fat came down from God in :24. So we have here an example of a situation being presented which is a summary of future events. The picture is given, and then we later read the explanation of how it came about. This is typical of so much Biblical writing.

Lev 9:21 and the breasts and the right thigh Aaron waved for a wave offering before Yahweh, as Moses commanded-

The portion to be waved was placed on the priests hands (Ex. 29:25), and then 'waved' or 'swung' towards the altar and then back- not from right to left. The idea was that the offerings were first given to God, recognizing they should be consumed on the altar to God; but then given back to the priest by God. So they ate them having first recognized that their food was really God's, all was of Him, and He had given it back to them to eat. This should be our spirit in partaking of any food, as we are the new priesthood. Our prayers of thanks for daily food should include this feature. All things are God's and anything we 'offer' to Him is only giving Him what He has given to us (1 Chron. 29:14,16).

Lev 9:22 Aaron lifted up his hands toward the people, and blessed them-

When the offerings are spoken of together, they are always in this order- sin offering, then burnt offering and then peace offering. Firstly we must deal with our sin; then dedicate ourselves to God, as spoken of in the burnt offering. Only then can we have peace with God and fellowship freely with Him, as exemplified in the peace offering.

Within the Pentateuch, the idea of blessing creation paves the way for God promising to "bless" the children of Abraham, and the blessings upon them with which Deuteronomy concludes (see too Lev. 9:22; Num. 6:22-24). The pagan creation stories sometimes spoke of the things created by the gods then blessing *them*. The Sumerians recorded that at 'creation', "The whole universe, the people in unison, to Enlil in one tongue gave praise". But the true God, the God of all grace, not only creates His

people and other creatures, but then blesses *them*! And the spirit of that grace should be seen in all our relationships. The Sumerian and Babylonian myths speak of people being created in order to serve the gods, "to bear the yoke of the gods" (S.G.F. Brandon), to relieve them in their everyday work. But the Genesis creation has God creating man and giving him great freedom, and blessing him.

And he came down from offering the sin offering, and the burnt offering, and the peace offerings-

Although the altar was very low, only three cubits (45 cm.) high (Ex. 27:1), Aaron "came down" from it (Lev. 9:22). This may be understood in the same way as people "went up" and "came down" from the temple. Sacrifice was a 'height'.

Lev 9:23 Moses and Aaron went into the Tent of Meeting, and came out, and blessed the people; and the glory of Yahweh appeared to all the people-

Blessing is often associated with forgiveness and acceptance with God. The blessings promised to Abraham and his seed likewise (Acts 3:25,26). If we are Abraham's seed by baptism (Gal. 3:27-29) then we are to be a blessing to the world in that we offer them the way to God's forgiveness and fellowship with Him. The glory of God is only perceptible by those who have been genuinely convicted of their sin.

Lev 9:24 There came forth fire from before Yahweh, and consumed the burnt offering and the fat upon the altar; and

when all the people saw it, they shouted, and fell on their faces-

Jewish tradition has it that the fire which came down from Heaven in Lev. 9:24 remained burning; and this fire was preserved burning all night and day. Hence the need for "fire pans" (Ex. 27:3) to keep the fire burning whilst the altar was being cleaned or the remains of sacrifices removed from it. The fire which never went out or was 'quenched' (Lev. 6:13) is a double symbol. The phrase is used multiple times with reference to the wrath of God in condemning sinners; it is the basis of the idea of eternal fire which will not be quenched. Rather like the cup of wine from the Lord being a symbol of either condemnation or blessing. So we have a choice- be consumed by the eternal fire now as living sacrifices, or be consumed by it anyway at the last day.

LEVITICUS CHAPTER 10

Lev 10:1 Nadab and Abihu the sons of Aaron, each took his censer, and put fire in it, and laid incense on it, and offered strange fire before Yahweh, which He had not commanded them-

The implication of :9 could be that they were drunk when they did this. Nadab and Abihu treated the sacred as secular; and that has to be a warning for all time. As explained on Lev. 9:24, special fire came down from God to show His acceptance of Aaron, and remained burning. Nadab and Abihu took "strange" fire, not this fire; and "strange" suggests Gentile or foreign, so it was likely fire associated with paganism.

Nadab and Abihu kindled strange fire, and it was with that fire that God burnt them up, in symbol of His destruction of all the wicked at judgment day (Lev. 10:2). Our words are as fire, and are to be connected with the fire of condemnation (James 3:5,6), which our words have already kindled (Lk. 12:49). Likewise wrongly gained wealth is the fire that will burn those who have it at the last day (James 5:3). James is picking up a figure from Is. 33:11, again concerning the final judgment: "Your [own] breath [i.e. words], as fire, shall devour you". Their breath, their words, were as fire which would in the end be the basis of their condemnation.

Lev 10:2 And fire came forth from before Yahweh, and devoured them, and they died before Yahweh-

Fire coming down from God has just occurred as a sign of His acceptance of sacrifice (Lev. 9:24). We shall either be consumed by God's fire, or we give ourselves to Him as living sacrifices and are accepted and consumed by Him. There's a logic of devotion here- whether we live to the flesh or to the Spirit, we are to be consumed anyway. So we may as well be consumed by God's acceptance of us rather than by His wrath.

Elijah called the fire down in evident allusion to how fire came down from the Lord to destroy Nadab and Abihu and also Sodom (Lev. 10:2; Gen. 19:24). He did the wrong thing from wrong motives and yet he Biblically justified it- for the prophets themselves saw an apostate Israel as being like Sodom (Is. 1:10). Now this is probably how most Christians sin. We rarely harden ourselves and sin in willful defiance. In the heat of the moment the 'devil' of our own self-talk persuades us to find a pseudo-spiritual justification for actions which only later we reflect were wrong. The Lord's wilderness temptations were all about doing justifiable things for wrong motives, based on a self-justifying recollection of Bible passages. And this in essence is how it is with most of our failures. The Lord's victory and Elijah's failure should serve to stop us in our tracks in careful and sustained self-examination.

Lev 10:3 Then Moses said to Aaron, This is what Yahweh spoke of, saying, 'I will be declared holy in those who come near Me, and before all the people I will be glorified.' Aaron held his peace-

If we don't burn up the flesh now, then it will be at judgment day. When the rebels were burnt by fire, Moses

commented: "This is it that the Lord spake, saying, I will be sanctified in them that come nigh me" (Lev. 10:3 AV). Either we burn ourselves up in commitment now, or we will be burnt up. God demands us from ourselves. The glaring logic is that seeing the flesh will be dissolved, it must have its judgment, therefore we ought to judge it now and thereby receive acceptance at the judgment; rather than omit to do so now and go through the same dissolution at the judgment, with the result that we will sleep eternally.

God's destruction of sinners is a constructive declaration of His holiness rather than an angry deity lashing out at people because they offended Him. Any disciplining of others which we may have to do, e.g. of our children or within the family of God, should be done in the same constructive spirit. This incident teaches that we cannot approach God on our own terms, in our own way, but must do so in the way He has defined in His word. The fact He doesn't respond to human failure so visibly as He did in Moses' time doesn't mean that this is any less true for us today.

Lev 10:4 Moses called Mishael and Elzaphan, the sons of Uzziel the uncle of Aaron, and said to them, Draw near, carry your brothers from before the sanctuary out of the camp-

This suggests they were in the holy place, offering upon the incense altar. It also presumably made the priests who carried them ritually unclean. This would have required seven days of purification, and likewise the tabernacle would have been defiled and required days to cleanse it because of defilement with dead bodies. Yet there is no evidence that God required this letter of the law to be fulfilled

at this point. And so we see that the inauguration of the tabernacle and priesthood began by grace; for it was all in a ritually unclean state right at its dedication. The lesson of acceptance by grace, by spirit and not letter, was taught from the beginning. There is another example of this noted on :17.

Lev 10:5 So they drew near, and carried them in their coats out of the camp, as Moses had said-

The fact they were dressed in their coats shows that they were attempting to do some kind of religious ritual in a "strange" or Gentile / pagan way. They were destroyed by fire (:2), but their coats were apparently miraculously preserved and not burnt. Perhaps this was so that the next priests who wore those coats would remember what had happened.

Lev 10:6 Moses said to Aaron, and to Eleazar and to Ithamar, his sons, Don't let the hair of your heads go loose, neither tear your clothes; that you don't die, and that He not be angry with all the congregation; but let your brothers, the whole house of Israel, bewail the burning which Yahweh has kindled-

To tear the priestly clothes meant God's wrath with all the congregation and the ending of his priesthood. Caiaphas' equivalent name in Hebrew could suggest 'cast out'; his rending of his priestly clothes at Christ's trial declared him "cast out" of the priesthood (see Lev. 10:6; 21:10). We note too that the sin of one person can bring judgment upon others, in this case "all the congregation". On one hand, God deals with us as individuals. And yet on another, the

nature of sin is that others suffer from the effects of the sin of third parties. That is largely the nature of sin.

Lev 10:7 You shall not go out from the door of the Tent of Meeting, lest you die; for the anointing oil of Yahweh is on you. They did according to the word of Moses-

This is the phrase used for not going out of the doors at Passover night, on pain of death (Ex. 12:22). They were to again realize that Israel's redemption from Egypt was theirs personally, and that redemption [like ours] had been in order to serve Yahweh. And that was what they were now doing.

Lev 10:8 Yahweh spoke to Aaron, saying-

Aaron has now been accepted as high priest in the place of Moses. Despite all the weakness just described. And so Yahweh now addresses him directly, rather than via Moses as earlier.

Lev 10:9 Drink no wine nor strong drink, you, nor your sons with you, when you go into the Tent of Meeting, that you don't die: it shall be a statute forever throughout your generations-

This suggests that the offering of strange fire may have been under the influence of alcohol. Which means that all the ritual of dedication we have been reading of so far in Leviticus... was done whilst under the influence of alcohol, or at least, involving sons of Aaron who were wont to abuse alcohol. The weakness of the priesthood is apparent. Perhaps it was because he knew this that Aaron was reticent about accepting the dedication of himself and his sons. The Lord Jesus as the great High Priest alluded to this ruling, when He said that He would no longer drink wine until

He drinks it again with us (Mt. 26:29). The implication is that after His death and until He returns, He is now on priestly duty for us.

Lev 10:10 and that you are to make a distinction between the holy and the common, and between the unclean and the clean-

The behaviour of the rebels was therefore a failure to make this distinction. "Distinction" or 'make a division' is the word used of how the veil divided between the holy and most holy place (Ex. 26:33). Their bodies were taken out from "before the sanctuary" (:4), so we wonder if they entered the most holy with their strange fire, drunk, and mixing clean and unclean foods. The list of unclean animals which follows in the next chapter was to underline this point; for that list was a distinction between the clean and unclean (Lev. 11:47). Prov. 31:4,5 associates alcohol abuse with forgetting God's law and it seems this is one of the many historical commentaries of Proverbs, alluding back to this incident.

Lev 10:11 and that you are to teach the children of Israel all the statutes which Yahweh has spoken to them by Moses-

The actions of the rebels were perhaps involved with a refusal to teach all Yahweh's statutes. And the priesthood were intended to teach Israel.

Lev 10:12 Moses spoke to Aaron, and to Eleazar and to Ithamar, his sons who were left, Take the grain offering that remains of the offerings of Yahweh made by fire, and eat it without yeast beside the altar; for it is most holy-

Because of the sin with the golden calf, God's intention had been to "destroy" Aaron (Dt. 9:20). A person was 'de-

stroyed' by having their family cut off (Am. 2:9). Moses had interceded for Aaron and apparently changed that outcome. But as it happened, the judgment was partially fulfilled, because of their sin. It's rather like Moses offering not to enter the land, so that Israel could. His offer was turned down, but in the end, he did not in fact enter the land, because of his sin. So God works even through human sin, in order to bring about what the sinner really wants. We also learn that human intercession for a sinner may indeed be heard, but if the sinner persists in their way, then they are allowed to choose their own condemnation.

Moses repeats the commands because he is fearful Aaron will not obey them properly, and may be slain as two of his sons had been.

Lev 10:13 and you shall eat it in a holy place, because it is your portion, and your sons' portion, of the offerings of Yahweh made by fire: for so I am commanded-

"For so I am commanded" could suggest these were specific commands given for the inauguration ceremony after the death of Nadab and Abihu. "It is *your portion*" signifies that no longer is Moses the priest, taking the portions for himself (Lev. 8:29). They were now Aaron's. I discussed on Lev. 8:13 how all this was very humbling for Moses. He had briefly been Israel's priest, and was therefore allowed to have the portions of the sacrifices for himself. But now he was handing over the priesthood to Aaron and his sons, when surely it had been his natural sense that he ought to have been the priest as he was spiritually more mature than Aaron.

Lev 10:14 The waved breast and the contributed thigh you shall eat in a clean place, you, and your sons, and your

daughters with you; for they are given as your portion, and your sons' portion, out of the sacrifices of the peace offerings of the children of Israel-

We note the inclusion of the daughters. All the family were to come to a clean place and eat. The dedication of the male members to the Divine service was to involve their families too, and they were to be engaged in this dedication ceremony. Constantly we see God's care for the family unit. This is contrast to the secular religious view, that priesthood was for chosen men, and their families must put up with it.

Lev 10:15 The heaved thigh and the waved breast they shall bring with the offerings made by fire of the fat, to wave it for a wave offering before Yahweh; and it shall be yours, and your sons' with you, as a portion forever, as Yahweh has commanded-

The portion to be waved was placed on the priests hands (Ex. 29:25), and then 'waved' or 'swung' towards the altar and then back- not from right to left. The idea was that the offerings were first given to God, recognizing they should be consumed on the altar to God; but then given back to the priest by God. So they ate them having first recognized that their food was really God's, all was of Him, and He had given it back to them to eat. This should be our spirit in partaking of any food, as we are the new priesthood. Our prayers of thanks for daily food should include this feature. All things are God's and anything we 'offer' to Him is only giving Him what He has given to us (1 Chron. 29:14,16).

Lev 10:16 Moses diligently inquired about the goat of the sin offering, and, behold, it was burned; and he was angry with Eleazar and with Ithamar, the sons of Aaron who were left, saying-

Moses' faith slipped for a moment; because his spirit was provoked by Israel, so that he spoke unadvisedly with his lips and was therefore barred from entering the land (although maybe such an apparently temporary slip was the reflection of deeper problems?). Yet it does seem uncharacteristic, a tragic slip down the graph of ever rising spirituality. There must have almost been tears in Heaven. Being easily provoked was one of Moses' characteristics; consider how he turned himself and stormed out from Pharaoh (Ex. 10:6; 11:8); how his anger waxed hot when he returned from the mount, how he went out from Pharaoh in great anger, how he first of all feared the wrath of Pharaoh and then stopped fearing it; how Moses was "very wroth" at Israel's suggestion that he was appropriating the sacrifices for himself; how he was "angry" with Eleazar (Ex. 32:19; 11:8; Num. 16:15; Lev. 10:16,17). This temperament explains his swings of faith. Was the Lord Jesus likewise afflicted?

Lev 10:17 Why haven't you eaten the sin offering in the place of the sanctuary, since it is most holy, and He has given it to you to carry the iniquity of the congregation, to make atonement for them before Yahweh?-

It was true that the letter of the law had been broken. But this was accepted, because Aaron's admission of bad conscience was in the spirit of the law. And so we see that the inauguration of the tabernacle and priesthood began by grace; for it was all in a ritually unclean state right at its

dedication. The lesson of acceptance by grace, by spirit and not letter, was taught from the beginning. There is another example of this noted on :4.

Lev 10:18 Behold, its blood was not brought into the inner part of the sanctuary: you certainly should have eaten it in the sanctuary, as I commanded-

Aaron the sinner comes over as more righteous than Moses the legalist. "As I commanded... you certainly should... why haven't you...?" is met with the answer that 'I didn't do all that because I was so upset with God and life generally for the slaying of my sons'. And that was the more mature response.

Lev 10:19 Aaron spoke to Moses, Behold, this day they have offered their sin offering and their burnt offering before Yahweh; and such things as these have happened to me; and if I had eaten the sin offering today, would it have been pleasing in the sight of Yahweh?-

Aaron felt unable to eat with God because of his bad conscience about his sons' behaviour, or maybe because he felt angry with God for killing his sons. Moses expected Aaron to just be obedient to the letter of the law for the sake of it, but Aaron is presented as having done the right thing, living with sensitivity to our conscience and feelings rather than in unthinking obedience to the letter of the law.

Lev 10:20 When Moses heard that, it was pleasing in his sight-

Moses is one of greatest types of the Lord Jesus, in whom the Father was supremely manifested. Because of this, it is fitting that we should see a very high level of

God manifestation in Moses. Indeed it seems that God was manifest in Moses to a greater degree than in any other Old Testament character. Thus Aaron asks: "Would it have been well pleasing in the sight of Yahweh?", and then we read "And when Moses heard that, it was well-pleasing in his sight".

LEVITICUS CHAPTER 11

Lev 11:1 Yahweh spoke to Moses and to Aaron, saying to them-

Comparing the lists of clean and unclean animals in Lev. 11 and Dt. 14, we see the Deuteronomy list tends to be more specific. This is understandable; for the people were now going to enter the land, and there would be specific questions about specific animals.

Lev 11:2 Speak to the children of Israel, saying, 'These are the living things which you may eat among all the animals that are on the earth-

Dt. 14:3 prefaces this teaching by saying that "you must not eat any abominable thing". See on :13. The word "abominable" has connections with idolatry. The reasons for defining certain animals as clear and others as unclean may be connected to the way in which the unclean animals were used in idol worship, especially by the Egyptians. There is a clear connection between unclean animals and idols in Is. 66:17; Ez. 8:10. There is nothing unclean of itself (Rom. 14:14), every creature is "good" and was made "very good" (1 Tim. 4:4); the differentiations were purely for teaching purposes, and therefore at the Lord's death the differences were collapsed. Peter struggled to accept this, but was taught that the unclean animals had been intended to represent the Gentiles- and now they were to be accepted on an equal footing to the Jews, the supposedly "clean" animals. Again we see the temporary nature of the law of

Moses; the animals were not of themselves unclean originally, nor were they after the Lord's death.

Lev 11:3 Whatever parts the hoof, and is cloven-footed-

The sense of the Hebrew is "Whatever parts the hoof, and completely divides it". Some animals part the hoof but don't completely divide it to the end, such as the camel. The lesson would be that there must be clear division between clean and unclean, good and bad, and that division must not be begun and not finished. The line dividing good from evil must run to the end through every part of our lives.

And chews the cud among the animals, that you may eat-

The Hebrew means to bring the food up again, to ruminate. Perhaps this was to represent ruminating upon God's word; and being cloven-footed perhaps speaks of being sure footed and walking stably in life. To chew the cud (ruminate on God's word) but not walk the talk (not having a cloven foot) still makes us unclean (:4). However, it may be that there is little significance in the chewing of the cud of itself, because doing so didn't make the animal unclean of itself- it was just an exercise for Israel to teach them the concept of discernment, self control and obedience to God even when this meant practical inconvenience for them (see on :6).

Lev 11:4 Nevertheless these you shall not eat of those that chew the cud, or of those who part the hoof: the camel, because he chews the cud but doesn't have a parted hoof, he is unclean to you-

Some animals part the hoof but don't completely divide it to the end (see on :3), such as the camel, which has a

kind of ball at the back of their foot which means the hoof is not completely divided. The lesson would be that there must be clear division between clean and unclean, good and bad, and that division must not be begun and not finished. The line dividing good from evil must run to the end through every part of our lives.

Lev 11:5 the rock badger, because he chews the cud but doesn't have a parted hoof, he is unclean to you-

As with the language of demons in the New Testament, the Bible here speaks of things as they appear. For hares and rock badgers do chew the cud, but their munching movements, the lower jaw moving backward and forward, suggest they are chewers of the cud- but in fact they don't.

Lev 11:6 the hare, because she chews the cud but doesn't part the hoof, she is unclean to you-

The hare was apparently thought to be avoided by demons ["jinns"] and so was worshipped; hare bones or skulls were used as good luck charms, and still are among some Arab tribes. So the reason for having nothing to do with hares was religious rather than because hares are somehow more intrinsically unclean than other animals.

Lev 11:7 the pig, because he has a split hoof, and is cloven-footed, but doesn't chew the cud, he is unclean to you-

Appearing to make a differentiation in our walk, our external life, is no good unless internally we are chewing the cud, masticating our food, ruminating upon God's word (:3). Many people appear to have made a division between themselves and society but this is no evidence that they are spiritual.

Lev 11:8 Of their flesh you shall not eat, and their carcasses you shall not touch; they are unclean to you-

The basis of the command to us in our age to "touch not the unclean thing" by being separate from sinful things (2 Cor. 6:17).

Lev 11:9 These you may eat of all that are in the waters: whatever has fins and scales in the waters, in the seas, and in the rivers, that you may eat-

All fish have fins and scales, it's just that some aren't evident. We see here how the Bible is written in places from the viewpoint of humans, and according to their understanding of things, even if that understanding is false. And this is why we find mental illness attributed to "demons" in the New Testament, even though demons don't exist.

Lev 11:10 All that don't have fins and scales in the seas, and in the rivers, of all that move in the waters, and of all the living creatures that are in the waters, they are to be an abomination to you-

The parable of the drag net pictures fishermen sitting down with their catch, throwing away the "bad" fish. These would've been the unclean sea creatures, e.g. crabs, which had got caught up in the net. This represented the 'sitting' of the final judgment at the last day (Mt. 13:48,49). We are to make that same division between good and bad in the choices we make today.

Lev 11:11 and you are to detest them. You shall not eat of their flesh, and you shall detest their carcasses-

As Israel were to "detest" idols and idolatry as "abomination" (Dt. 7:26), so they were to "abhor" and treat as "abomination" unclean animals (Lev. 11:11,13,43), lest

they "make yourselves abominable [s.w. "detestable"] with any creeping thing" (Lev. 20:25). I suggest this is the reason why God designated some animals as 'abominable'; because of their association with idol worship. The idols of Egypt were often in the form of animals, and sex with animals was part of the rites. Just as in primitive societies today. There is nothing unclean of itself (Rom. 14:14); no animal is morally more or less clean than another. The commandments about unclean animals were clearly intended just for Israel living within a culture of idolatry / abomination involving those kinds of animals.

Lev 11:12 Whatever has no fins nor scales in the waters, that is to be an abomination to you-

See on :9. "Abomination" is the language of idolatry, and it was the idolatrous associations which were the basis for these animals being forbidden; see on :2.

Lev 11:13 These you shall detest among the birds they shall not be eaten, they are an abomination: the eagle, and the vulture, and the black vulture-

"Detest" is the word for "abomination", which further suggests that the unclean birds were to be rejected because they were associated with idol worship; not because they were somehow more intrinsically unclean than the "clean" animals. See on :2.

Lev 11:14 and the red kite, any kind of black kite-

Dt. 14:11 LXX makes it a command that "Ye shall eat every clean bird". The reference may specifically be to the birds used in the ritual of the cleansing of the leper; as if this was the only time a bird may be eaten. For the basis upon which clean and unclean animals were divided [chew-

ing the cud, cloven hooves] doesn't apply to birds. It could be that birds were not to be eaten, apart from those sanctified or "made clean" by the rituals which used birds.

Lev 11:15 any kind of raven-

We note how Elijah was later to be made to depend upon food brought to him by unclean ravens (1 Kings 17:4-6). This was all part of God's program to educate him against exclusivity. God told Elijah that He had commanded unclean ravens to feed him; and thus He reminded Elijah of a basic fact, that God speaks to even unclean animals (Gen. 1:22)- and they obey him. The ravens not only obeyed Yahweh in going to Elijah, but in not eating the food they were carrying. Elijah likely considered that the fact God spoke to him meant that he must therefore have some automatic superiority over others. But not so. It's the same with us. We can consider that because we have heard God's true voice, we thereby are justified before Him. But He speaks to and uses all, clean and unclean.

Lev 11:16 the horned owl, the screech owl, and the gull, any kind of hawk-

These birds all hunt and eat other unclean animals, and many of them were totems of the idols believed in by the nations. Again the idea was to teach God's people the need to keep away from association with things which resembled sin, which would put ideas in the mind which tended towards sin rather than righteousness. This principle is so relevant today in connection with what we watch or read, for by presenting ourselves continually with sinful associations we are the more likely to ourselves fall into sin.

Lev 11:17 the barn owl, the cormorant, the great owl-

The extensive stress upon not eating owls of any kind (:18) was because the local tribes considered that owls were the most human-like of all birds. They were therefore worshipped and considered as mediators between the gods and man. There was to be no even going near these birds, because association is the basis of so much downward sliding in spiritual terms.

Lev 11:18 the white owl, the desert owl, the osprey-

See on :17. It is common in primitive societies for tribes and individuals to have totems, an animal or plant which they are associated with. This practice is common today in central Africa. Seeing there are no animals unclean of themselves, as the New Testament makes clear, one reason for the specific designation of some animals as "unclean" may be because they were associated with local tribes or individuals who were to be treated as unclean. The meaning of some of the names of the designated "unclean" animals are suggestive of individuals.

Lev 11:19 the stork, any kind of heron, the hoopoe, and the bat-

Some of the birds forbidden as unclean were thought to be good luck symbols, and their carcasses were used as medicines or potions used in idol worship. The heron and bat were amongst these. The take away lesson is that we are to avoid all associations with that which is pagan and anti-God.

Lev 11:20 All flying insects that walk on all fours are an abomination to you-

Paul observes that there is nothing unclean of itself (Rom. 14:14). These animals were to be unclean "to you"

because it was part of God's method of teaching His people to make a moral choice in life, to recognize there is sin and righteousness, clean and unclean. There were hygienic reasons behind the prohibition of some animals, but the essential intention was to teach the concept of making a difference, of looking at something we could partake of and saying 'No, that is not for me'. The fact God later withdrew the distinction between clean and unclean animals just confirms that they were not clean nor unclean of themselves; all had been created by God and declared "very good" in Genesis (1 Tim. 4:4). The distinctions between them were there to simply educate Israel in practicing the concept of separation and discernment between acceptable and unacceptable things in life.

Lev 11:21 Yet you may eat these: of all winged creeping things that go on all fours, which have legs above their feet, with which to hop on the earth-

Winged creeping things with feet recalls the language of the cherubim. These kinds of animals often had religious symbolism; the bas reliefs of Assyria and Babylon are full of such winged quadrupeds. Again we see that the prohibition about eating them was as it were a fence around the law. They were eaten in worship, and God wanted to ensure that there was not even to be the subconscious suggestion of idolatry for His people.

Lev 11:22 Even of these you may eat: any kind of locust, any kind of bald locust, any kind of cricket, and any kind of grasshopper-

The difference between these and the larger winged creeping things of :21 was simply that these were not generally objects of worship.

Lev 11:23 But all winged creeping things which have four feet, are an abomination to you-

The idea may be that they had the potential to fly, but often preferred to crawl on earth. Refusing to use spiritual potential was seen as a bad thing, and Israel didn't need even the unconscious association with anything which resembled that. This is why so much which passes for entertainment would be better not viewed nor listened to by Christians; there is nothing unclean in itself, but the subliminal associations are what drag us down.

Lev 11:24 By these you will become unclean: whoever touches their carcass shall be unclean until the evening-

See on :25. There was no requirement for sacrifice. But Lev. 5:2,6 taught that if a person touches an unclean thing and only later realizes they had done so, then they needed to offer a guilt offering. This seems to teach that moral weakness, immediately recognized, is less serious than unrecognized moral weakness which is later recognized. The requirement for a guilt offering was surely to underline the seriousness of sin even if committed in ignorance. And perhaps to thereby encourage thoughtfulness about and awareness of God's law, so that the cost and inconvenience of making a guilt offering was not incurred.

Lev 11:25 Whoever carries any part of their carcass shall wash his clothes, and be unclean until the evening-

The more conscious was the association with uncleanness, the greater was the effort which made to be made

to achieve cleansing. Thus if someone knowingly carried a carcass, they had to wash their clothes in addition to being unclean. There is definitely a principle connection between knowledge and responsibility, and conscious defilement requires greater cleansing.

Lev 11:26 Every animal which parts the hoof, and is not cloven-footed, nor chews the cud, is unclean to you. Everyone who touches them shall be unclean-

See on :7. Parting the hoof, appearing to make a differentiation in our walk, our external life, is no good unless internally we are chewing the cud, masticating our food, ruminating upon God's word (:3). Many people appear to have made a division between themselves and society but this is no evidence that they are spiritual. Or we may note the warning that some part the hoof but aren't cloven footed, meaning that although they appear to make a division in their walk, they don't do so to the end. For not being cloven-footed means that the parted hoof doesn't remain parted right to the end of the hoof.

Lev 11:27 Whatever goes on its paws, among all animals that go on all fours, they are unclean to you. Whoever touches their carcass shall be unclean until the evening-

GNB "all four-footed animals with paws", LXX "all the wild beasts that moves upon its fore feet". The Hebrew for "paws" is the usual word for "hands". It is used in the sense of 'power' (1 Sam. 4:3 and often). Perhaps the message is that those animals which so overtly trust in their own natural strength and power should be avoided. Or maybe the idea is that animals which appear to be a mix of the animal and the human [by having "hands"] should be avoid-

ed. For these were the animals worshipped in paganism, and half human, half divine idols and gods are found everywhere in pagan thought. For the same reason as humans shouldn't have sex with animals, even the subliminal suggestion of these animals was to be avoided. For man is not on the same level as the beasts, and he should not act like that.

Lev 11:28 He who carries their carcass shall wash his clothes, and be unclean until the evening. They are unclean to you-

We may enquire why a person would need to carry a carcass of an unclean animal. Possibly in order to move a carcass out of the way; but more likely, to use it for food or its skin for clothing. And this was forbidden. So the extra duty of washing clothes was introduced, because such behaviour was likely to lead closer to sin. We may despise fences around laws as legalistic, but in reality, the way of the Spirit requires wisdom and an appreciation in practical daily life decisions and structuring of our tendency to fall into sin.

Lev 11:29 These are they which are unclean to you among the creeping things that creep on the earth: the weasel, the rat, any kind of great lizard-

AV "The mouse". The mouse is associated with idolatry in Is. 66:17. This shows how these laws were intended to keep Israel well away from even the subliminal suggestion towards such idolatry. But they didn't obey the food laws, and so they ended up participating in the very idolatry which the food laws were designed to psychologically preclude.

Lev 11:30 the gecko, and the monitor lizard, the wall lizard, the sand lizard and the chameleon-

The animals listed were known in the land promised to Abraham. This is another proof that the Law of Moses was not intended for world-wide Gentile use but was the covenant between God and Israel during a specific time and in a specific location on the earth.

Lev 11:31 These are they which are unclean to you among all that creep. Whoever touches them when they are dead shall be unclean until the evening-

But the Hebrew could suggest that touching them dead or alive made unclean, hence GNB "Whoever touches them or their dead bodies will be unclean".

Lev 11:32 On whatever any of them falls when they are dead, it shall be unclean; whether it is any vessel of wood, or clothing, or skin, or sack, whatever vessel it is with which any work is done, it must be put into water, and it shall be unclean until the evening; then it will be clean-

This seems to suggest cases where things were inadvertently made unclean. The chance of harmful contamination being spread by a clean animal touching something was not less than that for an unclean animal. So these laws about washing the things with water were only partly for hygienic reasons; the teaching aspect was far greater.

Lev 11:33 Every earthen vessel, into which any of them falls, all that is in it shall be unclean, and you shall break it-

As noted on :32, if the reason was purely hygienic, then we would expect to read this about clean animals. We must ever recall that there is nothing unclean of itself (Rom. 14:14). The intention of these laws was to build up a cul-

ture of distaste and even fear of the unclean animals, because they were connected to idolatry. Even subliminal suggestions of idolatry were to be found distasteful. And this has huge relevance for us today. Why, then, would a Christian wish to read and view material which is full of subliminal suggestions and temptations to sin...

Lev 11:34 All food which may be eaten, that on which water comes, shall be unclean; and all drink that may be drunk in every such vessel shall be unclean-

GNB "Any food which could normally be eaten, but on which water from such a pot has been poured, will be unclean, and anything drinkable in such a pot is unclean". This is not to be seen as supporting guilt by association, contamination by communion and other such unGodly extremism. As noted on :33, it was all part of a teaching mechanism, and the aim was to create a culture of distaste and even fear of the unclean animals, because they were connected to idolatry.

Lev 11:35 Everything whereupon part of their carcass falls shall be unclean; whether it be an oven, or a range for pots, it shall be broken in pieces: they are unclean, and shall be unclean to you-

"Range for pots" is GNB "a clay stove"; or the idea may be 'covered pots', i.e. pots with lids. The outcome of this legislation would have been to ensure that unclean animals such as mice and lizards were kept out of the kitchen. It all contributed toward a cultural attitude towards these unclean animals, just as those raised in a Muslim culture may vomit at the thought of eating pork. This was how Israel

were to feel to all the unclean animals, and therefore to the religious associations they had.

Lev 11:36 Nevertheless a spring or a cistern in which water is gathered shall be clean; but that which touches their carcass shall be unclean-

It would be hard to legislate that a spring of water couldn't be used if an unclean animal fell into it. Clearly enough the hygienic reasons behind the legislation were only a minimal part of the thinking behind it. Otherwise the spring would have been declared unusable. Again we must recall that the chances of human contamination from many clean animals was about the same as from many unclean animals. There is nothing unclean of itself (Rom. 14:14).

Lev 11:37 If part of their carcass falls on any sowing seed which is to be sown, it is clean-

Again, the idea would be that barns and storehouses were best kept free of unclean animals like mice and lizards which were likely to cause this situation to come about. But we note that in this case, mere physical contact was not enough to make the seed unclean. Again, if the concerns were largely hygienic, then we would expect this. But it isn't the case, because they were being used as a teaching mechanism. Any hygienic benefit was in passing.

Lev 11:38 But if water is put on the seed, and part of their carcass falls on it, it is unclean to you-

GNB expresses the intent better: "But if the seed is soaking in water". There was indeed a higher chance of possible contamination due to the water, but again this is surely a teaching point. For the crop which was to later be pro-

duced from that seed would not be markedly inferior even if a dead mouse had fallen into the bowl of water where the seed was being soaked.

Lev 11:39 If any animal of which you may eat, dies; he who touches its carcass shall be unclean until the evening-

An unclean animal would usually only be touched if it were being brought home to be eaten. It was possible to eat it, although doing so required washing clothes and being unclean (:40). Famine would only come if Israel were unfaithful to the covenant, but even in that case, God was considerate to their hunger and allowed the eating of unclean food- given the provisos of :40.

Lev 11:40 He who eats of its carcass shall wash his clothes, and be unclean until the evening. He also who carries its carcass shall wash his clothes, and be unclean until the evening-

See on :40. The structure of the law of Moses seemed to almost encourage the idea of serving God on different levels. After much study of it, the Rabbis concluded that there was within it “a distinction between holy and holy just as much as there is between holy and profane”. Take the uncleanness laws. They basically said: ‘Don’t touch an unclean animal. If you do, there’s a penalty. If you carry the carcass, there’s a more serious penalty. And if you carry the carcass home and eat it, there’s something more serious. The highest ideal was not to touch the unclean thing. But there were concessions to weakness for those who either couldn’t or wouldn’t make the effort to attain the highest level of response to the will of God.

Lev 11:41 Every creeping thing that creeps on the earth is an abomination. It shall not be eaten-

This appears to contrast with the allowance for eating unclean meats in :40, if the person washed their clothes and became unclean until evening. As discussed on :40, the two ideas are clearly, consciously juxtaposed. Because the idea is that God could be served on different levels; although choosing the lower level, of eating unclean meat, made one more liable to break Divine law. Because clothes had to be washed, and they had to be unclean until evening- which meant they were likely to make others unclean by contact with them. So the path of lower levels only makes obedience and conformity to the Spirit that much harder.

Lev 11:42 Whatever goes on its belly, and whatever goes on all fours, or whatever has many feet, even all creeping things that creep on the earth, them you shall not eat; for they are an abomination-

They were not to associate themselves with animals which hugged the earth; just as we should not keep close to earthly things (Phil. 3:19) but seek the things which are above (Col. 3:1).

Lev 11:43 You shall not make yourselves abominable with any creeping thing that creeps, neither shall you make yourselves unclean with them, that you should be defiled thereby-

"Abomination" is the word also used for idolatry. Making oneself abominable with an animal seems to allude to sexual behaviour. Sex with any animal was wrong, but here sex with unclean animals is focused upon. So here we have

another big clue as to why some animals were designated unclean. They were associated with idolatry and perverted sexual behaviour which accompanied the idolatry.

Lev 11:44 For I am Yahweh your God. Sanctify yourselves therefore, and be holy; for I am holy; neither shall you defile yourselves with any kind of creeping thing that moves on the earth-

The Hebrew words for sanctification and holiness include the ideas of both being negatively separated *from* and positively being separated *unto*. The whole legislation about clean and unclean animals was to try to teach Israel this principle. As such there was limited significance in the actual division of animals into clean and unclean- it was merely a teaching device.

Lev 11:45 For I am Yahweh who brings you up out of the land of Egypt, to be your God. You shall therefore be holy, for I am holy-

The great works of Yahweh which He showed at the time of their exodus from Egypt (cp. the world) and baptism at the Red Sea were in essence repeated throughout their wilderness journey (Dt. 7:19). Therefore whenever they faced discouragement and an apparent blockage to their way, they were to remember how God had redeemed them at their baptism, and to realize that in fact His work was still ongoing with them (Dt. 20:1). He told them in the desert that He was "Yahweh that bringeth you up out of the land of Egypt" (Lev. 11:45). Therefore the overcoming of Edom, Moab and the Canaanite tribes is described in language lifted from the Red Sea record (e.g. Ex. 15:15-17). Throughout their history, Israel were reminded

that what God had done for them in their Red Sea deliverance He was continuing to do, and therefore all their enemies would likewise perish if they remained God's people (e.g. Is. 43:16). This didn't just happen at the Red Sea, just as it wasn't completed at our baptisms (1 Cor. 10:1,2). Our being brought out of Egypt and toward God is an ongoing process.

Lev 11:46 This is the law of the animal, and of the bird, and of every living creature that moves in the waters, and of every creature that creeps on the earth-

The earth or *eretz* is clearly the land promised to Abraham. For the 'every creature' in view refers to those in that territory. This is evidence enough that the law of Moses was indeed a mark of the covenant between God and Israel, and as such has never been applicable to the Gentile world. If it were e.g. applicable in the Australian outback or northern Siberia, the examples of animals given would have been different.

Lev 11:47 to make a distinction between the unclean and the clean, and between the living thing that may be eaten and the living thing that may not be eaten'-

This need to make a distinction between clean and unclean was exactly what Nadab and Abihu had failed to do, as explained in the previous chapter (Lev. 10:10). Indeed I suggest that it is in this context that we now have this list distinguishing between clean and unclean animals. It is our failure to divide light from darkness, to allow everything to become shades of gray, which is our most common weakness.

LEVITICUS CHAPTER 12

Lev 12:1 Yahweh spoke to Moses, saying-

Most primitive societies had legislation similar to this about childbirth; some kind of offering and period of uncleanness, and then a period confined at home without contact with others. And usually the periods were longer for a female child than for a male child. So this would be an example of where the Mosaic law recognized the religious needs of the time, and sought to meet them in a way which glorified Yahweh. We marvel at God's concessions to human weakness, and His understanding of the situation and need of every generation.

Lev 12:2 Speak to the children of Israel, saying, 'If a woman conceives, and bears a male child, then she shall be unclean seven days; as in the days of her monthly period she shall be unclean-

The reference to conception before bearing a male child may allude to the incorrect but strongly held ideas of the time- that a woman who releases her egg or achieves orgasm before contact with the male sperm in orgasm will bear a male child. This is the explanation of this passage which the Rabbis tend to give. This would then be in line with the suggestion on :1, that the following legislation is a concession to human weakness of understanding at the time. If Israel had not been given this legislation, likely they would have used the pagan rituals concerning childbirth which involved idol worship.

Lev 12:3 In the eighth day the flesh of his foreskin shall be circumcised-

I suggest this is added at this point because we read in :2 that the mother was to be unclean seven days after birth. The God who is apparently so far away could foresee human experience so accurately and sympathetically. For He knew that the circumcision would be an event to be celebrated. And so it would be nice for the mother to have had a week to recover from the childbirth, and to be in a ritually clean state so she could celebrate and mix freely with the others present. This is also noteworthy because it is the only time circumcision is commanded under the old covenant. It had already been commanded to Abraham, but within the series of promises which were to become the new covenant. We see here a tacit recognition of the difference between the two covenants. The command for circumcision had to be repeated rather than assumed as still binding.

Col. 2:12 presents baptism as the equivalent in our day if we wish to enter the new covenant, which is based upon the same promises to Abraham. But there is more to new covenant relationship than simply the ritual of baptism. Circumcision spoke of a cutting off of the flesh in the most private and intimate place. We always read of circumcision as being done to a person. Water baptism enables us to receive the birth of the Spirit, whereby the Lord will work through the Spirit to change our hearts, to cut off our flesh in the most private and personal recesses of human hearts. Cuttings of the flesh as a sign of tribal affiliation were common amongst the surrounding tribes, as they are to this day

in less developed tribal areas of the world. The signs are always public and immediately evident- you can tell instantly that a person belongs to this or that tribe by a cut in the ear or nose or cheek, or the removal of certain teeth, or the painting of a certain symbol on a visible part of the body. But circumcision was not at all outwardly evident. It was not mere tribalism; it taught that God's demands were upon the most private part of human life. Women also could be in covenant, and they must have wondered what was required for them. They would've quickly figured that lack of physical cutting was not to say they weren't in covenant, and that therefore, the real token of the covenant was not circumcision in itself, but what circumcision represented- the cutting off of the flesh in our most personal areas.

Lev 12:4 She shall continue in the blood of purification thirty-three days. She shall not touch any holy thing, nor come into the sanctuary, until the days of her purifying are completed-

A woman in this case was not unclean for 33 days after the birth of a son, but was still involved in the blood of purification. For after seven days she was ritually clean, but not allowed to enter the sanctuary. It can be no accident that the Lord lived for 33 years- in such close association with the purification of humanity that He was identified with our absolute human situation.

The command not to come into the sanctuary reminds us that women as well as men were allowed to enter the sanctuary. Relationship with Yahweh was not a mere male hobby as it was in many religions. We must however remember that Leviticus is specifically the commands given

to the Levites at their inauguration, so possibly the woman in view here is specifically a woman from the tribe of Levi who was accustomed to entering the sanctuary to eat the priestly portions.

Lev 12:5 But if she bears a female child, then she shall be unclean two weeks, as in her period; and she shall continue in the blood of purification sixty-six days-

This doesn't mean that females somehow need more purification than males. I suggest that the shorter period of purification for males was in order to demonstrate the great value of their circumcision, which was as it were worth 33 days of being "in the blood of purification".

The longer length of purification required for the woman is also found in many pagan religions. The reason was that it was believed that various demons and bad gods sought to kill female babies more than they sought male babies. And so for female babies there was a greater sense of gratitude for a live birth. Perhaps this legislation reflected how God was making concessions to the wrong or misinformed gut feelings of His people. Just as He often does to us. Likewise it may be a concession to the common but incorrect belief that bleeding and watery discharge continued longer after the birth of a girl than after that of a boy. Likewise the wrong ideas about 'demons' are as it were tolerated in the New Testament.

Lev 12:6 When the days of her purification are completed-

Let us note that the woman was unclean for a period, and *she* then needed purification- not her child. We cannot

therefore reason from this that the Lord Jesus was unclean by reason of His birth. It is no sin to be born a human.

For a son, or for a daughter, she shall bring to the priest at the door of the Tent of Meeting, a year old lamb for a burnt offering, and a young pigeon, or a turtledove, for a sin offering-

This was to remind them that the Passover deliverance through the lamb was effectively ongoing. The Passover lamb was likewise to be a year old (Ex. 12:5). We too are to live constantly under the impression of the Lord's sacrifice and redemption of us. Israel were asked to use a lamb of the first year to record various times when they should be thankful for God's redemption of them in the events which comprise life (Lev. 9:3; 12:6; 23:12,18,19; Num. 6:12,14; 7:15,17,21; 28:3,9,11,19; 29:2,8,13). This was to continually recall to them the events of their great redemption through the Red Sea. And the essence of our redemption, our baptism and salvation through the blood of the lamb, must likewise be brought ever before us.

We note that the sin offering was of far lower value than the burnt offering in this case. Perhaps this was to reflect how whilst God does indeed want recognition of sin and the fact we are born into a sinful environment, far more significant to Him is our desire to dedicate life to Him, despite that background and environment which we have. We also note that this is about the only time when the order sin offering - burnt offering is reversed. Usually there was to be conviction of sin resulting in dedication, the burnt offering. But a newborn child is not sinful, there is no "sin" somehow buried physically in human flesh; for

all we posit about human nature, we say about the Lord Jesus who fully shared that nature. So the idea was that the child was dedicated to Yahweh, that was the sense of the offering, along with an awareness that indeed we are all sinful in practice, and we recognize that the child is being born into a sinful family and environment.

Lev 12:7 and he shall offer it before Yahweh, and make atonement for her; and she shall be cleansed from the fountain of her blood. 'This is the law for her who bears, whether a male or a female-

It is commonly stated in the Mosaic law that the priest made atonement. Any thoughtful person would have soon concluded that indeed the blood of bulls and goats could not of itself atone for sin (Heb. 10:4). The role of the priest in bringing about the atonement was therefore critical. And yet they too were flawed. So this invited the spiritually minded to look forward to the coming of an ideal priest, the Lord Jesus.

Lev 12:8 If she cannot afford a lamb, then she shall take two turtledoves, or two young pigeons: the one for a burnt offering, and the other for a sin offering; and the priest shall make atonement for her, and she shall be clean'-

The poverty of Mary the mother of Jesus is indicated by the fact she offered doves and not a lamb (Lk. 2:24). He knew poverty. Even within the bird offerings there was a gradation. Turtledoves were larger than pigeons and more valuable, but they are only in Israel at certain times of the year; whereas pigeons are in Israel all year round, were easier to catch and were therefore cheaper. The various possible levels within God's law reflect our opportunities to serve

on different levels, just as the good soil of the sower parable brings forth different amounts. Some will make more of God's truth than others. The very existence of these levels, rather than a simple binary demand of obedience / disobedience, pass / fail, of itself inspires us to serve God as extensively as we can. For who can be a minimalist in response to His love.

LEVITICUS CHAPTER 13

Lev 13:1 Yahweh spoke to Moses and to Aaron, saying-

It's doubtful whether the skin disease referred to in Leviticus is what we now call leprosy, i.e. Hansen's disease. The descriptions of the disease or affliction in Lev. 13,14 don't sound at all like leprosy as we know it. And the idea of this disease actually being afflicted upon buildings and clothing doesn't sound like mere contamination. Leprosy had no cure in the ancient world. And yet the legislation in Lev. 13,14 sounds as if after a relatively short time, the affliction could be lifted- and then a sin offering had to be made. The decisions and diagnosis of the affliction was to be made by the priests, not physicians. I conclude therefore that we should pay more attention to the Hebrew word here translated "leprosy". It is the same word as used for the "stroke" of Divine judgment. This makes more sense throughout the legislation. God could smite sinners with this affliction, mistranslated as "leprosy". If the sinner repented sufficiently, it would be lifted. But the priest would judge that, and therefore sin offerings were required to complete the cleansing process. It is no sin to get sick with leprosy; but if we understand this affliction as a Divine stroke, then it all makes so much more sense.

Lev 13:2 When a man shall have a rising in his body's skin, or a scab, or a bright spot, and it becomes in the skin of his body the plague of leprosy, then he shall be brought to Aaron the priest, or to one of his sons, the priests-

Leprosy was and is a common scourge in the Middle East. For each person with the possible symptoms to be brought to either the high priest or one of his sons would have been logistically too much. This confirms the suggestion on :1 that what is in view is not Hansen's disease, leprosy as we know it, but a specific stroke from God upon sinners.

Lev 13:3 and the priest shall examine the plague in the skin of the body; and if the hair in the plague has turned white, and the appearance of the plague is deeper than the body's skin, it is the plague of leprosy; and the priest shall examine him, and pronounce him unclean-

Leprosy is symbolic of sin. But a person can appear to have leprosy when in fact it's only a surface level appearance of it; but only the priest, representing Jesus, can declare this. We must of course be careful not to excuse our failings as merely surface level sin; but when it comes to judging others, we must accept that someone can appear sinful to us but it's only a surface appearance; we must not ultimately judge whether a person will be saved or not, quite simply because we cannot do so. Only the priest, the Lord Jesus, can do so.

Lev 13:4 If the bright spot is white in the skin of his body, and its appearance isn't deeper than the skin, and its hair hasn't turned white, then the priest shall isolate the infected person for seven days-

The language is continually suggestive of spiritual repentance. See on :1. The hair had to be "turned" white, always the hint is at change. The same word is found in 1 Sam. 10:6, "turned into another man".

Lev 13:5 The priest shall examine him on the seventh day, and behold, if in his eyes the plague is arrested, and the plague hasn't spread in the skin, then the priest shall isolate him for seven more days-

The idea of plague or striking in judgment being arrested or stayed is found in Num. 16:48,50; 25:8; 2 Sam. 24:21,25; Ps. 106:30. In every case, the plague was a special striking from God in judgment; and it was arrested or stayed by repentance and / or intercession, even by third parties. If Hansen's disease ["leprosy" as we know it] was in view, such a quick diagnosis could not be made. Such leprosy would not break out and then be arrested after seven days. But if as suggested on :1 the "leprosy" was a stroke of Divine judgment which could be "arrested", then this is understandable. It was the duty of the Levites to teach Israel, so that they would not be smitten by such plague / striking in judgment (Num. 8:19). This is why these laws are given here to the Levites, in this book of Leviticus.

Lev 13:6 The priest shall examine him again on the seventh day; and behold, if the plague has faded, and the plague hasn't spread in the skin, then the priest shall pronounce him clean. It is a scab. He shall wash his clothes, and be clean-

Our life spent in Christ is represented by these periods of seven days; at the end, Christ as the true priest and judge will decide whether the sin which there is in our lives has remained at a surface, appearance level- or whether it has spread. Yeast likewise represents sin, in that it spreads its influence. Sin either spreads in our flesh or doesn't...

Lev 13:7 But if the scab spreads on the skin, after he has shown himself to the priest for his cleansing, he shall show himself to the priest again-

The spreading of plague in the sense of Divine judgment (see on :1) is found in Num. 16:46-48, and it was the intercession of Aaron which stopped it spreading further. We are therefore to understand this spreading of the plague in the person as a sign that they were continuing under Divine judgment.

Lev 13:8 The priest shall examine him; and behold, if the scab has spread on the skin, then the priest shall pronounce him unclean. It is leprosy-

"Pronounce him unclean" is literally 'to make him unclean'. The uncleanness was therefore a moral issue, rather than being made unclean simply through having contracted an illness. This confirms our suggestion on :1, that the "leprosy" was not Hansen's disease but a specific Divine judgment for sin. The temptation must have been to try to cover up the appearance of sin / leprosy rather than revealing oneself to the priest; just as we are tempted today.

Lev 13:9 When the plague of leprosy is in a man, then he shall be brought to the priest-

God's people were to avoid trying to judge the appearance of leprosy / sin in others. And this temptation remains an abiding issue for all time- to ourselves interpret appearances and judge them in others, rather than leaving this to the Lord's judgment.

Lev 13:10 and the priest shall examine him. Behold, if there is a white rising in the skin, and it has turned the hair white, and there is raw flesh in the rising-

GNB "If there is a white sore on your skin which turns the hairs white and is full of pus". "Raw flesh" is s.w. "life of the flesh" (Prov. 14:30). The idea is that living flesh was being actively contaminated and destroyed. The key issue was whether the disease was still spreading within the person. This speaks of whether or not we have as it were reigned in the spread of sin in our human lives. But the immediate reference was as to whether the Divine judgment was ongoing in the person.

Lev 13:11 it is a chronic leprosy in the skin of his body, and the priest shall pronounce him unclean. He shall isolate him, for he is unclean-

AV "It is an old leprosy". And that is indeed the sense of the Hebrew. The previous ["old"] judgments for sin had not been learned from, and continued. So the person was still unclean because they had not learned their lesson. Seeing leprosy was incurable at that time, an old leprosy is a contradiction in terms; as suggested on :1, the reference is to a specific stroke from God and not Hansen's disease.

Lev 13:12 If the leprosy breaks out all over the skin, and the leprosy covers all the skin of the infected person from his head even to his feet, as far as it appears to the priest-

This is again strong evidence that a stroke from God is in view and not leprosy as we know it; see on :1. For if this were leprosy, then the man would be completely unclean. The idea rather is that the stroke from God had now run its course, and the man had been completely rendered stricken.

Lev 13:13 then the priest shall examine him; and, behold, if the leprosy has covered all his flesh, he shall pronounce him clean of the plague. It has all turned white: he is clean-

If a person has indulged in sin and recognizes it, although they carry in their lives the evidence of it, yet the sin has as it were died and they are clean. At baptism into Christ we became "dead to sin" (Rom. 6:2).

Lev 13:14 But whenever raw flesh appears in him, he shall be unclean-

Whenever sin is actively dominating over virgin flesh, claiming new areas in a person's life, then they are "unclean". But the original idea would be that in this case, the judgment stroke of God was still actively at work in the person.

Lev 13:15 The priest shall examine the raw flesh, and pronounce him unclean: the raw flesh is unclean. It is leprosy-

AV "it is a leprosy" would suggest that this was not just a form of leprosy, but rather this was a stroke from God.

Lev 13:16 Or if the raw flesh turns again, and is changed to white, then he shall come to the priest-

The critical issue is whether the condition was spreading. And this is the question in our lives- whether sin has run its course with us, even if we bear the results of it in our flesh; or whether it is ongoing and spreading.

Lev 13:17 and the priest shall examine him; and, behold, if the plague has turned white, then the priest shall pronounce him clean of the plague. He is clean-

Turning white was the sign that the man was clean, whereas if Hansen's disease were in view, this would surely show that the man was obviously still infected. For lepers "white as snow" are described in the Biblical records.

"Turned white" would suggest that the stroke for sin had now turned the person "white", they were acceptable, covered in imputed righteousness through repentance and acceptance of their previous judgment for sin.

Lev 13:18 When the body has a boil on its skin, and it has healed-

The idea is that there are external signs which might suggest a person to have been smitten of God, but we cannot judge that. Job's example comes to mind. Only the priest, the Lord Jesus, can judge this. "Boil" is the word used of the smiting of Hezekiah (2 Kings 20:7) and Job (Job 2:7); also for 'the botch (RV "boil") of Egypt' (Dt. 28:17). In the cases of Job and Hezekiah, they were smitten by God; they didn't just contract the disease we now know as leprosy. And the end of that "boil" was an outcome of prayer and repentance. And the period of their affliction was far shorter than the natural course of leprosy as we know it. This again confirms the suggestion on :1 that "leprosy" here refers not to Hansen's disease but to some specific judgment from God upon a person.

Lev 13:19 and in the place of the boil there is a white rising, or a bright spot, reddish-white, then it shall be shown to the priest-

"Reddish" is the word *adam*. The idea may be that it is unclear in this case whether the man is "white" or not, for Adam, the natural man, is mixed with the whiteness. And we muse about so many folks, as to whether they are white in righteousness or still red with the ways of Adam. And again, it is not for us in fact to muse upon these things. We must leave it to the priest's judgment, the Lord Jesus.

Lev 13:20 and the priest shall examine it; and behold, if it appears beneath the skin, and its hair has turned white, then the priest shall pronounce him unclean. It is the plague of leprosy. It has broken out in the boil-

I suggested on :19 that the red / *Adam* sin is appearing as white righteousness. The question is whether we have allowed sin to penetrate beneath the flesh- by implication, to the heart. There may be here a distinction being drawn between sin on a surface level and that sin which is deeper, which leads to exclusion from God's family.

