

# OpenTheo

## Leviticus: Chapter-by-Chapter Commentary

May 1, 2022



**Alastair Roberts**

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## **Transcript**

The Book of Leviticus is one of the hardest books in the Bible. It's the point where many Bible-reading plans fail. My first two attempts to read through the Bible in a year founded on the rocks of the opening chapters of Leviticus.

If the instructions for building the tabernacle and the description of its construction was tedious, at least it wasn't anywhere near as strange and foreign as the Book of Leviticus. The sacrificial system is connected to the tabernacle. The tabernacle, however, is typically spoken of in Leviticus as the tent of meeting.

It's the place where God encounters his people. And the point of the sacrificial system is to facilitate and make possible that proper encounter. And the sacrificial system is very much a meaningful system of particulars.

It's like a language. We can often think about the meaning of language in terms of the relationship between a word and the external object in the world that it refers to. But the meaning of terms can also be discovered through the internal relationships of a language and the way that terms, even when referring to the same object in the world, can carry very different shades of meaning and present things within very different contexts.

So if we're talking about a dog, for instance, you can talk about that dog as a pet. It's a very different thing from talking about the dog as a canine, or as a hound, or a pooch, or a doggo. These are all different terms that carry different connotations and frame that single object in the world in different ways.

Now, when we think about language, language works in terms of such a system. And the sacrificial system is also a system. It's a number of different practices that are understood not just with their relationship to something outside of themselves, maybe they point to Christ, for instance.

They are also to be understood in terms of their differences from one another, by the way that they are associated with, differentiated from, juxtaposed with, or homologous with, other realities or practices or persons within the system. For instance, we can see an association between the legitimate sacrifice and the legitimate priest. Human life, society and relation is mapped onto and symbolically enacted within a system of animals, architecture, furniture, agricultural seasons and ritual.

And the animals, the architecture, the furniture, the agricultural feasts and the rituals, they're not magic. As the book of Hebrews argues, the blood of bulls and goats could never take away sin. The tabernacle was always patterned after and a copy of a greater realm of the Lord's presence.

It was never the true archetype. It was rather a sort of extended and enacted metaphorical system, a sort of mirror within and through which Israel could comport itself to the reality. Now we tend to think about things in terms of abstract and disembodied concepts.

We can be tempted to think of the tabernacle and the sacrificial system as pictures, particularly of Christ. The point of it all, we suppose, is to reflect upon the pictures and to see what ideas they are teaching, and then we try and translate the pictures into ideas and that's what we're supposed to derive from it. Now such an approach is not altogether without some truth to it, but is extremely misleading.

The tabernacle and the rites of the sacrificial system were designed to be inhabited as reality-filled symbolic objects and practices. They weren't primarily designed to be looked at from without and translated into abstract ideas. The tabernacle is a symbolic building, but God is really present there, and the structure of the building and its

associated rituals provide frameworks within which the reality of people's relationship to God could be lived out.

To some extent we could maybe compare this to a coronation or a wedding ceremony. The ceremony has all sorts of ritual and symbolic elements, and those symbolic elements are not just pictures that we reflect upon from without. They're not just fripperies that are there to be decorative.

They're the means by which we enter into the reality. The exchange of rings, for instance, is not just a picture to be thought about. It is actually a symbolic rite that is part of effecting the reality of a marriage.

If you were to strip away all the symbolic elements of a wedding ceremony and translate it fully into the realm of ideas and rational commitments, it would be a lot less effective as a marriage. The actual symbolic processes are means by which we navigate the reality and enter into that reality. If a coronation was stripped of all its pomp, if there were no crown put on someone's head, it would not be so effective as a coronation.

Entering into the reality requires a lot of this symbolism. All of the attention to the dress and the ceremony and the different parts of the rituals are integral to the effectiveness of these rituals. Of course, if you stand back and look at it in a very abstract way, it seems strange to represent the sovereignty over a nation in a piece of jewelled metal put upon someone's head.

But in the practical context of the coronation ceremony, it really makes a difference. So the sacrificial system is not about the communication of abstract ideas and pictures, which if we just grasped them directly would make the ritual irrelevant. No, the drama of the ritual is integral to what makes it work.

But the ritual isn't automatic and purely objective, as if, for instance, the exchange of rings has some weird magical character to bind people together in blissful matrimony. That's not how it works. The symbols and the rituals must be inhabited by those who perform them.

The tabernacle, for instance, isn't a talisman, and the sacrifices don't substitute for hearts far from God. However, properly inhabited, the sacrifices and the tabernacle comport people and genuinely relate people to God in an appropriate way. It's giving the reality through the symbol.

The whole sacrificial system, then, is an extended system of metaphor, a poetic mapping of Israel's life onto the animal and vegetable reality of creation. It's ordered around an architectural symbol that is a macrocosm of the human body and a microcosm of society, the creation, and the wider cosmos. Israel was to understand and to articulate its existence and its fellowship with God in terms of this profoundly material and

particular reality.

And the created cosmos was not for them merely a site for the operation of abstract mathematical laws upon generic particles. It wasn't just a reservoir of raw material to be extracted and pressed into the service of humanity's power. Nor was it just a realm of beautiful surface spectacles to gaze upon.

It was a charged realm of meaning and communion where the particular objects of the world bore divine truth. And such a system of analogies places the particular and its realm of differences into sharp relief. The animals of the sacrificial system and the dietary laws, for instance, present Israel with a system by which to understand and be formed into its unique place within the world.

Clean and unclean, sacrificial and non-sacrificial animals, and the many other distinctions within each category, are metaphorical frameworks for thought. They're a concrete framework designed to teach the art of discrimination in the realm of the particular that could not contrast more with our very abstract systems of thought. The people relate to God through specific and symbolic sacrificial practices in which the restoration of their relationship with and their new comportment of themselves towards God is symbolically enacted by them in the sacrificial rites.

Now within this sort of framework, within this way of viewing the world, particular differences assume great salience. Male and female, Jew and Gentile, circumcised and uncircumcised, priest, ruler, people, firstborn and later born, cooked and raw, seedtime and harvest, boiled and roasted, within the camp, without the camp, clean and unclean, feast, fast, ordinary time, morning, evening, etc. All of these differences are highlighted through metaphorical and poetic frameworks of thought and practice that are designed both to bear considerable weight and to have authoritative and theological force.

To sacrifice a donkey, for instance, rather than a bull for the priest would be a violation of truth. It wouldn't just be the breaking of an arbitrary ritual command. It would be misrepresenting the place of the priest within the system.

Now this may seem all very primitive to us, but within this framework Israel had a far more sophisticated practical framework for grasping its relationship to God than we generally do with our abstract theological concepts. The power of the sacrificial system is that as animals represented Israel and its various members, by performing sacrifice through symbolic substitutes, Israel could represent its own proper approach to God. However, the sacrifices also highlighted that something was lacking, as the animals substituted for human beings at the crucial point.

So human beings weren't actually sacrificing themselves to God. They were giving animals substitutes instead of sacrificing themselves. But the suggestion being that there's something lacking.

There is some need for the human being to offer himself to God and something needs to provide for that. The animal can represent it, but it can't actually fulfil the reality of it. Something is still missing.

And the point of the rituals was always primarily as things to be performed, not primarily to be fodder for theologising. Although we do have this extensive description of the sacrifices, a description of the sacrifices that is addressed to the whole people. It's not just a book of ritual for priests that they're supposed to reflect upon by themselves.

It's something that's given to the nation as a whole. And the whole people would have to learn the meaning of these sacrifices as they watched them being performed, as they inhabited the practices, and then as they stood back and reflected upon their practice. The theology lies beneath the surface of the ritual texts, implicit in the logic of their performance, which tends to surface through close attention to their place in the system as it emerges through comparative study of many texts.

But as you practice these things on a regular basis over many years, you would get a sense of what was meant. You would have a feel for what it meant to approach to God. And this would be a knowledge, a tacit, implicit knowledge, that would be enjoyed by Israelites more generally, not just by the gifted theologians among the scribes and the priests.

The sacrifices tend to be conjugations of a root meaning. And if you look through the sacrifices you'll see they're very similar in their form. And it can be difficult to understand what makes them about one thing rather than another.

Some emphasize the ascension of the offering on the altar. Some emphasize the blood rites. Some emphasize the meal aspect, etc.

And we're supposed to see them within the system, comparing them with each other and their slight differences, that they're conjugating a root meaning, but also in that conjugation they're set over against each other. So we need to ask questions like what type of animal is offered? What is the species of the animal? What is the sex of the animal? What action shall be performed upon the animal before it is killed? Where is the animal killed? How is the animal divided? How are the parts arranged and prepared? Where does the blood go? What parts of the offering are eaten? Who eats the offering? What parts are disposed of in some other manner? What is the effect of the offering? Going through Leviticus chapter 1 we notice many of these sorts of details. For instance, we're told that the bull that has to be offered has to be a male without defects.

Defects can disqualify a sacrifice. They can also disqualify a priest. And there's a ritual here with a moral connotation.

We see the connection between some of these things in Leviticus chapter 21 and 22.

There's an analogy drawn between the external lack of blemish in an animal and the lack of moral fault in a person. In this chapter we also see a list of different animals to be sacrificed.

Bull, goat, sheep, pigeon and turtle dove. These are the core animals of the sacrificial system. And different animals represent different parts of the people.

This becomes apparent as we go through the book of Leviticus. It's not yet clear here. The burnt offering as we see in Exodus chapter 29 verses 38 to 43 is the core daily sacrifice.

There's a morning and an evening burnt offering. And there is a collective and an individual character to Israel's worship. So there is this common practice of worship every single day at the tabernacle.

And then there are also these festal occasions when people would all gather together and have an event for the people more generally. And then there are times when an individual worshipper will offer something themselves as an individual or for their family perhaps. The sex of the animals isn't arbitrary.

It's part of a system of meaning. The burnt offering of the herd or the flock has to be a male without blemish. Some sacrifices however could be female.

For instance the peace offering in Leviticus chapter 3 verse 1 could be female. The sin or purification offering for the commoner described in Leviticus chapter 4 verse 28 and 32 had to be a female goat or lamb. So this helps us to see that there is some sort of logic underlying this.

The fact that the primary sacrifices had to be male but that not all of the sacrifices were male and that in the case of certain sacrifices it was stipulated that they should be female raises problems for almost all of the typical explanations. If male animals were simply more expendable then we would expect the greatest sacrifices to be female. But that's not what we find.

If the sacrifices had to be male simply in order to symbolise Christ as a male we wouldn't have female sacrifices. If the sex were a matter of indifference the sex of sacrifices wouldn't be stipulated at all. If the point was that male sacrifices were to be offered on the basis of some natural superiority of the male sex then we wouldn't have female sacrifices required at certain points.

Something more seems to be going on. If we go back to Genesis chapter 15 I think we see a further part of the background here. In Genesis chapter 15 again we see the sex is stipulated but it helps us to understand what's taking place in Leviticus chapter 1. In Genesis 15 God tells Abraham to gather animals together for a covenant ceremony.

God is making a covenant with Abraham, cutting a covenant with him and this covenant ceremony is at the very core of it. He said to him, So it's the covenant ceremony and there's the same five animals divided in the same sort of way. So when we get to Leviticus chapter 1 we see for instance that the animals are divided between the priest who represents the Lord and the worshipper and they have to take care of different halves of the animal.

And then in the case of the turtle doves and the pigeons It's the same description as we have back in Genesis 15. There is a connection between these things. Every time the sacrifices were performed it harks back to that original covenant making ceremony.

It's a recalling of God's statement to his people. God established this sacrificial movement and every single sacrifice is based upon that root meaning. It's a development out from that.

It's also a re-enactment of Passover. If you think about the initial covenant that God established with Israel through the Exodus it involved a sort of sacrifice. It involved the sacrifice of the firstborn sons and the worshipper brings the animal to the door of the tabernacle, places his hand upon the head of the animal.

It's designated as his representative, his substitute and this corresponds to the whole setting up of the Passover lamb. Which is related of course to the child, the son. These are sons of the herd or sons of the flock that are brought forward.

The worshipper slays the animal. It's connected with the Passover lamb being killed. The priest splashes the blood on the altar as the blood is put on the doors of the house.

And the priest stokes up the fire on the altar. The altar is a sort of Sinai. We've seen the connection between the mountain and the altar.

And the worshipper will wash parts of the animal. This is Israel's passage through the water to God's presence. Those parts that are washed are placed onto the altar fire and it turns it to smoke.

And this corresponds to the ascent upon the mountain. And whenever any sacrifice was being offered then it was a replaying of the history of the Exodus and the making of the covenant at Sinai. It was also looking back to God's forming of the covenant with Abraham at the very beginning.

And in the deep background there's something more. Eden. It's the return to the sanctuary, to fellowship with God, to that place that people have been cut off from.

The word for the person who brings forward the sacrifice at the beginning of this chapter is Adam. When an Adam brings an offering to the Lord it's a return to the realm of God's presence. It's drawing our minds back perhaps to Cain and Abel.



This is the proper sort of approach to God that overcomes the anxiety that your sacrifice might not be accepted. If you approach in this proper manner you will be accepted. God will invite you into his presence.

The Lord called Moses and spoke to him. That's the sentence that introduces this chapter. It's the introduction to the speech is more generally that expression.

The Lord spoke to Moses saying is repeated on several occasions throughout this book. 37 occasions I think actually. Chapter 1 to 3 is a single speech all held by this initial introduction.

There is some difference on this particular occasion because the Lord calls first and then speaks. We might think about the events of the burning bush in Exodus 3.4 and Sinai also in chapter 19.3. As we go through Leviticus it will also become apparent that this is occurring before the events of Exodus 40. The tabernacle has not yet been fully set up.

So this is happening within the tent of meeting which is mentioned in chapter 33. The tent of meeting which is set outside of the camp where God speaks to Moses. The ascension offering seems to be the sacrifice par excellence which is why it's mentioned first of all.

Why it's the one at the very heart and beginning of the book of Leviticus. It involves bulls from the herd or sheep or goats from the flock or turtles and pigeons as birds. These animals are the set of the animals of the sacrificial system representing Israel as a nation and all its different members.

So the bull represents the whole congregation or represents the high priest. The goat represents the leader of the people, the male goat. The sheep can represent the common person of the flock.

The turtle doves and the pigeons can represent the poor among the people. And so the whole nation is represented through this set of animals in its distinctive parts. This chapter introduces us to some of the fundamental elements of sacrifices that will be developed in different ways in the chapters that follow.

For specific sacrifices that emphasise a particular element of the sacrificial rite for a particular purpose. So if you're dealing with expiation or purification, the blood is particularly important, the blood rite part of it. If it's the peace offering, it's the meal part of it that's particularly important.

And these fundamental sacrifices can be joined together in particular ways for larger ceremonies such as the Day of Atonement. We also can see deviations from the fundamental template in specific cases. We should be especially attentive on such occasions as those sorts of deviations are meaningful and can also serve to illuminate the underlying logic.

When we think about sacrifice as Christians, our temptation is to think about it narrowly in terms of death. Whereas in many cases the death of the animal is not actually that prominent within the rite. It's something of secondary importance.

In the case of the whole burnt offering, the death is given a bit more significance. There's the hand placed upon the head of the animal, it's killed in a specific place which is where the most holy sacrifices had to be killed more generally. And sacrifices that had to be killed in this particular place before the Lord could often be associated with the burnt offering.

There's sacrifice there because it is most holy like the burnt offering. The point of the sacrifice however has a lot more to do in many cases with where the blood is put. It's the expiation or the purification that's involved.

Or maybe it's the case that it's a meal that's supposed to be shared and so it's the eater that's particularly important. Who is going to eat this and where are they going to eat it? Once we've moved beyond a narrow fixation upon the death of the animal as a substitutionary atonement or something like that, we'll begin to see that a lot more things are comprehended within the sacrificial system that we might initially have supposed. So the whole ascension offering is the lifting up of this animal to God's presence.

The ascension of that animal as a representative of the worshipper into God's presence. So it's not just about the death, it's about the rising up into God's presence in the smoke. The tribute offering is something that is given as an offering or gift to the Lord.

The peace offering is something that is eaten with the Lord, a fellowship of communion. And the purification offering is dealing with sin through blood, it's purifying things, expiating. The trespass offering is a sort of repayment of God, it's restitution for something that has been taken from God.

As the logic of the sacrificial system starts to come together then, we'll see it's a vast and beautiful and very subtle and nuanced system that helps us to understand what it means to approach God. It's one of the reasons why we should spend time in the book of Leviticus. There is much to reward us here, much to enlighten us, much to help us to understand what Christian worship means, what the work of Christ means, not just in the event of his death but also in his resurrection and ascension.

Also in his work in the Holy of Holies in the heavenly temple and how his blood avails for us in that realm. A question to consider, comparing the description of the whole burnt offering or the ascension offering within this chapter with the chapters that follow and the sacrifices within them, what are some of the most notable similarities and also variations between the sacrifices that share this fundamental template? In Leviticus chapter 2 the tribute offering is discussed. The tribute offering or the minchah is often

described as the grain offering on account of the fact that it is usually composed of grain.

It's not always composed of grain however, nor does the Hebrew term mean grain. As with other sacrifices, how we translate these terms actually matters. Nobayashi Kiyuchi uses *loyalty offering* as an alternative translation.

The *minkah* is best thought of as a gift or tribute from an inferior to a superior. The Hebrew term is not exclusive to sacrificial contexts but is used on several occasions of gifts of tribute in contexts outside of Israel's worship. When reading about the sacrifices in the book of Leviticus and elsewhere, we need to recognise that they hang together according to a deeper logic.

One of the first questions that confronts us when treating chapter 2 of Leviticus is whether a *minkah* or tribute offering could ever stand alone. Did such an offering always need to be offered alongside a preceding sacrifice or as an integral element of such a sacrifice? If we want to think about this carefully we need to distinguish between these two things. Some offerings may be coordinated together in a sequence whereas other offerings may be subordinated to primary offerings.

Naftali Meshel in his treatment of the grammar of sacrifices gives a helpful analogy for what we're talking about here. Imagine going to a fast food restaurant and ordering a burger. Then you're asked, do you want fries with that? Do you want a soda? Would you like salt on your fries? There is a sort of logic to these requests.

You would not order salt by itself for instance. You might imagine ordering fries by themselves but that would not count as a full meal. You might only order fries by themselves if you had already eaten a full meal or planned to do so later.

Likewise the salt does not belong with the burger or with the soda but with the fries. The burger is never thought of as a side for the fries either. The sort of questions that we're asking here about the grain offering are not dissimilar to questions like the following.

Could a large portion of fries reasonably be counted as someone's main or is it only ever a side? If the person had eaten a meal before going to the fast food restaurant, would the fries when considered in coordination with that meal be a reasonable main? Or are fries always only a side? Can a burger be considered a meal if it does not have fries or something similar on the side? There is a notable example in Numbers chapter 5 where we have a tribute offering or grain offering that is not coordinated with a preceding animal offering nor is it subordinated to an animal offering to which it belongs. Verse 15 of that chapter. This it seems reasonable to argue is a very special case of the tribute offering.

It does not, as the offerings of Leviticus chapter 2, come with accompanying oil or

frankincense and its purpose is not to bring a pleasing aroma but to bring iniquity to remembrance. The unusual character of the tribute offering in this case seems to be related to the exceptional purpose for which it was being employed. In all normal cases it would need to be coordinated with a prior sacrifice of an animal or subordinated to an animal sacrifice as the tribute offering belonging to it, as its side as it were.

The first instances of tribute offerings in the Bible are found in Genesis chapter 4 with the offerings of Cain and Abel. Cain brought a tribute offering of the fruit of the ground whereas Abel brought the firstborn of his flock and their fat portions. Cain's offering seems to have been rejected because it was neither coordinated with nor subordinated to an animal sacrifice.

This would give weight to the argument that the tribute offerings of Leviticus chapter 2 were not intended to stand alone. Rather they would typically be offered with ascension or peace offerings. There is another exceptional case of grain being used as a sin offering in Leviticus chapter 5 verse 11.

This is a helpful reminder that grain offerings were more expansive than merely tribute offerings and so grain offering is not the best translation. In the case of a very poor person a grain offering could be given as a form of sin offering. Furthermore various forms of grain offering could be parts of near bringings that were not actually burnt upon the altar such as in first fruits.

The tribute offering however seems to have burning upon the altar as an integral part of it. Leviticus chapter 2 is especially addressed to lay people and gives a lot of attention to the process of preparing the offering. Lee Travaskas notes that in contrast to the peace offering that follows none of it was to be eaten by the lay person.

It was most holy and the parts that were eaten were not eaten by the worshipper. It needed to be prepared in advance for the purpose. It should not just be grain or bread that was left over.

The restriction upon the use of leaven strengthens this point. Although we might expect to find instructions concerning drink offerings given alongside the grain tribute offerings at this point drink offerings are not mentioned here. Perhaps we are to presume that the drink offerings only became a regular part of the worship after they entered into the promised land.

However in addition to a small number of cases where drink offerings are mentioned in the book of Leviticus they are treated in a bit more detail in the book of Numbers. The uses of grain in tribute offering in this chapter all involve some form of transformation of the grain by the worshipper. The flour is made from the grain.

The oil and frankincense are added to it. It is transformed in some manner by fire. When

considering rituals and their meanings it is important to consider that which is integral to the ritual and that which is only ancillary or accidental to it.

For instance in the sin offering, provided that blood is administered to a particular object is the precise manner in which the text describes it being administered, being flicked, daubed or poured for instance something integral to the rite. In this chapter the various forms of cooking described do not seem to be integral to the rite but they are necessary preparations for it. However the fact that we are told about the different forms of tribute offering prepared in the oven, the griddle or the pan perhaps suggests that the worshippers work in preparing this offering is of greater significance for its meaning.

The tribute offering arguably bears an especially strong connection with the work of the offerer. While the ascension offering of chapter 1 could be seen as a bringing near of the offerer's person the tribute offering of chapter 2 could be seen as bringing near their works as well. Once the person of the offerer has been accepted their works can also be accepted.

Thinking about the tribute offering in this way might also help us to explain the exceptional case of the offering that's given along with the woman's suspected adultery in Numbers chapter 5. The tribute offering of the woman offered in that instance likely represents the works of the woman being brought near to the Lord for judgement. A further connection that we can draw here is suggested by Johann Heinrich Kurtz. Kurtz observes the relationship between the elements of the tribute offering and the furniture of the holy place in the tabernacle.

The grain naturally corresponds with the showbread, the frankincense with the incense and the oil with the lampstand. There is, as it were, a symbolic tabernacle being established within the altar. The tribute offering could take a number of different forms associated with different kinds of preparation.

All of the forms here are accompanied by oil but the offering could be a sacrifice of raw semolina or it could take the form of unleavened wafers or bread. The tribute offering was divided by the priests into a memorial portion of it which was burnt upon the altar to the Lord and the rest of it that was described as most holy and belonged only to the priests. Verse 11 excludes both leaven and honey in the tribute offerings.

On account of the feast of unleavened bread and the symbolism of cutting off an evil principle by cutting out leaven, many people see leaven here as a symbol of evil. However, if this were the case, it would not fit with verse 12 which permits the use of leaven in the near bringings of first fruits. Mary Douglas argues that the prohibition against honey and leaven or sourdough is best explained as follows.

The answer invokes the major division of the biblical worldview. On the one hand, natural generation including sexual reproduction of humans and on the other, divine generation

by the covenant symbolised by circumcision of the people of Israel. Honey and leaven work in the natural mode of generation.

Sacrifice works in the divine mode and to teach the lesson they are kept apart. Douglas goes on to observe the way that honey and leaven are partners within the bread making process. The honey is used to activate the leaven.

Koichi observes that both are associated with the Passover event. The honey represents the promised land that is fertile, flown with milk and honey and then the leaven represents Egypt that they are leaving behind, cutting off the old leaven. In discussing the offering of first fruits described in verse 12, Jacob Mildrem argues that we should distinguish between the first processed and the first ripe.

First ripe produce is taken directly from the field or the orchard or the vineyard. However, first processed produce is taken from the threshing floor and other such places where the produce has already been worked upon. The requirement of verse 13 could be variously understood.

Are the three statements essentially synonymous, merely claiming that every single tribute offering should include salt or is a stronger claim being made that all the sacrifices of this section or all the sacrifices in general must include salt with them? It is described as the salt of the covenant with your God and elsewhere in scripture we see a similar association between the covenant and salt. Numbers chapter 18 verse 19 All the holy contributions that the people of Israel present to the Lord I give to you and to your sons and daughters with you as a perpetual due. It is a covenant of salt forever before the Lord, for you and for your offspring with you.

2nd Chronicles chapter 13 verse 5 Ought you not to know that the Lord God of Israel gave the kingship over Israel forever to David and his sons by a covenant of salt? Salt then might be an image of endurance and preservation. It might also evoke its savour. In Mark chapter 9 verses 49 to 50 our Lord says For everyone will be salted with fire.

Salt is good, but if the salt has lost its saltiness, how will you make it salty again? Have salt in yourselves and be at peace with one another. The description of being salted with fire might make us think of the fact that salt with its savour is a sort of solid form of fire. Ezekiel chapter 43 verse 24 You shall present them before the Lord and the priest shall sprinkle salt on them and offer them up as a burnt offering to the Lord.

Perhaps suggests that the requirement here was not intended to be exclusive to the tribute offering. Rather salt was the one substance found in every single one of the sacrifices, a substance by which all of the sacrifices were connected together. Salt with its incorruptibility, its ubiquity, its preserving character and its savour represents something of the character of the covenant wherever it is found, communicating something of itself and acting upon everything to which it comes into contact.

The final verses describe what is the least processed of the tribute offerings, crushed new grain that has not yet been formed into flour. It is not the most elevated of the tribute offerings, which is probably why it comes last in this chapter, but it is logically the first form that such an offering can take and as a result can represent the offering of the larger body of work that follows after it. The tribute offering and its associated drink offerings of wine should make Christians consider associations with the practice of the Eucharist.

Just as one aspect of the tribute offering was a memorial, so the Eucharist is the memorial of Christ's work, calling the Lord to remember and to act on the basis of what Christ has done. A question to consider, can you think of any further associations between the tribute offering and the Christian celebration of the Eucharist? The book of Leviticus begins with the Ascension offering in chapter 1, followed by the tribute offering in chapter 2, and in chapter 3 we come to the peace offering. These three chapters form a single speech introduced by the Lord called Moses and spoke to him in chapter 1, verse 1. In many respects, within the logic of the sacrifices, the peace offering could be seen as the culmination.

Once you have dealt with sin, guilt and impurity through the purification and the reparation offerings, you can symbolically ascend into God's presence in the Ascension offering. Following that, or accompanying that, you can offer tribute, which could be seen as representing both the acceptance of your works and also your entrance into the broader reality of God's presence. And then finally, in the peace offering, you can celebrate a meal with God.

The peace offering then represents the goal of it all, communion with God, fellowship with Him, and also in the context of fellowship with God, fellowship with others. Various other interpretations or translations of the peace offering are given. Some see it as a sacrifice of well-being.

Berwick Levine speaks about it as a sacred gift of greeting. The animals for the peace offering are either animals of the herd or animals of the flock. The animals of the herd are bovines, and then we have the animals of the flock, which will be either sheep or goats.

Neither the age nor the sex of the sacrifices is stipulated here. This raises the question of whether the sex and the age was truly a matter of indifference, or whether these are just more general instructions for a range of sacrifices for which the sex of the animal mattered, but it varied by offerer. As Naftali Meshel argues, the sacrificial system has a sort of generative grammar.

It doesn't necessarily stipulate the form that each and every sacrifice should take in every single particular, but it exposes you to many different examples of laws concerning sacrifices and descriptions of sacrifice from which you can induce the larger

grammatical principles that underlie it all. Then, in situations where certain things are not stipulated, you can appreciate what things would be necessary, even if they're not stipulated within the text. On the question of the sex, the age and the type of animal being offered for the peace offering, it does appear that these things were not without symbolic significance in the case of the peace offering, at least on certain occasions.

The Passover is an exceptional example of the peace offering, and for the Passover it was necessary that the animal be an animal from the flock. It could be either a lamb or a kid, but it could not be a calf. Likewise, both the sex and the age of the Passover lamb were stipulated.

It had to be a male of its first year. The Ram of Ordination for the priest was another form of peace offering, and again the sex, and in that case also the age, of the sacrifice was stipulated. It needed to be a mature male of the sheep.

To make matters more interesting, when the Nazirite completes his vow, he has to bring a male lamb for a burnt offering, a ewe lamb for a sin offering, and a ram for a peace offering. Perhaps the logic of stipulating a ram for the peace offering here should be considered in the light of the Ram of Ordination for the priests. All burnt or ascension offerings have to be males, sin or purification offerings are supposed to be female in the case of a layperson, and perhaps the ram of the consecration for the Nazirite should be thought of as a ram of de-ordination for one who has temporarily enjoyed a sort of priestly status.

Again, there is a deeper logic or grammar behind the sacrifices. They're not just arbitrary, and the more exceptional or unusual sacrifices can often serve to disclose aspects of this logic. There are lots of common features between the sacrifices.

For instance, when we look at the sacrifice of the peace offering, we can see that like other sacrifices, it involves the manipulation of blood, placing things upon the altar to be burnt up into the presence of the Lord, and then also eating of a meal. All of those elements are included in some degree or other in other sacrifices. The purification offering, for instance, involves the placing of blood upon certain things.

It involves placing items upon the altar to be burnt up, and often involves the priests eating some part of the sacrificial meal. However, each of the sacrifices accents one aspect of the sacrifice rather than others. For the purification offering, it's the use of the blood.

For the whole burnt or the ascension offering, it's the conversion and the ascent of the animal into smoke. And in the case of the peace offering, it's the sharing of a meal. We could even think about dividing the sacrifices down into aspects and thinking about the way that certain sorts of sacrifices contain other modes of sacrifice within them.



The purification offering, for instance, has an element of the whole burnt offering alongside its fundamental element of purification. Meshel discusses this at some length. Peace offerings, with a few exceptions, were almost invariably private and voluntary sacrifices.

In Leviticus chapter 7 we see that there are a number of occasions for that offering. They could be offered in thanksgiving for deliverance, as votive offerings in connection with vows, or as free will offerings. In Leviticus chapter 23 verses 18 to 20, two male lambs of the first year are required as a sacrifice of peace offerings at the time of the Feast of Weeks.

