

## LEVITICUS: THE SINAI COVENANT CONTINUED

### Nine Studies in the book of Leviticus

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#### (A) Introduction

Many Christians think of Leviticus as a self-contained - and rather boring - book, full of lists of sacrificial rituals and dietary laws. Some consider it totally irrelevant because Christians do not observe these laws.

In fact, Leviticus is actually Part 2 of the Exodus and the Sinai covenant. To really understand the New Testament, we need to understand the Sinai covenant because Jesus and the NT writers all expressed their relationship with God in terms of the concepts of that covenant. These include God's grace, faithfulness and justice, and the idea that a true covenant relationship with God is expressed through every aspect of life. For example, when we read how the Sinai covenant was set up, we can see that God rescued Israel from Egypt before he offered them this covenant, that it was God who approached Israel and not Israel who approached God, that it is dangerous to approach God even after preparatory cleansing, and that the purpose of the covenant is to draw the nation of Israel into a special relationship with God.

Peter quotes God's invitation to the Israelites in Ex 19:4-6 when he says that Christians are "a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, God's own people" (1 Pet 2:9). We, like Israel, are called to minister to the world in the same way that the priests ministered to Israel. As we study Leviticus, let us consider how we can become more a people belonging to God.

#### (B) How should Christians treat Leviticus ?

Sometimes it's difficult to see how much of the Old Testament relates to us today, and Leviticus is one of the books for which this is most true. However, it may help to remember the following principles:

1. The **divine authority of the Old Testament** is recognised by Jesus and the New Testament authors. For instance, when the NT writers mention "scripture", they are almost always referring to the Old Testament, NOT to the New Testament. So even difficult books like Leviticus are "inspired by God and profitable for teaching ... and for training in righteousness" (2 Tim 3:16).

2. Laws and instructions in both Old and New Testaments need to be understood in the context of the contemporary social situation. The key to determining whether/how to follow an instruction in the bible is to first **work out what principle lies behind that instruction, given the situation at the time of writing**. Then we work out how to apply the same principle in our situation today. One example is Paul's instruction that women should cover their heads while praying or prophesying (1 Cor 11:5). Many Christians think that this instruction was given because head-covering in women was associated in Corinthian society with modesty. If this is the case, the principle which we are to follow is not necessarily to insist on women wearing hats in church but rather to dress and behave in a way which is interpreted by the society we live in as being modest.

3. God's nature does not change. Therefore the instructions in the **Old Testament should show us the same God of love, justice, mercy and goodness** as the teachings in the New Testament.

4. Much of the **NT teaching on salvation refers directly to the Sinai covenant**. Jesus' words at the Last Supper sound very like Moses' proclamation in Ex 24 "Behold the blood of the covenant ...".

5. The entire **Sinai covenant, including the sacrificial system, is based on grace**. God liberated Israel from slavery before he suggested the covenant - he didn't make acceptance of the covenant a condition of his redemption of Israel. Furthermore, there are many references throughout the Old Testament which clearly state that, without the right attitude to God, sacrifices were meaningless.

6. It is particularly significant that the "redemption" part of the Sinai covenant (the escape from Egypt) takes up less than half the book of Exodus and none of the book of Leviticus. **The bulk of the covenant story is concerned with the setting up of a community dedicated to the service of God and with which God was able to dwell**. It's just as important for Christians to learn how to live as part of a holy, God-focussed community - and Leviticus has plenty to say on this subject.