Lev 13:21 But if the priest examines it, and behold, there are no white hairs in it, and it isn't deeper than the skin, but is dim, then the priest shall isolate him seven days-

Heb. 'become dim'. Even if it appears that sin is in retreat in human life, the question is whether it spreads or not. Or, whether the stroke of God is still ongoing.

Lev 13:22 If it spreads in the skin, then the priest shall pronounce him unclean. It is a plague-

Clearly "it is a plague" suggests a stroke from God. And again, it is the spreading nature which showed whether the stroke was finished or not.

Lev 13:23 But if the bright spot stays in its place, and hasn't spread, it is the scar from the boil; and the priest shall pronounce him clean-

People carry the scars of their sins, but these don't mean we should treat them as sinful. There may be multiple children from a series of casual relationships, illnesses resulting from addictions; but we are not to judge people as unclean because of that.

Lev 13:24 Or when the body has a burn from fire on its skin, and the raw flesh of the burn becomes a bright spot, reddish-white, or white-

"A burn from fire" is literally "a fire of burning". The same word is used in Lev. 10:2 of how Yahweh sent out fire upon the flesh of Nadab and Abihu in judgment. There are similar usages of the word in Lev. 21:9; Num. 11:1; 16:35; 26:10; Dt. 4:24; 1 Kings 18:38; Job 1:16 etc. And as suggested on :1, I suggest that this is the context of this talk about Divine plague here.

Lev 13:25 then the priest shall examine it; and behold, if the hair in the bright spot has turned white, and its appearance is deeper than the skin; it is leprosy. It has broken out in the burning, and the priest shall pronounce him unclean. It is the plague of leprosy-

The idea would be that the person had not learned from being struck by the Lord. The judgment was still spreading, because they were still impenitent.

Lev 13:26 But if the priest examines it, and behold, there is no white hair in the bright spot, and it isn't lower than the skin, but is faded; then the priest shall isolate him seven days-

Even if the external appearance of the judgment of sin is apparently not lower than the flesh, and has apparently faded; this is not to say that a person is clean, or that their judgment from God had ended. The critical issue was not surface level appearance, but whether it has spread further (:27).

Lev 13:27 The priest shall examine him on the seventh day. If it has spread in the skin, then the priest shall pronounce him unclean. It is the plague of leprosy-

Again the issue is whether sin spreads, or whether the judgment from God was still ongoing. Clearly the Jews in Acts 4:17 had the idea that 'leprosy' spreading represented sin spreading.

Lev 13:28 If the bright spot stays in its place, and hasn't spread in the skin, but is faded, it is the swelling from the burn, and the priest shall pronounce him clean; for it is the scar from the burn-

I explained on :24 that "the burn" was a direct Divine judgment. The results of Divine judgment may be openly apparent in a person's life; but that is no reason to consider a person unclean in any ongoing sense.

Lev 13:29 When a man or woman has a plague on the head or on the beard-

Clearly the idea of leprosy only affecting the head or beard (:30) cannot apply to Hansen's disease, or leprosy as we now know it. The reference was clearly to some specific Divine judgment.

Lev 13:30 then the priest shall examine the plague; and behold, if its appearance is deeper than the skin, and the hair in it is yellow and thin, then the priest shall pronounce him unclean: it is an itch, it is leprosy of the head or of the beard-

The argument that this language makes a difference between surface level sin and deeper sin... is a slippery slope. Once we start justifying some failures as mere surface level sins, we are on the downward path. But it does remain a fact that in God's eyes- and it is the judgment of the Priest and not ours which is so critical in all this- there is a difference between surface level failure, and sin on a deeper heart level. There is a sin unto death, and a sin not unto death

(1 Jn. 5:16). We do well to remember this when the sins of others obtrude upon us and require some level of response from us.

Lev 13:31 If the priest examines the plague of itching, and behold, its appearance isn't deeper than the skin, and there is no black hair in it, then the priest shall isolate the person infected with itching seven days-

The various periods of examination were not because the priest needed to see whether the plague was spreading or not. Rather they were periods of self examination for the stricken person, opportunities for repentance in order to change the outcomes and spread of the disease.

Lev 13:32 On the seventh day the priest shall examine the plague; and behold, if the itch hasn't spread, and there is no yellow hair in it, and the appearance of the itch isn't deeper than the skin-

I suggested above that the requirement that these cases be brought either to the high priest or to his sons meant that, logistically, it couldn't be that whoever had an itchy beard or scurf would have to come to them. Clearly those in view are those individuals specifically smitten by God with a stroke of judgment.

Lev 13:33 then he shall be shaved, but he shall not shave the itch; and the priest shall shut up him who has the itch seven more days-

H.P. Mansfield suggests that "The ulcer shall not be shaved lest the place become irritated and inflamed, and the priest will not be able to form an accurate judgment". But I am approaching this legislation from the viewpoint that the "leprosy" is not leprosy as we know it, but a specific

stroke of Divine judgment. The legislation and various periods of seven days isolation were not for the sake of the priest, so that he could diagnose the condition; but rather were to elicit repentance from the stricken person, so that the stroke might be removed. The word for "shaven" is consistently used in the Bible for being shamed or being in mourning. This mourning and shame for sin was being elicited from the stricken person, so that they might repent and the stroke be lifted. The legislation was for the sake of the stricken person, designed to elicit their repentance.

Lev 13:34 On the seventh day, the priest shall examine the itch; and behold, if the itch hasn't spread in the skin, and its appearance isn't deeper than the skin, then the priest shall pronounce him clean. He shall wash his clothes, and be clean-

Sin must not spread nor go deeper than the skin, surface level sin must not become a sin from the heart. This is the repeated lesson. And in practice, the lack of spreading of the plague would indicate that the Divine judgment had run its course.

Lev 13:35 But if the itch spreads in the skin after his cleansing-

If the person merely had the appearance of leprosy but was found not to have it, then there would have been no need for any process of cleansing nor washing of clothes (:34). But I suggest that even this "itch" was a stroke of Divine judgment and reflected the moral failure of the person; therefore cleansing from it was required.

Lev 13:36 then the priest shall examine him; and behold, if the itch has spread in the skin, the priest shall not look for the yellow hair, he is unclean-

This legislation highlights the issue of whether the condition has spread. This was a sign that the Divine judgment was still ongoing. And in spiritual terms, the question is whether or not sin is spreading in us. We are either on the upward spiral of the Holy Spirit, or the downward spiral of the flesh. We cannot be on both at the same time.

Lev 13:37 But if in his eyes the itch is arrested, and black hair has grown in it; the itch is healed, he is clean. The priest shall pronounce him clean-

The opinion, analysis and judgment of the priest, representing the Lord Jesus Christ, is all important. Many people in primitive societies consider they have a legitimate medical opinion, based on the kind of traditions and folk wisdom which abound in relation to skin diseases. Israel were to resist these, and leave the diagnosis and judgment solely in the hands of the priest. We have a serious tendency to judge others' sin, and we really must leave this to Christ.

Lev 13:38 When a man or a woman has bright spots in the skin of the body, even white bright spots-

I suggested above that the requirement that these cases be brought either to the high priest or to his sons meant that, logistically, it couldn't be that whoever had spots appear on their bodies would have to come to them. Clearly those in view are those individuals specifically smitten by God with a stroke of judgment.

Lev 13:39 then the priest shall examine them; and behold, if the bright spots on the skin of their body are a dull white, it is a harmless rash, it has broken out in the skin, he is clean-

"Harmless rash" is not at all the sense, because as explained on :38, these spots were still some form of Divine judgment. LXX then adds: "it burst forth in the skin of his flesh". The idea is that when the pustule had burst, the judgment was over. "He is clean" should not be read as meaning "he's done nothing wrong, all a false alarm". The idea is that the person can now go through the process of cleansing- for there has been failure and judgment, and that requires cleansing.

Lev 13:40 If a man's hair has fallen from his head, he is bald, he is clean-

This sounds stating the obvious- until we read it as meaning that sudden baldness, removing the glory of a person's hair, was a Divine judgment. And as noted on :39, "he is clean" means he has been judged, the judgment is over, and he has to now go through the cleansing rituals of Lev. 14.

Lev 13:41 If his hair has fallen off from the front part of his head, he is forehead bald, he is clean-

GNB sums up the teaching of :40,41 as "If you lose your hair at the back or the front of your head, this does not make you unclean". Total sudden baldness was a stroke from God, and was not to be confused with the general receding of the hairline which comes with the ageing process.

Lev 13:42 But if there is in the bald head, or the bald forehead, a reddish-white plague; it is leprosy breaking out in his bald head, or his bald forehead-

There are five major types of leprosy, and only one of them involves hair loss, and the hair loss is mainly around the eyebrows. So as discussed on :1, we are not here reading

of leprosy as we know it. The idea is that the man was stricken by God with sudden baldness, didn't repent, and so the plague broke out again on his now bald head. The scenario pictured here, of sudden baldness and then the appearance of leprosy on the bald head, is simply not appropriate to leprosy as we know it, i.e. Hansen's disease.

Lev 13:43 Then the priest shall examine him; and, behold, if the rising of the plague is reddish-white in his bald head, or in his bald forehead, like the appearance of leprosy in the skin of the flesh-

Leprosy as we know it doesn't begin in the head; see on :42. Sudden baldness is a specific Divine judgment, as in Is. 3:24; 15:2; Jer. 47:5; Am. 8:10.

Lev 13:44 he is a leprous man. He is unclean. The priest shall surely pronounce him unclean. His plague is on his head-

The idea is that the stroke of judgment appearing on his head was one of the clearest signs of major Divine judgment. For sin is rooted in the mind, and the stroke of judgment was therefore manifest there in such a public manner. All because the person had refused to repent from the judgment of sudden baldness see on :43.

Lev 13:45 The leper in whom the plague is shall wear torn clothes, and the hair of his head shall hang loose. He shall cover his upper lip, and shall cry, 'Unclean! Unclean!'-

Contrary to what is often thought, leprosy is not highly contagious. It is a bacterial disease, not a viral infection. A common cold is a viral infection, and is far more contagious than leprosy. So this apparently heavy handed exclusion of lepers was not primarily for the sake of the health

of the community. Rather was it the equivalent of condemnation- having been stricken for sin and refusing to repent, despite multiple opportunities through the various seven days confinements, the person was effectively condemned. Living outside the community of God's people, with no path back, looked ahead to the awful condition of the rejected at the last judgment. For there is no legislation for the return of the leper from this situation. But see on :50.

Isaiah's vision of God's glory as it would be in His crucified Son convicted Isaiah of his sinfulness to a very fine degree. The vision occurred "in the year that King Uzziah died" (Is. 6:1)- and he died of leprosy, smitten of God for his sin. Isaiah would've known Uzziah, and prophesied against him. And yet now, after the vision of God's glory, Isaiah declares that *he* is a man "of unclean lips" (Is. 6:5). And it was lepers who had to cover their upper lips (Lev. 13:45). He felt no better than Uzziah, the well known smitten-by-God king of Isaiah's time. Likewise before the experience of God's glory as it was and is in Christ, we shouldn't feel that we are any better than the most famous sinner.

Lev 13:46 All the days in which the plague is in him he shall be unclean. He is unclean. He shall dwell alone. Outside of the camp shall be his dwelling-

The Lord Jesus Christ died for us "outside the camp" (Heb. 13:11,13); he was unashamed to associate with lepers, the condemned sinners (see on :45), and as it were died with them and for them. The Lord Jesus suffered and died, shedding the blood of atonement, "outside the camp" (Heb. 13:13). We are bidden go forth to the Lord Jesus

"outside the camp", just as those who "sought Yahweh" did when there was no tabernacle (Ex. 33:7). The people watching Moses as he walked out to it, without the camp, therefore looks ahead to a faithless Israel lining the via Dolorosa and watching the Lord walk out to His place of crucifixion. And we are to get behind Him and follow Him there, stepping out from the mass of Israel. As the Lord Jesus suffered "outside the camp", so various parts of the Mosaic sacrifices were to be burnt there (Lev. 4:12,21; 8:17; 9:11; 16:27); and yet it was the blood of those sacrifices which achieved atonement (Heb. 13:11; Num. 19:3,9). "Outside the camp" was the place of excluded, condemned sinners (Lev. 13:46; 24:14; Num. 5:3,4; 15:35,36; 31:13,19), and it was here that the Lord Jesus died, in identification with us. Do we struggle with some secret vice, in the grip of habitual sin? The cross convicts of sin, for we are impelled by it to follow Christ in going forth "without the camp" (Heb. 13:13), following the path of the leper who had to go forth without the camp.

Lev 13:47 The garment also that the plague of leprosy is in, whether it is a woollen garment, or a linen garment-

As explained on :1, the idea that "leprosy" can be in garments or houses (Lev. 14:55) means that the plague in view is not that of Hansen's disease or leprosy as we now know it. It was a specific judgment from God for specific sins.

Lev 13:48 whether it is in warp, or woof; of linen, or of wool; whether in a skin, or in anything made of skin-

The clothing of a man was significant, both in personal and economic terms. The idea may be that this legislation about clothing refers specifically to the clothing of the im-

penitent person who has been excluded outside the camp (:46)

Lev 13:49 if the plague is greenish or reddish in the garment, or in the skin, or in the warp, or in the woof, or in anything made of skin; it is the plague of leprosy, and shall be shown to the priest-

The person excluded permanently (see on :45,46) still had property, clothing and houses, as will be discussed in Lev. 14. The question was whether these things could be used by others, or should they be destroyed. If the "leprosy" in view was Hansen's disease, then surely the clothing of the leper had to be automatically destroyed. But as discussed on :1, this was not the case. The 'leper' was not a leper as we now think of a leper, but one smitten by God with some specific judgment. Whether or not his clothing and property could be taken by others.. was a question for God to pronounce upon.

Lev 13:50 The priest shall examine the plague, and isolate the plague seven days-

I argued on Lev. 13:45 that the final exclusion "outside the camp" was permanent. It looked forward to the final condemnation of the wicked at the last day. But in Num. 12:14,15 we have an example of Miriam being made a leper and being shut out of the camp for seven days. "Shut out" there is s.w. "isolate" in Lev. 13:50. But she repented, and was allowed back in. So I deduce that the implication is that the shut out person could still repent after seven days. The priest could not have contact with the excluded person. But their clothing and housing could be examined, and if the plague within it had not spread, then the person

had repented and could be received back in. Leprosy as we know it is not cured in seven days; as explained on Lev. 13:1, 'leprosy' here means literally a striking from the Lord, and not the leprosy we know today as Hansen's disease.

Lev 13:51 He shall examine the plague on the seventh day. If the plague has spread in the garment, either in the warp, or in the woof, or in the skin, whatever use the skin is used for, the plague is a destructive leprosy. It is unclean-

"Whatever use" suggests that no matter how valuable the garment, this didn't somehow mean that the leprosy [cp. sin] was any less significant. Petty material advantage was not to cloud judgment in these matters. See on :50.

Lev 13:52 He shall burn the garment, whether the warp or the woof, in wool or in linen, or anything of skin, in which the plague is; for it is a destructive leprosy. It shall be burned in the fire-

As explained on :50, the shut out person had the chance to repent after seven days. But there was no contact between the priest and the condemned leper. So their clothing was examined. If the stroke of God was still spreading in it, then judgment was ongoing, and it could be deduced that the excluded person had not repented. So perhaps the implication was that they should be burned in fire, along with their garments. For destruction by fire is the repeated image of final condemnation from God.

Lev 13:53 If the priest examines it, and behold, the plague hasn't spread in the garment, either in the warp, or in the woof, or in anything of skin-

As explained on :50, the condemned excluded sinner "outside the camp" had no contact with the priest. But after

seven days there, they had a chance to repent. If the plague had not spread in their garments, it could be deduced that they had repented and Divine judgment had run its course.

Lev 13:54 then the priest shall command that they wash the thing in which the plague is, and he shall isolate it seven more days-

The apparent repentance of the condemned person was not to be a passing matter; see on :50-53. Another seven days must be allowed after the partial cleansing by washing. For repentance of a person who has persistently refused to repent before has to be more than a passing feeling on their part.

Lev 13:55 Then the priest shall examine it, after the plague is washed; and behold, if the plague hasn't changed its colour, and the plague hasn't spread, it is unclean; you shall burn it in the fire. It is a mildewed spot, whether the rot is inside or outside-

The tendency would've been to think that if the rot was only on the inside of the garment and not visible to anyone else, then this didn't require attention or cleansing. Hence the emphasis- "whether the rot is inside or outside". Sin is still sin, whether or not it is visible to others or not. Some peoples' sins are more open to our view than others (1 Tim. 5:24). The condemned sinner had to change colour and not just repent on a surface level; see on :50-54.

Lev 13:56 If the priest looks, and behold, the plague has faded after it is washed, then he shall pluck it out of the garment, or out of the skin, or out of the warp, or out of the woof-

The plucking out was to stop the leprosy / sin spreading. Jesus uses the same phrase in teaching that we should

‘pluck out’ of our lives whatever is likely to lead us to stumble into sin (Mt. 5:29; 18:9). Repeatedly, the seriousness of the leprosy / sin is defined by whether it spreads, either in depth or distribution.

Lev 13:57 and if it appears again in the garment, either in the warp, or in the woof, or in anything of skin, it is spreading. You shall burn with fire that in which the plague is-

This effort of the priest to stop the plague spreading in the garment reflected the Divine effort to lead the condemned sinner to repentance, and to isolate the spread of sin. If the efforts for the garment failed, then this reflected how the isolated, stricken sinner had still not repented, sin was still alive and spreading in him. And so he / she along with the garments must be burned in fire.

Lev 13:58 The garment, either the warp, or the woof, or whatever thing of skin it is, which you shall wash, if the plague has departed from them, then it shall be washed the second time, and it will be clean-

The two stages of washing reflect the cleansing of the excluded sinner whom the garment represented (see on :50). Perhaps there is a hint here of being born of water and Spirit (Jn. 3:3-5), also reflected in the two stage washing and healing of the blind man in Mk. 8:23-25.

Lev 13:59 This is the law of the plague of leprosy in a garment of wool or linen, either in the warp, or the woof, or in anything of skin, to pronounce it clean, or to pronounce it unclean-

The final pronouncing of men clean or unclean will only be made by the Lord Jesus at the last day. As explained throughout this chapter, the various procedures were in or-

der to by all means elicit repentance in the stricken person (see on :1), so that the plague might be lifted- even after their apparently final condemnation outside the camp. In this we see God's earnest desire to save, to isolate the spread of sin- rather than to condemn by burning in fire.

LEVITICUS CHAPTER 14

Lev 14:1 Yahweh spoke to Moses, saying-

It's doubtful whether the skin disease referred to in Leviticus is what we now call leprosy, i.e. Hansen's disease. The descriptions of the disease or affliction in Lev. 13,14 don't sound at all like leprosy as we know it. And the idea of this disease actually being afflicted upon buildings and clothing doesn't sound like mere contamination. Leprosy had no cure in the ancient world. And yet the legislation in Lev. 13,14 sounds as if after a relatively short time, the affliction could be lifted- and then a sin offering had to be made. The decisions and diagnosis of the affliction was to be made by the priests, not physicians. I conclude therefore that we should pay more attention to the Hebrew word here translated "leprosy". It is the same word as used for the "stroke" of Divine judgment. This makes more sense throughout the legislation. God could smite sinners with this affliction, mistranslated as "leprosy". If the sinner repented sufficiently, it would be lifted. But the priest would judge that, and therefore sin offerings were required to complete the cleansing process. It is no sin to get sick with leprosy; but if we understand this affliction as a Divine stroke, then it all makes so much more sense.

Lev 14:2 This shall be the law of the leper in the day of his cleansing. He shall be brought to the priest-

There is a difference between the cleansing and the healing. If someone doesn't externally appear sinful (for leprosy represents sin), this doesn't mean he is therefore ac-

ceptable to God. There must still be the cleansing, which speaks of the Lord's work, through His Spirit and through His blood.

Lev 14:3 and the priest shall go forth out of the camp. The priest shall examine him, and behold, if the plague of leprosy is healed in the leper-

I suggested on Lev. 13 that the clothing of the stricken man was examined, and if the evidence from it was that the Lord's striking of the man had finished because of his repentance, then this procedure would be followed.

Lev 14:4 then the priest shall command them to take for him who is to be cleansed two living clean birds, and cedar wood, and scarlet, and hyssop-

The Lord was intensely intellectually conscious throughout His sufferings. His mind was evidently full of the word, He would have seen the symbolism of everything far more than we can, from the thorns in His mock crown, to the hyssop being associated with Him at the very end (the hyssop was the fulfilment of types in Ex. 12:8,22; Lev. 14:4,6,49-52; Num. 19:6,18).

Lev 14:5 The priest shall command them to kill one of the birds in an earthen vessel over running water-

The enigmatic Jn. 7:38 alludes here: "He that believes on me, as the scripture has said, out of his belly ("innermost being", NIV) shall flow rivers of living (Gk. spring) water". What "scripture" did the Lord have in mind? Perhaps the references to spring water being used to cleanse men from leprosy and death (Lev. 14:5; 15:13; Num. 19:16). Out of the innermost being of the true believer, the spring(ing) water of the Gospel will *naturally* spring up and go out to

heal men, both now and more fully in the Kingdom, aided then by the Spirit gifts. The believer, *every* believer, *whoever* believes, will preach the word to others *from his innermost being*, both now and in the Kingdom - without the need for preaching committees or special efforts (not that in themselves I'm decrying them). The tendency is to delegate our responsibilities to these committees. There is no essential difference between faith and works. If we believe, we will do the works of witness, quite spontaneously. And note how the water that sprung out of the Lord's smitten side is to be compared with the bride that came out of the smitten side of Adam. We, the bride, are the water; thanks to the inspiration of the cross, we go forth in witness, the water of life to this hard land in which we walk.

Lev 14:6 As for the living bird, he shall take it, and the cedar wood, and the scarlet, and the hyssop, and shall dip them and the living bird in the blood of the bird that was killed over the running water-

The running or springing water would have initially referred to the water from the rock which followed them at this time. The two birds, like the two goats on the day of atonement, could have spoken of the death and resurrection of the Lord Jesus. The similarity with the day of atonement suggests that atonement is in view here; because as suggested on :1, we are dealing here not simply with leprosy infection, but a specific stroke of Divine judgment in response to sin, which required repentance and atonement.

Lev 14:7 He shall sprinkle on him who is to be cleansed from the leprosy seven times, and shall pronounce him clean, and shall let the living bird go into the open field-

The phrase "let go" is often used of how God let Israel go from Egypt, overruling how the wicked Pharaoh refused to let the people go. The term is used later in the Mosaic legislation; the way Israel had been "let go" from Egypt was to determine how they "let go" others from slavery (Dt. 15:12,13,18); their own experience of redemption was to influence how they released others. Just as ours should. The letting go of the bird and scapegoat into the wilderness was likewise to remind them of how they had been let go from Egypt into the wilderness without being slain for their sins—all by grace (Lev. 14:7,53; 16:10,21,22,26).

The two birds may foreshadow the death and resurrection of Jesus. The bird which flew away in joyful, thankful freedom symbolized Christ's resurrection and the freedom from sin which is enabled for us who were spiritual lepers; thanks to the death of Christ, represented by the death of the first bird.

Lev 14:8 He who is to be cleansed shall wash his clothes, and shave off all his hair, and bathe himself in water; and he shall be clean. After that he shall come into the camp, but shall dwell outside his tent seven days-

This washing was because the stricken person had been involved in actual sin; see on :1. Washing the body was also what the priests had to do in order to begin their active service. So the idea was that the forgiven, cleansed person was now to give their lives to serving God in the spirit of priesthood. We see something of this in the command to Naaman: "Go and wash in the Jordan seven times, and your flesh shall be restored, and you shall be clean" (2 Kings 5:10). Although this was not Christian baptism, it is per-

haps analogous. Because humility was elicited by this request to dip in Jordan, as it is by the ritual of baptism. Elisha was aiming to convert Naaman, not simply heal him, so that he could continue as general of the forces who were marauding Israel. The fact there were plenty of lepers in Israel (Lk. 4:27) was evidence enough that the waters of Jordan contained no healing powers of themselves; Naaman was being taught faith in God's word, rather than supposed healing waters. The seven dippings recall the way Jericho was to be circled for six days before victory on the seventh (Josh. 6:3-5), the child sneezed seven times before resurrection (2 Kings 4:35) and the way Elijah was only answered at his seventh prayer (1 Kings 18:43). The intention was that through the six times performing something which had no immediate answer, faith, hope and humility were elicited. Lev. 14:8; 15:13 speak of the healed leper washing *after* the cure, in order to be then also ritually clean. And there were various sprinkling / cleansing rituals which had to be performed seven times upon the leper (Lev. 14:7,16,27). So Naaman was potentially cured of his leprosy, but what was necessary was that he become ritually clean, and therefore he had to take the step of faith in washing. Had he not done that, the potential cure would have remained an unrealized potential. He was bidden grasp that he had been cured by Elisha; but now he had to wash in order to become spiritually clean and acceptable within Israelite, and not Syrian, society (see on 2 Kings 5:1).

Lev 14:9 It shall be on the seventh day, that he shall shave all his hair off his head and his beard and his eyebrows,

even all his hair he shall shave off. He shall wash his clothes, and he shall bathe his body in water, then he shall be clean-

The cleansed leper was to become as a baby, and be washed in water. This looked ahead to baptism by full immersion into Christ as the new birth (Jn. 3:3-5).

Lev 14:10 On the eighth day he shall take two male lambs without blemish, and one ewe lamb a year old without blemish, and three tenths of an ephah of fine flour for a grain offering, mingled with oil, and one log of oil-

No animal actually is without blemish. God recognizes that we will not attain perfection in this life, but we are to do our best towards it; and His love imputes righteousness to us, counting us as unblemished because of our status in Christ. For only Christ was the sacrifice totally without moral blemish (1 Pet. 1:19). So this looked ahead to the unblemished character of the Lord Jesus. The offering of sacrifices "without blemish" uses a word which is used about Abraham and Noah being "without blemish" (AV "perfect") before God (Gen. 6:9; 17:1). Although the word is used about the sacrifices, it is really more appropriate to persons- "you shall be perfect with Yahweh your God" (Dt. 18:13), "serve Him in sincerity (s.w. "without blemish")" (Josh. 24:14). The idea, therefore, was that the offerer was invited to see the animal as representative of himself. Our lives too are to be as "living sacrifices" (Rom. 12:1). And yet in practical terms, no animal is without blemish. They were to give the best they could, and God would count it as without blemish; as He does with us. David frequently uses the term in the Psalms about himself and the "upright", even though he was far from unblemished in moral terms.

Lev 14:11 The priest who cleanses him shall set these things and the man who is to be cleansed before Yahweh, at the door of the Tent of Meeting-

It is commonly stated in the Mosaic law that the priest made atonement. Any thoughtful person would have soon concluded that indeed the blood of bulls and goats could not of itself atone for sin (Heb. 10:4). The role of the priest in bringing about the atonement was therefore critical. And yet they too were flawed. So this invited the spiritually minded to look forward to the coming of an ideal priest, the Lord Jesus. See on :15.

Lev 14:12 The priest shall take one of the male lambs, and offer him for a trespass offering, with the log of oil, and wave them for a wave offering before Yahweh-

The portion to be waved was placed on the priests hands (Ex. 29:25), and then 'waved' or 'swung' towards the altar and then back- not from right to left. The idea was that the offerings were first given to God, recognizing they should be consumed on the altar to God; but then given back to the priest by God. So they ate them having first recognized that their food was really God's, all was of Him, and He had given it back to them to eat. This should be our spirit in partaking of any food, as we are the new priesthood. Our prayers of thanks for daily food should include this feature. All things are God's and anything we 'offer' to Him is only giving Him what He has given to us (1 Chron. 29:14,16).

Lev 14:13 He shall kill the male lamb in the place where they kill the sin offering and the burnt offering, in the place

of the sanctuary; for as the sin offering is the priest's, so is the trespass offering. It is most holy-

Again we note that the cleansing of the leper was very much associated with cleansing from sin. This is not because it was sinful to get leprosy, or leprosy made a person sinful. Rather I suggested on :1 that we are not reading here of leprosy as we know it, but of being struck with Divine punishment for sin.

Lev 14:14 The priest shall take some of the blood of the trespass offering, and the priest shall put it on the tip of the right ear of him who is to be cleansed, and on the thumb of his right hand, and on the big toe of his right foot-

The leper was to continually live under the impression of the fact he or she had been healed and cleansed, just as we should. The fact the blood of Christ was shed for us personally should affect how we hear (hence the blood was put on the ear), what we do with our hands (the right thumb) and where we go with our feet (the right big toe). The process was repeated with oil (:16), perhaps foreshadowing the sanctifying work of the Spirit in the lives of those in Christ. The ritual here is similar to that at the inauguration of the priests. The idea was that having been cleansed from sin (see on :1), the repentant sinner was to devote themselves to the service of others in the spirit of priesthood, whether or not he or she was a Levite.

Lev 14:15 The priest shall take some of the log of oil, and pour it into the palm of his own left hand-

A log of oil is about half a pint, a third of a litre. We note the personal association of the priest with the

cleansed person. No vessel is used, only the palm and fingers of the priest. See on :11.

Lev 14:16 The priest shall dip his right finger in the oil that is in his left hand, and shall sprinkle some of the oil with his finger seven times before Yahweh-

The rituals similar to this usually involved the sprinkling of blood in this way. But here it is the sprinkling of oil. The idea is clearly that the Spirit of God is involved here. The stricken sinner was worthy of death; see on :1. But they had been saved by grace. And that experience as it were anointed them for further service in response to the grace shown. See on :18.

Lev 14:17 The priest shall put some of the rest of the oil that is in his hand on the tip of the right ear of him who is to be cleansed, and on the thumb of his right hand, and on the big toe of his right foot, upon the blood of the trespass offering-

The ritual here is similar to that at the inauguration of the priests. The idea was that having been cleansed from sin (see on :1), the repentant sinner was to devote themselves to the service of others in the spirit of priesthood, whether or not he or she was a Levite.

Lev 14:18 The rest of the oil that is in the priest's hand he shall put on the head of him who is to be cleansed, and the priest shall make atonement for him before Yahweh-

Were people really morally unclean before God because of bodily situations over which they had no control? Surely not. Anointing the head and body with oil by a Divine representative was effectively an anointing, which implied a call to service. Those stricken for their sin but who then repented... were called not simply to utter thanks to

God for His grace, but to respond in some specific way. And this is the consistent pattern with all God's servants. Their service was a response to grace received. And of course the ultimate anointed one was the Lord Jesus. We are to seek to be Him in this world in response to the gracious salvation and cleansing we receive, washed in water [cp. baptism] and then granted the washing of regeneration by the Spirit which the oil represented.

Lev 14:19 The priest shall offer the sin offering, and make atonement for him who is to be cleansed because of his uncleanness: and afterward he shall kill the burnt offering-

This repeats the usual progression from sin offering to burnt offering to peace offering [represented by the grain offering of :20), although in this case the equivalent of the peace offering was fire coming from Heaven in response to the sin and burnt offering. Conviction of sin leads to a desire to make complete dedication to God, which results in the peace with God celebrated in the peace offering. So the person was being convicted of his sin, so that their dedication to Yahweh's service was no mere ritual, but a from the heart desire to serve Him from gratitude for the forgiveness of sin.

Lev 14:20 and the priest shall offer the burnt offering and the grain offering on the altar. The priest shall make atonement for him, and he shall be clean-

I suggested on :19 that this grain offering was a kind of peace offering. As discussed on :1, it was not that the disease of leprosy was removed by this act of cleansing. The person had been struck for sin and had now repented. So this was a specific statement of moral forgiveness.

Lev 14:21 If he is poor, and can't afford so much, then he shall take one male lamb for a trespass offering to be waved, to make atonement for him, and one tenth of an ephah of fine flour mingled with oil for a grain offering, and a log of oil-

We get the impression that God was very strict about the offerings. He was. But He made concession to the man who couldn't bring what he ought to: "If he be poor, and cannot get much... two young pigeons, such as he is able to get" (Lev. 14:22). If they were blemished in some way, and even though they were not the animal God desired, God would accept such as the man was able to get. However it could be argued that in this case, by all means the male lamb must be offered; or it can be read as if the two birds of :22 could replace that male lamb. Likewise the offerings had to involve the shedding of blood; but God was prepared to accept a food offering if a man really couldn't get an animal. The eagerness of God to accept what a man can do rather than the insistence on legal principles really comes over. He recognized the Israelites would be living on different levels. Such an eagerness involved accepting a lower standard of adherence to God's ideal principles. In harmony with this, the Passover 'lamb' could be either a sheep, or if necessary, a goat (Ex. 12:5), even though the use of a goat would somewhat spoil the foreshadowing of Christ.

Lev 14:22 and two turtledoves, or two young pigeons, such as he is able to afford; and the one shall be a sin offering, and the other a burnt offering-

Even within the bird offerings there was a gradation. Turtledoves were larger than pigeons and more valuable,

but they are only in Israel at certain times of the year; whereas pigeons are in Israel all year round, were easier to catch and were therefore cheaper. The various possible levels within God's law reflect our opportunities to serve on different levels, just as the good soil of the sower parable brings forth different amounts. Some will make more of God's truth than others. The very existence of these levels, rather than a simple binary demand of obedience / disobedience, pass / fail, of itself inspires us to serve God as extensively as we can. For who can be a minimalist in response to His love.

Lev 14:23 On the eighth day he shall bring them for his cleansing to the priest, to the door of the Tent of Meeting, before Yahweh-

The following verses appear a repetition of what we have just read. There is huge emphasis upon this material. Because the grace of saving a condemned sinner was indeed remarkable. Therefore the commandments about what was to happen on the eighth day are repeated- this was indeed to be what happened.

Lev 14:24 The priest shall take the lamb of the trespass offering, and the log of oil, and the priest shall wave them for a wave offering before Yahweh-

The portion to be waved was placed on the priests hands (Ex. 29:25), and then 'waved' or 'swung' towards the altar and then back- not from right to left. The idea was that the offerings were first given to God, recognizing they should be consumed on the altar to God; but then given back to the priest by God. So they ate them having first recognized that their food was really God's, all was of Him,

and He had given it back to them to eat. This should be our spirit in partaking of any food, as we are the new priesthood. Our prayers of thanks for daily food should include this feature. All things are God's and anything we 'offer' to Him is only giving Him what He has given to us (1 Chron. 29:14,16).

Lev 14:25 He shall kill the lamb of the trespass offering. The priest shall take some of the blood of the trespass offering and put it on the tip of the right ear of him who is to be cleansed, and on the thumb of his right hand, and on the big toe of his right foot-

The stricken person was to continually live under the impression of the fact he or she had been healed and cleansed, just as we should. The fact the blood of Christ was shed for us personally should affect how we hear (hence the blood was put on the ear), what we do with our hands (the right thumb) and where we go with our feet (the right big toe). The process was repeated with oil (:16), perhaps foreshadowing the sanctifying work of the Spirit in the lives of those in Christ. The ritual here is similar to that at the inauguration of the priests. The idea was that having been cleansed from sin (see on :1), the repentant sinner was to devote themselves to the service of others in the spirit of priesthood, whether or not he or she was a Levite.

Lev 14:26 The priest shall pour some of the oil into the palm of his own left hand-

A log of oil is about half a pint, a third of a litre. We note the personal association of the priest with the cleansed person. No vessel is used, only the palm and fingers of the priest. See on :11.

Lev 14:27 and the priest shall sprinkle with his right finger some of the oil that is in his left hand seven times before Yahweh-

The rituals similar to this usually involved the sprinkling of blood in this way. But here it is the sprinkling of oil. The idea is clearly that the Spirit of God is involved here. The stricken sinner was worthy of death; see on :1. But they had been saved by grace. And that experience as it were anointed them for further service in response to the grace shown. See on :18.

Lev 14:28 Then the priest shall put some of the oil that is in his hand on the tip of the right ear of him who is to be cleansed, and on the thumb of his right hand, and on the big toe of his right foot, on the place of the blood of the trespass offering-

The placing of the oil upon the blood was required along with the washing in water. The same three entities are found in the enigmatic 1 Jn. 5:8. These three are the witness made in earth to the saving work of God's Son. The connection is at best oblique, but the idea may be that we are all in the position of the condemned, stricken person who has been saved by grace through these things, all of them associated with the work of the Lord Jesus.

Lev 14:29 The rest of the oil that is in the priest's hand he shall put on the head of him who is to be cleansed, to make atonement for him before Yahweh-

Were people really morally unclean before God because of bodily situations over which they had no control? Surely not. Anointing the head and body with oil by a Divine representative was effectively an anointing, which implied a call to service. Those stricken for their sin but who then repented... were called not simply to utter thanks to God for His grace, but to respond in some specific way. And this is the consistent pattern with all God's servants. Their service was a response to grace received. And of course the ultimate anointed one was the Lord Jesus. We are to seek to be Him in this world in response to the gracious salvation and cleansing we receive, washed in water [cp. baptism] and then granted the washing of regeneration by the Spirit which the oil represented.

Lev 14:30 He shall offer one of the turtledoves, or of the young pigeons, such as he can lay his hand on-

Even within the bird offerings there was a gradation. Turtledoves were larger than pigeons and more valuable, but they are only in Israel at certain times of the year; whereas pigeons are in Israel all year round, were easier to catch and were therefore cheaper. The various possible levels within God's law reflect our opportunities to serve on different levels, just as the good soil of the sower parable brings forth different amounts. Some will make more of God's truth than others. The very existence of these levels, rather than a simple binary demand of obedience / disobedience, pass / fail, of itself inspires us to serve God as extensively as we can. For who can be a minimalist in response to His love.

Lev 14:31 even such as he is able to afford, the one for a sin offering, and the other for a burnt offering, with the grain offering. The priest shall make atonement for him who is to be cleansed before Yahweh-

The Mosaic Law countered the idea that only the rich can be generous. They all had to tithe. And it's possible to argue that they had to give around 27%, not just 10% (10% to the Levites, 10% of the rest to support the feasts; and 10% of the rest for the poor). The purification after child-birth and the cleansing of the leper allowed a lower grade of offering to be made by the very poor- to underline that *no one* is exempted from giving to the Lord, no matter how poor they are. Consider the emphasis: "Every man shall give *as he is able*... he shall offer *even such as he is able to get*... then the disciples (consciously motivated by these principles?) *every man according to his ability*, determined to send relief... let *every one of you* lay by him in store, as God hath prospered him" (Dt. 16:17; Lev. 14:30,31; Acts 11:29; 1 Cor. 16:2). God reckons a man's generosity according to what he has; if there is the desire to give, a generous spirit, then this is seen as generosity. This is exemplified by the Lord's high estimation of the widow's giving. The amount was not as important as the spirit behind it. "The Lord blesseth a cheerful giver, and will supply the deficiency of his works" (Prov. 22:8 LXX; although not in the Hebrew text, this passage is quoted in the NT as inspired).

Lev 14:32 This is the law for him in whom is the plague of leprosy, who is not able to afford the sacrifice for his cleansing-

Lepers / stricken sinners (see on :1) had to live outside the camp of Israel and couldn't work, so they would've typically been very poor. But the concept of sacrifice was important; they weren't to assume 'I'm a leper, of course I have nothing, I don't have to sacrifice anything'. They had to lay their hand on at least some kind of animal- and the Hebrew could possibly carry the sense of '*whatever* he can lay his hand on' (:30). It was important that they gave at least something in recognition of their need for cleansing, and their receipt of it by God's grace. We shouldn't consider our poverty, in whatever area, to mean that we don't have to sacrifice anything to God.

Lev 14:33 Yahweh spoke to Moses and to Aaron, saying-

I suggest that the following legislation about "leprosy" in a house is further evidence that we are not reading here about leprosy as we know it, i.e. Hansen's disease, but rather the specific striking of a person because of their sin (see on :1).

Lev 14:34 When you have come into the land of Canaan which I give to you for a possession, and I put a spreading leprosy in a house in the land of your possession-

Constantly Israel were reminded that God would indeed give them the promised Kingdom, even though at that time as they wandered in the wilderness it must've seemed merely a nice idea. He encourages us likewise.

I argued on Lev. 13:45 that the final exclusion "outside the camp" was permanent. It looked forward to the final condemnation of the wicked at the last day. But in Num. 12:14,15 we have an example of Miriam being made a leper and being shut out of the camp for seven days. "Shut out"

there is s.w. "isolate" in Lev. 13:50. But she repented, and was allowed back in. So I deduce that the implication is that the shut out person could still repent after seven days. The priest could not have contact with the excluded person. But their clothing and housing could be examined, and if the plague within it had not spread, then the person had repented and could be received back in. Leprosy as we know it is not cured in seven days; as explained on Lev. 13:1, 'leprosy' here means literally a striking from the Lord, and not the leprosy we know today as Hansen's disease.

Lev 14:35 then he who owns the house shall come and tell the priest, saying, 'There seems to me to be some sort of plague in the house'

It would've been tempting for the owner to just cover up the signs of disease within his house, rather than ask the priest to inspect it. We are to be open before God, freely confessing our sins and possible sins or liabilities to sin, in open dialogue before Him in prayer. When David invites God to search his heart and see if there be any wicked way in him (Ps. 139:23), he was alluding to the language of the house owner inviting the priest to inspect his house for leprosy.

Lev 14:36 The priest shall command that they empty the house, before the priest goes in to examine the plague, that all that is in the house not be made unclean; and afterward the priest shall go in to inspect the house-

If a literal contagious disease like leprosy were in view, then everything in the house would surely be unclean anyway. But here the reasoning is different; whatever was in the house would not be unclean even if the house were de-

clared unclean- if it was removed before the priest entered it. Clearly "the plague" spoke of a specific judgment for sin upon someone. And as explained on :34, this was a condition brought upon the housing and clothing of the stricken person whilst the priest couldn't have contact with them. It was to reveal whether or not they were truly repentant, and Divine judgment had now run its course.

Lev 14:37 He shall examine the plague; and behold, if the plague is in the walls of the house with hollow streaks, greenish or reddish, and it appears to be deeper than the wall-

Just as leprosy / the Divine striking was defined by being deeper than the flesh, so the stroke upon housing was defined by being deeper than the surface. A person can appear to have the stroke of Divine judgment / leprosy when in fact it's only a surface level appearance of it; but only the priest, representing Jesus, can declare this. We must of course be careful not to excuse our failings as merely surface level sin; but when it comes to judging others, we must accept that someone can appear sinful to us but it's only a surface appearance; we must not ultimately judge whether a person will be saved or not, quite simply because we cannot do so. Only the priest, the Lord Jesus, can do so.

Lev 14:38 then the priest shall go out of the house to the door of the house, and shut up the house seven days-

The spreading of plague in the sense of Divine judgment (see on :1) is found in Num. 16:46-48, and it was repentance and the intercession of Aaron which stopped it spreading further. We are therefore to understand this spreading of the plague in the person as a sign that they were continuing under Divine judgment.

Lev 14:39 The priest shall come again on the seventh day, and look. If the plague has spread in the walls of the house-

This looks forward to Christ as the ultimate priest coming again on the final [seventh] day and inspecting the degree to which sin has spread within us, or remained merely on the level of appearance. 1 Pet. 2:12 alludes here, by calling the day of Christ's return "the day of inspection" (Gk.).

Lev 14:40 then the priest shall command that they take out the stones in which is the plague, and cast them into an unclean place outside of the city-

This looks ahead to the casting of the rejected into Gehenna, the place of condemnation outside the city of Jerusalem. As explained on :34, the state of the person's clothing and property reflected whether Divine judgment was still ongoing, in reflection of whether or not the person had truly repented. The fate of their property or living place was therefore reflective of their own fate.

Lev 14:41 and he shall cause the inside of the house to be scraped all over, and they shall pour out the mortar that they scraped off outside of the city into an unclean place-

The removing and scraping of diseased stones is a figure alluded to later in the Bible. The stones of Tyre were to be removed and scraped (Ez. 26:4)- for it was a sinful city. Jesus makes the same allusion when He said that the stones of the temple were to be removed one by one, because the Jews refused to accept the day of Christ's inspection (Lk. 19:44 Gk.). When He entered the temple, looked around it and then walked out, He was acting as a priest inspecting a leprous house (Mk. 11:11). But the Jews refused to ac-

cept Him as priest and insisted that their hypocrisy was in fact holiness. The new stones which were to be brought in (:42) refer to the Christian believers, who were to be built up into a new temple (1 Pet. 2:5). It was a radical thing indeed for Jesus to liken the temple, the very symbol of human piety and the very quintessence of the Jewish religion, to a leprous house which needed to be pulled down. Established religion today likely has the same judgment from Him.

Lev 14:42 They shall take other stones, and put them in the place of those stones; and he shall take other mortar, and shall plaster the house-

I explained on :41 that on a national level, these things looked ahead to the judgment and destruction of God's own temple, which He struck with judgment. The other stones brought in to replace them were therefore symbols of the Gentiles, who are built up as lively /healthy stones in the new sanctuary (1 Pet. 2:5).

Lev 14:43 If the plague comes again, and breaks out in the house, after he has taken out the stones, and after he has scraped the house, and after it was plastered-

As discussed on :41,42, the striking of God's house and replacing the stones with the Gentiles was still not guaranteed to bring about complete freedom from condemnation. For many of the Gentiles brought in were to likewise turn away and fall under Divine judgment. "Scraped" is s.w. "cut off", and it was sinners who brought shame upon their own house to cut it off (s.w. Hab. 2:10). But Yahweh was to scrape or cut off the house of Israel (s.w. 2 Kings 10:32). We could see this plastering, scraping and removal of offending

individuals as God's attempt to reform Israel- and it failed. For the language of plastering a house is used of how God tried to do this with His people, but it didn't work (Ez. 13:10-15; 22:28 s.w.).

Lev 14:44 then the priest shall come in and look; and behold, if the plague has spread in the house, it is a destructive mildew in the house. It is unclean-

"Mildew" is the word usually translated "leprosy" in this section, and as suggested on :1,34, it refers not to "leprosy" as we know it but to a specific Divine judgment for sin upon individuals. This legislation highlights the issue of whether the condition has spread. This was a sign that the Divine judgment was still ongoing. And in spiritual terms, the question is whether or not sin is spreading in us. We are either on the upward spiral of the Holy Spirit, or the downward spiral of the flesh. We cannot be on both at the same time.

Lev 14:45 He shall break down the house, its stones, and its timber, and all the mortar of the house. He shall carry them out of the city into an unclean place-

The language of breaking down the house of Israel is very often used in the prophets (s.w.) concerning what God did to Israel. It is also often used of the breaking down of idol shrines. Again we get the impression that the house was being destroyed not for practical reasons of stopping contamination, but rather in judgment for sin, especially idolatry. Ez. 13:10-15; 22:28 condemn Israel for shoddy building without proper mortar. And so it would fall down itself, and God's judgment was in confirmation of that.

Lev 14:46 Moreover he who goes into the house while it is shut up shall be unclean until the evening-

There was no excuse for doing so because everything in the house was to be removed before the inspection (:36). We wonder if the Lord had this in mind when urging His people in Jerusalem not to return back into their homes in the day of His coming (Lk. 17:31; Mk. 13:15). The day of judgment of the leprous house had begun, and there was to be no return into it.

Lev 14:47 He who lies down in the house shall wash his clothes; and he who eats in the house shall wash his clothes-

There was greater culpability the more consciously a person did things which he or she knew were unclean. Thus to lie down in the unclean house required a washing of clothes, whereas just going into it merited a lesser requirement for cleansing. Clearly knowledge is associated with responsibility.

Lev 14:48 If the priest shall come in, and examine it, and behold, the plague hasn't spread in the house, after the house was plastered, then the priest shall pronounce the house clean, because the plague is healed-

If leprosy or a contagious disease were in view, then there would surely have been some legislation surely about the priest cleansing himself after entering a contaminated building. But there is none. Because this was not a contagious disease, but as explained on :1, a stroke of Divine judgment.

Lev 14:49 To cleanse the house he shall take two birds, and cedar wood, and scarlet, and byssop-

We note the association of hyssop with the Lord's death on the cross (Jn. 19:29), before which He had been clothed in scarlet. That hyssop had been dipped in red wine, representing blood, and the Lord surely saw the relevance to Himself. "I am that hyssop", He would have thought. On the cross, He was the door (Jn. 10:9), and He experienced hyssop with red wine (representing blood) brushed against Him. Just as the doors at Passover had blood brushed onto them using a hyssop plant, and this was the basis of Israel's salvation.

Lev 14:50 He shall kill one of the birds in an earthen vessel over running water-

The Lord taught that He was the rock, and we like Israel drink of what came out of Him. The Law of Moses included several rituals which depended upon what is called "the running water" (Lev. 14:5,6,50-52; 15:18; Num. 19:17). "Running" translates a Hebrew word normally translated "living". This living water was what came out of the smitten rock. The Lord taught that the water that would come out of Him would only come after His glorification (Jn. 7:38)- an idea He seems to link with His death rather than His ascension (Jn. 12:28,41; 13:32; 17:1,5 cp. 21:19; Heb. 2:9). When He was glorified on the cross, then the water literally flowed from His side on His death. The rock was "smitten", and the water then came out. The Hebrew word used here is usually translated to slay, slaughter, murder. It occurs in two clearly Messianic passages: "...they talk to the hurt of him [Christ] whom thou hast smitten" (Ps. 69:26); "we esteemed him [as He hung on the cross] smitten of God" (Is. 53:4). The living waters were represen-

tative of the Holy Spirit which is given to us- not the miraculous gifts, but the power of God within the human spirit, to bring us to have His Spirit and mind which was in Christ. It is this which now is the cleansing agent, making our sacrifices acceptable, cleansing our motives in a way in which we cannot do, at least not by any conscious intellectual process.

Lev 14:51 He shall take the cedar wood, and the hyssop, and the scarlet, and the living bird, and dip them in the blood of the slain bird, and in the running water, and sprinkle the house seven times-

Wood, hyssop and scarlet clothing all featured in the final suffering and crucifixion of Christ. This is the basis for our cleansing from the leprosy of sin and condemnation.

Lev 14:52 He shall cleanse the house with the blood of the bird, and with the running water, with the living bird, with the cedar wood, with the hyssop, and with the scarlet-

It is commonly stated in the Mosaic law that the priest made atonement- looking ahead to the work of the Lord Jesus. Any thoughtful person would have soon concluded that indeed the blood of bulls and goats could not of itself atone for sin (Heb. 10:4). The role of the priest in bringing about the atonement was therefore critical. And yet they too were flawed. So this invited the spiritually minded to look forward to the coming of an ideal priest, the Lord Jesus. See on :15.

Lev 14:53 but he shall let the living bird go out of the city into the open field. So shall he make atonement for the house; and it shall be clean-

The running or springing water would have initially referred to the water from the rock which followed them at this time. The two birds, like the two goats on the day of atonement, could have spoken of the death and resurrection of the Lord Jesus. The similarity with the day of atonement suggests that atonement is in view here; because as suggested on :1, we are dealing here not simply with leprosy infection, but a specific stroke of Divine judgment in response to sin, which required repentance and atonement.

Lev 14:54 This is the law for any plague of leprosy, and for an itch-

The idea is that this is the way to distinguish between the stroke of God in Divine judgment (see on :1), and the appearance of it which was just an ordinary case of scurf ("itch"). The law was simply that the priest alone could discern the difference between that which appeared to be Divine judgment, and what was indeed Divine judgment.

Lev 14:55 and for the destructive leprosy of a garment, and for a house-

I suggested on :1,34 that the garment and house of a stricken person was also given a form of Divine judgment in order to demonstrate to the priest whether or not the condemned sinner had repented, during the period they were isolated from the community after having been stricken.

Lev 14:56 and for a rising, and for a scab, and for a bright spot-

The idea is that this is the way to distinguish between the stroke of God in Divine judgment (see on :1), and the appearance of it which was just an ordinary case of a scab

or spot on the skin. The law was simply that the priest alone could discern the difference between that which appeared to be Divine judgment, and what was indeed Divine judgment.

Lev 14:57 to teach when it is unclean, and when it is clean. This is the law of leprosy-

We note "when" and not "what" is clean or unclean. As explained on :1, the purpose of these regulations was not for the sake of hygiene; rather they were designed to reflect when and whether the person stricken with judgment had repented.

LEVITICUS CHAPTER 15

Lev 15:1 Yahweh spoke to Moses and to Aaron, saying-

These laws could be read as meaning that a person was made unclean by involuntary bodily discharges of a sexual nature. Or they can be read as referring to specific discharges related to sexually transmitted diseases; see on :3 LXX. The meaning would then be that they were made morally unclean by their sinful actions, and these were the consequences of those actions. Cleansing from them was therefore effectively representative of their cleansing from sin.

Lev 15:2 Speak to the children of Israel, and tell them, 'When any man has a discharge from his body, because of his discharge he is unclean-

These laws taught that in essence, it is what comes from within a person which makes them unclean, rather than what enters us from outside (Mk. 7:15-23). The idea that demons, evil spirits or Satan can enter us and make us unclean must be rejected; Jesus emphasizes that sin comes from *within*, therefore it is totally our fault, and we must take responsibility rather than blaming it on cosmic forces outside of us. See on :1.

Lev 15:3 This shall be his uncleanness in his discharge: whether his body runs with his discharge, or if his body has stopped excreting his discharge, it is his uncleanness-

LXX "whoever has a gonorrhea out of his body, this is his uncleanness in him by reason of the issue, by which, his body is affected through the issue". As discussed on :1,

the idea of this section may not be that people are unclean because of issues which are nothing to do with morality; but rather that these regulations cover the result of sexually transmitted diseases and therefore cleansing from those consequences was effectively parallel with forgiveness for the sins related to them. The fertility cults of Canaan involved the usage of temple prostitutes by the worshippers, and therefore sexually transmitted diseases were rife in Canaan. An Israelite who had one of them would have been suffering the result of such apostasy, either by themselves or by family members. This would explain why the stricken person in view in this section is a male- who had slept with the temple / cult prostitutes.

Even if we are no longer sinning, we must remember that we still stand guilty for past sins unless we have received cleansing for them. The passage of time and the fading of human memory works only a pseudo-atonement for sin; it is the blood of Christ and our conscious identity with it which alone can eternally cleanse our conscience from sins both past and present.

Lev 15:4 Every bed whereon he who has the discharge lies shall be unclean; and everything he sits on shall be unclean-

We must note that this legislation follows on from that about 'leprosy' in Lev. 13,14. I suggested on Lev. 13:1 that leprosy in the form we know it was not in view, but rather a specific stroke of Divine judgment from God. And the commands we now read about men with discharges of a sexual nature, and their cleansing, may well refer to a similar being stricken with a judgment appropriate to sexual

sin. This is why the bed of the stricken person is so emphasized. Effectively, the person was to be sexually isolated.

Lev 15:5 Whoever touches his bed shall wash his clothes, and bathe himself in water, and be unclean until the evening-

The implication was that his wife would have to abstain from sexual relationships with him and he was to be effectively isolated from his family. The stress upon the stricken person's bed is reflected in the Psalms, where David speaks of being stricken and lying on his bed, isolated from family and society because of his running, oozing issue which oozed in the night (Ps. 38:11; 77:2). It seems he was stricken with a Divine stroke that led to him secreting unclean fluids from his reproductive organ, which is the situation in view here (Ps. 6:6; 41:3). Job likewise complained of how he is isolated upon an unclean bed / couch (Job 7:13; 33:19 "he is chastened with pain upon his bed"), as if he too was experiencing a stroke from God which corresponds to the situation envisaged here in Lev. 15.

Lev 15:6 He who sits on anything whereon the man who has the discharge sat shall wash his clothes, and bathe himself in water, and be unclean until the evening-

The Hebrew for 'sitting' here is elsewhere used specifically in the context of urination or defecation, so the idea would be that the man was not to use a toilet shared by others.

