

## Focal Text

Leviticus 1:1–3; 2:1–3;  
3:1; 4:1–3, 13, 22–23,  
27–28; 5:1–6

## Background

Leviticus 1—7

## Main Idea

Making sacrificial offerings enabled Israel to indicate their commitment to God, give thanks to God, recognize their relationship with God and their fellow Israelites, and experience atonement for sins.

## Question to Explore

What principles can be found in Israel's practice of making sacrificial offerings?

## Teaching Aim

To lead the class to describe the offerings Israel made and identify principles for today from these practices

## LEVITICUS



**Becoming God's  
Holy People**

## Lesson One

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# Making Offerings to God

## BIBLE COMMENTS

### Understanding the Context

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The story is that the professor of Old Testament asked his class of budding young theologians, *If you were marooned on a deserted island and you could have only one Old Testament book with you and you had to choose between the Book of Isaiah and the Book of Leviticus, which would you choose?* To a person, the class chose the Book of Isaiah. The professor then said that he would choose the Book of Leviticus, giving the reason, *I've read the Book of Isaiah.*

Your class may not find ignorance of the Book of Leviticus sufficient reason to spend five weeks getting to know this book of the Bible. Even you, as a teacher, may be struggling with the prospect of studying this book. In the *Study Guide* article, "Introducing Leviticus: Becoming God's Holy People," there are at least three important reasons for not passing over the Book of Leviticus in our study of the Old Testament.

When the people of Israel left Egypt and arrived at Mount Sinai, God told Moses to say to the people, "You yourselves have seen what I did to Egypt, and how I carried you on eagles' wings and brought you to myself. Now if you obey me fully and keep my covenant, then out of

all nations you will be my treasured possession. Although the whole earth is mine, you will be for me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation. . . ” (Exodus 19:4–6).<sup>1</sup> Then, “The people all responded together, ‘We will do everything the LORD has said. . . ’” (Exodus 19:8). On Mount Sinai God gave the people his laws so that they would know what his ways were and how to walk in them.

The first five books of the Bible contain the Torah or the law or teachings. These laws can be categorized under four headings: the *moral law* (laws that come out of the very character of who God is and thus who God’s people are to become); the *civil and criminal law* (laws describing how God’s people are to relate to each other based on the moral law); the *dietary and health law* (laws designed to protect the health of the people); and *religious law* (laws that describe how God’s people are to relate to him).

Leviticus is in the middle of these law books and gets its name from the Septuagint, an ancient translation of the Old Testament into Greek. The Septuagint derived the name Leviticus from the primary contents of the book. Leviticus primarily contains matters of levitical interest, that is, matters of interest to the priests and others of the tribe of Levi who were the ministers to the Israelites.

In the Book of Leviticus we will discover laws prescribing the qualifications and function of the priests, laws that govern special feast days, a code of holiness, and laws establishing a system of sacrifices and offerings. We will study in this lesson the system of sacrifices and offerings.

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## Interpreting the Scriptures

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What can we say as to the relationship of the Old Covenant (Testament) to the New Covenant (Testament). Some who have little use for the Old Testament and its study subscribe to the notion that the “Old” has been superceded by the “New” and therefore is irrelevant to the “New Covenant.”

Perhaps a closer look at the church of the New Testament and the writers of the materials would lead us away from any idea that would devalue the Old Testament at best, and at worst, exclude it from the life of the Christian. I like the thought, *The Old Testament anticipates a “New,” and the New Testament presupposes and uses the “Old.”*

The New Testament book that uses and presupposes the Old Testament most clearly is the Book of Hebrews. Hebrews 9:1—10:18 deals with the relationship of the Old Testament to the New Testament with the sacrifice of Christ on the cross as the reality for which the sacrificial system of the Old Testament was but a “shadow” (Hebrews 10:1).

The lesson today comes from Leviticus 1—7. These materials might well have formed something of a manual for sacrifice to be used by priest and lay worshiper as well. The aim of the lesson is to help class members identify and describe the basic sacrifices given to God's covenant people and lead them to extract principles relevant to us today.