**(C) For those who aren't familiar with Exodus and/or how Leviticus fits into the Bible:**

The story so far goes roughly as follows:

1. At the end of Genesis, God arranged for Jacob and his descendants to migrate to Egypt to escape a terrible famine in Canaan. By the time of the Exodus, Jacob's family had grown from a mere 70 to over 600,000 (Num 1:46). The Egyptians felt threatened by the immigrants and so abused them. God responded to Israel's distress by calling Moses to bring them back to Canaan. [Ex 1, 2]

2. After a series of miraculous plagues sent by God, culminating in the Passover (when all the Egyptian first-born children and animals died but the Israelites were spared by painting the blood of a lamb on their doorframes), Moses led the Israelites out of Egypt. God saved Israel once again by parting the Red Sea for them to escape from the Egyptians. He then saved them from starvation by providing manna, water and quails and fought for them against the Amalekites. [Ex 3-18]

3. When Israel reached Sinai, God offered them a covenant (treaty or agreement) in which he promised that "if you will obey my voice and keep my covenant, you shall be my own possession among all peoples" (19:5). Israel agreed and the covenant was made. [Ex 19-24]

4. God continues giving Israel detailed instructions ranging from ceremonial details to civil laws. A large section of these focus on the building of the tabernacle and the book of Exodus concludes with a great climax as God's glory fills the completed tabernacle. [Ex 25-40]

And the covenant instructions continue in Leviticus ...

## **(D) Suggestions on Using these Studies**

It's probably best to take the "big picture" approach when reading Leviticus. This means that we focus on getting an overall view of the book's major points rather than worrying about small details. Here are the responses of three different people to Leviticus after reading through it in this way:

God really does take sin very, very seriously.

Structure and doing things in a particular way are very important to God. This is something which many Anglicans today find surprising and difficult to understand, because we are going through a stage in which we tend to react against ritualism.

Holiness is really important to God. The holiness of the people of God is based on *who* He is (cf. 2 Tim 1:12). The words "for I am Yahweh your God", or "for I am Yahweh who brought you up out of Egypt" or simply "for I am Yahweh", are given over and over again as the basis for God's laws.

When working through these studies, try doing these things:

(1) look for words or phrases which occur again and again. For example, in chapter 1, the phrase "a burnt offering, an offering by fire, a pleasing odour to the Lord" occurs 3 times in 17 verses. This helps to give us an idea of what the passage is about.

(2) Don't worry too much about details (unless you really find them fascinating).

(3) Some of the studies involve fairly long passages. If you are a fast reader, I encourage you to read the full passage as you will gain more. However, if you are not a fast reader, then just read the Sample Passage. If you like to match your daily readings to the studies, the table below will cover the full passage and also some related passages.

(4) Try to work out what each passage has to say to Christians today.

(5) If you can think of passages in other parts of Scripture which seem to be relevant, note them down and share them with the others in your group.

(6) At the end of some of the studies there is some additional information, which may (or may not) be helpful.

(7) Use the outline of Leviticus given on the next page to see how the passage you're reading fits in with the rest of the book.

## Daily Readings

	Day 1	Day 2	Day 3	Day 4	Day 5	Day 6
<b>Study 1</b>	Ex 19:1-25	1 Pet 1:13-25	1 Pet 2:1-10	1 Cor 10:23-11:1	Heb 11:1-40	Lev 1:1-17
<b>Study 2</b>	Lev 2:1-16	Lev 3:1-17	Lev 4:1-35	Lev 5:1-6:7	Lev 6:8-38	Heb 12:1-2, 12-29; 13:1-21
<b>Study 3</b>	Lev 8:1-36	Lev 9:1-24	Lev 10:1-20	Lev 21:1-24	Lev 22:1-33	Eph 2:1-22
<b>Study 4</b>	Lev 11:1-47	Lev 12:1-8	Lev 13:1-59	Lev 14:1-56	Lev 15:1-33	Mk 7:1-23
<b>Study 5</b>	Lev 16:1-34	Heb 4:14-5:10	Heb 6:9-7:19	Heb 7:20-8:13	Heb 9:1-28	Heb 10:1-25
<b>Study 6</b>	Lev 17:1-16	Acts 15:1-29	Gal 2:11-21	Ex 12:1-27	Ex 24:1-18	Mt 26:20-29
<b>Study 7</b>	Lev 18:1-30	Lev 19:1-37	Lev 20:1-27	Lev 24:10-23	Is 58:1-14	Is 61:1-11
<b>Study 8</b>	Lev 23:1-22	Lev 23:23-24:9	Lev 25:1-28	Lev 25:29-55	2 Cor 8:1-24	2 Cor 9:1-15
<b>Study 9</b>	Lev 26:1-46	Lev 27:1-34	2 Cor 4:16-5:10	2 Cor 5:11-7:1	Heb 4:1-13	Rev 21:1-14, 22-22:5

### (A) Regulations on Offerings (chs 1-7)

1:1-17 Burnt offerings - what the person making the offering should do

2:1-16 Grain offerings - what the person making the offering should do

3:1-17 Fellowship offerings - what the person making the offering should do

4:1-5:13 Sin offerings - what situations they are for; how they should be performed; what is required.