Lev 15:7 He who touches the body of him who has the discharge shall wash his clothes, and bathe himself in water, and be unclean until the evening-

This seems the equivalent of the leper of Lev. 13,14 being isolated from society. And I suggested on Lev. 13:1

that what was in view there was not the disease of leprosy, but a specific stroke of Divine judgment. And I suggest the person with a discharge was likewise. In practice, with such extreme laws about contact with him or whatever he touched, he would be isolated from his family and society. We note that the stricken person in view is presented as male. There is no equivalent legislation about females. This would make sense if as suggested on :3, the person in view is one who had slept with the temple / cult prostitutes. The fertility cults of Canaan involved the usage of temple prostitutes by the worshippers, and therefore sexually transmitted diseases were rife in Canaan. An Israelite who had one of them would have been suffering the result of such apostasy, either by themselves or by family members.

Lev 15:8 If he who has the discharge spits on him who is clean, then he shall wash his clothes, and bathe himself in water, and be unclean until the evening-

This law was therefore aimed at ensuring that people kept away from this stricken person. In primitive society, every day's labour was valuable, and nobody wanted to run the risk of being made unclean for a whole day.

Lev 15:9 Whatever saddle he who has the discharge rides on shall be unclean-

If an involuntary discharge of semen at night is in view, then such extreme danger of contaminating others would not be in view. In terms of hygiene, nothing would be achieved by it anyway. For most sexually transmitted diseases are spread only at body temperature, and not through sitting on the same chair as an infected person. Therefore we conclude that a special state of uncleanness and illness

is in view, the result of a Divine stroke. And in practice, if a man had an involuntary emission of semen at night, then who would know about it, unless he told them? So it seems more likely that the person in view is a sinner who has been struck with a Divine stroke.

Lev 15:10 Whoever touches anything that was under him shall be unclean until the evening. He who carries those things shall wash his clothes, and bathe himself in water, and be unclean until the evening-

There was greater culpability the more consciously a person did things which he or she knew were unclean. Thus to purposefully carry something unclean required a washing of clothes, whereas just touching them merited a lesser requirement for cleansing.

Lev 15:11 Whoever he who has the discharge touches, without having rinsed his hands in water, he shall wash his clothes, and bathe himself in water, and be unclean until the evening-

Those suffering with the "discharge" are parallel with 'lepers' in Num. 5:2 as needing to be put out of the camp. The dramatic laws about how they made everyone else unclean effectively required they be put outside the camp. I suggested on Lev. 13:1 that "lepers" doesn't refer to those with Hansen's disease, but to those struck down by Divine judgment. Those with a "discharge", literally a 'flowing', were in the same category. In neither case is involuntary disease or human bodily situation a reason for moral uncleanness. Just as human nature of itself doesn't separate between God and man; for all we posit about human nature,

we say about the undefiled Lord Jesus who fully had that same human nature.

Lev 15:12 The earthen vessel, which he who has the discharge touches, shall be broken; and every vessel of wood shall be rinsed in water-

As discussed on :11, the intention of these extreme laws were to effectively require that the person with such a discharge be put outside the camp. Otherwise they would render daily life impossible to live if they remained within it.

Lev 15:13 When he who has a discharge is cleansed of his discharge, then he shall count to himself seven days for his cleansing, and wash his clothes; and he shall bathe his flesh in running water, and shall be clean-

In the dry wilderness, this would have been from the river of spring water which followed them from the smitten rock, which represented Christ who was smitten so that we might have the means of being cleansed (1 Cor. 10:4). The enigmatic Jn. 7:38 alludes here: "He that believeth on me, as the scripture hath said, out of his belly ("innermost being", NIV) shall flow rivers of living (Gk. spring) water". What "scripture" did the Lord have in mind? Perhaps the references to spring water being used to cleanse men from uncleanness and death (Lev. 14:5; 15:13; Num. 19:16). Out of the innermost being of the true believer, the spring(ing) water of the Gospel will *naturally* spring up and go out to heal men, both now and more fully in the Kingdom, aided then by the Spirit gifts.

Lev. 14:8; 15:13 speak of the person healed of 'leprosy' [the Divine stroke] and a "discharge" washing *after* the cure,

in order to be then also ritually clean. As discussed on :11, those with a discharge and the 'leper' were treated the same way; for as with the leper / stricken person, the man with a "discharge" was under Divine judgment, and had not simply experienced an involuntary emission.

Lev 15:14 On the eighth day he shall take two turtledoves, or two young pigeons, and come before Yahweh to the door of the Tent of Meeting, and give them to the priest-

Even within the bird offerings there was a gradation. Turtledoves were larger than pigeons and more valuable, but they are only in Israel at certain times of the year (Song 2:12; Jer. 8:7); whereas pigeons are in Israel all year round, were easier to catch and were therefore cheaper. The various possible levels within God's law reflect our opportunities to serve on different levels, just as the good soil of the sower parable brings forth different amounts. Some will make more of God's truth than others. The very existence of these levels, rather than a simple binary demand of obedience / disobedience, pass / fail, of itself inspires us to serve God as extensively as we can. For who can be a minimalist in response to His love.

Lev 15:15 and the priest shall offer them, the one for a sin offering, and the other for a burnt offering. The priest shall make atonement for him before Yahweh for his discharge-

It is no sin to be human, nor to go through the bodily functions which go along with being human. The atonement was required because the person had sinned and had been struck with Divine judgment. That ended when the person repented, hence the language of atonement.

Lev 15:16 If any man has an emission of semen, then he shall bathe all his flesh in water, and be unclean until the evening-

Like many of the commandments, there was a large element of personal choice in whether to obey this or not; intimate matters such as personal discharges were unknown to others. Under the new covenant, this is even more the case; attitudes of mind which make us unclean before God are known only to ourselves. The Law of Moses was the only legal code which had so many clauses which concerned matters which could never be publically demonstrated. God's intention even under the old covenant was to teach and inculcate personal relationship between God and His people. He did this by giving commandments whose keeping only He and the individual knew about.

Lev 15:17 Every garment, and every skin, whereon the semen is, shall be washed with water, and be unclean until the evening-

I suggest that the emission of semen in view is not a result of sex within marriage. For Paul appears to warn against any such extremist interpretation by teaching that the marital bed is "undefiled", unlike that of whores and adulterers (Heb. 13:4). There is nothing in that sense dirty about the sexual act. What is in view is the immorality which has given rise to the Divine stroke which now requires repentance and atonement.

Lev 15:18 If a man lies with a woman and there is an emission of semen, they shall both bathe themselves in water, and be unclean until the evening-

I suggested on :17 that this doesn't refer to sex within marriage. For the marital bed is "undefiled" (Heb. 13:4). It could refer to sex outside marriage. The whole theme of this section which began in Lev. 13:1 is of Divine judgment for wrong behaviour, rather than normal bodily functions making a person unclean before God. If however it does refer to marital sex, then we reflect that the whole family would have known that 'mum and dad' or just mum was unclean. Personal matters like sex and menstruation thereby became part of normal family awareness, rather than being hived off in quasi-secrecy and invested with an aura of mystery as they are in many modern cultures.

The Lord taught that He was the rock, and we like Israel drink of what came out of Him. The Law of Moses included several rituals which depended upon what is called " the running water" (Lev. 14:5,6,50-52; 15:18; Num. 19:17). "Running" translates a Hebrew word normally translated "living". This living water was what came out of the smitten rock. The Lord taught that the water that would come out of Him would only come after His glorification (Jn. 7:38)- an idea He seems to link with His death rather than His ascension (Jn. 12:28,41; 13:32; 17:1,5 cp. 21:19; Heb. 2:9). When He was glorified on the cross, then the water literally flowed from His side on His death. The rock was "smitten", and the water then came out. The Hebrew word used here is usually translated to slay, slaughter, murder. It occurs in two clearly Messianic passages: "...they talk to the hurt of him [Christ] whom thou hast smitten" (Ps. 69:26); "we esteemed him [as He hung on the cross] smitten of God" (Is. 53:4). The living waters were represen-

tative of the Holy Spirit which is given to us- not the miraculous gifts, but the power of God within the human spirit, to bring us to have His Spirit and mind which was in Christ. It is this which now is the cleansing agent, making our sacrifices acceptable, cleansing our motives in a way in which we cannot do, at least not by any conscious intellectual process.

Lev 15:19 If a woman has a discharge, and her discharge in her flesh is blood, she shall be in her impurity seven days; and whoever touches her shall be unclean until the evening-

This is worded very strangely if in fact a normal period is in view. I have suggested earlier in this chapter that the "discharge" refers to a specific stroke of Divine judgment. It could involve a hemorrhage of blood. The language and grammar seems to imply that the "discharge" occurred at one time, and then after that point she was impure seven days. But period bleeding is not a one time event, lasting typically from three to eight days. If monthly periods are in view here, then the woman would be impure for up to 15 days / month. And whoever touched her would be unclean. This would have made family life just about impossible. So I don't think that monthly periods are in view, but rather a specific Divine judgment. "Be in her impurity" is s.w. "removed", "set apart", "put apart". It is the equivalent of being put outside the camp, which was the judgment for the leper and the man smitten with a "discharge" as Divine judgment (Num. 5:2). It is also found translated "filthy" in Ezra 9:11 "the filthiness of the people of the lands". But it is not an act of moral filth to have a period. What is in view is not period bleeding, but a specific Divine judgment for sin,

the female equivalent of the judgment upon sinful males described in the first half of this chapter.

Lev 15:20 Everything that she lies on in her impurity shall be unclean. Everything also that she sits on shall be unclean-

The severity of the laws about not coming into contact with such a woman were designed to make it impossible to have her in society or the home. She therefore effectively had to be put out of the camp (see on :19).

Lev 15:21 Whoever touches her bed shall wash his clothes, and bathe himself in water, and be unclean until the evening-

Beds were typically shared in family homes, so this was designed to make the woman leave her home. This would be appropriate for someone stricken with Divine judgment for serious sin, but not for a woman having a period.

Lev 15:22 Whoever touches anything that she sits on shall wash his clothes, and bathe himself in water, and be unclean until the evening-

This is the female equivalent of the male judgment of a "discharge". If involuntary period bleeding is in view, then such extreme danger of contaminating others would not be in view. In terms of hygiene, nothing would be achieved by it anyway. For most diseases are spread only at body temperature, and not through sitting on the same chair as a woman who is menstruating. Therefore we conclude that a special state of uncleanness and illness is in view, the result of a Divine stroke. And in practice, if a woman was menstruating, then who would know about it, unless she told

others? So it seems more likely that the person in view is a sinner who has been struck with a Divine stroke.

Lev 15:23 If it is on the bed, or on anything whereon she sits, when he touches it, he shall be unclean until the evening-

This was certainly not for hygienic reasons, for we would all be hopelessly infected if infection really spread by touching whatever a menstruating woman has touched. Again, the woman in view is clearly a sinner under the stroke of Divine judgment, and not simply a menstruating woman.

Lev 15:24 If any man lies with her, and her monthly flow is on him, he shall be unclean seven days; and every bed whereon he lies shall be unclean-

The "monthly flow" is apparently different to the "discharge". The discharge was, I suggest, a specific Divine judgment for sin. Lev. 20:18 says that if a man sleeps with a menstruating woman then they must both die. But Lev. 15:24 says that in this case the man must be unclean seven days. I suggest that the language of uncovering nakedness in Lev. 20:18 is talking about some form of illicit or perverted relationship. Menstrual blood was a times drunk or used in various cultic rituals.

Lev 15:25 If a woman has a discharge of her blood many days not in the time of her period, or if she has a discharge beyond the time of her period; all the days of the discharge of her uncleanness shall be as in the days of her period: she is unclean-

The "discharge" and "her period" are grammatically separate. But perhaps her period is not in view here. LXX "And if a woman have an issue of blood many days, not in

the time of her separation; if the blood should also flow after her separation, all the days of the issue of her uncleanness shall be as the days of her separation: she shall be unclean". As the 'leper' / stricken person was shut up for periods of seven days, which could be extended if they were impenitent, so here too, the woman was given a "time" during which her judgment lasted; but it could be extended, if she were impenitent.

Lev 15:26 Every bed whereon she lies all the days of her discharge shall be to her as the bed of her period: and everything whereon she sits shall be unclean, as the uncleanness of her period-

Her laying on a bed "all the days" could imply that she lay on her bed day and night. Which was impossible for an average Hebrew woman going about daily life, with so many responsibilities upon her in domestic life. But it makes more sense if we consider this to be talking about a specific period of Divine judgment which forced her to be confined to her bed, as happened to men like David. Again, "her period" may not be in view. LXX "And every bed on which she shall lie all the days of her flux shall be to her as the bed of her separation, and every seat whereon she shall sit shall be unclean according to the uncleanness of her separation"; GNB gives simply "Any bed on which she lies and anything on which she sits during this time is unclean".

Lev 15:27 Whoever touches these things shall be unclean, and shall wash his clothes, and bathe himself in water, and be unclean until the evening-

There was greater culpability the more consciously a person did things which he or she knew were unclean. Thus

to lie down in the unclean house required a washing of clothes, whereas just going into it merited a lesser requirement for cleansing. Clearly knowledge is associated with responsibility.

Lev 15:28 But if she is cleansed of her discharge, then she shall count to herself seven days, and after that she shall be clean-

This two stage cleansing process is common in the Mosaic rituals. She was clean, but in another sense not fully cleansed until the end of the seven days. We likewise are now cleansed in Christ, but in a full sense we will only be fully cleansed when He returns and our bodies are made like His, and the flesh no longer is a part of our condition of being.

Lev 15:29 On the eighth day she shall take two turtle-doves, or two young pigeons, and bring them to the priest, to the door of the Tent of Meeting-

As discussed on :14, this was the female equivalent to the male rituals required for a man stricken down with Divine judgment. This is what is in view, and not menstruation. It can hardly be that every menstruating woman in all Israel was to come to the door of the Tent of Meeting every month. Clearly what is in view is a woman under specific Divine judgment for sin who has now repented, rather than every menstruating woman.

Lev 15:30 The priest shall offer the one for a sin offering, and the other for a burnt offering; and the priest shall make atonement for her before Yahweh for the uncleanness of her discharge-

This repeats the usual progression from sin offering to burnt offering to peace offering (although that isn't specifically required here). Conviction of sin leads to a desire to make complete dedication to God, which results in the peace with God celebrated in the peace offering. So the woman was being convicted of sin, so that their dedication to Yahweh's service was no mere ritual, but a from the heart desire to serve Him from gratitude for the forgiveness of sin. Clearly a judgment for sin is in view; and not menstruation, which isn't sinful of itself.

Lev 15:31 Thus you shall separate the children of Israel from their uncleanness, so they will not die in their uncleanness, when they defile my tabernacle that is in their midst'

It could be argued from this that these commandments may have had specific relevance to the Levites, who were the only ones who could enter the holy places- GNB "so that they would not defile the Tent of his presence, which was in the middle of the camp. If they did, they would be killed". This is language more relevant to Levites- for whom this book of Leviticus was specifically relevant.

The legislation here is very severe- it seems inappropriate for touching something which a menstruating woman had touched, seeing menstruation is not a moral sin. So again I suggest that what is in view is a woman or man struck by God with a 'flowing' of intimate body fluids from their private parts, and not involuntary emissions of semen or blood. The "uncleanness" of Israel refers elsewhere to their actual sins which required repentance and atonement (Lev. 16:16,19; Ezra 6:21; Ez. 36:17). It was this which had

led to the woman being struck with a Divinely sent plague, and involuntary menstruation is not in view.

Lev 15:32 This is the law of him who has a discharge, and of him who has an emission of semen, so that he is unclean thereby-

"Thereby" is a translators' guess. The idea is simply "who is unclean", with the Hebrew for "unclean" having the sense of moral sin, s.w. foul, polluted, defiled- always in the sense of having actually committed sin. It was this sin which led to the discharge or flow of personal body fluids from intimate private parts, and was a judgment from God- rather than an involuntary part of being human. The idea is not that these things rendered an innocent person "thereby" offensive to God and worthy of being separated from. It is no sin to be human.

Lev 15:33 and of her who has her period, and of a man or woman who has a discharge, and of him who lies with her who is unclean-

The Hebrew word for "period" isn't used here. AV quaintly gives "sick of her flowers", but the phrase is literally "sick from her rejection / filthiness / uncleanness". She had been stricken because of her sin, her moral filthiness. This seems a separate punishment to the "discharge". Israel in their sinfulness and separation from God are likened to a woman in this contaminated state (Ez. 36:17). But Israel, like this woman, were separated from God because of their actual sins, and not by reason of simply being human.

LEVITICUS CHAPTER 16

Lev 16:1 Yahweh spoke to Moses after the death of the two sons of Aaron, when they drew near before Yahweh and died-

The High Priest had to cleanse himself meticulously before entering the Most Holy. Access was now limited to the Most Holy as a result of inadequate preparation by some in the past. The Lord's death reversed all this, it opened up the veil, for us to pass through with the utmost effort made by us in personal sanctification, in order to further God's glory in the salvation of others. We cannot simply refuse to enter, turn away from the torn veil. To do so is to turn away from what the cross has achieved, and to place ourselves outside its scope. We must go forward, go onwards into the presence of God to replicate in essence the Saviour's work, with the awed and humble spirit of the High Priest entering the Holiest on the day of atonement. He would surely have carefully analyzed his motives, as to why he was passing through that veil, and whether he was sufficiently personally sanctified for the work he was doing. He would have been comforted by knowing that his motives were solely for the glorification of his God in the redemption for his people which he was seeking to obtain. And our passing through the veil is likewise not a case of mere curiosity to get closer to the Divine, but in order to glory Him through what we may thereby do for others.

The Yom Kippur ritual has its context in the death of Aaron's sons for desecrating the tabernacle (Lev. 16:1). The cleansing of not only the sins of the people, but also

the tabernacle, was therefore in the context of Israel's desecration of the tabernacle- and not because physical bits of furniture somehow became unclean of themselves without human fault. This introductory verse, leading on as it does to the Day of Atonement ritual, raises the question of whether it was intended as an annual feast or rather an emergency ritual to be used when presumptuous sins had been committed and the tabernacle defiled. The only time in the Bible we read of the feast being called is in Num. 29, when the tabernacle had indeed just been defiled by Cozbi and Zimri and then by Phinehas bursting in to the most holy place to slay them. All the stress on "Aaron" rather than some more generic reference to 'the High Priest at the time' rather supports this view. Lev. 16:29 says that the fasting aspect was to indeed be observed on the 10th day of the 7th month, but this is *after* the commands about the scapegoat- which I suggest were for emergency use.

Lev 16:2 and Yahweh said to Moses, Tell Aaron your brother not to come at all times into the Most Holy Place within the veil, before the mercy seat which is on the ark, in case he die; for I will appear in the cloud on the mercy seat-

This is one of a number of examples where the Law God gave Moses was changed by Him in consideration of human weakness. This shows that God's law isn't set in stone; those who argue that we must keep the Sabbath today must face the fact that God *can* change and abrogate His own laws. The wonderful thing in this case is that God meditated upon the sin of Aaron's sons, and didn't wish to put Aaron in the way of temptation which might be too much for him; because God never allows us to be tempted

beyond our capabilities (1 Cor. 10:13). The way God here recognizes the extent of His own holiness and as it were seeks to protect humanity from being harmed by it is similar to how He warned Israel not to come too near to the burning mountain (Ex. 19:21), and how He urged Moses not to come too near to the burning bush (Ex. 3:5). This isn't God distancing Himself from us, but His seeking to establish understanding of His holiness whereby we can ultimately draw near to Him in Christ (Heb. 10:22). When we struggle with God's distance from us we must bear this in mind.

In the face of sin amongst His people, there are levels of God's withdrawal of His presence. The way the glory progressively departed from the temple as recounted in Ezekiel is a graphic illustration of this. Under the Law, Aaron initially could come at will within the Most Holy. But after the blasphemy of his sons, apparently for being drunk on duty, he was only allowed to come once per year, and only after an elaborate ritual emphasizing human sinfulness (Lev. 16:2 ff.). Likewise it seems that God's original intention was that the Angel of the presence should travel in the midst of Israel in the wilderness. But after the golden calf apostasy, God announced that He was still with Israel, but His Angel would "go before thee... for I will not go up in the midst of thee; for thou art a stiff-necked people: lest I consume thee in the way" (Ex. 33:2,3).

Lev 16:3 Herewith shall Aaron come into the sanctuary: with a young bull for a sin offering, and a ram for a burnt offering-

We note the contrast with Moses, who lived in a tent outside the tabernacle with the cloud of glory ever nearby, and the radiance from the Angel within it shining off his face. Aaron was being warned not to assume that intimacy with God experienced by Moses was the right of every man or priest. Relationship with God must be built up. It is not for us to assume that the close relationship with God enjoyed by another can be ours without personal effort at building that relationship.

The rabbis have pointed out that the Day of Atonement ritual is exactly at the mid point of the Torah. As if here we have the central point of God's revelation in the Torah- salvation by grace through the future sacrifice of the Lord Jesus, regardless of the surrounding laws and accounts of Israel's historical failures. Hebrews 9 is clear that Yom Kippur points forward to the Lord's work on the cross- for the sake of our sins and salvation. Paul argues that the blood of bulls and goats couldn't take away sin, or otherwise there would be no need for Yom Kippur. That is of course true, but it is a nuanced statement. The sin offerings did achieve forgiveness- offer sacrifice X for sin Y and you will be forgiven. That was what was offered by God and it was true and legitimate; He wasn't lying nor playing with words. But what was unforgiveable according to the law of Moses was sin outside those specified situations, and particularly the sin of presumption. This is why the language of the day of Atonement is alluded to by David in his penitential psalms regarding Bathsheba. It is these sins which were outstanding. It's why in Num. 29 the Israelites were told to keep a makeshift Day of Atonement seeing they had

sinned presumptuously. And it is these sins which are the sins of every man apart from the Lord. It is the total eternal redemption from all sin which is what the ritual spoke of. There is no Biblical record of Israel ever keeping the Day of Atonement with the release of the goats etc., and one wonders whether it was specifically intended for them in the wilderness- hence the release of the scapegoat into the desert to symbolize their freedom from sin now in that same desert. Paul does however imply that the High Priest often did the ritual- whereas the Lord did it only once. And there is historical evidence they did *at times* keep it. But the Biblical record of Israel's negligence to annually keep the feast as commanded suggests their failure to humbly accept the significance of their sins of presumption.

Lev 16:4 He shall put on the holy linen coat, and he shall have the linen breeches on his body, and shall put on the linen sash, and he shall be clothed with the linen turban. They are the holy garments. He shall bathe his body in water, and put them on-

The ideas of washing in water and being clothed in white linen are interpreted in the New Testament as applying to Christian baptism, and the imputation of righteousness, as clean as the white linen clothes of the priests (Rev. 19:8). This means that the work of even the high priest himself is to be aspired to by every Christian. The veil was rent at the Lord's death so that the way into the holiest was open to every believer. They were to follow the High Priest into the holiest- but what did he do there? He obtained forgiveness for others. And it is our mission likewise to do this, through bringing others to the saving experience

of the Lord's work. This was a high, challenging call for Jews in the first century, who assumed the priesthood did all their religious work for them, and they were effectively just spectators at a show.

The High Priest was not to wear his holiest clothes but rather to dress as a standard priest. This was to show that the atonement was not due to ritual garments, but due to the work of the High Priest relating to the blood of atonement. This points up the significance of the Lord's work on the cross.

Lev 16:5 He shall take from the congregation of the children of Israel two male goats for a sin offering, and one ram for a burnt offering-

This repeats the usual progression from sin offering to burnt offering to peace offering (although that isn't specifically required here- the experience of forgiveness was the equivalent). Conviction of sin leads to a desire to make complete dedication to God, which results in the peace with God celebrated in the peace offering. We note that both goats including the live one were together one sin offering. We are saved by the Lord's death and also "by His life". They spoke of His death and resurrection.

Lev 16:6 Aaron shall offer the bull of the sin offering which is for himself, and make atonement for himself and for his house-

This has been wrongly interpreted to mean that the Lord Jesus likewise offered for Himself, as if He were alienated from God by His nature. Whatever we posit about human nature, we say about the Lord Jesus who fully had our nature. And He was undefiled and perfect before God. He

showed us what is possible within human nature. See on :11.

Lev 16:7 He shall take the two goats, and set them before Yahweh at the door of the Tent of Meeting-

This looks ahead to the death of the Lord Jesus "before Yahweh"; His special presence was at Golgotha. The freedom of Barabbas appears to in some way reflect the language of the scapegoat.

Lev 16:8 Aaron shall cast lots for the two goats: one lot for Yahweh, and the other lot for the scapegoat-

The two goats represent the death and resurrection of Christ. The scapegoat bounding away in relieved, joyful freedom symbolizes the genuine freedom and joy of forgiven sin which we can experience in Christ. It's clear that human beings are eager for a scapegoat, we seem wired with a psychological need for one, someone upon whom we can place our sins and thereby feel free from them personally. The scapegoat has been provided for us in Christ, and therefore we shouldn't seek to scapegoat others.

The Hebrew for "scapegoat" is *azazel*, and there has been much misunderstanding of the term. It simply means the removed or separated one, and although the word doesn't occur elsewhere, the idea connects with what we have been reading in the last three chapters of Leviticus, where condemned sinners were to be separated or removed from the community. The Lord Jesus was associated with the condemned, and died for them; and yet He is also represented by the goat which ran free into the wilderness in resurrection life. The scapegoat was a goat, and Azazel means 'removal'. It simply spoke of the removal of sin as

shown by the goat running free into the desert. The atonement achieved in private by the High Priest was now made visible to all, as they saw the goat disappearing further and further into the distance until it, like their sins, was no longer visible nor on their horizon. In the wilderness journey to the promised land, we likewise run free of sin. As the goat was "let go" into the desert, so Israel had been "let go" from Egypt into the desert, speaking of our release from sin through baptism into the Lord Jesus. This is the truth that the Lord says makes free- freedom from sin, our own sins, our own unforgiveable sins, our fears about them, and freedom to serve Him in response. But the scapegoat was the sin offering and in that sense also represented the Lord Jesus as well as our sins now removed. Perhaps Paul has this in mind when he writes of the Lord on the cross becoming a curse for us (Gal. 3:13) or being "made sin" (2 Cor. 5:21; Rom. 8:3). He is the place of propitiation, the *hilasterion*, the mercy seat, the lid of the ark where the blood of the day of Atonement was sprinkled; and this is the propitiation, *hilasmos*, for sins (1 Jn. 2:22; 4:1). Exiled from the sanctuary and religious structures of his day by Saul's persecution, David felt he was dwelling beneath the cherubim wings- over that sprinkled blood with the glory of Yahweh around him.

The Jewish apocryphal Book of Enoch was instrumental in forging the Jewish misunderstanding of Satan as a personal being. This book shifts the blame for sin from humanity to a Satan-figure called Azazel, whose name is taken from the scapegoat: "The whole earth has been corrupted through the works that were taught by Azazel: to him

ascribe all sin" (1 Enoch 9:6; 10:8). There is a subtle but significant difference between this and the Biblical record in Gen. 6:11- which states that the earth became corrupt before God because of *human sin*. The Biblical record makes no attempt to pass the blame for this onto any other being- humanity was punished because *they* sinned. It would in any case be surely unethical for God to punish humanity because of what 'Azazel' supposedly did.

But the two goats were in a sense one "for Yahweh" and the other "for Azazel". It could be that there is indeed an allusion to wrong understandings about an 'Azazel' being who supposedly lurked out in the uninhabited desert, the supposed haunt of demons and evil. The allusion was in order to deconstruct this wrong idea. The real issue was not Azazel; it was human sin which needed atonement for. The real 'Azazel' was not a Satan like being out in the desert. It was human sin, which had now been dealt with. Just as 'Satan' is not a real cosmic being, but is defined in the New Testament as human sin, which has been dealt with and its power negated by the Lord's death on the cross. It was to that death which the day of Atonement pointed ahead to. Hence even the *azazel* goat was offered before Yahweh (:10) before its release- and not offered to any Satan like being.

Lev 16:9 Aaron shall present the goat on which the lot fell for Yahweh, and offer him for a sin offering-

This is the language used in Is. 53:4,6 about the sacrifice of the Lord Jesus, upon whom God laid the iniquity of us all. The Jewish commentator Ibn Ezra refers to a tradition that at the age of 33, a man would understand the

meaning of this. It can be no coincidence that the Lord Jesus was sacrificed at age 33. The thoughtful Jews would have perceived that He was indeed the sin offering.

Lev 16:10 But the goat on which the lot fell for the scapegoat shall be presented alive before Yahweh to make atonement for him, and then sent away as the scapegoat into the wilderness-

ESV: "But the goat on which the lot fell for Azazel shall be presented alive before the Lord to make atonement over it, that it may be sent away into the wilderness to Azazel". Atonement was made "over it"; the sending away free was part of the atonement.

Presented alive [Heb. 'stood up'] before Yahweh clearly looks ahead to the Lord's resurrection (Acts 1:3). The description of the believer as a "living sacrifice" (Rom. 12:1) alludes to the scapegoat, the only living sacrifice, which was a type of the risen Lord (Lev. 16:10 LXX = Acts 1:3). As the Lord ran free in His resurrection, bearing away the sins of men, so we who are in Him and preach that salvation can do the same. As Christ bore away our iniquities (Is. 53:11), so "we then that are strong ought to bear the iniquities of the weak" (Rom. 15:1).

The cycle of revenge and paying back has to be resolved in sacrifice- many societies have shown that. I was a few times in far northern Russia, and it was fascinating to hear the traditions of the Chukchi people. In the past, they say, when a big crime was committed and the criminal convicted, an *innocent* person had to be sacrificed. The study of primitive societies reveals this basic human need for a scapegoat. There was a psychological value to the Mosaic

rite of the scapegoat (Lev. 16:10). All the sins, all the grudges that called for revenge, were to be placed upon that animal, and it was released into the desert. They could watch it scampering away into the bush. This is how we are to understand the placing of human sin- yes, the sins committed against you this day by others- upon the Lord as He hung on the cross. And we must remember that "Vengeance is mine [not ours, not the state's], and requital" (Dt. 32:35). That taking of vengeance, that requital, was worked out by God on the cross.

Lev 16:11 Aaron shall present the bull of the sin offering which is for himself, and shall make atonement for himself and for his house, and shall kill the bull of the sin offering which is for himself-

Aaron was a sinful mortal, and had to offer for himself. This has been misread to mean that the Lord Jesus, the great high priest, had to offer as it were for the sin of being human. But I suggest this is a careless reading of the type, driven by a desire to prove a theological point. The New Testament commentary is at Heb. 5:3; 7:27: "And because of it, he is required to offer sacrifices both for his sins and also for the sins of the people". The "weakness" of the high priest included moral weakness, which required him to offer also for his own sins. But the Lord Jesus had none of this. The references to the High Priest are to present the Lord Jesus by way of both similarity and contrast. Thus the way the high priest served standing is contrasted with the way the Lord serves sitting (Heb. 10:11); and the contrast here at this point is that the Lord had no sins to offer for.

The Lord indeed was subject to weakness (Heb. 5:2), but without the need to offer sin offerings for his own sins.

Heb. 7:27 must be given its full weight in what it says about the Lord Jesus: "Who needs not to offer up sacrifices daily, like those high priests, first for his own sins and then for those of the people. For this he did once for all, when he offered up himself". "This he did once" is a contrast with how the old High Priest offered ["this"] daily [Jesus did it only "once"]. The reference to "first for his own sins, then for the people's" is as it were in parenthesis, a throw away comment, to indicate again the inferiority of the old High Priests who themselves were sinners and therefore needed to offer for their own sins as well as those of God's people. My own suspicion that Paul was the author of Hebrews is based upon the style of writing we have there which we see in Paul elsewhere- so often, a comment is made in passing like this example of commenting that the old Priests had to offer for their own sins too. This kind of style is typical of Paul, Ephesians and Colossians are full of this kind of thing- making an argument, but throwing in a comment in the midst of it, a kind of aside, which often phases the reader. It is not the day of atonement which is in view here, because the contrast is with the "daily" offerings of the priests. A sincere priest would have offered daily sin offerings for himself as well as for the people. The Lord Jesus didn't need to do this; the parallels with the Levitical priesthood are by way of both contrast and similarity. They stood; He sits. They offered animals, He offered "Himself". But as He offered for "the people" so too did the mortal priests; but He did so once, whereas they did so daily. They offered for

their own sins too; He did not. If the Lord in any sense had needed to offer for His own "sins", He would have had to do so daily. But He offered only one offering, for us. That Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures is the clear emphasis of the entire Biblical revelation. "This He did" refers to His offering for the people, for us; and not for His own 'sins'. This point is underlined in the next verse, which notes that the priests were morally weak, whereas the Son of God is perfect and shall be forever, unable to sin.

Lev 16:12 He shall take a censer full of coals of fire from off the altar before Yahweh, and two handfuls of sweet incense beaten small, and bring it within the veil-

Incense represents prayer offered by Christ (Rev. 8:3,4); the way it was taken beyond the veil into the Most Holy Place reflected how prayer, be it the 'mere' words of a woman waiting at a bus stop, enters into Heaven itself. The people were outside confessing their sins; their prayers for forgiveness were represented by this incense. The fire of the altar was ideally intended to be that kindled at the time of Lev. 9:24 when the tabernacle was consecrated. It was to be kept perpetually burning by the sacrifices being continually placed upon it, a lamb every morning and every evening. The fire which never went out or was 'quenched' (Lev. 6:13). is a double symbol. The phrase is used multiple times with reference to the wrath of God in condemning sinners; it is the basis of the idea of eternal fire which will not be quenched. Rather like the cup of wine from the Lord being a symbol of either condemnation or blessing. So we have a choice- be consumed by the eternal fire now

as living sacrifices, or be consumed by it anyway at the last day.

Lev 16:13 and he shall put the incense on the fire before Yahweh, that the cloud of the incense may cover the mercy seat that is on the testimony, so that he will not die-

For "the fire", see on :12. Incense smoke in the surrounding religions was supposed to drive away demons; but the image is used to represent prayer and Yahweh's glory (Lev. 16:3,13; Rev. 5:8). And thereby fear of demons was to be replaced by fear of God's holiness and human sin.

Lev 16:14 He shall take some of the blood of the bull, and sprinkle it with his finger on the mercy seat on the east; and before the mercy seat he shall sprinkle some of the blood with his finger seven times-

The High Priest sprinkled the blood eastwards, on the mercy seat. He would therefore have had to walk round to God's side of the mercy seat and sprinkle the blood back the way he had come. This would have given the picture of the blood coming out from the presence of God Himself; as if *He* was the sacrifice. Acts 20:28 seems to teach (in the AV) that God purchased the church with *His* own blood. His manifestation in His Son was especially intense.

Lev 16:15 Then he shall kill the goat of the sin offering, that is for the people, and bring his blood within the veil, and do with his blood as he did with the blood of the bull, and sprinkle it on the mercy seat, and before the mercy seat-

The idea of entering within the veil is clearly in view when Paul speaks of the work of the Lord Jesus resulting in a hope which "enters into that within the veil" (Heb. 6:19; 9:3,7). The typical meaning of this was therefore that fi-

nally, all Israel, the true people of God however defined, would enter within the veil, thanks to the blood of the ultimate sin offering. Those identified with the blood would, like the blood, enter within the veil, and remain there in fellowship with God, in His very presence. We show that identity with the Lord's blood through baptism, the breaking of bread and a life lived in Him.

Paul surely has the Day of Atonement in mind when he writes of the blood set forth on the mercy seat, the lid of the ark, which was done annually at the Day of Atonement: "[We] are justified freely by His grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus; whom God set forth to be a propitiation [mercy seat], through faith in his blood, to show His righteousness in the passing over of the sins done previously, in the forbearance of God" (Rom. 3:24,25). Israel's faith in the sprinkled blood [which they themselves never saw] was faith that their past sins had been forgiven. We too never saw the physical blood of the Lord, but we believe likewise that our past is now passed. The way God "set forth" the Lord's blood invites us to see God Himself working on the Day of Atonement as the priest for us, using the blood of His Son.

The implication of Lev. 16:14,15 is that the High Priest went beyond the veil twice during this ritual- once to atone for his own sins, and once for the sins of the people. But Heb. 9:12 labours that the Lord did this only once, and thus entered Heaven itself- for *us*, for our sins. Because the point of contrast is that He had no personal sins to atone for. So the idea that the Lord offered for Himself and then for us is actually the opposite of what Heb. 9:12 is teach-

ing. The "type" was by way of contrast and not similarity. Those who have failed to appreciate this have gone further after this wrong turning, and ended up constructing theories of 'atonement for human nature' which are foreign to the scriptures.

Lev 16:16 and he shall make atonement for the Holy Place, because of the uncleanness of the children of Israel, and because of their transgressions, even all their sins; and so he shall do for the Tent of Meeting that is situated amongst them, in the midst of their uncleanness-

Clearly the atonement was not made for the inanimate structure of the Holy Place. Rather was it for the sins of Israel. The idea would be that nobody is perfectly pure, and therefore the priests had indeed entered the Holy Place whilst impure; and this was being atoned for. The wonder was that God met with sinful man "in the midst of the uncleanness" - and this was to be recognized through these rituals.

Lev 16:17 No one shall be in the Tent of Meeting when he enters to make atonement in the Holy Place, until he comes out, and has made atonement for himself and for his household, and for all the assembly of Israel-

This means no priest was allowed into the holy place nor the tabernacle. This atonement was not to be achieved by the priesthood but by the High Priest alone with the blood- all looking forward to the Lord's work. Apart from the release of the live goat, the work of the High Priest was done unobserved by anyone else, as it were in secret. Just as the inner struggles of the Lord in achieving our atonement are to some extent hidden from us; we experience and wit-

ness only the atonement and freedom achieved. The people saw only the result of it. They did nothing really, and the Day of Atonement differed from the other feasts and sacrifices in that the people did nothing- apart from fast and repent. Just as we can "do" nothing for our own atonement. Any confession of personal sin was done in their heart- there was no mechanism whereby they told the High Priest their specific sins, and he then placed them somehow on the goat. The people trusted in the work of the High Priest and waited for him to emerge and pronounce that the atonement was indeed achieved. He has in one sense already appeared in the resurrection of the Lord, and in another sense we await His appearing "without sin unto salvation". This means that His second coming equates with the appearance of the High Priest to pronounce forgiveness and the release of the goat. His work of atonement is therefore going on also right now, in Heaven, for our sakes- with us largely ignorant of what He is doing invisible to our eyes. But what He is doing there now is what in essence He did on the cross, again effectively invisible to human eyes. The proclamation of forgiveness and release of the goat then equates with the great commission to spread the news of it to everyone.

This perhaps helps us to understand the ultimate loneliness of the Lord Jesus in making His offering. These rituals have been misunderstood, in my opinion, to mean that the Lord Jesus offered for Himself, for His family [the believers] and for the world. That is indeed what the mortal, sinful High Priest did, but the type works by way of difference rather than exact correspondence. The New Testa-

ment therefore emphasizes that the Lord Jesus, unlike the Mosaic High Priests, offered only *one* sacrifice to achieve atonement- and that was "for us" (Heb. 10:14). The idea that the Lord atoned for the world as well as "for us" would imply some kind of universal salvation, of which the Bible is silent. Christ died for our sins, the sins of His people- that is the Biblical emphasis. See on :11.

The Lord Jesus in Hebrews 9 is presented as the fulfilment of what was typed and foreshadowed in the day of Atonement rituals. But the majority of the 'fulfilment' was in the dissimilarity rather than the similarity. The High Priest entered and offered many times, the Lord only once; He sits mediating, the High Priest stands; the High Priest entered with the blood of another, but the Lord with His own blood. One other such point is that the Day of Atonement achieved "atonement" and "cleansing from iniquity", the Hebrew word meaning far more than 'covering' but also being used about appeasement of anger [e.g. of Esau's anger with Jacob being appeased]. Yes, God's wrath was turned away by the blood representing His Son's future sacrifice. But this is contrasted with the way the Lord's work achieved "eternal redemption" (Heb. 9:12). Not simply turning away of Divine wrath and purification from our dirt, but a wonderful and eternal redemption into the eternity of God's Kingdom, eternal in that there is no further let alone annual facing of our sin.

Lev 16:18 He shall go out to the altar that is before Yahweh and make atonement for it, and shall take some of the bull's blood, and some of the goat's blood, and put it around it, on the horns of the altar-

The New Testament observes that the blood of this bull and goat could not take away sins- even though the live goat apparently carried the sins away into the wilderness. If sin had really been carried away, there would have been no need for this annual day of atonement ceremony (Heb. 10:3,4). The conclusion is therefore drawn that God only operated this system of atonement on the basis that the blood of the sacrifices pointed forward to the blood of Christ, and on the basis of His faith and knowledge that Christ would make the perfect sacrifice, God accepted the animal blood on the basis that it was symbolic of Christ's blood.

Verse 17 has spoken of the High Priest's exit into the court, so the altar in view is not the altar of incense but the altar of burnt offering.

Lev 16:19 He shall sprinkle some of the blood on it with his finger seven times, and cleanse it, and make it holy from the uncleanness of the children of Israel-

Inanimate objects didn't need atonement. The cleansing was a recognition of the fact that the Israelites were unclean morally, and they had approached the altar and tabernacle furniture only technically clean when they were unclean morally.

Lev 16:20 When he has made an end of atoning for the Holy Place, the Tent of Meeting, and the altar, he shall present the live goat-

As explained on :19, this is not to imply that the furniture itself was somehow morally unclean; this atonement was because of "the uncleanness of the children of Israel"

who had approached into God's presence whilst still sinners.

Lev 16:21 Aaron shall lay both his hands on the head of the live goat, and confess over him all the iniquities of the children of Israel, and all their transgressions, even all their sins; and he shall put them on the head of the goat, and shall send him away into the wilderness by the hand of a man who is in readiness to do this-

We note "both his hands", whereas in all the other purification offerings in Lev. 3 and 4, only one hand was laid upon the sacrifice. This heightens the sense of total identity with the live goat, who would now run free, speaking of the Lord's resurrection.

All Israel's "transgressions" were forgiven by the day of Atonement, or we could instead say that the fact they had been forgiven them by grace already was celebrated then. The word "transgressions" in the Day of Atonement ritual in Lev. 16:21 etc. translates *pehshah*, a rather uncommon word in the Mosaic law. We read in Ex. 23:21 that Israel should not rebel against their guardian Angel because He would not pardon their *pehshah* (Ex. 23:21), even though God was capable of forgiving *pehshah* (Ex. 34:7 "keeping mercy for thousands, forgiving... transgression"). That capability was due to His extreme grace, and this was celebrated by the forgiveness of transgression achieved and memorialized on the day of atonement. The word is often used by David about his sin with Bathsheba, which was the presumptuous sin for which there was no forgiveness under the Mosaic rituals. But such transgression was dealt with by the Day of Atonement just as it was by the grace

shown to David (Ps. 25:7; 32:1,5; 39:8; 51:1,3). David defines "the sin of presumption" as "the great transgression" (Ps. 19:13), and yet from such apparently unforgiveable "transgression" the blood of the day of Atonement could cleanse; or celebrate that the impossible to forgive had actually been forgiven. No wonder the joyful feast of tabernacles followed right after Yom Kippur. The same word is used in Is. 53:5,8 of how the Lord's death was "for our transgressions... for the transgressions of My people was He stricken". Thus when the modified day of Atonement was kept in Num. 29 before Israel entered Canaan and after their shameless transgression with Midian, they were being reminded that all their transgressions / rebellions had been forgiven on account of the Atonement blood- which was looking forward to that of the Lord who died for the transgressions of His people.

Time and again, the difference between Moses' account of history and the surrounding myths is seen in the fact that Moses emphasizes human sin. There was a common ancient Near East belief in Azazel as a desert demon who looked like a goat. Perhaps Moses wished to address this idea when he called the scapegoat of the day of Atonement ritual "Azazel" and sent the goat into the desert (Lev. 16:21)- as if to say 'Now for you, Israel, no belief in that Azazel- the Azazel for us is simply a literal goat, bearing our sins in symbol, which we let loose into the desert'. Again and again, Moses sought to refocus his people on the practical, the literal, the concrete, and away from the myths which surrounded them. And yet he does this by alluding to those myths, so as to alert Israel to the fact that the new,

inspired record which he was writing was fully aware of the myths God's people were being assailed with.

Praise is related to the realization that sin has been forgiven. Hezekiah's praise on realizing God's mercy to him was expressed in a desire to walk in quiet fellowship with God for the rest of his life. There is no suggestion that praise was some kind of ecstatic exuberance of emotion. The normal Hebrew word translated "praise" is also translated "confess" in the context of confessing sin (Lev. 5:5; 16:21; 26:40; Num. 5:7). Contrition of heart because of appreciating our own failures is therefore one way of praising Yahweh's Name. So often does the word "praise" occur in the context of praising the *Name* of Yahweh, or the praising of "the God of Israel", i.e. Yahweh.

Lev 16:22 The goat shall carry all their iniquities on himself to a solitary land, and he shall let the goat go in the wilderness-

Is. 53:8 alludes here in saying that on the cross, the Lord Jesus was cut off from the land of the living. The experience of both goats was found in His sacrifice. "Solitary land" is Heb. 'a land cut off', 'a land not inhabited,' as A.V., or a land from which return was cut off. Our sins are sent to a land of no return. Atonement means they will never return to our account. Just as we may take comfort in this with regard to our own sins, we are to understand that God treats the sins of our brethren the same way. And we therefore are not to keep grinding away about them. There are many references to the Day of Atonement in Is. 53: "The Lord has laid on him the iniquity of us all... he shall bear their iniquities... he bore the sin of many", interpreted by

Peter in 1 Pet. 2:24 as "He Himself bore our sins in His body on the tree". But the living goat was a symbol of both the Lord, and us. For we are to be and feel a "living sacrifice" (Rom 12:1). And the scapegoat was the only sacrifice which was an "offering" but stayed alive. Possibly Rom. 6:13 likewise alludes to the 'presentation' of the live goat before Yahweh (Lev. 16:10), and applies it to all baptized into the Lord Jesus: "No longer present your members to sin as instruments of wickedness, but present yourselves to God as those who have been brought from death to life"; indeed we are "alive to God" (Rom. 6:10). "Let us go forth with Him without the camp" (Heb. 13:12) may also be an allusion.

The phrase "let go" is often used of how God let Israel go from Egypt, overruling how the wicked Pharaoh refused to let the people go. The term is used later in the Mosaic legislation; the way Israel had been "let go" from Egypt was to determine how they "let go" others from slavery (Dt. 15:12,13,18); their own experience of redemption was to influence how they released others. Just as ours should. The letting go of the bird and scapegoat into the wilderness was likewise to remind them of how they had been let go from Egypt into the wilderness without being slain for their sins—all by grace (Lev. 14:7,53; 16:10,21,22,26).

"All their iniquities" needs some reflection. All unforgiven sin, all undealt with issues, every kind of sin, including apparently unforgiveable rebellion and presumption, all was now dealt with. Including we can assume those sins for which there was no ritual prescribed, and for sins of presumption. This was exactly the situation of Israel that

seventh month, as they prepared to enter the Kingdom by grace alone, despite all their presumptuous sins. The RSV translation suggests that atonement was made upon the goat so that it may then be sent into the wilderness: "But the goat on which the lot fell for Azazel shall be presented alive before the LORD to make atonement over it, that it may be sent away into the wilderness to Azazel". This of course admirably fits with the Lord's work- it was the atonement achieved which enabled both He and His Israel to be set free, free in the glorious liberty of God's dear children. And thinking it through, if this translation is correct, the atonement was complete before the goat was released. Confession and placing the sins on the goat was enough for the freedom to be experienced, on the basis of the blood and death of the sin offering goat. And yet after this was done, there had to be the burnt offering of :24- for faith without works is dead. On the basis of what the goat rituals had achieved, there had to be dedication to Yahweh- which is what the burnt offering spoke of. Another obvious response to it was that the years of Jubilee began on the day of Atonement (Lev. 23:27; 25:9). Grace was to be shown to others because of the grace received.

The wages of sin is death, but Israel had not died for their sins. So we must not think that they were unforgiven until the day of Atonement, and then the blood magically made the sins of no account. As Israel stood there, they were forgiven. They were not dead. The atonement ritual was therefore a reminder to them that they had been saved by grace, on account of the blood and the work of the High Priest. The enquiring mind would have perceived that they

had not been slain because of something or someone which that blood and High Priest represented- the future Messiah, the Lord Jesus.

John's Gospel has several Day of Atonement allusions, starting with "Here is the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world!" (Jn. 1:29). The sin of the Jewish world was "taken away" by the scapegoat bearing that sin off into the desert. It seems to me that it is the "sin bearing" of the Day of Atonement, rather than only the Passover lamb, which is in view. But in a kaleidoscope of images, the Passover *lamb* has the image of the scapegoat superimposed upon it. Jn. 17 has the Lord praying that He might be sanctified so that He might sanctify "them", His people- very much the spirit of the High Priest on the Day of Atonement.

Lev 16:23 Aaron shall come into the Tent of Meeting, and shall take off the linen garments, which he put on when he went into the Holy Place, and shall leave them there-

The Lord was buried in linen garments after His death; so as noted on :11, the typical meaning of these things is often by way of contrast rather than equivalent similarity.

Lev 16:24 Then he shall bathe himself in water in a holy place, and put on his garments, and come out and offer his burnt offering and the burnt offering of the people, and make atonement for himself and for the people-

As discussed on :11, the Lord Jesus didn't need to do this; the parallels with the Levitical priesthood are by way of both contrast and similarity. They stood; He sits. They offered animals, He offered "Himself". But as He offered for "the people" so too did the mortal priests; but He did so

once, whereas they did so daily. They offered for their own sins too; He did not. If the Lord in any sense had needed to offer for His own "sins", He would have had to do so daily. But He offered only one offering, for us. That Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures is the clear emphasis of the entire Biblical revelation.

Lev 16:25 The fat of the sin offering he shall burn on the altar-

Some manuscripts have :23 after this verse :25. The altar in view is that of burnt offering and not the incense offering (Ex. 30:9). There is special emphasis upon the fat, which was perceived as the best part of the animal, and the most covered inward parts. After recognizing our sin, we must be prepared to offer these to God. David understood the spirit of the trespass offering when after his sin with Bathsheba he offered to God his inward parts (Ps. 51:6). Elsewhere the idea is as in LXX "the fat [even] the fat tail" (as Lev. 3:9). There were species of sheep with a large fatty tail, which was considered in their culture to be a great delicacy. We see here how the law of Moses was limited in application to an immediate context, and was simply not intended to be a global law for all time. But the take away lesson is that we are to give to God whatever is for us, in our culture and worldview, the best and most desirous.

Lev 16:26 He who lets the goat go for the scapegoat shall wash his clothes, and bathe his flesh in water, and afterward he shall come into the camp-

Throughout the rituals there is the idea that those involved in making this atonement were themselves "compassed with infirmity" (Heb. 5:2). The thoughtful Israelite

would have perceived that there was something lacking in all this; sinners were making atonement for sinners. There was thereby presented the need and longing for a righteous priest who was morally sinless although able to understand and relate to the weakness of men. And that need was met in the Lord Jesus.

Lev 16:27 The bull for the sin offering, and the goat for the sin offering, whose blood was brought in to make atonement in the Holy Place, shall be carried forth outside the camp; and they shall burn their skins, their flesh, and their dung with fire-

The Lord Jesus suffered and died, shedding the blood of atonement, "outside the camp" (Heb. 13:13). We are bidden go forth to the Lord Jesus "outside the camp", just as those who "sought Yahweh" did when there was no tabernacle (Ex. 33:7). The people watching Moses as he walked out to it, without the camp, therefore looks ahead to a faithless Israel lining the via Dolorosa and watching the Lord walk out to His place of crucifixion. And we are to get behind Him and follow Him there, stepping out from the mass of Israel. As the Lord Jesus suffered "outside the camp", so various parts of the Mosaic sacrifices were to be burnt there (Lev. 4:12,21; 8:17; 9:11; 16:27); and yet it was the blood of those sacrifices which achieved atonement (Heb. 13:11; Num. 19:3,9). "Outside the camp" was the place of excluded, condemned sinners (Lev. 13:46; 24:14; Num. 5:3,4; 15:35,36; 31:13,19), and it was here that the Lord Jesus died, in identification with us.

Lev 16:28 He who burns them shall wash his clothes, and bathe his flesh in water, and afterward he shall come into the camp-

As discussed on :26, in all these rituals there is the idea that those involved in making this atonement were themselves unclean. The thoughtful Israelite would have perceived that there was something lacking in all this; sinners were making atonement for sinners. And thus the desire was prepared for the perfect priest, the Lord Jesus.

Lev 16:29 It shall be a statute to you forever: in the seventh month, on the tenth day of the month, you shall afflict your souls, and shall do no kind of work, the native-born, or the stranger who lives as a foreigner among you-

This was to help them understand that no works could produce atonement. It was all of grace. "Afflict your souls" is the word used of how the Egyptians had afflicted the Hebrews (Ex. 1:11,12). Repeatedly, Israel were taught that they were to remember the state they had been in prior to their redemption from affliction; and redeem others from their affliction on that basis, and never to afflict people as Egypt had done to them. All this is an abiding principle for us. True redemption of others has to be rooted in an awareness of our own affliction. This is particularly necessary for those who were as it were schooled into Christ by reason of their upbringing.

Lev 16:30 for on this day shall atonement be made for you, to cleanse you; from all your sins you shall be clean before Yahweh-

Every kind of sin was atoned for (:21). Sins of ignorance, of omission rather than commission, were all met in

this atonement. And likewise even moreso with the sacrifice of the Lord Jesus. There should therefore never now be any sense that some sins are dealt with, but others aren't.

The Hebrew here and especially in Lev. 23:28 definitely reads as if it is the day of atonement which made atonement. This verse has been clung on to by Judaism at times when the temple was not standing and the sacrifices associated with the day of atonement were not offered. Their argument was and is that it is the day of atonement which makes atonement, because the atonement is from God's sovereign grace. And indeed there is some truth in this. For it was ever impossible for the blood of bulls and goats to take away sin, and Paul's argument in Hebrews is based upon the implications of the day of Atonement. It indeed looks ahead to another and more ultimate atonement, by God's grace through His pronouncement. And that pronouncement was made regardless of the Levitical priesthood and sacrifices; it was made over the blood of His crucified Son.

Lev 16:31 It is a Sabbath of solemn rest to you, and you shall afflict your souls; it is a statute forever-

They were to "do no kind of work" (:29). Because this was the day of atonement (:30). The point was that *God* was providing atonement by His grace and on account of the blood which represented Christ's blood- and not on the basis of our works.

Lev 16:32 The priest who is anointed and who is consecrated to be priest in his father's place shall make the atonement, and shall put on the linen garments, even the holy garments-

The language here is pregnant with allusion to the future Lord Jesus, the "Christ" or anointed priest, who operated in the name and place of His Father, God Himself.

Lev 16:33 Then he shall make atonement for the Holy Sanctuary; and he shall make atonement for the Tent of Meeting and for the altar; and he shall make atonement for the priests and for all the people of the assembly-

It is clarified in :19 that this cleansing of the furniture was to make them "holy from the uncleanness of the children of Israel". Inanimate objects didn't need atonement. The cleansing was a recognition of the fact that the Israelites were unclean morally, and they had approached the altar and tabernacle furniture only technically clean when they were unclean morally.