### **The Burnt Offering (1:1–3; see 1:1–17; 6:8–13)**

**1:1–2.** The burnt offering was the major offering performed by the Israelites. For this reason it is listed first among the five sacrifices of Leviticus 1—7. This offering is the only offering in which all of the animal (except the blood) was burned in the sacrifice. The blood was collected and poured out against the altar sides.

The victim was to be chosen from the domesticated animals, that is, from the cattle, sheep, or goats. For the Israelite who could not afford to offer an animal from among his domesticated herd, there was the provision for offering a turtledove or a young pigeon (Leviticus 1:14–17).

**1:3.** The victim for this offering had to be a “male without defect.” The primary purpose of the burnt offering was to secure atonement for sins (inferred in Lev. 1:4). In addition, the burnt offering was a gift made wholly to God (no part was eaten by priest or worshiper), and it thus formed an act of worship expressing total obedience.

The ritual was divided into the following actions: (1) offering the animal at the entrance of the sanctuary (1:3); (2) placing the worshiper's hand on the victim's head (1:4); (3) slaughtering the victim (1:5, 11); (4) throwing the blood against the altar (1:5, 11, 15); (5) skinning the animal and cutting it into pieces (1:6, 12, 16–17); and (6) burning the parts of the sacrifice on the altar (1:8–9, 12–13, 17).

### **The Grain Offering (2:1–3; see 2:1–16; 6:14–18)**

The “grain offering” is called the “meat” offering in the King James Version, in the seventeenth-century English sense of the word, that is, *food*. Four kinds of grain offering are specified in Leviticus 2: uncooked flour (2:1); bread baked in an oven (2:4); bread prepared on a griddle (2:5); and

bread cooked in a pan (2:7). While the meaning of the grain offering is not explicitly given, it is likely that its purpose was to give thanks to and express reliance on God. There was also a practical value; only a “memorial portion” (2:2) was actually burned on the altar, the rest going to the priests.

The ritual consisted of: (1) preparation of the offering (2:1, 4–7); (2) bringing the offering to the sanctuary (2:2, 8); (3) separating the memorial portion (2:2, 9, 16); (4) burning the memorial portion on the altar by the priest (2:2, 9, 16).

Two unusual features should be noted in the instructions for the grain offering. First, there was to be no leaven, or “yeast,” in the preparation (2:4). Perhaps the corruption involved in the fermenting of the yeast is representative of sin, or it may have been a reminder of the heathen neighbors of the Hebrews who used leaven in their worship. Second, “salt” was to accompany the burning of the memorial portion (2:13). Perhaps salt was a symbol of friendship and communion. Those who shared salt at a meal were in a genuine relationship of trust and friendship.

### **The Fellowship Offering (3:1; see 3:1–17; 7:11–36)**

The word translated “fellowship offering” in the NIV includes the ideas of health, wholeness, well-being, and peace.

The fellowship offering was used to express thanksgiving to God for some special good fortune. It differs from the “burnt offering” in several ways. First, the animal for this offering could be either male or female. In the case of the burnt offering, only a male was permitted. Second, only the fat, kidneys, and liver of the animal designated for the fellowship offering were burned on the altar. The rest of the animal was eaten by the priest and by the worshiper’s family, with the priest receiving the right breast and right thigh.

### **The Sin Offering (4:1–3, 13, 22–23, 27–28; see 4:1 to 5:13; 6:24–30)**

The sin offering (4:1; see 4:1 to 5:13; 6:24–30) and the trespass offering or the guilt offering (5:14; see 5:14 to 6:7; 7:1–10) are very closely related. The two names appear almost interchangeably. The sin offering was intended to provide atonement for sins, the effect of which terminated on the sinner, while the guilt offering provided atonement for sins done to other people or their property.

The word translated “unintentionally” does not rule out deliberate sin (4:2). Unintentional sin could be committed in ignorance, in error, or without premeditation, all of which could be described as deliberate. The opposite of unintentional sin would be defiant sin. Later rabbis interpreted this to be sins committed with the clear intention in advance of seeking forgiveness afterwards by means of sacrifice.