Interestingly, however, such a requirement is not present in Numbers chapter 28 in the laws concerning the sacrifices there. The laws there differ from the laws in Leviticus chapter 23 as there are two bulls and one ram instead of one bull and two rams. It seems that these sacrifices evolved over time in the life of the people.

Did the peace offerings of the Feast of Weeks cease? Or should we rather think that the peace offerings were considered as private sacrifices and that Numbers is only concerned with the public sacrifices? We can notice, for instance, that there is no mention of the Passover lamb in the context of the Passover sacrifices. Presumably that was seen as belonging to the worship of various families rather than of the central cult. Another example of the celebration of peace offerings can be seen in Deuteronomy chapter 15 verses 19 to 22.

You shall eat it within your towns. The unclean and the clean alike may eat it, as though it were a gazelle or a deer. A further notable example of a peace offering is found in 1 Samuel chapter 9 in the context of Saul's first encounter with Samuel when Samuel is going to lead a sacrificial meal in the city.

We also have peace offerings offered by the tribes in Numbers chapter 7. In that case, again, all of the peace offerings offered are male. The one occasion where we do seem to have an example of a female peace offering is the offering of the heifer by Samuel in the context of the anointing of David. In 1 Samuel chapter 16, the Lord gives Samuel this cover story.

He celebrates the sacrifice and invites Jesse's family to celebrate with him. Can we then discover some sort of logic to the sex of the sacrifice of the peace offering? For the most part, the peace offering is a private, voluntary sacrifice for individual families and worshippers to make. In such a context, the sex will not be stipulated.

However, in the case of first-born males of the herd and flock, the sacrifice is required and will necessarily be a male. When the household is participating in a larger national celebration, the sacrifice of the peace offering, though private in some respects, is participating within a more public event, and as a result, the animal will typically be

expected to be a male. One of the most important points about the peace offerings observed by John Kleinick when he recognizes the connection that it draws between the holiness of the tabernacle and the status of the people.

The people bring a clean animal to the temple. The most holy portion of the fat is taken up into the Lord's presence in the smoke. The blood is thrown against the sides of the altar.

And then the people receive back holy meat that they can participate in. In participating in that holy meat, they are, as it were, made guests at the Lord's table. Many modern ideas of sacrifice focus upon the killing of the animal, yet perhaps in the peace offering we see something about the central aspect of sacrifice involving eating a meal.

The altar is not primarily a place for killing the animals. Indeed, the animals were killed before they were brought to the altar. The altar is the table of the Lord, the place from which sacrifices are consumed into his presence.

Elsewhere in Leviticus, we see restrictions placed upon the time during which the sacrificial meal could be eaten. Offerings for Thanksgiving had to be eaten on the same day, but free will or vote of offerings could be eaten the next day as well. In the laws concerning the peace offering, as in the laws concerning the Holbent or the Ascension offering, a lot of attention is given to the different parts of the animal and the separation of certain elements from the rest.

In addition to the taboo upon eating blood, there's also an emphasis upon not eating the fat of the animal. The fat covering the entrails, the fat that is on the entrails, the two kidneys with the fat that is on them at the loins, and the long lobe of the liver all need to be removed along with the kidneys. The particular parts of the animal that are singled out are intriguing.

Mary Douglas has an extensive theory to explain this. She writes, Douglas argues that the surrounding fat or suet of these various organs is analogous to the clouds surrounding God's presence upon the holy mountain. It also corresponds to the covered internal area of the sanctuary and should remind us of the way that the tabernacle itself might be compared to an animal covered with skins.

Some have argued that the removal of the kidneys and the long lobe of the liver has to do with the use of these items within acts of divination. However, it seems more likely to me that the kidneys represent something of the sacred interiority of the animal and so need to be set apart for that symbolic reason. We should also note that there are no peace offerings given here for turtle doves and pigeons or for cereal offerings.

In verse 5 we are told that the fat portions of the peace offering need to be placed on the altar on top of the burnt offering, presumably the burnt offering of the morning sacrifice.

Kleinegg writes, This sacrifice was therefore associated with the public burnt offering and incorporated into it since the daily burnt offering was the foundational sacrifice that provided the ritual framework for all the other sacrifices. The peace offering, though more typically a private act of worship, was incorporated into the more public act of worship of the daily sacrifices.

It integrated the worshipper and their family into the holiness characteristic of the tabernacle and its sacrifices. A question to consider, how can the church's celebration of the Eucharist be considered in terms of the peace offering? The first three chapters of Leviticus are a single speech containing directions concerning the practice of the ascension offerings, tribute offerings and in chapter 3 the peace offerings. In chapter 4 a new speech begins and the purification offerings, often translated as sin offerings, are discussed.

If the ascension offerings are about symbolically ascending into the presence of the Lord, the tribute offerings about your works being received by the Lord and the peace offerings about communion with God, the purification offerings are about dealing with the impurity of sin. It's important to consider that until this point, many of the ways that contemporary Christians most typically understand sacrifice are marginal to the sacrifices that we encounter in the text. The sacrifices are not even focused on the death of the animal, let alone death inflicted as a sort of substitutionary atonement.

Rather the focus is upon the animal's ascent as the symbol of the worshipper, upon the gift of tribute or upon eating in fellowship. The limited paradigms that many Christians have for considering sacrifice ill equip us to understand what is going on in many of the sacrifices that we encounter in the Old Testament. They also greatly constrain our understanding of the sacrifice of Christ.

If we were to begin with the breadth of the vision of sacrifice that we encounter in the book of Leviticus, we might begin to appreciate how the sacrificial reality of Christ's work extends beyond the cross, including things such as the ascension of Christ and communion with God with Christ as our peace offering. In the purification offering we have a sacrifice that is more akin to how we typically understand sacrifice. As we have already noted, the three principal sacrifices, the ascension or whole burnt offering, the peace offering and the purification or sin offering, all have common features.

Each involves the ascension of the animal or some parts of it in smoke upon the altar. Each involves some sort of blood rite. And both the peace offering and the purification offering typically involve either the priest or the offerer or both enjoying a meal.

As Naftali Meshel argues, some later Jewish sources regard each purification offering as containing within itself its own ascension offering, as some part of it was handled like the ascension offering and entirely burnt upon the altar. This chapter also associates it with the peace offering, relating the placing of the fat upon the altar to the placing of the fat

of the peace offerings upon the altar. While having such common features, each of the principal sacrifices accents some aspect.

The ascension offering focuses upon the ascension of the flesh on the altar in smoke. The peace offering focuses upon the shared meal. The purification offering focuses upon the manipulation of blood.

It is important to consider that there is a sort of logic to the sacrifices. If you are going to approach the Lord, you would need to begin by dealing with guilt and impurity. So the purification offering and the reparation or trespass offerings would need to come first.

Once impurity and guilt have been addressed, you can then be consecrated in the ascension offering, have your gifts accepted by the Lord in the tribute offering and enjoy communion with him in the peace offering. However, the Book of Leviticus does not begin with the purification and reparation offerings, but with the burnt offering, tribute offering and peace offering. Why is this the case? Perhaps the reason for this is because even though they would be sequentially prior in the order of the offerings, the purification and reparation offerings are theologically subsequent to the ascension, tribute and peace offerings being added on account of sin.

While some form of ascension, tribute and peace offerings might have been offered even apart from sin, the same might not be the case for the other two sacrifices. In presenting the sacrifices to us, perhaps Leviticus is concerned that we appreciate that the ascension, tribute and peace offerings are essential and paradigmatic to a degree that the purification offering is not. While the other sacrifices are generally voluntary, the sin and reparation offerings are generally mandatory.

The need for purification offerings was most pronounced because the Lord dwelt in the midst of his people. Fellowship with the Lord and protection from his holy wrath breaking out against the people required covering of their sin and their impurity. We must consider that the purification offering is not merely about dealing with sins, but also with impurity, which includes non-moral forms of defilement too.

Sin defiles us and makes us unclean, but the flesh is also more generally defiled by death, so exposure to the polluted realities of the flesh also makes people ceremonially unclean, even if there is no moral fault on their part. This is one reason why purification offering is a more helpful translation than sin offering, even though the term is used for sin elsewhere. Prior to the covenant at Sinai, we have ascension offerings and tribute offerings.

At Sinai, peace offerings and purification offerings gain a new prominence. The most notable and central purification offering was, of course, the Day of Atonement, when the whole system was purified every single year. Curiously, however, purification offerings barely appear in the Old Testament narrative beyond the Pentateuch.

This apparent absence is most striking at times such as the dedication of Solomon's temple, where we might expect a purification offering to cleanse the people and the structure. How are we to explain this? One interesting verse that might suggest a possibility is Ezra 8, verse 35. At that time, those who had come from captivity, the returned exiles, offered burnt offerings to the God of Israel, twelve bulls for all Israel, ninety-six rams, seventy-seven lambs, and as a sin offering, twelve male goats.

All this was a burnt offering to the Lord. There, just under two hundred animals are sacrificed, and the whole assembly of the offerings is considered as a unity. It's described as a burnt or ascension offering to the Lord.

However, as part of that burnt offering to the Lord, there are twelve male goats as a sin offering. A possibility to consider here, perhaps also supported by the way that the purification offering is spoken of in places like Numbers chapter 28, is that the purification offering is generally seen to be subordinate to the burnt offering in larger sacrificial sequences. We might think of it this way.

The purification offering is not an end in itself. It exists, rather, in order to make the other sacrifices possible. In larger complexes of sacrifice, it's generally not the centre of attention, but it's preparatory for the others.

It need not, then, be explicitly mentioned, but its occurrence can be presumed. While no purification offerings are mentioned in the establishment of Solomon's temple, for instance, it seems reasonable to me that the reference to Solomon's offering of the sacrifice of the ascension offering, spoken of in the singular, despite the fact that it involved so many animals that the regular altar was not large enough to contain them, includes, as in Ezra chapter 8, the purification offering within it. While the ascension offerings were always male animals, the peace offerings allowed for female animals on occasion.

However, on the occasions where more public or common celebrations of peace offerings are mentioned, in the context generally of calendric feasts, the sacrificial animals invariably seem to be male, save in the case of birds, where the sex seems to be treated as a matter of indifference. In the case of the purification offering, the sex and type of the animal is much more specified. In the case of some sacrifices, the difference between sacrificial animals is economic.

Allowance is made for poorer people to offer a less costly sacrifice, a bird or even a grain offering, rather than an animal of the herd or flock. However, what we have in the case of the sin offering here is not a matter of allowance so much as of stipulation. Even the wealthiest layperson should offer a female goat or sheep.

Before we consider any more explicit symbolic purpose for the animals, it is worth considering their value. As Meschel and several other scholars argue, female animals

would generally be more valuable than male animals, as they would be far more essential to the breeding stock. However, as Lee Travaskis notes, we should consider the possibility that the Israelites would not be sacrificing their breeding stock, in which case the relative value of the animals would be determined more by their size and quantity of meat than by breeding potential.

Older animals would also be more costly for the worshipper than young animals, as more time and resources would have been invested in raising them to maturity. Here it might also be worth reflecting upon the psychological effects that raising an animal for the purpose of offering it as a sacrifice for yourself might have had upon the offerer. The fact that male herd and flock animals are required for the ascension offering, and for more public or collective forms of the peace offering, suggests that something more is going on in the stipulation of male animals for some persons and female animals for others in the case of the purification offering.

Sex is not merely functioning as an indicator of the economic value of the sacrifice, but seems to carry some further symbolic value. Meschel observes the way that the leaders and the elite of the people are described as rams and billy goats in Ezekiel 34, verse 17, and claims that it seems reasonable to presume that the stipulation of male and female animals relates to the status and office of the offerer. The priest is like a male bull, the leader of the herd.

Leaders of the people are like billy goats, the most powerful creatures in the flock, and relative to them, laypersons are like the less powerful females of the flock, and so must offer female goats or sheep to represent themselves. The offerer's bringing of the animal, and laying of his hand upon the animal's head, begins the sacrifice. The meaning of the offerer's act of laying his hand upon the animal is discussed by Travaskus, who considers a number of different things that it might have signified, things that are by no means mutually exclusive.

One of the most basic things it would signify was the offerer's ownership of the sacrificial animal. The animal is theirs, they are the one offering it, and the benefits of the sacrifice should accrue to them. Others see in the hand laying an act of consecration.

The animal is set apart for the sacrifice. While this may be an aspect of what is occurring in the act, it does underplay the relationship between the offerer and their sacrifice. On the Day of Atonement, in Leviticus chapter 16, verse 21, Aaron lays his hand upon the scapegoat, and confesses over it the sins of the people, before sending the creature away into the wilderness.

We might induce from this that there is some sort of transference deemed to have taken place. However, such transference does not seem to be in view in the act in the case of the Ascension offering, for instance. Another possibility is that the animal is seen as standing for, or substituting for the offerer in some manner.

This possibility could take a number of different forms. First, the animal could more directly symbolise the offerer, so that the offerer sees his own acceptance in the acceptance of the sacrificial animal, thinking when he looked at his sacrifice, this is me. Second, the animal could represent the offerer, the fitting offering not symbolising the offerer themselves, but acting more on their behalf and including them within it, like the high priest represents the people.

In such a case, the offerer might look at their sacrifice and think, I am being accepted in this fitting offering or representative. Third, the animal might substitute for the offerer. In such a case, the offerer might look at the sacrificial animal and think, this animal is suffering instead of me.

We should recognise that each of these ways in which an animal can stand for an offerer might be operative within the sacrificial system. We should beware of overly depending upon one to the exclusion of others. While the killing of the animal is an integral part of the rite, it is upon the placing of its blood that the accent falls.

Phenomenologically and biologically, blood is intimately associated with life. Lose a large quantity of your blood and you will die. The animal's blood is its life, its life poured out in its death.

This blood is then applied to specific objects which represent various realities. Here we need to consider the symbolic importance of various locations in the tabernacle. The high priest alone enters the most holy place only once a year on the Day of Atonement.

The rest of the priests can enter the holy place. The people are restricted to the courtyard. The altar of incense within the holy place corresponds to the bronze altar in the tabernacle courtyard.

In many respects, what the bronze altar is to the Israelite layperson, the altar of incense is to the anointed priest. The blood serves to purge impurity, protecting against the breaking out of the Lord's holiness against people. The blood is applied to the extremities of the two altars, the internal altar of incense in the case of the anointed priest or the entire people, and the external bronze altar in the case of laypersons.

In the case of a purification offering for the priest or the entire people, the blood is also sprinkled before the Lord in front of the veil of the most holy place. Although they cannot enter into the most holy place, the blood rite is performed towards the realm of the Lord's special dwelling. The horns of the altar could be seen as symbolising both the extremities of the land and of the human body.

Here it is important to consider instances where the blood of sacrifices is applied to human bodies, as in the cleansing of those with the skin disease later in Leviticus and the ordination of priests. In Leviticus 14, we read of the law of the person to be cleansed

from the skin disease. In Exodus 24, verses 6-8, we have a more dramatic blood rite performed at the very foundation of the Mosaic covenant.

And Moses took half of the blood and put it in basins, and half of the blood he threw against the altar. Then he took the book of the covenant and read it in the hearing of the people. And they said, All that the Lord has spoken we will do, and we will be obedient.

And Moses took the blood and threw it on the people and said, Behold the blood of the covenant the Lord has made with you in accordance with all these words. Perhaps we ought to see a symbolic relation here. The altar represents the people, and applying blood to the altar is symbolically related to applying blood to people.

The extremities of the right ear, right thumb and right big toe correspond to the horns of the altar. Consequently, the altar and the tabernacle symbolise the body and land of Israel, and is symbolically cleansed from impurity through such purification offerings. As the fat of the peace offerings is offered on top of the regular ascension offerings, so the fat of the sin offerings is offered.

The remainder of the sacrificial animal was treated in different ways, depending on the party for whom the offering was being made. In the case of the purification offerings for the priests and the whole congregation, none of the animal could be eaten. The parts that were not offered on the bronze altar were to be burned up in a clean place.

Here it is important to remember that different forms of burning carry different significance. The burning on the altar is for the purpose of transformation, not destruction. The animal burnt there is transformed into smoke and ascends into the Lord's presence.

The burning outside of the camp seems to serve a different purpose. It destroyed the rest of the sacrificial animal, preventing it from being used for any other purpose. It could not be offered as the fat, nor could it be eaten.

The regulations for lay persons' offerings, however, differed, and they are laid out in Leviticus 6, verses 24-30. And the earthenware vessel in which it is boiled shall be broken. But if it is boiled in a bronze vessel, that shall be scoured and rinsed in water.

Every male among the priests may eat of it. It is most holy. But no sin offering shall be eaten from which any blood is brought into the tent of meeting to make atonement in the holy place.

It shall be burned up with fire. The flesh of the purification offering was set apart, so it needed to be disposed of in a clean place, either completely destroyed by fire, or in the case of the sin offerings of lay persons, eaten by the priests in the courtyard. The priests' eating of the sin offerings of the people seems to be part of the efficacy of the purification offering, as this is implied in Leviticus 10, verses 17-18.



Moses addresses Aaron there, to make atonement for them before the Lord. By eating the purification offering, the priests can bear the iniquity of the nation, acting as substitutes for the people themselves on account of their holy status before the Lord. Through the sacrifice a sort of ritual transference seems to occur.

The biblical teaching concerning the purification offering finds its fulfillment in Christ, who has given us a purification or sin offering for us, and effects full and perfect atonement once and for all. In Hebrews 9, verses 13-14 we read, For if the blood of goats and bulls, and the sprinkling of defiled persons with the ashes of a heifer, sanctify for the purification of the flesh, how much more will the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered Himself without blemish to God, purify our conscience from dead works to serve the living God? The blood of bulls and goats could not ultimately take away sin, but Christ's blood can, and so all of the purification offerings anticipate His great offering, and, we can reasonably infer, depend upon that offering for their efficacy. We can also think about the importance of the purification offering in terms of our patterns of worship.

Just as the purification is followed by the ascension, is followed by the tribute, is followed by the peace offering, we can think about the order of worship as one involving confession and dealing with sins, consecration and ascension in worship, offering of our gifts and tribute, all culminating in a communion meal. A question to consider. Hebrews chapter 13, verses 10-13, refer to the purification offering and the ritual disposal of its meat.

We have an altar from which those who serve the tent have no right to eat, for the bodies of those animals whose blood is brought into the holy places by the high priest as a sacrifice for sin, are burned outside the camp. So Jesus also suffered outside the gate in order to sanctify the people through His own blood. Therefore let us go to Him outside the camp and bear the reproach He endured.

How might our consideration of the meaning of the purification offering help us to interpret this passage? In Leviticus chapter 5, the treatment of the purification offering is concluded, and we reach the fifth form of sacrifice. Leviticus chapters 1-3, the opening speech of the book, contained the ascension offering, tribute offering and peace offering in that order. Chapters 4 and 5 contained the second and third speeches of the book, which deal with the purification offering, and then, in chapter 5, also with the reparation offering.

However the parts of the second speech contained in this chapter seem to have something of a hybrid character, as we shall see. Verses 1-4 present a series of four different scenarios within which a person might need to offer a purification offering. The first is a sin of omission, where a person failed to testify in a case where he was a witness and bore guilt for his sin.

The responsibility that the witness bore before God to testify, and their liability to judgment if they did not, as John Kleinig observes, would have been an important means of ensuring the administration of justice in a very close-knit society without police, within which people would often be tempted to refrain from bearing testimony in cases where they might exonerate their enemies or condemn their friends or relatives. The second case is one where a person touched an unclean thing, such as the carcass of an unclean wild animal, and failed to do anything about it. The third case is where someone came into contact with human uncleanness and failed to do anything about it.

The fourth case is a sin of commission, an oath, perhaps a rash one, that someone inadvertently failed to fulfil. In contrast to many of the cases covered by the purification offering, these cases involve some guilt on the part of the offerer, and required confession. It's important to note that some of the situations here are what might be described as inadvertent.

In contrast to the sort of determined and intentional sins which could be described as high-handed, the cases described here in which someone contracted uncleanness, for instance, were not initially dealt with as they should have been, so some guilt is involved in addition to the uncleanness. Consequently, as verse 5 makes clear, some sort of confession had to occur. No offering is provided for high-handed or deliberate sins, although it seems likely that such sins could be downgraded in severity through repentance, as Jacob Milgram and others have argued.

Confession, we should consider, was an integral part of rituals such as those of the Day of Atonement. Numbers chapter 15 verses 27-31 discusses the difference between inadvertent and high-handed sins. If one person sins unintentionally, he shall offer a female goat a year old for a sin offering, and the priest shall make atonement before the Lord for the person who makes the mistake, when he sins unintentionally, to make atonement for him, and he shall be forgiven.

You shall have one law for him who does anything unintentionally, for him who is native among the people of Israel, and for the stranger who sojourns among them. But the person who does anything with a high hand, whether he is native or a sojourner, reviles the Lord, and that person shall be cut off from among his people, because he has despised the word of the Lord, and has broken his commandment. That person shall be utterly cut off.

His iniquity shall be on him. In thinking about the difference between a high-handed and an inadvertent sin, we might think about the way that Eve was deceived concerning the forbidden fruit, whereas Adam was not deceived, he sinned with a high hand, he knew what he was doing. As Eve had not heard the commandment directly from the Lord, and had been taught by Adam, who did not contradict the word of the serpent, she could be deceived.

As he had received the word of the Lord first-hand, he could not be so deceived. The sacrifices that we read of here, with the confession that was integral to their performance, would put the offerer back in good standing with the Lord. We should appreciate that the purification and reparation offerings go beyond cleansing alone.

Moving further into the book of Leviticus, we will see various cases of cleansing from uncleanness without sacrifice. The purification and reparation offerings address more serious forms of uncleanness and guilt than those which could be addressed by rituals such as washing alone. Although this section is commonly classed as concerning the purification offering, verse 6 contains the term that is used for the reparation offering, *asham*, the sacrifice that will be treated in the second half of this chapter.

Most commentators maintain that the term is being used in a more general sense here, rather than in reference to the reparation sacrifice. Naftali Meshel, however, makes the argument that the term is being used in the more technical sense, as a reference to the reparation offering. How could this be the case, especially as the same verse describes the animal as being brought for a sin or purification offering? Meshel, having observed the way that the term *asham* within verses 6 and 7 stands in parallel position in those sentences as offering in verse 11, argues that this makes far more sense if we consider that *asham* is the technical term for the offering in this context.

He argues that the term is not being used carelessly for the purification offering rather than the reparation offering here, nor is it being used non-technically as a reference to compensation more generally. However, this obviously leaves us with the question of why the animal is also being referred to as the purification offering. Meshel argues that this terminology makes sense when we consider the fact that the reparation offering is a sort of hybrid of the ascension offering and the purification offering.

We read more about the reparation offering in Leviticus chapter 7 verses 1 to 7. It is a guilt offering. Every male among the priests may eat of it. It shall be eaten in a holy place.

It is most holy. The guilt offering is just like the sin offering. There is one law for them.

The priest who makes atonement with it shall have it. Like the ascension offering, but unlike the purification offering, the blood of the reparation offering is thrown against the sides of the altar, presumably the internal sides. However, like the purification offering, the fat of the reparation offering is that which is burned upon the altar, and the priest can eat the flesh of the sacrifice in a holy place.

The close relationship between the purification and the reparation offering is underlined by the statement of chapter 7 verse 7. The guilt offering is just like the sin offering. There is one law for them. Meshel suggests that the form of reparation offering provided for the person who cannot afford a lamb, involving two turtle doves or two

pigeons, the first for a purification offering and the second for a burnt offering, further demonstrates its hybrid character.

Indeed, it is worth reflecting upon why two birds are required, rather than merely one. The two turtle doves or two pigeons are the first of two potential alternative sacrifices that could be offered by people who could not afford a female from the flock. The second alternative for someone who could not even afford the two birds was an ephor of fine flour.

Here a grain offering is functioning as a sin offering. While functioning as a sin offering, this sacrifice is handled very similarly to the tribute offering of grain in chapter 2, albeit without oil and frankincense. We might compare this to the description of the tribute offering of the woman suspected of adultery in the test of jealousy in Numbers chapter 5 verse 15.

Then the man shall bring his wife to the priest and bring the offering required of her, a tenth of an ephor of barley flour. He shall put no oil on it and put no frankincense on it, for it is a grain offering of jealousy, a grain offering of remembrance, bringing iniquity to remembrance. The indigent man's sin offering is largely handled as a tribute offering, save for the omission of oil and frankincense.

The oil and frankincense added to the tribute offering rendered it a pleasing aroma to the Lord, but the memorial of the purification offering of grain brings up before the Lord the man's fault, and so it should not be offered as a pleasing aroma. As we're seeing, many of the sacrifices have overlapping features, and in some of their forms will be strongly related to two or perhaps more of the different types of sacrifice. Perhaps we should treat the categories of sacrifice with a degree of flexibility, also appreciating the ways that specific offerings can seem to straddle categories of sacrifice, and that these forms of sacrifice can also illuminate the relationships between the categories.

In verse 14 of the chapter, a new speech begins with, While Meschel was a very distinct minority in holding that the earlier part of the chapter dealt with a form of the reparation offering, that the conclusion of the chapter deals with this offering is not really in dispute. Two cases are outlined here, the first a breach of faith, someone who sins unintentionally in any of the holy things of the Lord, and the second someone who sins again inadvertently in one of the things that the Lord's commandments say ought not to be done. When such a person realises their guilt, they have to offer a reparation offering.

We might think of cases such as someone who forgot to tithe upon a particular part of their produce and enjoyed the benefit of that for a year, and then realises, at the end of that year, that they had never offered a tithe for their grain, for instance. Or perhaps someone has inadvertently mixed crops within their field, perhaps the local Levite had not taught them well in this matter that this was not something that ought to be done, and then someone brings this fault to their attention, and they discover to their horror

that they are in breach of the Lord's commandment. How do they set things right? In such cases, you would offer a tribute offering.

When someone has desecrated the things of God, or failed to deliver to God those things that belong to him, some form of reparation or compensation needs to be paid. An example of such a trespass can be seen in somewhere like Leviticus chapter 22, verse 14. And if anyone eats of a holy thing unintentionally, he shall add the fifth of its value to it, and give the holy thing to the priest.

The reparation offering is unusual in what is offered. While the sin offerings of the flock were female, the reparation offering has to be an adult male of the flock. In contrast to the other offerings, the reparation offering also allows for the offering of the monetary equivalent to the cost of the sacrifice, measured in the shekel of the sanctuary.

2 Kings chapter 12, verse 16 suggests that this money went to the priests. The priests were the guardians of the holy things of God, and when someone trespassed upon those holy things of God, money was given to the guardians of those holy things. Holy things are for holy persons, and trespassing upon the holy things of God, when you are not a holy person or a clean person, puts you in a very dangerous position.

In touching a holy thing, you can contract a sort of holy status. In desecrating or taking one of the things of the Lord, the Lord now has a sort of claim upon you. In such cases, the offering would serve, as it were, to desanctify you, to remove you from the threatening realm of holiness.

We see a good example of this in the law concerning the Nazirite, in Numbers chapter 6, verses 9-12. In a situation where the Nazirite, for reasons beyond his control, could not keep his vow, he had to offer a reparation offering, because he had marked out his head for the Lord, and now he could not offer what he had promised. And if any man dies very suddenly beside him, and he defiles his consecrated head, then he shall shave his head on the day of his cleansing, on the seventh day he shall shave it.

On the eighth day he shall bring two turtle doves or two pigeons to the priest, to the entrance of the tent of meeting. And the priest shall offer one for a sin offering, and the other for a burnt offering, and make atonement for him, because he sinned by reason of the dead body. And he shall consecrate his head that same day, and separate himself to the Lord for the days of his separation, and bring a male lamb a year old for a guilt offering.

But the previous period shall be void, because his separation was defiled. The case of the Nazirite is an illuminating one. It is an example of how someone could inadvertently break their vow and defile the holy things of God.

The Nazirite in such a situation is presumably not seen as morally guilty. The man died

suddenly beside him. He wasn't expected to die, so the Nazirite wasn't being reckless about his vow.

But nonetheless, reparation does need to be made. He promised something to the Lord, and now he's failing to deliver it. Whether or not he's guilty, this is clearly a serious matter.

The stipulated sacrifices for the Nazirite who did not fulfil his vow under such circumstances seem to be lesser sacrifices within the categories to which they belong. Which perhaps suggests that the sacrifices that someone had to offer were not merely determined by economic factors, but could also involve some sort of consideration of the severity of their wrong. From the earlier part of this chapter, we might have expected that the Nazirite, for his broken vow, would have to offer a female of the flock as reparation.

But instead, he has to offer the lesser reparation sacrifice of two turtle doves or two pigeons. In addition to that sacrifice for the broken vow, he has to offer another reparation sacrifice for failing to deliver his consecrated head to the Lord. And that takes the form of a male lamb of the first year.

Interestingly, though a reparation offering, this is not the ram of reparation, but a lamb of reparation. Again it seems that there is some allowance being made for the extreme inadvertency of the Nazirite's fault. Another instance of a reparation offering is found in the case of the laws for the cleansing of lepers in chapter 14 of Leviticus.

Along with the ram of reparation, or its monetary equivalent, the offerer also needed to make restitution for what he had taken or failed to deliver. So a person who had failed to pay their tithe, for instance, would have to pay back that tithe with 20% added to it. This would all be given to the priest.

Perhaps the fifth that's added to it is seen as a sort of double tithe. Someone who failed to deliver to the Lord what belonged to him earlier now has to deliver double the Lord's portion upon that. A question to consider, what significance might we see in the distinction between the offering of a ram and the offering of a lamb? Leviticus chapter 6 begins with the start of New's speech, but continues the discussion of the reparation offering from the preceding chapter.

The reparation offering is the fifth of the types of offerings that we have looked at to this point. It has much in common with the purification offering, the treatment of which precedes it within the text of Leviticus. The reparation offering, often translated as the guilt or trespass offering, protected holy things from desecration or trespass, requiring reparation to be made in cases of fault.

At the end of chapter 5, we were presented with two broad categories of fault for which

reparation offering would need to be made. The first dealt with situations such as those in which someone unintentionally desecrated something holy or failed to complete a votive offering. The second deals with situations where there was a violation of some commandment concerning holy things.

