

## “Prescriptions and their Pertinence” (Lev. 6)

### 1. Atoning for Premeditated Sin (1-7)

- a. Transition: Third category of explanations of reparation guilt offerings.<sup>1</sup> We noted that the 3 divisions were viz. consecrated (5:14-16), commanded (5:17-19), and covenant (6:1-7) categories. The first two re: inadvertent sins and third re: premeditated sins.
- b. Temperature: There are obviously different degrees of violations of the Law as seen in differing sacrificial demands and reparations not to mention common sense. There are sins which directly violate God’s holy ceremonial laws w/o directly effecting others (cf. 5:15, 17) and thus reparations are given to God even though sin was committed inadvertently. Here in this third category, the violations are against one’s neighbor and premeditated hence the reparations required to the violated one. Previously, we looked at how ‘high handed’ sins incurred the just penalty of being “cut off” and or executed.<sup>2</sup> How would one measure a fifth (v. 5) more on top of what he stole if what he stole was a wife? All sin is not the same!
- c. Truthfulness: Again oaths are mentioned (v. 3) along with extortion and other theft. A liar is a thief and a thief is a liar. Bearing false witness can literally be murderous (as in an innocent being found guilty and executed). Justice and righteousness demand that only truth and the whole truth be revealed in lawful matters. In all matters we need our “yes” be yes and “no” be no but we must also avoid publicizing unnecessary truths e.g. gossip, animosity, and such (1 Pet. 4:8). I feel that I shouldn’t have to expound on the critical implications – and actual experienced realities, including death – w/ regard to the violation of the following oaths:
  - i. Hippocratic Oaths
  - ii. Marriage Oaths
  - iii. Legal Oaths
  - iv. Oaths of Office

### 2. Atoning for Perpetual Sin (8-13)

- a. Particular Prescription: Note this pericope regards the “burnt offering” which is obligatory here but was otherwise voluntary.
- b. Perpetual Propitiation (9, 12, 13 cf. ~~Ex. 29:38-42~~) A continued fire, stoked via mandatory priest offerings at each day’s beginning and end, was to never be extinguished. This fire is seen to have a divine origin (Lev. 9:24; 2 Chron. 7:1).<sup>3</sup> Though not an offering for specific transgressions per se, it was an atoning offering offered from the priests’ supply in order to show the need for God’s continued forgiveness and presence as well as Israel’s ongoing violations. Who could afford a sacrifice for each and every personal sin? How could God’s presence continually reside among any people? Something had to be done. Our sin nature has no treatment nor could those offerings effectively compensate transgressions against the Holy One. Such is why Jesus came. His “once for all” offering has perpetual efficacy e.g. Heb. 7:23-25; 10:10. We are helpless to achieve and to maintain purity.
- c. Possible Parallel: Jesus’ atoning work is possibly further shadowed here in that the perpetual fires were divinely initiated and thus man’s atonement is both initiated and completed by the Covenant LORD Himself. As each day and evening were bracketed by continual sacrifices,

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<sup>1</sup> Not all “guilt offerings” included reparations.

<sup>2</sup> Even if the punishment was not always or perhaps even often carried out, the prescribed penalty was stated in order to reveal the degree of violation and ultimate and natural consequences which await the violator if he failed to repent and seek redemption via the means of God’s Law and mercy. David’s “high handed” sins of adultery and murder were met with a lesser punishment and grace because he earnestly lamented his sin against God first and foremost.

<sup>3</sup> Noted by Calvin. This may also explain the logistical nature of the sin of Nadab and Abihu (Lev. 10:1).