5:14-6:7 Guilt offerings - when situations they are for; what is required

6:8-21 All 5 offering types - what the priests should do

6:22-38 Allocation of the offerings - God's share, the priests' share

(B) Consecration of the priests (chs 8-10)

8:1-9:24 Aaron and his sons are consecrated; they offer holy sacrifices as atonement for the people. God responds with acceptance.

10:1-30 2 of Aaron's sons make unholy offerings; God responds with judgment.

(C) Regulations on Holiness in Physical Things (chs 11-15)

11:1-47 Dietary laws

12:1-15:33 Laws on uncleanness relating to childbirth, disease, mildew, bodily discharge.

(D) Atonement for Sin (ch 16)

16:1-34 Instructions on the Day of Atonement

(E) The Requirements of Holiness for Israel (chs 17-20)

17:1-18:30 Prohibitions on practices linked to idolatry (sacrifices outside the Tabernacle, consumption of blood, other Canaanite practices)

19:1-37 The "33 Commandments"

20:1-27 Prohibitions on practices requiring death or excommunication as a penalty

(F) The Requirements of Holiness for the Priests (ch 21)

21:1-22:16 Priestly requirements and regulations

(G) The Requirements of Holiness for Activities involving the Tabernacle (chs 22-24)

22:17-33 Requirements for a sacrifice to be acceptable

23:1-44 Regulations of festivals

24:1-9 Regulations on the oil and flour used in the tabernacle

(H) The Penalties for Blasphemy, Murder (ch 24)

24:10-23 A blasphemer is stoned, God stipulates the penalties for murder and killing an animal

(I) The Implications of the Sabbath principle (chs 25-27)

25:1-55 Application of the Sabbath and Year of Jubilee principles for land usage, property ownership, bond servants and slaves

26:1-46 Reminder of the conditions of the covenant and the rewards and penalties involved.

27:1-34 Values for dedication to and redemption from God.

## Study 1: Background to Leviticus

### Study Passage: Ex 19:1-6; 1 Pet 1:13-2:10

1. Think of a movie, show or book which you have seen or read recently. Come up with one word, phrase or sentence to explain what it was about, or what point it was trying to make (i.e. the "big picture" approach). For example - "Romeo and Juliet" could be described as "a love story" or "the stupidity of prejudice".

2. Look at the outline of Leviticus given in the Introduction. Can you see any words or ideas which appear several times? As we work through Leviticus, you may find it helpful to modify this outline to reflect those ideas and lessons which are most important to you.

3. Ex 19:1-6 describes the first time God formally offers Israel a covenant (agreement, contract, treaty) with him.

(a) What was the basis of this offer (v4)?

(b) What was God's aim in setting up the Sinai covenant with Israel (v5-6)?

(c) How does this compare with the new covenant Christians have?

4. Read 1 Pet 1:13-2:10.

(a) A great deal of Leviticus revolves around teaching Israel what to do to live a holy lifestyle as individuals and as a community, in the same way that the NT calls Christians to a holy lifestyle. What is the basis of this call to holiness (1 Pet 1:16, cf. Lev 11:44-45)?

(b) What does it mean for Christians today to be a "royal priesthood"?

5. 2 Tim 3:16 tells us that "all scripture is inspired by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction and for training in righteousness". How does this determine our attitude to the instructions in Leviticus, especially those laws which are not practised by Christians today? [You may also find Mk 7:1-14, Acts 10:15 and 1 Cor 10:23-11:1 relevant.]