We can imagine several situations that might fall under these categories of fault for which a reparation offering would need to be offered. Perhaps someone failed to pay his tithe on part of his produce, or perhaps he ate some holy food which he ought not to have eaten, or had mixed crops on his land, not realising it was against the Lord's commandments. Perhaps he hadn't been well taught by the Levites in his area.

Perhaps he was a Nazarite who inadvertently was defiled and could not complete his vow. Ananias and Sapphira's failure to pay the price of their devoted field to the Lord in Acts chapter 5 is a New Testament example of a trespass in holy things. The Lord struck them both down for their trespass and, as a result of their deaths, people's awareness of the weightiness of the holiness of the Lord was markedly heightened.

In verses 1 to 7 of this chapter, we have a third category of cases. These cases are cases of false swearing or perjury. In these cases, the person is guilty of bearing the name of the Lord in vain, lying after binding himself by oath to tell the truth.

The specific cases of perjury that are covered here concern the sinful obtaining of a neighbour's property, whether through deception, robbery, oppression, or failure to return a neighbour's lost property and denial under oath that it had come into one's hands. A case of oppression might be the failure to pay a hired worker his due, as described in places like Deuteronomy chapter 24, verses 14 to 15. You shall not oppress a hired worker who is poor and needy, whether he is one of your brothers or one of the sojourners who are in your land within your towns.

You shall give him his wages on the same day, before the sun sets, for he is poor and counts on it, lest he cry against you to the Lord and you be guilty of sin. The reparation offering here backs up laws that we find in places like Exodus chapter 22, verses 7 to 12, where oaths before the Lord were used to resolve disputes concerning property. If a man gives to his neighbour money or goods to keep safe, and it is stolen from the man's house, then if the thief is found, he shall pay double.

If the thief is not found, the owner of the house shall come near to God to show whether or not he has put his hand to his neighbour's property. For every breach of trust, whether it is for an ox, for a donkey, for a sheep, for a cloak, or for any kind of lost thing, of which one says, this is it, the case of both parties shall come before God. The one whom God condemns shall pay double to his neighbour.

If a man gives to his neighbour a donkey or an ox or a sheep or any beast to keep safe, and it dies or is injured or is driven away, without anyone seeing it, an oath by the Lord

shall be between them both to see whether or not he has put his hand to his neighbour's property. The owner shall accept the oath, and he shall not make restitution. But if it is stolen from him, he shall make restitution to its owner.

In these cases where there is no clear proof of the claims or suspicions of the parties, and human courts would not be able to judge, taking a solemn oath before the Lord placed the matter in the Lord's hands. The case of the perjurer here gives weight to the idea that high-handed sins could be decreased in severity through confession. The sacrifice can never serve as a way of paying off God while remaining proud in one's sins.

However, with confession and restitution to the wrong neighbour, the reparation sacrifice could deal with what was initially a high-handed and intentional sin. The Lord's sanctions undergirding just relations in society was a crucial aspect of the social effect of the law. If you wrong or defraud your neighbour, you are not only accountable to them for your fault, but also to the Lord.

The reparation offering was part of the manner in which such debts could be addressed. In this case, unlike the earlier case where the misappropriated items belonged to the Lord and the repayment was made to him, here the repayment needs to be made to the wronged party. But for the sacrilegious use of the Lord's name, the perjured party has to offer a reparation offering, or its monetary equivalent.

In all of the various cases of the reparation offering, some holy thing has been desecrated or misappropriated. In the case of the Nazirite who cannot complete his vow, it is his consecrated head. In the case of the perjurer, it is the Lord's name.

When considering the reparation offering for the leper in this context, it could be helpful to think about the connection between leprosy, not the same skin condition as that which is conventionally referred to by that term, and being struck by the Lord on account of a trespass upon holy things. Miriam was struck with leprosy when she spoke against the Lord's anointed leader Moses in Numbers chapter 12. King Uzziah was struck with leprosy when he committed sacrilege by trying to burn incense before the Lord, although he was not a priest, in 2 Chronicles chapter 26.

In Ezra chapter 10, the sons of the priests who had married foreign women, defiling the holy status of the priesthood and the holiness of the seed of Israel, had to offer a ram of the flock as a reparation offering and to put away their pagan wives. John Kleinig suggests that we might see, in Isaiah chapter 53 verse 10, a reference to the reparation offering that helps us to consider the death of Christ in terms of it. Yet it was the will of the Lord to crush him.

He has put him to grief. When his soul makes an offering for guilt, he shall see his offspring, he shall prolong his days. The will of the Lord shall prosper in his hand.



Christ is the offering for guilt, or reparation offering, for people who have sinned against the Lord's holy things. The reparation offering seems to be a close relation of the purification offering. However, the reparation offering requires a ram or a male lamb.

Male lambs and rams were animals that were not offered as purification offerings. Rather, female lambs and ewes and female goats were offered for the sins of laypersons, and male goats and bulls for the sins of leaders and priests. The male sheep, missing in the purification offering, appears in the reparation offering.

The fact that Jesus is spoken of as a male lamb suggests that he is associated in some way with the ram of reparation. Christ deals with our Adamic trespass against the Lord's holiness. His sacrifice is, as James Jordan has maintained, the foundational sacrifice, the basis for our entire communion with God.

The rest of chapter 6 gives a series of instructions concerning various sacrifices that have already been established in the book of Leviticus. These instructions fill out the ritual law that we have in the preceding chapters. In this chapter we have instructions concerning the daily sacrifice of the ascension offering and the tribute offering, and then instructions for the purification offering.

The altar involved a continual ascension of smoke to the Lord, much as the lamp in the holy place was to be kept burning. It was a pillar of cloud and fire that rose up perpetually, representing the ascent into God's presence and a conduit of communion between heaven and earth. Managing this perpetually ascending fire was a key responsibility of the priests.

They had to remove the ashes and place them in a clean place outside of the camp, the same location where the flesh of the purification offerings for the priests were burnt. The ashes were not holy, but nor were they defiled. When disposing of the ashes, the priest had to wear holy garments of his office when taking up the ashes from the altar, and change into common garments to deposit the ashes outside of the camp.

Mary Douglas suggests that the altar was established as a sort of sacrificial mountain. At the base of the mountain, on top of the wood, you would have the main pieces of the ascension offering, the main portions of its flesh chopped up, its head and its fat. On top of those pieces, the fat of the peace offerings would be placed.

Then, at the summit of the mountain of the sacrifice, the washed entrails and legs of the ascension offering would be placed. This follows the pattern of Mount Sinai. The base of the mountain corresponds to the people, the middle section, the place where the leaders of the people and the priests were able to eat before the Lord, and then the summit of the mountain where God was present and to which Moses ascended.

Douglas argues that by the legs, the text is euphemistically referring to the genitals of

the animal. Together with the entrails, the genitals would represent the inmost reality of the creature. The layperson offering and ascension offering was to wash these while the priests were arranging the main pieces of their offering upon the altar, presumably symbolically associated with the need for the cleansing of the inmost parts of the human self to ascend into God's presence.

As Psalm 24, verses 3 and 4 puts it, Who shall ascend the hill of the Lord, and who shall stand in his holy place? He who has clean hands and a pure heart, who does not lift up his soul to what is false, and does not swear deceitfully. The tribute offering of grain comes next. Once again, there are restrictions upon what can be offered and how it is to be eaten.

The memorial portion must be offered to the Lord upon the altar, but the rest needs to be eaten by the priests in a holy place, in the court of the tent of meeting or tabernacle. No leaven must be used in it or added to it. It is holy food and restricted to persons who are set apart.

In addition to the regular ascension offering, a regular tribute offering must be offered. Although a number of possible forms of baking, in an oven, in a pan or on a griddle are listed in chapter 2, here the exact mode of preparing the regular tribute offering is stipulated. It must be made with oil on a griddle.

This suggests that there might perhaps be some symbolic import to the different modes of preparation of the offering listed in chapter 2. No mention is made of frankincense here, although as it is explicitly excluded on other occasions, the fact that it is not mentioned here is not decisive evidence of its absence. As the tribute offering is being made by the high priest, none of it is to be eaten. The concluding instructions of the chapter also concern the eating of the sacrifices and the disposal of things that had come into contact with them.

The purification offerings of the people were to be eaten in a holy place by the priests who offered them. Anyone or anything that came into contact with the meat or blood of the sacrificial animal contracted holiness and needed to be treated accordingly, either being cleansed or destroyed. The purification offerings for the priests and the entire congregation, which were brought into the holy place, were not, however, to be eaten.

Such sacrifices contracted a greater level of holiness and needed to be treated accordingly. A question to consider, where might we see some further examples of contraction of holiness like those mentioned at the end of this chapter? From Leviticus chapter 1 to the first half of chapter 6, the book laid out the fundamental law of the sacrifices. There were five key forms of sacrifice, the ascension offering, tribute offering, peace offering, purification offering and reparation offering.

At the end of chapter 6 we move to further instructions concerning the sacrifices that

had already been established, treating the ascension offerings, tribute offerings and purification offerings. These instructions continue in chapter 7 here, in which we turn to the reparation and peace offerings. The instructions here fill out the picture concerning the reparation sacrifice from chapter 5 and the beginning of chapter 6. Many details of the reparation offering about which we might have wondered are given to us here.

The location of the killing of the reparation offering is stipulated at this point, being the same as that of the ascension offering on the north side of the altar before the Lord, as we see in chapter 1 verse 11. The description of the locations where the animals were killed varies. The peace offering is killed in front of, or at the entrance of, the tent of meeting, in chapter 3 verse 2, 8 and 13.

The location for the killing of the purification offerings is given as before the Lord, seemingly at the entrance of the tent of meeting, in the case of the anointed priests or congregations' bulls, chapter 4 verse 4 and 15. Or in the case of the leader of the people or the commoner, it's given as the site in which they kill the ascension offering. The entrance of the tent of meeting probably refers to the area from the entrance to the bronze altar, which would be to the east of the complex.

The north side of the altar would be to the right of it as you face the altar and the tabernacle from the entrance to the courtyard. Perhaps this was partly for reasons of practicality. Milgram speculates... The area left with adequate space was the north.

As in the case of the ascension offering, the blood of the reparation offering is thrown against the sides of the altar, possibly internal, or, if Naftali Meshel is correct, on top of the altar. As in the case of the purification and peace offerings, the fat of the reparation offering is offered to the Lord. The handling of the reparation offering also resembled the purification offering in the fact that the priests were able to eat of it in a holy place.

Priests enjoyed privileges relative to the sacrifices that they performed for others. They could consume the meat in a holy place and could also keep the skin of the animal. Priests also were given the various tribute offerings of the people's grain, besides their memorial portions.

We were introduced to the peace offerings in chapter 3 and now we have a more elaborate presentation of them as we are instructed concerning several forms that they could take. The peace offering was the principal type of sacrifice that regular Israelites would offer, a voluntary offering that culminated in the enjoyment of a sacrificial meal. In contrast to the meat of the lay person's purification and reparation offerings, which the priests alone would eat, the meat of the peace offerings was also enjoyed by the party offering it.

The first form of the peace offering described here is the thanksgiving offering. Such sacrifices are mentioned in places like Psalm 50, verse 14-15. The thanksgiving offering

was a peace offering made on account of divine deliverance.

The Lord had rescued the offerer from trouble and in gratitude the offerer performed this peace offering. With the sacrifice he brings a number of grain offerings, unleavened loaves mixed with oil, unleavened wafers smeared with oil and loaves of fine flour well mixed with oil, and also loaves of leavened bread. These are not here described as *minkah* or tribute offerings, and we should recall leaven, required within some of the loaves offered here, was not permitted in the tribute offerings, whether offered in coordination with or subordination to animal sacrifices.

We can see an example of how such loaves would have been handled in the sacrifice of the Nazirite upon the completion of his vow in Numbers 6, verses 19-20. The Nazirite, who was to be sacrificed, had to be eaten on the same day as the offering. The author of the book of Hebrews, even after speaking about the way that the old covenant sacrificial system is no longer operative, exhorts his readers continually to offer a sacrifice of praise in chapter 13, verse 15.

Most likely here he is adopting the language of the Septuagint of Leviticus 7, verse 15 and Psalm 116, verse 17, which refer to the peace offering for thanksgiving in the same terms. From the earliest years of the church, the term Eucharist, or thanksgiving, was adopted to refer to the Lord's Supper. We see this in the *Didache*, for instance.

While the old covenant involved a continual, twice-daily burnt offering that continued to ascend throughout the day and the night, and a continual tribute offering along with it, the new covenant is distinguished by a continual thanksgiving offering, its perpetual Eucharist, and it seems likely that it is drawing upon this particular form of the peace offering. In celebrating the Eucharist, we are celebrating a continual thanksgiving for the Lord's deliverance in Christ. The second kind of peace offering was the votive offering, which could be offered in fulfillment of a vow.

For instance, an Israelite might say that if the Lord were to bring something to pass, they would celebrate a peace offering in thanksgiving. Alternatively, another form of votive offering would be upon the completion of something like the Nazirite vow. In Numbers 6, verse 14, in the laws for the Nazirite, the Nazirite was expected to offer a ram without blemish as a peace offering at the conclusion of the period of his vow.

The third form of the peace offering was the free will offering, which didn't really involve the same occasion as the other two, but could be offered purely of the offerer's own grateful initiative to the Lord. In the case of the latter two forms of the peace offering, the meat of the sacrifice could be eaten on the day of the sacrifice and on the day after it. Any meat remaining to the third day, however, had to be destroyed.

If someone were to eat it, it would invalidate the sacrifice. Holy food was for holy, or in some cases clean, people, and a failure to uphold this principle could lead to serious

consequences. Verses 19-21 outline some of the boundaries that needed to be upheld in this area, and the severity of the punishments faced by those who breached them.

There is another example of a law concerning someone eating holy food that he ought not to eat, in chapter 22, verses 14-16. And if anyone eats of a holy thing unintentionally, he shall add the fifth of its value to it, and give the holy thing to the priest. They shall not profane the holy things of the people of Israel, which they contribute to the Lord, and so cause them to bear iniquity and guilt by eating their holy things.

For I am the Lord who sanctifies them. In this and other cases, it seems that such violations could be dealt with through making restitution for the item, paying some added compensation, and presumably sacrificing a reparation offering. However, where a person was not penitent, and their sin could not be dealt with through the trespass offering, they were to be completely cut off from the people for their sacrilege.

In Genesis chapter 9, the Lord prohibited the consuming of blood, and this prohibition is often repeated in the law. In addition to that blood taboo, which is also reiterated in this context, Israel was to refrain from consuming the fat of animals, presumably the specific fatty covering offered in the peace and purification offerings. Like the blood, the fat of the animal was reserved for the Lord and the cult.

To eat it would be a trespass of great severity. Israel was not only prohibited from eating the fat of their sacrifices, but also from eating the fat of animals more generally, on pain of excommunication from the people. Verses 29-36 concern the performance of the peace offering.

The person whose animal was being offered needed to bring the sacrifice by his own hands. The sacrifice involved a sort of change of ownership. The offerer gave his offering to the Lord, and then received parts of it back from the Lord's hand in the form of the communion meal.

The animal that entered into the tabernacle as common meat was received back by the offerer as holy meat. In particular, the fat and breast of the animal were presented as an elevation offering to the Lord. This is often translated wave offering.

The parts were lifted up to the Lord, devoted or dedicated to him by the offerer, and then needed to be treated as the Lord's possession, no longer that of the offerer. The fat was the Lord's portion of the sacrifice, and the breast was the portion belonging to the priests. The right thigh of the peace offering was the due of the officiating priest at the sacrifice.

Instructions concerning this were given earlier to Moses in Exodus 29-28, in connection with the investiture of Aaron and his sons as priests. You shall also take the fat from the

ram, and the fat tail, and the fat that covers the entrails, and the long lobe of the liver, and the two kidneys with the fat that is on them, and the right thigh, for it is a ram of ordination, and one loaf of bread and one cake of bread made with oil, and one wafer out of the basket of unleavened bread that is before the Lord. You shall put all these on the palms of Aaron, and on the palms of his sons, and wave them for a wave offering before the Lord.

Then you shall take them from their hands, and burn them on the altar on top of the burnt offering, as a pleasing aroma before the Lord. It is a food offering to the Lord. You shall take the breast of the ram of Aaron's ordination, and wave it for a wave offering before the Lord, and it shall be your portion.

And you shall consecrate the breast of the wave offering that is waved, and the thigh of the priest's portion that is contributed from the ram of ordination, from what was Aaron's and his sons. It shall be for Aaron and his sons, as a perpetual due from the people of Israel, for it is a contribution. It shall be a contribution from the people of Israel, from their peace offerings, their contribution to the Lord.

The Apostle Paul appeals to the example of the priest's due from the sacrifice as a principle for Christian ministers, as John Kleinig observes in 1 Corinthians 9, verses 13-14. Do you not know that those who are employed in the temple service get their food from the temple, and those who serve at the altar share in the sacrificial offerings? In the same way the Lord commanded that those who proclaim the gospel should get their living by the gospel. This chapter concludes the instructions concerning the offerings that opens the book of Leviticus, setting things up for the establishment of the priests and their duties in the chapters that follow.

A question to consider. Throughout our discussion of the sacrifices, we have seen ways in which they help us better to understand the sacrifice of Christ, and the logic of Christian worship. What are some of the ways in which Christian worship, even without offering animals, continues to be informed by the logic of every one of the sacrifices of Leviticus? The first seven chapters of Leviticus are laws concerning the sacrifices, and in chapter 8 we reach some narrative, concerning the consecration of Aaron, his sons, the tabernacle and its furniture.

It's a narrative that corresponds to the instructions of Exodus chapter 29, where Moses was first told to consecrate Aaron and his sons. Now back in Exodus there are various creational seven-day patterns to be observed in the establishment of the tabernacle, and this culminates in the appointment of Aaron and his sons, and the appointment of the daily sacrifices. And here there are similar patterns to be observed, although they correspond more to the way that the fall at Sinai with the golden calf follows after the seven-day creational pattern of chapters 25 to 31.

In Leviticus 8 to 9, there is the consecration of Aaron and his sons, followed by the rest

of the completed establishment of Aaron and the tabernacle. This is then followed by a fall story, though with the sin of Nadab and Abihu. In Genesis chapter 3, the fall is followed by judgment upon the animal, the serpent, then judgment upon the woman concerning her womb, judgment upon the man concerning the sweat of his brow and his work on the earth, and then the making of coverings for them.

And here we see something very similar. There's the establishment of a new humanity within the garden setting, then there is the fall, Nadab and Abihu. That is followed by laws concerning animals, unclean and clean animals, and their relationship with the dirt.

Then there are laws concerning childbirth, connecting with the judgment upon the woman, and then there are laws concerning skin disease and bodily emissions, connected with the judgment upon the sweat of the brow and the flesh, connected with death. This is then followed by the day of coverings. God gave coverings to Adam and Eve in the garden.

Then God gives coverings to his people on the day of atonement. The day of atonement is the day of coverings, it's the more literal way of translating it. The text then is playing out a very familiar pattern, one that we've seen before.

The ritual for the consecration of Aaron and his sons begins with washing and dressing. And this is something that's taken up in the New Testament, connecting our appointment through baptism to the house of God with the appointment of the priests in the Old Testament. We can draw near having our hearts sprinkled clean from an evil conscience and our bodies washed with pure water in Hebrews 10.

Or in Galatians chapter 3, as many as have been baptized into Christ have put on Christ, dressed themselves with Christ. We are priests in a new temple. The washing with water is followed by dressing, and they put on the garments that are appointed to them in chapter 28 of Exodus.

There are three sacrifices that are stipulated for this particular ordination rite. There's the sin or purification offering, that's concerning purification or expiation. It's a blood rite particularly.

There's the whole burnt offering or ascension offering. The point of that one is that it all goes up to God's presence. That's a dedication type sacrifice.

Then it's followed by the ram of consecration. The ram of consecration is a rather unusual sacrifice. It's one that connects most closely with the logic of the peace offering.

The peace offering is about communion. So if you put all the sacrifices together, there is a logic to them. It begins with the trespass offering, which gives restitution for crimes done, things taken from God that do not belong to us, boundaries crossed, that sort of thing.

That is followed by the purification offering. The purification offering relates to the expiation or purification of sin. It's a particular blood rite.

It's cleansing things. Then following that, there's the dedication offering or the ascension offering, where the person in the symbolic substitute of the animal is dedicated wholly to God. With the ascension offering, you often have tribute given with that.

It can be an offering of some grain or some grain product, or it can be connected with a drink offering. That's about giving a gift or a tribute to the Lord. You can think about the offering that Cain gave.

That was a sort of gift or tribute offering, but it was not the right way to begin. It was not the right way to approach God. Then that's followed by a peace offering, and the peace offering is about communion.

It's about having fellowship with God and eating a meal with him, essentially. After Aaron and his sons have been washed and dressed, they are anointed for their priestly service. That anointing is not just upon Aaron and his sons.

It's also upon the elements of the tabernacle. It's a consecration of the priest, but it's also a consecration of the tabernacle itself. This is then followed by the sacrifices.

The rite for the offering here is slightly different from the regular rite. The blood seems to be placed on the bronze altar in the courtyard, rather than on the altar of the incense in the holy place, as we see for the typical rite for the sin offering for the high priest in Leviticus chapter 4. Because the priest is not yet a minister in the holy place, he can't defile it, so the blood isn't taken in there. That doesn't need to be cleansed, because it hasn't been defiled yet.

It's just been established, it's just been consecrated, and the priest has not entered into it. As a result, it's just the external altar, the realm in which he has operated to this point, as one who has been to that point of the status of a commoner within the land. There are two realms.

There's the realm of the burnt offering, and there's the realm of consecration. Aaron and his sons put their hands upon both of these animals, but unlike in most sacrifices, the person who's doing the sacrifice doesn't do the killing. The whole burnt offering, or the ascension offering, comes first.

In the logic of it, you've purified the realm that has been defiled by the priest and the congregation, and now you can dedicate the priest. That dedication occurs in the ascension of the animal as his substitute and representative. The bull represents the high priest, or represents the whole congregation.

And after that, once that has been done, the path is cleared for the peace offering. And



the peace offering here is the realm of consecration, which plays a very similar role. The consecration realm is a sort of initial peace offering for the priest.

Aaron and his sons eat part of the realm of consecration, but Moses receives the priest's portion. We should note that Moses is performing all of these things as the priest, relative to Aaron and his sons, who are not acting as priests yet. That will come in the next chapter, when they sacrifice on behalf of the congregation.

Blood is placed on both the priest and the altar, the four corners of the human body, the four horns, as it were, of the human body, and then the different parts of the altar. In placing the blood on these parts of the body, and in the wave offering, there is the dedication of the person and their service to the Lord. And so the ordination rite includes these elements to really set up the fundamental fellowship that the priest will have with the Lord as his servants.

Their hands are filled with various elements of their service, which they present as a wave offering towards the Lord. The filling of the hands of the priest is that part of the rite that really stands for the whole thing in some ways. Ordination could be spoken of as the filling of the hands.

And so this particular part of the rite seems to have a special importance in terms of the logic of the whole. It's where the service of the priest is really offered to the Lord, at this particular point, perhaps. In the previous chapter, in Leviticus 7, verses 29-34, there's the law of the wave offering of the breast and the thigh.

And the breast is a wave offering that is then given to the priest, while the thigh is a contribution to the priest that's given more directly. The wave offering here of the breast is given to Moses, because he plays the role of the officiating priest, whereas the thigh is for Aaron and his sons. The consecration takes seven days, and it works up towards the eighth day.

Why the eighth day? Animals couldn't be sacrificed until the eighth day. Circumcision happened on the eighth day. The eighth day is also the day when we move from God's week of creation to the week of man's activity within the creation.

Man's work starts on the eighth day. And so it seems fitting here that the work of the priest begins on the eighth day. In addition to the transition from the work of God, as it were, in establishing these things, to the work of man as priest, there is another transition here.

There's the transition from Moses to Aaron. There's a seven-fold use of the expression, as the Lord commanded, within this chapter. But there's a transition at the very end from Moses to Aaron.

And Aaron and his sons did all the things that the Lord commanded by Moses. There's a

shift there from Moses' work, where he is doing all that the Lord commanded, to Aaron doing everything that God commanded through Moses. And in the next chapter we see that more fully, as Aaron officiates as priest and acts on behalf of Israel.

A question to consider. What do you think is the difference between the parts of the bull for the sin offering burnt outside of the camp in verse 17 and the parts that were burnt on the brazen altar? Why the different locations for burning? In Leviticus chapter 9, the ritual for the induction and consecration of the priest, the tabernacle and the garments, which began in chapter 8, is completed. In the first seven chapters of the book of Leviticus, we have instructions concerning the sacrifices.

And these are presented more in the abstract, in their typical forms. In Leviticus chapters 8 and 9, for instance, we see how some of these sacrifices could function within a larger sequence of sacrifices to perform some ceremonial purpose. In this case, the ordination of the priest and the consecration of the tabernacle.

We might perhaps think of the sacrifices as roots of verbs that are conjugated differently within specific sentences. In something such as the ordination ceremony, we have various conjugations of the verbs of the sacrifices being employed within what we might think of as a series of ritual sentences that produce a particular outcome. Reading such passages and recognising why specific sacrifices are joined together in the ways that they are, why they take the particular conjugated forms that they do, and why they have the ceremonial effects that they have, enables us to make a lot more sense of the underlying grammar of the sacrificial system.

The first part of the ceremony for consecration of the priest began with a bull for a sin or purification offering, a ram for a burnt or ascension offering, and a ram for a special form of peace offering, the consecration or ordination sacrifice. The ritual for the ram of consecration had a far more elaborate blood rite than one would typically have for a peace offering, with blood being placed on various extremities of Aaron and his son's bodies. Throughout that part of the ceremony, Moses was the officiant, acting as the priest and receiving the priest's portion.

It is illuminating to observe ways in which rituals deviate from their typical patterns and to consider the reasons why those deviations might occur. For instance, and most obviously, Moses, not the Aaronic priest, officiates at the ceremony. Aaron and his sons have not yet been consecrated, so Moses represents the Lord as his servant in ways that the priests later would.

This helps us to see the prophet Moses as exercising a sort of priestly ministry more generally, behind the Aaronic priesthood. We have elsewhere observed the ways in which Mount Sinai is a sort of archetype of the tabernacle. As Moses ascended the mountain and interceded for the people before the glorious theophanic presence of God, veiled in the dark cloud, he was like the high priest entering the Holy of Holies.

The bull for the purification offering for Aaron and his sons was also offered in an unusual way. Aaron and his sons all put their hands upon the bull. The bull was a sort of collective purification for them.

The blood of the bull for the purification offering was not brought into the Holy Place, as it would typically have been. Once again, understanding the unusual character of the situation and the deeper logic of the sacrifices helps us to understand why it was not. Aaron and his sons had not yet ministered in the Holy Place.

They were still in the courtyard with the laypersons, so they could not yet have defiled it. The unusual ritual of the ram of consecration, where blood was placed on various extremities of Aaron and his sons' bodies, also makes sense as a sort of counterpart to the act of placing blood on the horns of the altar. The ritual followed the instructions given in Exodus chapter 29.

After the initial phase of the ordination ritual, there was a seven-day period during which the process of ordination and the consecration of the altar was ongoing. This seven-day period is described in more detail in Exodus chapter 29 verses 35-37. Thus you shall do to Aaron and to his sons, according to all that I have commanded you.

Through seven days shall you ordain them, and every day you shall offer a bull as a sin offering for atonement. Also you shall purify the altar when you make atonement for it, and shall anoint it to consecrate it. Seven days you shall make atonement for the altar and consecrate it, and the altar shall be most holy.

Whatever touches the altar shall become holy. The connection between the creation of the world in seven days at the beginning of Genesis and the establishment of the tabernacle and its service through seven days here in Leviticus should probably not be lost on us. The tabernacle is a new creation, as is clear in Exodus, and the priests are like a new humanity within it.

The events of these chapters should probably be identified with the establishment of the tabernacle and its service, described in Exodus chapter 40. Although the book of Leviticus seems to follow directly from the book of Exodus, it seems likely that we are going back a short period of time with the instructions given for the sacrifices and the establishment of the priests, and this period overlaps with that of the final chapters of the book of Exodus. For the completion of the ordination rite on the eighth day, there is another bull offered as a purification offering, although it is possible that this is not a mature bull, but a bull calf.

As Aaron is just beginning his high priestly ministry, perhaps a bull calf would make more sense than the bull that he would offer when fully installed in the office. Likewise, rather than the typical bull for the congregation's purification offering, they are instructed to offer a male goat. Again, perhaps this is because they have not yet fully entered into

their status as a priestly people.

Now that the seven days of the ordination ritual are complete, Moses no longer officiates. Nevertheless, the priestly sin offering is still offered in the same manner as on the first day of the ceremony, as Aaron and his son still have to enter into the holy place. Aaron offers a purification offering for himself, the bull, and then he also offers an ascension offering for himself, the ram.

His own offerings are offered before the offerings that he offers for the people. This follows the logic described in Hebrews 7, verse 27, where the high priest offered sacrifices daily, first for his own sins, and then for those of the people. The sequence of the sacrifices here should also be noted.

You deal with impurity and sin first, then you have consecration and ascension into the Lord's presence, then, having done that, you can share a communion meal with him. The order of the people's sacrifices here are purification offering first, ascension offering second, tribute offering third, and then peace offerings. While peace offerings were generally not public offerings, the establishment of the tabernacle and its ministry was an important public event, and the sharing of a covenant meal was a natural aspect of its climax.

Having gone up to the altar and offered these sacrifices, Aaron then turned to bless the people. The instruction concerning the Aaronic blessing is given in Numbers 6, verses 22-27. The Lord spoke to Moses, saying, Speak to Aaron and his sons, saying, Thus you shall bless the people of Israel.

You shall say to them, The Lord bless you and keep you. The Lord make his face to shine upon you and be gracious to you. The Lord lift up his countenance upon you and give you peace.

So shall they put my name upon the people of Israel, and I will bless them. Having finished the sacrifices, Moses and Aaron went together into the tent of meeting. Different terminology is used for the tabernacle in the books of Exodus and Leviticus.

The language of tabernacle, which we find more often in the book of Exodus, accents the fact that the tabernacle was the place of the Lord's dwelling. Tent of meeting terminology presents the tabernacle as the place of interaction between man and God. Prior to the construction of the tabernacle, there was another tent of meeting that preceded it.