The ritual of this sacrifice is very similar to that for the fellowship offering. The major difference in the offering ritual is that whereas in the fellowship offering, the sacrificial victim was eaten by the priest and the worshipers, in the sin offering the carcass of the animal was disposed of outside the sanctuary (4:12).

### **The Guilt Offering (5:14 to 6:7; 7:1–10)**

The main difference between the guilt and the sin offerings is that the guilt offering was an act that affected someone else. Restitution was also demanded with a twenty percent penalty (6:5).

In Leviticus 1—3, where instructions were given for the burnt offering, the grain offering, and the fellowship offering, the primary emphasis was on the correct ritual and the proper animals or grain to be used. In 4:1—6:7, the emphasis is on defining the occasions when the sacrifices were to be made.

### **Focusing on the Meaning**

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Harry Emerson Fosdick was one of the most well-known preachers in the United States in the twentieth century. Fosdick said that his fellow preachers in New York City were the only ones who thought people would drive across town to hear a sermon on “What Happened to the Geshurites?” (Joshua 13:13)!

Perhaps people ought to know what happened to the Geshurites, but it is not likely to be a high priority for most folk. This lesson will probably teach your class more than they ever wanted to know about the sacrificial system of Old Testament Israel. In fact, this lesson might well have been titled, “More About Offerings Than You Ever Wanted to Know”! Be sure to leave time to focus on the meaning of worship that stands behind the sacrificial rituals.

The sacrifices were a means to an end. The end was a relationship with the God who had delivered the Israelites from Egypt. The sacrifices helped

the Israelites keep these facts straight: God was the Creator/Redeemer God, and they were the created/redeemed ones. Life does not run smoothly when any people of any time get these facts mixed up.

Sacrifices gave the Israelites a way to express their commitment to God as their Redeemer from Egyptian slavery. It gave the people an avenue for expressing gratitude for the blessings of freedom and protection from their enemies, as well as for material provisions.

Make sure that your class has time to explore ways in which the offerings they bring to church parallel the offerings given by the Israelites. Does God need our money any more than God needed burned animals in biblical days? If the class's answer is *no*, then of what value is my offering? What does giving an offering do to me in my relationship to God?

Does the insistence that the sacrificial animal be one “without defect” (1:3; 3:1; 4:3; 6:6) say something to us about the quality of the gift we give to God?

Finally, no study of the sacrificial system Israelites can claim to be complete without raising the question, *What kind of worship pleases God?* Worship wars begin in our churches when the people ask, *What kind of worship do I like?* The appropriate question at the end of any worship service is always, *Was God pleased with what happened in worship today?*

During the eighth century B.C. when the prophet Amos ministered in the Northern Kingdom of Israel, the people thronged to the worship centers, but the old prophet was unimpressed. God was not pleased with worship. Why? Because lives remained unchanged by the activity. Amos said that God did not want more sacrifices but changed lives (Amos 5:22, 24): “Even though you bring me burnt offerings and grain offerings, I will not accept them. Though you bring choice fellowship offerings, I will have no regard for them. . . . But let justice roll on like a river, righteousness like a never-failing stream!”

In the seventh century B.C., Jeremiah ministered to the Southern Kingdom of Judah just prior to the nation being carried into captivity by the Babylonians. There was a lot of outward repentance, but it did not result in obedience and walking with God: “For when I brought your forefathers out of Egypt and spoke to them, I did not just give them commands about burnt offerings and sacrifices, but I gave them this command: Obey me, and I will be your God and you will be my people. Walk in all the ways I command you, that it may go well with you. But they did not listen or pay attention; instead, they followed the stubborn inclinations of their evil hearts. They went backward and not forward” (Jeremiah 7:22–24).

It was time to turn the clock ahead one hour to begin daylight saving time, but our friend forgot. He arrived at church at 12:00 noon thinking it was 11:00. Surprised to see everyone leaving the church building, he asked, “Is the service over?” Someone who understood the kind of worship that pleases God said, “No! Worship is over. The service is just beginning!”

When the church’s doors open and the community is filled with changed lives ready to serve, God-pleasing worship has transpired in that place.