## Study 2: The Sacrificial System

### Study Passage: Lev 1-7

### Sample Passage: Lev 4:27-31, 5:1-6; Heb 13:12-16

1. What are the aims of sacrifice (4:31) ?
2. What is the Christian equivalent of these sacrifices (e.g. Ps 51:17, Heb 7:27, 13:15-16) ?
3. Note the division of labour between the laity and the priesthood - the lay person does quite a lot of the work involved in the sacrifice. Does this have any bearing on the way we conduct (a) our worship services (b) our daily lives (cf Rom 12:1-2) ?
4. The type of sacrifice specified in Leviticus depended on three things: the reason the offering was being made, the status of the person making the offering and how wealthy (or poor) the person was (e.g. Lev 4:3, 22-23, 27-28; 5:7, 11). Do we incorporate enough of this compassion and flexibility in our approach to church life e.g. in tithing, allocation of church duties, choice of activities in home church groups ?
5. Are there any general points/principles which you consider important or significant in these chapters ? [For example, what are the most important things about a sacrifice, what things make it good in God's eyes ?] What do these suggest about God, e.g. in terms of his character, how he wants people to relate to him ?

### ***Additional Information***

*Lev 1 - the burnt offering was frequently done on occasions of significant statement of faith (e.g. Ex 18:11-12, 24:3-8)*

*1:4: The phrase "lay hand on offering" is actually "press" or "lean" on the offering. Laying on of hands and prayer are linked in Lev 16:21, Deut 21:6-9, etc. thus could also be an indication that this is the point at which the worshipper should pray.*

*Lev 2 - the Hebrew word for cereal offering is "minhah", meaning tribute (the regular payment made by a tributary nation to its overlord in acknowledgement of the protection provided by him).*

*6:1-7: Different level of restitution given to that in Ex 22:6ff. Possible difference is that Lev refers to voluntary confession whereas Ex involves case instigated by plaintiff against guilty defendant.*

### **Study 3: Ordination of the Priests**

**Study Passage: Leviticus 8-10, 21-22**

**Sample Passage: Lev 10:8-15, 9:1-4; Eph 2:6-22**

1. Read Lev 10:17. Some people think that the sacrificial system is a system of works, diametrically opposed to God's grace. What does this verse tell us about it ?

2. If you read through Lev 10:8-15, you will notice that the phrase "the Lord commanded" or "the Lord spoke" is used many times. Note also 10:1 "... Nadab and Abihu ... offered unholy fire before the Lord, such as he had not commanded ...".

(a) Why was God so specific about the way ceremonies were to be conducted (cf. Lev 11:44-45) ?

(b) Do you think God is still particular about our church services today ? If so, what things do you think he would insist on and why ? If not, why not ? [Some passages you may find helpful: 1 Cor 14:26b, 33; Eph 2:21; Heb 10:24-25; Mt 5:23-24]

3. Read Lev 10:8-15 and Eph 2:6-22.

(a) What special privileges and responsibilities do the priests have ? (You may also find Lev 21:6, 8, 12, 15; 22:9, 15 helpful.)

(b) What special privileges and responsibilities do Christians have ?

3. The sacrifices for the first day of the ordination (Lev 8) were a bull, 2 rams and 3 cereal offerings. At the end of the ordination (Lev 9), Aaron had to offer another bull and a ram, while the people had to offer a goat, a calf, a lamb, a bull, a ram and 1 cereal offering, because God was going to appear to them. By contrast, the sacrifice for unintentional sin was only a single offering - a bull for a priest or for all Israel, a male goat for a ruler, a female goat (or lamb or 2 birds or cereal offering) for a commoner.

(a) Why were the ordination sacrifices so substantial ? Note that Aaron and his sons also had to stay at the door of the tent of meeting for 7 days, performing sacrifices.

(b) The post-ordination sacrifices were equally substantial because God was about to meet with and reveal his glory to Israel. How seriously do we take our meetings with God ? What can we do to prepare ourselves before e.g. church, personal prayer, death, the second coming?