When Moses and Aaron come out from the tent of meeting, they bless the people once more, and then the glory of the Lord appears to the whole company. Fire descends from the Lord and consumes all the items upon the altar. As we have already seen, the fire burning upon the altar was a sign of the Lord's presence in the midst of his people, a

conduit between heaven and earth, an ascending pillar analogous to the pillar of cloud and fire that led the people through the wilderness.

The events described here might perhaps be related to those described at the very end of the book of Exodus, in chapter 40 verses 32 to 38. When they went into the tent of meeting, and when they approached the altar, they washed, as the Lord commanded Moses. And he erected the court around the tabernacle and the altar, and set up the screen of the gate of the court.

So Moses finished the work. Then the cloud covered the tent of meeting, and the glory of the Lord filled the tabernacle. And Moses was not able to enter the tent of meeting because the cloud settled on it, and the glory of the Lord filled the tabernacle.

Throughout all their journeys, whenever the cloud was taken up from over the tabernacle, the people of Israel would set out. But if the cloud was not taken up, then they did not set out till the day that it was taken up. For the cloud of the Lord was on the tabernacle by day, and fire was in it by night, in the sight of all the house of Israel throughout all their journeys.

A question to consider, why might the burnt offering for the people have required a calf and a lamb, both of their first year? In Leviticus chapter 10, the priesthood and the tabernacle have just been consecrated. It seems like the start of a glorious new order, and then something goes terribly wrong. There are a number of creation and new creation stories in Scripture, and we see many of them being followed by some sort of fall.

In Genesis chapter 1 and 2, the earth and mankind are created, and that's followed by a fall in Genesis chapter 3. In Genesis 9, there is a new earth after the flood, and a covenant made with Noah and his sons. That is immediately followed by a fall narrative, as Ham sinfully enters his father's tent and sees his nakedness. In Genesis chapter 16, after God has made a covenant with him, Abraham sins by taking Hagar.

In Genesis chapter 32, after the gift of the law at Sinai, and the plans being given for the sabbatical tent of the tabernacle, the Israelites sin with the golden calf. In 1 Kings chapter 10, after being given the knowledge of good and evil, building the new Eden of the temple, and being visited by the woman, the Queen of Sheba, Solomon falls by breaking the Deuteronomic law of the king in every particular. In Leviticus 10, there is another fall narrative, after the blessing of the establishment of the priesthood and the tabernacle, and it has resemblances to some of these other falls.

It's a violation of the father's tent, seemingly involving wine, as in the story of Noah and Ham. It's the taking and giving of something not commanded, leading to expulsion, as in the case of Adam and Eve. Nadab and Abihu offer unauthorised or strange fire.

This is presumably fire taken from a profane source, rather than the altar. There is also the possibility that it is a private offering, that they are offering these on their own personal pans, rather than on the pans of the sanctuary that they were supposed to use. They sin by fire, and they are judged by fire.

The fire that consumes them seems to be the fire of God's own presence. In verse 24 of the previous chapter, fire has come out from God's presence to consume the sacrifices on the altar, at the end of this great celebration of Aaron's priesthood being established. The judgment on Nadab and Abihu provokes an appropriate fear of the Lord in the people and the priests.

Those who come near to God are in a position of extreme danger, and should not take their duties lightly. And perhaps we are supposed to see something in the similarity between Nadab's name and that of the free will offering. Nadab offers a gift on his own terms, but the gift is a trespass.

It's violating the boundaries that God has set up. He's giving a gift, but it's not actually a gift that God wants or desires. It may be similar in some ways to the sacrifice of Cain, who gives a tribute offering, but without approaching God in the proper way.

He's giving to God and approaching God on his own terms. And this is a violation of the principles of the tabernacle, but also of the free will offering. There is a time and a place for the free will offering, but it needs to be in terms that God has established, not on people's own terms.

To make more sense of this story, we should probably go back to Exodus chapter 24. In Exodus chapter 24, we encounter Nadab and Abihu for the first time. Starting in verse 1, Then he said to Moses, And then in verse 9, They beheld God, and ate and drank.

Then Moses went up on the mountain, and the cloud covered the mountain. The glory of the Lord dwelt on Mount Sinai, and the cloud covered it six days. And on the seventh day he called to Moses out of the midst of the cloud.

Now the appearance of the glory of the Lord was like a devouring fire on the top of the mountain in the sight of the people of Israel. Moses entered the cloud, and went up on the mountain. And Moses was on the mountain forty days and forty nights.

This is the previous time that we have encountered Nadab and Abihu. And in that story, they are joining Moses and the elders and Aaron as they go up on the mountain and eat before the Lord. As in the previous two chapters, there is a period of waiting for seven days.

And they are waiting for Moses to enter into the presence of the Lord. There is also in that story, the devouring fire as the presence of God. And so there are a number of elements that are similar.

We've already noted the way that the tabernacle is a sort of portable Sinai. And here it's being established as the place where they can come into God's presence. But they were held back that last time, and now they seem to want to press forward on their own terms.

They ate in the presence of God, and they were not destroyed. But they had to obey God, they had to come on his own terms. And now they want to come on their terms.

They want to come to God with strange fire, and they are breaking the requirements that God has given them. Moses gets Elzaphan and Mishael to carry out the bodies. Because the anointed priests were not allowed to defile themselves with corpse contact.

They have been anointed and they must not waver from their proper duties. And even more so now as they see how serious it is to be servants of the Holy God. Protecting the people from God's holiness breaking out.

And then also being mindful themselves and ensuring that they do not commit any trespass in the sanctuary. The rationale for the killing of Nadab and Abihu begins to make more sense in the statement that the priests are to distinguish between the holy and the common, the clean and the unclean. Now the holy and the common and the clean and the unclean are different things.

So the holy and the common is the distinction between those things that are dedicated to God, that belong to God. Those things that are set apart for him, and those things that are not. So the priests are holy in a way that the average Israelite is not.

But the average Israelite who can worship in God's presence is clean. And those who are outside of the camp, those who are defiled by corpses, those who are defiled by omissions or some other thing, they are unclean. Now those distinctions overlap to an extent.

They can't be broken down into just two distinctions but there is an overlap between the clean and the common. So clean is not identical with holy. There are some things that are clean but not holy.

The average Israelite who is worshipping can be clean but they are not holy in the way that the priests are. Nadab and Abihu had failed to observe these distinctions. And the priests were supposed to teach the Israelites to exemplify these distinctions in that area where those distinctions mattered most of all.

When Nadab and Abihu failed to observe these, God had to uphold the boundary of the holy himself, breaking out with that fire that consumed them. Why the prominence of the prohibition on alcohol here? Perhaps it may be an indication of what led Nadab and Abihu to sin. Alcohol affects a change of mental state and people can often mistake that change of mental state with some intoxicating substance, a drug or alcohol, with

attaining that higher level of holiness.

Many forms of religion involve that change of mental state through intoxicating substances. And using that as a means to get close to God. Israelite religion was not to operate like that.

Rather it was supposed to abstain from that altogether in the service of God. The holy was not to be sought through changing your state of mind and taking mind-altering substances. Rather it required sobriety and seriousness and a recognition of the need to distinguish, to have your faculties alert and ready to uphold the boundaries that God had set.

And if there was indeed alcohol involved in this particular sin, maybe it reminds us of the sin of the golden calf where they sat down to eat and drink and rose up to play. That sort of worship, a worship characterized by revelries, by altered states of mind, by inducing ecstasies through dancing and other things like that, that was out. That was not the sort of thing that should characterize the worship of Israel.

And in the sin of the golden calf and in the sin of Nadab and Abihu I think we're seeing something of the fault with that sort of worship. And how God completely rejects it and wishes to be approached in a very different manner. The sin of Nadab and Abihu is followed by a crisis with the purification offering.

Aaron and his sons were supposed to eat the purification offerings whose blood was placed on the horns of the outer bronze altar. The ones that were brought into the holy place with their blood placed on the horns of the golden altar, they were not to eat those. Rather the flesh of those had to be burnt outside the camp in a clean place.

For the sacrifices that were offered on the outer bronze altar, with their blood being placed on that altar, the priests were able to eat that. They took the impurity of the flesh of the purification offering upon themselves and consumed it. Presumably the idea being that their holiness, their holy status, was able to overwhelm the sin and the impurity of the purification offering associated with the average Israelite.

A problem came however when the priests themselves sinned or when the people as a company sinned and then they couldn't eat the sacrifice. Rather it had to be all burnt up. Now what seems to have happened here is not that they're just mourning and want to be let off the requirement to eat meat because it just seems unfitting.

There seems to be more going on here than that. Rather the problem is that once Nadab and Abihu have died there is impurity that has not been addressed. And so if they were to eat the sacrifices they would take an impurity upon themselves that they're not able to take upon themselves because the sin had been done in the holy place itself.

Just as in Genesis chapter 3 the fall is followed by a divine address to the people that



deals with the problem. In the chapters that follow we have laws concerning animals and purity of animals. We have laws concerning childbirth.

We have laws concerning the impurity of skin disease and then also the leprous house and being expelled from that and it being torn down. And then we have laws concerning bodily emissions and the flesh and its pollution. And then finally we have the day of coverings.

Coverings being given for the sin and the nakedness of the people. And all of that is connected with the sin of Nadab and Abihu. It's following on from that and it's also following the pattern of Genesis chapter 3. Judgment upon the serpent, judgment upon the woman and her bearing of children, judgment upon the man in his skin, his flesh and its connection with death.

And then finally offering of coverings for them. And it's the same pattern that's playing out here. There's been a fall but then God's grace is being spoken into the situation so that the system can be restored so that they can relate to him once more.

There is something paradigmatic about the sin of Nadab and Abihu. In 1 Kings chapter 12 we see that Jeroboam sets up golden calves for Israel and he has sons called Nadab and Abijah. The resemblance is quite strong.

He resurrects the idolatry that Aaron was involved in in the incident with the golden calf in chapter 32 of Exodus. And he also has sons that die before their time who are involved in his idolatry. Both Aaron and Jeroboam set up altars and ordain feasts of false worship.

Both act illegitimately as priests. And this suggests that in the story of Aaron and his sons we have a paradigm of false worship that plays out in the later history of Israel. Jeroboam the son of Nebat is the one whose idolatry sets the terms for Israel's continued idolatry throughout all its different kings.

And so the sin of Aaron and Nadab and Abihu is paradigmatic for the false worship that plagues Israel from the days of the split of the kingdom. It's important that we pay attention to what's going on here because it will help us to read those later stories. A question to consider.

The book of Leviticus is not just about the worship of Israel. It teaches us patterns for our own worship. How can the sin of Nadab and Abihu and the distinction between the holy and the common, the clean and the unclean that the priests were supposed to maintain, help us to understand the proper manner of our own worship? What are some of the ways where we might violate these things as Nadab and Abihu did? It is a lot easier to understand the logic of Leviticus chapter 11 and what follows if we recognise that a creation and fall pattern is playing out in the book.

The establishment of the tabernacle worship was like a new creation event. But the sin

of Nadab and Abihu was a new fall. After the original fall the Lord addressed the serpent, the woman and then the man and declared judgment.

A similar pattern can be observed here. After the fall and the new Eden of the tabernacle we have first a passage dealing with the uncleanness of animals, corresponding with the judgment upon the serpent. In chapter 12 we deal with the uncleanness of women in the context of childbirth, corresponding with the judgment upon the woman in Genesis chapter 3. In chapters 13-14 there are laws concerning those struck with and exiled on account of a skin disease, corresponding to the judgment upon the man and his exile from the garden.

Chapter 15 deals with the corruption of the flesh through death. And then in chapter 16, as the Lord covered Adam and Eve with skins after the fall, the Lord provides for the covering of his fallen people through the day of atonement. With this pattern in mind, even beyond understanding why it is placed where it is within the book, certain aspects of the logic of chapter 11 will become slightly less opaque.

The criteria for determining which animals are clean and unclean at many points suggest that unclean animals are those with similar features to the serpent, as Nobayashi Kiyuchi argues. They are, for instance, associated with the unclean dust or have an affinity to death as carnivores or carrion creatures. There are similar instructions concerning dietary laws in Deuteronomy chapter 14, where it is connected with the third commandment.

Israel is a holy people to the Lord their God and they should not bear the name of the Lord in vain. Even though there is a similar rationale for the commandments here, there is a significant difference between Deuteronomy chapter 14 and Leviticus chapter 11. Leviticus chapter 11 is not narrowly focused upon dietary requirements as is Deuteronomy chapter 14.

Much of this chapter concerns broader forms of defilement that can come about from handling or contact with unclean animals and their bodies. Both originally in the garden and then also after the flood, in Genesis chapter 9, new food commandments were given to the people. The Lord permitted Adam and Eve to eat of any of the trees of the garden.

Only one tree was forbidden them, the tree of the knowledge of good and evil at the centre of the garden. In Genesis chapter 9, Noah and his sons are permitted to eat of all the different animals. The fear of you and the dread of you shall be upon every beast of the earth and upon every bird of the heavens, upon everything that creeps on the ground and all the fish of the sea.

Into your hand they are delivered. Every moving thing that lives shall be food for you. And as I gave you the green plants, I give you everything.

Along with this gift of food in verses 2 to 3, there is a restriction upon what can be eaten in verses 4 and 5. But you shall not eat flesh with its life, that is its blood. And for your lifeblood I will require a reckoning from every beast I will require it, and from man, from his fellow man, I will require a reckoning for the life of man. Prior to the flood, there is already some sort of distinction between clean and unclean animals that is operative.

But man is able to eat of all of the animals, not just the clean ones. The food restrictions that are given to Israel seem to relate to its set apart status. They are connected with its holiness, a point that is underlined at the end.

They should be holy as the Lord their God is holy. A connection between the dietary laws and holiness is found elsewhere, in places like Leviticus chapter 20 verses 24 to 26. But I have said to you, you shall inherit their land, and I will give it to you to possess, a land flowing with milk and honey.

I am the Lord your God who has separated you from the peoples. You shall therefore separate the clean beast from the unclean, and the unclean bird from the clean. You shall not make yourselves detestable by beast or by bird, or by anything with which the ground crawls, which I have set apart for you to hold unclean.

You shall be holy to me, for I the Lord am holy, and have separated you from the peoples, that you should be mine. The class of sacrificial animals does not exactly coincide with the class of clean animals. The class of sacrificial animals comprises oxen, goats, sheep, doves and pigeons.

But there are other clean animals that could be eaten, but could not be sacrificed, such as deer. There are other animals that were unclean, that were important parts of Israel's life, such as the donkey. The principal sacrificial animals, apart perhaps from the pigeons, were all domesticated animals.

But not all domesticated animals were clean or sacrificial. Fish are another example of animals that could be clean, but not sacrificial. Various theories have been advanced to try to understand the rationale between what is clean and unclean.

Some have argued that being unclean is connected with being unnatural or abnormal, but this theory seems to be a weaker one. Others think that the animals that are unclean are dirty animals, or perhaps the Lord made these restrictions for health reasons. There are various detailed criteria according to which animals can be discerned to be either clean or unclean.

Chewing the cud, having a cloven hoof, hopping on the ground rather than crawling on it, having scales as a fish. These criteria don't seem to be arbitrary, so we ought to consider what holds them all together. Many have maintained that the forbidden creatures are typically carnivores, predators and carrion creatures.

Animals that chew the cud and have split hooves are herbivores. Indeed Jewish oral law argued that, apart from the criteria that we have here, you could tell the difference between clean and unclean animals by unclean animals' possession of canine teeth. Kaiichi points out the similarity of the unclean animals with the serpent.

The serpent is directly connected with the dust. The reference to creatures that go on their belly in verse 42 of this chapter is only the second time in the Bible, after Genesis chapter 3, that moving on the belly is mentioned. The suggestion then would be that unclean animals have characteristics of the cursed serpent.

They have the same connection with the curse bearing earth that the serpent does. Clean animals have cloven hooves. They have, as it were, shoes that divide them from the earth.

The divide in their hooves, Kaiichi argues, might also be a suggestion of a differentiation between clean and unclean. Clean animals are ruminants. They thoroughly digest their food.

This is in contrast to the serpent who swallows it whole, not engaging in the sort of chewing over that is characteristic of righteous meditation upon the world. Unclean birds are birds of prey and carrion birds. Clean fish also have scales that serve as a sort of armour against the uncleanness that surrounds them.

We might also consider that sea creatures without scales are most similar to the serpent, things like eels. These dietary requirements seem to have been exclusive to Israel. It's a sign of Israel's holy status, marking Israel out, but also teaching Israel to be a people who make distinctions concerning what they take in to their life.

Like the clean animals, they need to be separated from defilement. They need to be discriminating, like those animals with cloven hooves and the animals that ruminate rather than just swallowing their food whole. We should also consider the fact that even if Israel did not have these commandments, very few of these animals would have been on the menu.

These commandments then seem to serve a symbolic purpose beyond the merely practical one. In contrast to Deuteronomy chapter 14, Leviticus chapter 11 gives a lot of attention to forms of defilement by means of these unclean animals beyond merely eating them. Touching the carcasses of unclean animals was also defiling, not merely eating their flesh.

Becoming unclean was not in itself a sin, and most of the forms of defilement mentioned here were fairly minor. The uncleanness only attached to the person for the rest of the day. When the evening came, they were no longer considered unclean.

Nevertheless, for the duration of their uncleanness, they were exiled from the presence

of God. Lee Travaskas has argued that this served an educational function for Israel. They were supposed to avoid the underlying reality of uncleanness and be holy to the Lord.

And every single time they were unclean through contact with an unclean animal's carcass, they were frustrated in their enjoyment of fellowship with God. Such commandments could make them very fastidious about avoiding becoming unclean, and increasingly alert to the reality of holiness and the importance of being set apart to the Lord. Becoming unclean oneself, or having some object in one's possession become unclean, could prove greatly frustrating and inconveniencing.

Swarming things in particular, because of their close proximity with the curse-bearing dust, are bearers of uncleanness. The underlying rationale for all of these laws concerning cleanness in relationship to animals eating them and touching their carcasses is given in the conclusion of the chapter. It is to teach Israel about holiness.

They are to learn to make distinctions, to distinguish between clean and unclean, and to learn from the clean animals about the sorts of people that they ought to be. In their concern about being defiled by unclean animals, they should learn something about the danger of being defiled by sin. Practically speaking, Israel could only enjoy close fellowship with God as they kept clean, and could go to the Lord's presence at the tabernacle.

Not to take cleanness seriously was not to take Israel's status as a people holy to the Lord seriously. And so, being scrupulous about these commandments was an important manifestation of Israel's commitment to the covenant. A question to consider, why does the church not observe such dietary requirements in the new covenant? Leviticus chapter 12 is a chapter that raises many questions.

First of all, what is it doing at this particular point in the book? Why does childbirth, something that seems to be a positive thing, render the woman unclean? Why the distinction between the purification period for female and male children? And what is the purpose of the sacrifice? The first question, what the commandment is doing here, is answered in part by consideration of the pattern of Genesis that has been playing out in the chapters following the deaths of Nadab and Abihu. In Genesis chapter 3, after the fall, there are a series of judgments. First upon the serpent, then upon the woman, and then upon the man.

And the same sort of order is followed here. Leviticus chapter 11 was concerned with unclean animals, and particularly emphasized their connection with the curse bearing earth. First, unclean animals are in some way or other similar to the serpent.

After the judgment upon the serpent in Genesis chapter 3, the Lord addressed the woman, and her judgment concerned the pains of childbearing. In Leviticus, in a similar

pattern, after dealing with unclean animals, the Lord addresses the woman and childbirth in chapter 12. Why then might childbirth render the woman unclean? This text is a troubling one for many readers.

It suggests that there is an underlying misogyny in the biblical text, that women are somehow seen as defiled and defiling. However, before jumping to conclusions, we should consider the text more carefully. The law here is explicitly connected to the law concerning the uncleanness of menstruation.

We see a rationale for that commandment in Leviticus chapter 20, verse 18. If a man lies with a woman during her menstrual period and uncovers her nakedness, he has made naked her fountain, and she has uncovered the fountain of her blood. Both of them shall be cut off from among their people.

Blood, as such, does not seem to render people unclean. If someone accidentally cut themselves while working and was bleeding, they weren't unclean on that account. The defiling character of blood seemed to relate more to cases of unjust shedding of blood, the prohibited eating of blood, or relations with a menstrual woman.

In all of these cases, there is some form of trespass, some attempt to take life, or sacrilegious violation of it. Leviticus chapter 20, verse 18, suggests that some sort of inappropriate uncovering has occurred. He has made naked her fountain.

The same word as translated as fountain in chapter 20 is translated as flow in verse 7 of our chapter. In the biblical literature, the woman is often connected with or associated with springs, wells, and fountains. Many of the great women of Genesis and Exodus, Hagar, Rebekah, Rachel, Zipporah, Miriam, were associated with wells or springs.

Sexual relations are compared to drinking water from wells and fountains in Proverbs chapter 5, verses 15 to 19. Drink water from your own cistern, flowing water from your own well. Should your springs be scattered abroad, streams of water in the streets, let them be for yourself alone and not for strangers with you.

Let your fountain be blessed, and rejoice in the wife of your youth, a lovely dear, a graceful doe. Let her breasts fill you at all times with delight. Be intoxicated always in her love.

In Song of Songs, the beloved compares the bride to a sealed garden fountain, albeit using a different word. The life is in the blood, and the menstrual blood of the woman is most especially associated with life, connected with the mysterious powers of her fertility. On account of the power of female fertility, the substances associated with it need to be handled with particular care.

The woman whose fountain has been exposed, either through regular menstruation or through childbirth, is taboo. David Bialy argues that the menstrual woman is similar to

the Nazarite, set apart for a period, and required to separate themselves from various things. He writes, if menstrual blood like semen was thought of as a procreative fluid, then it too had to be separated from cultic activity, and intercourse during a woman's menstrual period might produce a double impurity, the impurity of normal intercourse, plus the impurity of contact with menstrual blood.

The source of the blood is what must remain hidden, as it apparently is when she is not menstruating. Even during intercourse, menstrual bleeding by itself indicates that the source has been breached, but it takes an act of intercourse to fully reveal it. What is clear is that intercourse during the menses causes both partners to reveal, or come into contact with, the source of female fertility.

Mark Garcia remarks that the fixed periods of impurity do not seem to correspond to the variable duration of the actual menstrual period or a postpartum discharge. He suggests that the actual menstruation or discharge is treated more as a surface manifestation of the deeper reality of the woman's life-giving fertility, which is a reality like the life-bearing blood, which is subject to a strict taboo, so that it cannot be trespassed upon. The blood of the menstrual woman can be polluting because, on account of its connection with the power of natural fertility, it has the potential to violate the realm of the sacred when the woman's fountain is uncovered.

In contrast to many other societies, Israel's worship was not a fertility cult, and the natural powers and substances of sexuality and fertility, while respected, were never sacralised. A crucial aspect of the picture is that the woman's fertility involved the generative powers of the flesh, and hence is associated with sin and death after the fall, polluting on account of the impurity of flesh itself. Sex and childbirth are good, but in them the defiled reality of sinful flesh is most powerfully exposed, because its creative powers are most in evidence.

In all of this we should think back to Genesis chapter 3 and the judgment upon the woman. To the woman he said, I will surely multiply your pain in childbearing, in pain you shall bring forth children. Childbearing may be one of the greatest blessings and the most remarkable powers enjoyed by human beings, but after the fall it is especially exposed to judgment.

Nakedness and exposure of our sinful flesh is now subject to shame on account of our corruption. Garcia also considers the associations of the numbers 7 and 40, highlighting possible connections with the stories of creation and flood. In both of those cases the watery womb from which the world was brought forth is exposed, first in the watery deep at the beginning of the seven days of creation, and second at the beginning of the 40 days of the floodwaters rising in Genesis chapter 7 verse 11, when the fountains of the deep burst open.

The woman would probably have had full access to the common domestic realm again

after the 7th or the 14th day, but would not have had access to the sacred realm in the celebration of peace offerings for instance, until the 40th or 80th. Why the distinction then between the sexes? Why the longer purification period for girls? The answer it seems to me is found in circumcision. The newborn infant and its mother are bound together as a pair, and not merely symbolically.

The infant in the earliest period after birth is dependent upon and frequently attached to the body of its mother. If the significance of the flesh is particularly concentrated in the woman's powers of fertility, exposed during menstruation and after childbirth, in men the powers of the flesh are particularly symbolically concentrated in the genitals. Circumcision is the cutting off of the flesh in the site where it is symbolically focused.

As the flesh is cut off there for the male child, the polluting power of the impure flesh born by the pair is then halved. After the period of her purification is complete, the woman has to offer a sacrifice. The sacrifice is the same irrespective of whether the child was male or female, although provision is made for poorer persons.

The purification offering would deal with the heightened exposure of the corruption of fallen flesh in childbirth, and with the ascension offering would have reincorporated the woman into the worshipping community. The laws concerning menstruation and childbirth paint a complicated picture of the great power and goodness of women's fertility, and the necessity of treating it with honour and not violating it, while also underlining the truth that our flesh, for all of its creational goodness, is now corrupt, subject to death, and consequently defiling. We read of the performance of this sacrifice in Luke 2, verses 21-24.

And at the end of eight days, when he was circumcised, he was called Jesus, the name given by the angel before he was conceived in the womb. And when the time came for their purification according to the law of Moses, they brought him up to Jerusalem to present him to the Lord, as it is written in the law of the Lord, every male who first opens the womb shall be called holy to the Lord, and to offer a sacrifice according to what is said in the law of the Lord, a pair of turtledoves or two young pigeons. From our knowledge of Leviticus chapter 12, we can recognise that Mary and Joseph must have been poorer.

A question to consider, how might an understanding of the presence of the flesh at the heart of human virility and fertility help us to think more properly about these things? Leviticus chapters 13 and 14 are two lengthy chapters dealing with diseases of the skin that would render the sufferer unclean, and could lead to people being excluded from the holy community. Commonly translated as leprosy, this is not the same thing as we would typically refer to under the name of leprosy. Modern leprosy is Hansen's disease, yet the description of the symptoms given in this chapter and the chapters that follow do not fit that disease.



It seems probable that we have a variety of associated skin conditions here, rather than just one single disease. This leprosy could also strike houses and clothing, not merely human flesh. There are also some notable features about the way that it is handled that should draw our attention and give us a sense of what we are and are not referring to here.

One such detail in particular is the fact that someone who is completely white on account of this disease was considered clean. We should also consider the context of these laws. As we have already seen, the laws of these chapters follow the pattern of the judgments declared upon the serpent, the woman and the man in Genesis chapter 3 after the fall.

The judgment upon the serpent connects with the clean and unclean animals, the judgment upon the woman connects with the laws concerning childbirth, and here the judgments upon the man connect with laws concerning corrupt flesh. The laws of leprosy, like the laws that follow concerning bodily discharges, have to do with the exposure of the flesh. In considering the laws concerning childbirth, we saw something similar at play there.

The laws of this chapter, as in chapter 11, are addressed by the Lord to Moses and Aaron. After Aaron has been ordained as the high priest, he is included alongside Moses as the recipient of much of the revelation of the book of Leviticus. Verses 2-8 of the chapter deal with the symptoms of a leprous disease.

It was the duty of Aaron and the priest to examine cases of suspected leprosy. In some cases the disease was quite evident, the hair in the area would have turned white and something was clearly wrong beneath the surface. However, in other cases things were not quite so clear.

The priest would examine and then quarantine the person for seven days, waiting to see whether the disease spread, whether an eruption seemingly on the surface of the skin would actually reach deeper and spread further. If, in a further examination after the quarantine of seven days, the condition did not seem to have spread or worsened, the person would be quarantined for seven more days, examined again, and then if it hadn't spread by that point, he was considered clean. The person could then wash their clothes and enter fully back into life among the people.

If the examination was not satisfactory, however, the person would be pronounced unclean with a leprous disease. The rest of the chapter provides the principles of examination in a number of different sorts of cases that might be presented. In verses 9-17 there is a particular emphasis upon the presence of raw flesh.

If the leprous disease has covered the entire body of the infected person and he is entirely white, then he is considered clean. Perhaps the whiteness is what is left when

the disease has run its course, and the raw flesh is the sign that it is still ongoing. In verses 18-46 we have a series of potential complications of other conditions.

Someone who has an infected boil that becomes leprous, the infected burn, the head rash, the discoloured skin, and then the case of baldness. John Kleine identifies five secondary symptoms confirming the presence of a leprous skin disease. First, change of skin colour from the normal pink-white.

Second, change of hair colour from dark to white or yellow. Third, subsidence to the flesh under the infected area. Fourth, spread of the infected area.

And fifth, ulceration of the skin in a discoloured area. From verse 47 we have a list of other potential cases of leprosy. Leprosy in garments, fabrics, and things made of skin.

Presumably these are cases of a sort of corrupting mould. Leprosy seems to involve something of a dying off of flesh in a living person. The leper might perhaps be compared to a living corpse.

The language used of leprosy in verse 2 is of a plague or a stroke of the Lord. This is the same language that is used of the killing of the firstborn in Exodus chapter 11 verse 1. The corpse-like quality of the person afflicted with leprosy is something to which we are alerted in Numbers chapter 12 verses 8 to 12. After Miriam spoke out against Moses there, she was struck with leprosy.

Why then were you not afraid to speak against my servant Moses? And the anger of the Lord was kindled against them, and he departed. When the cloud removed from over the tent, behold, Miriam was leprous like snow. And Aaron turned toward Miriam, and behold, she was leprous.

And Aaron said to Moses, O my Lord, do not punish us because we have done foolishly and have sinned. Let her not be as one dead, whose flesh is half eaten away when he comes out of his mother's womb. There are a few things further to observe here, beyond the comparison of the person afflicted with leprosy and the corpse.

As Rabbi David Foreman notes, the corpse being referred to in Numbers chapter 12 is the corpse of the stillborn infant in particular. Leprosy here is also something that the Lord strikes people with. It seems to be a powerful exposure of the corruption of the flesh.

And in addition to rendering the body of the person afflicted with it akin to a dead corpse, it also results in a sort of social death, as they are cut off from others and must declare themselves to be unclean. In Deuteronomy chapter 24 verses 8-9 we read, Take care in a case of leprous disease to be very careful to do according to all that the Levitical priests shall direct you. As I commanded them, so you shall be careful to do.