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our salvation is bracketed from faith to faith which is initiated and completed by God cf. Phil. 1:6. We are sinful at our core and thus cannot self-redeem nor maintain righteousness.

d. Pertinent Procedures (10-11)

- i. Consecrated Contagion: Careful compliance with holy procedures was necessary because God’s radiant holiness is like high voltage or nuclear radiation to our bodies. There is a unique scriptural motif regarding this consecrated contagion (oxymoron). Why wouldn’t God want to spread His holiness across the sin-decimated world? Isa. 6:9-10; Mat. 13:13; 11:25; Ro. 11:7-10; Ex. 3:19. Was God attempting to keep His holiness unto Himself and perhaps only those directly ministering around Him? Why protect holiness? Why not? What or who is holy must be “set apart” and not mingle with the sinful. Paul expounded in 1 Cor. 6:9-20.
- ii. Righteous Robes: Another related motif of holiness is seen in righteous garments vs filthy garments. Clean garments can be soiled thus they should be washed. However, the contagion concern was not for the holy things becoming defiled but that the holy things would consume the unholy. In the case of an animal or person, one who was un sanctified would be consumed by the same fire which consumed the sanctified sacrifices because God’s presence is holy and a consuming fire (see Deut 4:24; Isa 10:17, 30:27; 31:9; 33:14; Heb 12:29). The Jewish scholar Jacob Milgrom explained: “Holiness is lethal to all but the priests. That is, only the consecrated priests, who themselves have become holy, have the right to approach and handle the sanctums. The early narratives corroborate this assumption: the most sacred sanctums are lethally contagious to unauthorized persons even when their contact with them is respectful, for example, Uzzah’s touching the ark (2 Sam 6:6–7) and the Bethshemeshites’ viewing it (1 Sam 6:19). The theophany at Sinai provides a particularly illuminating example. Whoever trespasses on the mountain must be slain, but his slayers must heed that “no hand shall touch him, he shall be either stoned or pierced through” (Exod 19:13, JE). The implication is clear: the holiness communicated to the offender is of such power that it can be transmitted through a medium. Hence the instrument of death must not allow contact between the offender and his executioner. P also provides a telling example: the death of Nadab and Abihu (Lev 10:1–5). The divine fire has executed them for their cultic offense, but their bodies may not be touched directly; they must be wrapped in other garments before being removed from the sanctuary (v. 5). Again, the holiness contracted by persons can be imparted by touch to a third party with fatal results. This second-degree holiness is attributed to the sanctum associated with the very presence of God (e.g., the ark, Mount Sinai, the divine fire). ¶The high voltage of the supersanctums is also evidenced by their power to communicate not only by contact but by sight. This has already been noted in the story of the ark at Beth-shemesh (1 Sam 6:19). But even in P—which, as will be shown, strives for a reduction in the contagious power of the sanctum—the sanctums still possess the power to kill their viewers when they are being dismantled (Num 4:20\*).”<sup>4</sup>

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P Priestly source

P Priestly source

\* <sup>20</sup> But the Kohathites must not go in to look on the holy things even for a moment; otherwise they will die.

Numbers 4:20 (NRSV)

<sup>4</sup> Milgrom, J. (2004). [\*A Continental Commentary: Leviticus: a book of ritual and ethics\*](#) (p. 64). Fortress Press.