***Additional Information:***

*Lev 8 describes how Moses follows the detailed instructions given by God in Ex 29:1-37 - another clear link between Exodus and Leviticus. Note the importance Moses places on exact obedience.*

*Lev 8:8: The Urim and Thummim were some sort of device used for determining which option God wanted Israel to take. It is not known exactly what they were.*

*Lev 8:14, 18, 22: Note Aaron and his sons have to lay hands on the offering - see note on 1:4.*

*Lev 10:6: Priests were normally allowed to go into mourning for sons and brothers (cf. 21:1-2).*

*Lev 10:17: tells us the purpose of the sin offering.*

## Study 4: Uncleanness

### Study Passage: Lev 11-15

### Sample Passage: Lev 11:29-12:8, 15:31; Mk 7:14-23

1. Lev 11-15 deals with the various ways a person could become "unclean" and the steps that person had to take to purify themselves.

(a) Why did God give Israel all these laws (11:44-45, 15:31) ?

(b) How can Christians become unclean (Mk 7:14-23) ?

3. Who is actively involved in the purification rituals (e.g. Lev 12:6-8) and what does each of these three parties have to do ? Is this the same for the way Christians are made pure ?

4. Uncleanness could be transferred by contact (e.g. 11:32-38). Is this true for Christians also ? How can we avoid becoming unclean ?

### ***Additional Information:***

*Possible rationale behind dietary distinctions are normality vs abnormality, e.g. birds should have 2 wings and 2 feet, fish should have fins and scales, land animals should have hooves and chew the cud (because the Israelites were pastoralists). Significance re land animals in particular also that the clean animals were those used for sacrifice, therefore the restriction helped Israelites to "recall that he owed all his spiritual privileges to divine election", cf. Deut 14:1-2 and Lev 11:44-45 both link election to these laws.*

*11:1 - rare for God to address both Moses and Aaron, probably done here because Aaron and the priests had a practical role in deciding whether something was clean or not.*

*11:8 - note OK to touch live unclean animal (e.g. ride on camel)*

*12:2: Three of the possible reasons why childbirth was considered unclean are: (i) Uncleanness may have been associated with things which were not usual (e.g. a woman doesn't go through childbirth most of the time). (ii) The discharge of blood associated with childbirth - blood is linked with life (cf. Lev 17). (iii) The pain of childbirth is one of the consequences of the Fall.*

*12:4-5: Why were the purification periods what they were ? Firstly, we can't be sure why the purification period was longer after a female child than a male child, but it is clear that the Levitical laws make a clear distinction between male and female. Secondly, the total purification period was 40 or 80 days; the number 40 is associated in the Bible with events of great significance, e.g. the flood, the years in the wilderness, Jesus' time in the wilderness.*

## Study 5: The Day of Atonement

**Study Passage: Lev 16:1-34; Heb 9:24-28; 10:19-25**

1. Read through chapter 16. The Day of Atonement, or Yom Kippur, is the holiest day of the Jewish year and the sacrificial ceremony described has a number of features which make it quite distinct from the normal sacrificial rituals. Fill in the table below (add more rows if you need them).

<b>Features</b>	<b>Difference to normal sacrifices</b>	<b>Significance</b>
High priest enters holy of holies	No one enters holy of holies	Approach close to God possible
Atonement for self, priests and all of Israel		
High priest wears simple white garment		
Scapegoat takes sins away		

2. Heb 9-10 compares the Leviticus sacrificial system with Jesus' work. Read through these chapters, looking for parallels, similarities and differences.

	<b>OT</b>	<b>Jesus</b>
Duration of effect	Temporary	Once for all
Nature of tabernacle		
Entry made possible by:		
Covenant		
Direct access to God		
Blood needed		

3. The scapegoat (the goat sent to Azazel in RSV) symbolised the removal of Israel's sins from God and his people (cf. Ps 103:2). Reflect on how Jesus voluntarily chose to be the scapegoat for us and separated himself from the Father.