Remember what the Lord your God did to Miriam on the way as you came out of Egypt. The second part of this instruction seems to fit oddly with the first. While the Lord certainly struck Miriam with leprosy, there's nothing obviously about the fact that the Lord struck Miriam with leprosy that teaches the people to do what the Levitical priests direct them to do.

Another odd feature of that particular text is that it seems to be part of the section dealing with bearing false witness against one's neighbour. How do we make sense of all of this? It seems to me that considering the occasion for the judgement of Miriam will help us to find the answer. Miriam is judged because she spoke against Moses.

One can imagine the people, dealing with the onerous demands of the quarantine for suspected cases of leprosy, would be tempted to speak against the Levitical priests, much as Miriam had spoken against Moses. However, just as the Lord struck Miriam on account of her slander of Moses, so the people should beware of slandering the leaders that the Lord had appointed to this particular task. An important feature of a biblical text concerning leprosy, something that we might have been clued into by the way that it's introduced as a plague or a stroke, is the way that it is frequently described as something that the Lord brings upon people as a judgement for their trespasses.

The person who trespasses on holy things has the corruption of their flesh break out and be revealed. One of the signs that the Lord gave to Moses for the people in Exodus chapter 4 was leprosy on his skin as he placed his hand next to his heart. When he placed it in and took it out again, it was restored like his other flesh.

This might be seen as a sign of purification more generally for a sinful people. In 2 Kings chapter 5, Gehazi, the servant of Elisha, was struck with leprosy for his sin concerning Naaman, taking treasures from Naaman and lying about them to Elisha. Another example of someone being struck with leprosy is in 2 Chronicles chapter 26 verses 16-20 concerning King Uzziah.

Now he had a censer in his hand to burn incense. And when he became angry with the priests, leprosy broke out on his forehead in the presence of the priests in the house of the Lord by the altar of incense. And Azariah the chief priest and all the priests looked at him, and behold, he was leprous in his forehead.

And they rushed him out quickly, and he himself hurried to go out, because the Lord had struck him. Leprosy then seems to be connected with the stroke of the Lord in judgment upon someone. It is often connected to a signal judgment of the Lord, but it is an apt manifestation of judgment, because leprosy more generally represents the corruption and death of the flesh.

The death of the flesh spiritually is reflected physically. Like the rest of the surrounding commandments, the laws here for leprosy concern the character of the flesh as a result

of sin and the fall. Flesh is a bearer of death, and when the flesh is exposed, whether in its fountain in fertility, in its corruption through skin disease, or through omissions of the flesh, in chapter 15, it ends up cutting the person off from the presence of the Lord.

A question to consider, what can we learn from the cases in the New Testament where Jesus deals with lepers? The laws concerning leprosy, which began in Leviticus chapter 13, continue in chapter 14. Here, however, Moses alone is addressed, rather than Moses and Aaron together. Leprosy, as we have seen, is a breaking out of the flesh.

The person struck with leprosy has corpse-like qualities. In several cases in Scripture, leprosy is seen as a particular judgment of the Lord, particularly upon someone who has transgressed, by trespassing upon something that is holy, or committing some other form of sacrilege. Miriam is struck with leprosy in Numbers chapter 12 for speaking against Moses, the Lord's servant.

In 2 Chronicles chapter 26, King Uzziah is struck with leprosy for his sacrilegious action in the temple. Gehazi is struck with leprosy in 2 Kings chapter 5 for seeking to take some Naaman's treasure and lying to Elisha. When Aaron described Miriam after she had been struck with leprosy in Numbers chapter 12, he compared her to the corpse of a stillborn infant.

The corpse-like quality of the person who has been struck by leprosy is particularly important to notice. This is something that comes out in the parallels between the laws in this chapter and the law concerning the ritual of the red heifer and the water of cleansing in Numbers chapter 19. In verses 2 to 12 of that chapter we read, This is the statute of the law that the Lord has commanded.

Tell the people of Israel to bring you a red heifer without defect, in which there is no blemish, and on which a yoke has never come, and you shall give it to Eliezer the priest, and it shall be taken outside the camp and slaughtered before him. And Eliezer the priest shall take some of its blood with his finger and sprinkle some of its blood toward the front of the tent of meeting seven times. And the heifer shall be burned in his sight, its skin, its flesh, and its blood with its dung shall be burned.

And the priest shall take cedarwood and hyssop and scarlet yarn and throw them into the fire burning the heifer. Then the priest shall wash his clothes and bathe his body in water, and afterward he may come into the camp. But the priest shall be unclean until evening.

The one who burns the heifer shall wash his clothes in water and bathe his body in water and shall be unclean until evening. And a man who is clean shall gather up the ashes of the heifer and deposit them outside the camp in a clean place, and they shall be kept for the water for impurity for the congregation of the people of Israel. It is a sin offering.

And the one who gathers the ashes of the heifer shall wash his clothes and be unclean until evening. And this shall be a perpetual statute for the people of Israel and for the stranger who sojourns among them. Whoever touches the dead body of any person shall be unclean seven days.

He shall cleanse himself with the water on the third day and on the seventh day, and so be clean. But if he does not cleanse himself on the third day and on the seventh day, he will not become clean. The law concerning the red heifer involves cedarwood and hyssop and scarlet yarn all joined with the red heifer in the fire.

In the law for the cleansing of the man with leprosy, there is also cedarwood and scarlet yarn and hyssop, and these are all joined together being dipped in the bloodied water with the live bird. The importance of cleansing on the seventh day for the man who is corpse defiled also recalls the process of cleansing for the man with leprosy here. Leprosy then can be better understood when we relate it to corpse defilement.

If you were afflicted with leprosy, you yourself became like a living corpse. This was not merely a physical condition. On account of leprosy, a person could also be cut off from the camp, being limited in the sorts of social activities that they could participate in.

The cleansing of the leper, of course, was not the healing of the leper. It was rather the means by which the leper could be declared clean and reintegrated into the life of the worshipping community that he had been separated from. The ritual for the cleansing of the leper has a number of elements that besides reminding us of the ritual of Numbers chapter 19, might recall the story of the exodus.

In Joshua chapter 2, the scarlet cord in Rahab's window serves a similar purpose to the blood on the doorpost and the lintel in the original Passover. Besides Numbers chapter 19, the law of the red heifer, and this chapter, the only other reference to hyssop in the Pentateuch is found in Exodus chapter 12, verse 22. In that context, the Israelites were shut up within their houses until the morning came.

In this case, the leper is shut outside of the camp until his purification is complete. The similarity of the ritual involving the dipping, the hyssop and the blood should be quite apparent to us, and the presence of cedar wood here would remind us of the importance of the lintels and the doorposts. So what exactly is taking place? Rabbi David Foreman has helpfully suggested that we see this as a sort of Passover in miniature occurring for the person who is being cleansed of his leper's uncleanness.

The nation was first born in the events of the Passover and the crossing of the Red Sea. They were locked up within their houses, celebrating the Passover with blood on the doorposts and the lintels, while the Egyptians received the stroke of the Lord, the great plague of the death of the firstborn. After that great final plague, they would go through those bloody doors, go through the passage through the Red Sea, and be born as a new

nation.

The story of the Exodus, of course, is filled with these themes of birth. Israel is the Lord's firstborn, and the law concerning the firstborn is placed bang in the middle of the events of the Passover. and the crossing of the Red Sea.

The firstborn who opens the womb helps to explain what's taking place in the Exodus. Thinking back to the comparison that Aaron makes in the case of Miriam, the person who's afflicted with leprosy is like a stillborn Israelite, a person who has not fully participated in that event of national birth. Consequently, in the ritual for cleansing the leper, there is a sort of Passover in miniature performed for such a person.

The familiar elements associated with the Passover are brought back in, and now as they are reincorporated into the community of Israel, they are made beneficiaries of that salvation once again. At the Passover, Egypt's firstborn received the stroke, or plague, of death, while Israel was born as the firstborn of the Lord. One nation, as it were, was rendered stillborn, whereas the other was born into new life.

And there is a similar division between the birds in this case. One of the birds is killed in an earthenware vessel over fresh water. The water, we might recognize, has been turned to blood, and the live bird dipped in that blood is set loose.

We might think about the way that the Red Sea became the grave for the pursuing Egyptians, whereas it was the means of release for the Israelites. Following the Passover, Israel had to celebrate the Feast of Unleavened Bread for seven days, and after the leper was first cleansed, he had to wait outside of his tent for seven days. That period both began and ended with washing his clothes, and shaving off all of his hair, and bathing himself in water.

If purging out leaven is the way that you cut off a principle of growth as it plays out in food, shaving all of one's hair is a way that that can be done for the human person. To be fully incorporated into the life of Israel's worshipping community once again, the man to be cleansed of leprosy needed to offer a reparation sacrifice. This suggests, as we have seen in other ways, the possibility that there is some association between leprosy and the suspicion of the trespass against the Lord in desecrating holy things.

We should also note the similarities between the ritual prescribed here and that prescribed for the Nazarite who had become corpse defiled in Numbers 6, verses 9-12. We should also recognize in the placing of blood on the extremities of the cleansed person's body a similarity with the ordination rite for the priests in Leviticus 8, verses 22-23. The cleansed leper also has oil applied to those same parts.

The body of the priest was being consecrated for divine service. The body of the cleansed leper needs to be re-consecrated as a member of the people after being defiled

on account of its corpse-like quality. As in the case of the laws concerning childbirth, provision is made for those who cannot afford the more expensive offering.

The rest of the chapter gives laws for leprous houses. Besides persons, garments and houses could also be infected with leprosy. This probably suggests that we're talking about a number of conditions that are related in their appearance but different in their underlying causes.

The corruption of houses probably involves a sort of mould or fungus. As in the case of the inspection of the leprous person in the previous chapter, the inspection typically involved a number of stages. After an initial examination, there was a further examination on the seventh day.

If the disease spread, then the stones and mortar in which the leprosy had spread were unclean and needed to be removed and destroyed outside of the camp. Such a house could defile people who dwelt in it or things that were kept in it. If, after the initial removal of the stones, it was found to be infected again, the house was condemned to be destroyed.

However, if the disease was not found to have spread in any way, the house was to be cleansed with a very similar ritual to that used for the cleansed leper. We should here consider the great similarities of this ritual, not merely to the events of the Passover, but also to the ritual of the Day of Atonement, which appears in a couple of chapters' time. In Leviticus 16, verses 8-10 we read, And Aaron shall cast lots over the two goats, one lot for the Lord and the other lot for Azazel.

And Aaron shall present the goat on which the lot fell for the Lord and use it as a sin offering. 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. A cleansing ritual involving the sprinkling of blood and the division of two paired animals, one being set free into the wilderness and the other being killed, should help us to see a connection between the law of the Day of Atonement and the law for the cleansing of houses with leprosy.

What happens to the tabernacle also happens to the houses of individual Israelites. This helps us to see something of an extension of principles of holiness. The holiness of the camp at its very heart, in the tabernacle itself, has some sort of analogy in every house of the Israelites.

The ritual for the cleansing of the leper's house is a sort of miniature Day of Atonement for the individual Israelite, just as the cleansing of the leper is a miniature Passover for that Israelite. A question to consider, how might we see in Jesus' cleansing of the temple and the Gospels some sort of connection to the cleansing of leper's houses? Leviticus chapter 15 comes in a sequence of passages concerning the corruption of the flesh,

passages which largely follow the order of the judgments in Genesis chapter 3 after the fall. There was a fall in the new garden of the tabernacle with the sin of Nadab and Abihu, the chapters that follow that address the reality of uncleanness in the world, the uncleanness of unclean animals and animal corpses, related to the uncleanness of the serpent who crawls on his belly and eats dust.

The uncleanness of the fleshly fountain of humanity in childbirth is discussed in chapter 12. The uncleanness of the flesh manifested in the skin condition of leprosy, with its symptoms that are reminiscent of a dead body, is addressed in chapters 13 and 14. And chapter 15 concerns the reality of bodily emissions and their uncleanness.

As such emissions come from the flesh, the corruption of fallen flesh is especially exposed in them, and they must be dealt with accordingly. Leviticus chapter 15 is structured chiastically, as a book-ended structure, or a there-and-back-again structure. It deals with abnormal or chronic discharges at each extremity, in verses 2-15 and 25-30, with ordinary and short-term discharges within, verses 16-17 and 19-24, and the case of emissions in ordinary sexual relations in the centre, in verse 18.

As Mark Garcia writes, the first and final sections of the chapter describe physiological settings that are pathological. The reproductive system is unsound. Neither discharge can lead to the creation of life.

The two sections that flank the centre of the passage are, in Garcia's words, addressing situations that are not pathological, not life-threatening or degenerative, nor physiologically abnormal, but, while typical, they are not the ideal conditions for reproduction. Verse 18 of the chapter, he argues, represents the fulcrum of the chapter, and it portrays sexual reproductive physiology in its fully functional setting. Each individual in the scene evidences the physiology appropriate for the ideal sexual physiological setting for intercourse, and more specifically reproduction, ejaculation of seed by the male, and the absence of menstrual discharge in the female.

The chiastic structure of the passage, with cases of the most severe impurity at each end, cases of lesser impurity within, and the case of the least impurity of all the cases discussed at the centre, presents us with a sort of concentric textual structure of impurity, but still presses the question upon us of why ordinary sexual relations are causes of uncleanness at all. Many of the cases discussed in this chapter are cases where the reproductive system is somehow awry. The fountains of life are overflowing, but no life is being brought forth.

Even in the more physiologically ordinary situations of the emission of semen or menstruation, this is still the case. We should also observe the symmetry of the passage. It deals with abnormal and normal male genital discharges on one side, normal and abnormal female genital discharges on the other, and with sexual relations between the two sexes at the centre.



While the male organ can serve in giving rise to new life, in both pathological and ordinary conditions, it also brings forth defiling substances and waste. The same is true of women's bodies. Even in their most ideal operations, in procreative sexual acts, the fact that human bodies are corrupt flesh is still emphasised.

The life that we perpetuate through procreation is a life that has been corrupted by sin and death. Our genitals, while remarkable organs of procreation, are also unruly, unclean, and after the fall subject to a sense of shame. There is a sort of ambivalence here that should be instructive for our theologies of sexuality.

While contemporary Christians are often concerned to emphasise the goodness of sexuality, and there are healthy theological instincts at work there, it is important not to lose sight of the ambivalence of sexuality, and of the reality of the flesh at the heart of it all. The Christian tradition, however, has often given a lot more weight to this ambivalence, recognising the way that the unruly, corrupt, and sinful flesh is present at the heart of the garden of sexuality. Yes, sexual relations are good, but within them we are especially exposed to the reality of flesh, not only in its potency and creational goodness, but also in its weakness, corruption, and fallenness.

The laws of Leviticus chapter 15 would have forced the Israelites, both male and female, to reckon with this reality in their lives. On a regular basis they would have to deal with uncleanness on account of discharges, whether in ordinary sexual relations or in other situations. Through such practices, in a context where nonetheless was the great celebration of marriage and childbearing, they would have had much occasion to reflect upon both the creational goodness and the fallenness and corruptness and weakness of flesh and its sexual character.

Jacob Milgram argues that we need to be careful not to over-read the degree to which impurity could be communicated by a menstrual woman. He writes, Note that there is no prohibition barring the menstruant from touching anyone. This can only mean that in fact her hands do not transmit impurity.

The consequence is that she is not banished, but remains at home. Neither is she isolated from her family. She is free to prepare their meals and perform her household chores.

They, in turn, merely have to avoid lying in her bed, sitting in her chair, and touching her. Thus human physiology may have resolved the exegetical enigma. The key factor is the difference in the intensity of the impurity source.

Therefore, anyone who touches her contracts a lesser impurity than one who touches anything beneath her. This leniency contrasts markedly with the fear of the menstruant's touch, and even of her breath, that prevailed elsewhere, and is attested in rabbinic folklore. When we are reading such teaching concerning the flesh and its corrupt

character, we should be careful to consider it in light of the New Testament teaching that we are not in the flesh but in the spirit, while aspects of the flesh continue to be operative in our lives, not least in our sexuality, by the spirit we have received a greater cleansing than any of those on offer in the Old Covenant.

A question to consider. Where in the Gospels do we see Jesus dealing with a case of impurity such as those described in this chapter, and what can we learn from that episode? The Day of Atonement, or more properly the Day of Covering in Leviticus chapter 16, is at the very heart of the sacrificial system. It's at the centre of the Book of Leviticus and of the Pentateuch as a whole.

It's a solemn Sabbath, or maybe the Sabbath of Sabbaths. It's a ritual of cosmic significance, and its place within the Pentateuch maybe suggests its importance. It's a day of forgiveness, a day of judgement, and a day of drawing near to God, and it represents, among other things, the great awaited Day of the Lord, the day where all things are set right in the cosmos.

It occurs nine days after the Feast of Trumpets. In Leviticus chapter 25 verses 8 to 10 we see it's also the beginning of the year of Jubilee. It's a time of restoration of all things.

It's a time of judgement, and it's a time in which God draws near to his people. The point of it is drawing near, a sort of drawing near that was lost at the fall, and that failed in the actions of Nadab and Abihu, who drew near on their own terms. This, in fact, is a direct response to the death of Nadab and Abihu, presumably on the same day.

It's not just a response to Nadab and Abihu in particular, though. It's about the uncleanness of Israel more generally, and in the previous chapters that uncleanness has been described in considerable detail. Going back to Genesis chapter 3, which I've already argued is a paradigm for thinking about what takes place in the actions of Nadab and Abihu, the fall of man recapitulated, we can notice a correspondence between the judgements upon the serpent and the human beings and the actions of God towards them with chapters 11 to 16 of the book of Leviticus.

So chapter 11 concerns forbidden foods, and also concerns judgement in the animal realm on the basis of the animal's connection with the dust. The serpent is condemned to crawl on his belly and eat dust, and the animals associated with the serpent in Leviticus chapter 11 are unclean and not to be eaten. In chapter 12, there's the laws concerning childbirth, corresponding with the judgement upon the woman in Genesis chapter 3. And then there's the judgement upon the man and death.

In chapters 13 to 15, there are the laws for skin disease, expulsion from the house, as the leper's house is to be torn down, and then there is also the laws concerning bodily emissions, the body as a site of uncleanness. And then that leads into chapter 16. That gives a background for understanding why the uncleanness of Israel is such a problem.

This chapter then, seen against the backdrop of Eden, gives us a sense of what's taking place. Man is re-entering the presence of God, getting nearer to the presence of God than ever before. This is akin to Moses going up Mount Sinai and spending time with the Lord there.

And here is a ritual that ensures the communication and fellowship between God and his people on a yearly basis. Adam is re-entering the presence of God after the fall. Now we speak of the Day of Atonement typically, but a better understanding would be the Day of Covering.

When we talk about covering, you could think about covering for someone. You stand in their place, maybe you pay their bill at the restaurant. It can also be associated with clothing.

And in the story of Eden, there is covering given after all of these other events have taken place, after the fall, after the judgments, and as they're about to be expelled. God gives them covering. And in the same way, in the Day of Covering, God gives his people covering.

And that covering enables them to come near to God, to have fellowship with God. Animals symbolically substitute for man. Although that substitution is limited, they can substitute to a degree.

As a symbolic substitute, an animal could go into God's presence, being taken up in smoke into God's presence, as a substitute for the worshipper. The worshipper knew that that was what God required of him, and he could offer the animal as a symbolic substitute for himself. There's also a particular part of the tabernacle furniture that is important on this day, the covering of the Ark of the Covenant.

Commonly called the Mercy Seat, but connected with the same word and concept of covering. Just as God covered the shame and nakedness of Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden, so God covers the transgressions and the iniquities of his people, so that they can draw near to him. God then is providing a way for people to come near to him.

In a way that Nadab and Abihu failed, God is opening up a route. And this is also a rebooting of the system. The system absorbs impurity over the period of the year, and something needs to be done to expel that, to drive out the impurity from the system.

It's a sort of, have you tried turning it off and on again day. It's a day where things are rebooted and set back to their original state. What the Day of Atonement involves in effect is an intense purification offering.

It's an extreme purification offering, and the mourning and the fasting of the people is associated with that. Whatever is not cleansed during the year is dealt with in this one fell swoop on the Day of Covering. It's the only time of the year that Aaron would go into

the Holy of Holies, and that nearness to God is found with the forgiveness.

He must strip himself of his clothes of glory and beauty, and bathe, and wear simple, holy linen garments. He offers a bull as a purification sacrifice for himself. He's defiled by his own sin, and also the sin of the people, and he must open up a way for himself to enter into the presence of God, with the blood rite of the sin offering, or the purification offering.

He brings the blood into the Holy of Holies. The only time he goes into the Holy of Holies is on this day, and he brings it with a cloud of incense. Now Nadab and Abihu brought in incense to the presence of God, and were destroyed with fire from the presence of the Lord.

Now Aaron takes incense in a censer, and he uses coals from the fire before the Lord, from the golden altar of incense, and puts incense on that altar as well. This creates a cloud of incense that, as he goes into the Holy of Holies, will go up above him and shield him, as it were, from the presence of God's glorious cloud. He then sprinkles the blood of the bull that was offered as the purification offering for himself upon the mercy seat seven times.

This is followed by the rite of the goats, and there are two male goats, taken as a sin offering for Israel, a sin or a purification offering. Now those two goats belong together. They're both goats for a single sin offering, but there's a division between them.

There's a pairing of the goats. Now we see two rams used for the ascension offering later on, but those aren't a pair of rams as these goats are. These two goats belong together.

They're a pair, and one of them has one fate, the other has another fate, and they're divided by lot. There's nothing about the goats themselves that justifies their division. It's merely that division by lot.

And it's to highlight that these two belong together as part of a single rite. I spoke earlier of the Day of Atonement or the Day of Coverings as an intensified purification offering, and this helps us to understand what's taking place here. These two goats belong together.

They're divided from each other, and they are both used to perform the sin offering. One performs the sin offering in an intense way for the people, but the other goat bears those sins that cannot be dealt with by the purification offering itself, by expelling those from the camp. That goat is for Azazel.

It belongs to the defiled place. Maybe Azazel is seen as some sort of demon of the wilderness, Satan in the wilderness. I've suggested elsewhere that this might help us to understand Christ being expelled into the wilderness after the people confess their sins in John's baptism, and Christ goes out to meet Satan in the wilderness.

The wilderness is the demonic realm, the realm of chaos and disorder. It's a realm that is empty and unformed. It's a return to the original chaos of the creation.

Aaron performs a similar blood ritual with the goat for the purification offering, the goat on which the lot fell for that. He brings the blood into, again, the Holy of Holies, and sprinkles it on the covering, and he also sprinkles it, or places blood, upon the horns of the golden altar of incense in the holy place. Then he goes out and puts blood on the horns of the brazen altar in the courtyard, blood of the bull that he offered for himself, and then also blood of the goat that was offered for the people.

Once he's done all this cleansing, he deals with the other half of the goat purification offering. He takes the goat upon which the lot had been cast for Azazel, and confesses the sins and iniquities and transgressions of Israel over it. This isn't just for regular impurities.

It also deals with the high-handed sins and rebellions of Israel, and it was an association of Israel with that goat. Israel is associated with the goat, as Aaron's hand is placed upon it, and he confesses Israel's sin. It's a symbolic substitute.

Israel should see itself going out into the wilderness, being expelled from the camp on the basis of its sins. Ordinary purification offerings were burnt up in a clean place outside of the camp, and this happens with the bull and the goat of the purification offerings on the Day of Atonement. But the goat for Azazel is expelled into the unformed and empty waste of the wilderness.

It vanishes, as it were, into the maw of chaos. It's returned to the deep, the abyss. High-handed sins have no sacrifice for them, but they could be reduced in status by repentance.

And this sacrifice, this whole procedure, this ceremony, dealt with the high-handed sins that hadn't been dealt with anywhere else, all those things that were left over and impure, standing between God and His people. The people are called to afflict themselves on this day, to confess their sins and to afflict themselves. And it's an important part of the ritual that we don't usually think about enough.

The rituals of the sacrifices were not intended to be mechanical or magical, to just turn a lever and have the result that you want. God could reject sacrifice. Sacrifices more generally, and the Day of Atonement more particularly, involved a ceremony in which people's hearts were called to be involved.

They were called to draw near with their hearts, not just in these symbolic substitutes. Now, doing the ritual properly really mattered, as we see with Nadab and Abihu. If you do it wrongly, you could even lose your life.

The ritual really changed something. It really changed something about God's

relationship with His people. But that ritual required a corresponding state of heart.

It had to be confirmed in Israel's afflicting of itself for their sins. Now, we can think of this in terms of any sort of ceremony. If you had a wedding ceremony and then went on as if nothing had happened, the wedding ceremony isn't magic.

Rather, the wedding ceremony is an invitation, an encouragement, a framework within which everyone is taught how to act differently. After the wedding ceremony, no one acts in the same way again. Bride and bridegroom are no longer just two people who love each other very much, they're husband and wife, and everyone else around them treats them differently.

The state treats them differently, their neighbours treat them differently, their families treat them differently. The man leaves his father and mother and is joined to his wife, and the two become one flesh. That's an amazing thing for a ceremony to perform, but it never performs it in a purely objective way, like turning a handle, and suddenly, poof, man and wife, irrespective of how everyone lives or fails to live in terms of that.

This, then, is the case for the sacrificial system too. Animals symbolically substitute for man, but they can't ultimately deal with sins. The blood of bulls and goats cannot take away sins, as the author of Hebrews makes clear.

Something more is needed. The animals were not a helper suitable to man. Analogies can be drawn between man and the animals, and they can symbolically substitute for him, but they cannot truly substitute for him.

This ritual, then, among other things, anticipates a greater dealing with sin, a greater day of atonement, a day when those things that cannot be cleansed by the blood of bulls and goats will be cleansed by blood greater than that. A question to consider. One of the curious features of the law in Scripture is the way that the law often can connect with narrative.

In the book of Genesis, I believe there are a number of stories that anticipate the day of atonement in different ways. I think that two of these are found in the story of Jacob and Esau, and also in the story of Judah and Tamar in Genesis chapter 38. What are some of the parallels that you can see between these stories and the day of atonement? And are there any other such stories that you notice in Scripture? How can the ritual of the day of atonement help us to read these stories better? Leviticus chapter 17 to 27 have commonly been known as the holiness code.

It's seen to involve a movement out from the focus upon ritual of the first half of the book into a much more expansive ethical and moral concern with holiness. However, this understanding establishes a false breach between the concerns of the first half of the book and those of the latter half. Rather, a proper approach to ritual should inculcate a

sensitivity to moral and ethical concerns.

Ethics and ritual are mutually constitutive. A proper practice of ritual is confirmed in ethical practice, and true ethical concerns will come with an increased sensitivity to the importance of the ritual. While the first half of the book then focused upon the priests and centered upon the service of the tabernacle, chapter 17 addresses the broader people of Israel.

Chapter 17 contains five different commands, each introduced with something like the expression, if anyone of the house of Israel. So there's the first one in verses 3 to 7, the second in verse 8 to 9, third in verses 10 to 12, fourth in verses 13 and 14, and then the fifth and final one in verses 15 and 16. These commands come with warnings upon disobedience, and most include a rationale for obedience.

The central command concerns the eating of blood, which should remind us of Genesis chapter 9 verses 3 to 6, which is in the background of the commandments here. Genesis chapter 9 verses 3 to 6, Every moving thing that lives shall be food for you, and as I gave you the green plants, I give you everything. But you shall not eat flesh with its life, that is its blood.

And for your lifeblood I will require a reckoning. From every beast I will require it, and from man. From his fellow man I will require a reckoning for the life of man.

Whoever sheds the blood of man, by man shall his blood be shed. For God made man in his own image. The first command of chapter 17 is that all slaughtered oxen, lambs or goats must be offered as sacrifices to the Lord.

Shedding the blood of an animal is spoken of in a way similar to the shedding of the blood of a human being, as we see in Genesis chapter 9 verse 6 and Numbers chapter 35 verse 33. You shall not pollute the land in which you live, for blood pollutes the land, and no atonement can be made for the land for the blood that is shed in it, except by the blood of the one who shed it. The person who breaks this command will be cut off from among his people.

This may be a reference to being exiled or possibly not being acknowledged by God, possibly not having offspring. There are a number of other theories. The purpose of this command is that slaughtered oxen, lambs and goats should be sacrificed to the Lord as peace offerings.

The peace offering, certain parts of it were offered to the Lord, but the worshipper could eat most of it, and the blood would also be used in a blood rite. However, the teaching here is expanded to make clear that it is also designed to stop the alternative pagan practice that some of the Israelites were presumably engaging in, of sacrificing to goat demons in the wilderness. The association of goats with demons in the wilderness may

help us better to understand the significance of Azazel in the law of the Day of Coverings in the previous chapter.

The wilderness is associated with demons, and goat demons, we see this elsewhere in Scripture. A number of commentators point to Isaiah 13, verse 21, and 34, verse 14 in this connection. The wilderness, then, is a realm of demons and wild animals, and the goat sent out into the wilderness is expelled from the realm of the Lord's presence into the realm of the demons and into the realm of the wild beasts.

The purpose of this law in chapter 17, then, seems to be designed in part to guard against a particular form of idolatry. It also extends the logic of the sacrificial system out into the more general life of the people in the camp. The second commandment in this chapter extends the principle of the first, including the sojourner.

All sacrifices and ascension offerings must be offered to the Lord. The Lord has a complete monopoly on sacrifice. And the central commandment of this chapter is the prohibition on consuming blood.

Once again, this is founded upon Genesis, chapter 9. The blood taboo highlights God's ownership of all life. And also the analogy between human life and animal life. You can't eat the animal's blood.

The soul is in its blood. There's a continuity between the life of animals and the life of human beings. And life belongs to God.

It's not for us to dispose of in whatever way we wish. The laws of Leviticus 11 list clean and unclean animals. There were also sacrificial and non-sacrificial animals.

The key sacrificial animals were the ox, the goat, and the lamb. And then there were secondary sacrificial animals in the two birds that could be offered. The turtle dove and the pigeon.

Each of the ox, the goat, and the lamb had to be offered as peace offerings if they were to be eaten. However, the fourth commandment of the chapter teaches that clean but non-sacrificial animals had to have their blood poured out and covered up with earth. Partly because that would prevent the blood being used for any wrong purpose.