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- iii. Elliger explains the phrase as follows: “He enters a state in which anyone who is not a priest trained to act discreetly will soon provoke God’s special wrath against himself. At least he can only free himself from this state by undergoing a special act of purification.”<sup>75</sup> In other words, those in contact of said sanctified objects become as culpable priests – who then must be either purified or punished.
- iv. However, this motif is further developed in Ezekiel’s visionary Temple which was future to ancient Israel. Rather than destroying common folk who may have been exposed to the holy contagion, they would be sanctified unwittingly (44:19; 46:20). Could anyone be accidentally sanctified? I can only think of two related events viz. a child under the age of comprehension e.g. 2 Sam. 12:23 and Jephthah’s daughter (Judg. 11:35-36). Nevertheless, in both cases we can deduce that neither such sanctification was forced nor unjust.
- v. The point may be further emphasized in the removal of holy ashes from the Holy Place. The overall point is not unlike that of the whole of Leviticus viz. there is a profound difference between what is holy and what is common. →
- vi. The application of profound privilege forsaken is seen in God’s parable (or analogy) recorded by *Jeremiah* 13, see vv. 10-11. The solution to the problem of unclean and unholy garments has been procured by Jesus’ sacrifice which provides us with pure holy garments, see Mat. 22:11-14. As God wanted Israel to be as a holy garment which He could proudly wear, they (like the soiled garment Jeremiah hid) had become unattractive. Israel’s purpose was to make YHWH’s name holy among the world and be God’s conduit of holiness. In Christ, we are the holy priesthood who have been sanctified to offer ourselves to His service and bring the Gospel to all nations. We are priests reconciling the world to God and thus our righteous works ought to display the results of the Gospel (as intended and noted in *Jeremiah* 13) in our lives creating a thirst in the world (see 2 Cor. 5:18-20; Mat. 5:15-16). We must be set apart (lit. holy) and though in the world not of it (Jn. 17:15-16) – salt and light to it.
- vii. R. K. Harrison wrote: “The emphasis upon the fire ritual will doubtless have impressed the reader with two interesting facts. First, even in so apparently menial a task as the removal of ashes from the altar, it was the officiating priest, and not a deputy, who performed it. Secondly, for this work this same man had to be attired in a different form of dress from that worn in the holy place. There is always a dignity and an importance attached to the performance of the tasks which the Lord assigns to his servants, no matter how trivial the work may appear to be. The way in which one appears physically before God frequently betrays one’s attitude of mind (cf. Matt. 22:11–14).”<sup>6</sup>
- viii. Application of sacred vs secular: Expound on:
  - 1. Venues for Christian artists, ministers, workers: It’s not so much the venue as the objective.
  - 2. Must Christians be prohibited from patronizing particular vendors?
  - 3. Must Christians avoid certain books, albums, artists, movies, etc.?

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<sup>7</sup> Elliger, p. 97.

<sup>5</sup> Wenham, G. J. (1979). *The Book of Leviticus* (p. 121). Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co.

<sup>6</sup> Harrison, R. K. (1980). *Leviticus: an introduction and commentary* (Vol. 3, pp. 77–78). InterVarsity Press.

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- ix. Outside the camp: It was the most holy of offerings which were burnt in the Holy Place inside the Tent. And it was the most holy sacrifice which was offered once a year upon the Mercy Seat on the Ark in the Holy of Holies. The ashes of these high atoning sacrifices were to be taken outside the camp to a holy designation opposed to the other ashes offered outside the Tent.
- x. Significance: The gradations of offerings varied according to guilt, affordability, and scope. The highest and most holy of such were even further set apart than all the other set apart objects and such. The author of *Hebrews* makes a correlation to Jesus’ body and the ashes (and in particular, bodies (13:10-16 in particular 10-12 cf. Lev. 4:11-12, 21) of these most holy offerings. The author then makes another correlation (among many!) viz. the Church bearing/sharing the reproach of Jesus’ being taken and executed outside the camp. Our offerings may not be traditional and they are certainly not animal sacrifices. But sometimes the greatest sacrifices are those which cost us reproach in the eyes of an establishment – a presumptuous and self-righteous crowd. Making a stance for true righteousness, justice, truth, and grace. Not a “holier than thou” stance which necessitates holy demeanor and etiquette (sanctimoniously doing and saying the right things) but in motive, objective, value, attitude, and priority.