Lev 16:34 This shall be an everlasting statute for you, to make atonement for the children of Israel once in the year because of all their sins. It was done as Yahweh commanded Moses-

The Sabbath is described as a perpetual, eternal ordinance between God and His people (Ex. 31:16). Yet in the New Testament we read that the Old Covenant has been done away; and the Old Covenant clearly included the ten commandments (Dt. 4:13), one of which was concerning the Sabbath. For this reason the New Testament is at pains to explain that Sabbath keeping is not now required of God's people (Col. 2:14-17; Rom. 14:1-3). Indeed, the whole Law of Moses is described as an everlasting covenant (Is. 24:5; Dt. 29:29), but it has now been done away (Heb. 8:13). The feasts of Passover and Atonement were to be "an everlasting statute unto you" (Lev. 16:34;

Ex. 12:14); but now the Mosaic feasts have been done away in Christ (Col. 2:14-17; 1 Cor. 5:7). The Levitical priesthood was “the covenant of an everlasting priesthood” (Ex. 40:15; Num. 25:13), but “the priesthood being changed (by Christ’s work), there is made of necessity a change also of the law” (Heb. 7:12). There was an “everlasting covenant” between God and Israel to display the shewbread in the Holy Place (Lev. 24:8). This “everlasting covenant” evidently ended when the Mosaic Law was dismantled. But the same phrase “everlasting covenant” is used in 2 Samuel 23:5 concerning how Christ will reign on David’s throne for literal eternity in the Kingdom. In what sense, then, is God using the word *olahm*, which is translated “eternal”, “perpetual”, “everlasting” in the Old Testament? James Strong defines *olahm* as literally meaning “the finishing point, time out of mind, i.e. practically eternity”. It was God’s purpose that the Law of Moses and the associated Sabbath law were to continue for many centuries. To the early Israelite, this meant a finishing point so far ahead that he couldn’t grapple with it; therefore he was told that the Law would last for ever in the sense of “practically eternity”. For all of us, the specter of ultimate infinity is impossible to intellectually grapple with. We may glibly talk about God’s eternity and timelessness, about the wonder of eternal life. But when we pause to really come to terms with these things, we lack the intellectual tools and linguistic paradigms to cope with it. Therefore there is no Hebrew or Greek word used in the Bible text to speak of absolute infinity. We know that death has been conquered for those in Christ, therefore we have the hope of immortal life in his

Kingdom. But God speaks about eternity very much from a human viewpoint.

LEVITICUS CHAPTER 17

Lev 17:1 Yahweh spoke to Moses, saying-

These regulations which follow reflect the concept of sacred space which was central to the old covenant. Stephen's speech in Acts 7 demonstrates how even within the Old Testament, there were many hints that God operated well beyond the confines of this concept. And finally all notions of sacred space were collapsed beneath the wonderful idea that God dwells in the hearts of those who are His.

Lev 17:2 Speak to Aaron, and to his sons, and to all the children of Israel, and say to them: 'This is the thing which Yahweh has commanded-

As discussed on :3,5, the commandment of Yahweh in this passage was limited to Israel in the wilderness. Because later, sacrifice to Yahweh was acceptably offered by men like Gideon, Manoah, David and Samuel in places other than the sanctuary. Likewise the command that Gentiles could not eat Passover was only true for the first Passover, and later legislation allowed them to eat it. A failure to appreciate this has led to many mistaken turns in Biblical exposition; thus Adventists think that any law of Yahweh is eternal, whereas clearly the laws within 'the law of Moses' were often time and place limited. And 'closed table' enthusiasts build an argument on the laws surrounding the first Passover instead of realizing that those laws were only for a limited place and time.

Lev 17:3 Whatever man there is of the house of Israel, who kills a bull, or lamb, or goat, in the camp, or who kills it outside the camp-

This legislation was clearly only intended for Israel during the wilderness years. For "the camp" no longer existed once the land had been settled. It could be argued that the animals listed are not simply sacrifices, but refer to any animal. In this case, it was not God's intention that the people should eat animal meat during the wilderness journey; the manna was intended to be all sufficient. In this case they would have returned to the situation after creation and before the flood, when animal meat was not eaten. It was therefore an attempt to help Israel rise above the effects of the flood and to return towards Eden, as they were on their way to the promised land, which was presented as an Eden to some extent restored.

Lev 17:4 and hasn't brought it to the door of the Tent of Meeting, to offer it as an offering to Yahweh before the tabernacle of Yahweh: blood shall be imputed to that man. He has shed blood; and that man shall be cut off from among his people-

The animal represented the offerer, and therefore to slay a sacrificial animal was as if a person had been slain. Hence the language of bloodshed. The Law foresaw that there would be the tendency to worship God away from the rest of the congregation. Those who did so were condemned in the strongest terms: their sacrifice of an animal was seen as the murder of their brother, whereas they would have seen it as an expression of their righteousness. "He that kills an ox is as if he slew a man" (Is. 66:3) refers

back to this, making it parallel with idolatry and proudly refusing to let God's word dwell in the heart.

Lev 17:5 This is to the end that the children of Israel may bring to Yahweh their sacrifices which they sacrifice in the open field, to the door of the Tent of Meeting, to the priest, and sacrifice them for sacrifices of peace offerings to Yahweh-

This was to help the Israelites not to follow the example of the Egyptians and desert dwellers through whom they travelled, who offered religious sacrifices to satyrs and other supposed demons of the desert (:7). Sacrifice was only to be offered at the tent of meeting. This was later impractical when Israel were no longer just dwelling around the tent of meeting; so this law was temporary. See on :2.

Lev 17:6 The priest shall sprinkle the blood on the altar of Yahweh at the door of the Tent of Meeting-

To sprinkle blood upon something didn't necessarily mean the object was forgiven. For an inanimate altar didn't need forgiving. The blood of the covenant was sprinkled (s.w.) upon the people as a sign of their involvement with the covenant process of salvation, rather than as a statement of their forgiveness (Ex. 24:8). Likewise with the sprinkling of the blood of the Passover lamb (2 Chron. 35:11). This was an act of identification rather than forgiveness of sin. The function of the altar was valid before God, or efficacious, because of its association with the blood of Christ; for the blood of the animals slain upon it couldn't bring salvation of itself, but only through God's way of looking at that blood is looking ahead to that of His Son (Heb. 10:4). And so the altar was associated with the blood which represented His blood.

And burn the fat for a pleasant aroma to Yahweh-

"A pleasant aroma" is a very common phrase. This concept is important to God. It first occurs in Gen. 8:21 where it means that God accepted Noah's sacrifice and vowed that the pole of saving mercy in His character was going to triumph over that of necessary judgment. Under the new covenant, it is persons and not sacrifices or incense which are accepted as a "pleasant aroma" (Ez. 20:41). The word for "pleasant" means strong delight; this is how God's heart can be touched by genuine sacrifice. Those pleasing offerings represented us, the living sacrifices (Rom. 12:1). And so it is applied to us in 2 Cor. 2:15- if we are in Christ, we are counted as a pleasant aroma to God. The offering of ourselves to Him is nothing of itself, but because we are in Christ and counted as Him, we are a delight to God. Hence the colossal importance of being "in Christ". "Aroma" or "smell" is a form of the Hebrew word *ruach*, the word for spirit or breath. God discerns the spirit of sacrifices, that was what pleased Him rather than the burning flesh of animals. Our attitude of mind in sacrifice can touch Him. Sacrifice is therefore accepted, Paul says, according to what a person has to give, but the essence is the attitude of mind behind it. We think of the two coins sacrificed by the widow.

Lev 17:7 They shall no more sacrifice their sacrifices to the goat idols-

See on :5. LXX calls the idols "vanities". Do we feel that life is just pointless, an endless round of childcare, working all day doing in essence the same job for 30 years, a trudging through an endless tunnel until our mortality catch-

es up on us? We were redeemed by the precious blood of Christ from the "vain way of life handed down from the fathers" (1 Pet. 1:18), from the frustration of this present life. The word used for "vain" is that used by the LXX for the 'vanity' of life as described in Ecclesiastes, and for idol worship in Lev. 17:7 and Jer. 8:19. We have been redeemed from it all! Not for us the life of endlessly chasing the rainbow's end, slavishly worshipping the idols of ever bigger homes, smarter technology...we were redeemed from the vanity of life "under the sun" by the precious blood of Christ. We were bought out of this slavery, even if in the flesh we go through its motions.

After which they play the prostitute. This shall be a statute forever to them throughout their generations'-

Israel is so often set up as the bride of God (Is. 54:5; 61:10; 62:4,5; Jer. 2:2; 3:14; Hos. 2:19,20). This is why any infidelity to God is spoken of as adultery (Mal. 2:11; Lev. 17:7; 20:5,6; Dt. 31:16; Jud. 2:17; 8:27,33; Hos. 9:1). The language of Israel 'selling themselves to do iniquity' uses the image of prostitution. This is how God feels our even temporary and fleeting acts and thoughts of unfaithfulness. This is why God is jealous for us (Ex. 20:15; 34:14; Dt. 4:24; 5:9; 6:15)- because His undivided love for us is so exclusive. He expects us to be totally His. Just as Israel were not to be like the Egyptians they were leaving, nor like the Canaanites into whose land they were going (Lev. 18:1-5; 20:23,24). We are to be a people separated unto Him.

Lev 17:8 You shall say to them, 'Any man there is of the house of Israel, or of the strangers who live as foreigners among them, who offers a burnt offering or sacrifice-

Dt. 12:20,21 says that when God enlarged the land, this law of only eating at the sanctuary was to be changed. There was never any signal from God that He had now enlarged the land and therefore this change of the law was allowed. We note that the law of Moses was flexible and open to change. That it should later be abrogated is therefore no surprise. The argument that each Mosaic law was eternal is therefore lacking in careful attention to the text of the law itself.

Lev 17:9 and doesn't bring it to the door of the Tent of Meeting to sacrifice it to Yahweh; that man shall be cut off from his people-

Sacrifice couldn't be offered anywhere, although see on :8. It wasn't the case that the fact someone had a desire to do something for God thereby made them acceptable to Him. He had to be approached in the way He stipulated; and Jesus said "I am the door" (Jn. 10:9). It's not therefore true that all spiritual roads lead to the same place. We can only come to God in His way. Later we read that God did accept sacrifice in local sanctuaries; we think of acceptable offerings made in other places, by Gideon, Manoah, David and others. We see reflected here God's willingness to accept less than ideal sacrifices, so desirous is He of relationship with His people.

Lev 17:10 Any man of the house of Israel, or of the strangers who live as foreigners among them, who eats any kind of blood, I will set my face against that soul who eats blood, and will cut him off from among his people-

The peoples' behaviour in 1 Sam. 14:32 is portrayed as breaking every principle of the commands here about

eating blood in Lev. 17:10-14. They ate blood, and also killed calves and mothers on the same day (disobeying Lev. 22:28). All because they were more obedient to their oath to Saul not to eat anything until sundown, rather than to God's covenant. For all this, they were to have God against them and be cut off from God's people. The essence of this has been seen so many times in church history. An insistence upon petty legalism leads people to commit major sin. They are more obedient to the party line and the barked orders of their leadership, than to God. And the legalistic demands of their elders lead them to make utter shipwreck of their faith, breaking the most elemental principles of their covenant with God. Once sundown came and they were free from the oath to Saul, the people were totally disobedient to the covenant.

Blood represents life; to take life to ourselves rather than recognize it is God's results in us losing our lives (:14). Just as simply as the blood was to be given to God, so we are to give our lives to God. To take the blood to themselves is in fact spoken of as being as bad as murder (:4). This seems extreme language, but it underlines how important to God is this principle- that life is His and we are to give it to Him rather than live or take it to ourselves.

Lev 17:11 For the life of the flesh is in the blood; and I have given it to you on the altar to make atonement for your souls; for it is the blood that makes atonement by reason of the life'-

The symbolism of blood in the Bible is difficult. At times it seems to mean simply 'life', at others, it appears to be used for 'death'. We are saved by the blood of Christ- His

life, outgiven in death, and His resurrection life lives in us today through the Spirit. God did not demand the death of animals because He simply is pleased by death. What He wants from us is our lives, not that we accept Christ and kill ourselves. 1 Cor. 10 speaks of how we have fellowship with the blood of Christ through the memorial drinking of wine, but in practice this surely refers to our physical symbolism of how we are sharing in His life; His life becomes ours. Life is not ours to take, we are to give it to God- that's the whole idea of the repeated Old Testament emphasis upon not drinking blood but pouring it out to God. The Lord Jesus alludes to all this by urging us to drink *His* blood, *His* life- the life we live in the flesh we are to live by, or 'on account of', Jesus (Gal. 2:20; 2 Cor. 4:11).

When the psalmist says, 'What profit is there in my blood?' he means, 'What profit is there in my death?' (Ps. 30:9). The idiom of 'blood upon him' means that a person bears the guilt for another's death. "His blood be on us" (Mt. 27:25) clearly means they accepted guilt for the death of Jesus. Babylon is a woman "drunken with the blood of the saints"- guilty of their death (Rev. 17:6; 18:24). "Innocent blood" is brought upon a person by allowing the death of an innocent person (Jer. 26:15 RV). The blood of the innocent cries out to God- in the sense that their *death* cries out to Him for vengeance (Gen. 4:10). The Leviticus passages state that "the life is in the blood", meaning that once the life is taken out of a person or animal, then they are dead [this is an oblique evidence against the notion of an 'immortal soul']. In this sense, blood refers to death as well as life. We have no right to shed blood because all life is

God's; and likewise we have no right to think that our life is our own. It is God's. Even animal life was seen as belonging to God- the blood of animals had to be poured out to Him in acknowledgment of this. Our thanks to God for meat is gratitude that He has allowed us to kill and eat animals, to take their lives. "The blood of his cross" (Col. 1:20) clearly means the death of the cross, rather than the blood of Jesus which was smeared on the cross as opposed to His blood generally.

The command not to murder has as its basis the fact that human life is not for us to use as we will (Ex. 20:13; Lev. 17:11; Gen. 9:6). It is God's life and is His- and this applies to our view of others lives as well as our own. Others, therefore, are not for us to use as we will. Gentleness and sensitivity to the life of others, in family life, the workplace, on the road... is therefore an outcome of our belief that the 'other' person likewise has been created by God and has life from Him. To drive in an unkind way, to act in a thoughtless way to others detriment, is therefore the same basic error as taking human life in murder.

Lev 17:12 Therefore I have said to the children of Israel, No person among you shall eat blood, neither shall any stranger who lives as a foreigner among you eat blood-

The blood was understood as representing life (Dt. 12:23; Lev. 17:11). We are not to take life to ourselves; not merely in that we aren't to murder, but we also aren't to assume that our lives, or any life, is in fact ours to use or dominate for ourselves. Our lives and those of others are God's, and we cannot take any life to ourselves. The Lord Jesus specifically alluded to the major Jewish principle of

not eating blood- when He taught that unless His blood was drunk, then they had no life in them. This alludes to another reason for not eating blood, given in Lev. 17:11: "I have given it to you on the altar to make atonement for your souls; for it is the blood that makes atonement by reason of the life". The blood looked ahead to the blood which God would give which would make atonement. The blood of animals couldn't take away sins (Heb. 10:4). So the blood only 'made atonement' because it pointed forward to that of the Lord Jesus. The whole structure of the laws about blood required some blood of atonement which had to be shed in future, a blood sacrifice of a representative human who was not an animal. That blood was to be given to God, and not to man. Hence the stress upon not eating blood.

Lev 17:13 Whatever man there is of the children of Israel, or of the strangers who live as foreigners among them, who takes in hunting any animal or bird that may be eaten; he shall pour out its blood, and cover it with dust-

Burying the life, as it were. In baptism, we give our lives to God and figuratively die and are buried with Christ (Rom. 6:1-10). We are to live life in this spirit that life is not ours but to be given to God. This frees us from all the manic human concern to live life to the full for ourselves. We no longer have this concern if we continually accept the principle that life is not ours, but God's.

Lev 17:14 For as to the life of all flesh, its blood is its life; therefore I said to the children of Israel, You shall not eat the blood of any kind of flesh; for the life of all flesh is its blood-

It is very often stated in the New Testament that our justification and salvation is through the blood of Jesus (e.g. 1 John 1:7; Rev. 5:9; 12:11; Rom. 5:9). To appreciate the significance of Christ's blood, we must understand that it is a Biblical principle that "the life of every creature is its blood" (Lev. 17:14 NIV). Without blood a body cannot live; it is therefore symbolic of life. This explains the aptness of Christ's words, "Unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink His blood, you have no life in you" (John 6:53). Sin results in death (Rom. 6:23), i.e. a pouring out of the blood, which carries the life. For this reason the Israelites were expected to pour out blood each time they sinned, to remind them that sin resulted in death. "According to the law (of Moses) almost all things are purged (cleansed) with blood, and without shedding of blood is no remission (forgiveness)" (Heb. 9:22). Because of this, Adam and Eve's covering of themselves with fig leaves was unacceptable; instead, God killed a lamb to provide skins to cover their sin (Gen. 3:7,21). Similarly, Abel's sacrifice of animals was accepted rather than Cain's offering of vegetables, because he appreciated this principle that without shedding blood there could be no forgiveness and acceptable approach to God (Gen. 4:3-5). Not only did he appreciate it, he *had faith* in that blood, and on this basis God accepted his offering (Heb. 11:4). These incidents point forward to the supreme importance of the blood of Christ.

Whoever eats it shall be cut off

Being "cut off from Israel" may not mean that the person must be slain. For then the phrase "cut off from the earth" would have been used (as in Prov. 2:22 and often).

The idea is that the person who ate leaven (Ex. 12:15) or was not circumcised (Gen. 17:14) was excluded from the community of God's people because they had broken or despised the covenant which made them His people. But there is no record of Israel keeping a list of 'cut off from Israel' Israelites and excluding them from keeping the feasts. So we conclude this means that God would consider such persons as cut off from His people. He would do the cutting off, and not men. In His book, they were "cut off". But there was no legal nor practical mechanism provided to Israel to manage the 'cutting off from Israel' of those who despised the covenant. The cutting off was done in God's eyes, in Heaven's record, and the Israelites were intended to continue to fellowship with such persons at the feasts. This is a strong argument for an open table, and for not seeking to make church excommunication the equivalent of this cutting off of the disobedient from the people of Israel. This explains why being "cut off from Israel" is the punishment stated for doing things which man could not see and judge—secretly breaking the Sabbath (Ex. 31:14), eating peace offerings whilst being unclean (Lev. 7:20- for how were others to know whether someone had touched the unclean, or was experiencing an unclean bodily emission), eating meat with blood still in it (Lev. 17:10,14), not adequately humbling the soul (Lev. 23:29), not keeping Passover (Num. 9:13), being presumptuous (Num. 15:30,31- only God can judge that), not washing after touching a dead body (Num. 19:13,20). This is why Lev. 20:6 makes it explicit that "I [Yahweh personally] will set My face against that person,

and will cut him off from among his people". It is Yahweh who does the cutting off and not men (also 1 Sam. 2:33).

Lev 17:15 Every person that eats what dies of itself, or that which is torn by animals, whether he is native-born or a foreigner, he shall wash his clothes, and bathe himself in water, and be unclean until the evening: then he shall be clean-

The more conscious was the association with uncleanness, the greater was the effort which made to be made to achieve cleansing. Thus if someone knowingly carried a carcass, they had to wash their clothes in addition to being unclean. And it's the same principle here. There is definitely a principle connection between knowledge and responsibility, and conscious defilement requires greater cleansing.

Lev 17:16 But if he doesn't wash them, nor bathe his flesh, then he shall bear his iniquity-

The Lord Jesus Christ knew from Isaiah 53 that He was to bear Israel's sins, that the judgments for their sins were to fall upon Him. Israel 'bore their iniquities' by being condemned for them (Num. 14:34,35; Lev. 5:17; 20:17); to be a sin bearer was therefore to be one condemned. To die in punishment for your sin was to bear your sin. There is a difference between sin, and sin being laid upon a person. Num. 12:11 brings this out: "Lay not the sin upon us... wherein we have sinned". The idea of sin being laid upon a person therefore refers to condemnation for sin. Our sin being laid upon Jesus therefore means that He was treated *as if* He were a condemned sinner. He briefly endured within Him the torment of soul which the condemned will feel.

LEVITICUS CHAPTER 18

Lev 18:1 Yahweh said to Moses-

So far in Leviticus the text has dealt with uncleanness and sin in an abstract sense. Now Lev. 18-20 exemplify this by talking of sin in more concrete, actual terms.

Lev 18:2 Speak to the children of Israel, and say to them, I am Yahweh your God-

The following commandments relate to matters of intimate relationships. If Yahweh is our God, then His commandments and principles extent to every part of our lives, especially the most personal and intimate.

Lev 18:3 You shall not do as they do in the land of Egypt, where you lived; and you shall not do as they do in the land of Canaan, where I am bringing you; neither shall you walk according to their statutes-

The contrast is presented between the word of God and that of man (:4). And this is the abiding conflict in our lives. The chapter will go on to outlaw various immoral relationships and sexual bonding. But these are all prefaced by this commandment not to do according to the laws of the Gentiles. These outlawed sexual behaviours were therefore part of the laws of the various fertility cults. These things were done in the belief they would thereby please the gods and result in abundant harvests. And the idea was the more attractive because it appealed to the lust of the flesh.

Lev 18:4 You shall do My ordinances, and you shall keep My statutes, and walk in them: I am Yahweh your God-

The Hebrew *mishpat*, "ordinances", has a wide range of meaning. The idea is of judgment, as if God and His Angels gave these laws as their considered judgment after considering the human condition, and Israel were to abide by them. But the word also the idea of a right or privilege; and that is how we should see God's laws. They are only felt as a burden because of human hardness of neck towards God's ways. His laws are not of themselves burdensome, but rather a privilege and blessing. The law was indeed "holy, just and good" (Rom. 7:12), designed to inculcate a holy, just and good life (Tit. 1:8), a way in which a man should "walk" in daily life (Lev. 18:4), a culture of kindness and grace to others which reflected God's grace to man. If we dwell upon the idea of "rights" carried within the word *mishpat*, we note that the law begins in Ex. 21:1,2 (also Dt. 15:12-18) with the rights of a slave- those considered to have no rights in the society of that day. The "rights" to be afforded by us to others are the essence of God's rightness / justice.

Lev 18:5 You shall therefore keep My statutes and My ordinances; which if a man does, he shall live in them: I am Yahweh-

Rom. 7:10 "unto life" presumably implies that perfect keeping of the law would have resulted in a person living the life of God, the kind of life which will be lived in the eternal life (which might also be implied in Lev. 18:5 cp. Rom. 10:5; Ps. 19:7-10; Ez. 20:11; Lk. 20:28). Death for such a person would therefore be necessary because of their relation with Adam, but would in another sense be unjust, in that they had not sinned. The perfect obedience of the

Lord Jesus therefore required His resurrection. His eternal life wasn't given to Him by grace, but He was entitled to it by obedience. He had no pre-existent eternal life; He was given eternal life because of His obedience. And His life is counted to us who are "in Him" by grace. See on Rom. 7:12.

"If a man does, he shall live in them" is quoted in Gal. 3:12 to prove that life with God was possible by complete obedience to the Law of Moses. The Law could not give life in practice only in that people broke it (Gal. 3:21). Paul's point in Galatians is that eternal life therefore cannot be given on the basis of doing the Law- because we all break it. But Jesus completely kept the Law, and therefore deserved to have eternal life; but He died for us. Because of His perfect obedience to it, it wasn't therefore possible for Him to remain dead, He had to be raised from the dead (Acts 2:24). The principle that life was possible for those who lived in perfect obedience to the Law would have driven every humble, sensitive, Godly minded person to wonder how he or she could attain to eternal life; they would've so wished to find a person who was completely obedient to the Law whose righteousness could as it were be counted to them. In this sense, the Law was a household servant which led people to perceive their need for Christ (Gal. 3:24).

The life of serious obedience will lead to more obedience. Likewise the man who is obedient to God's commands will live in them, i.e. they will become an integral part of his way of life (Lev. 18:5; Neh. 9:29; Ez. 20:13,21 etc.). The further we go in God's way, the clearer and more obvious it all becomes, and the fewer agonies we face over

decisions, as perhaps we did in our early days of believing. The way of wisdom is "plain to him that understands" (Prov. 8:9). Some seek for wisdom but can never find it; for others, "knowledge is easy unto him that understands" (Prov. 14:6).

Lev 18:6 None of you shall approach anyone who are his close relatives, to uncover their nakedness: I am Yahweh-

Who God is becomes the motive for obedience; our core desire to be like Him, rather than a legalistic, literalistic desire to keep commandments, is what will help us in practice to be like Him.

Lev 18:7 You shall not uncover the nakedness of your father, nor the nakedness of your mother: she is your mother. You shall not uncover her nakedness-

Uncovering nakedness alludes to the result of the first sin in Eden. The idea therefore is not that it is a sin to simply see a parent naked. Rather is it that such sins are sins because you are leading your sexual partner into sin and they will receive the same judgment as Adam and Eve- their nakedness will be uncovered. And so the Lord Jesus likewise reasons that the problem with sexual sin is that it leads other parties into sin (Mt. 5:32).

Lev 18:8 You shall not uncover the nakedness of your father's wife: it is your father's nakedness-

In a polygamous society, this is not the same as "your mother", which has been addressed in :7. We learned in :3 that this kind of thing happened amongst the Gentiles, but was not to happen amongst God's people. Paul makes some kind of allusion to this by complaining that this was happening in the church at Corinth, but it didn't happen

amongst the Gentiles (1 Cor. 5:1). His idea may be that there had been some moral progression amongst the Gentiles in this area- but sadly not amongst God's people.

Lev 18:9 You shall not uncover the nakedness of your sister, the daughter of your father, or the daughter of your mother, whether born at home, or born abroad-

These laws teach that nakedness should only be uncovered before your wife or husband. Uncovering nakedness is an idiom for the sexual act. The allusion is to Adam and Eve having their nakedness uncovered; we have to accept the situation we are in as a result of the curse, rather than having sexual relations with who we like, as if uncovering nakedness is nothing shameful. Our hope is for the curse put on us in Eden to be lifted at Christ's return; we can't lift it in this life, as our own ever insistent mortality reminds us.

Lev 18:10 You shall not uncover the nakedness of your son's daughter, or of your daughter's daughter, even their nakedness: for theirs is your own nakedness-

The idea is that such sexual sin is effectively a sin against ourselves, a shaming of self. Paul sees this as an abiding principle, when he warns the Corinthian Christians to quit using temple prostitutes because they were thereby sinning against their own bodies (1 Cor. 6:18). Sin is its own judgment, and to be made naked is the language of the shame of condemnation (Rev. 16:15). By being naked with inappropriate partners, the sinner was effectively living out their own condemnation. Sin is its own judgment, the condemned are essentially self condemned, and in this sense judgment day is now.

Lev 18:11 You shall not uncover the nakedness of your father's wife's daughter, conceived by your father, since she is your sister-

It is no mere coincidence that so many of these forbidden relationships were seen in the patriarchal family. Abraham and Sarah were half brother and sister. So we see that Israel were being reminded that their whole national basis was rooted in moral weakness from the start. They were God's people by grace alone.

Lev 18:12 You shall not uncover the nakedness of your father's sister: she is your father's near kinswoman-

We note that Moses' father Amram had married his father's sister (Ex. 6:20). It could be that uncovering the nakedness therefore refers specifically to perversions practiced in the name of idolatry, which is the context here. Or the idea may be that the founding fathers of Israel broke these very principles, showing how the whole nation was built upon Divine grace rather than obedience.

Lev 18:13 You shall not uncover the nakedness of your mother's sister: for she is your mother's near kinswoman-

These awful things listed here were clearly real temptations for Israel; for they are repeated in the list of what Judah actually did in their idol worship (Ez. 22:11).

Lev 18:14 You shall not uncover the nakedness of your father's brother, you shall not approach his wife: she is your aunt-

We note the distinction between uncovering nakedness and 'approaching' the woman. The word for "approach" is the standard word used in Leviticus, and very often, for 'offering' in a religious sense. This confirms that

what is in view here is illicit sexual activity performed as part of idol cult worship.

Lev 18:15 You shall not uncover the nakedness of your daughter-in-law: she is your son's wife. You shall not uncover her nakedness-

This was exactly what Judah did (Gen. 38:11,16,24). The founding fathers of Israel broke these very principles, showing how the whole nation was built upon Divine grace rather than obedience.

Uncovering nakedness was what would happen to Israel in the shame of their condemnation at the hands of their one time lovers (Is. 47:3; Ez. 16:36,37; 23:10). But this was because they had themselves inappropriately revealed their nakedness to those lovers when they were still lovers (Ez. 22:10; 23:18). Sin is therefore its own judgment. In this sense it is man who condemns himself, rather than being condemned by the Lord Jesus (Jn. 8:15).

Lev 18:16 You shall not uncover the nakedness of your brother's wife: it is your brother's nakedness-

Herod was condemned by John the Baptist for doing this (Mt. 14:3). This raises the issue as to whether we have a duty to point out to people in the world that they are living in sin. Although it could be argued that Herod claimed to be some kind of Jew, and therefore was under these laws. The laws of Levirate marriage allowed such marriage (Dt. 25:5), so it seems to me that uncovering nakedness doesn't refer to marriage but to illicit sexual activity, probably in the context of idol worship.

Lev 18:17 You shall not uncover the nakedness of a woman and her daughter. You shall not take her son's daugh-

ter, or her daughter's daughter, to uncover her nakedness: they are near kinswomen: it is wickedness-

David took the wives of Saul and also Saul's daughter- and his breaking of the Law in this didn't lead to happiness, even though he remained God's man. But I suggest that it is not marriage which is in view here by 'uncovering the nakedness'. Rather is it some sexual ritual involving sleeping with a mother and her daughter at the same time as part of idol worship. Am. 2:7 condemns a man and his son for sleeping with the same girl, again in the context of idolatry.

Lev 18:18 You shall not marry your wife's sister, to be a rival, to uncover her nakedness, while her sister is yet alive-

Jacob broke this principle by taking Rachel and Leah, and his sad family life afterwards was recorded as a testimony to how if we break God's principles, we may remain His people as Jacob did, but we will suffer the consequences. Many aspects of the Mosaic Law were already in place before it was pronounced to Moses; the prohibition on marrying a second wife who was the sister of the first wife could well have been known among God's people in Jacob's time, seeing that it was a precept based on the principles of Eden (Lev. 18:17,18). "It is wickedness" was God's comment to Moses, and there is no reason to think that His essential moral judgment on this kind of thing has ever changed much. Yet Jacob thought nothing of breaching this command, and committing this "wickedness". And yet through this, God worked to create the house of Israel.

Lev 18:19 You shall not approach a woman to uncover her nakedness, as long as she is impure by her uncleanness-

This verse seems to have stuck in David's mind, in that he lay with Bathsheba "because" she was "purified from her uncleanness". This is typical of so much spiritual dysfunction- to focus on a few Divine words and be strictly obedient to them, whilst ignoring the far larger principles. We think of the Jews being so careful to keep the Passover, whilst crucifying God's Son.

However I suggested on Lev. 15:24 that the woman in view was not simply menstruating but suffering a specific Divine stroke or plague which involved bleeding. To sleep with such a woman was therefore particularly defiant of God's judgments and therefore is so strongly condemned (Ez. 18:6; 22:10).

Lev 18:20 You shall not lie carnally with your neighbour's wife, and defile yourself with her-

This may indeed be a condemnation of adultery, but I suggest that the specific reference is not to having an affair, but to sleeping with women as part of the Moloch cult- and the woman slept with might well be their neighbour's wife. "And defile yourself with her" makes better sense if read as referring to defilement with idols, you along with her. "Defile" is often used in the context of idolatry.

Lev 18:21 You shall not give any of your children to sacrifice to Molech; neither shall you profane the name of your God: I am Yahweh-

We carry God's Name too, in that we are baptized into the Name. Our behaviour must therefore be appropriate to the Name we bear (James 2:7). Children born within the covenant were intended to bear Yahweh's Name; to sacrifice them to Molech was therefore to profane Yahweh's

Name. "I am Yahweh" means that He is real and His Name is real, and we are not to profane it through devoting our children to idols. And we can devote them to the idols of career and secular success just as much as Israelites gave their children to Molech. The Hebrew phrase is literally "to pass over to Molech". "Pass [through the fire]" [AV] is an interpretation not a translation. "Pass over" translates *abar*, the root of the word 'Hebrew', those who passed over. By letting their children pass over to Molech, the parents were denying their calling as Hebrews, to pass over from this world to the things of the Kingdom. "Profane" is the word for prostitution or defilement. This is what we do to God's wonderful Name if we as His people pass over to other gods.

Lev 18:22 You shall not lie with a man, as with a woman. That is detestable-

Or, "an abomination". The related passage in Lev. 20:13 also says that the two men have committed "abomination". "Abomination" is a word distinctly and specifically associated with idol worship. The context of these commands is an appeal not to follow the ways of Moloch worshippers (also in Lev. 20:2-5). As was the case in Corinth centuries later, idol worshippers slept with both male and female prostitutes; and that is what is primarily in view here.

Lev 18:23 You shall not lie with any animal to defile yourself with it; neither shall any woman give herself to an animal, to lie down with it: it is a perversion-

Such was God's desire to teach that we are made in His image, and must not act as animals, bringing ourselves down to their level as if we are equal only to them. So the

message for us is that we are to respect ourselves as made in God's image, and not act on a purely animal level.

"Perversion" is AV "confusion", and is the word also used of God's condemnation of men in "confusion" unto destruction (Gen. 11:7,9). Again we see that sin is its own judgment; people condemn themselves by their behaviour, living out condemnation in their sins. Israel are condemned for having 'mixed themselves' amongst the Gentiles (s.w. Hos. 7:8).

Lev 18:24 Don't defile yourselves in any of these things; for in all these the nations which I am casting out before you were defiled-

I suggested on Lev. 1:1 that Leviticus was given at the beginning of the wilderness wanderings. At that point, God was casting out the nations from Canaan. Their refusal to enter the land was therefore a waste of so much potential. And a reflection of their disbelief in words like these which were spoken to them. Israel were eventually cast out of the land as the Canaanites were intended to be; and yet God's patience with them was remarkable. We note that God's plan was to cast out the nations before Israel so that they could enter the land immediately after leaving Egypt. But there is no evidence this happened- because the people chose not to enter the land. And when they did, they themselves didn't cast out the nations but rather co-existed with them in the land, and worshipped their gods. Again we see how so much potential was wasted; just as many have the path to entrance into the Kingdom made clear for them, but they reject it.

Lev 18:25 The land was defiled; therefore I punished its iniquity, and the land vomited out her inhabitants-

The period for gathering iniquity was fulfilled, and so the land was intended to vomit out the Canaanites (Gen. 15:16). But we see here the flexibility and open ended nature of God's ways of working. For one thing, that period was extended by around 40 years; for Israel didn't enter the land when they were intended to, and so the local inhabitants remained there. And the vomiting out of the inhabitants was to be fulfilled through human agency, i.e. the Israelites were to cast them out with God's help. But they generally didn't do this, and chose to coexist with those inhabitants within the land, and to serve their gods.

Lev 18:26 You therefore shall keep my statutes and my ordinances, and shall not do any of these abominations; neither the native-born, nor the stranger who lives as a foreigner among you-

The idea was that the perversions listed above were not to be found within the land. The original inhabitants who did these things were to be vomited out; and Israel and any Gentiles remaining in the land were to not do these things, lest they be vomited out of the land. This was the Divine intention. But as noted on :24,25, the reality was different. Israel chose not to enter the land, so these abominations were done in the land for another 40 years longer than ideally anticipated. Israel then entered the land, didn't cast the nations who did these things out of the land; and Israel did the same abominations because they worshipped the gods of the local inhabitants.

Lev 18:27 (for all these abominations have the men of the land done that were before you, and the land became defiled)-

"Defiled" is the word used for being ritually "unclean". The land was to be "clean" because Yahweh lived as it were in the land (Num. 35:34). As soon as Israel entered the land, they defiled it by their abominations / idolatry (Jer. 2:7 s.w.). Clearly Joshua was not representative of the people generally, and the generation who entered the land were hardly strongly committed to Yahweh. They had after all carried the tabernacle of Moloch and the star of Remphan all through the wilderness, and Joshua himself told them that he considered that they were so far gone in idolatry that they ought not to sign up to a covenant of loyalty to Yahweh. We can therefore assume that seeing the land was instantly defiled by Israel when they entered it, they therefore did in fact commit the abominations of the Canaanites which are listed in this chapter.

Lev 18:28 that the land not vomit you out also, when you defile it, as it vomited out the nation that was before you-

"When you defile it" shows God's premonition that they would do all these abominations and defile it; and indeed that is what happened (s.w. Jer. 2:7). The figure of vomiting suggests that their rejection from the land was going to happen as an immediate gut reaction if they did these abominations. They did them, but God's response was so patient. It was as if He did not vomit them out immediately as planned, but remained feeling nauseous at their behaviour for centuries, until He finally did so.

Lev 18:29 For whoever shall do any of these abominations, even the souls that do them shall be cut off from among their people-

As noted on :29, this didn't happen immediately, because of God's love and patient, pitiful hopefulness that it wouldn't continue. But they defiled the land when they entered it by their idolatry (Jer. 2:7 s.w.), and they repeatedly defiled the land by their abominations, i.e. their idolatry and the associated perverted practices listed in this chapter (s.w. Ez. 22:4; 33:26; 36:18).

Lev 18:30 Therefore you shall keep My requirements, that you do not practice any of these abominable customs, which were practiced before you, and that you do not defile yourselves with them: I am Yahweh your God'-

The word so often used for "diligently observing" Yahweh's commandments is from the word meaning a thorn hedge; the idea originally was to hedge in. Taking this too literally led Judaism to all their endless fences around the law, i.e. forbidding this or that because it might lead to doing that or this, which in turn would then lead to breaking an actual commandment. And those various fences become elevated to the level of commandments. But this is not the idea. We are indeed to hedge ourselves in ("take heed to yourself", Dt. 11:16; 12:13,19,30,32 s.w.), so that we may keep / hedge ourselves in to keep the commandments of God (Lev. 18:4,5,26,30; 19:19,37; 20:8,22; 22:9,31; 25:18; 26:3; Num. 28:2; Dt. 7:11,12; 8:1,11 [s.w. "beware"]; 10:13; 11:1,8,22,32; 12:1; 13:4,18; 15:5,9 ["beware"]; 17:19; 19:9; 23:9 ["keep yourself"]; 24:8; 26:16-18; 27:1; 28:1,9,13; 29:9; 30:10,16; 31:12; 32:46).

And without falling into the legalism of Judaism, self discipline does require a degree of fencing ourselves in to the one way. Thus the man struggling with alcoholism avoids the supermarket where alcohol is pushed in front of the eyes of the shoppers; the married woman struggling with attraction to another man makes little laws for herself about avoiding his company. And if we do this, then the Lord will "keep" us, will hedge us in to keeping His way (s.w. Num. 6:24)

LEVITICUS CHAPTER 19

Lev 19:1 Yahweh spoke to Moses, saying-

This section develops the theme of holiness and what it means in practice. Holiness means both separation *from* and also separation *unto*. We are separated from the things of the flesh and this world, but that is not a negative, onerous burden. For thereby are we separated unto the positive things of God's service.

Lev 19:2 Speak to all the congregation of the children of Israel, and tell them, 'You shall be holy; for I Yahweh your God am holy-

The inclusiveness of Yahweh of His people, the nature of who His Name reveals Him to be, should of itself have led Israel to not discriminate against other races: "For I am Yahweh your God" (Lev. 24:22). Because Yahweh *is* who He is, therefore we must be like Him; His very existence and being demands it of us (Lev. 20:7 cp. 19:2,10). If we really know the characteristics implicit in His Name, we will put our trust in Him (Ps. 9:10; 124:8). If we see / know God in the experiential sense, we will do no evil (3 Jn. 11).

Holiness in the sense of separation from the unclean had been a major theme in the Mosaic Law, and it figured largely in the theology of the Pharisees. But the Lord quoted "Be holy because I, Yahweh your God am holy" (Lev. 19:2) as "Be you therefore merciful, even as your father in heaven is merciful" (Lk. 6:36). To be merciful to those who sin is now the true holiness- not merely separation from them and condemnation of their ways. Note, too, how He

invites us to interpret the Yahweh as "father", rather than transliterating the Name.

Lev 19:3 Each one of you shall respect his mother and his father-

We have to read this in the context of the preceding chapter which has forbidden idolatrous rites involving sexual activity with parents and siblings. The contemporary Near Eastern legal codes prescribed the most severe penalties for crimes against the wealthy and their property. Rich people were given lesser punishments than poor people for the same crime. The value of persons reflected in Yahweh's law meant that all people were judged equally before the law, and truly there was no respect of persons with the true God. Both father and mother are placed together as worthy of equal honour (Lev. 19:3; Ex. 20:12)- whereas the contemporary laws were oriented towards respect of the male rather than females.

The Lord Jesus saw as parallel the commands to honour parents and also not to curse them. These two separate commands (from Ex. 20:12 and 21:17) He spoke of as only one: "*the* commandment" (Mk. 7:9). He therefore saw that not to honour parents was effectively to curse them (Mk. 7:10). *Omitting* to honour parents, even if it involved appearing to give one's labour to God's temple, was therefore the same as *committing* the sin of cursing them. Sins of omission are perhaps our greatest weakness.

You shall keep My Sabbaths. I am Yahweh your God-

The two laws repeated here, about honouring parents and keeping the Sabbath, are the only two positive commandments in the ten commandments. The others are all

"You shall not..." So this confirms the impression that now having read so much negative, about separation from sin, we are being encouraged to focus upon what we are separated unto, positively.

Lev 19:4 Don't turn to idols, nor make molten gods for yourselves. I am Yahweh your God-

This clearly alludes to the golden calf which they had made. They were not to ever do this again. And yet we know from Ez. 20:7,8 that they took the idols of Egypt with them through the Red Sea, and carried the tabernacle and star of their idols throughout the wilderness journey. Even by Joshua's time, he had to urge them to cast away the idols of Egypt. Perhaps they justified them by arguing that they had not cast them themselves. Our flesh is so able to justify sin. And we must beware of that.

Lev 19:5 When you offer a sacrifice of peace offerings to Yahweh, you shall offer it voluntarily-

The Mosaic law was in fact geared against mere legalism and symbolic offerings for the sake of discharging religious conscience. Voluntary offerings must indeed be just that- from the heart. Freewill offerings such as the peace offering must really be of our free will. We mustn't feel any sense of obligation to others, doing voluntary things to be seen of them, but any act of freewill devotion must be genuine, motivated by our personal desire to devote our time or resources to God.

Lev 19:6 It shall be eaten the same day you offer it, and on the next day: and if anything remains until the third day-

The law of the peace offerings was designed so as to encourage the person who decided to make such a freewill

offering to execute it immediately- they were to eat it the same day they offered it, and the sacrifice would be totally unacceptable if it was killed but left for some days (Lev. 19:5-7). If we have an impulse to respond to the Lord, we should respond to it immediately. This isn't mere impetuosity. It's a spirit of always having an immediacy of response, which empowers us to overcome the procrastination which holds us back so much.

It shall be burned with fire-

"With fire" is literally "with the fire". The fire of the altar was ideally intended to be that kindled at the time of Lev. 9:24 when the tabernacle was consecrated. It was to be kept perpetually burning by the sacrifices being continually placed upon it, a lamb every morning and every evening. The fire which never went out or was 'quenched' (Lev. 6:13). is a double symbol. The phrase is used multiple times with reference to the wrath of God in condemning sinners; it is the basis of the idea of eternal fire which will not be quenched. Rather like the cup of wine from the Lord being a symbol of either condemnation or blessing. So we have a choice- be consumed by the eternal fire now as living sacrifices, or be consumed by it anyway at the last day.

Lev 19:7 If it is eaten at all on the third day, it is an abomination. It will not be accepted-

We cannot be passive on receiving the opportunity to serve God. We will urgently seek to do something with what we have been enabled to do for the Lord: "The servant who got five bags *went quickly* to invest the money and earned five more bags" (Mt. 25:16 NCV). The law of

the peace offerings was designed so as to encourage the person who decided to make such a freewill offering to execute immediately- they were to eat it the same day they offered it, and the sacrifice would be totally unacceptable if it was killed but left for some days (Lev. 19:5-7). If we have an impulse to respond to the Lord, we should respond to it immediately. This isn't mere impetuosity. It's a spirit of always having an immediacy of response, which empowers us to overcome the procrastination which holds us back so much.

If we think our freewill devotions to be God can be done as we wish without regard for His principles, then what we do is obnoxious to Him. The Hebrew word translated "abomination" is often used about idol worship; we will not be worshipping Him, but the idols of our own image and standing in the eyes of people.

Lev 19:8 but everyone who eats it shall bear his iniquity, because he has profaned the holy thing of Yahweh, and that soul shall be cut off from his people-

This was a very stern warning. It was designed to guard against the temptation to spin out eating the peace offerings over several days, so that you personally benefitted from the meat. We are not to offer that which costs us nothing (2 Sam. 24:24).

Lev 19:9 When you reap the harvest of your land, you shall not wholly reap the corners of your field, neither shall you gather the gleanings of your harvest-

This doesn't make allowing gleaning a binding law upon landowners. The text simply states that "When you reap your harvest in your field and have forgotten a sheaf in

the field, do not go back to get it. It shall be for the foreigner, for the fatherless and for the widow" (Dt. 24:19). By allowing gleaners to come and pick up dropped grain, Boaz's grace was going far beyond the letter of the law. This was taking that law way beyond what it said, in a spirit of grace. This would account for the hint in Ruth 2:22 that not every landowner allowed such gleaning in their fields. Likewise he extrapolates from the law of Levirate marriage to marry Ruth. So we see that the law of Moses was not a chain, a leash binding and tethering man to reluctant obedience; for Israel is God's partner, not His dog. But rather was it designed as a springboard towards a culture of grace, kindness and taking initiatives of grace in practice.

Lev 19:10 You shall not glean your vineyard, neither shall you gather the fallen grapes of your vineyard; you shall leave them for the poor and for the foreigner. I am Yahweh your God-

If all Israel were obedient to the Law of Moses, there wouldn't have been any poor in Israelite society (Dt. 15:4). But the same Law of Moses repeatedly instructed Israel to be generous and sensitive to the poor; it tacitly recognized, as did Jesus, that there would always be poor within Israel, for the Law would never be fully kept (Mt. 26:11). We see in the structure of the Law the recognition of human failure in a way which no other law has ever equaled. There's a tendency to assume that the poor are poor because of their own poor decision making and therefore we have no responsibility to help them- although we are all poor decision makers in various ways, especially in spiritual matters. The Law taught a principle we need to learn also- that even

if folk have dug a whole and fallen into it, we are still to assist them and be sensitive to their situation.

Lev 19:11 You shall not steal, nor lie, nor shall you deceive one another-

The command not to steal is associated with not deceiving others nor lying to them. Dishonesty, even if it's unrelated to material gain at another's expense, is a form of theft; we are taking from another wrongfully. The Hebrew indeed means to steal, but also carries the idea of deceit. For to deceive another is to effectively steal from them, to take away and misuse their belief and trust in you and your integrity. And all deceit is ultimately in order to gain something wrongly, even the thing gained isn't anything material.

Lev 19:12 You shall not swear by My name falsely, and profane the name of your God. I am Yahweh-

Ex. 20:7 phrases this in terms of not taking God's Name in vain. But the idea of not taking Yahweh's Name "in vain", 'vanity', is often associated with idolatry. Israel never formerly rejected Yahweh, and never became atheists. They mixed Yahweh worship with idolatry on the basis that they claimed that they worshipped Yahweh through worshipping the idols. This is what emboldened them to later place idols in Yahweh's temple. They were taking Yahweh's Name as a form of vanity, "in vain", a kind of idol. Thus their relationship with Yahweh was not to be a "vain thing" (Dt. 32:47).

The vulnerability and sensitivity of God is reflected in the way that He is concerned that His covenant people, His wife, who bears His Name, might profane His Name

(Lev. 19:12; Ex. 20:7; Dt. 5:11). His repeated concern that His Name be taken in vain doesn't simply refer to the casual use of the word "God" as an expression of exasperation. God is concerned about His people taking His Name upon themselves (Num. 6:27) in vain- i.e., marrying Him, entering covenant relationship with Him, taking on His Name (which we do through baptism)- but not being serious about that relationship, taking it on as a vain thing, like a woman who casually marries a man who loves her at the very core of his being, when for her, it's just a casual thing and she lives a profligate and adulterous life as his wife. When God revealed His Name to His people, opening up the very essence of His character to them, He was making Himself vulnerable. We reveal ourselves intimately to another because we wish for them to make a response to us, to love us for what we revealed to them. God revealed Himself to Israel, He sought for intimacy in the covenant relationship, and therefore was and is all the more hurt when His people turn away from Him, after having revealed to them all the wonders of His word (Hos. 8:12). See on Lev. 5:16.

Lev 19:13 You shall not oppress your neighbour, nor rob him-

The oppression in view is things like not paying him his hire every day (Dt. 24:14,15; Lev. 19:13). The ethnic background of the man was irrelevant; he was to be treated as a person and not in any way abused because of his weak economic position. "Oppress" is the same word translated "deceive"; to not oppress others through deceiving them would elicit the heaviest judgment from God, when the

person realized the deception and cried to God because of it (Dt. 24:15). Deceiving / oppressing a neighbour was a sin against Yahweh (Lev. 6:2 s.w.), because He has a special interest in the poor. And His law reflects that.

The wages of a hired servant shall not remain with you all night until the morning-

Dt. 24:15 adds: "Each day you must give him his hire. The sun must not go down on it for he is poor and sets his heart on it, lest he cry against you to Yahweh and it be sin to you". This is one of many examples of the utter inversion of values to be found in the sphere of God's dealings with men: The rich are to almost fear the landless poor labourer, in case he feels hard done by and prays to God against the rich. The power, in ultimate and spiritual terms, is with the poor- and the balance of power is against the wealthy. James 5:4 specifically alludes to this command, and says that the cry of those we have been insensitive to will enter the ears of Yahweh of Hosts, a title typically associated with His active judgment. The cries of those we hurt are effectively a calling out to Yahweh of Hosts to enter into judgment with us. Whilst we may not have hired labourers, there are many ways in which we can make our less privileged brethren cry out in pain to God; particularly through refusing them fellowship at the Lord's table.

Lev 19:14 You shall not curse the deaf, nor put a stumbling block before the blind; but you shall fear your God. I am Yahweh'-

As if God is especially sensitive to our abusing others' disadvantages in whatever form, and His wrath about this is to be feared. Dt. 27:18 has "Cursed is he who makes the

blind wander out of the way". It was Aaron, their revered leader, who had made Israel wander "out of the way" through the golden calf apostasy (Ex. 32:8). The people surely could not have repeated these words without thinking of Aaron. It was intended, therefore, as a reminder to them of how their very standing with God was by grace alone; and they were not from any wonderful spiritual pedigree, but instead were God's people by grace through faith. Paul repeats the essence of this teaching in warning against making our brother stumble, even if he is spiritually blind. And he applies this therefore to what we eat and the things our own conscience may allow us to do.

Lev 19:15 'You shall do no injustice in judgment: you shall not be partial to the poor, nor show favouritism to the great; but you shall judge your neighbour in righteousness-

We are not to judge in the sense of condemn others, but it's inevitable in daily life that we have to form opinions. But we must always remember that the person we are judging is in fact our neighbour, our brother, our equal; our judgment shouldn't be rooted in any sense of feeling inherently superior over him or her, spiritually or otherwise. We are warned in Ex. 23:3,6 against bias in any way- feeling pity for a poor man who has done wrong is as bad as bias toward the wealthy. Economic status is of no matter, compared to human behaviour and the human person.

Lev 19:16 You shall not go up and down as a slanderer among your people. You shall not endanger the life of your neighbour. I am Yahweh-

Unless we talk frankly to our brother about issues (:17) between us *alone*, then we will end up hating him in our

heart (even though it may not feel like that) and we will gossip about him. The frank raising of the issue with our brother is associated with loving our neighbour as ourselves. This is actually the opposite to what we would think; we would imagine that it would be more 'loving' to say nothing to our brother. But in this case, we will inevitably gossip about him and be bitter against him. The practice of true love will result in an open community in which we can frankly discuss with each other the issues which concern us, with love and not hatred in our hearts. This is the teaching of Lev. 19:16-18. No wonder the Proverbs expand upon it so much. And no wonder the Lord appropriated it as a ground rule for His ecclesia- there must be no gossip in the church (Mt. 18:15).

Lev 19:17 You shall not hate your brother in your heart. You shall surely rebuke your neighbour, and not bear sin because of him-

The implication is that if we don't have transparency with our neighbour, if we don't rebuke them openly and specifically, then we will end up hating them. Just saying nothing about those situations calling for rebuke will only drive you to hate the person in the end. "You shall not hate your brother in your heart, but you shall reason with your neighbour" (Lev. 19:17,18). Unless there is direct, one on one dialogue, the hatred born of misunderstanding will develop. But reasoning together is something only possible if we perceive the value of persons. By not rebuking our brother, by saying nothing and not engaging with the issues when we need to, we are likely to breed anger in our hearts against him or her. Again we note that the law of God is

unlike secular legal codes in that it speaks so much about attitudes of the heart, which are unseen by others and can never be formally judged by any human legal apparatus.

Lev 19:18 You shall not take vengeance, nor bear any grudge against the children of your people; but you shall love your neighbour as yourself. I am Yahweh-

One reason we fail to love others as ourselves is because we may in fact not love ourselves in the sense of perceiving our own value before God. Unless there is direct, one on one dialogue, the hatred born of misunderstanding will develop. But reasoning together is something only possible if we perceive the value of persons.

The structure of the law of Moses seemed to almost encourage the idea of serving God on different levels. After much study of it, the Rabbis concluded that there was within it “a distinction between holy and holy just as much as there is between holy and profane”. They were not to avenge (Lev. 19:18). But they *could* avenge, and provisions were made for their human desire to do so (Num. 35:12; Dt. 19:6). These provisions must also be seen as a modification of the command not to murder. The highest level was *not* to avenge; but for the harshness of men's hearts, a concession was made *in some cases*, and on *God's* prerogative. *We* have no right to assume that prerogative.

Proverbs is often a commentary upon the Law. The many passages there about gossiping are based upon this passage, in Lev. 19:16-18. The fact this passage is expanded upon so many times in Proverbs would indicate that gossip was as major a problem among the old Israel as it is among the new. But notice the fine psychology of the Spirit here:

gossip in the church is related to having a grudge, to hating your neighbour in your heart, to not loving your neighbour as you love yourself (and we are very conservative about our own failings). When the Lord spoke about hating your brother being the same as murdering him (Mt. 5:22; 1 Jn. 3:15), he may well have been thinking of this passage in Leviticus. To hate your brother in your heart, to gossip about him, was and is as bad as murdering him. And this same connection between gossip and murder is made in the prophets (Ez. 22:9 cp. Prov. 26:22). But the Law provided a way out. If you had something against your brother, frankly tell him about his failure, so that you would not hate him in your heart. If we don't do this, or try to get someone else to do it, we will end up hating our brother in our heart and we will gossip about him.

Lev 19:19 You shall keep my statutes-

It could be argued that the following commandments in this verse were hedges around the law to assist obedience- rather than addressing issues which were immoral in themselves.

You shall not crossbreed different kinds of animals-

The first mention of mules in the Bible is when Absalom murders his brother Amnon (2 Sam. 13:29). They were cross bred in disobedience to this command. We get the impression that a generally slack attitude to what might have been considered minor matters of the law was associated with the major sin of murder. This is the problem when we start to think that some parts of God's laws can just be ignored.

You shall not sow your field with two kinds of seed-

The commandments about not inappropriately mixing things in Dt. 22 are sandwiched between commandments about avoiding sexual perversion and inappropriate bonding, such as adultery, sex with a father's wife (Dt. 22:30), and the perversion of Dt. 22:5, which is also about inappropriate mixture of sexual behaviours. There is a similar sexual context here in :20. The idea of these commands about not mixing seed and animals may be as it were a fence around these laws. The fear was that this was going to be a subliminal temptation towards sin. Rather like the command not to plant trees near an altar of Yahweh, lest this lead to the subliminal temptation to worship the trees like an asherah grove.

Neither shall there come upon you a garment made of two kinds of material-

Again, as discussed above, there is nothing intrinsically sinful about this. Rather the idea was that in daily life, there was to be the lesson of separation and avoidance of inappropriate bonding. Dt. 22:11 speaks specifically of not mixing linen and wool. It could be argued that "linen" came from Egypt (1 Kings 10:28; Prov. 7:16; Ez. 27:7), whilst wool was the classic produce of Israel.