The rationale for this, again, is that the life of the animal is in the blood. Now, we can risk taking this statement in an overly literal way, worrying that scripture is teaching that the life of the animal is literally contained in the blood in some way that might be proven or disproven with modern science. However, our science paints far too narrow a picture of the world to understand such a commandment.

Life is bound up with the blood in much the same way as the person is seen in their face. It's not a literal scientific connection, it's just a very natural way of seeing the world.



Finally, the person eating an animal that died by itself, or that was torn apart by animals, should wash his clothes and bathe in water and be unclean until evening.

It wasn't clear whether such an eater had been polluted by eating blood or not, so they had to be treated as unclean and cleanse themselves. There are later laws given in Deuteronomy chapter 12, which need to be read alongside this chapter for an understanding of concessions that were made for settled life in the land. Deuteronomy chapter 12, verses 15 following or the contribution that you present.

If the place that the Lord your God will choose to put his name there is too far from you, then you may kill any of your herd or your flock which the Lord has given you, as I have commanded you, and you may eat within your towns whenever you desire. Just as the gazelle or the deer is eaten, so you may eat of it. The unclean and the clean alike may eat of it.

Only be sure that you do not eat the blood, for the blood is the life, and you shall not eat the life with the flesh. You shall not eat it, you shall pour it out on the earth like water. You shall not eat it, that all may go well with you and with your children after you, when you do what is right in the sight of the Lord.

But the holy things that are due from you, and your vow offerings, you shall take and you shall go to the place that the Lord will choose, and offer your burnt offerings, the flesh and the blood, on the altar of the Lord your God. The blood of your sacrifices shall be poured out on the altar of the Lord your God, but the flesh you may eat. Be careful and obey all these words that I command you, that it may go well with you and with your children after you forever, when you do what is good and right in the sight of the Lord your God.

The killing of animals and the eating of meat was seen as religious within the ancient world, and in many places down to the modern day. It's a time when man is reminded of the reality of the mortality of flesh, and the mysterious commonality of all creaturely life. It reminds us of human power over the animal world, the power that man has to act almost as a god over the animal world, a great power.

And it reminds us also of the source of all life, both of animal life and of human life. God didn't forbid meat eating, but permitted it, particularly after the flood. However, meat eating is a matter of considerable gravity.

The entire sacrificial system both permitted and prescribed the killing and the eating of animals. However, the logic of the sacrificial system depended upon a recognition of both the analogy between animal life and human life, because if there were no analogy, there'd be no way that an animal could substitute for a human being. But it also highlighted the key difference between animals and human beings.

Human beings alone were made in the image of God, so although animals and their blood can symbolically substitute for mankind, their blood cannot truly deal with sin. And teaching people to take the killing and the eating of animals very seriously is one of the ways that the logic of the sacrificial system more generally is underlined. Taking life is a matter of extreme seriousness, whether it's a human being or whether it's an animal.

And because of the gravity of taking life, when an Israelite puts his hand upon an animal and that animal is killed and taken up into God's presence in the ascension offering, for instance, that worshipper should recognise the weightiness of what is just taking place. A question to consider, how might a clearer understanding of Leviticus' teaching on the slaughtering and eating of meat inform our own eating practices and our treatment of animals? Leviticus chapter 18 addresses the principle of holiness to the realm of sexual relations. This part of Leviticus is the most extensive body of such material within the Old Testament.

It presents the relationships that are forbidden for various reasons, whether due to incest, adultery, sodomy, bestiality or some other reason. The passage is bookended by statements concerning Israel's need to be distinct from the surrounding nations in verses 1-5 and 23-30. The sexual laws, among other things, helped to mark Israel out from the other nations that surrounded them.

They needed to keep these laws if they wanted to retain their right to the land. And these laws seemed to have more general applicability beyond Israel, as the other nations before them were cast out of the land for failing to keep them. Verses 6-16 concern different forms of incest, verses 17-18 relations with women who are too closely related, and verses 19-23 forbidden relations with other parties.

The consequences of breaking these rules would be either being cut off from the people as an individual or being cut off from the land as a nation, the annihilation of the social existence of Israel. The same sort of concerns about proper priestly behaviour in relation to the tabernacle that we see in the earlier chapters of Leviticus are here seen in the context of the concern for proper sexual behaviour of the people in the land. Leviticus 18 explores what it means to have sexual union with another, appropriately and inappropriately.

In many ways we could see this as exploring the logic behind a man leaving his father and mother and becoming one flesh with his wife, as is described in Genesis chapter 2. An incestuous union is a failure to leave father and mother. In incest, a family turns in upon itself. It's a failure to grow outwards, it's a turning inwards and the family consumes itself from within.

Marriage has a sort of sacrificial character. It's the division of an old union of flesh and a ritual passage into a new union. A man leaving his father and mother breaks an old union and becoming one flesh with his wife, there's a new union that's formed.

Sexual relations must navigate the reality of commonality and also otherness. So incest and homosexual relations are an inversion of sexual relations. It's a failure to relate to otherness.

It's perversely sexualising the life of the family and also the solidarity of one's own sex. On the other hand, something like bestiality is sexual behaviour where no real union is possible, as the otherness is too extreme. Marrying outside of the covenant would be similar.

Israel was generally endogamous, it was marrying within itself. But we see cases like Ruth who marries into Israel from without, she's a Moabite. The important discriminating factor in such cases is not biology and ancestry but membership of the covenant.

So it's appropriate for Boaz to marry Ruth as Ruth has committed herself to the God of Israel. However, to marry outside of Israel to someone who worships foreign gods is a violation of the covenant. While people strictly had to marry outside of their family, they were generally expected to marry within the clan or nation.

This wasn't a rule but it was generally expected, it was the norm. Marriages to cousins weren't opposed either. However, if we look at these commandments there are some things that stand out to us or should stand out to us.

Perhaps one of these noteworthy features is the fact that every member of the congregation stands in the same way in relationship to them. There isn't a division on the basis of class nor is there some division on the basis of ethnicity. This entire body of laws is founded upon a repeated emphasis upon the Lord's sovereign claim upon his people and upon humanity more generally.

In the repeated I am the Lord statement. It's essential that we appreciate that these commandments were not just regulations or guidelines for private sexual behaviour. They were about keeping or breaking the covenant.

This chapter extends the sorts of principles that we see in association with the tabernacle and its worship where clear boundaries needed to be maintained and connects them with the behaviour of the body. The sorts of restrictions and requirements that we have here are not dissimilar from the sort of logic that governs the life of the tabernacle. And we've already seen an association between the body and the tabernacle earlier on in the book of Exodus.

For instance the law about sexual relations with a menstrual woman seems to depend upon a similar notion of trespass into a realm that you are forbidden to enter because of its generative power. In the same way as there's a taboo upon blood because the blood is the life of the animal, so the blood of the woman represents her procreative potential, something that comes from God and should not be profaned or treated as common.

Verse 5 presents obedience to the law as a means to enter into life, not as a matter of earning obedience, as if by our good works we could merit salvation or something of that kind.

Rather it's a matter of enjoying the reality of life in fellowship with God as you abide in His commandments. To keep these commandments is to enjoy fellowship with God. Verse 6 is a key claim.

No one should come near any one of his own flesh to uncover nakedness. These are key terms that are used throughout the passage. Come near, own flesh, and uncover nakedness.

Own flesh refers not just to one's own body but to close relatives as well. The common expression the nakedness of is also important for understanding the verses that follow. The nakedness of the father for instance is the mother's nakedness.

It's a nakedness that isn't just exposing her but also exposing him as it is a nakedness to which he should have exclusive access. She is holy to him, set apart for him. One of the things that this chapter underlines in the way that it treats such sexual sins is that sexuality is not private.

Sexual union and familial union means that people belong to each other and that relations with one person can violate another person. This is the logic of the sinfulness of adultery for instance. It isn't just a matter of consent and non-consent.

The body has a natural significance that isn't just given to it by consent or its lack, or by choice and what we choose to ascribe to the actions that we engage in sexually. The attention to sexual relations and the body in this chapter seems strange to us as we live in a society that regards sex as casual. However scripture presents sexual relations as matters not just of ethical importance but as connected with holiness.

Paul for instance can teach that the body is the temple of the Holy Spirit so it must be treated with the appropriate honour and care. It's not just actions outside of the body that matter. It's the body itself that has a value and a meaning and a significance and a holiness.

Leviticus 18 doesn't present us with a comprehensive treatment of sexual morality. It focuses particularly upon male behaviour for instance. It also focuses especially upon those women who would be within the same household as a man, protecting women in such a position from predatory patriarchs.

It is also focused particularly upon unions and divisions, concerns that tend to be most central in a system that's focused upon being set apart or holy. Another interesting feature of this body of material is that it addresses previous practices within the history of Israel. You should not take a woman as a rival wife to her sister in the same way as

Rachel was taken as a rival wife to Leah.

That is ruled out. It's casting a judgement back upon the previous story. We also tend to think of sexual relations as actions outside of the body.

They can take whatever meaning we ascribe to them. They're governed by principles of consent and the like. But Leviticus presents a vision of the body where the body itself is a tabernacle-like thing, a realm of presence and a realm of meeting, a realm of covering and a realm of holiness, a realm of mystery and of all, a realm of union and a realm of boundaries.

In our body something of the reality of transcendence is at work, and a society that fails to honour the sort of transcendence and meaningfulness of the body violates the land that it dwells in. It's an interesting connection. Our bodies are bound up with each other.

Our bodies connect us to other bodies through sexual union or procreation. And Leviticus is very concerned that this is not violated. Persons who do so will be cut off from their people, a consequence that's fitting to the sin.

Our bodies bind us into a reality beyond themselves. They bind us into the reality of procreation that is mysteriously at work in them. In our bodies the reality of our being male or female, a reality that exceeds us and that we share with others, and which summons us to a horizontal transcendence of relating to the otherness of the other sex, either men or women, is also at work.

Furthermore, our bodies bind us into the union of the bonds of flesh constitutive of the family. My body, like your body, is literally an extension of the union of our parents' bodies, the physical union that they had in sexual relations, that is worked out in our bodies. Our bodies are not our private plaything.

Our bodies are connected to the meaning of their bodies. Likewise, our bodies are bound up with the bodies of our siblings. And all these bonds and unions must be honoured and protected and not violated or transgressed.

The connection between the appropriate treatment of the body and the relationship of the people with the land is suggestive here. The body could perhaps be seen as the land of the soul. It has its own life and patterns that must be honoured, things like the menstrual cycle.

It has its own givenness and places its own claims upon us. In the same way as the land limits us and roots us and grounds us, so our bodies ground us in relationships to other people. They ground us in the reality of a particular sex.

They ground us in the reality of a bond of bodies connected to our families. When the soul instrumentalises the body, it dishonours the body's integrity. And the holiness of the

body is connected to an apprehension of the holiness of the land.

Profaning the body would also lead to a profaning of the land. A question to consider. Read Romans chapter 1 verses 18-32 and 1 Corinthians chapters 5 and 6. How does the teaching of Leviticus 18 shed light on Paul's teaching in these chapters? Leviticus chapter 19 is an exceedingly important chapter.

It's a single speech framed by perhaps the most important and fundamental statement of the entire book. You shall be holy, for I the Lord your God am holy. This is a statement addressed not merely to the priests but to the entire congregation of the people.

Holiness must characterise everyone in the nation, from the least to the greatest. They are a people set apart to the Lord, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, as we see in Exodus chapter 19 verses 5-6. This democratisation of holiness is also expressed in a concern for the well-being and loving treatment of each and every person within the nation, no matter how low or high they may be.

These chapters of Leviticus express what it means to be a people set apart. Verses 3-8 present a series of vertical commandments related to the first five commandments of the ten words of Exodus chapter 20. Verses 9-18 present a series of horizontal commandments related to the second five commandments of the ten words.

In verse 18 we meet the statement in which the entire second half of the ten words is summed up, the second great commandment, you shall love your neighbour as yourself. The chapter is concluded by a return to its opening theme of God's identity and his claim upon his people, and a reminder of the ten words and the rootedness of this chapter within their material. I am the Lord your God who brought you out of the land of Egypt, the same sort of sentence that comes at the beginning of the ten commandments.

Leviticus chapter 19 should probably then be regarded in large measure as a commentary upon the ten words. Once again, but in a manner that is more pronounced than in the previous chapter, chapter 19 is punctuated throughout by the statement I am the Lord. Righteous behaviour is seen to arise logically from God's holiness and his claim upon his people.

If you look through the chapter you can see material corresponding to each one of the ten commandments, much as we do in Exodus chapter 21-23 or Deuteronomy chapter 6-26, which are also extended commentaries upon or expansions of the ten words. Leviticus 19 is not as expansive as these other instances though, but what each of these expansions of the ten words do, however, is to explore some dimension of the inner logic of the commandments as a whole. Here perhaps the surprising feature is the fact that the list begins with the fifth commandment, followed by the fourth.

Every one of you shall revere his mother and his father and you shall keep my sabbaths.

These two commandments are the two positive commandments at the heart of the ten words in Exodus chapter 20. In verse 30 there is a return to the opening with the statement, you shall keep my sabbaths and reverence my sanctuary.

We return to the sabbaths and to the theme of reverence, but with the mother and father being replaced by God's sanctuary. Reverence for mother and father is proper behaviour in the context of the most fundamental familial and social relationship. However, as we go throughout the chapter, this is expanded to a more general posture of love and concern towards neighbour and stranger.

The importance of the body as something to be honoured and as a realm set apart to God is once again underlined here, as it was in the preceding chapter. The sabbath commandment in verse 3 is followed by commands that speak of the importance of honouring the things that belong to God. Commands concerning the avoidance of false gods and the making of idols and the proper practice of sacrifices.

Verses 9 to 18 largely expand upon the second table of the law and sum it up in a positive concluding statement. So in these verses we see the refraction of commandments into further distinct principles. For instance, the prohibition upon stealing also includes a commitment to give the poor their due of our produce.

In verses 9 to 10, this section especially focuses upon not stealing or bearing false witness and synthesises these commandments into a vision for a just and equitable society. Where oppression and injustice are opposed, there is loving concern for everyone, native or sojourner, and everyone is provided for. In this material we see also the seeds of prophetic concern for justice in society.

If we just read the Ten Commandments by themselves we could be forgiven for missing this concern about social justice. But when you see the Ten Commandments expanded in the material that is ancillary to them, you will realise that this is actually integral to those principles. Particularly the principles concerning not stealing and not bearing false witness against your neighbour.

Those things concern not just not lying and not stealing, but giving people their due and being a society where there are not structures of oppression and institutions such as the law being used in a predatory way. Verses 17 and 18 parallel each other. They present an alternative to the nursing of hatred and grudges, frank communication with and love for one's neighbour.

We must speak openly and honestly and address our concerns to our neighbour in words and deal with them and start to resolve our conflicts. The focus here is upon our neighbour with whom we are at odds. The second Great Commandment finds its first articulation in the context of our duty to love our enemy.

Jesus' teaching that you should love your enemy is something that is grounded within the Old Testament itself. Jesus is merely elaborating and developing something that is quite clear within the text of Leviticus 19 itself. And we should also note the way that the teaching here is similar in structure to the way that Jesus teaches in the Sermon on the Mount.

So you have hate or a grudge within your heart. How do you deal with that? You deal with it by frank communication with your neighbour, communicating through your problems and through that you dissolve the conflict. Or you deal with the root of vengeance by pursuing love and love being seen not just as a sort of state of mind or feeling but something that is very practical and worked out in action.

That is how you deal with the issue of hatred in the heart. Leviticus 19 foregrounds the importance of right relationship to neighbour as the context within which faithful relationship to God can be lived out. While much of Leviticus is focused more directly upon appropriate ritual and relationship to God, in Leviticus 19 loving relationship to one's neighbour, to the poor, to the alien and stranger, to the blind, the deaf, the elderly, to father and mother etc.

is presented as the testing ground for the truth of our relationship with God. As the Apostle John says in 1 John 4 verses 20-21, Verse 18 then is a version of the Golden Rule. It can also be regarded as a positive expression of the Tenth Commandment, an understanding that then can inform the entirety of what it means to keep the second table of the law.

The Tenth Commandment, the desire in covetousness, desiring what belongs to your neighbour, that is reversed in love for your neighbour. Not seeking to take from him but to give to him, to give to him what is due to him in the way of love and also to seek his good rather than to seek to take from him what is his. The Tenth Commandment also propels our attention inward to the deeper reality that underlies our keeping of the law.

It's not just a matter of external conformity to certain external actions. It's about dealing with the issues of the heart itself. Love your neighbour also presents the negative prohibitions of Exodus 20 verses 13-17 in a positive form.

So the law is summed up not in a series of do nots, it's summed up in a positive injunction to love your neighbour and to love God. The material that follows this, much of which concerns divisions, extends the sorts of concern for division and order that we see in association with the tabernacle and its service to other parts of Israelite life. And what such laws do is create a pronounced sense of order and meaning in Israel's life more generally.

Israel's life is a choreographed life, a life that has structure and order to it, where there are clear divisions, there are clear categories in which Israelites would understand



themselves, their day-to-day life and the world around them. And those categories give a sense of the holiness and the order of their life more generally. The similarity between their lives, which have these categories at play, and the life of the tabernacle, where those divisions and those categories of holy and profane or clean and unclean are of central importance.

By regulating the sewing of fields or the making of cloth or the way that you would cut your hair and your beard, the law presented the entire fabric of the average Israelite's life as a matter of holiness and being set apart for God. Even in the most quotidian events of their lives, they were supposed to recognise and remember that they belonged to God, that they were his people and that they behaved differently for that reason. Verses 33-34 extend the principle of love for neighbour even further.

The neighbour is not just the person like us, but includes the stranger and the alien. Israel must remember that they were once the stranger and must show hospitality to the strangers in their land. And perhaps we can think back here to the story of Hagar.

Hagar was a stranger in the house of the Hebrews, Abram and Sarai, and she was afflicted there. And then they were told in the previous chapter that one day their descendants would be strangers in a land not their own, that they would be afflicted there, but they could not see the person in their own house who was suffering that fate. Now Israel has to have learnt its lesson.

They were once the strangers, now they should be able to recognise and see the strangers, the ones who others would overlook. They need to remember that they were once that person, that God is a God who takes concern for the outcast, for the stranger, for the widow, for the orphan, for the poor and for the oppressed of the world. And they must treat them accordingly.

That is part of what it means to be a holy people set apart to the Lord. A question to consider. The ethics of Leviticus chapter 19 focus our duty upon love to our neighbour, the person who is in our path as it were, whoever that person may be, rich or poor, alien or native, or someone of high status, someone of low status, someone who is elderly, someone who is young.

It is not focused however, as we often focus our ethics, upon a more general duty to just love everyone. It is focused upon a particular person, upon the neighbour, upon the person in your path. What might be some of the practical and theoretical implications of this difference in focus? In Leviticus chapter 20 we largely retread the ground of Leviticus 18.

In Leviticus 20 however, rather than presenting us with a list of do's and do not's, as Leviticus 18 largely does, we are given penalties for the sins. Leviticus 18 tells us what not to do, but does not say what will happen to us if we do them. Perhaps because it is

speaking to the part of families rather than to judicial figures who will actually impose sanctions.

Leviticus 20 also places a great deal more of an emphasis upon resisting the idolatrous worship of the Canaanites and other surrounding nations. Verses 1-16 deal with capital offences, verses 17-21 deal with sins for which one will be cut off from the community. The opening of the chapter focuses upon sacrifice to Molech, necromancy and mediums.

All are idolatrous and adulterous violations of the bond between God and his people. The person who gives any of his children to Molech must be stoned by the people. Stoning was a communal form of judgement that expressed the community's collective rejection of such practice, taking weighty responsibility as a group and as individual members of it for dealing with such a wrongdoer.

Such a matter cannot just be dealt with by the judges. The entire community, the entire congregation must ensure that they keep the law of the Lord and stand with the law of the Lord against those who would seek to rebel against it. Deuteronomy 17, verse 7 declares, As the hand of the witnesses shall be first against him to be put to death, and afterward the hands of all the people, so you shall purge the evil from your midst.

As the whole community was included in enacting the sentence, it ensured that they were all on board with that judgement, they all committed themselves to upholding that truth. In Deuteronomy chapter 13, verses 10-11 we read, You shall stone him to death with stones, because he sought to draw you away from the Lord your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of slavery. And all Israel shall hear and fear and never again do any such wickedness as this among you.

Another important thing about the command to stone in certain cases, it's a matter of witness-bearing. The whole community has to be part of this. It has to see what's being done, it has to affirm what's being done by being involved in the action.

And also witnesses, those who were responsible for the sentence being enacted, had to be the first to cast the stones, had to take specific responsibility for their part within the event. And if they were found guilty of false witness in a capital crime, they would be subject to the same sentence themselves. It's important to consider the crimes that have the death penalty attached, and those that don't.

Apart from murder, certain cases of negligent homicide, false witness in a capital case, man-stealing, flagrant cases of rebellion against parents or the courts, almost all of the capital crimes have to do with various forms of rebellion against the Lord and rejection of his covenant, through idolatrous worship or the like, or with a series of sexual sins. This is important to notice because, certainly relatively speaking, in ancient Near Eastern societies, the Mosaic Law wasn't simply overly given to the death penalty. The fact that direct rebellion against the Lord and sexual immorality are especially singled out is a

sign of how seriously these particular sins are taken.

It is those sins that most directly rebel against God or violate his image that have the death penalty attached. A further important thing to consider is the way that the community is expected to be involved in the excision of such persons from their midst. Such crimes jeopardise the entire community and its holy status, and must be dealt with accordingly.

Indeed, when someone was engaged in child sacrifice, if a community didn't root out the person immediately, they themselves would risk suffering the same removal from the people, and draw God's judgement upon them. We should recognise how these laws are connected with the logic of the sacrificial system. The person who engages in child sacrifice, according to Leviticus 20, makes God's sanctuary unclean and profanes his name.

Israel bears God's name and has God's presence in their midst, in the tabernacle, which attracts the sins of Israel into it. The legal system is responsible to protect the holiness of the people. Where the legal system fails to punish such abominations, the entire system is unsettled, and the community itself risks being vomited out of the land for the abominations.

These laws, then, are not just a matter of relational societal ethics and crimes and punishments associated with them. No, they have a far more cultic and religious character, being connected more immediately with the holiness of the people. Sexual sins are not merely sins committed in the privacy of a person's own home, with no harm being done if all parties are consenting.

They violate the dignity of humanity. They pervert, debase or parody the divine gift of procreative union. They offend God, their abominations that threaten the holy status of the entire community, and they set patterns that others might follow if they are not dealt with swiftly and decisively.

The Creator gave man and woman the capacity to become one flesh, and such a gift must be honoured and never profaned. Sexual sins like bestiality and homosexual relations are treated as perversions of this great gift, and sins of a more symbolic import, such as not lying with a woman during her menstrual period, are seen as profanations of such a union, treating it as some common thing that people can enjoy on their own preferred terms, without acknowledgement of the giver. Consequently, these sins must be opposed strongly, and those who perform them and give themselves to them must be rooted out of the community.

Sanctions vary for different sins. Religious rebellion tends to involve stoning. A man taking a woman and her daughter must be burnt along with them, which is an unusual punishment.

Some crimes, such as lying with a man as with a woman, involve being put to death in an unspecified manner. Verse 17 speaks of someone bearing his iniquity. For other sins, people are to be cut off from the people, which probably didn't involve death, but banishment or something else like that.

In other cases, God punished people more directly himself, leaving them childless, as in a number of examples in this chapter. The chapter ends with the requirement that Israel separate between the clean beast and the unclean beast. This all seems rather strange and arbitrary to us.

While there is an apparent symbolic logic to the laws concerning clean and unclean animals that we read in Leviticus 11, such distinction doesn't really seem to be that significant. However, like circumcision and the Sabbath, such food laws were a divinely given sign of Israel's holy status, and anyone who took that holy status seriously would take the divinely given signs of it extremely seriously too. Some have argued that such penalties, the death penalties mentioned in this chapter, ought to be applied today.

While the New Testament does not, I believe, rule out the death penalty, even in such passages as John 8, with the woman caught in adultery, I think that it is essential to recognise the way that the administration of the law in such sanctions is a far more contingent matter. It must be adapted to unique societies and their situations. Not least, in the case of Israel, the fact that they were a nation in covenant with the Lord, with God dwelling in their midst, and in contrast to modern societies, a densely connected and unified peoplehood, where the actions of one party within the community would far more readily implicate the other members of it.

They were also a hard-hearted people, for whom the severest penalties were probably necessary as deterrence for sins that would have led great numbers of them astray had they not been there. As such situations do not obtain in modern societies to the same degree, we should be very wary of those who advocate for the reintroduction of comparable sanctions for such sins as being biblical. Rather, we must prudentially consider the more specific conditions, character, besetting sins and the like of our own societies, and while learning principles of jurisprudence from scripture, we must develop legal systems and sanctions that are appropriate to our own situations.

So just as Moses legitimately allowed divorce as a concession to the hardness of Israel's hearts, so there are certain sins and bad practices for which we must, without in any way justifying them, make ameliorating accommodations, where stricter sanctions would prove ineffectual or counterproductive, and jeopardise the standing of the law more generally. Something to consider. Read 1 Corinthians 5 and observe the ways in which Paul's approach there is informed by the same sorts of principles that we see in Leviticus 20.

What parallels can be seen between Leviticus 20 and the principles that guide Paul's

arguments, and what similarities can also be seen in the sanctions imposed in both cases? Leviticus chapters 21 and 22 are a pair of chapters dealing with holy things and holy persons, their criteria for holiness and the way in which their integrity can be preserved. In chapter 21 we begin with instructions concerning the regular priests in verses 1-9, and then in verses 10-15 concerning the high priest. The concluding verses of the chapter present the necessity of bodily integrity for acting priests.

As we will see, many of the commandments here are also applied to Israelites in general, or at least similar but lesser commandments are. However, it was a matter of particular importance that the priests, and especially the high priest, should retain their purity and holiness. They are acting on behalf of the whole nation, and if they are impure, they jeopardise the nation's status more generally.

The commandments, first for the priests and then for the high priest, begin with treating situations of death and corpse defilement, and then proceed to give criteria by which fitting wives could be determined. The laws concerning uncleanness for the dead fit into the more general body of commandments concerning corpse defilement, but also target practices associated with cults of the dead that would have been practiced in surrounding cultures. As I have already noted, many of the laws here would have applied not merely to the priests, but also to Israelites more generally.

We see this in places like Deuteronomy chapter 14 verses 1 and 2. For you are a people holy to the Lord your God, and the Lord has chosen you to be a people for his treasured possession, out of all the peoples who are on the face of the earth. This passage in Deuteronomy chapter 14 is given in the context of an exposition of the third commandment. Israel bears the name of the Lord, and the people like the priests are holy to the Lord, and must not be a people marked out by the marks of death.

God is the Lord and giver of life, and he does not want his people to become a people associated with death. Similar laws are also found a few chapters earlier, in Leviticus chapter 19 verses 27 and 28. As Israel is a holy people, they need to be set apart from death and its defilement.

We should consider the laws addressing corpse defilement in places like Numbers chapter 19 verses 11 to 13. And that person shall be cut off from Israel, because the water for impurity was not thrown on him. He shall be unclean.

His uncleanness is still on him. The priests are forbidden to make themselves unclean for the dead among their people, but exceptions are made for their closest blood relatives, mother, father, son, daughter, brother or virgin sister. The surprising exception to this list of course is the wife, and verse 4 says he shall not make himself unclean as a husband among his people and so profane himself.

The interpretation of this verse has long been challenging, on account of its unusual

wording and grammar, not merely because it seems to make what is a very surprising statement. The most likely reading of the verse does seem to present the wife as excluded from the class of persons for which the priest could legitimately make himself unclean. Laws for separation from the dead are even more pronounced in the case of the high priest.

He cannot make himself unclean by going into dead bodies, even for his father or mother. This separation from death is important because the high priest's holiness was part of the means by which he was able to serve and to ensure that the sins of the people were dealt with. A severely unclean high priest might precipitate a minor crisis.

Moses warned Aaron and his sons concerning inappropriate mourning in Leviticus 10, verses 6-7, after the Lord had killed Aaron's sons Nadab and Abihu in judgment. And Moses said to Aaron and to Eleazar and Ithamah his sons, Do not let the hair of your heads hang loose, and do not tear your clothes, lest you die, and wrath come upon all the congregation. But let your brothers, the whole house of Israel, bewail the burning that the Lord has kindled.

And do not go outside the entrance of the tent of meeting, lest you die, for the anointing oil of the Lord is upon you, and they did according to the word of Moses. A priest or high priest mourning in the holy place would bring the wrath of the Lord upon the whole of the people because they were representing the entire nation. The Aaronic priesthood was all male, but the women in their households participated in some of their holy status and could eat of certain parts of their husbands' or fathers' food, which was given as a contribution to the priests.

This would not include the purification offering, for instance, which was to be eaten by the priestly males to bear the sin of the people. The women of the priestly houses could not do this. The priestly women were subject to higher judgments upon unfaithfulness, and there were higher criteria for a fitting wife for the high priest.

The high priest was expected to marry a virgin of his own people, and a priestly daughter who committed harlotry was not stoned to death like a woman of a lay family, but was to be burned. We see an example of this in the harlot in Revelation 17, verse 16. She is condemned to be burned.

That is one of many details within that passage giving support to the identification of the harlot with unfaithful Jerusalem, an apostate priestly daughter. In addition to keeping the priest separate from the defiling cult of death and association with the uncleanness of death, these laws concerning marriage ensured the holiness of the seed of the priests. The final section of the chapter, in verses 16 to 24, addressed the need for physical integrity for the acting priests.

Priests who were disabled or blemished were permitted to participate in the holy food

that was given to the priests, but they could not serve in the holy place or at the altar. We should observe the very close parallels between the laws concerning the physical integrity of the priests and the laws concerning the physical integrity of animals in the chapter that follows, paired with this one. In verses 22 to 25 of that chapter we read, Neither shall you offer as the bread of your God any such animals gotten from a foreigner, since there is a blemish in them, because of their mutilation, they will not be accepted for you.