4. The ceremony of the Day of Atonement was a dramatic reminder to Israel every year of how serious sin really is, how great a sacrifice is needed to atone for it, and how dangerous it is to approach a holy God. Do we recognise these things enough in our lives and in our ceremonies ? Can we improve on the way we do this ?

### ***Additional Information***

*"Kippur" [Hebrew for atonement] can mean either "to wipe clean" or "to pay a ransom". Note that in OT times, a ransom was the price paid to reduce the penalty to the guilty, like compensation (e.g. Ex 21:30, Lev 20:10, Pr 6:35, 2 Sam 1:3-6) rather than a payment made to rescue the innocent as it is today.*

*Note the difference between the high priest's clothing in 16:4 and his usual vestments in Ex 28. Wenham points to a similarity with the clothing of angels (Ezek 9 and 10, Dan 10, 12) and saints in heaven (Rev 19:8).*

*16:22 - "the region that is cut off" is actually literally "a land of cutting off". Can mean a place where the goat's life is cut off. The Mishnah says the goat was pushed over a steep cliff.*

*16:8,10,26 - Azazel the name of a demon in Enoch, and goat takes the sins of Israel back to their author. Alternative interpretations that Azazel is "a rare Hebrew noun meaning complete destruction" or "rocky precipice"(i.e. parallel to the land of cutting off).*

*16:29-34 - "fast" actually "afflict yourselves". Associated with fasting in Isaiah; Ps 35 suggests all sorts of penitential practices.*

## **Study 6: The Holiness of Blood**

### **Study Passage: Lev 17:1-16; Gen 9:4-6; Heb 9:18-22**

1. Many Christians think that the sacrificial system was based on works through which the Israelites thought they could achieve God's blessing. What does Lev 17:11 tell us about who initiated the sacrificial system and the reason it was set up?
2. What is the significance of blood and of the ban on its consumption (cf. Gen 9:4-6, Heb 9:22) ?
3. Can you think of other events/passages in the Bible where blood plays a major role ? How would the Jews at the time have interpreted those events/passages given their view of the significance of blood and the ban on eating it ?
4. Why did the NT church retain the ban on eating blood (Acts 15:29) ? There possible reasons are: (a) to avoid behaviour which would upset the Jewish Christians or (b) if blood were associated with pagan rituals at the time (and certainly the other two banned behaviours were) then the ban was to avoid misunderstanding by both Gentile Christians and pagans or (c) Jesus identified blood with life and this identification goes all the way back to Noah, i.e. pre-dates the Sinai covenant, thus it is a genuinely fundamental ban which applies at all times. Discuss these reasons and any others you may think of. Should this ban still apply to Gentile Christians today and why/why not ?
5. How could Christians apply the principles from the answer to question 2 ? You may wish to consider issues such as abortion, euthanasia, killing animals or blood transfusion.

### ***Additional Information***

*17:4 - "to be cut off from his people" interpreted as: to be punished by God himself directly, or to be exiled from the nation.*

## ***Study 7: Holiness in Society***

**Study Passage: Lev 18-20; 24:10-23**

**Sample Passage: Lev 19:1-37; Is 58:1-14**

1. Read Lev 19. Can you notice anything which is repeated several times ? How is this important?

2. Lev 19 calls the Israelites to care for many different groups of people and things. List some of these and consider how we can care for these groups today.

3. What does Is 58:1-14 tell us God wants us to do/not do ? How can you apply these principles in your daily life ?

4. [Bonus Question - if interested in this area] Chapter 18 and 20:10-26 are about the types of sexual relationships which God forbade. Sometimes it is suggested that the main reason God gave Israel these laws was because he wanted to prevent the types of medical problems which can be caused by inbreeding. However, note that some of the banned relationships do NOT involve close blood ties (e.g. 18:15-20) so it is not simply a matter of heredity problems.

(a) What does this chapter tell us is God's main reason for instituting these laws (18:1-6, 24-30; 20:23-24, 26) ?

(b) What other principles underlie these laws (e.g. 18:7-8, 10, 14, 16, 21) ?