Mal. 2:11-15 shows that the sin of marriage out of the faith is because it is a denial of God's principles regarding children; He instituted marriage to create "a Godly seed". It stands to reason that marrying an unbeliever (or an uncommitted believer, for that matter) cannot very easily produce a Godly seed. Israel were not to sow "mingled seed" in their fields, or make clothes of "mingled" materials (Lev. 19:19). The materials would, as the Lord Himself men-

tioned, tear apart. The garment wouldn't last. And sowing different seeds together likewise would bring no fruit to perfection. But the LXX in these passages is quoted in one place only in the NT: "Be not unequally yoked together with unbelievers" (2 Cor. 6:14). If we are, *the relationship can't work*. So don't think that if we marry out of the Faith, it will all work out OK. Unless there is serious repentance (and even then, not always), *it won't work*. It will be a garment patched up with two different materials.

Lev 19:20 If a man lies carnally with a woman who is a slave girl, pledged to be married to another man, and not ransomed, or given her freedom; they shall be punished. They shall not be put to death, because she was not free-

See on :19. The Mosaic law appears to take into account that slavery is indeed slavery, and this does make a difference (also Ex. 21:20,21). The toleration of slavery was a concession to their weakness, but having made the concession, God shows integrity in to some extent accepting the status of the slave and the diminished rights which go with that.

Lev 19:21 He shall bring his trespass offering to Yahweh, to the door of the Tent of Meeting, even a ram for a trespass offering-

Nothing is said about payment of recompense to the intended bridegroom of the woman, perhaps because the idea is that he was also a slave and didn't have full rights; see on :20.

Lev 19:22 The priest shall make atonement for him with the ram of the trespass offering before Yahweh for his sin

which he has committed; and the sin which he has committed shall be forgiven him-

It is commonly stated in the Mosaic law that the priest made atonement. Any thoughtful person would have soon concluded that indeed the blood of bulls and goats could not of itself atone for sin (Heb. 10:4). The role of the priest in bringing about the atonement was therefore critical. And yet they too were flawed. So this invited the spiritually minded to look forward to the coming of an ideal priest, the Lord Jesus.

Lev 19:23 When you come into the land, and have planted all kinds of trees for food, then you shall count their fruit as forbidden. Three years shall they be forbidden to you. It shall not be eaten-

Forbidden fruit naturally recalls the forbidden fruit on the tree in Eden. To grab as much as we can immediately without working for it nor recognizing that the firstfruits of all human endeavour must be given to the Lord- is all very human and common. But to do so is painted as being as bad as taking the forbidden fruit of Eden, with all the long term suffering which came as a result of short-termism.

Lev 19:24 But in the fourth year all its fruit shall be holy, for giving a praise offering to Yahweh-

This was all designed to teach self control. For three years the fruit couldn't be eaten, on the fourth year the fruit must be offered to God, and only on the fifth year could the fruit be eaten (:25). Self control, delayed gratification, looking to the long term rather than the short term, is what

spiritual life is all about. And such things are increasingly in deficit in secular society.

Lev 19:25 In the fifth year you shall eat its fruit, that it may yield its increase to you. I am Yahweh your God-

The implication could be that if the required self control discussed on :24 was not followed, then the tree would not "yield its increase" - a phrase often used about how God would make the plants of the land yield their increase abundantly to an obedient Israel.

Lev 19:26 You shall not eat any meat with the blood still in it; neither shall you use enchantments, nor practise sorcery-

These two commandments are put together because drinking blood was part of many idol worshipping rituals. Hence LXX speaks of eating blood "upon the mountains". One practical consequence of this was that obedience would have meant social separation from the Canaanites; for none of them observed these positions on blood, indeed eating blood or meat with much blood in it was a delicacy. Blood represents life; to take life to ourselves rather than recognize it is God's results in us losing our lives (Lev. 17:14). Just as simply as the blood was to be given to God, so we are to give our lives to God. To take the blood to themselves is in fact spoken of as being as bad as murder (Lev. 17:4). This seems extreme language, but it underlines how important to God is this principle- that life is His and we are to give it to Him rather than live or take it to ourselves. In baptism, we give our lives to God and figuratively die and are buried with Christ (Rom. 6:1-10). We are to live life in this spirit that life is not ours but to be given to God. This frees us from all the manic human concern

to live life to the full for ourselves. We no longer have this concern if we continually accept the principle that life is not ours, but God's.

AV "observe times" is literally "exercise the evil eye". They were to reject pagan notions of a cosmic Satan and demons, and believe instead that good and evil come from God, not the evil eye (Is. 45:5-7).

Lev 19:27 You shall not cut the hair on the sides of your heads, neither shall you clip off the edge of your beard-

This was the style of mourning in the surrounding world. And it had some hints of idolatry. We could take this as meaning 'Don't follow the fashions of the world when they are allusive to idolatry and sinful ways'. And that has abiding relevance. The spiritual way of life seeks to cut off all opportunities for the flesh; all subliminal encouragements to sin are to be rooted out of our lives, rather than seeing how close we can sail to the wind.

Lev 19:28 You shall not make any cuttings in your flesh for the dead, nor tattoo any marks on you. I am Yahweh-

The context refers to such marks as showed loyalty to an idol or to the dead who were thought to be still alive. Whereas the Bible teaches that death is unconsciousness. Whilst there is nothing morally wrong with cutting the skin, the idea was that Israel weren't to even appear associated with pagan rituals for the dead. We likewise should naturally not want to even appear like worshippers of any other god (of whatever kind) when Yahweh is our only God.

Lev 19:29 Don't profane your daughter, to make her a prostitute; lest the land fall to prostitution, and the land become full of wickedness-

Sexual misbehaviour sets an example which spreads so easily. Thus if a very poor man discreetly prostituted his daughter out of financial desperation, the whole land would fall to whoredom and sexual abandon. But the idea behind making a daughter a prostitute likely refers to making her serve as a cult prostitute in the idol rituals. The serious nature of sexual sin is that it leads others into sin, by its very nature. The Lord Jesus reasoned likewise (Mt. 5:32).

Lev 19:30 You shall keep my Sabbaths, and reverence my sanctuary: I am Yahweh-

The stress may be upon the word "My". The systems of idol worships also required days to be kept as holy to them, and *their* sanctuaries to be revered. For the context here is all about avoiding idolatry. Yahweh's claims upon His people are supreme. There is no way we can worship both Yahweh and idols; the Sabbath was to be kept exclusively for Him rather than also to the other gods who also demanded that a Sabbath be kept to them. Perhaps this was one reason for the Sabbath legislation at this time- to preclude keeping Sabbath to any other god. But Israel as so many to-day sought to worship Yahweh through idol worship. The church at Corinth made the same mistake.

Lev 19:31 Don't turn to those who are mediums, nor to the wizards-

The Bible is written in terms which the surrounding people would have understood; therefore it sometimes speaks of how things appear to be *as if* this really is the case.

God warns against dabbling with “them that *have* familiar spirits” (Lev. 19:31 AV); not ‘those who think they’ve got access to the supposed spirit world which, of course, doesn’t exist’. This is the same approach the New Testament adopts to the demons issue.

Don't seek them out, to be defiled by them. I am Yahweh your God-

This is exactly what Saul did in seeking out the witch of Endor. He thereby showed that Yahweh was not his God, and yet he went to the witch because he wanted to find connection with Yahweh.

Lev 19:32 You shall rise up before the gray head, and honour the face of an old man, and you shall fear your God. I am Yahweh-

"Fear the Lord your God" of Ex. 9:30; Lev. 19:14,32; 25:17 becomes "love the Lord your God" in the greater maturity of Deuteronomy, the second law (Dt. 6:5; 7:9; 10:12; 11:1; 19:9; 30:6,16,20). Some time, read through the book of Deuteronomy in one or two sessions. You'll see many themes of Moses in Deuteronomy. It really shows how Moses felt towards Israel, and how the Lord Jesus feels towards us, and especially how he felt towards us just before his death. For this is what the whole book prefigures. "Love" and the idea of love occurs far more in Deuteronomy than in the other books of the Law. There are 23 references to not hating in Deuteronomy, compared to only 5 in Ex. - Num.; Moses saw the danger of bitterness and lack of love. He saw these things as the spiritual cancer they are, in his time of maturity he warned his beloved people against them. His mind was full of them. The LXX uses the

word *ekklesia* eight times in Deuteronomy, but not once in Moses' other words (Dt. 4:10; 9:10; 18:16; 23:1,2,3,8; 32:1). Responsibility for the whole family God had redeemed was a mark of Moses; maturity at the end of his life, at the time of Deuteronomy. It is observable that both as a community and as individuals, this will be a sign of our maturity too.

Lev 19:33 If a stranger lives as a foreigner with you in your land, you shall not do him wrong-

Israel were to be motivated in kindness to others by the recollection that they had been redeemed from Egypt; the memory of our redemption through the waters of baptism [cp. the Red Sea] should have the same effect upon us. Deceiving / oppressing a neighbour was a sin against Yahweh (Dt. 24:14; Lev. 6:2 s.w.), because He has a special interest in the poor. And His law reflects that.

Lev 19:34 The stranger who lives as a foreigner with you shall be to you as the native-born among you, and you shall love him as yourself; for you lived as foreigners in the land of Egypt. I am Yahweh your God-

Try to see the historical events which occurred to Israel as relevant to you personally. They were "types of us". Note how 1 Cor. 10:1 speaks of "*our* fathers" - even when Paul is writing to Gentiles. He intended them to see in the Jewish fathers a type of themselves. Israel's keeping of the Passover implied that each subsequent Israelite had personally been redeemed that night. All down the years, they were to treat the stranger fairly: "for you know the heart of an alien" (Ex. 23:9). The body of believers, the body of Christ, is not only world-wide geographically at this point in time; it stretches

back over time as well as distance, to include all those who have truly believed. This is why David found such inspiration from the history of Israel in his own crises (e.g. Ps. 77).

The law of Moses often seems to allude back to the weaknesses of the patriarchs. Lev. 19:34 warns about mistreating the *hagger* living amongst God's people- the stranger, refugee, foreigner. This is a related word to 'Hagar'- it has the same consonants. Clearly the message to Israel was to not treat foreigners as Sarah had treated Hagar.

Lev 19:35 You shall do no unrighteousness in judgment, in measures of length, of weight, or of quantity-

The Hebrew *mishpat*, "judgment", s.w. "ordinances", has a wide range of meaning. The idea is of judgment, as if God and His Angels gave these laws as their considered judgment after considering the human condition, and Israel were to abide by them. But the word also the idea of a right or privilege; and that is how we should see God's laws. They are only felt as a burden because of human hardness of neck towards God's ways. His laws are not of themselves burdensome, but rather a privilege and blessing. The law was indeed "holy, just and good" (Rom. 7:12), designed to inculcate a holy, just and good life (Tit. 1:8), a way in which a man should "walk" in daily life (Lev. 18:4), a culture of kindness and grace to others which reflected God's grace to man. If we dwell upon the idea of "rights" carried within the word *mishpat*, we note that the law begins in Ex. 21:1,2 (also Dt. 15:12-18) with the rights of a slave- those considered to have no rights in the society of that day. The "rights" to be afforded by us to others are the essence of God's rightness / justice.

Lev 19:36 You shall have just balances, just weights, a just ephah, and a just hin. I am Yahweh your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt-

Israel's deliverance from Egypt was by grace, not justice. They worshipped idols there and took them with them through the Red Sea (Ez. 20:7,8). Their salvation was by grace and not by justice, for their just desert was to be abandoned there. Our salvation is likewise only "just" because we are in Christ, on a personal level we are saved despite our unworthiness. One response to this is to seek to be just in all our dealings.

Deuteronomy, the second law, stresses these things. Dt. 25:13 says that "You must not have in your bag different weights, a great and a small". Deceitful traders still use balancing weights (Heb. "stones") of different weights, the lighter to sell with, the heavier to buy with. But the reference to the bag suggests that this command strikes at the forethought before the action. Don't go to market having prepared such weights in your bag. Any human legal code would focus just upon the act of using deceitful weights, whereas God foresees the planning and thought process behind the act of sin. Dt. 25:14 goes further: "You must not have in your house different measures, a great and a small". To avoid temptation it's best to not even possess things which we may be tempted to misuse. See on :13. The act of deceiving at the market was analyzed by God as beginning in the home, and it was there and to that thought that the Divine law struck. Even possessing such "different measures" was a temptation to misuse them, and we take the lesson that we are to remove sources of temptation.

Dt. 25:16 adds: "For all who do such things, all who do unrighteously, are an abomination to Yahweh your God". The 'doing' in view is not deceiving customers in the marketplace but the forethought which preceded it- having unjust weights and measures in your bag when you set out to market, or even having them in your home (Dt. 25:13,14). The Lord Jesus rightly interpreted this teaching as meaning that the thought is counted as the action, the doing. These forethoughts, planning deceit in order to gain a petty amount of material advantage, were seen by Yahweh as "abomination", the word for idol worship. And such things are our temptation constantly.

Lev 19:37 You shall observe all my statutes, and all my ordinances, and do them. I am Yahweh'-

The word so often used for "diligently observing" Yahweh's commandments is from the word meaning a thorn hedge; the idea originally was to hedge in. Taking this too literally led Judaism to all their endless fences around the law, i.e. forbidding this or that because it might lead to doing that or this, which in turn would then lead to breaking an actual commandment. And those various fences become elevated to the level of commandments. But this is not the idea. We are indeed to hedge ourselves in ("take heed to yourself", Dt. 11:16; 12:13,19,30,32 s.w.), so that we may keep / hedge ourselves in to keep the commandments of God (Lev. 18:4,5,26,30; 19:19,37; 20:8,22; 22:9,31; 25:18; 26:3; Num. 28:2; Dt. 7:11,12; 8:1,11 [s.w. "beware"]; 10:13; 11:1,8,22,32; 12:1; 13:4,18; ; 15:5,9 ["beware"]; 17:19; 19:9; 23:9 ["keep yourself"]; 24:8; 26:16-18; 27:1; 28:1,9,13; 29:9; 30:10,16; 31:12; 32:46).

And without falling into the legalism of Judaism, self discipline does require a degree of fencing ourselves in to the one way. Thus the man struggling with alcoholism avoids the supermarket where alcohol is pushed in front of the eyes of the shoppers; the married woman struggling with attraction to another man makes little laws for herself about avoiding his company. And if we do this, then the Lord will "keep" us, will hedge us in to keeping His way (s.w. Num. 6:24).

LEVITICUS CHAPTER 20

Lev 20:1 Yahweh spoke to Moses, saying-

The theme of this section appears to be of capital offences against God, which were to be punished by execution, or by God cutting the person off in His own way and time.

Lev 20:2 Moreover, you shall tell the children of Israel, 'Anyone of the children of Israel, or of the strangers who live as foreigners in Israel, who gives any of his descendants to Mol-ech; he shall surely be put to death. The people of the land shall stone him with stones-

Despite this very clear statement, made right at the beginning of the wilderness journey (see on Lev. 1:1), the Israelites carried the tabernacle of Moloch through the wilderness (Am. 5:26; Acts 7:43). They heard these words, but refused to let them really take lodgment within them. And neither did the Levites, to whom they were originally addressed. We must ask ourselves whether we are really allowing God's words to truly register with us. "The people of the land" may refer to the Gentiles living in Israel; see on :4.

Lev 20:3 I also will set My face against that person, and will cut him off from among his people-

The Hebrew word translated 'to cut a covenant' is also translated 'cut off' in the sense of death (Gen. 9:11; Lev. 20:2,3; Is. 48:9; Prov. 2:21). Death and blood shedding are essential parts of covenant making, and in this sense the covenant was ended too by death / cutting off. This means

that God would pay special attention to this individual, setting His face against them, and remove them from His covenant people- whether or not He slew them immediately.

Because he has given of his descendants to Molech, to defile My sanctuary, and to profane My holy name-

Our attitude to our children is our attitude to God's Name. We need to ask ourselves how in our context we might be giving our children to Molech? 'Giving' children to Molech may not only have referred to child sacrifices but also dedicating children to the service of Molech. Our children are to be dedicated to God and nobody and nothing else.

Lev 20:4 If the people of the land all hide their eyes from that person, when he gives of his seed to Molech, and don't put him to death-

Acting as if we didn't notice something is a sin of omission just as bad as a sin of commission. "The people of the land" is literally 'the people of the *eretz*', a phrase which usually refers to the non-Israelite peoples within the land promised to Abraham (Gen. 23:7; 42:6; Num. 13:18,28; 14:9; Dt. 28:10; Josh. 4:24; 1 Kings 8:43,53; 1 Chron. 5:25 etc.). This would be the likely understanding of the phrase here (and in Lev. 4:27).

Lev 20:5 then I will set My face against that man, and against his family, and will cut him off, and all who play the prostitute after him, to play the prostitute with Molech, from among their people-

Israel is so often set up as the bride of God (Is. 54:5; 61:10; 62:4,5; Jer. 2:2; 3:14; Hos. 2:19,20). This is why any

infidelity to God is spoken of as adultery (Mal. 2:11; Lev. 17:7; 20:5,6; Dt. 31:16; Jud. 2:17; 8:27,33; Hos. 9:1). The language of Israel 'selling themselves to do iniquity' uses the image of prostitution. This is how God feels our even temporary and fleeting acts and thoughts of unfaithfulness. This is why God is jealous for us (Ex. 20:15; 34:14; Dt. 4:24; 5:9; 6:15)- because His undivided love for us is so exclusive. He expects us to be totally His. Just as Israel were not to be like the Egyptians they were leaving, nor like the Canaanites into whose land they were going (Lev. 18:1-5; 20:23,24). We are to be a people separated unto Him.

The seriousness of sin is partly in the influence it has upon others. To give children to Molech encouraged others to sin by the example set. The power of our example upon others is far greater than we realize. Verse 14 likewise teaches that sexual perversion in one case could easily lead to wickedness being practiced amongst the whole congregation. Israel were told to destroy any of their number who worshipped idols; but if they failed to do this, God said that He Himself would remove that man from the community. He doesn't say that the whole nation of Israel would become personally guilty by association and therefore the whole nation would be treated by Him as the one man who was idolatrous.

Lev 20:6 The person that turns to those who are mediums, and to the wizards, to play the prostitute after them, I will even set My face against that person, and will cut him off from among his people-

Being "cut off from Israel" may not mean that the person must be slain. For then the phrase "cut off from the

earth" would have been used (as in Prov. 2:22 and often). The idea is that the person who ate leaven (Ex. 12:15) or was not circumcised (Gen. 17:14) was excluded from the community of God's people because they had broken or despised the covenant which made them His people. But there is no record of Israel keeping a list of 'cut off from Israel' Israelites and excluding them from keeping the feasts. So we conclude this means that God would consider such persons as cut off from His people. He would do the cutting off, and not men. In His book, they were "cut off". But there was no legal nor practical mechanism provided to Israel to manage the 'cutting off from Israel' of those who despised the covenant. The cutting off was done in God's eyes, in Heaven's record, and the Israelites were intended to continue to fellowship with such persons at the feasts. This is a strong argument for an open table, and for not seeking to make church excommunication the equivalent of this cutting off of the disobedient from the people of Israel. This explains why being "cut off from Israel" is the punishment stated for doing things which man could not see and judge—secretly breaking the Sabbath (Ex. 31:14), eating peace offerings whilst being unclean (Lev. 7:20— for how were others to know whether someone had touched the unclean, or was experiencing an unclean bodily emission), eating meat with blood still in it (Lev. 17:10,14), not adequately humbling the soul (Lev. 23:29), not keeping Passover (Num. 9:13), being presumptuous (Num. 15:30,31— only God can judge that), not washing after touching a dead body (Num. 19:13,20). This is why Lev. 20:6 makes it explicit that "I [Yahweh personally] will set My face against that person,

and will cut him off from among his people". It is Yahweh who does the cutting off and not men (also 1 Sam. 2:33).

Lev 20:7 Sanctify yourselves therefore, and be holy; for I am Yahweh your God-

The inclusiveness of Yahweh of His people, the nature of who His Name reveals Him to be, should of itself have led Israel to not discriminate against other races: "For I am Yahweh your God". Because Yahweh *is* who He is, therefore we must be like Him; His very existence and being demands it of us (Lev. 20:7 cp. 19:2, 10). If we really know the characteristics implicit in His Name, we will put our trust in Him (Ps. 9:10; 124:8). If we see / know God in the experiential sense, we will do no evil (3 Jn. 11).

Lev 20:8 You shall keep My statutes, and do them. I am Yahweh who sanctifies you-

Note the logic of Lev. 20:8 and indeed the whole spirit of the Law given at Sinai: Because it is Yahweh who sanctifies / counts righteous His people, therefore, in thankful response, "you shall keep My statutes and do them". As they stood and sat before Yahweh and Moses, He sanctified them, or in Ezekiel's terms, picked up a sickly baby and turned her in His eyes into a beautiful woman. And their response to that imputed righteousness was to keep the laws they were given.

The word so often used for "diligently observing" Yahweh's commandments is from the word meaning a thorn hedge; the idea originally was to hedge in. Taking this too literally led Judaism to all their endless fences around the law, i.e. forbidding this or that because it might lead to doing that or this, which in turn would then lead to break-

ing an actual commandment. And those various fences become elevated to the level of commandments. But this is not the idea. We are indeed to hedge ourselves in ("take heed to yourself", Dt. 11:16; 12:13,19,30,32 s.w.), so that we may keep / hedge ourselves in to keep the commandments of God (Lev. 18:4,5,26,30; 19:19,37; 20:8,22; 22:9,31; 25:18; 26:3; Num. 28:2; Dt. 7:11,12; 8:1,11 [s.w. "beware"]; 10:13; 11:1,8,22,32; 12:1; 13:4,18; ; 15:5,9 ["beware"]; 17:19; 19:9; 23:9 ["keep yourself"]; 24:8; 26:16-18; 27:1; 28:1,9,13; 29:9; 30:10,16; 31:12; 32:46). And without falling into the legalism of Judaism, self discipline does require a degree of fencing ourselves in to the one way. Thus the man struggling with alcoholism avoids the supermarket where alcohol is pushed in front of the eyes of the shoppers; the married woman struggling with attraction to another man makes little laws for herself about avoiding his company. And if we do this, then the Lord will "keep" us, will hedge us in to keeping His way (s.w. Num. 6:24).

Lev 20:9 For everyone who curses his father or his mother shall surely be put to death: he has cursed his father or his mother; his blood shall be upon him'-

Note how blood is a symbol of both life and also death (Gen. 37:26; Num. 35:19,33; Lev. 20:9). Both the Lord's death and His life form a covenant / testament / will for us to obey- in both baptism and then in living out the death and life in our daily experience. We cannot be passive to it. Gal. 3:15; Heb. 9:16 and other passages liken the blood of Christ to a covenant; and yet the Greek word used means definitely the last will and testament of a dead man. His

blood is therefore an imperative to us to do something; it is His will to us, which we must execute. Thus His death, His blood, which is also a symbol of His life, becomes the imperative to us for our lives and living in this world.

In the immediate context here, cursing parents may be equivalent to sleeping with them or sexually misusing them as part of Moloch worship (:2-5). In the very similar passage in Lev. 18, at this point there is the prohibition of sex with parents; here we read of not cursing them. The idea may be that sexual misbehaviour involves leading others into sin. If parents agreed to participate, then they would be cursed by God, and so effectively the child who tried to sleep with their parents as part of Moloch worship was cursing them, by bringing a Divine curse upon them.

Lev 20:10 'The man who commits adultery with another man's wife, even he who commits adultery with his neighbour's wife, the adulterer and the adulteress shall surely be put to death-

"Another man's wife, even... his neighbour's wife" is a definition which suggests that every man in the community was to be treated as one's neighbour. Hence in the New Testament, loving our neighbour is interpreted as meaning loving all others within the community of God's people (Gal. 5:13,14). We shouldn't think that because someone is unknown to us or distant from us in whatever sense, that we can act differently to them than we would to the one living next door to us.

Lev 20:11 The man who lies with his father's wife has uncovered his father's nakedness: both of them shall surely be put to death: their blood shall be upon them-

In a polygamous society, this is not the same as "your mother". We learned in :2-5 that this kind of thing happened amongst the Gentile Moloch worshippers, but was not to happen amongst God's people. Paul makes some kind of allusion to this by complaining that this was happening in the church at Corinth, but it didn't happen amongst the Gentiles (1 Cor. 5:1). His idea may be that there had been some moral progression amongst the Gentiles in this area- but sadly not amongst God's people.

Lev 20:12 If a man lies with his daughter-in-law, both of them shall surely be put to death: they have committed a perversion-

"Perversion" is AV "confusion", and is the word also used of God's condemnation of men in "confusion" unto destruction (Gen. 11:7,9). Again we see that sin is its own judgment; people condemn themselves by their behaviour, living out condemnation in their sins. Israel are condemned for having 'mixed themselves' amongst the Gentiles (s.w. Hos. 7:8).

Their blood shall be upon them-

Blood being upon them seems a variation of "they shall bear their iniquity"; the guilt for their own blood or life was upon them. The Lord Jesus Christ knew from Isaiah 53 that He was to bear Israel's sins, that the judgments for their sins were to fall upon Him. Israel 'bore their iniquities' by being condemned for them (Num. 14:34,35; Lev. 5:17; 20:17); to be a sin bearer was therefore to be one condemned. To die in punishment for your sin was to bear you sin. There is a difference between sin, and sin being laid upon a person. Num. 12:11 brings this out: "Lay not the

sin upon us... wherein we have sinned". The idea of sin being laid upon a person therefore refers to condemnation for sin. Our sin being laid upon Jesus therefore means that He was treated *as if* He were a condemned sinner. He briefly endured within Him the torment of soul which the condemned will feel.

Lev 20:13 If a man lies with a male, as with a woman, both of them have committed an abomination: they shall surely be put to death; their blood shall be upon them-

"Abomination" is a word distinctly and specifically associated with idol worship. The context of these commands is an appeal not to follow the ways of Moloch worshippers (:2-5). As was the case in Corinth centuries later, idol worshippers slept with both male and female prostitutes; and that is what is primarily in view here.

Lev 20:14 If a man takes a wife and her mother, it is wickedness: they shall be burned with fire, both he and they; that there may be no wickedness among you-

"They shall be burnt with fire" makes this punishment appears different to that stipulated in the other legislation, where we read simply that the sinners "shall surely be put to death". However, the idea isn't that in this case of a man taking a wife and her mother, they were to be burnt to death. Rather does it mean that the corpses were to be burnt with fire. Achan likewise was stoned to death, and then his corpse burnt with fire (Josh. 7:25). The idea seems to be that the sin was so gross that there was to be a public lesson made out of it. We read of the smoke arising from the burning of Babylon and other enemies of the Lord's people (e.g. Rev. 18:9,18). The idea was that there was to be

a warning to others from this; and that surely was the intention here in Lev. 20:14.

Lev 20:15 If a man lies with an animal, he shall surely be put to death; and you shall kill the animal-

Such was God's desire to teach that we are made in His image, and must not act as animals, bringing ourselves down to their level as if we are equal only to them. So the message for us is that we are to respect ourselves as made in God's image, and not act on a purely animal level.

Lev 20:16 If a woman approaches any animal, and lies down with it, you shall kill the woman, and the animal: they shall surely be put to death; their blood shall be upon them-

See on :15. Such was God's desire to teach that we are made in His image, and must not act as animals, bringing ourselves down to their level as if we are equal only to them. So the message for us is that we are to respect ourselves as made in God's image, and not act on a purely animal level. "Their blood" requires an ellipsis to be read in 'the guilt for their blood / loss of life'. This behaviour was likely in the context of idolatry, and was particularly an Egyptian religious rite which the people had taken with them.

Lev 20:17 If a man takes his sister, his father's daughter, or his mother's daughter, and sees her nakedness, and she sees his nakedness; it is a shameful thing; and they shall be cut off in the sight of the children of their people: he has uncovered his sister's nakedness; he shall bear his iniquity-

It is no mere coincidence that so many of these forbidden relationships were seen in the patriarchal family. Abraham and Sarah were half brother and sister (Gen. 20:17).

So we see that Israel were being reminded that their whole national basis was rooted in moral weakness from the start. They were God's people by grace alone.

Lev 20:18 If a man lies with a woman having her monthly period, and uncovers her nakedness; he has made naked her fountain, and she has uncovered the fountain of her blood: and both of them shall be cut off from among their people-

Lev. 20:18 says that if a man sleeps with a menstruating woman then they must both die. But Lev. 15:24 says that in this case the man must be unclean seven days. I suggest that the language of uncovering nakedness in Lev. 20:18 is talking about some form of illicit or perverted relationship, perhaps with a woman under the stroke of Divine judgment. But here we are reading of menstruation. Menstrual blood was a times drunk or used in various cultic rituals.

Lev 20:19 You shall not uncover the nakedness of your mother's sister, nor of your father's sister; for he has made naked his close relative: they shall bear their iniquity-

Uncovering nakedness alludes to the result of the first sin in Eden. The idea therefore is not that it is a sin to simply see a parent naked. Rather is it that such sins are sins because you are leading your sexual partner into sin and they will receive the same judgment as Adam and Eve- their nakedness will be uncovered. And so the Lord Jesus likewise reasons that the problem with sexual sin is that it leads other parties into sin (Mt. 5:32).

Lev 20:20 If a man lies with his uncle's wife, he has uncovered his uncle's nakedness: they shall bear their sin: they shall die childless-

The implication of dying childless is that they had slept with each other in order to have children- perhaps not specifically with each other, but because this was part of a fertility ritual. But it would not work- in fact the opposite. They would both be unable to have children. And perhaps dying childless could mean that their existing children would die before they died.

Lev 20:21 If a man takes his brother's wife, it is an impurity: he has uncovered his brother's nakedness; they shall be childless-

See on :20 for 'dying childless'. "Impurity" is the Hebrew word for rejection, especially at the last day (2 Sam. 23:6; Job 18:18; Hos. 9:17). Sin is its own judgment; in this sense, man condemns himself rather than being condemned by God. We stand before His judgment in daily life; we make the answer now.

Lev 20:22 You shall therefore keep all My statutes, and all My ordinances, and do them; that the land, where I am bringing you to dwell, may not vomit you out-

The Hebrew *mishpat*, "ordinances", has a wide range of meaning. The idea is of judgment, as if God and His Angels gave these laws as their considered judgment after considering the human condition, and Israel were to abide by them. But the word also the idea of a right or privilege; and that is how we should see God's laws. They are only felt as a burden because of human hardness of neck towards God's ways. His laws are not of themselves burdensome, but rather a privilege and blessing. The law was indeed "holy, just and good" (Rom. 7:12), designed to inculcate a holy, just and good life (Tit. 1:8), a way in which a man

should "walk" in daily life (Lev. 18:4), a culture of kindness and grace to others which reflected God's grace to man. If we dwell upon the idea of "rights" carried within the word *mishpat*, we note that the law begins in Ex. 21:1,2 (also Dt. 15:12-18) with the rights of a slave- those considered to have no rights in the society of that day. The "rights" to be afforded by us to others are the essence of God's rightness / justice.

Lev 20:23 You shall not walk in the customs of the nation, which I am casting out before you: for they did all these things, and therefore I abhorred them-

I suggested on Lev. 1:1 that Leviticus was given at the beginning of the wilderness wanderings. At that point, God was casting out the nations from Canaan. Their refusal to enter the land was therefore a waste of so much potential. And a reflection of their disbelief in words like these which were spoken to them. Israel were eventually cast out of the land as the Canaanites were intended to be; and yet God's patience with them was remarkable. We note that God's plan was to cast out the nations before Israel so that they could enter the land immediately after leaving Egypt. But there is no evidence this happened- because the people chose not to enter the land. And when they did, they themselves didn't cast out the nations but rather co-existed with them in the land, and worshipped their gods. Again we see how so much potential was wasted; just as many have the path to entrance into the Kingdom made clear for them, but they reject it.

The period for gathering iniquity was fulfilled, and so the land was intended to vomit out the Canaanites (Gen.

15:16). But we see here the flexibility and open ended nature of God's ways of working. For one thing, that period was extended by around 40 years; for Israel didn't enter the land when they were intended to, and so the local inhabitants remained there. And the vomiting out of the inhabitants was to be fulfilled through human agency, i.e. the Israelites were to cast them out with God's help. But they generally didn't do this, and chose to coexist with those inhabitants within the land, and to serve their gods.

Lev 20:24 But I have said to you, You shall inherit their land, and I will give it to you to possess it, a land flowing with milk and honey. I am Yahweh your God, Who has separated you from the peoples-

Israel came to describe the Egypt they had been called out from as the land flowing with milk and honey (Num. 16:12), and denied that the Kingdom was in fact like that. And so we have the same tendency to be deceived into thinking that the kingdoms of this world, the world around us, is effectively the Kingdom of God, the only thing worth striving after.

Lev 20:25 You shall therefore make a distinction between the clean animal and the unclean, and between the unclean bird and the clean; and you shall not make yourselves abominable by animal, or by bird, or by anything with which the ground teems, which I have separated from you as unclean for you-

The fact God had separated His people from this world (:24) was the reason for the commandments about them making a distinction between clean and unclean. There is nothing unclean of itself, the commands were given as a

mechanism for teaching and reminding Israel in their daily lives of their separation from uncleanness. Those animals designated by God as "unclean" were "unclean *for you*" - not that they were in themselves.

As Israel were to "detest" idols and idolatry as "abomination" (Dt. 7:26), so they were to "abhor" and treat as "abomination" unclean animals (Lev. 11:11,13,43), lest they "make yourselves abominable [s.w. "detestable"] with any creeping thing" (Lev. 20:25). I suggest this is the reason why God designated some animals as 'abominable'; because of their association with idol worship. The idols of Egypt were often in the form of animals, and sex with animals was part of the rites. Just as in primitive societies today. There is nothing unclean of itself (Rom. 14:14); no animal is morally more or less clean than another. The commandments about unclean animals were clearly intended just for Israel living within a culture of idolatry / abomination involving those kinds of animals.

Lev 20:26 You shall be holy to me; for I, Yahweh, am holy-

Peter quotes these words to his Jewish converts (1 Pet. 1:15,16): "But like He who called you is holy, be you yourselves holy in all manner of living. Because it is written: You shall be holy, for I am holy". Orthodox Jews such as they once were would have been obsessed with holiness in the sense of ritual separation. But this was to be extended to "all manner of living". By being holy / separate over a few things, they were tempted to think that vast areas of life in other areas could be lived as they wished. This was and is

the problem with legalistic obedience. Hence the focus on all manner of living.

These words are quoting from the Levitical code of conduct for priests (Lev. 11:44,45). But those same words were spoke to all the congregation (Lev. 19:2)- for it was God's intention that all Israel should develop into a nation of priests. And this very idea is applied by Peter to the entire church (1 Pet. 2:5,9). We likewise cannot assume that others shall take care of our spirituality; we are in fact called to be Levites for others. All of us have this calling.

And have set you apart from the peoples, that you should be Mine-

But in reality, Israel mixed with the peoples and were not set apart from them. Although God potentially enabled this. We are to live out in practice what we have been made in status by our gracious Father. The very fact He counts us as in Christ, as the spotless bride of His Son, must be both felt and lived up to by us. The way He counts us like this is a wonderful motivation to rise up to it all. Consider how God told Israel that *if* they kept His commandments, *then* they would be His “peculiar treasure” (Ex. 19:5). This conditional promise is then referred to by Moses as having been fulfilled- Israel became His “peculiar treasure” by status even though they did *not* keep His commandments (Dt. 7:6; 14:2 s.w.; Ps. 135:4). Moses concludes by saying that “the Lord hath avouched thee this day to be his peculiar people [s.w.]... that thou shouldest keep all his commandments” (Dt. 26:18). See what’s happening here. God said that *if* they were obedient, *then* they would be His special people. Yet He counted them as His special

people even though they were not obedient. And He did this so that they would be so touched by this grace that they *would* be obedient.

Lev 20:27 A man or a woman that is a medium, or is a wizard, shall surely be put to death: they shall stone them with stones; their blood shall be upon them'

AV "a familiar spirit" is misleading, and many of the modern versions give something like "witch" or [ESV, GNB] "a medium". LXX has "a divining spirit". It doesn't mean she did actually have any such spirit; but that she was considered as having this. Such people were thought to be able to be possessed by the spirit of dead people, and to therefore speak in their name. But the Bible clearly teaches that the "spirit returns to God" (Ps. 146:4; Ecc. 12:7), and that death is unconsciousness. The spirit of dead persons don't enter other people. I would go so far as to say that the record of the witch at Endor, who supposedly had a "familiar spirit", is deconstructing this belief. For Samuel himself appears, and speaks directly to Saul, and not through the "medium". The woman therefore screamed in shock when Samuel actually appeared. He was resurrected, briefly, in order to give God's final message to Saul. The people claiming to have "familiar spirits" lay on the ground and mumbled hard to understand words in a voice seeking to imitate the dead person (Is. 29:4) but Samuel appeared in person and spoke clearly to Saul, directly. We also note that Samuel appeared to Saul standing upright, because Saul bowed before him: "Saul perceived that it was Samuel, and he bowed with his face to the ground and showed respect"

(1 Sam. 28:14). This was quite different to how the mediums lay on the ground and mumbled words into the dust.

LEVITICUS CHAPTER 21

Lev 21:1 Yahweh said to Moses, Speak to the priests, the sons of Aaron, and say to them: 'A priest shall not defile himself for the dead among his people-

Mourning the deceased was not of itself defiling. What is in view is the custom of touching the corpse, which would make them unclean. Touching a corpse made a person unclean seven days (Num. 19:11), and if the priests were on duty then this would have caused a disruption in their service. And they were being asked to put God's service before the desire to touch the corpse of their loved ones. They were not being forbidden to mourn their loss, but rather were being asked not to become defiled by touching the corpse.

Lev 21:2 except for his relatives that are near to him: for his mother, for his father, for his son, for his daughter, for his brother-

We wonder whether Paul's command not to weep for the dead who die in the Lord (1 Thess. 4:13) may have this in mind. The idea may be that this allusion is one of many which encourages the Christian believers to see themselves as the new priesthood (1 Pet. 2:5).

Lev 21:3 and for his virgin sister who is near to him, who has had no husband; for her he may defile himself-

The list in :2,3 includes only direct blood relatives; his wife is omitted. See on :4. But it could be assumed that his wife was included amongst the "relatives near to him" of :2. Ezekiel was a priest, and when his wife died and he didn't

mourn her, the people were surprised as to why he didn't (Ez. 24:16,19).

Lev 21:4 He shall not defile himself, being a chief man among his people, to profane himself-

The Hebrew uses the word '*baal*' in the sense of master or husband. So some interpret this as meaning 'He shall not defile himself as an husband (i.e. for his wife) among his people'. But we wonder why, when he was allowed to do so for his other close relatives (:2,3). But LXX has "He shall not defile himself suddenly among his people to profane himself" - as if without self control, sudden expressions of grief could lead a person into uncleanness.

Lev 21:5 They shall not shave their heads, neither shall they shave off the corners of their beards-

This was the style of mourning in the surrounding world. And it had some hints of idolatry. We could take this as meaning 'Don't follow the fashions of the world when they are allusive to idolatry and sinful ways'. And that has abiding relevance. The spiritual way of life seeks to cut off all opportunities for the flesh; all subliminal encouragements to sin are to be rooted out of our lives, rather than seeing how close we can sail to the wind.

Nor make any cuttings in their flesh-

This refers to such marks as showed loyalty to an idol or to the dead who were thought to be still alive. Whereas the Bible teaches that death is unconsciousness. Whilst there is nothing morally wrong with cutting the skin, the idea was that Israel weren't to even appear associated with pagan rituals for the dead. We likewise should naturally

not want to even appear like worshippers of any other god (of whatever kind) when Yahweh is our only God.

Lev 21:6 They shall be holy to their God, and not profane the name of their God-

Whatever carries God's Name is Him; and we bear that Name by baptism into it. We are to be aware of this and not profane it by inappropriate contact with that which is unclean.

For they offer the offerings of Yahweh made by fire, the food of their God; therefore they shall be holy-

God invited Israel to eat with Him at the altar, which became His table with their sacrifices as God's food, eaten by Him. The equivalent for us is eating with God at the Lord's table, the breaking of bread (1 Cor. 10:21). Eating together was understood in Semitic culture as a sign of religious acceptance and fellowship.

Lev 21:7 They shall not marry a woman who is a prostitute, or profane; neither shall they marry a woman divorced from her husband; for he is holy to his God-

Reference to the possibility of prostitutes who were not punished with death is another tacit recognition within the Law that it would not be fully kept; for prostitution was outlawed. Thus in the very structure of the Law we see God's sensitive recognition of the fact it would not be fully kept. His sensitivity to and provision for our failures in advance, both individually and collectively, shouldn't lead us to think that therefore we needn't take His principles seriously; His foreknowledge of our weakness shouldn't be perceived by us as a safety net for our sinfulness. We recall how Solomon when confronted by two prostitutes did not

order them to be slain as the law required; and his judgment was that of Divine wisdom, which is of grace.

Lev 21:8 You shall sanctify him therefore; for he offers the bread of your God: he shall be holy to you; for I Yahweh, who sanctify you, am holy-

Paul saw the sacrifices of Israel as having some relevance to the Christian communion meal. He comments: "Are those who eat the victims not in communion with the altar?" (1 Cor. 10:18); and the altar is clearly the Lord Jesus (Heb. 13:10). Eating of the communion meal was and is, therefore, fundamentally a statement of our fellowship with the altar, the Lord Jesus, rather than with others who are eating of Him. The bread and wine which we consume thus become antitypical of the Old Testament sacrifices; and they were repeatedly described as "Yahweh's food", laid upon the altar as "the table of Yahweh" (Lev. 21:6,8; 22:25; Num. 28:2; Ez. 44:7,16; Mal. 1:7,12). And it has been commented: "Current translations are inaccurate; *lehem panim* is the 'personal bread' of Yahweh, just as *sulhan panim* (Num. 4:7) is the 'personal table' of Yahweh". This deeply personal relationship between Yahweh and the offerer is continued in the breaking of bread; and again, the focus is upon the worshipper's relationship with Yahweh rather than a warning against fellowshiping the errors of fellow worshippers through this action. What is criticized in later Israel is the tendency to worship Yahweh through these offerings at the same time as offering sacrifice to other gods.

Lev 21:9 The daughter of any priest, if she profanes herself by playing the prostitute, she profanes her father: she shall be burned with fire-

The prostitution in view was likely not for economic reasons, but was rather being a cult prostitute at an idol shrine. This mixture of Yahweh worship and idolatry was especially obnoxious to God. The woman would have profaned not only her earthly father but also her Heavenly Father. This is why this kind of prostitute was to be punished whereas as noted on :7 there were others who were apparently tolerated.

Lev 21:10 He who is the high priest among his brothers, upon whose head the anointing oil is poured, and that is consecrated to put on the garments, shall not let the hair of his head hang loose, nor tear his clothes;-

LXX "he having been consecrated to put on the garments, shall not take the mitre off his head, and shall not rend his garments". If he was on duty, especially at the day of atonement, then this was to be of paramount importance, reflecting the Lord's absolute focus upon His work on the cross. There seems to have been something unusual about the Lord's outer garment. The same Greek word *chiton* used in Jn. 19:23,24 is that used in the LXX of Gen. 37:3 to describe Joseph's coat of many pieces. Josephus (*Antiquities* 3.7.4,161) uses the word for the tunic of the High Priest, which was likewise not to be rent (Lev. 21:10). The Lord in His time of dying is thus set up as High Priest, gaining forgiveness for His people, to 'come out' of the grave as on the day of Atonement, pronouncing the for-

givenness gained, and bidding His people spread that good news world-wide.

This is not to say that long hair is wrong in itself for a male. The pagan priests of Egypt, from where Israel had just been brought out, were noted for their long hair, which stood out from the rest of the male population in Egypt who generally had shaved heads at that time. The principle is that we shouldn't perceive our religion as merely just one of many other religions; there is something utterly unique about our way to God through Christ, who is our only mediator, the only way, "the truth". Whilst on one hand God doesn't judge the outward appearance but the heart, we should also be careful not to have externalities which make us appear to be 'pagan' and not the unique people of God.

Lev 21:11 neither shall he go in to any dead body, nor defile himself for his father, or for his mother-

He would have been unclean for seven days if he did (Num. 19:11), and this would have meant that his ministrations for the people, especially at the day of atonement, would have been interrupted. He like the Lord Jesus was to focus upon the work of saving the people more than anything else.

The Lord's comment: "Let the dead bury their dead" (Mt. 8:22) reveals how He had a way of so radically challenging the positions held by normal people of the world, to a depth quite unheard of- and He did it in so few words. Lev. 21:11 forbade the High Priest to be polluted by touching the corpse of his parents, which would've precluded him from the usual Jewish manner of burying the dead in the first century. By asking His followers to act as if under

the same regulation, the Lord was inviting His followers to see themselves, each one, as the High Priest. We may merely raise our eyebrows at this point, as a matter of mere expositional interest. But to those guys back then, this was major and radical, a man would have to sum up every ounce of spiritual ambition in order to rise up to this invitation. And psychologically, we could say that those first century illiterate Jews were subject to a very powerful systemic spiritual abuse. By this I mean that they were so emotionally hammered into the ground by the oppressive synagogue system that they felt themselves unworthy, no good, not up to much, awful sinners, woefully ignorant of God's law, betrayers of Moses and their nation... and the Lord addresses these people and realistically asks them to feel and act like the High Priest! No wonder people just 'didn't get' His real message, and those who did were so slow to rise up to the heights of its real implications. And we today likewise toil under a more insidious systemic abuse than we likely appreciate, with the same sense of not being ultimately worth much... until the Lord's love and high calling bursts in upon our lives, releasing us from the mire of middle class [or aspired-to middle class] mediocrity into a brave new life.

Lev 21:12 neither shall he go out of the sanctuary, nor profane the sanctuary of his God; for the crown of the anointing oil of his God is upon him. I am Yahweh-

The calling to priesthood was not to be taken lightly. There was the death penalty for not remaining on duty during the seven days of their inauguration (Lev. 8:35), and it could be that Lev. 21:12 implies the same as a general principle. We cannot just resign our responsibilities; for we

are called to the priesthood, our baptism and clothing in the righteousness of Christ was our calling and inauguration (see on Lev. 8:6,7). It is not for us to walk away from our calling. We are in this for life, serving until death, and then eternally in God's Kingdom.

Lev 21:13 He shall take a wife in her virginity-

LXX "He shall take for a wife a virgin of his own tribe". Perhaps this is therefore one of the passages alluded to by Paul in 1 Cor. 7:39 when he taught that marriage was to be "only in the Lord". See on :15. He was also alluding back to the command to Zelophehad's daughters to marry "whom they think best", but only "in" their tribe, otherwise they would lose the inheritance (Num. 36:6,7). The implication is that those who do not marry "in the Lord" will likewise lose their promised inheritance. And this rather strange allusion indicates one more thing: the extent of the seriousness of marriage out of the Faith is only evident to those who search Scripture deeply.

Lev 21:14 A widow, or one divorced-

Divorce was clearly possible under the Mosaic system. If a man's wife committed adultery he could have her killed; *or* he could put her through the trial of jealousy of Num. 5, with the result that she would become barren; or he could divorce her (Dt. 22:19; 24:1 RV; Lev. 21:14; 22:13). Within a Law that was holy, just and good (Rom. 7:12), unsurpassed in it's righteousness (Dt. 4:8; and let us not overlook these estimations), there were these different levels of response possible. But there was a higher level: he could simply forgive her. This was what God did with His fickle Israel, time and again (Hos. 3:1-3). And so the

Israelite faced with an unfaithful wife could respond on at least four levels. This view would explain how divorce seems outlawed in passages like Dt. 22:19,29, and yet there are other parts of the OT which seem to imply that it was permitted. It should be noted that there were some concessions to weakness under the Law which the Lord was not so willing to make to His followers (e.g., outside the marriage context, Dt. 20:5-8 cp. Lk. 9:59-62; 14:18,19). He ever held before us the Biblical ideal of marriage.

Or a woman who has been defiled, or a prostitute, these he shall not marry; but a virgin of his own people shall he take as a wife-

Prostitutes were envisaged as not always being put to death. See on :7. By not doing so, Solomon showed his wisdom. "His own people" may refer to 'from his own tribe', as in :13 LXX.

Lev 21:15 He shall not profane his seed among his people; for I am Yahweh who sanctifies him'-

GNB "Otherwise, his children, who ought to be holy, will be ritually unclean. I am the LORD and I have set him apart as the High Priest". The idea of children being clean or unclean is alluded to by Paul when he says that "The unbelieving husband is sanctified in the wife, and the unbelieving wife is sanctified in the brother. Else were your children unclean; but now are they holy" (1 Cor. 7:14). We noted on Lev. 21:13 another allusion to this section in 1 Cor. 7. Principles relevant to the High Priest are now applied to every believer; willful marriage to the unclean would not produce holy / clean children. Just as the tearing down of the veil into the most holy was a signal that all

in Christ, and not just the High Priest, should now go in there just as the High Priest had done- and do his work, in essence. This was a high calling for those used to the Judaist system doing everything for them. In Christ they were called not just to priesthood, but to participate with and in Him who does the work of the High Priest.

Lev 21:16 Yahweh spoke to Moses, saying-

The demands we will now read for unblemished Levites to serve Yahweh recall the requirements for unblemished sacrifices. But the thoughtful Israelite would have reflected that no man nor animal is without blemish. These commandments were to elicit a desire for perfection which was not possible. And this desire was only realizable in the change of human nature which was to be possible only through the appearance of an unblemished priest and sacrifice, the Lord Jesus. We too are brought up against our blemishes, in order to make us long for this final change which has to be brought about by God's action rather than our own efforts at perfection.

Lev 21:17 Say to Aaron, 'None of your seed throughout their generations who has a blemish may approach to offer the food of his God-

"Of your seed" is LXX "of thy tribe". See on :16. God invited Israel to eat with Him at the altar, which became His table with their sacrifices as God's food, eaten by Him. The equivalent for us is eating with God at the Lord's table, the breaking of bread (1 Cor. 10:21). Eating together was understood in Semitic culture as a sign of religious acceptance and fellowship. As we sit to eat at the Lord's table, quite naturally the very experience elicits self examination.

And we realize that we are blemished; but by grace we are urged to eat at the Lord's table.

Lev 21:18 For whatever man he is that has a blemish, he shall not draw near: a blind man, or a lame, or he who has a flat nose, or any deformity-

A person who feels they are somehow a nice guy and worthy of invitation will be the one who tends to consider others as unworthy of invitation to the Kingdom. He or she who perceives their own desperation will eagerly invite even those they consider to be in the very pits of human society. The lame, blind etc. were not allowed to serve God under the law (Lev. 21:18), nor be offered as sacrifices (Dt. 15:21), nor come within the holy city (2 Sam. 5:6-8). The Lord purposefully healed multitudes of lame and blind (Mt. 15:30), and allowed them to come to Him in the temple (Mt. 21:14). His acted out message was clearly that those who were despised as unfit for God's service were now being welcomed by Him into that service. The lame and blind were despised because they couldn't work. They had to rely on the grace of others. Here again is a crucial teaching: those called are those who can't do the works, but depend upon grace.

Yahweh describes His servant Israel, both natural and spiritual, as a blind servant: "Who is blind but my servant?... who is blind as he that is perfect, and blind as the Lord's servant?" (Is. 42:19). There is a real paradox here: a blind servant, or slave. What master would keep a blind servant? Only a master who truly loved him, and kept him on as his servant by pure grace. Yet this useless blind servant was God's servant and messenger- even though the

blind were not acceptable as servants or sacrifices of God under the Law (Lev. 21:18,22)! God uses His spiritually blind servant people to proclaim His message to the world. The disciples, still blind to the call of the Gentiles, were sent out to preach to the whole world! And we too, blind as we are in many ways, are turning men from blindness to light.

Lev 21:19 or a man who has an injured foot, or an injured hand-

LXX gives "broken" for "injured". Perhaps this was to make a connection with how not a bone of the Passover lamb was to be broken. And this was fulfilled in the Lord Jesus, of whom not a bone was broken (Jn. 19:36). The priests were to be as living sacrifices.

Lev 21:20 or hunchbacked, or a dwarf, or one who has a defect in his eye, or an itching disease, or scabs, or who has damaged testicles-

LXX "or hump-backed, or blear-eyed, or that has lost his eye-lashes, or a man who has a malignant ulcer, or tetter, or one that has lost a testicle". The reference to the "itching disease" may refer to those who had received a specific Divine stroke of judgment, as discussed on Lev. 13,14. Eye lashes are particularly affected by leprosy, so this and the itch and scabs would sound like the stroke of Divine judgment which was similar to what we know as leprosy, although I suggested on Lev. 13:1 that it was not leprosy as we now know it.

Lev 21:21 no man of the seed of Aaron the priest who has a blemish shall come near to offer the offerings of Yahweh

made by fire. Since he has a blemish, he shall not come near to offer the food of his God-

The idea of eating the bread of God, the sacrifice which represents His son, and thereby having fellowship with Him, should send our minds forward to John 6. "The bread of God is He which comes down from heaven", i.e. our Lord Jesus (Jn. 6:33). Not for nothing do some Rabbis speak of 'eating Messiah' as an expression of the fellowship they hope to have with Him at His coming. The sacrificial animals are spoken of as "the bread of your God" (Lev. 21:6,8,21; 22:25; Ez. 44:7 etc.), pointing forward to Christ. In addition to alluding to the manna, Christ must have been consciously making this connection when He spoke about himself as the bread of God. The only time "the bread of God" could be eaten by the Israelite was at the peace offering. When in this context Christ invites us to eat the bread of God, to eat His flesh and drink His blood (Jn. 6:51,52), He is looking back to the peace offering. But this is also an evident prophecy of the breaking of bread service. Many of the Jews just could not cope with what Christ was offering them when He said this. They turned back, physically and intellectually. They just could not grapple with the idea that Christ was that peace offering sacrifice, and He was inviting them to sit down with God, as it were, and in fellowship with the Almighty, partake of the sacrificed body of His Son. But this is just what Christ is inviting each of us to do in the memorial meeting, to sit down in fellowship with Him, and eat of His bread. God really is here with us at the memorial meeting. He is intensely watching us. He is intensely with us, He really is going to

save us, if only we can have the faith to believe how much He loves us, how much He wants us to share His fellowship and know His presence. We are the new priesthood, and can only eat this bread of God if we are unblemished. But we are full of blemishes. We can only be unblemished through believing that we are "in Christ", the unblemished One.

Lev 21:22 He shall eat the food of his God, both of the most holy, and of the holy-

LXX "The gifts of God are most holy, and he shall eat of the holy things". Whatever blemish the man had, he could still personally fellowship with God, but he was not to publically offer the offerings of others. The priests at that moment were to be consciously representative of the sacrifices, which are the only other things which have the language of 'blemish' and 'unblemished' applied to them (e.g. Lev. 22:20). The message may be that whatever a man's disqualification from public ministry, he should never be denied eating "the food of his God", fellowship at the Lord's table.

Lev 21:23 He shall not come near to the veil, nor come near to the altar, because he has a blemish; that he may not profane My sanctuaries, for I am Yahweh who sanctifies them'-

As discussed on :16, there was no man nor animal which was totally without blemish or (Heb.) 'spot'. The thoughtful Israelite would have therefore looked ahead to an unblemished priest and sacrifice which was not to be of the Mosaic order. This idea is alluded to when Paul and Peter write to Hebrews that the Lord Jesus offered "without

spot" (Heb. 9:14; 1 Pet. 1:19); and through being "in" Him, we too are counted as without spot, by imputed righteousness (Eph. 5:27; 2 Pet. 3:14). This idea is hinted at here in this verse; the unblemished were not to come near to the veil, because it is Yahweh who would sanctify them / make them holy. This appears at first blush to be a juxtaposition of ideas; but the sense is that the all were in fact blemished, and it was only Yahweh who would sanctify them or make them holy.