The importance of those approaching the presence of God being without blemish is best understood in terms of the analogy between physical integrity and moral integrity. Of course, physical integrity is not proof of moral integrity, far from it, but it does serve as a powerful symbol of it. A question to consider, how might the analogy between the priests and the sacrifices that are brought near to the presence of God help us better to understand part of the meaning of both priesthood and sacrifice? Leviticus chapters 21 and 22 should be read in many respects as a pair.

Together they deal with the integrity of holy persons and holy things. Chapter 21 focused on maintaining the cleanness of the priests by avoiding contracting uncleanness through corpse defilement, involvement in practices surrounding the dead, and marriage with women who were not adequately set apart. Chapter 22 focuses on how the sacrifices and sacrificial portions belonging to the priests were to be handled.

At the conclusion of the preceding chapter we saw that priests who were not able to officiate at the altar on account of some form of defect were nonetheless permitted to participate in the portions belonging to the priests. Women in priestly families could also participate in much of the priestly food. Close parallels can be observed between the two chapters, not least between the laws of physical integrity for the priests and the laws of physical integrity for sacrificial animals.

The laws of this chapter are frequently punctuated by references to the Lord's own holiness. The priests must be holy because the Lord is holy, and he has set them apart for his service. Priests are guardians of that which is holy, and so in addition to enjoying special privileges in participating in holy things, they have a special responsibility to guard the holy things.

Those who serve in holy things are in a position of grave potential danger. They could become overly familiar with the holy things of God and end up profaning them. They could also, on account of their enjoyment of spiritual authority, come to despise the people to whom the Lord charged them to minister, for instance to fail to treat the sacrifices of the people with respect, and even to act in a predatory manner towards the people.

On several occasions in scripture the Lord declares judgment upon an unfaithful priesthood, which has failed in this area. Perhaps one of the most notable examples is in

1 Samuel 2, verses 12-17. Now the sons of Eli were worthless men.

They did not know the Lord. The custom of the priests with the people was that when any man offered sacrifice, the priest's servant would come, while the meat was boiling, with a three-pronged fork in his hand, and he would thrust it into the pan or kettle or cauldron or pot. All that the fork brought up the priest would take for himself.

This is what they did at Shiloh to all the Israelites who came there. Moreover, before the fat was burned, the priest's servant would come and say to the man who was sacrificing, Give meat for the priest to roast, for he will not accept boiled meat from you, but only raw. And if the man said to him, Let them burn the fat first, and then take as much as you wish, he would say, No, you must give it now, and if not, I will take it by force.

Thus the sin of the young men was very great in the sight of the Lord, for the men treated the offering of the Lord with contempt. Hophni and Phinehas, through their practices, were quite happy to deprive the Lord of his portion of his people's sacrifices, obstructing the people's enjoyment of fellowship with God and the Lord's enjoyment of fellowship with his people. Despising the sacrifices of the Israelites, in the case of Hophni and Phinehas, went hand in hand with the despising of the people.

They took of parts of the sacrifice that were forbidden to them, and they also took of the people in ways that were forbidden of them. They lay with the women serving at the entrance of the tabernacle, as we see in chapter 2, verse 22, presumably in a way that involved the same exploitation of power and authority as in their unlawful taking of the people's sacrifices. On account of the sins of Eli and his sons, the Lord judged the house of Eli severely.

In 1 Samuel, chapter 2, verses 28 to 33, I gave to the house of your father all my offerings by fire from the people of Israel. Why then do you scorn my sacrifices and my offerings that I commanded for my dwelling, and honour your sons above me by fattening yourselves on the choicest part of every offering of my people Israel? Therefore the Lord, the God of Israel, declares, I promised that your house and the house of your father should go in and out before me forever. But now the Lord declares, Far be it from me, for those who honour me I will honour, and those who despise me shall be lightly esteemed.

Behold, the days are coming when I will cut off your strength and the strength of your father's house, so that there will not be an old man in your house. Then, in distress, you will look with envious eye on all the prosperity that shall be bestowed on Israel, and there shall not be an old man in your house for ever. The only one of you whom I shall not cut off from my altar shall be spared to weep his eyes out, to grieve his heart, and all the descendants of your house shall die by the sword of men.

Verse 3 presents the general rule that needs to be observed. No one of the priests who is



unclean should approach the holy things that the people of Israel had dedicated to the Lord. The uncleanness in view includes leprous disease or a bodily discharge, but also the second-hand forms of uncleanness through corpse defilement, contraction of uncleanness from someone defiled with a bodily omission, or from contact with an unclean animal.

Priests would routinely become defiled in these sorts of ways. Such cases of defilement were not a big problem. The person would be unclean until evening, and then after washing he could participate in holy things once again.

For inadvertent sins in these sorts of areas there were provisions made in the sacrificial system. For instance, we might think about some of the sacrifices mentioned in Leviticus chapter 5. However, in most of these cases no sacrifice would be necessary. It would just be a matter of waiting until evening and washing your body in water.

The priests should not merely take care about their own behaviour around the holy things. They had been appointed as guardians within the Lord's house more generally, and so they bore an especial responsibility to ensure that the things of the Lord were not desecrated. Verses 10-16 give a list of people who were proper and improper participants in the holy things.

If someone inadvertently ate of the holy things, verse 14 provides instruction in how such a situation could be rectified. The reparation offering prescribed in Leviticus chapter 5 verses 14-16 would also apply in such a case. The Lord spoke to Moses saying, If anyone commits a breach of faith and sins unintentionally in any of the holy things of the Lord, he shall bring to the Lord as his compensation a ram without blemish out of the flock, valued in silver shekels according to the shekel of the sanctuary for a guilt offering.

He shall also make restitution for what he has done amiss in the holy thing, and shall add a fifth to it and give it to the priest. And the priest shall make atonement for him with the ram of the guilt offering, and he shall be forgiven. Verses 15-16 give warnings about profaning the holy things of Israel.

If the priest desecrated the sacrifices of the people, the people's sacrifices would be frustrated. The bearing of sin that was supposed to occur in the sacrificial offering fails, and the sin comes back upon the offerer's head. Ensuring that the offerings were properly offered then was a very solemn responsibility.

At the end of chapter 21 there are instructions concerning the physical integrity required of those who approached the altar of the Lord to serve. At the end of chapter 22 there are similar requirements for the sacrifices that are brought near. Beirut Levine has shown that these correspond almost one to one between the two accounts.

The priest is like a sacrificial animal, and the sacrificial animals are like priests. The

purpose of all of these commandments is to uphold the holiness of the Lord's name, so that it not be profaned, and that the things of the Lord not be desecrated. The behaviour of the priests and their guarding of the holy things is one of the chief ways that they teach the reverence of the Lord to the people.

A question to consider, what might be some new covenant analogies to the behaviour required of the priests in this chapter? Leviticus chapter 23 is the list of the feasts of Israel. There's a connection between the feasts and the agricultural calendar. The natural rhythm of life in the land is connected with the celebrations of the feasts of the Lord.

There's also a connection between the agricultural calendar and redemptive history. Not only is the agricultural calendar associated with specific divine feasts, those divine feasts themselves are connected with events that God performed for his people in their history. God appoints times, and the Israelites must proclaim them as sacred occasions.

Israel seemed to follow a broadly lunar calendar, however it's quite possible that this calendar had exactly 52 weeks. With extra days or an extra month being added every few years. Perhaps even 49 extra days every Jubilee year.

If it is the case that every typical year had exactly 52 weeks, then the feasts would always be on the same day of the week. Gordon Wenham suggests that this claim would be strengthened by the dates in the flood narrative. Leviticus 23 begins with the Sabbath, which seems strange because the Sabbath is a weekly thing, not an annual celebration.

Yet the Sabbath is the key sign of the Mosaic covenant in Exodus 31, verses 12-17. In many ways it's the fundamental feast. It's that from which all of the others are derived.

This is particularly noticeable in the case of feasts such as the Feast of Weeks. Sabbath is a time of remembrance and consecration. That principle of remembrance and consecration is expanded to include other events that are connected with times of harvest and in-gathering, but also which remember events of God in history, the way he has delivered his people.

There are seven festivals in the year, again continuing the Sabbath theme. Passover, Unleavened Bread, Weeks, Trumpets, the Day of Atonement, the Feast of Booths and the Day after the Feast of Booths. There are seven days of rest.

The first and the last day of the Unleavened Bread, the Feast of Weeks, the Feast of Trumpets, the Day of Atonement, the first day of the Feast of Booths and the day after that feast. Most of the feasts occur in the seventh month, again a Sabbath theme. The Feast of Unleavened Bread and the Feast of Booths are both seven days long.

The sign of the Sabbath then is refracted into a calendar of annual feasts. To these we

can also add the sabbatical year and the year of Jubilee, which extend the Sabbath principle even further. The whole calendar is shaped by the principle of Sabbath, the seventh.

The seventh day, the seventh year, the seventh month, we will see it everywhere we look. The Sabbath is a time of complete cessation of regular work. A Sabbath of solemn rest is an intensified expression as the term Sabbath itself meant rest and the term translated solemn rest is extremely closely related to it.

The first of the feasts is the Passover. The Passover begins on the 14th day of the month at evening. The first month was designated as such on account of the Exodus in Exodus 12, verse 2. The Passover began with the sacrifice of the Passover lamb at twilight.

The Passover was immediately followed by the pilgrimage feast of unleavened bread, which lasted for seven days. On the pilgrimage feasts, people had to travel to a divinely appointed location to celebrate them. The Feast of Weeks and the Feast of Booths were other pilgrimage feasts.

Leavened bread had to be avoided, in part as a symbol of cutting off of the tradition of the past. This feast commemorated the deliverance from slavery in Egypt, so they were cutting off the leaven of Egypt. For each day of the feast of unleavened bread, appointed sacrifices would be offered to the Lord.

The sacrifices for the different feasts are laid out in Numbers chapter 28 and 29. The Feast of Firstfruits was appointed for Israel to celebrate after they entered into the land. They would have to waive a sheaf of their harvest before the Lord along with a male lamb without blemish, a grain offering of two-tenths of an ephor and a fourth of a hin of a drink offering.

This feast was celebrated on the day after the Sabbath. This was likely the Sunday of the Feast of Unleavened Bread, although Joshua 5 might suggest the possibility that it was on the day after the Passover, so the first day of unleavened bread. It was at the beginning of the barley harvest.

So if Jesus' death was connected with the Passover sacrifice, his resurrection is associated with the Sunday of the Feast of Unleavened Bread, with the Feast of Firstfruits. This connection was recognised by the Apostle Paul who spoke of Jesus as the firstfruits of the dead, the first offering of the awaited harvest of the general resurrection. The firstfruits offering is a sheaf, or an omer, of the firstfruits of the harvest.

Now why an omer? This isn't a word that we encounter often. The great majority of the biblical uses of this term are found in this chapter or in Exodus chapter 16, where it refers to the omer that was the daily portion of the manna. And this connection is very suggestive.

Perhaps the purpose of the feast, in part, was to recall the provision of the food for the people in the wilderness, in the manna, and to connect it with the food in the land. Joshua chapter 5 verses 10-12 reads, While the people of Israel were encamped at Gilgal, they kept the Passover on the fourteenth day of the month, in the evening on the plains of Jericho. And the day after the Passover, on that very day, they ate of the produce of the land, unleavened cakes and parched grain.

And the manna ceased that day after they ate of the produce of the land. And there was no longer manna for the people of Israel, but they ate of the fruit of the land of Canaan that year. So what happens is a transition from the manna to the fruit of the land.

And recognising that the principle of divine provision that we see in the manna continues in the provision of food from the land. That's something that's secured by this practice of the offering of the omer. It recalls the provision of the manna and then it connects that with the provision of grain.

At the beginning of the barley harvest every year then, Israel would be reminded of God's provision of their bread in the wilderness. And be taught to recognise that even when settled in the land, that same principle of gracious divine provision applied. The accompanying grain offering is double the regular grain offering of the burnt offering of a lamb.

It's two efforts rather than one. The normal regulations are seen in Numbers chapter 15 verses 2-5. Although the drink offering is the same.

Leviticus chapter 2 verses 14-16 gives us a sense of how the grain offering would have been offered. The next feast is the feast of weeks. And the importance of a system of sacrifices or festivals is that the meaning of things is to be sought not merely in underlying root meanings, but in the relationship that things have to each other.

The feast of weeks is a feast numbered from the feast of first fruits with the counting of seven weeks. It illustrates the Sabbath principle once more. The feast of weeks comes at the end of the grain harvest which began with the barley harvest and ends with the gathering of the wheat.

It also involves a grain offering. The fact that this, like the feast of first fruits, was on the first day of the week, suggests themes of a new creation. At this feast there was a wave offering of two leavened loaves of bread made with two tenths of an ephra of flour.

Now that recalls the grain offering of verse 13. In the feast of first fruits, the grain offering of the feast of first fruits seems to have become two leavened loaves. And the addition of leaven is surprising considering the strict prohibition of leaven in grain offerings in Leviticus chapter 2 verse 11.

Perhaps what we're seeing here is an exceptional case with the reintroduction of a

principle of leaven at this feast. It's the only occasion where leaven is included in an offering which suggests that the leaven is an important part of the meaning. The feast of weeks also multiplies the sacrifice of the feast of first fruits with seven lambs a year old as burnt offerings instead of just one.

A bull from the herd and two rams as burnt offerings along with a male goat of a sin offering and two lambs as peace offerings. The feast of weeks or Pentecost as we tend to call it came to be associated with the time of the giving of the law due to its timing. Again it's an agricultural feast that is connected with events in redemptive history.

The seven sevens that are used to count should also remind us of the way that Sinai was a sort of great Sabbath. A couple of chapters later we have the Jubilee and we should observe the similarities. The feast of weeks involves the counting of seven weeks and the year of Jubilee involves the counting of seven weeks of years in chapter 25 verse 8 following the institution of the Sabbath year.

The feast of weeks is a sort of annual version of the year of Jubilee in miniature. The feast of first fruits comes after the counting of seven days on the day after the Sabbath. It is part of a seven day feast of the feast of unleavened bread.

And the feast of weeks comes after the counting of seven weeks. The year of Jubilee celebrated God's deliverance of his people and his gift of the land to them. The feast of weeks celebrates God's declaration of the liberation of his people at Sinai.

It also focuses on the duty of those harvesting to leave the edges of their fields and the gleanings for the poor and the sojourner. Like the year of Jubilee it protects the stake of the poor and the dispossessed in the land. Now Christians obviously associate the feast of weeks as Pentecost.

On this day the risen Christ, the one who is the Passover lamb sacrificed for us, who has risen as the first fruits of those fallen asleep, gives his sevenfold sabbatical spirit to his bride the church. A new principle by which they will grow with the leaven of the spirit's work. As the law was given at Sinai so Christ gives the spirit to write the law upon our hearts at Pentecost.

A new tradition as it were. Leaven is a handing down of a tradition. It's continued from loaf to loaf and here we have this new leaven given to us.

As Israel's liberation was declared at Sinai so our liberation is declared as the realisation of Christ's exodus at Pentecost. As in Leviticus and other Old Testament teaching concerning Pentecost the account of Pentecost in Acts 2 gives a lot of attention to the celebration of meals of joy and thanksgiving and to the fact that all are to be provided for. The feast of trumpets comes next.

It's the day of solemn rest on which certain sacrifices, mostly ascension offerings,

dedicating the nation to God would be made. The day was a memorial, a day proclaimed with the blowing of trumpets which would muster the people and summon them to attention. As a memorial it would recall people to the covenant and also call upon the Lord to remember his covenant commitment to his people.

This is one of the rare occasions in the law where we have sounds as part of the worship of God apart from speech. We don't have music as part of the worship of God within the law for the most part. We have bells upon the garments of the high priest and we also have blowing of trumpets at key points.

So maybe we should see in this an anticipation of a movement towards music. We may also think about the way that this sound on the one hand reminded the people of their covenant commitment and recalled them to faithfulness but also called for God to act in remembrance of his covenant. Maybe our music should be considered the same way.

This day later became the Jewish New Year. However we can see further significance in the fact that it is the beginning of the second half of the year. The first month recalled the first departure from Egypt and half way through the year Israel is recalled to the work that God began in the Exodus.

It is also, perhaps more significantly, the first day of the seventh month. It's the beginning of the sabbatical month as it were. So we should recognise Sabbath themes here also.

And as the seventh month has most of the feasts we should also appreciate that this is preparing the people for a period of feasting. The feast of trumpets is once again an expansion of the Sabbath principle. The day of atonement is the feast that comes next.

It was the great purification event that occurred every year rebooting the sacrificial system. It was the day when the high priest went into the very presence of God. The seventh month was a month of a number of key feasts and the day of atonement's association with the day of the Lord, with its cleansing and admission to the very presence of God and its utter expulsion of those bearing sins from God's presence, is an event that anticipates the final great Sabbath at the end of all things.

The final feast of the year is a strange one. Once again it's a feast of the seventh month. It's the feast of booths.

After Israel had gathered in the produce of the land, Israel had to gather fruit of splendid trees, branches of palm trees, boughs of leafy trees and willows of the brook and rejoice before the Lord. This was seemingly another celebration of the fruitfulness of the land. Now celebrating not the grain harvest but other produce of the land.

As an ingathering festival the feast of booths seems to be associated with the gift of rain in Zechariah 14, 9-19. And also seems to have a significance for all of the nations. In

Numbers 29-34 where the list of sacrifices are given for this festival, we see that 70 bulls are sacrificed over the course of it, one for each of the nations.

Now in Zechariah 14 we see the feast of tabernacles in an eschatological context. And the Lord will be king over all the earth. On that day the Lord will be one and his name one.

Then everyone who survives of all the nations that have come up against Jerusalem shall go up year after year to worship the King, the Lord of hosts, and to keep the feast of booths. And if any of the families of the earth do not go up to Jerusalem to worship the King, the Lord of hosts, there will be no rain on them. And if the family of Egypt does not go up and present themselves, then on them there shall be no rain.

There shall be the plague with which the Lord afflicts the nations that do not go up to keep the feast of booths. This shall be the punishment to Egypt and the punishment to all the nations that do not go up to keep the feast of booths. But the feast of booths, or sakkoth, also looks back to Israel's experience in the wilderness.

They had to dwell in temporary booths for seven days in commemoration of that. We should remember that Sakkoth was the site of Israel's first camp after leaving Egypt at the Passover. Exodus 12, verse 37 reads, And the people of Israel journeyed from Ramses to Sakkoth, about 600,000 men on foot, besides women and children.

It is where they stayed on the night of the fifteenth day of the first month. But this is on the fifteenth day of the seventh month. Why is that? Later on in the following chapter, in Exodus 13, verse 22 we read, And they moved on from Sakkoth and encamped at Etham, on the edge of the wilderness.

And the Lord went before them by day in a pillar of cloud to lead them along the way, and by night in a pillar of fire to give them light, that they might travel by day and by night. The pillar of cloud by day and the pillar of fire by night did not depart from before the people. Sakkoth then is the first place where we read about the pillar of cloud and fire that accompanied them.

Sakkoth is also the place where, surprisingly, Israel first celebrated the feast of unleavened bread. In Exodus 12, verse 39, And they baked unleavened cakes of the dough that they had brought out of Egypt. For it was not leavened, because they were thrust out of Egypt and could not wait, nor had they prepared any provisions for themselves.

Again, this is strange, because the feast of unleavened bread is in the first month of the year. So what's going on? The feast of unleavened bread focuses on the food of that first day of the Exodus journey. The feast of booths focuses on the dwellings that they lived in.

If unleavened bread involved the cutting off of the leaven of Egypt, booths was the first break that Israel had with the settled life beneath roofs that they had in Egypt. And God journeyed with them in the cloud. Every year, Israel was to replay this, to recall the trust that they had shown that first night of leaving their Egyptian dwellings and following God into the wilderness.

Why was it celebrated when it was then? Why not in the first month? The clue is found in recognising that the feast of unleavened bread, connected with the exact same time in Israel's history, begins on the 15th day of the first month and runs for seven days. The feast of booths begins on the 15th day of the seventh month and runs for seven days. They are divided by six months, by exactly half of a year.

They mirror each other. If the feast of unleavened bread begins the months of gathering the grain and produce of the land, the feast of ingathering comes at its conclusion. And they can also be seen to be bookends at either end.

The feast of unleavened bread begins with this feast at the very beginning, the feast of Passover, for one day. And the feast of booths has one day just after it, the eighth day, where there's another holy convocation and food offering. So at the very conclusion of the year, at the point where they might be most tempted to think themselves self-sufficient, the Lord returns his people to the very beginning.

He returns them to that point that they remember when they first came out of Egypt. He reminds them of the trust and complete dependence that first led them to follow him into the wilderness, of his glory cloud that accompanied and sheltered them, and of the clouds to which they still look to for rain. A question to consider.

How does the mapping of redemptive history onto the seasons and the year shape Israel's conception of God and their sense of their relationship to their history? How can we learn from this in our approach to the church calendar? The presence of the material of this chapter in its current position might initially be rather puzzling, seeming out of place after the instructions concerning the festal calendar. If we had been ordering the material of this book, we might have placed the material of this chapter after chapter 22 concerning the holy food and requirements for proper sacrifices. John Kleinick suggests that we explain its position by considering the chapter as the culmination in the treatment of holy things that began in chapter 19.

The sequence of the chapters then gradually moves us towards the most holy things of all. Chapters 19 and 20 concern the holiness of the Israelites. Chapters 21 to 22 concern the holiness of the priests and sacrifices.

Chapter 23 concerns holy days. And finally chapter 24 moves from the holiness of the items of the holy place, the lamps and the table of showbread, to the most holy thing of all, the name of the Lord, who dwells in the most holy place. The directions for the



construction of the table of showbread and the lampstand are first given at the end of Exodus chapter 25.

The instructions with which the chapter begins are also found in a similar form elsewhere, in Exodus chapter 27 verses 20 to 21, when the oil for the lamp was appointed in the instructions concerning the tabernacle. You shall command the people of Israel that they bring to you pure beaten olive oil for the light, that a lamp may regularly be set up to burn. In the tent of meeting outside the veil that is before the testimony, Aaron and his son shall tend it from evening to morning before the Lord.

It shall be a statute forever to be observed throughout their generations by the people of Israel. Two parties were held responsible for the maintaining of the items within the holy place. The people were responsible to provide pure oil, oil of the highest quality, and Aaron was responsible to tend to the lamp and to arrange the showbread on the table.

We should observe here an analogy between the lamp and the table of showbread in the holy place, and the brazen altar and the tribute offerings in the courtyard. Aaron must tend to the fire of the lamp and present the bread within, and Aaron's sons are responsible to ensure that the fire of the brazen altar keeps burning, and to manage the tribute offerings in the courtyard without. Aaron and his sons enjoy food privileges from the table within the house, and they enjoy food privileges from the table of the altar outside of the house.

All of these parallels can be seen when we read Leviticus chapter 6 verses 12 to 18. The fire on the altar shall be kept burning on it, it shall not go out. The priest shall burn wood on it every morning, and he shall arrange the burnt offering on it, and shall burn on it the fat of the peace offerings.

Fire shall be kept burning on the altar continually, it shall not go out. And this is the law of the grain offering, the sons of Aaron shall offer it before the Lord in front of the altar, and one shall take from it a handful of the fine flour of the grain offering and its oil, and all the frankincense that is on the grain offering, and burn this as its memorial portion on the altar, a pleasing aroma to the Lord. And the rest of it Aaron and his sons shall eat, it shall be eaten unleavened in the holy place, in the court of the tent of meeting they shall eat it, it shall not be baked with leaven, I have given it as their portion of my food offerings, it is a thing most holy, like the sin offering and the guilt offering, every male among the children of Aaron may eat of it, as decreed forever throughout your generations, from the Lord's food offerings, whatever touches them shall become holy.

Considering that the bread on the table of showbread in the holy place was arranged before the Lord every Sabbath day, the bread from the preceding Sabbath would presumably have been the Sabbath portion of the priests, on the Sabbath day then they would have enjoyed bread from the higher table of the Lord as it were. Such passages should teach us that the primary metaphor governing sacrifice is food rather than killing

and death. While the death or the slaying of the sacrificial animals was an integral part of the meaning of the sacrifices, the priests are, to pick up on language that is repeatedly used of them in Leviticus chapter 21, those who approach to offer and enjoy the privilege of eating the bread of their God.

The altar is not so much a killing site, where the animals were killed before being placed on the altar, but a table as it is referred to in Malachi chapter 1. The continual burning of the lamp was a symbol of the Lord's light-giving presence in the midst of his people. However, we might also relate this to the priests themselves, who were to be like lamps among the people. The oil for the priests' anointing is paralleled with the oil for the lamps in Exodus.

The table of showbread was under a meter, or around three feet in length. The bread arranged upon it might have been arranged in two piles of six loaves, or in two rows of six loaves. In 1 Samuel chapter 21 verses 3-6 there is an episode concerning the showbread, when David was fleeing from King Saul, to which Christ refers in the Gospels.

There David addresses the priests, Now then, what do you have on hand? Give me five loaves of bread, or whatever is here. And the priest answered David, I have no common bread on hand, but there is holy bread, if the young men have kept themselves from women. And David answered the priest, Truly women have been kept from us, as always when I go on an expedition.

The vessels of the young men are holy, even when it is an ordinary journey. How much more today will their vessels be holy? So the priest gave him the holy bread, for there was no bread there but the bread of the presence, which is removed from before the Lord, to be replaced by hot bread on the day it is taken away. The second half of this chapter contains a surprising and strange episode.

A man who was half Israelite and half Egyptian, cursed the name of the Lord, and the people brought him to Moses for judgment. Uncertain of what to do with the man, they inquired of the Lord, while holding the man in custody. The Lord's answer to their inquiry is not what we might have expected.

He instructs them to put the blasphemer to death, as we might have expected, but then gives a much longer series of instructions concerning sanctions, concluding with the instruction that they have the same rule for the sojourner as for the native. There is a very similar passage in Numbers chapter 15 verses 32 to 36. While the people of Israel were in the wilderness, they found a man gathering sticks on the Sabbath day, and those who found him gathering sticks brought him to Moses and Aaron and to all the congregation.

They put him in custody, because it had not been made clear what should be done to him. And the Lord said to Moses, The man shall be put to death. All the congregation

shall stone him with stones outside the camp.

And all the congregation brought him outside the camp and stoned him to death with stones, as the Lord commanded Moses. Looking closer at the episode in Leviticus, there are several puzzling and interesting details that we can observe, which Rabbi David Fulman remarks upon. We have noted the Lord's lengthy response, most of which seems to be irrelevant to the people's inquiry.

There is also the detail of the man's ancestry. While we are not given the man's own name, or the name of the person with whom he was fighting, we are told what tribe the man's mother came from, and the fact that he had an Egyptian father. When we have so few details, why are we given these details? Further, we have the odd wording of verse 10, which as Fulman observes, says that the man went out in the midst of the sons of Israel.

There is a sort of two-way movement here, going out and going within. Further, the man's cursing of the Lord seems to have been precipitated by a fight with an Israelite man in the camp. We might wonder why the man cursed the Lord, rather than the other man with whom he was fighting.

As Fulman argues, cursing the man would seem to make a lot more sense. Why bring the Lord into it? Puzzling over many of these details, Fulman gives a theory that makes sense of many of them. Why would the man's fight with an Israelite man in the camp lead him to curse the Lord? Perhaps because in some manner, in that fight, the Lord seemed to be on the side of the Israelite man, over against the half-Israelite.

Why are we given the man's ancestry, but not his name? Perhaps because his mixed ancestry was what precipitated the fight. Enjoyment of a heritage within Israel depended upon the father's line of descent. However, this half-Israelite's father was an Egyptian, not an Israelite.

His mother was the Israelite. His going out in the midst of the people might refer to his attempt to find a place among the people of his mother, the tribe of Dan. Yet, rather than welcome this sojourner among them, the people of Dan fought against him.

In fighting against the half-Israelite, the full Israelite presumably appealed to the Lord to back up his case, denying that the Egyptian had any grounds for inclusion among Dan on the basis of the Lord's favour to Israel and the fact that the man was not really an Israelite. Consequently, the half-Israelite, feeling that God himself was against him, cursed the Lord. This reading of the story helps us to make sense of a lot of the details.

The fact that the ancestry of the man is mentioned, the fact that he was struggling against a full Israelite, the way that he is described as going out in the midst of the people, the reasons for which he might have cursed the Lord, the uncertainty of the

people in judging him, and then finally, the way that the Lord responds. In the Lord's response, what is highlighted is equity in judgment and the inclusion of the sojourner and the native under the same law. That principle is mentioned near the beginning of the Lord's response in verse 16, the sojourner as well as the native, when he blasphemes the name, shall be put to death, and then also at the end in verse 22, you shall have the same rule for the sojourner and for the native, for I am the Lord your God.

Foreman notes that in addition to the story of the man picking up sticks on the Sabbath, there is another instance in the book of Numbers where Moses and the people put a case before the Lord that they do not feel able to adjudicate. This is the case of Zelophehad's daughters in Numbers chapter 27. We could note that there are similar issues at play in both of these cases.

In the case of Zelophehad's daughters, they are concerned that their enjoyment of a patrimony within the land is going to be forfeited because their father had no sons, and the half-Egyptian seems to be completely excluded from Israel because he does not have an Israelite father, only an Israelite mother. In both cases, enjoyment of inheritance through the line of the mother is somehow at stake. While the Lord does not say here that the man should have been given an inheritance among the people of Dan, considering the case of Zelophehad's daughters, it seems reasonable to believe that he could have presented a case for himself.

Of course, rather than appealing to the Lord, he considered the Lord his adversary and cursed the Lord. Had he appealed to the Lord like Zelophehad's daughters rather than cursing the Lord, he might even have enjoyed an inheritance among Israel. Whether or not this is the case, he should have received equitable and generous and hospitable treatment as a sojourner among them.

While in response to his cursing of the Lord, the Lord underlines the equitable treatment with which the sojourner should be treated. The equitable treatment concerns punishment, not blessing. However, if the man had appealed to the Lord rather than cursing him, the teaching of the Lord concerning the equity with which sojourners should be treated might have been pushed in a different direction.

We see in Exodus 23, verse 9, for instance, In a very thought-provoking reading of the passage, Foreman argues that we should read the episodes of Judges 17 and 18 in terms of the events described here. Micah is unwittingly cursed by his mother for taking the 1,100 pieces of silver. She tries to retract her curse by declaring a blessing over him instead.