(c) Is there any difference to the way these principles should be applied in our society ? For example, what about family situations where many of the members of the family may not be related by blood, such as adopted children or siblings related only by marriage ?

## Study 8: The Year of Jubilee

**Study Passage: Leviticus 23-24:9; 25**

**Sample Passage: Lev 25:8-17, 25-55; 2 Cor 8:9-15**

1. Read Lev 25:8-17, 25-55. What were the effects of the instructions regarding the Year of Jubilee ?
2. What were the principles underlying the Year of Jubilee (25:23-24, 42-43,55) ?
3. Try to come up with ways we could apply these principles to our church life and also to Australian society, in particular, the local community:
4. Jesus' response to the principles of the Year of Jubilee is spelt out in 2 Cor 8:9: "He was rich, yet for your sake he became poor, so that by his poverty you might become rich." How can we respond appropriately to Jesus' gift ?

### ***Additional Info:***

*The number seven recurs in the festival arrangements, e.g. 7 festivals each year, 7 days of rest, unleavened bread on 1<sup>st</sup> and 7<sup>th</sup> days, 7 weeks, most festivals in 7<sup>th</sup> month, etc.*

*"No regular work" = literally "no work of labour or service", probably reference to Ex 20:9 ("six days you shall labour and do all your work"). Presumably less restrictive than the total work ban in 23:3, 32*

*24:16-22 is a "palistrophe", that is, it has an ABC...CBA structure (e.g. v16 and 22 stress applicability to both native and foreigner, v17 and 21 discuss murder, etc.). The structure emphasises the matching of punishment to offence and the universality of the laws.*

*The "eye for an eye" regulation appears to be a principle rather than a strict law. For example, a slave who loses an eye receives his freedom (Ex 21:26). Thus the idea is that adequate compensation must be made. The only crime for which such compensation is strictly forbidden is murder (Num 35:16ff).*

*The phrase "acceptable year of the Lord" (Is 61:1, Lk 4:19) may have been based on the Year of Jubilee, since the messianic age is intended to bring liberty and justice etc.*

## Study 9: The Conclusion to the Covenant

### Study Passage: Leviticus 26-27

### Sample Passage: Lev 26:3-45; Rev 21:1-4

1. Chapter 26 lists the rewards and punishments which are the consequences of following or breaking the covenant. Make a list of these rewards and punishments. Should we expect these to apply to Christians as well (cf. Mt 6:33, Lk 11:41ff, 1 Cor 11:30, 2 Tim 3:12) ?
2. Notice that the punishments are described as coming in increasingly terrible stages. What does this tell us about God's feelings towards these punishments ?
3. 26:40-45 reminded the Israelites that the entire Sinai covenant, including all the laws and ceremonies described in Leviticus, was based on God's faithfulness to them (cf. Ex 2:24-25). If we remember that God's laws are based on his grace and faithfulness, how does this affect our attitude to those laws ?
4. God's key promise "I will walk among you, and I will be your God, and you shall be my people" is repeated many times in the Bible, for example in 2 Cor 6:16-18 and Rev 21:1-4. Note that the word used for "people" is actually singular rather than plural, i.e. the concept involved is one of "community" rather than "a group of many persons". What does it mean to you to have Yahweh walk among us, to be our God and for us to be his people ?
5. Looking back over what we have learnt of Leviticus, what do you see as its most important overall theme ? Can you see a **new** way to apply this to your life ?

### *Additional Notes:*

*Wenham suggests that the reason why chapter 27 is placed after chapter 26 is because it deals with vows which man make to God while chapter 26 is basically the vows God makes to Israel. Following on from that idea, the entire Sinai covenant could be viewed as the vows which Israel have agreed to make to God.. Wenham points out that the bible stresses repeatedly the danger of treating such vows lightly (e.g. Eccl 5:3-4, Prov 20:25).*

*27:3 - According to Wenham, 50 shekels is more than 4 years' wages (about 1 shekel/month).*

*27:28-29 - these verses refer to a more stringent vow than ordinary dedication.*