Lev 21:24 So Moses spoke to Aaron, and to his sons, and to all the children of Israel-

Leviticus is addressed to the Levites, indeed it could be that the entire book is a transcription of the things said at the inauguration of the Levites after the tabernacle was completed. But "all the children of Israel" were to be aware of them; the priesthood and regulations were to be no secret. All the people were to be made aware of them, so they might perceive the principles being taught. This contrasts with how the pagan religions tended to keep their priestly regulations a close kept secret.

LEVITICUS CHAPTER 22

Lev 22:1 Yahweh spoke to Moses, saying-

The language of the next verses is used elsewhere about the peace offerings, so perhaps they were particularly in view. Voluntary devotion to God doesn't mean we can ignore His principles.

Lev 22:2 Tell Aaron and his sons to separate themselves from the holy things of the children of Israel, which they make holy to Me, and that they don't profane My holy name. I am Yahweh-

The summary idea is as in GNB "You must not bring disgrace on my holy name, so treat with respect the sacred offerings that the people of Israel dedicate to me". Eating the offerings was one of the many antecedents of the memorial meeting. Once the offerer had dedicated himself to making it, he was condemned if he didn't then do it, and yet also condemned if he ate it unclean (Lev. 7:18,20). So a man *had* to either cleanse himself, or be condemned. There was no get out, no third road. The man who ate the holy things in a state of uncleanness had to die; his eating would load him with the condemnation of his sins (Lev. 22:3,16 AV mg.). This is surely the source for our possibility of "eating... condemnation" to ourselves by partaking of the breaking of bread in an unworthy manner. And so it is with us as we face the emblems. We must do it, or we deny our covenant relationship. And yet if we do it in our uncleanness, we also deny that relationship. And thus the breaking of bread brings us up before the cross and throne of

the Lord Jesus- even now. It brings us to a realistic self-examination. If we cannot examine ourselves and know that Christ is really in us, then we are reprobate; we "have failed" (2 Cor. 13:5 G.N.B.). Self-examination is therefore one of those barriers across our path in life which makes us turn to the Kingdom or to the flesh. If we can't examine ourselves and see that Christ is in us and that we have therefore that great salvation in Him; we've failed.

Lev 22:3 Tell them, 'If anyone of all your descendants throughout your generations approaches the holy things, which the children of Israel make holy to Yahweh, having his uncleanness on him, that soul shall be cut off from before Me. I am Yahweh-

It was not allowed for unclean offerers to eat peace offerings (Lev. 7:20), nor could Levites or priests approach to the sacrifices whilst unclean (Lev. 22:3). But there is no statement that the offerer had to be clean, indeed Dt. 12:22 says that in some circumstances, some sacrifices could be eaten by the offerer whilst unclean. We see here God's willingness to by all means accept the offerer of sacrifice.

Lev 22:4 Whoever of the seed of Aaron is a leper or has an issue shall not eat of the holy things, until he is clean. Whoever touches anything that is unclean by the dead, or a man whose seed goes from him-

As noted on Lev. 13:1 and throughout Lev. 13,14, I suggest that the leprosy in view is a specific stroke of Divine judgment, from which the person could be cleansed by repentance. It doesn't refer to leprosy as we now understand it, i.e. Hansen's disease. Whilst a priest was under Divine judgment, he couldn't eat in fellowship with God.

Lev 22:5 or whoever touches any creeping thing, whereby he may be made unclean; or a man from whom he may take uncleanness, whatever uncleanness he has-

The "whoever" continues to apply to the Levites; see on :3. Leviticus is specifically commandment to the Levites.

Lev 22:6 the person that touches any such shall be unclean until the evening, and shall not eat of the holy things, until he bathe his body in water-

As we as the new priesthood (1 Pet. 2:5) read of these requirements not to eat the holy things whilst unclean, we may wonder how we as sinners can ever eat the bread and drink the wine as required to remember Christ's death. But the fact is, we have been washed and sanctified for service by baptism into the Name of Christ (1 Cor. 6:11 alludes here). This is a status we are continually in- for this is the wonder of the concept of our being "in Christ".

Lev 22:7 When the sun is down, he shall be clean; and afterward he shall eat of the holy things, because it is his food-

The food which the Levites ate is also called God's food (see on Lev. 21:17); their eating of it for themselves was effectively God eating the sacrifices of the people. So in eating it, they were to manifest God, and therefore not be in a state of uncleanness.

Lev 22:8 That which dies of itself, or is torn by animals, he shall not eat, defiling himself by it. I am Yahweh-

Ex. 22:31 says they were to throw such food to the dogs and not eat it. Perhaps "dogs" meant Gentiles. This command wasn't only for hygienic reasons. God wished to encourage His people to have a healthy work ethic, not taking short cuts, but eating animals they had raised them-

selves for that purpose. We live in a society where laziness and trying to live for free has become almost an art form. We cannot ultimately get around the curse, that we shall eat only as a result of the sweat of our own labour. We have to accept our humanity and our fallen condition, looking for the lifting of the curse in God's future Kingdom.

Lev 22:9 They shall therefore follow My requirements, lest they bear sin for it, and die therein, if they profane it. I am Yahweh who sanctifies them-

They were to be holy or sanctified, because Yahweh counted them as holy / sanctified. We are to live out in practice what we have been made in status by our gracious Father. The very fact He counts us as in Christ, as the spotless bride of His Son, must be both felt and lived up to by us. The way He counts us like this is a wonderful motivation to rise up to it all.

Lev 22:10 No foreigner shall eat of the holy thing: a foreigner living with the priests, or a hired servant, shall not eat of the holy thing-

The Law has a lot to say about welcoming foreigners and being hospitable to them. We as the "Israel of God" (Gal. 6:16) should likewise be open rather than closed to the people of the world around us, even though we are in another sense separated *from* them and *unto* the things of our God. The priests who ate the meat sacrificed by the Israelites were representing God by doing so. The food which the Levites ate is also called God's food (see on Lev. 21:17); their eating of it for themselves was effectively God eating the sacrifices of the people. So in eating it, they were to manifest God and therefore a foreigner was not appropri-

ate for this. This was not racism; for foreign slaves and their children could eat of it (:11), the idea therefore seems to be a Gentile traveller who had been given temporary hospitality by a Levite.

Lev 22:11 But if a priest buys a slave, purchased by his money, he shall eat of it; and such as are born in his house, they shall eat of his bread-

Gentiles who had been bought for a price by a priest to be his servants were treated as Israelites. This looked forward to Christ, the final Priest, buying us with His own blood that we might be His servants, and thereby we are fully part of His family and the people of God (1 Cor. 7:23).

Lev 22:12 If a priest's daughter is married to an outsider, she shall not eat of the heave offering of the holy things-

The girl who married a Gentile couldn't eat of the holy things; and neither could a Gentile who was passing through, it is stated, in this same passage (Lev. 22:11). The point was: if you marry a Gentile, then you are a Gentile, and you forego your spiritual privileges which you have as an Israelite.

Lev 22:13 But if a priest's daughter is a widow, or divorced, and has no child, and has returned to her father's house, as in her youth, she may eat of her father's bread-

Divorce was clearly possible under the Mosaic system. If a man's wife committed adultery he could have her killed; or he could put her through the trial of jealousy of Num. 5, with the result that she would become barren; or he could divorce her (Dt. 22:19; 24:1 RV; Lev. 21:14; 22:13). Within a Law that was holy, just and good (Rom.

7:12), unsurpassed in its righteousness (Dt. 4:8; and let us not overlook these estimations), there were these different levels of response possible. But there was a higher level: he could simply forgive her. This was what God did with His fickle Israel, time and again (Hos. 3:1-3). And so the Israelite faced with an unfaithful wife could respond on at least four levels. This view would explain how divorce seems outlawed in passages like Dt. 22:19,29, and yet there are other parts of the OT which seem to imply that it was permitted. It should be noted that there were some concessions to weakness under the Law which the Lord was not so willing to make to His followers (e.g., outside the marriage context, Dt. 20:5-8 cp. Lk. 9:59-62; 14:18,19). He ever held before us the Biblical ideal of marriage.

But no stranger shall eat any of it-

But if the stranger had been bought by the Priest, he or she was no longer a stranger (:11). Paul has this passage in mind when he rejoices that those baptized into Christ are no longer strangers and foreigners but members of God's family and fellow citizens with "the saints", a term which he may well have understood in this context as referring to the community of Israel (Eph. 2:19).

Lev 22:14 If a man eats something holy unwittingly, then he shall add the fifth part of its value to it, and shall give the holy thing to the priest-

We note that the legislation about the cities of refuge likewise reflected God's special concern about unintentional sin. He recognizes that there are different kinds of sin. And in this we see His sensitivity, for the other legal codes at the time saw everything in black and white terms

of obedience or disobedience to legal statutes. The word for "unwittingly" or "unintentionally" is s.w. 'deceived' (Job 12:16). It could be that God also recognizes that some are deceived into sin, and therefore treats those who lead into sin more severely than those who are led into sin. Likewise the New Testament condemns false teachers, but seems to be more acceptive of the falsely taught, the misguided.

Lev 22:15 The priests shall not profane the holy things of the children of Israel, which they offer to Yahweh-

The summary idea is as in :2 GNB "You must not bring disgrace on my holy name, so treat with respect the sacred offerings".

Lev 22:16 and so cause them to bear the iniquity that brings guilt, when they eat their holy things; for I am Yahweh who sanctifies them'-

The man who ate the holy things in a state of uncleanness had to die; his eating would load him with the condemnation of his sins (Lev. 22:3,16 AV mg.). This is surely the source for our possibility of "eating... condemnation" to ourselves by partaking of the breaking of bread in an unworthy manner. See on :3.

Lev 22:17 Yahweh spoke to Moses, saying-

The idea of the following section is that the offerings now described had to be as the offerers, whose 'without blemish' status has just been described. Perhaps this was to develop the reflection that the offerer was to be as the offering. Because the offering represented the offerer; and this is made explicit in the New Testament invitation to be living sacrifices (Rom. 12:1).

Lev 22:18 Speak to Aaron, and to his sons, and to all the children of Israel, and say to them, 'Whoever is of the house of Israel, or of the foreigners in Israel, who offers his offering, whether it be any of their vows, or any of their freewill offerings, which they offer to Yahweh for a burnt offering-

The Hebrew word here for "freewill" carries the idea of spontaneity. This is the clear implication of its usage in places like Ex. 35:27; 36:3; Jud. 5:2,9; 1 Chron. 29:5,9; 2 Chron. 35:8; Ps. 54:6. There is a strong sense of immediate emotion attached to the word (Hos. 14:4). And there was a major emphasis in the law of Moses upon freewill offerings (Lev. 7:16; 22:18,21,23; 23:38; Num. 15:3; 29:39; Dt. 12:6,17; 16:10; 23:23). The other legal codes of the nations around Israel were all about rituals; whereas Yahweh's law encouraged spontaneous giving as part of the way of Yahweh. For He is not a God of rituals, but of relationship. The way of the Spirit is the same today; spontaneous, emotional, personal response to God's grace, responding to Him on our own initiative and in our own way, in addition to obeying His specific requirements.

Lev 22:19 that you may be accepted, you shall offer a male without blemish, of the bulls, of the sheep, or of the goats-

No animal actually is without blemish. God recognizes that we will not attain perfection in this life, but we are to do our best towards it; and His love imputes righteousness to us, counting us as unblemished because of our status in Christ. For only Christ was the sacrifice totally without moral blemish (1 Pet. 1:19). So this looked ahead to the unblemished character of the Lord Jesus. The offering of

sacrifices "without blemish" uses a word which is used about Abraham and Noah being "without blemish" (AV "perfect") before God (Gen. 6:9; 17:1). Although the word is used about the sacrifices, it is really more appropriate to persons- "you shall be perfect with Yahweh your God" (Dt. 18:13), "serve Him in sincerity (s.w. "without blemish")" (Josh. 24:14). The idea, therefore, was that the offerer was invited to see the animal as representative of himself. Our lives too are to be as "living sacrifices" (Rom. 12:1). And yet in practical terms, no animal is without blemish. They were to give the best they could, and God would count it as without blemish; as He does with us. David frequently uses the term in the Psalms about himself and the "upright", even though he was far from unblemished in moral terms.

Lev 22:20 But whatever has a blemish, that you shall not offer: for it shall not be acceptable for you-

The idea of being not accepted may mean that the fire of God would not appear and consume it. "Acceptable" translates the same Hebrew word used for "at your own will" (:19,29; Lev. 1:3; 19:5). The sense is that offering a blemished animal would as it were cancel out the commendable freewill desire to offer to God. Our desire to serve God on our initiative doesn't mean that we can ignore the need to give Him the best.

Lev 22:21 Whoever offers a sacrifice of peace offerings to Yahweh to accomplish a vow, or for a freewill offering, of the herd or of the flock, it shall be perfect to be accepted: no blemish shall be therein-

This repeats the principle discussed on :20; that a desire to serve God on our own initiative does not mean

we can ignore His principles. They are not somehow subsumed beneath the value of our freewill; His will is to be honoured more than ours. And yet "perfect to be accepted" would have struck the thoughtful Israelite as a principle which left them for ever unacceptable- for no offerer nor offering was "perfect". And so again the whole structure was set up to elicit a desire for the perfect One, the Lord Jesus.

Lev 22:22 Blind, injured, maimed, having a wart, festering, or having a running sore, you shall not offer these to Yahweh, nor make an offering by fire of them on the altar to Yahweh-

But this is precisely what the priests at the time of the restoration are condemned for doing in Mal. 1:8. The excuse of the priests would have been that it was the people who offered these defective animals. But they were judged as responsible, as their acceptance of them encouraged the masses in their disrespect. Thus they failed to speak out against the low spiritual standards of their flock, but instead went along with them. So the masses got the spiritual leadership they wanted, even if they despised them (Mal. 1:8,9). For this reason, both society and priesthood were equally to be condemned. They offered blemished sacrifices, when it had been prophesied / commanded in the Ezekiel prophecies of the restored temple that Israel were not to do this (Ez. 43:23). Those prophecies were command more than prediction, and only conditional upon Israel's obedience- which was not forthcoming. So much prophetic potential was wasted, as it is in human life today. See on Mal. 1:7,10; 2:14; 3:8.

Lev 22:23 A bull or a lamb that has any deformity or is lacking in his parts, that you may offer for a freewill offering; but for a vow it shall not be accepted-

For a freewill offering, God would accept a deformed animal (Lev. 22:23), even though this was against His *preferred principle* of absolute perfection in offerings. There was no atonement without the shedding of blood; and yet for the very poor, God would accept a non-blood sacrifice. This all reflected the zeal of God to accept fallen men.

Lev 22:24 That which has its testicles bruised, crushed, broken, or cut, you shall not offer to Yahweh; neither shall you do thus in your land-

Animals weren't to be castrated. We see in this not only a reflection of the huge value God places upon life in general, but also His sensitivity to animals. Verses 27 and 28 may reflect the same. Animals are usually castrated if they have defects so that they don't produce more deformed animals. But if Israel were obedient to the covenant, their animals would be healthy and not deformed, so obedience to this command would have been easier. If we follow the Spirit, then we are led into an upward spiral of spiritual life and an atmosphere whereby obedience leads to obedience.

Lev 22:25 Neither shall you offer any of these as the food of your God from the hand of a foreigner; because their corruption is in them. There is a blemish in them. They shall not be accepted for you'-

Paul saw the sacrifices of Israel as having some relevance to the Christian communion meal. He comments:

"Are those who eat the victims not in communion with the altar?" (1 Cor. 10:18); and the altar is clearly the Lord Jesus (Heb. 13:10). Eating of the communion meal was and is, therefore, fundamentally a statement of our fellowship with the altar, the Lord Jesus, rather than with others who are eating of Him. The bread and wine which we consume thus become antitypical of the Old Testament sacrifices; and they were repeatedly described as "Yahweh's food", laid upon the altar as "the table of Yahweh" (Lev. 21:6,8; 22:25; Num. 28:2; Ez. 44:7,16; Mal. 1:7,12). And it has been commented: "Current translations are inaccurate; *lehem panim* is the 'personal bread' of Yahweh, just as *sulhan panim* (Num. 4:7) is the 'personal table' of Yahweh". This deeply personal relationship between Yahweh and the offerer is continued in the breaking of bread; and again, the focus is upon the worshipper's relationship with Yahweh rather than a warning against fellowshipping the errors of fellow worshippers through this action. What *is* criticized in later Israel is the tendency to worship Yahweh through these offerings at the same time as offering sacrifice to other gods.

The idea of eating the bread of God, the sacrifice which represents His son, and thereby having fellowship with Him, should send our minds forward to John 6. "The bread of God is He which comes down from heaven", i.e. our Lord Jesus (Jn. 6:33). Not for nothing do some Rabbis speak of 'eating Messiah' as an expression of the fellowship they hope to have with Him at His coming. The sacrificial animals are spoken of as "the bread of your God" (Lev. 21:6,8,21; 22:25; Ez. 44:7 etc.), pointing forward to

Christ. In addition to alluding to the manna, Christ must have been consciously making this connection when He spoke about himself as the bread of God. The only time "the bread of God" could be eaten by the Israelite was at the peace offering. When in this context Christ invites us to eat the bread of God, to eat His flesh and drink His blood (Jn. 6:51,52), He is looking back to the peace offering. But this is also an evident prophecy of the breaking of bread service. Many of the Jews just could not cope with what Christ was offering them when He said this. They turned back, physically and intellectually. They just could not grapple with the idea that Christ was that peace offering sacrifice, and He was inviting them to sit down with God, as it were, and in fellowship with the Almighty, partake of the sacrificed body of His Son. But this is just what Christ is inviting each of us to do in the memorial meeting, to sit down in fellowship with Him, and eat of His bread. God really is here with us at the memorial meeting. He is intensely watching us. He is intensely with us, He really is going to save us, if only we can have the faith to believe how much He loves us, how much He wants us to share His fellowship and know His presence.

Lev 22:26 Yahweh spoke to Moses, saying-

We must remember that these commands are given to the Levites- we are reading Leviticus. They were not to consider that the low standards of others were not their concern.

Lev 22:27 When a bull, or a sheep, or a goat, is born, then it shall remain seven days with its mother; and from the

eighth day and thenceforth it shall be accepted for the offering of an offering made by fire to Yahweh-

Animals often died after birth, and it was only by the eighth day that it was apparent whether or not it was deformed. This was to remind them that they were to offer the best to God, and not to offer that which cost them nothing (2 Sam. 24:24).

Lev 22:28 Whether it is a cow or ewe, you shall not kill it and its young both in one day-

The Mosaic law sought to inculcate a culture of kindness and extreme sensitivity to all, even animals. Read like this, the law about not boiling a kid in its mother's milk is similar to the prohibitions of killing on the same a cow and a calf, or a ewe and her lamb. It is likely that this was also related to a pagan fertility ritual, performed at harvest time ; and God didn't want His people to even remotely be associated with that. For He alone was the source of all fertility.

The peoples' behaviour in 1 Sam. 14:32 is portrayed as breaking every principle of the commands about eating blood in Lev. 17:10-14. They ate blood, and also killed calves and mothers on the same day (disobeying Lev. 22:28). All because they were more obedient to their oath to Saul not to eat anything until sundown, rather than to God's covenant. For all this, they were to have God against them and be cut off from God's people. The essence of this has been seen so many times in church history. An insistence upon petty legalism leads people to commit major sin. They are more obedient to the party line and the barked orders of their leadership, than to God. And the legalistic demands of their elders lead them to make utter

shipwreck of their faith, breaking the most elemental principles of their covenant with God. Once sundown came and they were free from the oath to Saul, the people were totally disobedient to the covenant.

Lev 22:29 When you sacrifice a sacrifice of thanksgiving to Yahweh, you shall sacrifice it so that you may be accepted-

The Levite was not to just assume that an unacceptable peace offering was not his concern. He was not to just do his job as if it were a secular day job of mere religion. His passion was to be that others might be accepted by God; and as a nation of priests (1 Pet. 2:5) we should have the same spirit.

Lev 22:30 It shall be eaten on the same day; you shall leave none of it until the morning. I am Yahweh-

The law of the peace offerings was designed so as to encourage the person who decided to make such a freewill offering to execute immediately- they were to eat it the same day they offered it, and the sacrifice would be totally unacceptable if it was killed but left for some days (Lev. 19:5-7). If we have an impulse to respond to the Lord, we should respond to it immediately. This isn't mere impetuosity. It's a spirit of always having an immediacy of response, which empowers us to overcome the procrastination which holds us back so much. Lev. 7 warns against various ways of using the peace offering for the benefit of the offerer. One such idea may have been to kill meat and eat it over three days, and then claim this was a peace offering- when actually it involved eating meat which the offerer wanted to eat anyway. So the warning is against using voluntary offerings [in whatever way] as a front for doing our own thing, offer-

ing what cost us very little, and only appearing to others to have a great religious devotion. Lev. 19:7 warns that "If it is eaten at all on the third day, it is an abomination". We note that "the third day" was not to be taken as 72 hours, and this affects our understanding of the chronology of the Lord's death and resurrection. If we think our freewill devotions to be God can be done as we wish without regard for His principles, then what we do is obnoxious to Him. The Hebrew word translated "abomination" is often used about idol worship; we will not be worshipping Him, but the idols of our own image and standing in the eyes of people.

Lev 22:31 Therefore you shall keep My commandments, and do them. I am Yahweh-

The word so often used for keeping / "diligently observing" Yahweh's commandments is from the word meaning a thorn hedge; the idea originally was to hedge in. Taking this too literally led Judaism to all their endless fences around the law, i.e. forbidding this or that because it might lead to doing that or this, which in turn would then lead to breaking an actual commandment. And those various fences become elevated to the level of commandments. But this is not the idea. We are indeed to hedge ourselves in ("take heed to yourself", Dt. 11:16; 12:13,19,30,32 s.w.), so that we may keep / hedge ourselves in to keep the commandments of God (Lev. 18:4,5,26,30; 19:19,37; 20:8,22; 22:9,31; 25:18; 26:3; Num. 28:2; Dt. 7:11,12; 8:1,11 [s.w. "beware"]; 10:13; 11:1,8,22,32; 12:1; 13:4,18; ; 15:5,9 ["beware"]; 17:19; 19:9; 23:9 ["keep yourself"]; 24:8; 26:16-18; 27:1; 28:1,9,13; 29:9; 30:10,16; 31:12; 32:46).

And without falling into the legalism of Judaism, self discipline does require a degree of fencing ourselves in to the one way. Thus the man struggling with alcoholism avoids the supermarket where alcohol is pushed in front of the eyes of the shoppers; the married woman struggling with attraction to another man makes little laws for herself about avoiding his company. And if we do this, then the Lord will "keep" us, will hedge us in to keeping His way (s.w. Num. 6:24).

Lev 22:32 You shall not profane My holy name, but I will be made holy among the children of Israel. I am Yahweh Who makes you holy-

They as us were to live out in practice the status which God had given them. He had made them holy and acceptable in His sight, and they were therefore to live in a holy manner. Because we bear the Lord's Name by baptism into it, we *are* Christ to this world. Likewise, those in covenant relationship in the Old Testament bore Yahweh's Name, and were therefore in all ways to act appropriately lest their behaviour "profane My holy name".

Lev 22:33 Who brought you out of the land of Egypt, to be your God. I am Yahweh-

The language echoes that of God to Abraham: "I am Yahweh who brought you out of Ur" (Gen. 15:7). They were being asked to act as Abraham's seed, and respond as He did to the Divine initiative in separating them from the world- by following His commandments. Whenever God speaks about His Name, it is in the context of His emphasizing His huge commitment to Israel as His people, often in the face of their weakness (Ex. 12:12; 15:26; 20:2;

Ez. 20:5,6). The very meaning of God's Name is of itself encouraging- although it is somewhat masked in English translations. God 'is' not just in the sense that He exists, but in that He 'is' there with and for us. The verb behind 'YH-WH' was "originally causative", i.e. God not only 'is' but He causes things to happen. We aren't to understand Him as passive, just a stone cold Name... but rather passionately active and causative in our sometimes apparently static and repetitive lives.

LEVITICUS CHAPTER 23

Lev 23:1 Yahweh spoke to Moses, saying-

There are connections between the various sections of Revelation and the Jewish feasts. Here's a summary:

Revelation 5 Passover Rev. 5:6,9 = Ex. 12:13

Revelation 7 Tabernacles Rev. 7:9,15,16 RV = Ex. 23:16; 34:22; Zech. 14:16-20

Revelation 8,9 Day Of Atonement Lev. 16:31; more detailed links in Harry Whittaker, Revelation: A Biblical Approach pp. 104,105.

Revelation 11 Dedication & Purim The Torah readings for these feasts were Num. 7 and Zech. 2- 4 about the dedication of the temple; Rev. 11:10 = Esther 9:19,22. The period from Tabernacles to Purim is exactly 5 months- as mentioned in Rev. 9:5

Revelation 12 Pentecost & Passover The Jews traditionally ask: "On this Sabbath, shall I reap?"

Revelation 14 Tabernacles

Revelation 15 + 16 Atonement & Passover Lev. 16; Ps. 118 the Hallel Psalm

Revelation 19 Passover Ps. 113,114 Passover Psalms

Revelation 21,22 Tabernacles

Laying out the material chronologically, we have:

Chapter 5: Passover

6 months

Chapter 7: Tabernacles

Chapters 8 & 9: Atonement and Tabernacles

1 year

Chapter 11: Dedication 5 months (Rev 9:5)

Chapter 11: Purim

Chapter 12: Passover and Pentecost

Chapter 14: Tabernacles

1 year

Chapter 15: Atonement

Chapter 16 & 19: Passover

Chapter 21 & 22: Tabernacles

1 year

The conclusion would therefore be that we have in the book of Revelation a literal account of the three and a half years tribulation, with the Jewish feasts being the key marker points. And it would appear there will be an especial period of five months tribulation as described between Revelation chapters 9 and 11.

Lev 23:2 Speak to the children of Israel, and tell them, 'The set feasts of Yahweh, which you shall proclaim to be holy assemblies, even these are My set feasts-

"Convocation" or "assembly" is LXX *ekklesia*. This is the word rendered "church" in the New Testament. We could reason from this therefore that "church" specifically refers to a gathering of God's people. At that time and during those moments, they are a church. When the entire community of believers is referred to as "church", this is how God views them- as if they are all gathered together at a gathering or convocation before Him. The word in its Biblical usage therefore doesn't refer to what we might call a denomination or fellowship.

Lev 23:3 Six days shall work be done, but on the seventh day is a Sabbath of solemn rest, a holy assembly; you shall do no kind of work. It is a Sabbath to Yahweh in all your dwellings-

The Lord Jesus invites those who follow Him to accept the "rest" which He gives (Mt. 11:28), using the word which is used in the Septuagint for the Sabbath rest. Jesus was offering a life of Sabbath, of rest from trust in our own works (cp. Heb. 4:3,10). We shouldn't, therefore, keep a Sabbath one day per week, but rather live our whole lives in the spirit of the Sabbath. Just as we are to live the "eternal life" now, the type of life we will eternally live in the Kingdom is to be lived and experienced now. In this sense, as Hebrews makes clear, we "have entered into rest", and yet in another sense we labour now to enter into that rest at the Lord's return. This is a classic case of the "now but not yet" theme of the Bible.

We note that the Sabbath was one of the ten commandments. But the Sabbath was specifically "a sign between them (Israel) and Me (God), that they might know that I am the Lord who sanctifies them" (Ez. 20:12). As such, it has never been intended to be binding on Gentiles (non-Jews). "... the Lord has given *you* [not all mankind] the Sabbath (Ex. 16:29); "... You [God] made known to them [Israel] Your holy Sabbath" (Neh. 9:14). The Old Covenant refers to the Law of Moses, which was replaced on the cross by the New Covenant. God "declared to you (Israel) His covenant which he commanded you (Israel) to perform, that is the Ten Commandments; and He wrote them on two tablets of stone" (Dt. 4:13). God "wrote on the tablets the words of the covenant, the Ten Command-

ments" (Ex. 34:28). If we argue that keeping the covenant made in the ten commandments is necessary, we must also observe every detail of the entire Law, seeing that this is all part of the same covenant. It is evidently impossible to do this. "There was nothing in the ark except the two tablets of stone which Moses put there at Horeb ... the ark, in which is the covenant of the Lord" (1 Kings 8:9,21). Those tablets, on which were the ten commandments, were the covenant. Heb. 9:4 speaks of "the tablets of the covenant". The ten commandments were written on the tablets of stone, which comprised "the (old) covenant". Paul refers to this covenant as "written and engraved on stones", i.e. on the tablets of stone. He calls it "the ministry of death... the ministry of condemnation..." that which is "... passing away" (2 Cor. 3:7-11). However, nine of the ten commandments have been reaffirmed, in spirit at least, in the New Testament: 1st. - Eph. 4:6; 1 Jn. 5:21; Mt. 4:10; 2nd. - 1 Cor. 10:14; Rom. 1:25; 3rd. - James 5:12; Mt. 5:34,35; 5th. - Eph. 6:1,2; Col. 3:20; 6th. - 1 Jn. 3:15; Mt. 5:21; 7th. - Heb. 13:4; Mt. 5:27,28; 8th. - Rom. 2:21; Eph. 4:28; 9th. - Col. 3:9; Eph. 4:25; 2 Tim. 3:3; 10th. - Eph. 5:3; Col. 3:5. Numbers 3,5,6,7,8 and 9 can be found in 1 Tim. 1 alone, and numbers 1,2 and 10 in 1 Cor. 5. But never is the fourth commandment concerning the Sabbath repeated in the New Testament as obligatory for us.

Lev 23:4 These are the set feasts of Yahweh, even holy assemblies, which you shall proclaim in their appointed season-

Paul alludes here when he says that the breaking of bread meeting- the only 'feast' we have under the New

Covenant- is a proclaiming of Christ's death (1 Cor. 11:26).

Lev 23:5 In the first month, on the fourteenth day of the month in the evening, is Yahweh's Passover-

Israel both kept Passover and went through the Red Sea at night. Indeed, it is stressed six times in Ex. 12 that it was "night", and hence Dt. 16:1 reminds them to carefully keep the Passover (i.e. at night), "for... your God brought you forth out of Egypt by night". Other latter day prophecies speak of the events of the second coming being at "night": Lot left Sodom in the very early hours of the morning; and it was "at midnight (that) there was a cry made" informing the virgins of their Lord's return (Mt. 25:6).

Lev 23:6 On the fifteenth day of the same month is the feast of unleavened bread to Yahweh. Seven days you shall eat unleavened bread-

These seven days were to recall the seven days of creation; for the exodus was a new creation of Israel, out of the water of the Red Sea.

Lev 23:7 In the first day you shall have a holy assembly. You shall do no regular work-

Work was obviously required in order to keep the Passover; the "work" in view is therefore secular work. But the Hebrew phrase "regular work" is that repeatedly used for "the work of the service" of the tabernacle, performed by the Levites (Ex. 35:21,24; 36:1,3,5; 1 Chron. 9:13,19; 23:24; 25:1 etc.). Perhaps this command in Leviticus was specifically addressed to the Levites, and the idea was that at the times of the festivals, the Levites were to focus upon keeping them in their own families and not be unduly tak-

en up with the work of the sanctuary beyond what was required by the Mosaic law. The principle is that we must not be so taken up with religious duty that we neglect our own personal worship, especially in our own families.

Lev 23:8 but you shall offer an offering made by fire to Yahweh seven days. In the seventh day is a holy assembly: you shall do no regular work'-

The sacrifices on each of the seven days were two young bullocks, one ram and seven lambs for a burnt offering, with the accompanying meat offerings, and one goat for a sin offering (Num. 28:19-24). This explains why the Jews at the time of the Lord's death were careful about not being defiled so that they might eat the Passover (Jn. 18:28). The reference is not to the Passover lamb, but to these sacrifices which began the seven day feast of unleavened bread which followed the Passover feast, which only last one day.

Lev 23:9 Yahweh spoke to Moses, saying-

We wonder whether the following commandment about the feast of ingathering was therefore given at a slightly different time to the preceding material about Passover; or whether the inspired recording of it wished to emphasize a subdivision.

Lev 23:10 Speak to the children of Israel, and tell them, 'When you have come into the land which I give to you, and shall reap the harvest, then you shall bring the sheaf of the first fruits of your harvest to the priest-

It could be argued that the following ritual was specific to the first generation who entered the land. But see on :14.

But there is no historical record of their obedience to it. Constantly Israel were reminded that God would indeed give them the promised Kingdom, even though at that time as they wandered in the wilderness it must've seemed merely a nice idea. He encourages us likewise.

Lev 23:11 and he shall wave the sheaf before Yahweh, to be accepted for you. On the next day after the Sabbath the priest shall wave it-

The portion to be waved was placed on the priests hands (Ex. 29:25), and then 'waved' or 'swung' towards the altar and then back- not from right to left. The idea was that the offerings were first given to God, recognizing they should be consumed on the altar to God; but then given back to the priest by God. So they ate them having first recognized that their food was really God's, all was of Him, and He had given it back to them to eat. This should be our spirit in partaking of any food, as we are the new priesthood. Our prayers of thanks for daily food should include this feature. All things are God's and anything we 'offer' to Him is only giving Him what He has given to us (1 Chron. 29:14,16). Joseph was likened to a sheaf (Gen. 37:7), as a type of the Christ who was the wave sheaf.

Lev 23:12 On the day when you wave the sheaf, you shall offer a male lamb without blemish a year old for a burnt offering to Yahweh-

This looked ahead to the unblemished character of the Lord Jesus. The offering of sacrifices "without blemish" uses a word which is used about Abraham and Noah being "without blemish" (AV "perfect") before God (Gen. 6:9; 17:1). Although the word is used about the sacrifices, it is

really more appropriate to persons- "you shall be perfect with Yahweh your God" (Dt. 18:13), "serve Him in sincerity (s.w. "without blemish")" (Josh. 24:14). The idea, therefore, was that the offerer was invited to see the animal as representative of himself. Our lives too are to be as "living sacrifices" (Rom. 12:1). And yet in practical terms, no animal is without blemish. They were to give the best they could, and God would count it as without blemish; as He does with us. David frequently uses the term in the Psalms about himself and the "upright", even though he was far from unblemished in moral terms.

Lev 23:13 The grain offering with it shall be two tenth parts of an ephah of fine flour mingled with oil, an offering made by fire to Yahweh for a pleasant aroma; and the drink offering with it shall be of wine, the fourth part of a hin-

The mention of bread and wine looked ahead to the breaking of bread meeting. But they were accessory sacrifices; they imply that there must be an offering which they accompany. And that speaks of the Lord Jesus, and of ourselves in response to Him.

"A pleasant aroma" is a very common phrase. This concept is important to God. It first occurs in Gen. 8:21 where it means that God accepted Noah's sacrifice and vowed that the pole of saving mercy in His character was going to triumph over that of necessary judgment. Under the new covenant, it is persons and not sacrifices or incense which are accepted as a "pleasant aroma" (Ez. 20:41). The word for "pleasant" means strong delight; this is how God's heart can be touched by genuine sacrifice. Those pleasing offerings represented us, the living sacrifices (Rom. 12:1). And

so it is applied to us in 2 Cor. 2:15- if we are in Christ, we are counted as a pleasant aroma to God. The offering of ourselves to Him is nothing of itself, but because we are in Christ and counted as Him, we are a delight to God. Hence the colossal importance of being "in Christ". "Aroma" or "smell" is a form of the Hebrew word *ruach*, the word for spirit or breath. God discerns the spirit of sacrifices, that was what pleased Him rather than the burning flesh of animals. Our attitude of mind in sacrifice can touch Him. Sacrifice is therefore accepted, Paul says, according to what a person has to give, but the essence is the attitude of mind behind it. We think of the two coins sacrificed by the widow.

Lev 23:14 You shall eat neither bread, nor roasted grain, nor fresh grain, until this same day, until you have brought the offering of your God. This is a statute forever throughout your generations in all your dwellings-

The following ritual was specific to the first generation who entered the land. But there is no historical record of their obedience to it. And yet subsequent generations were to keep this, feeling each year as if they had just entered the land. In this sense Biblical history becomes alive; we live in newness of life, as the historical records come alive for us time and again. History is not therefore bunk for us.

Lev 23:15 'You shall count from the next day after the Sabbath, from the day that you brought the sheaf of the wave offering; seven Sabbaths shall be completed-

This sheaf represented the Lord Jesus; see on :16. This came to the feast of Pentecost, around 50 days after Passover. After the Lord's death there was to be a great har-

vest celebration- and that is the significance of the mass baptisms on the day of Pentecost, the greater harvest after the harvesting of the Lord Jesus in His resurrection. All those baptized chose to do so of their own freewill, but things worked out wonderfully in fulfilling the feasts in spiritual terms. We see here the interplay between Divine sovereignty and human volition.

Lev 23:16 even to the next day after the seventh Sabbath you shall number fifty days; and you shall offer a new grain offering to Yahweh-

Dt. 16:9 adds: "You must count for yourselves seven weeks: from the time you begin to put the sickle to the standing grain you shall begin to number seven weeks". These 50 days led to the Greek term "Pentecost". The putting of the sickle to the barley harvest was therefore at Passover (Ex. 9:31). The wheat harvest was seven weeks after this. The Lord's death at Passover was as the barley harvest, and we recall that barley was the food of the poor. He died on 13 / 14 Nissan, and resurrected on 16/17 Nissan, which was when the 50 days to Pentecost began to be counted from; for that was the time when the sickle was put to the grain and the firstfruits harvested (Lev. 23:15). But at the feast of Pentecost 50 days later, there were the baptisms of 3000 people. This was as it were the wheat harvest, of which the Lord's resurrection was a foretaste and firstfruit (1 Cor. 15:20,23). That great multitude represented all who would afterwards believe, and be finally harvested at the last day.

Lev 23:17 You shall bring out of your habitations two loaves of bread for a wave offering made of two tenth parts of

an ephah of fine flour. They shall be baked with yeast, for first fruits to Yahweh-

Yeast represents human sin (1 Cor. 5:8), and was often banned from being offered. But here it was required- to remind the people that they were sinners, and yet God still accepts the offerings of sinners. On the morning after the Passover Sabbath a sheaf of firstripe barley must be waived (i.e. passed to and fro) before the Lord; this represents the resurrection of Christ and the fact He is a firstfruits of us; but so encouragingly, a few weeks later at Pentecost the corresponding wave offering before the Lord was two loaves *baked with leaven*. Leaven always represents sin or corruption. They represent Jews and Gentiles who because of Christ's resurrection and triumph can come into the presence of God despite their leaven, our natural wretched man of the flesh, not having been completely purged out of them. Personally I feel that the N.T. indicates that it is God's desire that we should break bread weekly; if so, then the seven days of unleavened bread afterwards then represent our restrained lives in the coming week until we come to break bread again.

Lev 23:18 You shall present with the bread seven lambs without blemish a year old, one young bull, and two rams. They shall be a burnt offering to Yahweh, with their grain offering, and their drink offerings, even an offering made by fire, of a sweet aroma to Yahweh-

No animal actually is without blemish. God recognizes that we will not attain perfection in this life, but we are to do our best towards it; and His love imputes righteousness to us, counting us as unblemished because of our status

in Christ. For only Christ was the sacrifice totally without moral blemish (1 Pet. 1:19).

Lev 23:19 You shall offer one male goat for a sin offering, and two male lambs a year old for a sacrifice of peace offerings-

This was to remind them that the Passover deliverance through the lamb was effectively ongoing. The Passover lamb was likewise to be a year old (Ex. 12:5). We too are to live constantly under the impression of the Lord's sacrifice and redemption of us. Israel were asked to use a lamb of the first year to record various times when they should be thankful for God's redemption of them in the events which comprise life (Lev. 9:3; 12:6; 23:12,18,19; Num. 6:12,14; 7:15,17,21; 28:3,9,11,19; 29:2,8,13). This was to continually recall to them the events of their great redemption through the Red Sea. And the essence of our redemption, our baptism and salvation through the blood of the lamb, must likewise be brought ever before us.

Lev 23:20 The priest shall wave them with the bread of the first fruits for a wave offering before Yahweh, with the two lambs. They shall be holy to Yahweh for the priest-

The two lambs offered for a burnt offering at the end of harvest contrast with the single lamb offered at the start of it (:12). This was to underline that the receipt of blessing from God must be responded to in dedication to Him-which is what the burnt offering represented.

Lev 23:21 You shall make proclamation on the same day: there shall be a holy assembly to you; you shall do no regular work. This is a statute forever in all your dwellings throughout your generations-

The celebration of harvest was typically a celebration of the fruits of human labour. But God's people were to be careful to realize that any harvest blessings were ultimately of God and not of their labour.

Lev 23:22 When you reap the harvest of your land, you shall not wholly reap into the corners of your field, neither shall you gather the gleanings of your harvest: you shall leave them for the poor, and for the foreigner. I am Yahweh your God'-

The Israelites were reminded of this principle at this point in the legislation lest they become so caught up with realizing their own material blessings that they forgot that others were not so blessed. Whenever we reflect upon our material blessings we are to immediately remind ourselves that others somewhere are not so blessed, and we have a duty towards them. The idea was that the poor could come after the field had been harvested and glean. By allowing gleaners to come and pick up dropped grain, Boaz's grace was going far beyond the letter of the law. This was taking that law way beyond what it said, in a spirit of grace. This would account for the hint in Ruth 2:22 that not every landowner allowed such gleaning in their fields. Likewise he extrapolates from the law of Levirate marriage to marry Ruth. So we see that the law of Moses was not a chain, a leash binding and tethering man to reluctant obedience; for Israel is God's partner, not His dog. But rather was it designed as a springboard towards a culture of grace, kindness and taking initiatives of grace in practice.

Lev 23:23

Yahweh spoke to Moses, saying-

The feast of trumpets is mentioned separately to that of the day of atonement, but it was clearly intended to prepare for it. To blow trumpets was to proclaim a King, or to rejoice in his kingship. Yahweh was Israel's King. Ps. 81:2,4 interprets the feast as jubilation that God is king and judge of Israel- and this thought of judgment leads to the soberness of the day of Atonement. Yahweh is indeed proclaimed as judge, but we can jubilate in that because He will judge with grace and forgiveness.

Lev 23:24 Speak to the children of Israel, saying, 'In the seventh month, on the first day of the month, shall be a solemn rest to you, a memorial of blowing of trumpets, a holy assembly-

Neh. 8:2 records that this feast was used in order to teach the law to the assembled people. It was a lead up to the affliction of souls on the tenth day of that month at the day of atonement.

Lev 23:25 You shall do no regular work; and you shall offer an offering made by fire to Yahweh'-

There is repeated emphasis upon not working whilst remembering God's saving work. Throughout the Mosaic law, there was the clear teaching that it was God's work and not that of man which was to be celebrated and was to be the basis of relationship with God.

Lev 23:26 Yahweh spoke to Moses, saying-

The feast of trumpets featured both conviction of sin and also joy in God's salvation and forgiveness; the same strange mixture of emotions we see in the record of its observance in Neh. 8:1-10, and which we experience in our own lives. And this was all to prepare for the same mix-

ture of emotions at the day of Atonement which followed straight on.

Lev 23:27 However on the tenth day of this seventh month is the day of atonement: it shall be a holy assembly to you, and you shall afflict yourselves; and you shall offer an offering made by fire to Yahweh-

"Afflict your souls" is the word used of how the Egyptians had afflicted the Hebrews (Ex. 1:11,12). Repeatedly, Israel were taught that they were to remember the state they had been in prior to their redemption from affliction; and redeem others from their affliction on that basis, and never to afflict people as Egypt had done to them. All this is an abiding principle for us. True redemption of others has to be rooted in an awareness of our own affliction. This is particularly necessary for those who were as it were schooled into Christ by reason of their upbringing. The details of the offerings are given in Num. 29:7-15.

We note from Zech. 8:19 that the fast of the seventh month, which clearly refers to this fasting at the day of atonement, was to be a time of joy and cheerful feasting once Israel were assured of their forgiveness. And this was fulfilled to a limited extent when the exiles [apparently on the day of atonement] mourned in conviction of their sins, and then with their eyes streaming with tears, were told to go and rejoice with a feast (Neh. 8:10). It was this spirit which was to be found in the subsequent feast of tabernacles, which was to commemorate and rejoice in sin forgiven. But there is reason to think that the exiles on that occasion were told to in fact celebrate on that very day of atonement; another indication that God never intended His law

to be eternally fixed and literally unchanging. Although it is worth considering whether in fact the law was actually requiring fasting; rather was the emphasis upon affliction of souls after conviction of personal sin.

Lev 23:28 You shall do no kind of work in that same day; for it is a day of atonement, to make atonement for you before Yahweh your God-

The Hebrew definitely reads as if it is the day of atonement which made atonement. This verse has been clung on to by Judaism at times when the temple was not standing and the sacrifices associated with the day of atonement were not offered. Their argument was and is that it is the day of atonement which makes atonement, because the atonement is from God's sovereign grace. And indeed there is some truth in this. For it was ever impossible for the blood of bulls and goats to take away sin, and Paul's argument in Hebrews is based upon the implications of the day of Atonement. It indeed looks ahead to another and more ultimate atonement, by God's grace through His pronouncement. And that pronouncement was made regardless of the Levitical priesthood and sacrifices; it was made over the blood of His crucified Son.

Lev 23:29 For whoever it is who shall not bow himself down in that same day shall be cut off from his people-

But only God could see which soul did not afflict itself (see AV). So many of these laws were not able to be judged by men; and indeed Yahweh was Israel's judge and not any human judiciary. Hence in Is. 58:3-5 we read of God's judgment of an insincerely kept day of Atonement. The people fasted and bowed down their heads- but God saw that it

was an affliction of soul, and in fact they did this for the sake of their own egos. They were to afflict their souls and on this basis give practical help to the afflicted souls (Is. 58:3,5,10). And this was to be the spirit of the subsequent feast of booths. Our generosity to others who are afflicted is to be upon the basis of our own conviction of personal sin and self affliction because of it.

Being "cut off from Israel" may not mean that the person must be slain. For then the phrase "cut off from the earth" would have been used (as in Prov. 2:22 and often). The idea is that the person who ate leaven (Ex. 12:15) or was not circumcised (Gen. 17:14) was excluded from the community of God's people because they had broken or despised the covenant which made them His people. But there is no record of Israel keeping a list of 'cut off from Israel' Israelites and excluding them from keeping the feasts. So we conclude this means that God would consider such persons as cut off from His people. He would do the cutting off, and not men. In His book, they were "cut off". But there was no legal nor practical mechanism provided to Israel to manage the 'cutting off from Israel' of those who despised the covenant. The cutting off was done in God's eyes, in Heaven's record, and the Israelites were intended to continue to fellowship with such persons at the feasts. This is a strong argument for an open table, and for not seeking to make church excommunication the equivalent of this cutting off of the disobedient from the people of Israel. This explains why being "cut off from Israel" is the punishment stated for doing things which man could not see and judge—secretly breaking the Sabbath (Ex. 31:14), eating peace of-

ferings whilst being unclean (Lev. 7:20- for how were others to know whether someone had touched the unclean, or was experiencing an unclean bodily emission), eating meat with blood still in it (Lev. 17:10,14), not adequately humbling the soul (Lev. 23:29), not keeping Passover (Num. 9:13), being presumptuous (Num. 15:30,31- only God can judge that), not washing after touching a dead body (Num. 19:13,20). This is why Lev. 20:6 makes it explicit that "I [Yahweh personally] will set My face against that person, and will cut him off from among his people". It is Yahweh who does the cutting off and not men (also 1 Sam. 2:33).

Lev 23:30 Whoever it is who does any kind of work in that same day, that person I will destroy from among his people-

As explained on :29, the emphasis is upon how God Himself, and not His people, would cut off or destroy such a person. Whilst work was forbidden during the other feasts, this threat is added only here concerning the Day of Atonement. This was how important it was for them to realize that atonement for our sins is in the end by God's grace through the sacrifice of the animals who represented Christ; and not according to our works.

God in the prophets complains that *His people* don't keep the Sabbath. He didn't cut off the individuals as He threatened. The Lord (Mt. 12:5) said that the priests " profaned" the Sabbath; He didn't say that because they kept the spirit of it, that was acceptable. By using a word as extreme as " profaned" He seems to be even emphasizing the point. This isn't to say that God says but doesn't do. It's just that His grace and patience is beyond His law.

Lev 23:31 You shall do no kind of work: it is a statute forever throughout your generations in all your dwellings-

We note how God so wished the people to cease from their own works, and to believe in justification by faith through grace, rather than by their own works.

Lev 23:32 It shall be a Sabbath of solemn rest for you, and you shall bow down yourselves. In the ninth day of the month at evening, from evening to evening, you shall keep your Sabbath-

The Sabbath is always called God's Sabbath, celebrating His rest from His works; here, the Sabbath associated with the day of Atonement is called Israel's Sabbath. The need to rest from their own works is so strongly stressed.

Lev 23:33 Yahweh spoke to Moses, saying-

The material about the feasts is clearly split up into clearly defined sections, probably to assist memorization in a largely illiterate society.

Lev 23:34 Speak to the children of Israel, and say, 'On the fifteenth day of this seventh month is the feast of tents for seven days to Yahweh-

This was to celebrate the joy of forgiveness received at the day of Atonement. The communal nature of it was in order to provide an opportunity for the generosity to others which was intended to arise from personal experience of God's gift of salvation and forgiveness. See on :29.

Lev 23:35 On the first day shall be a holy assembly: you shall do no regular work-

This huge stress upon not working is to be noted. The feast was celebrating God's forgiveness of His people on the day of Atonement, and it was critical for Israel to realize

that it was His grace and not their works which was the basis of their salvation. It is therefore quite wrong to think of the Mosaic law as teaching salvation by works; it taught the very opposite.

Lev 23:36 Seven days you shall offer an offering made by fire to Yahweh. On the eighth day shall be a holy assembly to you; and you shall offer an offering made by fire to Yahweh. It is a solemn assembly; you shall do no regular work-

The details of the offerings are given in Num. 29:12-38. 13 bullocks were to be sacrificed on the first day, and the number of bullocks decreased by one every day until seven bullocks on the last day. Additionally there were to be two rams and fourteen lambs. The sin offering on each day was one kid of the goats. On the eighth day the burnt offering consisted of one bullock, one ram, seven lambs, and the sin offering of one kid of the goats. Over the eight days, this made a total of seventy-one bullocks, fifteen rams, one hundred and five lambs and eight kids plus meat and drink offerings.

Lev 23:37 These are the appointed feasts of Yahweh, which you shall proclaim to be holy assemblies, to offer an offering made by fire to Yahweh, a burnt offering, and a grain offering, a sacrifice, and drink offerings, each on its own day-

This is the word used in Ex. 5:13 of the 'daily work quota' of Israel under Egyptian abuse. But the phrase is used of their daily work for Yahweh, in collecting manna (Ex. 16:4) and serving in the tabernacle (Lev. 23:37). They were being reminded that they had changed masters when they crossed the Red Sea, just as Paul says happens when we are baptized (Rom. 6). And the Red Sea crossing represented

baptism into Jesus (1 Cor. 10:1,2). Like us, Israel were not radically free to do as they pleased. What happened was that they changed masters; hence the appeal to Pharaoh to let God's people go, that they may serve Him rather than Pharaoh. We too will only find ultimate freedom through this servitude to God's ways, and will finally emerge into the radical liberty of the children of God in the Kingdom age (Rom. 8:21).

Lev 23:38 besides the Sabbaths of Yahweh, and besides your gifts, and besides all your vows, and besides all your freewill offerings, which you give to Yahweh-

The repeated use of the word "besides" emphasized that times of special commitment to God shouldn't lead us to forget the regular sacrifices and devotions which we are to make. An example of this would be that if one spends some days away at a church gathering, we are not to forget our own personal quiet time with God, prayer and Bible reading.

The Hebrew word here for "freewill" carries the idea of spontaneity. This is the clear implication of its usage in places like Ex. 35:27; 36:3; Jud. 5:2,9; 1 Chron. 29:5,9; 2 Chron. 35:8; Ps. 54:6. There is a strong sense of immediate emotion attached to the word (Hos. 14:4). And there was a major emphasis in the law of Moses upon freewill offerings (Lev. 7:16; 22:18,21,23; 23:38; Num. 15:3; 29:39; Dt. 12:6,17; 16:10; 23:23). The other legal codes of the nations around Israel were all about rituals; whereas Yahweh's law encouraged spontaneous giving as part of the way of Yahweh. For He is not a God of rituals, but of relationship. The way of the Spirit is the same today; spontaneous, emotion-

al, personal response to God's grace, responding to Him on our own initiative and in our own way, in addition to obeying His specific requirements.

Lev 23:39 So on the fifteenth day of the seventh month, when you have gathered in the fruits of the land, you shall keep the feast of Yahweh seven days: on the first day shall be a solemn rest, and on the eighth day shall be a solemn rest-

Leviticus was given at the beginning of the wilderness journey (see on Lev. 1:1). There was continual encouragement that they would indeed possess the promised kingdom and eat the fruits of that land. Just as we are given such continual encouragement by the same God whose greatest will is that we should inherit the Kingdom. This feast would not therefore have been kept whilst Israel lived in tents all the time in the wilderness. Sadly they would have likely considered it an irrelevancy, as in their hearts they returned to Egypt. The solemn rest was ultimately the "rest" of the Kingdom which Joshua didn't give Israel, but the Lord Jesus will. Rev. 7:9-17 uses the imagery of the feast of tabernacles to describe the entire Kingdom of God upon earth; then we will spend eternity in joyful fellowship, celebrating the gift of atonement made possible by the Lord Jesus. The ingathering of fruits of the land / Kingdom would then refer to the time when all the people of God have been gathered in. The firstfruits of that harvest were ultimately the Lord Jesus, but the image also appears to refer to a specific group of Jews saved during the last tribulation (see on Rev. 14:4).

Lev 23:40 You shall take on the first day the fruit of goodly trees, branches of palm trees, and boughs of thick trees, and

willows of the brook; and you shall rejoice before Yahweh your God seven days-

The image of rejoicing Israelites with palms in their hands is the image of Rev. 7:9, used of the final joy of the Kingdom, when forgiveness of sins and atonement comes to its ultimate term. Neh. 8:15 records the fulfillment of this "as it is written" by taking "olive branches". But the olive branches are not listed here; we conclude that obedience "as it is written" still involves keeping the spirit rather than the letter of the law. God is not a literalist nor a legalist, and to interpret the Mosaic law in such a casuistic way is to miss the spirit of the entire law.

Lev 23:41 You shall keep it a feast to Yahweh seven days in the year: it is a statute forever throughout your generations; you shall keep it in the seventh month-

The seven days looks forward to the eternity of God's Kingdom. For this feast celebrated the atonement received on the day of atonement.

The whole Law of Moses is described as an everlasting covenant (Is. 24:5; Dt. 29:29), but it has now been done away (Heb. 8:13). The feasts of Passover and Atonement were to be "an everlasting statute unto you" (Lev. 16:34; Ex. 12:14); but now the Mosaic feasts have been done away in Christ (Col. 2:14-17; 1 Cor. 5:7). The Levitical priesthood was "the covenant of an everlasting priesthood" (Ex. 40:15; Num. 25:13), but "the priesthood being changed (by Christ's work), there is made of necessity a change also of the law" (Heb. 7:12). There was an "everlasting covenant" between God and Israel to display the shewbread in the Holy Place (Lev. 24:8). This "everlasting

covenant” evidently ended when the Mosaic Law was dismantled. But the same phrase “everlasting covenant” is used in 2 Samuel 23:5 concerning how Christ will reign on David’s throne for literal eternity in the Kingdom. In what sense, then, is God using the word *olahm*, which is translated “eternal”, “perpetual”, “everlasting” in the Old Testament? James Strong defines *olahm* as literally meaning “the finishing point, time out of mind, i.e. practically eternity”. It was God’s purpose that the Law of Moses and the associated Sabbath law were to continue for many centuries. To the early Israelite, this meant a finishing point so far ahead that he couldn’t grapple with it; therefore he was told that the Law would last for ever in the sense of “practically eternity”. For all of us, the specter of ultimate infinity is impossible to intellectually grapple with. We may glibly talk about God’s eternity and timelessness, about the wonder of eternal life. But when we pause to really come to terms with these things, we lack the intellectual tools and linguistic paradigms to cope with it. Therefore there is no Hebrew or Greek word used in the Bible text to speak of absolute infinity. We know that death has been conquered for those in Christ, therefore we have the hope of immortal life in his Kingdom. But God speaks about eternity very much from a human viewpoint.