She uses some of the money to construct idolatrous images. Micah then places those images within his house in a shrine. Later, a Levite of the tribe of Judah comes on the scene and Micah shows hospitality to him, taking him into his household.

Foreman suggests that the man might have been half-Levite, half-Judahite, and perhaps the fact that he was wandering north was because he was excluded from his people on account of his mixed tribal ancestry. In Judges 18, we find that the tribe of Dan did not find a place among their brethren. As they were not able to find a secure place within the land, they went north to try and find some easier land to possess.

They ended up taking the Levite and Micah's household gods with them and established an idolatrous shrine in their new territory, essentially cursing the name of the Lord. At the very end of the narrative, we discover the ancestry of the Levite. The Levite was the son of Gershom, the son of Moses.

Foreman suggests that we need to put all of the pieces together and to recognise that within the story of Micah, the household gods, the Levite and the tribe of Dan, many of the elements of the story at the end of Leviticus chapter 24 are resurfacing. In that chapter, it seems most likely that it was the tribe of Dan that excluded the half-Israelite with an Egyptian father. Now, however, Dan finds itself excluded among the tribes of Israel, not being able to secure a place within the land.

Their response to the situation is not dissimilar to the man that they once excluded. They end up rebelliously seeking their own territory and essentially cursing the name of the Lord by establishing an idolatrous shrine. The Levite, the descendant of Moses, finds himself in a similar position to that which his grandfather was once in.

As a stranger in a strange land, he is a sojourner who, like his grandfather, is shown hospitality. Moses was welcomed by Jethro and became a member of his family. And something similar happens to the Levite in chapter 17 of Judges.

All of this should raise troubling questions about how the people of the Lord treat sojourners and the way in which their inhospitality can provoke people to curse God himself. On the other hand, it raises questions about the ways that those who are at the receiving end of inhospitality leap to cursing or rejecting God rather than actually appealing to him. Far from being straightforward and clear-cut then, the narrative at the end of Leviticus chapter 24 causes us to reflect upon the ways in which the inhospitality of Israel, and even Moses himself, might have provoked the man to his sin.

The Lord's teaching about equity and sanctions is surprising in the context. We might expect that there would be two different laws, one for natives and one for sojourners, but they both come under the same law. The other aspect of this is seen in part in the next chapter where the Lord ensures that the sojourner and the stranger have a positive place and enjoy hospitality among his people.

They should not, as the half-Israelite of this chapter seems to have been, be excluded and mistreated. A question to consider, what are some of the ways in which our inhospitality to others might lead them to curse or reject the Lord? Leviticus chapter 24

concluded with a troubling episode about a man who cursed the Lord, who, reading between some lines, likely did so because he was a half-Israelite sojourner who was not welcomed among the people. Chapter 25 concerns the protection of people's stake within the land, protection for the poor Israelite, and also has teaching concerning the treatment of sojourners.

The first half of the chapter, verses 1-22, present us with the law of the Sabbath year and of the year of Jubilee. The second half, verses 23-55, addresses various situations where a poor Israelite would need protection from disenfranchisement, impoverishment, and social marginalization. It protects such persons from predatory treatment, secures their rights of redemption of their property, and places constraints upon the treatment to which the indebted person could be subject.

Perhaps the most important statement in this chapter is found in verse 23. The land shall not be sold in perpetuity, for the land is mine, for you are strangers and sojourners with me. The laws and teachings of this chapter apply and develop that truth, teaching the Israelites to recognize that they have the land as a gracious grant of the Lord, not as their absolute possession.

Practices such as the Sabbath year and the year of Jubilee place limits upon the claims that people can make upon the land, and the ways in which some parties can be dispossessed while others accumulate wealth. It ensures that people, even once they have been settled in the land, consider their position in the land in terms of trust in the Lord and in terms of the Lord's grace. In this chapter we also see further refraction of the fourth commandment and its consequences for the people.

The law of the Sabbath has implications far beyond a mere weekly day of rest. It has implications for the way that they treat the land, its animals, their slaves, and the poor in their midst. In delivering his people from Egypt, the Lord had given rest to slaves, and that principle of rest is played out in things such as the Festal Calendar, which is built around that principle of seven.

Israel memorializes the great works of the Lord, as the principle of the Sabbath is expressed throughout their entire year. We see this in chapter 23, with two great seven-day festivals, with a great cluster of festivals in the seventh month, with seven weeks, seven times seven, following the Feast of Firstfruits to the Feast of Weeks, with seven feasts, and with seven holy convocations. The Sabbath principle was to be expressed in Israel's economic system and their social policy.

In the first of the case laws in the book of Exodus, in Exodus chapter 21, verse 2, we read, When you buy a Hebrew slave, he shall serve six years, and in the seventh he shall go out free for nothing. Israel had been set free as slaves, and they should always be moving towards setting their own slaves free. In the law of the Sabbath year in this chapter, the Lord includes the land itself as the recipient of rest.

As the land is described in the book of Leviticus, it is oppressed by injustice, by bloodshed, and also by overwork. The land will provide more than enough for the people's needs, and confidence in the goodness of the God who has given it is expressed in part in being willing to let it rest. During the Sabbath year, the people should neither sow nor reap of the land as they typically did.

Rather, during this year, they should trust in the Lord's provision. This principle is described in verses 20-22. Because the people are neither reaping as they would usually do, nor sowing during the seventh year, they might wonder about where the food is going to come from for both the seventh and the eighth year, and this question is dealt with in verses 20-22.

The principle is similar to that that applied to the manna in the wilderness. In Exodus chapter 16, verses 26-30, we read, Six days you shall gather it, but on the seventh day, which is a Sabbath, there will be none. On the seventh day some of the people went out to gather, but they found none.

And the Lord said to Moses, How long will you refuse to keep my commandments and my laws? See, the Lord has given you the Sabbath. Therefore on the sixth day he gives you bread for two days. Remain each of you in his place.

Let no one go out of his place on the seventh day. So the people rested on the seventh day. Verses 6 and 7 of Leviticus chapter 25 might suggest that the people are in the land during the Sabbath year, as the poor and sojourners are in the land for the rest of the years.

They are neither reaping nor sowing, but can be like gleaners upon the Lord's land. This posture of trust and dependence goes hand in hand with a willingness to show grace towards others. Those who trust in the Lord will not feel the need to overwork either themselves, their animals, their servants, or their land.

They take rest and they give rest to others, and the result is good. One can imagine such a repeated extended practice of trust would be deeply spiritually formative for the people. Where such a practice of trust did not exist, people would not only overwork themselves, but they would overwork and oppress others.

The Lord declares his judgment upon an unfaithful and oppressive people in the next chapter. In verses 32 to 35 of that chapter we read, The Lord will unsheathe the sword after you, and your land shall be a desolation, and your cities shall be a waste. Then the land shall enjoy its Sabbaths as long as it lies desolate, while you are in your enemy's land.

Then the land shall rest and enjoy its Sabbaths, as long as it lies desolate it shall have rest, the rest that it did not have on your Sabbaths when you were dwelling in it. The

judgment upon Judah in its destruction by Babylon is described in such terms in 2 Chronicles chapter 36 verses 20 and 21. He took into exile in Babylon those who had escaped from the sword, and they became servants to him and to his sons until the establishment of the kingdom of Persia, to fulfil the word of the Lord by the mouth of Jeremiah until the land had enjoyed its Sabbaths.

All the days that it lay desolate it kept Sabbath, to fulfil 70 years. The Sabbath year squared was the year of Jubilee, a year in which ancestral lands that had been sold were returned to their original owners. This served as a check upon long-term impoverishment, and prevented families from being alienated from the inheritance of Israel.

We should observe a similarity between the Feast of Weeks and the year of Jubilee. The Feast of Weeks is calculated as is described in Leviticus chapter 23 verses 15 and 16. You shall count seven full weeks from the day after the Sabbath, from the day that you brought the sheaf of the wave offering.

You shall count fifty days to the day after the seventh Sabbath. Then you shall present a grain offering of new grain to the Lord. And in Leviticus chapter 25 verse 8, you shall count seven weeks of years, seven times seven years, so that the time of the seven weeks of years shall give you forty-nine years.

This counting seven times seven applies in both cases, and it helps us perhaps to see an analogy between these two things. What the Feast of Weeks is within the year, the year of Jubilee is on a much greater scale. In the context of the Feast of Weeks, there's a reminder of the people's possession of the land by the gracious gift of God, the importance of leaving produce in the land for gleaners, and the importance of celebrating the Lord's goodness in a manner that included everyone.

Rabbi David Forman observes the strong connection that has always been made between the Feast of Weeks, or Pentecost, and the giving of the law. The giving of the law at Sinai was the first great declaration of Israel's freedom, but that was blown up on a greater scale as they entered into the land. Forman suggests that the year of Jubilee provides a way of understanding the importance of what's taking place in the defeat of Jericho.

In the defeat of Jericho, the first city in the Promised Land, we see a Jubilee principle in the return of the land to the people whose rightful possession it will be. The year of Jubilee began with the blowing of trumpets, and the conquest of the land began in a similar way, with an emphasis upon the number seven, the multiples of it, and the blowing of trumpets. Joshua 6, verses 3-5 reads, Then all the people shall shout with a great shout, and the wall of the city will fall down flat, and the people shall go up, everyone straight before him.



The principle of Jubilee is found throughout Israel's history in subtle ways. We might think about the way that the prophet Isaiah speaks of the year of the Lord's favour, a passage taken up by our Lord as he speaks about his own ministry in Luke chapter 4. We might consider that the completion of the temple complex occurs exactly 500 years after the event of the Exodus. Solomon brings the people into the fullness of rest, and that's a Jubilee as it were times ten.

In Daniel chapter 9, the prophet meditates upon the prophecy of Jeremiah concerning the 70 years of Babylon's dominance. He then receives a vision concerning 70 weeks of years, beginning with a seven week of year period. Seven weeks of years is a Jubilee, and 70 weeks of years is a Jubilee times ten.

Daniel is told that these 70 weeks will finish the transgression, put an end to sin, and atone for iniquity, bringing in everlasting righteousness, sealing both vision and prophet, and anointing a most holy place. The year of Jubilee began on the day of atonement, and Daniel's 70 weeks look forward to the provision of full atonement. As James Bajon has argued, the year of Jubilee is alluded to throughout the book of Ezekiel, in the dates, but also in the measurements and the numbers of his visionary temple.

Within that temple, multiples of the numbers 25, half a Jubilee, 49, 50, and 7 constantly appear. Ezekiel's temple is a sort of architectural Jubilee. Similarly, throughout the book of Revelation, the number 7 and multiples thereof appear repeatedly.

The Lord is bringing about his great Sabbath, his ultimate Jubilee. In the rest of the chapter, the Lord presents several ways in which the poverty of his people must be mitigated. In verses 25, 35, 39, and 47, we have the repeated expression, If your brother becomes poor, these verses present different scenarios, and how they ought to be addressed in a way that save people from devastation, oppression, and ruin.

First of all, the Lord prevents the land from being sold in perpetuity. Likewise, people cannot be sold in perpetuity. People might enter into a sort of slavery or hired state because of their debts, but they cannot remain in that state indefinitely.

Israel's behavior towards the poor and dispossessed in the land must be informed by a recognition of their status before the Lord, that they are dependent upon him, that they are strangers within his land. The Lord establishes a number of measures to protect the poor. Beyond the fact that the land cannot be sold in perpetuity and alienated from families, the Lord provides for the possibility of redemption of the land.

The figure of the near kinsman is expected to act on behalf of his brother, to act as a redeemer in the same way as the Lord acted as a redeemer towards his people. Indebted persons could be allowed to remain as tenants upon their land, rather than dispossessed and uprooted entirely. No interest could be taken upon loans to such persons.

The rich could not profit through predatory lending. We have a similar body of teaching in Deuteronomy chapter 15, verses 7 to 15. If among you one of your brothers shall become poor in any of your towns within your land that the Lord your God has given you, you shall not harden your heart or shut your hand against your poor brother, but you shall open your hand to him and lend him sufficient for his need, whatever it may be.

Take care lest there be an unworthy thought in your heart and you say, The seventh year, the year of release, is near. And your eye look grudgingly on your poor brother, and you give him nothing, and he cry to the Lord against you and you be guilty of sin. You shall give to him freely, and your heart shall not be grudging when you give to him, because for this the Lord your God will bless you in all your work and in all that you undertake, for there will never cease to be poor in the land.

Therefore I command you, you shall open wide your hand to your brother, to the needy and to the poor in your land. If your brother, a Hebrew man or a Hebrew woman, is sold to you, he shall serve you six years, and in the seventh year you shall let him go free from you. And when you let him go free from you, you shall not let him go empty-handed.

You shall furnish him liberally out of your flock, out of your threshing floor, and out of your winepress. As the Lord your God has blessed you, you shall give to him. You shall remember that you were a slave in the land of Egypt, and the Lord your God redeemed you.

Therefore I command you this today. In this passage from Deuteronomy we see similar principles at work, not least, what you were once, this person is now, or what this person is in relationship to you, is similar to what you are in relationship to the Lord. Therefore treat him accordingly.

The laws of this chapter protect Israelites from being reduced to a state of servitude once again. Masters are expected to treat their servants graciously. Elsewhere in the Pentateuch there is the expectation that many servants will want to remain with their masters in the long term and become part of their families.

The master is thereby encouraged to play the part of the gracious and provident father figure towards his indigent servants, and or to move them to the point where they are no longer dependent and are able to provide for themselves. Remaining debts would be written off in the Jubilee year, so debts could not hang over a family forever. Of the allowance that the Lord gave his people to own foreign slaves, Nobuyoshi Koichi writes, As commented by some exegetes, slaves in Israelite society would have enjoyed far more freedom than, say, the slaves of a galley ship.

True, they were bought, but they were not ordinarily subjected to torture or harsh treatment, though to an extent this would depend entirely on their individual masters.

That slaves from surrounding countries or strangers became the property of the Israelites indicates that such slaves have a status similar to that of the inherited land. So, if bought from someone else, they return to their homes in the year of Jubilee.

In other words, while purchased slaves are legally distinct from the Israelites, they indirectly inherit the promised land. From the viewpoint of the purchased slaves, their engrafting into an Israelite family would hold out the prospect of a promising future, in that they could expect to receive crumbs fallen from their master's table, which means their being recipients of forgiveness and patience, since it is assumed, at least in this chapter, the Israelites will observe all the Lord's commandments. The Lord's blessing on the Israelites belongs to these purchased slaves also.

We should also bear in mind that man-stealing was a capital crime. In the New Testament, Jesus' ministry can be seen as a sort of great jubilee. He declares release for the captives and deliverance of those who have been bound.

He declares a great release from debts and return for those who have been exiled. This sort of re-enactment of the world regarding the ministry of Christ through the lens of Jubilee will bring much into greater clarity. A question to consider.

Released from their typical agricultural tasks, how do you imagine that the Israelites spent the Sabbath years and the year of Jubilee? What sort of things would they have been released to do? Leviticus chapter 26, like Deuteronomy 28-30, with which it shares many similarities, comes at the end of a body of ritual and legal material and declares the divine sanctions upon Israel's obedience or disobedience. Like various other books of Scripture, this frames the material of the book in terms of principles of blessing and punishment, wisdom and folly, life and death. We see a similar feature in books like Deuteronomy, in the first Psalm, in Proverbs chapter 9, or in Matthew 5 and 23.

Two paths lie before the people and they must choose accordingly. If they obey the commandment of the Lord, they will enjoy a blessed and fruitful life in the land. If they reject his word, they will suffer disaster and ultimately be driven from it.

If they are faithful, they will prosper, enjoy a fruitful land, be delivered from wild beasts in the land and from their enemies. Most importantly, the Lord will dwell among them and be their guard. This is the great covenant formula.

I will be your guard and you shall be my people. It expresses the covenant relationship between God and his people. He delivered them so that they would be his own.

The Lord brought them out of Egypt so that they should cease to be slaves, so that they should walk at their full stature, no longer bent down under a burdensome yoke. The purpose of the Lord's commandments then is to retain them in the freedom for which he set them free. The majority of the chapter is devoted to the judgments that Israel will

suffer should they reject the way of the Lord.

The judgments that follow steadily escalate for each failure to respond to God's correction. Each successive judgment is introduced by the formula, if you will not listen to me, or something similar, and threats of sevenfold judgment. After several iterations of judgment without faithful response, beginning with God sending things such as plagues, wild beasts, or enemies after them, God will finally come after them himself, devastating their land personally, as we see in places like verse 32.

At many points the judgments can be seen as the direct inverse of the blessings. The choices between the land being fertile or unproductive, between God turning in favour towards his people or turning his face from them, between Israel triumphing over their enemies or being routed by them, between deliverance from wild beasts or being devoured by wild beasts, between the protection of the land from the sword or giving the land over to the sword, between security in the land or being uprooted from the land. God will subject the people to the most serious judgment, expelling them from the land and placing them in exile and captivity to their enemies if they persist in their unfaithfulness.

They would risk being extinguished as a people, rotting away in exile. However, here a rich note of promise is introduced. When they have fallen to their lowest point, if they will confess their iniquity, humble themselves and make amends for their sin, the Lord will remember his covenant.

He will not spurn them or destroy them utterly. In their absence the land shall be left desolate until the point when they have suffered for their sins and can be restored to it. But God will not forget his covenant.

He brought them out of Egypt in the presence of the nations in order to be their God. His very covenant identity as the Lord is bound up with his commitment to his people. And this section is parallel to Deuteronomy chapter 30 verses 1 to 10.

And when all these things come upon you, the blessing and the curse, which I have set before you, and you call them to mind among all the nations where the Lord your God has driven you, and return to the Lord your God, you and your children, and obey his voice in all that I command you today, with all your heart and with all your soul, then the Lord your God will restore your fortunes and have mercy on you. And he will gather you again from all the peoples where the Lord your God has scattered you. If your outcasts are in the uttermost parts of heaven, from there the Lord your God will circumcise your heart and the heart of your offspring, so that you will love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul, that you may live.

And the Lord your God will put all these curses on your foes and enemies who persecuted you. And you shall again obey the voice of the Lord and keep all his

commandments that I command you today. The Lord your God will make you abundantly prosperous in all the work of your hand, in the fruit of your womb and in the fruit of your cattle and in the fruit of your ground.

For the Lord will again take delight in prospering you, as he took delight in your fathers. When you obey the voice of the Lord your God, to keep his commandments and his statutes that are written in this book of the law, when you turn to the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul. The land then plays a very important part in the blessings and the judgments.

The land will suffer if they are unfaithful, not receiving rain, and if they persist, the land itself will frustrate their efforts in cultivating it. If they persist yet further in unfaithfulness, the land and its creatures will start to devour them and their livestock. And if they still persist, the land will vomit them out and they will go into exile, as we see in chapter 18 and 20.

And if they are faithful, the land will become a place where they are ever more securely planted, which is deeply responsive to their labors, and ultimately a place where they will enjoy fellowship with the Lord himself. If and when their unfaithfulness gets them sent into exile, they will have to wait until the land has enjoyed the Sabbaths that are due to it. The land itself is regarded as a sort of servant of the Israelites, which should not be oppressed by harsh and unrelenting service.

In the previous chapter we read of the Sabbath year, in Leviticus chapter 25 verses 1-7. The Lord spoke to Moses on Mount Sinai, saying, It shall be a year of solemn rest for the land. The Sabbath of the land shall provide food for you, for yourself and for your male and female slaves, and for your hired worker and the sojourner who lives with you, and for your cattle and for the wild animals that are in your land.

All its yield shall be for food. Along with the Sabbath year there is also the year of Jubilee, which is also about the people's relationship with the land. In chapter 25 verses 8-13, You shall count seven weeks of years, seven times seven years, note the similarities with the Feast of Weeks, so that the time of the seven weeks of years shall give you forty-nine years.

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, and you shall consecrate the fiftieth year and proclaim liberty throughout the land to all its inhabitants. It shall be a Jubilee for you, when each of you shall return to his property, and each of you shall return to his clan.

That fiftieth year shall be a Jubilee for you. In it you shall neither sow nor reap what grows of itself, nor gather the grapes from the undressed vines. For it is a Jubilee, it shall be holy to you, you may eat the produce of the field.

In this year of Jubilee each of you shall return to his property. The land isn't just territory, property and resources. It's a sort of secondary party within the relationship, a place where the people are to be planted like a tree and to put down roots.

It will be a home for them, filled with the life of fellowship with God who dwells with them in it. But it ultimately belongs to God, and his ownership must be honoured. God has eminent domain, and they can't treat it however they wish as if it were their private property.

Land, for instance, must revert to the persons to whom God gave it in the fiftieth year. The relationship between the people and the land is not a mere imposition of a dominating logic upon the land. It requires them to honour the integrity, the otherness and the holiness of the land.

They must not oppress the land, they must not devastate the land, they must not profane the land. And if they do, the land will be released from their tyranny for a time. It will vomit them out into exile, and they will be held out of the land until the land has been released from their tyranny for the period of its Sabbaths.

The Sabbath principle, connected with their own deliverance from slavery, must inform their treatment of the land and also their enjoyment of possession of it. We should observe the Sabbath and Jubilee themes in their first victory in the land, in the defeat of Jericho in Joshua chapter 6 verses 12-16. Then Joshua rose early in the morning, and the priests took up the ark of the Lord.

And the seven priests, bearing the seven trumpets of ram's horns, before the ark of the Lord, walked on. And they blew the trumpets continually, and the armed men were walking before them, and the rear guard were walking after the ark of the Lord, while the trumpets blew continually. And the second day they marched round the city once, and returned into the camp.

So they did for six days. On the seventh day they rose early at the dawn of day, and marched round the city in the same manner seven times. It was only on that day that they marched round the city seven times.

And at the seventh time, when the priests had blown the trumpets, Joshua said to the people, For the Lord has given you the city. It's the principle of seven sevens. It's also the principle of blowing the trumpet, and their gaining of the land.

The land is reverting to its proper owner. It's the year of Jubilee. It's the year of the liberation of the land from the people who have been oppressing it.

But they need to remember that they can become like Jericho and the Canaanites too. If they are not careful, and if they oppress the land, they will suffer the same fate. Where they fail to honour the principle of the Sabbath then, the great sign of their liberation,

neither living in the liberty of right relationship with the Lord, nor liberating their neighbour on the land, judgment will fall upon them.

The entire life of Israel is supposed to be Sabbath-shaped, a participation in God's rest in the land, with God dwelling in their midst. It should not surprise us that Sabbath is mentioned nine times in this chapter. God's judgment moves from a sort of eye-for-an-eye judgment to something much more devastating.

Now punishment can be inflicted through direct imposition of a punishment or sanction, as a positive act, or it can be inflicted through the removal of blessing or protection. And many fail to consider that God is the source of every good gift. For God to withdraw his blessing and protection is to be exposed to every ill and danger, and ultimately to suffer utter destruction itself, as we are cut off from life and health and peace.

It is to give oneself entirely over to the forces of decreation. Ultimately the health of Israel and the land is to be found as they cling to the Lord and the Giver of life. The story of the Exodus shows what happens when a nation rebels against the Lord, the sorts of forces of decreation that come into play.

And also what happens when God provides for a people. The same hyper-naturalism that is seen in the plagues is also seen in God's provision for his people in the wilderness. And those same principles will follow them into the land.

A question to consider. Although we know that Canaan as the Promised Land has a unique status, are there any lessons that we can learn about the relationship with the creation that we should have from Israel's relationship to the land? Leviticus chapter 27 is a surprising end to the book. The blessings and curses of chapter 26 might have been a far more natural place to conclude.

Reading chapter 27 it can seem a bit tagged on. However if it is tagged on we might wonder why it has been appended to the end of the book rather than added somewhere within it. The chapter concerns vows and votive offerings.

Israelites might make such vows in times of crisis, declaring their intention to dedicate some person or some part of their property to the Lord. We might for instance think about Hannah. In 1 Samuel chapter 1 verse 11 we read, Taking such vows was a very solemn thing to do.

In Acts chapter 5 Ananias and Sapphira lost their lives for lying to the Lord concerning vowed property. In Deuteronomy chapter 23 verses 21 to 23 we have the following warning, In the book of Judges chapter 12 verses 30 to 31 we read of the rash vow of Jephthah. Within Leviticus chapter 27 provision is made for the redemption or buying back of certain things that have been dedicated to the Lord.

Yet such buying back is not permitted in all of the cases. The first vow mentioned here is

the vowing of persons. We might think for instance of Hannah's vow of her son or the way in which someone in the midst of a crisis might vow themselves or some member of their family to the service of the Lord's house were they delivered.

The valuations listed here seem to be on the basis of people's suitability for manual labour. Consequently males of working age are valued much more highly than anyone else. The value given for the elderly, for children and for women is much lower.

Redeeming such a person might cost the equivalent of four years of typical wages. So such buying back could not be easily done. As we see in verse 8, provision was made for people who were too poor to pay such valuations.

The next case that is dealt with is the vowing of animals. Animals that could be sacrificed were holy to the Lord and could not be substituted for. If the vower wanted to substitute for the vowed animal, both the animal and the substitute animal would be holy to the Lord.

Presumably the animal that he sought to substitute for in this instance would be used as a peace offering. The fact that redemption is not allowed for here differs from the law of the reparation offering in Leviticus 5.15 If anyone commits a breach of faith and sins unintentionally in any of the holy things of the Lord, he shall bring to the Lord as his compensation a ram without blemish out of the flock, valued in silver shekels, according to the shekel of the sanctuary, for a guilt offering. For the reparation offering, either the animal or its monetary equivalent was permitted.

However, in the case of the vows mentioned in chapter 27, the animal itself had been vowed and could not be redeemed. Unclean animals could also be vowed. Such animals presumably went to the service of the Levites, so a man might vow his donkey and give it over to the Levites or redeem it for its valuation plus 20%.

Houses and land could also be dedicated. They could also, like the animals, be redeemed for an additional 20% of the valuation price. The dedication of land was complicated by virtue of the Jubilee laws.

The value of land was assessed by its productive capacity until the year of Jubilee. Once again, if someone wanted to redeem it, they had to add 20%. Verses 20-21 deal with a special case.

As Jacob Milgram notes, what seems to have occurred in this instance is that an Israelite had already sold their property until the Jubilee, and then they consecrate the field that they had sold. Since the use of the property until the year of Jubilee does not actually belong to them, but belongs to the person to whom they sold it earlier, what they are really giving over to the sanctuary is not the use of the land until the Jubilee, which they had given to the other party for money, but rather the right of reclaiming the land at the



time of Jubilee. From that point onwards, the land belongs to the sanctuary.

Verses 22-24 deal with a case where a person dedicates his right to the use of a field until the year of Jubilee, the field not being his own, but the possession of someone else. At the time of the Jubilee, that field shall return to its original owner. In Exodus chapter 13, verses 1 and 2, and then 11-13 we read, The Lord said to Moses, You shall redeem.

Because the firstborn already belonged to the Lord, they could not ordinarily be dedicated to him. In the case of a child like Samuel, Samuel was presumably redeemed and then dedicated. Verses 28-29 deal with cases of the ban.

This was perhaps the strongest form of vow of all, placing persons under a death sentence. As Gordon Wenham writes, It seems unlikely that ordinary Israelites could pronounce such vows. Only the recognized leaders had authority to declare a death sentence.

We see an instance of such a vow in Numbers chapter 21, verse 2. And Israel vowed a vow to the Lord and said, If you will indeed give this people into my hand, then I will devote their cities to destruction. We see an interesting case in Joshua chapter 9. The Gibeonites, as part of the people of the land, were under the ban and had to be destroyed. However, because of the people's rash oath of protection, they were preserved.

Yet how could such persons be preserved if they were truly under the ban? Milgram suggests that becoming lifelong sanctuary servants was a way in which a lesser but acceptable form of harem was imposed. Putting all of the pieces together, he writes, In sum, the harem imposed voluntarily by the owner of his property, whether it is his slaves, animals or tenured fields, transfers it to perpetual sanctuary ownership, where it may be neither sold nor redeemed because of its most sacred status. But persons who are declared harem by some outside body, presumably an authorized court, must be put to death.

So then there are two possible scenarios for a prescribed person. Either they are consigned to sanctuary ownership or they suffer the death penalty. This helps us to recognize the possibility that Jephthah's daughter was not in fact killed, but was rather dedicated to the sanctuary for the rest of her life and could not marry.

Gordon Wenham draws attention to Genesis chapter 28 verses 20-22. Then Jacob made a vow, saying, Israel's practice of the tithe then could be seen as a continuation of the vow of their forefather Jacob. And laws concerning the paying and the redeeming of tithes ends this chapter and the book.

Chapter 27 ends with a similar statement as we find at the end of chapter 7 and chapter 26. Different statements summing up sub-sections of commandments that the Lord gave

to Moses at Mount Sinai. As we conclude the book, we should return once again to the question of why it ends with this particular chapter.

Emmanuel Shalev observes a sort of symmetry in the book. The beginning section of the book, in chapters 1-7, deal with the offerings of the priests within the tabernacle. The end of the book concerns the vows of the people to the Lord.

There is a sort of parallel here. The offerings of the tabernacle and the vows of the people are similar. However, whereas one is focused upon the sanctuary of the tabernacle, the other is practiced more generally within the land, not focused upon the tabernacle to the same extent.

The first half of the book, leading up to the laws concerning the Day of Atonement, is focused very much upon the sanctuary and life that narrowly orbits around that context. However, the second half of the book has the larger land in view. This, Shalev argues, shows that we are dealing with a sort of microcosm and macrocosm.

What takes place in the context of the tabernacle needs to be played out within the larger stage of the land. The Lord dwells in the tabernacle, in the tent that the people have erected for him. And the people dwell in the Lord's land that he has established them within.

Communion between God and man must be worked out in both realms. This symmetry between the realm of the sanctuary and the realm of the land, between the microcosm and the macrocosm, needs to be preserved for the holiness of the people. The principle of offerings and worship that we see at the beginning of the book in the context of the tabernacle also needs to be played out in the context of the wider land, in the vows and other offerings that the people give to the Lord.

The tabernacle at the heart of the camp and later at the heart of the nation establishes a fundamental pattern into which the rest of life needs to be drawn. The people must be holy because the Lord, their God, is holy. A question to consider, what might this chapter and its place within the book more generally teach us about the theological importance of giving to the Lord and to his service?