## TEACHING PLANS

### Teaching Plan—Varied Learning Activities

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#### Connect with Life

1. Ask: *Do you have a bedroom in your house reserved for guests? Or, do you have china or silver that you use only for special occasions? Or, do you have a chair in your den that nobody uses but you?* Let the class respond. Then explain that each of these items might be called *holy*, meaning *to be set apart*. Ask the class to look in their *Study Guide* for the title of this unit of study. State that the biblical use of the word *holy* adds the thought and thus means *to be set apart for consecration to God*. Call on a member to read aloud Leviticus 11:44–45.
2. Lead the class to open their *Study Guide* to the table of contents and write the dates for the lessons in the spaces provided.
3. Tell this story: One morning, a mother, in preparation for attending a women’s meeting at the church, dressed her preschool son in white pants and a white shirt. She told him to sit in the porch swing until she was ready. He didn’t heed his mother’s instructions but went into the yard to play. It had rained the night before, and in no time he slipped and fell flat in the mud. When his mother came out on the porch ready to go to church, the mud-covered youngster came running for a hug. However, instead of a hug, his mother turned both palms toward him and said, *Stop! I love you, but I can’t hug you.*

*You're covered with mud!* Explain that this is a picture of people after they sin. As we study the next five lessons we will seek to learn not only how Israel was to live in a holy manner in the presence of a holy God but also what Israel was to do when it sinned and broke its relationship with God.

### Guide Bible Study

4. Call on a class member, assigned ahead of time, to take no more than three minutes to summarize the “Introducing Leviticus” article in the *Study Guide*. Instruct the member to be sure to include reasons for studying Leviticus and the setting of the book.
5. Give each class member a copy of the chart, “More About Offerings” (download from [www.baptistwaypress.org](http://www.baptistwaypress.org).) Divide the class into five research teams. Assign to each team one of the five sets of Scriptures explaining a particular offering. Give each team five minutes to read aloud to the team its Scriptures and then work together to fill in its line on the chart. Use different translations and the *Study Guide* as resources. (The chart with blanks is for group use. The chart with answers filled in is for your use.)
6. Call for a representative from each team to report on its findings. Guide the class in filling in all sections of the chart. As time allows, use Scripture references in the “NT parallel” column to help the class understand how Jesus fulfilled these Old Testament sacrificial laws.

More About Offerings					
Scriptures in Leviticus	Name(s) of offering	What was offered	Use of offering	Purpose of offering	Possible NT parallel
1:1–17; 6:8–13					
2:1–16; 6:14–18					
3:1–17; 7:11–36					
4:1–5:13; 6:24–30					
5:14–6:7; 7:1–10					

**Encourage Application**

7. State that God designed offerings for people to use to express their relationship with him. Tell the class to look over the “Purpose of Offering” column and use single words to describe the attitude the giver should bring with each offering. (Gratitude, thanksgiving, fellowship, confession, repentance)
8. Ask: *What do you think about when you write your check to the church? when you drop your envelope in the offering plate? Is your attitude different when you give in Sunday School rather than in a worship service? Why?*
9. Ask the class to bow their heads. Then refer to the story about the little boy and ask, without expecting oral answers, *When you come to God for a hug, do you still have mud on your clothes?* Read the words of a hymn such as “All on the Altar” (stanzas only), “I Surrender All,” “I Gave My Life for Thee,” or “Take My Life and Let It Be.”