Lev 23:42 You shall dwell in booths seven days. All who are native-born in Israel shall dwell in booths-

The dwelling in booths / tents is not specifically recorded in the historical record, but we do read that on leaving Egypt, Israel camped at Succoth- a related word to “booths” in Hebrew (Ex. 12:37; 13:20 cp. Gen. 33:17).

They camped there in tents; but they camped there in fear of their own vulnerability before Egypt / the world, as well as relief that they had left Egypt / the world. And God wanted His people to always remember that spirit. The booths were not strictly tents, but as it were miniature replicas of the tabernacle. And it was Yahweh who dwelt in the tabernacle. Their dwelling in the mini tabernacles was therefore in order to encourage them to manifest Him, and His generous spirit. Therefore Dt. 16:14 commands that the Gentiles and marginal people should be entertained at this time. So the idea was that they should be generously entertained within the booths erected by the Israelites. This would be an appropriate way of reflecting the generosity shown to them in personal forgiveness (see on :29) and at the deliverance from Egypt (:43).

Lev 23:43 that your generations may know that I made the children of Israel to dwell in booths, when I brought them out of the land of Egypt. I am Yahweh your God'-

It's not recorded in the account of the Exodus that God made Israel dwell in booths; but see on :42. Often later Scripture gives us extra information about what happened at a historical event. This is why we need to use the entire Bible in order to get the correct picture about what happened in the historical sections.

Israel were "brought forth" from Egypt by God; they had been unwilling to leave Egypt, preferring to serve the Egyptians rather than Yahweh (Ex. 14:12). God had as it were forced through His project of saving Israel by bringing them out of Egypt. And He had done so largely for the sake of Moses, by whose faith the Red Sea parted and

they were delivered (Heb. 11:28,29). Therefore Yahweh's bringing Israel out of Egypt was what He did for Moses, and only thereby for His people. We too are brought out of this world towards God's Kingdom by His grace alone, with His consistently taking the initiative in our hearts and life circumstances, in accord with the loving intercession of the Lord Jesus [represented by Moses]. Thus Yahweh brought Israel out of Egypt (Ex. 18:1; 19:1; Lev. 23:43; 25:55; Num. 26:4; 33:1,3,38; Dt. 4:45,46;), but Moses did (Ex. 3:10,11).

Lev 23:44 Moses declared to the children of Israel the appointed feasts of Yahweh-

The Hebrew for "feasts" means literally an assembly, and the same word is translated "synagogue". The essence of the feasts was therefore the gathering together of God's people, and it is in this spirit that all assemblies of God's people are kept under the new covenant. The Old Testament feasts were therefore by their nature not intended to be kept individually. And it has ever been God's intention that His people should not serve Him in total isolation from each other.

LEVITICUS CHAPTER 24

Lev 24:1 Yahweh spoke to Moses, saying-

The whole congregation of Israel were to bring a small amount of oil and flour for the bread each week. The constantly burning oil and presence of the small loaves was a symbol of how Israel were continually before Him. Yet the amount of oil and flour required each week was miniscule in comparison to the size of all Israel- there were probably three million of them at the time this law was given (Ex. 12:37). But God is the God of small things. In the very small things we offer Him, we are remembered before Him. Israel were taught that this tiny offering of oil and flour each week was so highly significant; offering even very small things shouldn't be seen by us as unnecessary or insignificant before God. The way Jesus noticed the widow offering two tiny coins and commented upon it is proof of this (Lk. 21:2).

Lev 24:2 Command the children of Israel, that they bring to you pure olive oil beaten for the light, to cause a lamp to burn continually-

"Pure olive oil" apparently refers to olive juice which bursts naturally from the first ripe olives. But we enquire where Israel obtained olive oil from in the wilderness, especially such "pure" olive oil to such great amounts as required here? Perhaps they had been given lots of it as they left Egypt and gave it to the priests. But for 40 years? I suggest as on Ex. 27:8 that this was God's ideal intention, and many of these laws were applicable only in contexts when

obedience to them was possible. God's law is not therefore at all a reflection of a God who is a literalist or legalist. For by its nature, the law of Moses shows that He was not like that.

Lev 24:3 Outside of the veil of the Testimony, in the Tent of Meeting, shall Aaron keep it in order from evening to morning before Yahweh continually: it shall be a statute forever throughout your generations-

Ex. 27:21 adds "Aaron and his sons". "The tent of meeting" is the tent where God met with His people over the blood of atonement upon the ark of the covenant. But that "meeting" was effectively not with the people, as only the priests entered into the holy place, and the high priest alone, only once / year, into the ultimate place where God met with His people- the Most Holy place. But the candlestick was to be kept burning in order to point the way into the Most Holy. All this suggested that there was something lacking in the entire system. God was prepared and even willing to meet with His people over the blood of atonement on the day of atonement. That meeting was therefore predicated upon their repentance and forgiveness. But it would have left the people aware that a fuller meeting with God was somehow promised. And this would come to full term when the Lord's death tore down the veil, and the way into the holiest was opened for all, not just the priests nor the High Priest.

Lev 24:4 He shall keep in order the lamps on the pure gold lampstand before Yahweh continually-

The lampstand is used as a symbol of the ecclesia in the visions of Revelation 2 and 3. The purpose of the ecclesia

is to enable the oil of the Spirit to be burnt, to turn it into light. We are to keep our own personal light burning continually, day and night. Jesus had this in mind when He likened us to women waiting for the bridegroom to come at night, whose oil lamps should not be allowed to go out (Mt. 25:8).

The lampstand is a symbol of the ecclesia; the lamps are us. The oil is the spirit of Jesus. Aaron was as Jesus. He daily 'orders' us, enabling us to shine. Jesus understood this to be so in saying that He came to fan men's lamps into brighter light, to mend smoking flax, not give up on it. And He is actively about this work on a daily basis as were the priests.

Lev 24:5 You shall take fine flour, and bake twelve cakes of it: two tenth parts of an ephah shall be in one cake-

These "cakes" were quite large seeing that about six pints of flour were used for each of them.

Lev 24:6 You shall set them in two rows, six on a row, on the pure gold table before Yahweh-

The bread on the table connects with the breaking of bread at the table of the Lord under the New Covenant. The bread was replaced- as it were eaten by God- each week (:8). Whilst there is no specific command as to how frequently we should break bread, it would seem from Acts 20:7 that some of the early Christians did it weekly, and this is no bad example for us to follow. Ex. 25:30 expresses this as "You shall set bread of the presence on the table before me always". "The bread of the presence" doesn't simply mean that it was bread which was in God's presence; for that is the meaning covered by "before Me always". Rather the idea is that God's especial presence was there in the eat-

ing of the bread. The God who dwelt the other side of the veil, over the mercy seat, as it were came out from there and was present when the bread was eaten. We may have here some hint that there is a special presence of the Father and Son at the breaking of bread, which is the Christian equivalent of this table (Mt. 18:20; 1 Cor. 11:10).

Lev 24:7 You shall put pure frankincense on each row, that it may make the bread be for a memorial, even an offering made by fire to Yahweh-

Many times we read of God being provoked to remember someone, often for good (Lev. 24:7 LXX "that God may mercifully remember"; Ps. 69:1 LXX; 37:1 LXX; Zech. 6:14; 1 Kings 17:18). This language of limitation surely suggests that the God who could be omniscient over time, not needing to have anything brought back to His memory, allows Himself to 'forget' so that sin or righteousness again brings things to His remembrance. Thus generosity and prayer is a memorial before God in the sense that it brings a person to His memory or attention (Acts 10:4), and He appropriately responds in their lives.

The "memorial portion" of the offerings was to serve as a reminder to God, as it were, of the covenants which He "remembered". He of course doesn't forget His covenant but ever remembers it (Ps. 105:8 etc.), yet He is presented in human terms as having His memory rekindled, as it were, by human prayer, faith, situations and sacrifices so that He "remembers the covenant" (Gen. 8:1; 9:15; Ex. 2:24; 6:5; Lev. 26:42,45; Num. 10:9 and often). The regular sacrifices were such a "memorial" or 'reminder'- both to God and to His people. The place of prayer, regular sacri-

fice of giving, breaking of bread at the "memorial meeting" etc., are all equivalents for us under the new covenant.

Paul writes often that he "makes mention" or 'remembers' his brethren in regular prayer (Rom. 1:9; Eph. 1:16; 1 Thess. 1:2; Philemon 4). The Greek *mneia* is the word used in the LXX for the "memorial" of the incense or the meal offering (Lev. 2:2,16; 6:15; 24:7), or the constant fire on the altar (Lev. 6:12,13). That fire, that flour, that incense, had to be carefully and consciously prepared; it had to be the result of man's labour. And likewise, Paul seems to be saying, he first of all thought through the cases which he then presented to the Father.

Lev 24:8 Every Sabbath day he shall set it in order before Yahweh continually. It is on the behalf of the children of Israel an everlasting covenant-

The whole Law of Moses is described as an everlasting covenant (Is. 24:5; Dt. 29:29), but it has now been done away (Heb. 8:13). The feasts of Passover and Atonement were to be "an everlasting statute unto you" (Lev. 16:34; Ex. 12:14); but now the Mosaic feasts have been done away in Christ (Col. 2:14-17; 1 Cor. 5:7). The Levitical priesthood was "the covenant of an everlasting priesthood" (Ex. 40:15; Num. 25:13), but "the priesthood being changed (by Christ's work), there is made of necessity a change also of the law" (Heb. 7:12). There was an "everlasting covenant" between God and Israel to display the shewbread in the Holy Place (Lev. 24:8). This "everlasting covenant" evidently ended when the Mosaic Law was dismantled. But the same phrase "everlasting covenant" is used in 2 Samuel 23:5 concerning how Christ will reign on

David's throne for literal eternity in the Kingdom. In what sense, then, is God using the word *olahm*, which is translated "eternal", "perpetual", "everlasting" in the Old Testament? James Strong defines *olahm* as literally meaning "the finishing point, time out of mind, i.e. practically eternity". It was God's purpose that the Law of Moses and the associated Sabbath law were to continue for many centuries. To the early Israelite, this meant a finishing point so far ahead that he couldn't grapple with it; therefore he was told that the Law would last for ever in the sense of "practically eternity". For all of us, the specter of ultimate infinity is impossible to intellectually grapple with. We may glibly talk about God's eternity and timelessness, about the wonder of eternal life. But when we pause to really come to terms with these things, we lack the intellectual tools and linguistic paradigms to cope with it. Therefore there is no Hebrew or Greek word used in the Bible text to speak of absolute infinity. We know that death has been conquered for those in Christ, therefore we have the hope of immortal life in his Kingdom. But God speaks about eternity very much from a human viewpoint.

Lev 24:9 It shall be for Aaron and his sons; and they shall eat it in a holy place; for it is most holy to him of the offerings of Yahweh made by fire by a perpetual statute-

The priests had no inheritance amongst Israel, they survived by eating parts of the offerings. Their eating of them represented God's 'eating' of the sacrifices, the altar being described as His table (Mal. 1:7,12), and His acceptance of the offerer and fellowship with them- for eating what had

been brought to you was a sign of acceptance and religious fellowship with the donor.

Lev 24:10 The son of an Israelite woman, whose father was an Egyptian-

This suggests there was some intermarriage between the Egyptians and Israelites, which explains why a mixed multitude left Egypt with the Israelites. That mixed multitude were apparently not spiritually committed to the things of Israel's God once they got tough in the desert (Ex. 11:4). The similarity of phrasing with Ex. 2:11 leads the rabbis to claim that this was the son of the Egyptian whom Moses slew. See on :17.

Went out among the children of Israel; and the son of the Israelite woman and a man of Israel strove together in the camp-

"Went out" is to be connected with how the rebels of Num. 16:27 "came out" in argument as in Prov. 25:8. This striving together could have been in a legal sense, before the judges. The idea is not necessarily of a literal fight between the two men. Perhaps when he was judged against, he blasphemed (:10). The idea is certainly that his blasphemy was done openly and publically in the spirit of rebellion. As the Israelites encamped according to "the names of the tribes of their fathers" (Num. 26:55), it could be that this man whose father was an Egyptian was somehow encamped outside the camp, and he had come into the camp to foment rebellion and express his anger at his position. However the command in :17 could suggest that the half Egyptian had slain an Israelite in this striving.

Lev 24:11 The son of the Israelite woman blasphemed the Name, and cursed; and they brought him to Moses-

Perhaps he repeated the language of Pharaoh who did the same (Ex. 5:2). The context is of the shewbread, so perhaps the striving together in :10 was connected with the use of the shewbread. Bringing the case to Moses suggests that it had first been brought before the system of judges beneath him (Ex. 18:13-26). This confirms the suggestion made on :10 that the striving together may have been before the judges, as it were in court.

His mother's name was Shelomith, the daughter of Dibri, of the tribe of Dan-

If we marry out of the family of faith (:10), our children may well not have the reverence towards the true God which they should have. Her name may have been preserved as a permanent reproach for her influence upon her apostate son; or perhaps we are to understand her name, "Peaceable", and her father's name "Man of the words", and her tribe "Judgment", as implying that she was faithful and not associated with her son's apostacy.

Lev 24:12 They put him in custody, until the will of Yahweh about this should be declared to them-

A similar incident was dealt with the same way in Num. 15:34. It was clear that the person should be executed, but perhaps the question was what method of execution should be used, as it was unclear whether he was to be treated as a Jew or Gentile.

Lev 24:13 Yahweh spoke to Moses, saying-

The penalty of death by stoning was appropriate to an Israelite, whereas Gentiles would have been slain by the

sword. So although the man was the son of an Egyptian, and foreigners only entered the congregation after three generations (Dt. 23:8), this man was treated as an Israelite. So as ever in God's judgments, we discern even there some element of grace.

Lev 24:14 Bring out of the camp him who cursed; and let all who heard him lay their hands on his head, and let all the congregation stone him-

The Lord Jesus suffered and died, shedding the blood of atonement, "outside the camp" (Heb. 13:13). We are bidden go forth to the Lord Jesus "outside the camp", just as those who "sought Yahweh" did when there was no tabernacle (Ex. 33:7). The people watching Moses as he walked out to it, without the camp, therefore looks ahead to a faithless Israel lining the via Dolorossa and watching the Lord walk out to His place of crucifixion. And we are to get behind Him and follow Him there, stepping out from the mass of Israel. As the Lord Jesus suffered "outside the camp", so various parts of the Mosaic sacrifices were to be burnt there (Lev. 4:12,21; 8:17; 9:11; 16:27); and yet it was the blood of those sacrifices which achieved atonement (Heb. 13:11; Num. 19:3,9). "Outside the camp" was the place of excluded, condemned sinners (Lev. 13:46; 24:14; Num. 5:3,4; 15:35,36; 31:13,19), and it was here that the Lord Jesus died, in identification with us.

Lev 24:15 You shall speak to the children of Israel, saying, 'Whoever curses his God shall bear his sin-

This contrasts with how the one who blasphemed the name of Yahweh was to be killed (:16). The command is specifically in the context of the Egyptian man who had

blasphemed Yahweh. It is as if God is saying that blasphemers of their own gods were still in sin, but Yahweh pronounced no judgment upon them. This is one of a number of Biblical examples of where God requires some level of integrity from those who don't know Him and have their own wrong religious ideas. He even apparently commends the Gentiles for not changing their gods and being faithful to them, whilst lamenting Israel's penchant for many gods and their unfaithfulness to all of them.

Lev 24:16 He who blasphemes the name of Yahweh, he shall surely be put to death; all the congregation shall certainly stone him: the foreigner as well as the native-born, when he blasphemes the Name, shall be put to death-

This seems to answer the unclarity which was the reason for Moses asking God's advice; they were unsure whether to treat this man as a foreigner or an Israelite. See on :12,13.

Lev 24:17 He who strikes any man mortally shall surely be put to death-

This additional clarification could be in the immediate context of the striving between the half Egyptian and the Israelite in :10. Perhaps the Israelite had been killed. If indeed this man was the son of the Egyptian whom Moses slew (see on :10), then we can better understand why his abiding anger led him to want to slay an Israelite in revenge.

Lev 24:18 He who strikes an animal mortally shall make it good, life for life-

The context seems to suggest that this was a slaying of an animal intentionally in order to damage the owner.

Lev 24:19 If anyone injures his neighbour; as he has done, so shall it be done to him-

This command may be in connection with the fight between the two men of :10. The equivalent command in Ex. 21:22-25 is also in the context of two men fighting.

Lev 24:20 fracture for fracture, eye for eye, tooth for tooth; as he has injured someone, so shall it be done to him-

When the Lord Jesus gave His commandments as an elaboration of Moses' Law, that Law was still in force. He didn't say 'When I'm dead, this is how you should behave...! He was showing us a higher level; but in the interim period until the Law was taken out of the way, He was opening up the *choice* of taking that higher level, even though making use of the concessions which Moses offered would not have been a sin during that period. Thus He spoke of not insisting on "an eye for an eye"; even though in certain cases the Law did allow for this. He was saying: 'You can keep Moses' Law, and take an eye for an eye. But there is a higher level: to simply forgive'.

Lev 24:21 He who kills an animal shall make it good; and he who kills a man shall be put to death-

The slain animal was to be replaced by another animal; the slain man was to be replaced, as it were, by the death of the murderer. The idea of 'making it good' could possibly hint that through his willing submission to death, the murderer could be forgiven. The Hebrew *shalam* carries with it the idea of making peace, but the death of the murderer could only make peace with God rather than with the man whom he had slain.

Lev 24:22 You shall have one kind of law, for the foreigner as well as the native-born; for I am Yahweh your God'-

If we have unbelievers into our homes or any situation where we are in charge of the social situation, we are to ensure that God's principles are upheld. Again translating this into modern terms- if parents have unbelieving children in their home to play with their own children, God's principles are still to be upheld by the visitors.

The inclusiveness of Yahweh of His people, the nature of who His Name reveals Him to be, should of itself have led Israel to not discriminate against other races: "For I am Yahweh your God". Because Yahweh *is* who He is, therefore we must be like Him; His very existence and being demands it of us (Lev. 20:7 cp. 19:2, 10). If we really know the characteristics implicit in His Name, we will put our trust in Him (Ps. 9:10; 124:8). If we see / know God in the experiential sense, we will do no evil (3 Jn. 11).

Lev 24:23 Moses spoke to the children of Israel; and they brought out him who had cursed out of the camp, and stoned him with stones. The children of Israel did as Yahweh commanded Moses-

The essential idea of the Hebrew word used for cursing here is to treat as a light thing (s.w. 1 kings 16:31 "as if it had been a light thing"). To treat the things of God as a mere hobby, as light rather than "heavy", which is the idea of the Hebrew *kabod* translated "glory"... is to curse God. It is the same idea as taking God's Name in vain, as a vain, light thing. And this is the problem with hobby level religion. What may begin as a mere religious hobby may lead us to the eternal weight of God's glory. And no longer must

we treat these things as a light thing. True spirituality must eclipse mere religion. And if it doesn't, then we risk effectively cursing God, treating Him as a light thing, just a passing part of our lives...

LEVITICUS CHAPTER 25

Lev 25:1 Yahweh said to Moses in Mount Sinai-

The assumption at this point was that those hearing these words would soon be established in the promised land. God foreknew they would not, but He goes ahead with His ideal potentials with absolute enthusiasm and legitimate enthusiasm.

Lev 25:2 Speak to the children of Israel, and tell them, 'When you come into the land which I give you, then the land shall keep a Sabbath to Yahweh-

As will be explained below, the whole purpose of the legislation was to teach Israel spiritual things. Whilst leaving land fallow is indeed a good idea, we must remember that the incredible fecundity promised was the result of Divine blessing for covenant keeping, and not of agricultural technique.

Lev 25:3 Six years you shall sow your field, and six years you shall prune your vineyard, and gather in its fruits-

The parallel here is with six days of work followed by the seventh day of rest. The seventh year was therefore to be a temporary suspension of the curse, the possibility of having a taste of the Kingdom now; just as we today can live "the eternal life", the kind of life which we will eternal-ly live in the Kingdom. The idea of the Sabbath year was also to lead Israel away from the mentality of justification by works. And that was to involve faith in God's provision, rather than trust in our own works. We note that work is a commandment; there is no way to avoid the curse. But the

Sabbath day and Sabbath year shows that even in this life, we have a foretaste of the Kingdom when the curse shall be no more.

Lev 25:4 but in the seventh year there shall be a Sabbath of solemn rest for the land, a Sabbath to Yahweh. You shall not sow your field or prune your vineyard-

The legislation about the feasts stressed so often that Israel were not to work at these times. The weekly Sabbath likewise taught the need to trust in God rather than human works. The spirit of it all was that "There's more to life than work, put relationship with God, in the Spirit of the Sabbath rest of the Kingdom, before mad accumulation of wealth". Having hopefully learned these lessons week by week and feast by feast, the people were thus spiritually educated for the far greater test of not working for a whole year, or even three years, in the Jubilee year. There is no historical evidence that Israel ever kept this legislation as outlined here. They failed to learn the lessons and to be taken further in faith. This is why the land had to keep its Sabbath during the years of exile to compensate for how it had never been allowed to rest under the tenure of the Israelites.

Lev 25:5 What grows of itself in your harvest you shall not reap, and the grapes of your undressed vine you shall not gather. It shall be a year of solemn rest for the land-

This was so that the poor could eat (Ex. 23:11). So through this experience, the landowners were treated as the poor and landless. They too had to live by faith in God's provision and not in their own works or ownership of assets. God works likewise with us all, helping us to identi-

fy with the poor, that we might have a heart and identity with those who lack our resources. LXX has "thou shalt not gather fully the grapes of thy dedication". The idea may be that the fruit of the vine was the best fruit, but it was to be dedicated to God. Israel were not therefore to make or drink wine in the Sabbath or Jubilee years.

Lev 25:6 The Sabbath of the land shall be for food for you; for yourself, for your servant, for your maid, for your hired servant, and for your stranger, who lives as a foreigner amongst you-

Ex. 23:11 expresses the reason for this as being "that the poor of your people may eat". It's true that often, although not always, poverty is partly due to poor decisions and mismanagement, and any aid given is often misused. And it's true that the materially poor are partly poor [in many cases] exactly because of that. And yet the Bible teaches generosity to "the poor". There is no attempt in the Bible teaching about "the poor" to subdivide them into the genuinely poor, and those who are poor because of their own fault or laziness, or who are asking for support when they don't actually need it. A person who comes to you claiming need is "the poor". Thus Israel were not to farm their land in the seventh year, "that the poor of your people may eat" (Ex. 23:11). This immediately raised the issue that all manner of people could eat the fruit which grew naturally on the land that year- but there is no legislation to try to limit who had access to it. Those who had food in their barns might eat what grew- but there was no mechanism within the law which controlled that. The point is, in our spiritual poverty we are just the same. We are in that

position partly because of our human situation and other factors over which we have no control; but also partly and largely because we choose to be in it. We cry to God for the riches of His forgiveness- and we waste it, by doing the same sin over and again. Our hold on spiritual things is weak, we don't respond with the grace and appreciation we ought to. We're spiritually lazy. We're no better than those who are materially poor through nothing but their own fault. Our generosity to them is a reflection of our recognition of this.

Lev 25:7 For your livestock also, and for the animals that are in your land, shall all its increase be for food-

LXX "the wild beasts". God feeds wild animals from that which grows naturally, and here He wanted the people to do the same; to experience and live out something of His generosity to all. But the acceptance that wild animals would exist is perhaps a tacit recognition that the full blessing of the covenant would not come, for the presence of wild beasts in the land was a sign of lack of blessing (Lev. 26:22). It's rather like the promise that there would be no poor in the land, and yet there is plenty of Mosaic legislation about poor Israelites. We see in this God's acceptance that His people would not live and experience as they should, and yet His legislation accounted for that- for He so thirsted for relationship with them. And He likewise is acceptant of our imperfection and failure to receive the blessings we could and should receive.

Lev 25:8 You shall count off seven Sabbaths of years, seven times seven years; and there shall be to you the days of seven Sabbaths of years, even forty-nine years-

The seventh year was also a Sabbath year, so the idea is that there would be two years when the land was not sown, which meant that there would be a bumper harvest given enough for three years (:21).

Lev 25:9 Then you shall sound the loud trumpet on the tenth day of the seventh month. On the Day of Atonement you shall sound the trumpet throughout all your land-

This clearly established that the jubilee of abundant Divine provision and rest from works was a result of the atonement. That atonement clearly looked forward to the work of the Lord on the cross, as Hebrews makes clear. Therefore the things of the jubilee year are those of the Kingdom made possible for us through that.

Lev 25:10 You shall make the fiftieth year holy, and proclaim liberty throughout the land to all its inhabitants. It shall be a jubilee to you; and each of you shall return to his own property, and each of you shall return to his family-

To preach [proclaim] the acceptable year of the Lord (Lk. 4:19) is parallel with "You shall proclaim liberty throughout the land to all its inhabitants" (Lev. 25:10). Likewise there are to be found other such allusions to the proclamation of Jubilee: "We as workers together with him, beseech you also that ye receive... the grace of God... a time accepted... in the day of salvation [the Jubilee] have I succoured thee: behold, now is the *accepted time*" (2 Cor. 6:1,2) "Repentance and remission of sins should be preached [proclaimed, s.w. Lk. 4:19] in his name among all nations" (Lk. 24:47). This is alluded to in Lk. 4:19 where we read that Jesus proclaimed "the acceptable year of the Lord". We are to make the same proclamation in preaching

the good news to all people- "Repentance and remission of sins should be preached ["proclaimed", s.w. Lk. 4:19] in his name among all nations" (Lk. 24:47). The year of Jubilee began with the Day of Atonement, which is understood in the New Testament as foreshadowing the sacrifice of Christ on the cross for our sins. We are now to live in a permanent state of Jubilee, announcing it to all people. The Hebrew word translated "jubilee" carries the idea of forgiveness, release, freedom. This is our message to all the people of the world.

Lev 25:11 That fiftieth year shall be a jubilee to you. In it you shall not sow, neither reap that which grows of itself, nor gather from the undressed vines-

LXX "neither shall ye gather its dedicated fruits". The idea may be that the fruit of the vine was the best fruit, but it was to be dedicated to God. Israel were not therefore to make or drink wine in the Sabbath or Jubilee years. The confusion between 49th and 50th year is because the seventh year was a jubilee year anyway, so there were two years when the land wasn't cultivated. In the Sabbath year they could eat what grew naturally, but not in the Jubilee year. This was a massive leap of faith. Only God's law would judicially require such behaviour, in faith in His provision.

Lev 25:12 For it is a jubilee; it shall be holy to you. You shall eat of its increase out of the field-

The Jubilee year is presented as the land itself. They were to eat the increase of the jubilee year in that their barns were to be full of harvest. They were not to eat that which grew naturally (:11). We think of how the harvests of Egypt gave enough food for seven years, and of how the

rich fool thought he had enough in his for many years. But the food which could be stored would have only been basic grain- none of the nicer things which are specifically cultivated would have kept in store for so long. So the Jubilee was a call to live a basic life, remembering their fathers sustained by the harvests of Egypt- by grace alone.

Lev 25:13 In this Year of Jubilee each of you shall return to his property-

"His property" is intentionally contrasted with the reality that "the land is Mine" (:23). The concept of 'private property' is indeed a myth. For we die, and leave it all behind. The Mosaic law sought to teach this- because "The land is mine", what appeared to be a 'sale' of property wasn't really a sale at all- quite simply because the land was God's (Lev. 25:13,23). And likewise our 'generosity', as David observed, isn't really that at all- for we only give God back what He has given us. In fact, when you think about it, the only 'thing' that Biblically a person can say is 'theirs' is their partner or family- even though these are also given of God. And so it's sadly understandable that a materialistic, wealthy society always becomes one that has a low estimate of the family unit and the exclusive sanctity of marriage.

The reality was that the property returned to the owner; but we read that the owner was to return to his property. We see encouraged a mutuality between each individual and their place or inheritance in the Kingdom.

Lev 25:14 If you sell anything to your neighbour, or buy from your neighbour, you shall not wrong one another-

"Do wrong..." is the word used of how the Egyptians oppressed the Israelites in Egypt (Ex. 22:21). The oppres-

sion would be through deceiving the buyer concerning how many years were left until the Jubilee. It would be like selling a ten year lease for the price of a forty year lease. But Israel did oppress the simple and ignorant (Ez. 22:7,29), and so were oppressed by Babylon (s.w. Jer. 50:16).

Lev 25:15 According to the number of years after the Jubilee you shall buy from your neighbour. Relative to the number of years of the crops he shall sell to you-

The ultimate time of Jubilee will be at the return of Christ. We are to perceive the value of all things we buy relative to this. Effectively, the Jubilee was a time of release from debt. "Forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors" (Mt. 6:12) is probably another allusion to the Jubilee. We release / forgive men their debt to us, as God does to us. If we choose not to participate in this Jubilee by not releasing others, then we cannot expect to receive it ourselves.

Lev 25:16 According to the length of the years you shall increase its price, and according to the shortness of the years you shall diminish its price; for he is selling the number of the crops to you-

The idea seems to be, the number of harvests expected until the Jubilee year. But the number of harvests depended upon Israel's blessings for obedience. If they were disobedient, then there would be no harvests. If they were obedient, then every year they would not harvest the land before the time for sowing had come (Lev. 26:5; Am. 9:13). So there was built in to this law an opportunity to reflect upon the potentials possible if they were obedient. God's ideal was that there would be a continual harvest; but His

legislation in Lev. 25:16 accepts the reality that this would not happen. His awareness of our failure to reach our potential height of blessing is seen throughout His word. See on :7.

Lev 25:17 You shall not wrong one another; but you shall fear your God; for I am Yahweh your God-

An awareness that Yahweh is intensely watching our treatment of our brethren should have an abiding effect upon us. All forms of harshness, dishonesty and unkind division from them are thereby forbidden to any who truly fear God. For "wrong one another", see on :14 (s.w.).

Lev 25:18 Therefore you shall do My statutes, and keep My ordinances and do them; and you shall dwell in the land in safety-

The Hebrew mishpat, "ordinances", has a wide range of meaning. The idea is of judgment, as if God and His Angels gave these laws as their considered judgment after considering the human condition, and Israel were to abide by them. But the word also the idea of a right or privilege; and that is how we should see God's laws. They are only felt as a burden because of human hardness of neck towards God's ways. His laws are not of themselves burdensome, but rather a privilege and blessing. The law was indeed "holy, just and good" (Rom. 7:12), designed to inculcate a holy, just and good life (Tit. 1:8), a way in which a man should "walk" in daily life (Lev. 18:4), a culture of kindness and grace to others which reflected God's grace to man. If we dwell upon the idea of "rights" carried within the word mishpat, we note that the law begins in Ex. 21:1,2 (also Dt. 15:12-18) with the rights of a slave- those considered to

have no rights in the society of that day. The "rights" to be afforded by us to others are the essence of God's rightness / justice.

Lev 25:19 The land shall yield its fruit, and you shall eat your fill, and dwell therein in safety-

But this was conditional upon their obedience (Lev. 26:5,6). This is one of many examples where "Shall..." is used not as total prophecy, but as a statement of a conditional future- even if the conditions are not immediately stated. The style reflects God's earnest desire to give His people the promised Kingdom blessings. And here He asks them to believe it, as He asks us.

Lev 25:20 If you were to say, What shall we eat the seventh year? Behold, we shall not sow, nor gather in our increase; -

We can't have a spirit of meanness in our personal lives if we are proclaiming Yahweh's release. This is one of many instances where the process of preaching the Gospel benefits the preacher. The jubilee offered release from the effects of past misfortune and even past foolishness in decisions; and our offer of jubilee offers this same message in ultimate term. Incidentally, the Lord had implied that we are in a permanent Jubilee year situation when He said that we should "take no thought what ye shall eat ...Sow not nor gather into barns" and not think "What shall we eat?" (Mt. 6:26,31 = Lev. 25:20). There must be a spirit of telling this good news to absolutely *all*. And yet according to Luke's own emphasis, it is the poor who are especially attracted to the Jubilee message of freedom (Lk. 6:20-23; 7:1,22,23; 13:10-17).

Lev 25:21 know that I will command My blessing on you in the sixth year, and it shall bring forth fruit for the three years-

For all Moses' desire for Israel's obedience, there are some subtle differences in his attitude to law and obedience between Deuteronomy, and the law earlier given. Thus in Leviticus it was stressed that obedience would bring blessing; whilst Dt. 28:58 says that obedience results in fearing the fearful Name of Yahweh and His glory. Fear shouldn't lead to obedience; but obedience leads a man to *know and fear his God and His Name*. This is blessing enough. Like Jacob and Job, Moses came to a fine appreciation of Yahweh's Name at his latter end.

Lev 25:22 You shall sow the eighth year, and eat of the fruits, the old store; until the ninth year, until its fruits come in, you shall eat the old store-

If Israel had doubts about how they would survive in the seventh year when the land rested, God would provide them with bumper harvests in the sixth year. But when the Lord bids us take no anxious thought what we shall eat on the morrow, He is surely directing us to the higher level, despite His willingness to make concession to human weakness. We note how God is intensely aware of our worries and doubts about His promised provision; and He answers them.

Lev 25:23 The land shall not be sold in perpetuity, for the land is Mine; for you are strangers and live as foreigners with Me-

The principles of the Jubilee taught that all persons and land belong to God; we are only temporarily using

them, and nothing ultimately belongs to us personally; all is God's. This helps us cope better with 'loss' of possessions, and should keep us from the manic materialism which has been bred by capitalism, whereby all seek personal ownership of land and resources. Yet we note the parallel between the land being God's, and it being theirs- for they were not to sell it exactly because it was their eternal possession. This "Yours is the Kingdom", but it is God's pleasure to give us the Kingdom.

Lev 25:24 In all the land of your possession you shall grant a redemption for the land-

The law of Moses reasons as if each family of Israel had a specific inheritance which was not to be sold or moved outside the family. Hence the sin of Ahab in obtaining Naboth's vineyard. It would seem that there was some unrecorded list made of each family and which land they were to be given. This looks forward to our very personal and unique inheritance in God's Kingdom, possibly based around spiritual family units. This was "The inheritance of fathers", "your possession" (Lev. 25:27,28; Num. 36:7,8). God had given specific inheritances to His people, that this was not to be sold or traded. The division by lot in Josh. 15:1 presumably meant that the tribal areas were defined and then distributed by lot. And then within those areas, each family was given a specific inheritance. This legislation stopped the accumulation of property and wealth in the hands of a few, and protected the unwise and even lazy from the total loss of property.

Lev 25:25 If your brother becomes poor, and sells some of his possessions, then his kinsman who is next to him shall come, and redeem that which his brother has sold-

Boaz extrapolated from the law of Levirate marriage to marry Ruth and thereby redeem the land of the family. But the law here didn't require that. Boaz was going further than this law required. So we see that the law of Moses was not a chain, a leash binding and tethering man to reluctant obedience; for Israel is God's partner, not His dog. But rather was it designed as a springboard towards a culture of grace, kindness and taking initiatives of grace in practice. By allowing gleaners to come and pick up dropped grain, Boaz's grace was going far beyond the letter of the law. This was taking that law way beyond what it said, in a spirit of grace. This would account for the hint in Ruth 2:22 that not every landowner allowed such gleaning in their fields.

Lev 25:26 If a man has no one to redeem it, and he becomes prosperous and finds sufficient means to redeem it-

As Hosea 'redeemed' Gomer in His attempt to force through His fantasy for her (Hos. 3:1), so Yahweh is repeatedly described in Isaiah as Israel's *go'el*, redeemer (Is. 41:14; Is. 43:14; Is. 44:6,24; Is. 47:4; Is. 48:17; Is. 49:7,26; Is. 54:5,8). The redeemer could redeem a close relative from slavery or repurchase property lost during hard times (Lev. 25:25,26, 47-55; Ruth 2:20; Ruth 3:9,12). The redeemer was also the avenger of blood (Num. 35:9-28; Josh. 20:3,9). All these ideas were relevant to Yahweh's relationship to Judah in captivity. But the promised freedom didn't come- even under Nehemiah, Judah was still a province within the Persian empire. And those who returned com-

plained: "We are slaves this day in the land you gave..." (Neh. 9:36). The wonderful prophecies of freedom and redemption from slavery weren't realized in practice, because of the selfishness of the more wealthy Jews. And how often is it that the freedom potentially enabled for those redeemed in Christ is in practice denied them by their autocratic and abusive brethren?

Lev 25:27 then let him reckon the years since its sale, and restore the surplus to the man to whom he sold it; and he shall return to his property-

The word translated "Jubilee" carries the idea of 'return'; but the spirit of that return could be practiced at times other than the Jubilee. And it is the same in our lives.

Lev 25:28 But if he isn't able to get it back for himself, then what he has sold shall remain in the hand of him who has bought it until the Year of Jubilee: and in the Jubilee it shall be released, and he shall return to his possession-

Eph. 1:13 speaks of our place in God's Kingdom as our possession which has been purchased by the blood of Christ, and which we will receive as an inheritance at His return. This is all Jubilee language. The eternal time of Jubilee will be when the Kingdom is established upon earth, and we will each receive both literally and more abstractly an eternal inheritance in that Kingdom on earth, each with a varying number of towns to rule over (Lk. 19:17). Whether we are rich or poor in this life, whether or not we purchase our 'own' homes (:29), we are assured that our very own personal possession is assured, and we will return to it eternally in the Kingdom of God at Christ's return. The Israelite who became "poor", either by his own fail-

ures, others' manipulations or his own poor decision making, would have continually looked forward to the year of Jubilee- when finally he and his family would be free, no longer in servitude, and could return to their very own land and inheritance as their eternal possession (:34). We look forward to Christ's return with the same spirit.

Lev 25:29 If a man sells a dwelling house in a walled city, then he may redeem it within a whole year after it has been sold. For a full year he shall have the right of redemption-

The laws about houses in cities are far less protective than for land. The implication could be that God's intention was that Israel didn't develop urban life, but instead stayed in the inheritance He had given each family, and rejoiced in the abundant harvests of blessing He would shower upon them there. And this is the impression we have in the prophecies of the restored Kingdom.

Lev 25:30 If it isn't redeemed within the space of a full year, then the house that is in the walled city shall be made sure in perpetuity to him who bought it, throughout his generations. It shall not be released in the Jubilee-

The implication is that the walled cities would not fall within the personal inheritance of any family. For if they did, then they would be covered by the laws about the redemption of land. It was God's intention therefore that Israel lived in their family allotments. Urban life was not His ideal intention, but as with so much of the law of Moses, He recognized their likely future weakness.

Lev 25:31 But the houses of the villages which have no wall around them shall be reckoned with the fields of the

country: they may be redeemed, and they shall be released in the Jubilee-

As explained on :29,30, God's intention therefore was that Israel lived in small settlements and not walled cities. For if they had faith they would have no need of walled cities, for there would be peace in the land (Lev. 26:6). The entire law therefore was designed to elicit an upward spiral of obedience and blessing; it was not the miserable chain of legalism which it is made out to be.

Lev 25:32 Nevertheless the cities of the Levites, the houses in the cities of their possession, the Levites may redeem at any time-

The Levites had no land inheritance, only cities. Or better, towns. As explained on :29,30, God's intention therefore was that Israel lived in small settlements and not walled cities. Ideally, the only cities were to be those of the Levites. This detailed potential intention was never realized by Israel; just as the extensive and intricate commands about the restoration of the temple in Ez. 40-48 never were. One of the greatest tragedies for God must be all the wasted potentials He sets up in countless lives. And His joy is when we at least begin to realize them.

Lev 25:33 The Levites may redeem the house that was sold, and the city of his possession, and it shall be released in the Jubilee; for the houses of the cities of the Levites are their possession among the children of Israel-

See on :32. The Levites would only be driven to the desperation of selling their houses if Israel failed to generously provide for them through their tithes. Again God's

law foresees their likely failure. Just as He does not expect perfection from us.

Lev 25:34 But the field of the suburbs of their cities may not be sold; for it is their perpetual possession'-

This is the same phrase for "everlasting possession" used in the promises to Abraham about eternal possession of the land. The intention was that Israel would develop into the Kingdom of God on earth. And the land given the Levites in possession would indeed be eternally theirs. But this great intention never came near to fulfillment; it has been reinterpreted and rescheduled for fulfillment in the eternal Kingdom enabled by the Lord Jesus, with the Levitical priesthood replaced by Him and all God's people would be the priests.

Lev 25:35 'If your brother has become poor, and his hand can't support him among you; then you shall uphold him. He shall live with you like an alien and a temporary resident-

That is, with the same generosity you should show a foreigner. But the acceptance that poor Israelites would exist is perhaps a tacit recognition that the full blessing of the covenant would not come, for the promise was that there would be no poor in the land; and yet there is plenty of Mosaic legislation about poor Israelites. We see in this God's acceptance that His people would not live and experience as they should, and yet His legislation accounted for that- for He so thirsted for relationship with them. And He likewise is acceptant of our imperfection and failure to receive the blessings we could and should receive. See on :7.

Lev 25:36 Take no interest from him or profit, but fear your God; that your brother may live among you-

The Lord's parable of the lazy servant alludes here. He spoke to Jewish people who would have known that His advice to the rejected man to have lent out His money for interest was at variance with this teaching. The Lord may have meant that the man should have given His money, the Gospel, to the Gentiles, from whom interest could be taken. Or He may have meant that 'You should at least have done *something*, even if it broke the letter of the law- and then I would have had compassion on you. But you did precisely nothing and kept it for yourself and got on living your life for your own pleasure and profit rather than Mine'.

Lev 25:37 You shall not lend him your money at interest, nor give him your food for profit-

The reason is given in :38. Because Israel had been redeemed from Egypt, they were to be generous to their brethren, and generally open handed (Lev. 25:37,38). This is why the Acts record juxtaposes God's grace / giving, and the giving of the early believers in response (Acts 4:33 cp. 32,34-37).

Lev 25:38 I am Yahweh your God, Who brought you forth out of the land of Egypt, to give you the land of Canaan, and to be your God-

Because of Israel's experience of the Red Sea redemption, therefore they were to have a generous spirit to their brother. Because the Egyptians were hard taskmasters, and Israel had been graciously saved from them, *therefore* they were not to be hard on each other (Lev. 25:40). If the oppressed [as Israel were oppressed] cry out unto you [as Israel cried out for their affliction], you must hear them,

otherwise God will hear them and punish you, as if you are the Egyptian taskmaster (Ex. 22:24-27). Indeed, the whole Law of Moses is shot through with direct and indirect reference to the Red Sea experience. It was as if this was to be the motivator for their obedience and upholding of the culture of kindness which the Law sought to engender (Lev.23, 24; Dt. 17:7; 24:19-24). And our experience of redemption from this world ought to have the same effect.

Lev 25:39 If your brother has grown poor among you, and sells himself to you; you shall not make him to serve as a slave-

The covenant promised wealth and blessing to an obedient Israel. There were therefore to be no poor within Israel. The Israelite who became "poor did so either by his own failures, others' manipulations- or his own poor decision making. But God's law foresaw this failure to realize the potentials He had enabled, and legislated accordingly, still seeking to show grace even in this dysfunctional situation. And that is a pattern for us; for we have all received such grace and must show it to others. If a man digs a hole and falls into it, he is still in the hole and needs our grace.

Lev 25:40 As a hired servant and as a temporary resident he shall live with you; he shall serve with you until the Year of Jubilee-

Perhaps we should note "live with you". The servant was to be a family member. We see here a hint toward God's dislike of slavery, although He tolerated it as He tolerates much lower level behaviour.

Lev 25:41 then he shall go out from you, he and his children with him, and shall return to his own family, and to the possession of his fathers-

Again we see God's intention that His people should ideally live in the parcel of land which He had specifically given them. Any work or period away from home was to be but a temporary thing. As noted above, God's intention was that God's people enjoyed the inheritance He intended for them. And He geared things to promote that. He likewise has similar specific plans and intentions for us.

Lev 25:42 For they are My servants, whom I brought out of the land of Egypt. They shall not be sold as slaves-

Just as the land was God's and Israel were intended to have on a kind of eternal leasehold, so all Israel were His servants and were not to be treated as the servants of men. He had brought them out of Egypt to serve Him; He had required Pharaoh to release them so that they might serve *Him* and not Pharaoh. Likewise at our Red Sea baptism, there is a change of masters, as Rom. 6 makes clear. We are never to forget that; that our brethren are not ours but the servants of the Lord, they are His and not ours. And we are to treat them appropriately. But "they shall not sold as slaves" was again a conditional statement, although the conditions aren't made immediately apparent. For if they left covenant with Him, they would no longer be His slaves and would be sold into the Gentile world as He later threatened- and as happened (Dt. 28:68). But whilst they remained in covenant with Him, they were His servants. We note how the Lord Jesus took all this to a higher level, in declaring us not even servants, but friends (Jn. 15:15).

Lev 25:43 You shall not rule over him with harshness, but shall fear your God-

Constantly, fear of God is given as a reason never to be harsh nor abusive in any way to God's people. We can deduce that He therefore has a particular interest in how we treat our brethren. Any language or even impression of harshness must therefore be outlawed. The same word is used here of how the Egyptians were harsh toward Israel in Egypt (Ex. 1:13,14), and so by behaving like this we declare ourselves as not God's people but being of the world. And the word is again used as a reason why Judah were finally rejected- they had been "harsh" to each other (Ez. 34:4). These principles are not only relevant to those in leadership or power positions. If someone sins against us, we are in power over them; and it is for us not to be harsh towards them.

Lev 25:44 As for your male and your female slaves whom you may have; of the nations that are around you, from them you may buy male and female slaves-

God was surely against slavery, for it is a reflection of a lack of value of the human person; and all are made in the image of God. But I suggest God allowed slavery if the slave were a Gentile as a concession to their human weakness.

Lev 25:45 Moreover of the children of the aliens who live among you, of them you may buy, and of their families who are with you, which they have conceived in your land; and they will be your property-

There was continually envisaged a presence of Gentiles in Israel. The "mixed multitude" who came out of Egypt

may have been initially in view, but they were to be naturalized into Israel in their third generation. So the idea was that as Israel were a missionary nation, a light to the Gentile world, Gentiles would indeed come and live among them. But the legislation here seems geared towards incorporating those Gentiles into Israel.

Lev 25:46 You may make them an inheritance for your children after you, to hold for a possession; of them may you take your slaves forever; but over your brothers the children of Israel you shall not rule, one over another, with harshness-

Becoming Israel's eternal slaves would be through the children of any Gentile slaves being given an inheritance within the Israelite family; in this sense they would be "forever" in the family. "You may make them..." is misleading; it was not an option. This was a command. They were to do this. As we learn from the book of Ruth, there was great concern about marring an inheritance by splitting it up amongst too many children. So the idea surely was that if indeed Israel did buy Gentile slaves, then they were to give their children a part of the family inheritance, adopting them into their family. In this sense they would become their "slaves forever"; that is perhaps said almost sarcastically. God permitted slavery, but He was making it unattractive for those who only wanted slaves for secular work. These slaves would effectively become part of the Israelite family and their children would share in the family inheritance. It was another reflection of God's continual desire to incorporate Gentiles within the nation of Israel.

Lev 25:47 If an alien or temporary resident with you becomes rich, and your brother beside him has grown poor, and sells himself to the stranger or foreigner living among you, or to a member of the stranger's family-

LXX "or to a proselyte by extraction". The situation envisaged here refers to the curse for disobedience, whereby the Gentiles would rise up above the native Israelites (Dt. 28:43). Again we see how God's law constantly envisaged Israel's failure, and sought to legislate for their protection even then. This is grace indeed.

Lev 25:48 after he is sold he may be redeemed. One of his brothers may redeem him-

As discussed on :47, the situation here is that Israel had sinned and individuals were being judged for that. But there was hope for redemption through "one of his brothers", an oblique reference to the Saviour redeemer, the Lord Jesus, who was to arise to save sinful Israel as one of their brothers (Dt. 18:18), fully of their nature.

Lev 25:49 or his uncle, or his uncle's son, may redeem him, or any who is a close relative to him of his family may redeem him; or if he has grown rich, he may redeem himself-

Ps. 49:7-9 appears to be a commentary upon these things: "None of them can by any means redeem his brother, nor give God a ransom for him. For the redemption of their life is costly, no payment is ever enough, that he should live on forever, that he should not see corruption". Even if a man became strong enough to redeem himself, or his brethren could- the ultimate redemption was from eternal death. Whilst the effects of the man's sin (see on :47) might be ameliorated by his brethren, the thoughtful

Israelite was to reflect that the ultimate redemption from sin could not come from any known person, but from the future Messianic Saviour, raised up from amongst their brothers.

Lev 25:50 He shall reckon with him who bought him from the year that he sold himself to him relative to the Year of Jubilee: and the price of his sale shall be according to the number of years; according to the time of a hired servant shall he be with him-

There is no mention made of the potential strength of the person nor his age, which surely would have been critical. For a 50 year old sold into servitude with 40 years to run until the Jubilee would surely have been worth less than a 20 year old. Those factors are not weighted, when they cry out to be factored in to such legislation. I suggest that this was to nudge the Israelites towards the higher level- that the person sold into servitude really ought to be released anyway. And they should not be valued for how much work they might produce, but rather the year of redemption ought to be the final and only issue which affected the evaluation of a person. The legislation permits servitude and Gentile slavery, but is effectively geared against it. LXX is somewhat different, apparently outlawing anything apart from a yearly contract to serve: "then shall he calculate with his purchaser from the year that he sold himself to him until the year of release: and the money of his purchase shall be as that of a hireling, he shall be with him from year to year". Or GNB "They must consult the one who bought them, and they must count the years from the time they sold themselves until the next Year of Restoration and must

set the price for their release on the basis of the wages paid hired workers".

Lev 25:51 If there are yet many years, according to them he shall give back the price of his redemption out of the money that he was bought for-

See on :50. The Hebrew text is unclear, GNB for :52,53 offers "They must refund a part of the purchase price according to the number of years left, as if they had been hired on an annual basis". In this case the idea would be that the purchaser had to pay a kind of fine to the person who had been redeemed. Again, the law permits slavery and servitude but effectively makes it unattractive; the purchaser of a servant could end up seriously out of pocket if the servant was redeemed before the year of Jubilee.

Lev 25:52 If there remain but a few years to the year of jubilee, then he shall reckon with him; according to his years of service he shall give back the price of his redemption-

I suggested on :51 that this may imply that the initial purchaser of the servant had to pay a kind of fine; making such purchases of servants or slaves very risky and unattractive. To have forbidden slavery and purchase of servants would have been too much for Israel to swallow, as these practices were so inherent in their world experience. We see God's great sensitivity in recognizing this; and yet His laws led to the thoughtful person finding slavery unattractive. We find the same essential sensitivity and grace in the way that the New Testament as it were 'allows' belief in demons, even though they don't exist; and yet the implication and style of the records effectively deconstructs the idea of their existence.

Lev 25:53 As a servant hired year by year shall he live with him: he shall not rule with harshness over him in your sight-

Any social superiority we may have over others is temporary, and must be seen in the context of the year of Jubilee which has been announced in Christ. The whole concept was designed to teach humility and gentleness in relationships. "In your sight" could mean that those who spotted any abuse of servants was to be reported and acted upon. All Israel were to be aware of abuse issues and to ensure that they didn't occur. Again, the classic idea of slavery is being deconstructed and made impossible to operate.

Lev 25:54 If he isn't redeemed by these means, then he shall be released in the Year of Jubilee, he, and his children with him-

No mention is made of the wife, because it is perhaps assumed that husband and wife should be treated as a unit. The common idea that the children of a servant somehow belonged to the master is here shattered. Again, the practice of slavery as generally practiced in those days is not being tolerated. The family unit is given paramount importance, and everything is geared towards the independence of that family unit.

Lev 25:55 For to Me the children of Israel are servants; they are My servants whom I brought out of the land of Egypt. I am Yahweh your God'-

Those who had servants were to remember that they themselves were servants. Maybe Paul had this in mind when he reminded us that all our brothers and sisters are servants of Christ and not of us, and we therefore have no

right to judge another man's servant (Rom. 14:4). As Israel were to be a nation of servants, so should the Christian community be today.

Israel were "brought forth" from Egypt by God; they had been unwilling to leave Egypt, preferring to serve the Egyptians rather than Yahweh (Ex. 14:12). God had as it were forced through His project of saving Israel by bringing them out of Egypt. And He had done so largely for the sake of Moses, by whose faith the Red Sea parted and they were delivered (Heb. 11:28,29). Therefore Yahweh's bringing Israel out of Egypt was what He did for Moses, and only thereby for His people. We too are brought out of this world towards God's Kingdom by His grace alone, with His consistently taking the initiative in our hearts and life circumstances, in accord with the loving intercession of the Lord Jesus [represented by Moses]. Thus Yahweh brought Israel out of Egypt (Ex. 18:1; 19:1; Lev. 23:43; 25:55; Num. 26:4; 33:1,3,38; Dt. 4:45,46), but Moses did (Ex. 3:10,11).

LEVITICUS CHAPTER 26

Lev 26:1 'You shall make for yourselves no idols, neither shall you raise up an engraved image or a pillar, neither shall you place any figured stone in your land, to bow down to it; for I am Yahweh your God-

The Hebrew words for 'image' and 'imagination' are related, just as they are in English, Russian and other languages. This ancient law suddenly becomes bitingly relevant in our highly visual, screen oriented age- we are not to worship imaginations. The idols of the world are to be thrown down. Paul perceived the connection between stone images and psychological imaginations when he wrote of how we are to cast down [the language of casting down idols] imaginations and every high, lifted up thing that is against Christ (2 Cor. 10:5). People live their lives worshipping imaginations, chasing vaguely defined psychological dreams- of what it would be like to drive that car, live in that house, have that career, live with that man or woman. And these are our idols in this age, which we are to cut down and replace with the Christ centered mind.

Lev 26:2 You shall keep My Sabbaths, and have reverence for My sanctuary. I am Yahweh-

The stress may be upon the word "My". The systems of idol worships also required days to be kept as holy to them, and their sanctuaries to be revered. For the context here is all about avoiding idolatry. Yahweh's claims upon His people are supreme. There is no way we can worship both Yahweh and idols; the Sabbath was to kept exclusively for

Him rather than also to the other gods who also demanded that a Sabbath be kept to them. Perhaps this was one reason for the Sabbath legislation at this time- to preclude keeping Sabbath to any other god. But Israel as so many to-day sought to worship Yahweh through idol worship. The church at Corinth made the same mistake.

Lev 26:3 If you walk in My statutes, and keep My commandments, and do them-

The list of blessings in Lev. 26 and Dt. 28 were given by God perhaps knowing at the start that they would never be realized- "It shall come to pass, if you shall hearken diligently unto the voice of the Lord" (Dt. 28:1). God gave such detailed blessings for obedience even though they would never be realized by Israel. Likewise He gave such detailed plans for the temple in Ez. 40-48- even though the envisaged, possible scenario never came about because Israel chose to be disobedient.

Lev 26:4 then I will give you your rains in their season, and the land shall yield its increase, and the trees of the field shall yield their fruit-

The amount of fruit given was going to be huge (:5). But it would be because of the rains given by God, as if God was still going to bring about the blessing through natural means. This could imply a change of climate to almost tropical. The creation of such a specific microclimate over the promised land would be no difficulty for God.

