



Reading of the book of Leviticus

DID YOU KNOW?

1. Leviticus is one of the most difficult books to read in the Old Testament. It contains very few stories and characters. It has no poem. On the contrary, it is full of laws and rituals explained in great depth.
2. Even though Leviticus is difficult to read, it contains an important lesson for all of us. In this book, God teaches the terrible consequences of sin to the Israelites as well as to us.
3. Leviticus can be divided into two parts. The first part (chapters 1-17) explains how Israel was to draw near to God. The second part (chapters 18-27) teaches Israel how to walk with God after receiving Him.
4. The animals that the priests sacrificed were to be without blemish (Le. 1:2, 3:1).
5. Only the priests and their families could eat the rest of the offering presented to the Lord as a sacrifice (Le. 2 :10, 6 :9-11).
6. For unintentional sin (a sin that was committed unconsciously), the individual or the people had to present a sacrifice of atonement in order to find forgiveness (Le. 4).
7. God gave everyone (rich and poor alike) the opportunity to present a guilt offering for unintentional sin:
 - a. Whoever could afford a female from the flock (lamb or goat) (Le. 5: 6).
 - b. Whoever could not afford a lamb, could get two turtledoves or two pigeons (Le. 5 :7).
 - c. Whoever could not afford turtledoves or pigeons, could get fine flour (Le. 5 :11).
8. Aaron and his sons, from the tribe of Levi, were the first generation of priests officially consecrated to the Lord by Moses (Le. 8).
9. The Israelites were accustomed to the magnificence of God's glory, but they had seen it only from a distance, on Mount Sinai. Even at this distance they had been afraid (Ex. 19:16-22). Now that glory had come down to the Tent of Meeting in the middle of the camp. They were indeed « close to God » (Le. 9 :23).
10. God consumed Nadab and Abihu, two of Aaron's sons, with fire because they brought an unauthorized fire to the altar of burnt offering. Probably the way they put the fire was not in accordance with God's command (Le. 10 :1-2).

11. God forbade the priests to drink wine or strong wine when they approached the altar of God in order to be clearheaded in the exercise of their duties (Le. 10: 8-11).
12. The offering of two turtledoves or two young pigeons as prescribed by the laws dealing with childbirth was offered by poor women to be accountable to God (Le. 12:8). Mary also offered such a sacrifice after the birth of Jesus (Lk. 2:24) - proof that Jesus' family was not rich.
13. The term goat of the sin-offering has the same meaning as scapegoat. This term was formed to express the profound meaning of the ceremony of atonement in which the goat symbolically took with it all the sins of Israel in the wilderness (Le. 16:20-22). Today the term scapegoat applies to anyone who is blamed for the wrongdoings of others.
14. God forbade the children of Israel to eat the blood of an animal because its life is its blood (Le.17: 14).
15. God forbade all sexual relationships between child and parent, sister and brother, and close relatives such as uncles and aunts. This is an abomination in His eyes (Le. 18 :6-18, 27).
16. God forbade all forms of false judgments, false scales, false weights, etc. (Le. 19: 35-36).
17. God's law had a special concern for the wellbeing of the poor. Every day agriculture was practiced so that the poor and foreigners could find food (Le. 19 :9-10).
18. God condemned all forms of magical practice and spiritism (Le. 20: 31).
19. Any sexual relationship between two men was punishable by death. Any sexual relationship between human beings and animals was also punishable by death. (Le. 20 :13, 15-16).
20. Blaspheming God's name (i.e., profaning God's name) resulted in death by stoning. (Le. 24 :16).
21. The original purpose of the law "eye for eye - tooth for tooth" (Le. 24:20) was to establish a rule of punishment in court. It curbed revenge and ensured fair justice for rich and poor, nationals and foreigners.
22. God's law provided for a kind of redistribution of wealth every 50 years, at which time everyone's land was returned to him (Le. 25:28). The tendency of the rich to buy up all the

land was reversed in the Jubilee year. In reality, land was not sold, which in the beginning had been shared equally among families - they loaned it out (Le. 25:23).

23. Every foreigner, in order to become a Jew, must practice the rite of circumcision, which is the sign of God's covenant with Abraham (Ge. 17:10). But the reference to the uncircumcised heart (Le. 26:41) shows that the attitude of the heart as well as the physical act was very important. Six hundred years later, Jeremiah accused the Israelites of having uncircumcised hearts (Je. 9:26). Another six hundred years later, Stephen made a similar complaint (Ac. 7:51). Paul, on the other hand, wrote, "...circumcision is that of the heart by the Spirit..." (Ro. 2:28-29).
24. The notion of sacrifice inspires the vocabulary of Leviticus: the words "priests", "Sacrifice", "blood", "offering" are used very often: the Hebrew term *qodesh*, translated by "holiness" or "holy" is found more than 150 times. A characteristic phrase appears several times: "you shall be holy, for I am holy" (Le. 11:44, 45; 19:2, 20:7, 26).