<b>More About Offerings</b>					
<b>Scriptures in Leviticus</b>	<b>Name(s) of offering</b>	<b>What was offered</b>	<b>Use of offering</b>	<b>Purpose of offering</b>	<b>Possible NT parallel</b>
1:1–17; 6:8–13	Burnt	Bullock, male sheep, male goat, turtledoves, young pigeons	Blood sprinkled; all else except hide burned	To honor God and indicate one’s total commitment to God	Sacrifice of a sinless Christ; living sacrifice (Romans 12:1–2)
2:1–16; 6:14–18	Grain Meat Cereal Meal	Flour, oil, frankincense, salt, grain	Small amount burned; remainder to priests	To express thanks to and reliance on God	Jesus as Bread of Life (John 6:32–35); offerings to God
3:1–17; 7:11–36	Fellowship Well-being	Male or female cattle, sheep, goats	Blood sprinkled; breast and right shoulder for the priest; remainder for worshipers	To celebrate a positive relationship with God and one’s fellow human beings	Fellowship meal; Lord’s Supper
4:1—5:13; 6:24–30	Sin	Bullock; male or female goat or lamb; two turtledoves or pigeons; flour	Blood sprinkled; fat burned; remainder for priests	To gain atonement for unintentional sins	Jesus’ sacrifice for us (Matthew 26:28)
5:14—6:7; 7:1–10	Guilt Trespass	Ram; restitution plus 20%	Blood sprinkled; fat burned; remainder for priests	To gain atonement for unintentional sins that could be repaid	Jesus’ sacrifice for us (Matthew 26:28)

## Teaching Plan—Lecture and Questions

### Connect with Life

1. Ask: *When I say the word “holy,” what’s the first thought that comes to your mind?* Give time for answers. Ask: *What’s your impression of “holy” people? Have you ever thought you were a “holy” person?* State: *Becoming a holy person will be our goal for the next five weeks as we study the Book of Leviticus*
2. Lead the class to open their *Study Guide* to the table of contents and write the dates for the study sessions in the spaces provided.
3. Use information in “Introducing Leviticus” in the *Study Guide* to introduce Leviticus and present reasons for studying it. Include the book’s setting.
4. Ask: *Why do we take an offering in almost all of our worship services?* (Some answers may be to support our staff and administrative needs, pay for a place to worship, support world-wide mission causes, etc.) State: *In today’s lesson let us look for the reasons God instructed Israel to begin the practice of making offerings.*

### Guide Bible Study

5. Display the following outline of the lesson:

#### God’s People . . .

(Add the following information as you move through the lesson.)

1. Respect and Honor God (1:1–17; 6:8–13)  
Burnt offering
2. Express Gratitude to God (2:1–16; 6:14–18)  
Grain offering
3. Celebrate Relationships (3:1–17; 7:11–36) Fellowship offering
4. Address Sin (4:1—5:13; 5:14—6:7; 6:24–30; 7:1–10) Sin and guilt offerings

6. Secure five empty offering envelopes from the church office or from a church pew. Insert in each a currency-size piece of paper containing one of the following Scripture references:
  - a. Leviticus 1:1–17
  - b. Leviticus 2:1–16
  - c. Leviticus 3:1–17
  - d. Leviticus 4:1–12
  - e. Leviticus 5:14–19

Give each envelope to a class member, and ask the member to be prepared to read the passage when called on.

7. Before reading each assigned passage, ask the class to look for the following items:
  - What was the name of the offering?
  - What was the purpose of the offering?
  - What items were to be offered?

Call for answers after each passage is read. Write the name of the offering to the right of the displayed outline point. Also ask the question below after the appropriate offering:

- **Burnt:** *What is the significance of giving an animal “without defect”?*
- **Grain:** *Why do you think this offering was to include salt but not leaven?*
- **Fellowship:** *Why do you think the burnt offering came before this offering?*
- **Sin:** *What is the meaning of “unintentionally”?*
- **Guilt:** *Can you recall a time when you knew what was being said or done was wrong but you did not speak up?*

Lecture briefly on each offering using information in this *Teaching Guide* and the *Study Guide*. Also refer to the “Possible NT parallels” of the chart, “More About Offerings.”

### Encourage Application

8. Ask: *What do you think about when you write your offering check to the church?* Review the paragraph beginning “Several years ago . . .” in the section of the *Study Guide* under the heading, “God’s People

Respect and Honor Him (1:1–17; 6:8–13).” Ask: *How does the way you handle the offering time in worship help you identify your commitment to Christ with your offering?*

9. Ask the class to bow their heads. Challenge the class to ask themselves: *Would my offerings be better given if I gave more thought and heart to what I was doing, when I do it, and the way I do it?* Close with a prayer that God will help us put more thought and heart in our offerings.

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## NOTES

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1. Unless otherwise indicated, all Scripture quotations in the lessons on Leviticus are from the New International Version.