Lev 26:5 Your threshing shall reach to the vintage, and the vintage shall reach to the sowing time; and you shall eat your bread to the full, and dwell in your land safely-

Israel's dwelling in peace and safety before the final invasion (Ez. 38) could then speak of a time when Israel have repented and Christ is already back. In this case, the blessings of Lev. 26 would then describe the blessedness of the Messianic Kingdom rather, when Israel are totally obedient, rather than having had any fulfillment in Israelite history to date.

The experience of preaching is in itself a foretaste of the future world-wide Kingdom. The harvest is both at the end of the age, according to the parables of Mt. 13, but also is ongoing right now (Jn. 4:36) as we gather in the harvest of converts. The Lord in Jn. 4:35,36 took this figure far further, by saying that the harvest is such that the interval between sowing and harvesting is in some sense collapsed for those who engage in preaching. The reaper was already collecting his wages; the harvest was already there, even though it was four months away (Jn. 4:35). This clearly alludes to the promises that in the Messianic Kingdom there would also be no interval between sowing and harvest, so abundant would be the harvest (Lev. 26:5; Am. 9:13). And hence, we are impelled to spread the foretaste of the Kingdom world-wide by our witness right now. God's ideal was that there would be a continual harvest; but His legislation in Lev. 25:16 accepts the reality that this would not happen. His awareness of our failure to reach our potential height of blessing is seen throughout His word.

Lev 26:6 I will give peace in the land, and you shall lie down, and no one will make you afraid; and I will remove evil animals out of the land, neither shall the sword go through your land

But the acceptance in Lev. 25:7 LXX that wild animals would exist is perhaps a tacit recognition that the full blessing of the covenant would not come, for the presence of wild beasts in the land was a sign of lack of blessing (Lev. 26:22). It's rather like the promise that there would be no poor in the land, and yet there is plenty of Mosaic legislation about poor Israelites. We see in this God's acceptance that His people would not live and experience as they should, and yet His legislation accounted for that- for He so thirsted for relationship with them. And He likewise is acceptant of our imperfection and failure to receive the blessings we could and should receive.

Lev 26:7 You shall chase your enemies, and they shall fall before you by the sword-

There were times in Israel's history when they did chase their enemies, e.g. at the time of David's victory over Goliath (1 Sam. 17). Likewise in the earlier reign of Solomon, Israel lived fruitfully and were multiplied (:9). But they were far from obedient to God's laws. But He all the same gave them the blessings for obedience. This was partly due to His love and grace, and partly because He accepted the faithfulness of a minority as being the obedience of the majority; and in this we see a foretaste of the imputed righteousness of Christ granted to all those in Him, despite their personal failure to achieve total obedience to Divine law.

Lev 26:8 Five of you shall chase a hundred, and a hundred of you shall chase ten thousand; and your enemies shall fall before you by the sword-

If five chased 100, this meant that one Israelite chased 20. But then the ratio increases- 100 chasing 10,000 means that one Israelite chased 100. The idea may be that their victories would ever increase in wonder. But if we understand by "a hundred" '100 groups of five', i.e. 500 men, then we have the same ratio- for 500 men chasing 20 each would mean they chased 10,000.

Lev 26:9 I will have respect for you, and make you fruitful, and multiply you, and will establish My covenant with you-

This is all the language of the Abrahamic promises. These promises can come true in a progressive sense in our lives in accordance with our living in step with God's ways. The language suggests that each one of God's people stands with Abraham that starry night; he is no distant saint, but a living personal example whose path of faith is to be replicated in the life of each of God's children.

That God can "respect" mere humans indicates not only His humility but also His extreme sensitivity to us and His delight in our feeble attempts to please Him; rather like a parent may be thrilled by the responses of a baby, totally insignificant as they are in themselves.

They had left Egypt with great riches of silver and gold, and this is "your silver and gold" which was to be multiplied even more (Dt. 8:13). The multiplication of Abraham's seed promised to him clearly meant not simply numerical multiplication, but material multiplication too. That is the sense too in Lev. 26:9; Dt. 30:5. We wonder why God gave them all this blessing, knowing that it would lead to such spiritual temptation and failure. We wonder

why He gives so many of His people today the same huge blessings, however unappreciated they are. One simple answer is that it is because He loves us with all the love of a father for his children; He rejoiced to multiply them (Dt. 28:63). The king of Israel was warned in the same words not to multiply silver and gold lest his heart turn away (Dt. 17:17). The idea may be that we are to leave God to multiply our silver and gold if He wishes, and not set our heart to doing so.

Lev 26:10 You shall eat old store long kept, and you shall move out the old because of the new-

This may be a specific reference to the legislation about the year of Jubilee just given in Lev. 25. They would be given such a big harvest before the year of Jubilee that they would eat it for three years. But if they were obedient to the covenant, then every year would be like the year of Jubilee. They would live permanently in that spirit. Having to move out the old begs the question "Where to?". Presumably to the poor and marginalized, to the extent that there would be no poor left in the land, as was God's ideal intention. The Lord seems to have had this verse in mind when speaking of the householder who brings out of his treasures things new and old, once he accepts the new covenant (Mt. 13:52). And Paul likewise speaks of the person in Christ letting the old things pass away ["move out"] because of the new things (2 Cor. 5:17). Clearly we in Christ are to live in the spirit of this, in spiritual terms.

Lev 26:11 I will set My tent among you: and My soul won't abhor you-

David and Solomon sought to force the fulfillment of this promise to place God's dwelling place within Israel by building a temple for God to dwell in. They wanted to bring about the effects of obedience by human strength; rather like seeking peace in Christianity without making true peace with God through repentance. The same words translated "set [My] tabernacle" are found in Ez. 25:4, where God says that in distinction to this, Israel's enemies would set *their* dwellings / tabernacles within Israel. If God doesn't live in us, then the world will do so; we will be indwelt by some spirit, be it God's or that of the flesh and the world. We can't just be neutral in this.

I will set My tabernacle among you- God did this (2 Sam. 7:6,7), by grace, even though the precondition of Israelite obedience was not met. Such is His desire to dwell with His people.

Lev 26:12 I will walk among you, and will be your God, and you will be My people-

Again, God did this (2 Sam. 7:6,7), by grace, even though the precondition of Israelite obedience was not met. Such is His desire to walk with His people. Revelation concludes with the picture of God's tabernacle being with men and walking amongst us (Rev. 21:3)- the reward for obedience given by grace to we who have been disobedient.

"Be your God... My people" is alluded to in the closing visions of Revelation, which speak of this as the final destiny of God's people- even though we have all failed to be obedient. Obedience, therefore, will be imputed to us, and we shall receive the blessings of obedience even though we have not attained total obedience. "The tabernacle of

God" being God's people; He being our God; God living and walking with us (Rev. 21:3) is evidently alluding to Lev. 26:11,12 and Ex. 29:45,46 concerning the ultimate blessings of the covenant after Israel's final repentance. The shadowy fulfillment they have had in the past through God's manifestation in an Angel doesn't mean that these promises can and must only be fulfilled by some form of God manifestation. Surely Rev. 21:3 is saying that at the second coming the principle of God manifestation will change in that God will personally be with His people. Because we have so far lived under the paradigm of God manifestation, let's not think that it's not possible for God to personally be with us.

Lev 26:13 I am Yahweh your God, Who brought you forth out of the land of Egypt, that you should not be their slaves; and I have broken the bars of your yoke, and made you go upright'-

The emphasis is on the word "their". Israel were to change masters- to become *God's* servants and not those of Pharaoh. We do the same at our Red Sea baptism, as Rom. 6 explains.

Lev 26:14 'But if you will not listen to Me, and will not do all these commandments-

The judgments to come upon the earth / land of Israel in Revelation are presented in four groups of seven. This is exactly the pattern of Lev. 26, where Israel are threatened with seven-fold judgments; and if they did not repent, then the seven-fold judgments would be repeated. Four times this is threatened; if they had repented after the first seven-fold judgments, there would have been no need for the oth-

ers. It seems to me that the sequence of events in the last days is likewise impossible to predict in detail, because depending upon human freewill, the fulfillment of the various prophecies may be suspended or be realized in more symbolic ways, as we have already seen God working like this in the past.

He not only repeats all the curses of Lev. 26 to them, but he adds even more, under inspiration (Dt. 28:50-57). Presumably the Angel had explained in one of their conversations how Israel would suffer even greater punishment than what He had outlined in Lev. 26. Notice in passing that Lev. 26 and Dt. 28 are not strictly parallel. And in some ways, Moses became more demanding, whilst at the same time emphasizing grace and love.

Lev 26:15 and if you shall reject My statutes, and if your soul abhors My ordinances, so that you will not do all My commandments, but break My covenant; -

See on :44. God promised that even if Israel sinned, He would never break His covenant with them (Lev. 26:44; Jud. 2:1). But He did (Zech. 11:10 cp. Jer. 14:21), as witnessed by the termination of the Law of Moses, which was the basis of His covenant with Israel. His love creates yet another Bible paradox. Israel broke the covenant by their disobedience (Lev. 26:15; Dt. 31:16 and many others). God therefore broke His part of the covenant. Yet God made His promises concerning the unbreakable covenant because He chose to speak in words which did not reflect His foreknowledge that Israel would sin. The apparent contradiction is resolvable by realizing that God did not set His mind upon Israel's future apostasy when He

made the 'unbreakable' covenant with them. And yet the paradox still ultimately stands; that He broke His covenant with them when they sinned. He worked through this punishment in order to establish an even more gracious new covenant.

Lev 26:16 I also will do this to you: I will appoint terror over you-

"I will *appoint* over you terror" uses a Hebrew word which appears elsewhere concerning appointing officers over a land (Gen. 41:34), implying some form of enemy rulership over Israel during the desolation period. The curses to come upon Israel as a result of the latter day invasions are described in terms which are extremely apposite to modern warfare. The plagues to come upon Israel as a result of the invasions are almost impossible to identify with anything presently known: "a consumption... a fever... an inflammation... an extreme burning... blasting... the burning ague that shall consume the eyes" (Dt. 28:22; Lev. 26:16) all seems to echo the language of nuclear fall-out. "They shall be burnt... and devoured with burning heat, and with bitter destruction" (Dt. 32:24) is similar. The release of complex chemical weapons, as well as nuclear detonation, would explain why rainfall patterns will be interrupted during this latter day tribulation (Dt. 28:23). The fall-out from such weapons would create the murderous rain of dust upon the land which Dt. 28:24 speaks of: "The Lord shall make the rain of thy land powder and dust: from heaven shall it come down upon thee, until thou be destroyed". It is twice emphasized that those in the land would suffer blindness (Dt. 28:28,29), which may also be

related to such nuclear or chemical fallout. This has not yet happened; the context invites us to read this as literal rather than figurative. We know that the latter day invaders who attack Jerusalem will both fight each other and have their eyes rot in their sockets (Zech. 14:12), the implication being that they use their weaponry against each other as well as against Israel. Their earlier use of these weapons would account for this blindness coming upon Israel, and again we see the principle that what the attackers do to Israel will be inflicted upon them.

And make the soul to pine away; and you will sow your seed in vain, for your enemies will eat it-

God's blessings and cursings involve His direct operation upon the human heart. Many of the cursings involve psychological attitudes- fleeing when nobody is chasing (:17), having pride broken (:19), faintness sent into the heart (:36) etc.

Lev 26:17 I will set My face against you, and you will be struck down before your enemies. Those who hate you will rule over you; and you will flee when no one pursues you-

The fleeing of the Egyptians from Israel in the midst of the Red Sea (Ex. 14:25,27) was a case of fleeing when none pursued them. This was the judgment upon Israel (Lev. 26:17,36; Dt. 28:25), which was to arise because in their hearts they had returned to Egypt (the world) and were therefore to be judged as Egypt, "condemned with the world" they had loved (1 Cor. 11:32).

A spirit of fear, nervousness and negativity can be given by God as a result of willful disobedience to His ways. He can give a spirit (mental attitude) of fear (2 Tim. 1:7).

Lev 26:18 If you in spite of these things will not listen to Me, then I will chastise you seven times more for your sins-

It should be noted that the record of the curses in Lev. 26 splits them up into six sections, each introduced by a phrase like, "If you will not for this hearken unto me... then..." more curses would come (Lev. 26:14,18,21,23,27,36). It is tempting to associate this with the series of six judgments to be poured upon Israel and her enemies as outlined in the six seals (Rev. 6) and six vials (Rev. 16), leading up to the seventh period, of Israel's repentance and Christ's Kingdom. There are many other points of contact between the curses and the language of the seals and vials.

"If you will not for all this *hearken* unto me" (Lev. 26:18) may suggest that God's word will be spoken to Israel along with the trials brought about by the curses. This again indicates that the Elijah ministry will operate within Israel during their period of final downtreading. See on :23.

Lev 26:19 I will break the pride of your power, and I will make your sky like iron, and your soil like brass-

The same word is used in 2 Kings 25:13 concerning the breaking of the brass temple pillars by the Babylonians. The Babylonian invasion clearly looks forward to the final destruction of Israel in the last days. The lack of rain recalls how this was the situation during the three and a half years of Elijah's appeal to Israel to forsake idolatry. And that looks ahead to the latter day Elijah ministry.

Lev 26:20 and your strength will be spent in vain; for your land won't yield its increase, neither will the trees of the land yield their fruit-

"Ye shall sow your seed in vain... your strength shall be spent in vain: for your land shall not yield her increase" (Lev. 26:16,20), not only confirms the many other hints that Israel's physical fertility will be ruined during this period, despite that implication that Israel will make a major effort to be agriculturally self-sufficient in the tribulation. This may indicate a world-wide trade embargo against her, or a blockade which the West refuses to challenge.

Lev 26:21 If you walk contrary to Me, and won't listen to Me, then I will bring seven times more plagues on you according to your sins-

"If..." could suggest that when suffering the curses for disobedience, they would then be offered the opportunity for repentance. But if they refused this, then the plagues would not be of 'short continuance' as was potentially possible, but would last "long" (Dt. 28:59), or made seven times heavier (Lev. 26:21).

Lev 26:22 I will send wild animals among you, which will rob you of your children, destroy your livestock, and make you few in number; and your roads will become desolate-

See on 1 Kings 22:22. "Your highways shall be desolate" (Lev. 26:22 AV) is definitely picked up in Jud. 5:6, concerning the result of the reign of terror in Israel. They were saved from it through repentance and the raising up of a saviour / judge, looking ahead to the Lord Jesus in the last days. The highways and transport infrastructure of modern Israel face a like fate.

"I will also send wild beasts among you, which shall rob you of your children, and destroy your cattle" (Lev. 26:22 cp. Dt. 28:31) speaks of the "beasts of the earth / land" (Dt.

28:26), who refer to the nations within the earth / land promised to Abraham. The use of cattle raiding language in Ez. 38:12 would then lead us to equate that latter day invasion with the final fulfillment of the curses upon Israel here.

But the acceptance that wild animals would exist in the land (Lev. 25:7 LXX) is perhaps a tacit recognition that the full blessing of the covenant would not come, for the presence of wild beasts in the land was a sign of lack of blessing. It's rather like the promise that there would be no poor in the land, and yet there is plenty of Mosaic legislation about poor Israelites. We see in this God's acceptance that His people would not live and experience as they should, and yet His legislation accounted for that- for He so thirsted for relationship with them. And He likewise is acceptant of our imperfection and failure to receive the blessings we could and should receive.

Lev 26:23 If by these things you won't be returned to Me, but will walk contrary to Me-

It seems that the curses mentioned in this chapter aren't just a general list, but there is an intended chronological sequence. God had planned from the start that if Israel were disobedient, then He would bring various judgments, in order to help them be obedient; and if they failed, He would bring more, again with the intention that they responded to them. The curses for disobedience weren't therefore merely an offended deity lashing out at a people who had irritated Him; God has purpose and positive spiritual intention even in the judgments He brings into peoples' lives. He is constantly seeking our return to Him, just

as the shepherd searched for the lost sheep until He found it (Lk. 15:4).

"If you will not be *reformed* by me" (Lev. 26:23 AV) uses a Hebrew word elsewhere translated 'to teach', defined by Strong as 'to chastise by words'. This provides further confirmation of the ideas discussed on :18 about a latter day appeal by a teaching ministry to Israel, as they go through these curses.

Lev 26:24 then I will also walk contrary to you; and I will strike you, even I, seven times for your sins-

To have God against you ["even I"] is a terrible thing (Heb. 10:31). But they had walked contrary to God (:21), and so inevitably they would find Him walking against them. It was their choice. It was not that God was walking with them and then turned around and walked against them. They decided to walk against God, and so it is axiomatic that He was therefore walking against them. All judgment is effectively chosen by men, sin is its own judgment. Men more condemn themselves rather than being condemned by Him against their will.

Lev 26:25 I will bring a sword upon you, that will execute the vengeance of the covenant; and you will be gathered together within your cities: and I will send the plague among you; and you will be delivered into the hand of the enemy-

Just as all the animals and everything in the *eretz* promised to Abraham was 'delivered into the hands' of Noah (s.w. Gen. 9:2), so the nations of that *eretz* were delivered into the hands of Israel (s.w. Ex. 6:8; 23:31; Dt. 2:24; 3:2,3; 7:24; 21:10; Josh. 2:24; Jud. 1:2). Tragically, like Adam in Eden [perhaps the same *eretz* promised to

Abraham] and Noah in the new, cleansed *eretz*, Israel didn't realize this potential. What was delivered into the hand of Joshua (Josh. 2:24) actually wasn't delivered into their hand, because they disbelieved (Jud. 2:23); and this looks ahead to the disbelief of so many in the work of the Lord Jesus, who has indeed conquered the Kingdom for us. They considered the promise of the nations being delivered into their hand as somehow open to question, and only a possibility and not at all certain (Jud. 8:7; Num. 21:2 cp. Num. 21:34). Some like Jephthah (s.w. Jud. 11:32; 12:3), Ehud (Jud. 3:10,28), Deborah (Jud. 4:14), Gideon (Jud. 7:15) did, for a brief historical moment; but as individuals, and their victories were not followed up on. Instead they were dominated by the territory. And so instead, they were delivered into the hands of their enemies within the *eretz* (s.w. Lev. 26:25; Jud. 13:1).

The "pestilence" which was the plague upon Egypt (Ex. 9:3) was to come upon a hard hearted Israel (s.w. Lev. 26:25; Num. 14:12; Dt. 28:21; Jer. 21:6). It will do in the last days (Ez. 33:27-29). The plagues upon Egypt form the basis for the vials and seals of Revelation, which speak of judgment to come upon the land of Israel. It is a theme with God that His apostate people are "condemned with the world" (1 Cor. 11:32). If their hearts are really with Egypt / the world, then they will share the judgments of this world. The time for separation is now, just as the Egyptians had to identify with Israel if they wished to escape the plagues.

Withdrawal into fenced cities was what happened in the Assyrian invasion (2 Kings 18:13). The great emphasis

on how famine and plague would lead to Israel's capture by their enemies rather than straight military defeat (Lev. 26:25), is especially relevant to Nebuchadnezzar's taking of Jerusalem (cp. Jer. 14:12). All these curses had elements of historical fulfillment, but will have their main fulfillment in the last days.

Most especially is Babylon called "the enemy": Ps. 78:61; Jer. 6:25; 15:11; 18:17; 31:16 and an impressive 11 times in Lamentations. 'Babylon' has specific latter-day application to the neighbouring enemies of Israel.

Lev 26:26 When I break your staff of bread, ten women shall bake your bread in one oven, and they shall deliver your bread again by weight-

These words are quoted in Is. 3:1 concerning Judah's deprivation at the hands of the Assyrians. The curses, like all Bible prophecy, had multiple fulfillments over Israelite history- but will come to complete fulfillment only in the last days.

Ezekiel's prophecies of the coming Babylonian tribulation have several references to Lev. 26. The initial fulfillment was in Babylon, but it looks ahead to that in the last days. "They shall eat bread by weight" (Ez. 4:16) = "They shall deliver you your bread by weight" (Lev. 26:26); "The fathers shall eat the sons in the midst of (Zion), and the sons shall eat their fathers" (Ez. 5:10)= "You shall eat the flesh of your sons" (Lev. 26:29). "I will make you waste" (Ez. 5:14) = "I will make your cities waste" (Lev. 26:31, s.w.); "...draw out a sword after (you)" (Ez. 5:12) = "I will scatter you among the heathen, and draw out a sword after you" (Lev. 26:33).

Note that to break the bread in a place was an idiom for breaking the life there (Ez. 4:16; 5:16; 14:13; Lev. 26:26). This was what the Lord asks us to remember- not the physical breaking of His body, but the breaking of His life for us and sharing it with us (Is. 58:7). The Lord's death is surely to be understood as a tearing apart of the flesh nature and tendencies which He bore; and it is this we remember in breaking the bread which represents His flesh.

And you shall eat, and not be satisfied-

So many of the judgments are mental attitudes (especially :16,36). God gives people attitudes of mind, positive and negative. And He uses that ability today through the work of the Spirit on human hearts. Israel were given manna in the wilderness, and they ate it and were full (Ex. 16:8,12). But they were promised that in the promised land of the Kingdom, they would likewise eat and be full, again from blessing given by God (s.w. Dt. 8:10; 11:15; 14:29; 26:12; 31:20). After our Red Sea baptism, we are now in the wilderness; but by feeding on the manna, the word of God in the Lord Jesus, we have a foretaste of the Kingdom experience. But the curse for disobedience was that they would eat and not be full / satisfied (Lev. 26:26).

The description of the thin cows eating up the fat cows (Gen. 41:21) is alluded to in the Hebrew text of the curses for Israel's disobedience in Lev. 26:26: "you shall eat, and not be satisfied". The seven years of famine were therefore to be seen as a curse. Disobedient Israel would be treated like Egypt, which is a theme throughout all the curses of Lev. 26. Egypt represents the world, and those rejected from the new Israel will likewise "be condemned with the

world" (1 Cor. 11:32), sent back into the world they loved to share the world's judgment.

Lev 26:27 If you in spite of this won't listen to Me, but walk contrary to Me-

See on :24 for "walk contrary". We note the parallel between listening and walking. Daily life, walking, is to be guided step by step by our listening to God's word. In our age and situation, daily Bible reading is a major part of this process, as well as developing the ability to hear those ancient words speaking to us as we face the life moves which make up daily walking in this world.

Lev 26:28 then I will walk contrary to you in wrath; and I also will chastise you seven times for your sins-

This chastisement was in order to elicit repentance and change, s.w. Dt. 8:5; 21:18- it was not the lashing out of an offended Deity, but the chastisement of a loving Father. God had spoken to Israel from Heaven with His own voice, that He might "instruct" (s.w. chastise) them (Dt. 4:36). Although He was madly in love with Israel in the wilderness, He chastised them even there and tried to teach them to live by His word daily (Dt. 8:5 s.w.), but they refused all this. If we refuse God's direct statements to us through His word, then He uses life situations to try to teach or instruct us. And this will come to full term in Israel's latter day afflictions, until they finally admit they have been chastised / instructed and turn to God and His Son in repentance (s.w. Jer. 31:18).

Lev 26:29 You will eat the flesh of your sons, and you will eat the flesh of your daughters-

In the account of the great famine in Samaria which this invasion brought about, there is the extraordinary record of the two women arguing about the eating of their children (2 Kings 6:29). The inclusion of this incident in the record must be to recall Lev. 26:29, where it is prophesied that this is exactly what would occur. Ben-hadad's invasion is typical of the onslaught of the last day. Likewise in the Babylonian context "The fathers shall eat the sons in the midst of (Zion), and the sons shall eat their fathers" (Ez. 5:10); see on :26.

Lev 26:30 I will destroy your high places, and cut down your incense altars, and cast your dead bodies upon the bodies of your idols; and My soul will hate you-

This was done by Josiah (2 Chron. 34:5) because God said that He would do this if His people broke covenant. Josiah was recognizing that indeed they had broken covenant and were worthy of such things. He was agreeing that this curse was true and legitimate and hastened to bring it about, with the humility which only comes from conviction of sin.

Lev 26:31 I will lay your cities waste, and will bring your sanctuaries to desolation-

The same word is used of the Babylonian desolation of Judah, both historically and in the last days "I will make you waste" (Ez. 5:14). See on :26. "Waste" uses a Hebrew word which means 'wasted by intense heat' - i.e. nuclear fission? See on :16.

And I will not take delight in the sweet fragrance of your offerings-

As can be imagined, there will be much Jewish prayer in the last days, but the majority of Israel will fail to accept that it is faith in Christ's mediation of prayer, rather than the mental intensity of supplication, which brings a response. Spiritual Israel may have to re-learn this lesson at the same time.

"A pleasant aroma" is a very common phrase. This concept is important to God. It first occurs in Gen. 8:21 where it means that God accepted Noah's sacrifice and vowed that the pole of saving mercy in His character was going to triumph over that of necessary judgment. Under the new covenant, it is persons and not sacrifices or incense which are accepted as a "pleasant aroma" (Ez. 20:41). The word for "pleasant" means strong delight; this is how God's heart can be touched by genuine sacrifice. Those pleasing offerings represented us, the living sacrifices (Rom. 12:1). And so it is applied to us in 2 Cor. 2:15- if we are in Christ, we are counted as a pleasant aroma to God. But Israel in their tribulation will still have rejected the Lord Jesus, so they can never be a pleasing aroma. The offering of ourselves to Him is nothing of itself, but because we are in Christ and counted as Him, we are a delight to God. Hence the colossal importance of being "in Christ". "Aroma" or "smell" is a form of the Hebrew word *ruach*, the word for spirit or breath. God discerns the spirit of sacrifices, that was what pleased Him rather than the burning flesh of animals. Our attitude of mind in sacrifice can touch Him. Sacrifice is therefore accepted, Paul says, according to what a person has to give, but the essence is the attitude of mind behind it. We think of the two coins sacrificed by the widow.

Lev 26:32 I will bring the land into desolation; and your enemies that dwell therein will be astonished at it-

The desolation of the physical land of Israel is associated with God's anger at Israel's disobedience, and the physical blossoming of the land with His blessing for obedience. But since 1948 the land of Israel has blossomed physically- but without Israel's obedience. This, then, is the outpouring of God's grace in these last days. This 'remembering of the land' by God will be if dispersed Israel repent (:42). They did not- but God has gone beyond His terms of blessing here, such is His grace and desire to save Israel. In this spirit :45 seems to say that even if they are disobedient, God will still remember His covenant desire to bless them. This is grace indeed.

Lev 26:33 I will scatter you among the nations, and I will draw out the sword after you; and your land will be a desolation, and your cities shall be a waste-

The same phrase is used of the Babylonian desolation of Judah, both historically and in the last days: "I will... draw out a sword after (you)" (Ez. 5:12). See on :26.

Lev 26:34 Then the land will enjoy its Sabbaths as long as it lies desolate and you are in your enemies' land. Even then the land will rest and enjoy its Sabbaths-

Judah's exile in Babylon was to allow the land to enjoy her Sabbaths (2 Chron. 36:21). But the restoration from Babylon was not because of Judah's repentance; it was brought about by God's grace, because Judah were largely impenitent. "Enjoy" is literally 'repay', and this idea is found in Is. 40:2 "her iniquity has been repayed". The idea of the Isaiah reference was that the exile had as it were repayed

for Israel's refusal to obey the legislation about the Sabbath years and Jubilee years, which as explained on Lev. 25 required huge faith to obey- which they didn't have. We see that God has His way ultimately; Israel didn't obey that legislation, and yet God made the land have that Sabbath rest through the exile of the people upon it.

Lev 26:35 As long as it lies desolate it shall have rest, even the rest which it didn't have in your Sabbaths, when you lived on it-

Closer study reveals the variableness of outworking of the time periods. Jer. 25:11,12 and Jer. 29:10 speak of a 70 year period of Babylonian rule over Judah, beginning with the invasion of BC597. But Babylon only ruled over Judah for 49 years, before Babylon fell to the Persians. This would connect with the way that Zech. 4:3 speaks of 7 menorah candlesticks each with 7 lamps, making 49 lamps. 49 is the cycle of 7 Sabbath years that culminated in the jubilee year, and the jubilee year, the proclamation of liberty to the land (Lev. 25:8-12; 27:7-24) is a figure used so often in Isaiah to describe the freedom of Judah once released from Babylon. Lev. 26:34,43 speak of the land enjoying her Sabbaths whilst Israel were in exile for their sins- i.e. for 49 years. So it seems that there could have been some restoration after 49 years- but it didn't happen. But Dan. 9:2 and 2 Chron. 36:21 seem to reinterpret those 70 years of Jeremiah's prophecies as speaking of a 70 year period during which Jerusalem and the temple would be desolate. And yet there again, Ezekiel was asked to prophecy that Judah would suffer for their sins for 40 years (Ez. 4:6). Perhaps something could've happened after 40 years... Perhaps

some restoration could have happened to the ten tribes after 390 years (Ez. 4:5), although there's no sign it ever did. And then, the starting point of the 70 or 40 years was somewhat flexible- for Ez. 22:3,4 records Ezekiel's prophecy that the desolation of Jerusalem by the Babylonians [the starting point of the time periods] was actually being hastened, brought forward, by the terrible behaviour of the Jews living there after the initial Babylon invasion of the land. In fact, if a person had been found who would have powerfully interceded for Jerusalem, 'stood in the gap' (Ez. 22:30), God wouldn't have destroyed Jerusalem - "that I should not destroy it" is an allusion to Abraham interceding for Sodom in Gen. 18:28. There were simply so many possible scenarios! And this is what we must expect if even time periods can be shortened or extended in response to human behaviour.

Lev 26:36 As for those of you who are left, I will send a faintness into their hearts in the lands of their enemies; and the sound of a driven leaf will put them to flight; and they shall flee, as one flees from the sword; and they will fall when no one pursues-

During their latter day tribulation, Israel will experience "faintness in their hearts", intense "terror" (Lev. 26:16), which would be enough to kill them (Dt. 32:25). This extraordinary level of paranoia will be modelled upon that of Jacob as he faced Esau - representing Israel's confrontation with the Arabs in the last days (Jer. 30:5,7). This state of fear will result in many Jews going to live in Jerusalem, as happened during the Babylonian and Assyrian invasions (Jer. 35:11). Ezekiel had prophesied of this time: "Terrors

(an intensive plural - i.e. 'the one great terror') by reason of the sword shall be upon my people" (Ez. 21:12). Likewise our Lord spoke of "fearful sights" being seen in latter-day Israel (Lk. 21:11). This fear will be absolute paranoia: "I will make you a terror to yourself" (Jer. 20:4) because of latter day Babylon's invasion; "ye shall flee when none pursueth you... I will send a faintness into their hearts... the sound of a shaken leaf shall chase them" (Lev. 26:17,36). "I will bring the land into *desolation*" (Lev. 26:32) uses a Hebrew word which can imply stupefaction by fear. This paranoia will be associated with a manic depression which will have its roots in a chronically bad conscience towards God, going back thousands of years to their national childhood: "I will... cause sorrow of heart... they that are left of you shall pine away in their iniquity... and also in the iniquity of their fathers shall they pine away" (Lev. 26:16,39). Note how the *land* will be brought into this mental desolation. Frequently the land of Israel is paralleled with the people (e.g. Jer.19:14 cp. 26:17). The intense desolation of Jewry will be reflected physically in the state of their land. And the resolution of this psychological torment will only be through repentance and acceptance of the Saviour Messiah whom they crucified.

Lev 26:37 They will stumble over one another, as it were before the sword, when no one pursues: and you will have no power to stand before your enemies-

This is one of a number of word pictures among the curses which recall the scenes of Nazi death camps. But even they were nothing to the scenes which tragically are yet to come in the last days. The stumbling when no man

chased them is another indication of a psychological state given to them. We recall that this was the method of destruction God used against Israel's enemies, e.g. in the time of Gideon. And they were to experience the same judgments as their enemies. Revelation makes this clear in a latter day context, where the seals of judgment upon Israel are in fact essentially the same as the vials of judgment upon their enemies.

Lev 26:38 You will perish among the nations, and the land of your enemies will eat you up-

"The land of your enemies will eat you up" implies that Israel's enemies are to be seen as a beast. This sort of language is quite common in the prophecies which speak of a latter-day beast devouring Israel (e.g. Is. 49:19; Joel 1:6).

Lev 26:39 Those of you who are left will pine away in their iniquity in your enemies' lands; and also in the iniquities of their fathers shall they pine away with them-

Israel's repentance would involve a recognition that their fathers had sinned; in contrast to their way of praising their ancestors as great men of God, when in fact they slew God's prophets and crucified His Son. There is no religion like Judaism for quoting with veneration the various fathers of their faith, and seeking to whitewash all Jewish Bible characters from any real wrongdoing.

Lev 26:40 If they confess their iniquity, and the iniquity of their fathers, in their trespass which they trespassed against Me, and also recognize that because they walked contrary to Me-

"Confess" is the word for praise. Praise is related to the realization that sin has been forgiven. Hezekiah's praise on

realizing God's mercy to him was expressed in a desire to walk in quiet fellowship with God for the rest of his life. There is no suggestion that praise was some kind of ecstatic exuberance of emotion. The normal Hebrew word translated "praise" is also translated "confess" in the context of confessing sin (Lev. 5:5; 16:21; 26:40; Num. 5:7). Contrition of heart because of appreciating our own failures is therefore one way of praising Yahweh's Name. So often does the word "praise" occur in the context of praising the *Name* of Yahweh, or the praising of "the God of Israel", i.e. Yahweh.

Lev 26:41 I also walked contrary to them, and brought them into the land of their enemies: if then their uncircumcised heart is humbled, and they then accept the punishment of their iniquity-

See on :24 for "walk contrary". This clearly demonstrates how the whole of Jewry will be destroyed apart from this righteous remnant who are left (:39) - and that even they will be a remnant of a remnant. This accords with our previous conclusions, that there will be a group within latter-day Israel who associate themselves with the remnant, but who do not fully repent. They may well meet their final curse in the (temporary) fires of Gehenna, outside the city of their refuge.

Lev 26:42 then I will remember My covenant with Jacob, and also My covenant with Isaac, and also My covenant with Abraham; and I will remember the land-

We read of God 'remembering' His covenant (Ex. 2:24; Lev. 26:42; Jer. 14:10,21); and of God 'not remembering' or forgetting the sins of His covenant people (Is. 43:25; Jer. 31:34). If words mean anything, this surely im-

plies that sins which God once remembered, He then stops remembering and 'forgets'. Such language seems on one hand inappropriate to the God who by nature doesn't have to forget and can recall all things. But He has willingly entered into the meaning of time which is experienced by those with whom He is in covenant relationship. He allows Himself to genuinely feel it like it is. The 'gap' between God stating His plan and its actual fulfillment is the opportunity for men and women to plead with Him, as Moses did, as Abraham did regarding Sodom (Gen. 18:17-22), as so many have done...

Lev 26:43 The land also will be left by them, and will enjoy its Sabbaths while it lies desolate without them: and they will accept the punishment of their iniquity-

Some prophecies were delayed / rescheduled in their fulfillment. Others have their intended fulfillment changed into another form. Is. 40:2 speaks of how Jerusalem's "punishment is accepted" (RVmg.), referring to how Lev. 26:43 had said that the land would lie desolate until her punishment was fulfilled. This passage could have come true when Judah returned from captivity. But it didn't. It is applied to the preaching of John the Baptist in the first century; but again, Judah would not hear. And so once again the land lay desolate again, until now the time has arrived for the final Elijah prophet.

Because, even because they rejected My ordinances, and their soul hated My statutes-

See on :44. Israel have ever claimed to love God's word, studying every letter of every word in the Mosaic law with apparently great respect. But God sees things from His per-

spective. And they despised and even "hated" those statutes and rejected them. For they all led to His Son, whom they crucified. We have here an example of how God sees to the essence of implied positions. If we hate or despise God's word, He will hate us (:30). Our attitude to God's word is related to His attitude to us. The very least we can do is to read His word daily and love it, through all our weakness.

Lev 26:44 Yet for all that, when they are in the land of their enemies, I will not reject them, neither will I abhor them, to destroy them utterly, and to break My covenant with them; for I am Yahweh their God-

The covenant was broken, not least because Israel broke it and abrogated it (see on :15). The promise here however is that even when Israel were to be in the land of their enemies as punishment for their sins, "I will not cast them away". God will not cast away Israel (Is. 41:9). Only if Heaven can be measured will God cast away Israel (Jer. 31:37). God has not cast away His people (Rom. 11:2). And yet the same word is found in statements like "My God will cast them away" (Hos. 9:17; Is. 54:6); the same Hebrew word occurs when God says He would "reject" Israel (Hos. 4:6). This is only explicable as a paradox of God's grace. Although we could read Romans as Paul arguing that God has only not rejected His people in that He has redefined His people as those now "in" His Son who was "Israel" as intended.

Although it is true as it was with Saul that those who reject Yahweh's word are rejected (1 Sam. 15:23), God's grace is beyond such a simplistic picture. Israel were to despise / reject God's word (s.w. Lev. 26:15,43), "and yet for

all that.. I will not reject them / cast they away" (Lev. 26:44 s.w.). Israel rejected Yahweh when they wanted Saul to be their king (s.w. 1 Sam. 8:7; 10:19), and yet He did not reject them immediately because of that. The relevance to the exiles was in that they were in captivity because they too had rejected God's word and therefore God had rejected them (2 Kings 17:15 cp. 2 Kings 17:20; 23:27), because they rejected His prophetic words, He rejected them (Jer. 6:19,30; Hos. 4:6), "and yet for all that... I will not reject them / cast they away" (Lev. 26:44; Jer. 31:37 s.w.). For ultimately God has not rejected / cast away His people (Is. 41:9; Jer. 33:26; Rom. 11:2). This is the mystery of grace, no matter how we may seek to explain it away by Biblical exposition and balancing Bible verses against each other. See on :15.

Lev 26:45 but I will for their sake remember the covenant of their ancestors, whom I brought out of the land of Egypt in the sight of the nations, that I might be their God. I am Yahweh'-

See on :32. The "memorial portion" of the offerings was to serve as a reminder to God, as it were, of the covenants which He "remembered". He of course doesn't forget His covenant but ever remembers it (Ps. 105:8 etc.), yet He is presented in human terms as having His memory rekindled, as it were, by human prayer, faith, situations and sacrifices so that He "remembers the covenant" (Gen. 8:1; 9:15; Ex. 2:24; 6:5; Lev. 26:42,45; Num. 10:9 and often). The regular sacrifices were such a "memorial" or 'reminder'-both to God and to His people. The place of prayer, regular sacrifice of giving, breaking of bread at the "memorial

meeting" etc., are all equivalents for us under the new covenant.

Lev 26:46 These are the statutes, ordinances and laws, which Yahweh made between Him and the children of Israel in Mount Sinai by Moses-

The Hebrew *mishpat*, "ordinances", has a wide range of meaning. The idea is of judgment, as if God and His Angels gave these laws as their considered judgment after considering the human condition, and Israel were to abide by them. But the word also the idea of a right or privilege; and that is how we should see God's laws. They are only felt as a burden because of human hardness of neck towards God's ways. His laws are not of themselves burdensome, but rather a privilege and blessing. The law was indeed "holy, just and good" (Rom. 7:12), designed to inculcate a holy, just and good life (Tit. 1:8), a way in which a man should "walk" in daily life (Lev. 18:4), a culture of kindness and grace to others which reflected God's grace to man. If we dwell upon the idea of "rights" carried within the word *mishpat*, we note that the law begins in Ex. 21:1,2 (also Dt. 15:12-18) with the rights of a slave- those considered to have no rights in the society of that day. The "rights" to be afforded by us to others are the essence of God's rightness / justice.

LEVITICUS CHAPTER 27

Lev 27:1 Yahweh spoke to Moses, saying-

This chapter is as it were an appendix to the Law because it concerns vows which were freewill decisions to give something to God and weren't part of the legal demands which God made upon His people in the previous chapters. It's good for us to at times make a special commitment to God from a joyful heart. The values attached to people in the next verses seem to speak of the price that should be paid if a person wished to cancel the dedication of themselves or even of others which they had made. It seems Jephthah may have been ignorant of these provisions and therefore suffered immensely from not paying attention to all God's law (Jud. 11:31-40).

Lev 27:2 Speak to the children of Israel, and say to them, 'When a man makes a vow, the persons shall be for Yahweh by your valuation-

It could be argued that this continues from the theme of Lev. 25 about valuing persons. There, the context was valuing them in the context of the year of Jubilee. Here, the valuation is in the context of vowing property to God's service. In this sense, Lev. 27 is not really an appendix but a continuation (although see on :1). The idea in this verse is perhaps that a vow must not be vaguely expressed, but must be defined specifically- in order to discourage the general desire and expression of a wish to give something to God, and then just leaving it as a vague, undefined desire which could later be pulled back from. And that is an abiding les-

son for us all. LXX implies this section speaks of a person vowing themselves to God rather than vowing to give a servant to His service: "Whosoever shall vow a vow as the valuation of his soul for the Lord".

Lev 27:3 Your valuation shall be of a male from twenty years old even to sixty years old, even your valuation shall be fifty shekels of silver, according to the shekel of the sanctuary-

The person was valued at what they would be worth on the secular market as it were, which is why the female is valued at less (:4); not because God thinks women are less valuable, but because the idea was that the person was being given to the Lord's service just as a property could be given, and to redeem or take back the gift, an appropriate price must be paid according to the secular value of whatever had been dedicated.

Lev 27:4 If it is a female, then your valuation shall be thirty shekels-

See on :3. Jephthah could have redeemed his daughter from the vow he involved her with (Lev. 27:4). But he decided in his mind: "I have opened my mouth unto the Lord, and I cannot go back" (Jud. 11:35). Actually he could have done; but he so firmly chose the higher level that it was as if there was no way back. Ps. 15:4, in evident allusion to Jephthah, describes those who will attain the Kingdom as fearing Yahweh, and swearing to their own hurt and changing not. Some may swear and change and attain the Kingdom; but we are invited to follow Jephthah to the highest level.

Lev 27:5 If the person is from five years old even to twenty years old, then your valuation shall be for a male twenty shekels, and for a female ten shekels-

As discussed on :3, this was not because God was devaluing females; the idea was that a dedication of a person should not be undertaken lightly, and if it was to be changed, then the person who made the vow had to pay the secular value of the person.

Lev 27:6 If the person is from a month old even to five years old, then your valuation shall be for a male five shekels of silver, and for a female your valuation shall be three shekels of silver-

We have an example of this when Hannah dedicated Samuel to the sanctuary from a young age.

Lev 27:7 If the person is from sixty years old and upward; if it is a male, then your valuation shall be fifteen shekels, and for a female ten shekels-

Again as discussed on :3,5, the idea is not that God is devaluing elderly people nor women nor youngsters. The idea simply is that the secular value of the person must be calculated and the price required for redeeming them back had to be decided accordingly.

Lev 27:8 But if he is poorer than your valuation, then he shall be set before the priest, and the priest shall value him; according to the ability of him who vowed shall the priest value him-

This provision seems to foresee the possibility that a totally poor person would dedicate themselves to God's service (e.g. doing some work related to the maintenance of the sanctuary) and yet need to change that commitment

(perhaps to care for a sick and dying relative), and yet have nothing to pay for his own redemption. The idea is 'Too poor (to pay) your valuation'. This freewill dedication of oneself to God's service is alluded to when Paul praises some of the Macedonian believers for devoting their own selves to the Lord (2 Cor. 8:5), and the family of Stephanas for having 'ceremonially consecrated' themselves to serving their fellow believers (1 Cor. 16:15 Gk.). What could we devote ourselves to do, remembering that wealth is no barrier to making this kind of devotion?

Lev 27:9 If it is an animal, of which men offer an offering to Yahweh, all that any man gives of such to Yahweh becomes holy-

This legislation and in :10 is typical of where the law foresees people trying to disobey. Whatever animal was given was holy / dedicated for good. No substitute could therefore be given. But if a substitute was given (:10), then that too would be dedicated. The laws were geared to discourage anyone from making a rash vow, and towards acceptance that whatever we give to God should never be demanded back. Giving must be total and absolute and never regretted later; and that again is an abiding principle.

Lev 27:10 He shall not alter it, nor change it, a good for a bad, or a bad for a good; and if he shall at all change animal for animal, then both it and that for which it is changed shall be holy-

Changing what we have given to God according to new circumstances isn't encouraged; we should give and assume that what we gave is now not ours any longer. Giving should be frank and final, with no thought of regret after-

wards or considering what might have been if we had not given it- e.g. letting our mind wander around the possibilities of what we could have used money for if we'd not given it to God.

Lev 27:11 If it is any unclean animal, of which they do not offer as an offering to Yahweh, then he shall set the animal before the priest-

The unclean animal would have been given for the domestic use of the priests.

Lev 27:12 and the priest shall value it, whether it is good or bad. As you the priest values it, so shall it be-

A bad animal that was unclean could still be given to God. The idea was that the very poor could still be allowed to give to God whatever they could. And that again is an abiding principle. For giving is not only for rich Christians. It is to be the spirit for all God's people of whatever social or economic status.

Lev 27:13 But if he will indeed redeem it, then he shall add the fifth part of it to its valuation-

The fact the unclean could be redeemed but not the clean perhaps hints at the Lord's redeeming work. He came as a doctor for the sick, the unclean, rather than for the healthy who considered themselves clean.

Lev 27:14 When a man dedicates his house to be holy to Yahweh, then the priest shall evaluate it, whether it is good or bad: as the priest shall evaluate it, so shall it stand-

There is continually the hint that the person vowing would consider his 'gift' of a different value to what it really was. There was always the concern that public vowing was not from pure motives. Dt. 23:21 is of the same spirit:

"When you make a vow to Yahweh your God you must not be slack to pay it, for Yahweh your God will surely require it of you and it would be sin upon you". This was to guard against the temptation to make a vow which was publically impressive before men, but then not to pay it. Any attempt to garner kudos for our spiritual devotion is absolutely wrong; such spiritual pride is the worst. God would therefore "require it" and severely judge those who did this (Dt. 23:21). Not being slack to pay a vow (Dt. 23:21) fits in with a wider Biblical theme of being quick in responding to God. It comes to full term in the New Testament accounts of immediate baptisms straight after people had grasped the basic message of the Gospel. "Yes straight away" is what God really seeks from His children. Israel were not to delay in offering their firstfruits to God (Ex. 22:29), lest their intentions weren't translated into practice. The disciples immediately left the ship, simply put their nets down and followed (Mt. 4:20,22); Matthew left his opened books and queue of clients in the tax office and walked out never to return (Lk. 5:17,18 implies).

Lev 27:15 If he who dedicates it will redeem his house, then he shall add the fifth part of the money of your valuation to it, and it shall be his-

Again we note that the law is geared towards the conclusion that any gift to God should not be given in the hope of getting it back. What is given is given and we live in the joy of having made that gift, without regretting it or seeking to recoup it. Although God does make concessions to those who for some reason wanted or needed to retract

their gift. "It shall be his" is a reminder that when something had been given, it was no longer "his".

Lev 27:16 If a man dedicates to Yahweh part of the field of his possession, then your valuation shall be according to the seed for it: the sowing of a homer of barley shall be valued at fifty shekels of silver-

The idea is that the field was calculated in accordance with how much seed was required in order to sow it, and not the projected harvest from it. The quality of the land was not taken into account. Fifty shekels of silver was a lot if indeed a homer (10 ephahs, Ez. 45:11) of barley was all that it produced. Again, the law is geared to make redemption of such a dedicated field very expensive, and to enforce the idea that vows should not be rashly made. And what is given to God should not be considered as reclaimable. See on :17.

Lev 27:17 If he dedicates his field from the Year of Jubilee, according to your valuation it shall stand-

The idea may be that the 50 shekels of :16 was the price for the field if dedicated for the Jubilee cycle, a shekel / year making therefore 50 shekels.

Lev 27:18 But if he dedicates his field after the Jubilee, then the priest shall reckon to him the money according to the years that remain to the Year of Jubilee; and a reduction shall be made from your valuation-

See on :17; apparently the idea was a shekel for every year.

Lev 27:19 If he who dedicated the field will indeed redeem it, then he shall add the fifth part of the money of your valuation to it, and it shall remain his-

"Remain his" is not the sense; rather is the idea that the field would be established to him. The idea is as in :15, "it shall be his", whereas after it had been vowed to God, it was not his. Again the lesson is that giving to God means we are totally in deficit, we have actually parted with what was ours and it is no longer ours. We must remind ourselves of this definition of giving; for we are not to "give" in some secret hope that what we give will return to us somehow, at least in part. Failure to realize this led to the destruction of Ananias and Sapphira.

Lev 27:20 If he will not redeem the field, or if he has sold the field to another man, it shall not be redeemed anymore-

Giving something to Yahweh and then selling it to another man was an awful thing to do. But the law foresaw that people would be inclined to "give" to God and yet still assume ownership and power over what they had given. Like a donor to a charity then thinking they can thereby take control of that charity. The punishment for this was that the field would be totally lost both to that man and any who had purchased it (:21).

Lev 27:21 but the field, when it goes out in the Jubilee, shall be holy to Yahweh, as a field devoted; it shall be owned by the priests-

See on :20. The land was God's anyway, so the punishment for the wrong behaviour of :20 was that the 'owner' would be taught this lesson- for he could hardly complain at this judgment, if he accepted the land was God's anyway.

Lev 27:22 If he dedicates to Yahweh a field which he has bought, which is not of the field of his possession-

Here we have the tendency revealed to be generous with that which is not ours. The principle is that we are not to offer that which costs us nothing (2 Sam. 24:24).

Lev 27:23 then the priest shall reckon to him the worth of your valuation up to the Year of Jubilee; and he shall give your valuation on that day, as a holy thing to Yahweh-

The value of all things is relative to the Year of Jubilee, which speaks of the return of Christ (see on Lev. 25:10,15,20). And we are to live by this principle.

Lev 27:24 In the Year of Jubilee the field shall return to him from whom it was bought, even to him to whom the possession of the land belongs-

The idea could be that the field itself was not bought, as the land possession of the Israelites was not to be sold, but rather the usage of the land to grow crops. Although this indicated that the ideal situation in the land was not going to be achieved, whereby each Israelite enjoyed super abundant harvests in the land God had specifically given to them. Constantly we see examples of where the law of Moses foresaw human failure and yet God was still eager to work with them, even though they were not experiencing His ideal intentions for them.

Lev 27:25 All your valuations shall be according to the shekel of the sanctuary: twenty gerahs to the shekel-

There were various definitions of shekels; but as in our lives, all valuation, our entire worldview and value system, is to be based upon God's way and values rather than ours or those of the surrounding world.

Lev 27:26 Only the firstborn among animals, which is made a firstborn to Yahweh, no man may dedicate it: whether an ox or sheep, it is Yahweh's-

We should avoid the temptation to give what we owe to God anyway as if it is a gift of special freewill devotion.

Lev 27:27 If it is an unclean animal, then he shall buy it back according to your valuation, and shall add to it the fifth part of it; or if it isn't redeemed, then it shall be sold according to your valuation-

The redemption of unclean devoted animals was to be at the basis of the animals value plus one fifth. But the firstborn of donkeys were to be redeemed with a lamb, and a lamb would have been of less value than a newborn donkey. The firstborn of the donkey was to be redeemed by a lamb (Ex. 13:13) as a ritual reminder of the power of the Passover lamb's redemption. The value of its blood was far greater than its commercial value. And this was to point forward to the value of the blood of the Lord Jesus, far more precious than of any gold or silver (1 Pet. 1:18). The donkey was the most common domestic animal, and it was an unclean animal. It was therefore representative of common people, in their unclean state. Firstborn donkeys were to be redeemed because they were to be understood as representative of God's people, redeemed by the Passover lamb.

Lev 27:28 Notwithstanding, no devoted thing that a man shall devote to Yahweh of all that he has, whether of man or animal, or of the field of his possession, shall be sold or redeemed: every devoted thing is most holy to Yahweh-

We have been reading earlier in this chapter of how things devoted in a vow could be redeemed, usually upon the payment of extra money. So now in this section the devoted things must refer to something different. Perhaps what is in view is the things devoted in tithe to the priests; the priests were not sell these things back to the donor. Verse 30 speaks of the tithe. Or perhaps the devoted things refer to things taken in warfare, which makes more sense when we come to :29.

Lev 27:29 No one devoted, who shall be devoted from among men, shall be ransomed: he shall surely be put to death-

As discussed on :28, what may be in view are people or things captured in warfare which were devoted to Yahweh. If someone [like Achan] was to be slain, then they must be- and money was not to be taken in order to save their lives. Ps. 49:7 alludes here, lamenting that no man, no matter how rich or powerful, can redeem his brother in this case. But that passage goes on to imply that it is the Lord Jesus who alone can do so, through abrogating all such legal condemnation.

Lev 27:30 All the tithe of the land, whether of the seed of the land or of the fruit of the trees, is Yahweh's. It is holy to Yahweh-

Whilst devoted animals could not be redeemed, it seems agricultural produce could be (see on :28). But there must be firstly the recognition that it was Yahweh's. It had been given to Him, and did not belong to the donor any more. It was His, and should not be given in the hope of somehow getting it back. However what may be in view

here is the natural growth of the seeds in the land, and not of cultivated crops. In the context of this chapter, which speaks about vows, perhaps the idea is that the tithes were not to be claimed as voluntary offerings, as if to try to impress others by their apparent generosity when in fact they were only giving the required tithes anyway. The law was clearly aware that there would be such tendencies, and we must accept that we have the same.

Lev 27:31 If a man redeems anything of his tithe, he shall add a fifth part to it-

They could only possibly redeem their own tithe; they were not to look at the tithes of others and wish them for themselves. Constantly the legislation is geared towards stopping people from 'giving' with a view to taking back what they had given.

Lev 27:32 All the tithe of the herds or the flocks, whatever passes under the rod, the tenth shall be holy to Yahweh-

The Rabbis explain this as meaning: "When a man was to give the tithe of his sheep or calves to God, he was to shut up the whole flock in one fold, in which there was one narrow door capable of letting out one at a time. The owner, about to give the tenth to the Lord, stood by the door with a rod in his hand, the end of which was dipped in vermillion or red ochre. The mothers of those lambs or calves stood without: the door being opened, the young ones ran out to join themselves to their dams; and as they passed out the owner stood with his rod over them, and counted one, two, three, four, five, etc., and when the tenth came, he touched it with the coloured rod, by which it was distinguished to be the tithe calf, sheep, etc., and whether poor

or lean, perfect or blemished, that was received as the legitimate tithe".

Lev 27:33 He shall not analyze whether it is good or bad, neither shall he change it; and if he changes it at all, then both it and that for which it is changed shall be holy. It shall not be redeemed'-

God foresaw their disobedience to His stated principle, and made a concession and provision. This ruling about tithes is an example: "...neither shall he change it: and if he change it..." (Lev. 27:33). Likewise God told Israel that He wanted altars made of earth; but He knew they would want to make altars of stone like the other nations, and He made allowance for this (Ex. 20:24,25). The Law has several examples of this living on different levels. "Ye shall let nothing of (the Passover) remain until the morning; and that which remaineth of it until the morning ye shall burn with fire" (Ex. 12:10) is an evident example. We should not be carefully calculating in our giving to God, trying to do so at minimal cost to ourselves.

Lev 27:34 These are the commandments which Yahweh commanded Moses for the children of Israel on Mount Sinai-

The implication is that no more commandments would now be given. The law had been given as a whole and was not to be meddled with or have additional commandments added, although Deuteronomy appears to be God's clarification of some of them at the end of the wilderness wandering. The whole system of laws was designed to inculcate an upward spiritual spiral, with each law reinforcing others. Removing some laws or adding others would not in fact make the path to obedience easier; the laws giv-

en were especially designed to be adequate and self reinforcing, and any removal or addition would destroy their purpose and collective effect.



About the Author

Duncan Heaster has pastored churches around the world and has done missionary work in many countries. He has written commentary on every verse of the Bible, seeking to balance theological depth with devotional appeal.

Read more at www.heaster.org.

About the Publisher