### 3. Appreciation for Provisions (14-23)

- a. These voluntary grain offerings were from a heart of gratitude and served to supply the priests’ food. Even those Levites with physical defects could partake. “*Every male* (18) Aaronite could eat the cereal offering, even those who exhibited some physical defect and were therefore blemished (cf. 21:18–23). The emphasis upon ceremonial holiness describes the status of a gift consecrated to God, as Christ indicated (Matt. 23:19), and implies that ritual holiness could be transmitted by contact, just as ritual uncleanness could.”<sup>7</sup>
- b. Harrison further commented: “Levitical rituals make it abundantly clear that it is a very responsible matter for persons to stand in the service of the living God. By their initial act of commitment they enter into a relationship of holiness to God, and must fulfil the Lord’s will in the manner in which he prescribes it, not as they think it might be done. For the Christian, holiness is the result of the Holy Spirit’s work in the individual life, removing that which is alien to the nature of Christ and enabling the believer to grow in grace (cf. Eph. 4:15; 2 Pet. 3:18, etc.) so that he can begin to match the stature of Christ.”<sup>8</sup> →
- c. True vs Contrived Worship: Application can be seen in that since we are all priests in Christ, we have such a greater privilege to worship Him directly apart from such bloody ceremonies. But we are not w/o ceremony today. Nevertheless, we must guard against vain and rote ceremonial mechanical and mere emotional worship. Just as merely going through rituals could not purify one’s heart nor fool God, He cannot be manipulated through emotive singing, overt crying, or grandiose praising. One cannot conjure up the Spirit via scheduled revivals of weeks or months long services. Although corporate worship involves earnest and biblically induced emotions, resolve, gratitude, etc. the overwhelming majority of our worship is in the common place. We take our lamps into the darkness via arriving on time and mostly early for work, providing honorable and good service, going the extra mile (Mat. 5:38-40), restraining from retaliation, humbly serving others, paying off our debts, aptly forgiving others and repenting our own transgressions.

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<sup>7</sup> Harrison, R. K. (1980). [\*Leviticus: an introduction and commentary\*](#) (Vol. 3, p. 78). InterVarsity Press.

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- d. The Pharisee went to the Temple (see Lu. 18:9-14) to praise and thank God for all he received from Him, whilst cleverly elevating himself. Yet the tax collector would not be so presumptuous as to “lift his eyes toward heaven but rather beat his breast, saying ‘God, be merciful to me a sinner?’” Jesus said that he was the one who went home justified for he humbled himself. Humility is obeying God including repentance.
  - e. Our free will offerings of thanks are a pleasing aroma to God and keep us from quenching the Spirit (1 Thes. 5:18-22).
4. Atoning for Purification (24-30)
- a. Cleanliness is literally next to godliness, here seen in the instructions re: the ‘sin’ or ‘purification’ offering. Ever washing and scrubbing were the priests. Jay Sklar wrote, “A garment spattered by sacrificial *blood* had to be *washed* ‘in a holy place’ (6:27; NIV *in the sanctuary area*); this ensured that the blood of a *most holy* sacrifice did not enter the profane realm.”<sup>9</sup> However, there is a paradox →
  - b. Purity Paradox: the blood that sanctified the altar, curtain, and garments was also treated as if it was unclean thus having to be washed off, scoured, or broken. The only corollary (parallel of application) which comes to mind is Heb. 10:29, a warning not to treat Christ’s blood as a common or unholy thing. In context, the reader is warned not to revert back to the Levitical sacrificial system but adhere to the “order of Melchizedek” (Heb. 6:20ff.) via the person and work of the Son of God via His pure and cleansing blood (Heb. 9:14). To fail to heed said warning is to count the holy blood of Jesus as common or unholy. Further (in 12:25-29), the warning is reiterated and linked back to the terrifying “consuming fire” of God which came upon Aaron’s sons in their presumption to offer God an incense other than prescribed. Thankfully – profoundly gratefully – Jesus is the only prescribed sacrifice for the sins of the world hereafter.

### PC

There is so much application in Leviticus for us today. In fact much of it is referred to by the NT authors. Unfortunately, much of the application is not applied. But the problem is not so much a lack of information but of negligence and willful ignorance, if not blatant selection and twisting of the Scriptures to fit our lifestyles. This is a book about holiness and we are a people diseased by sin which wars for our affections, motives, values, priorities, and attitudes. Without Christ we are helpless to win said war. But in Him we are called to holiness, and not only that but to promote it and serve as convicting priests in a hostile world. It’s impossible to win a war when soldiers are failing to wear the proper attire, employ training, and engage but rather are supporting the other side in practice and conviction. We must allow the Spirit and Word of God inform and conform us to the image of His Son; and only then will we be holy and become the prescribed salt and light that will achieve victory in the spiritual war to which we have been enlisted.

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<sup>9</sup> Sklar, J. (2013). [\*Leviticus: An Introduction and Commentary\*](#) (D. G. Firth, Ed.; Vol. 3, p. 131). Inter-Varsity Press.