Leviticus

Vasholz's commentary on Leviticus provides another helpful resource for students of the Scriptures. His work on this often neglected biblical book will take its place next to a comparatively small group of commentaries that combine an evangelical focus, a high view of Scripture, careful attention to the text, and an avoidance of overemphasis on symbolism and typology. Throughout the volume, he interacts with other commentaries on Leviticus as well as various monographs, writes clearly in an expositional fashion, and provides helpful explanations of a book whose meaning and importance eludes many of its readers.

Michael A. Grisanti, Associate Professor of Old Testament,
The Master's Seminary, Sun Valley, California

Dr Vasholz claims that Leviticus, far from being a book to avoid or skip over, is of basic importance to the Bible and to our understanding of what it teaches. His commentary proves the claim to the hilt. It is a high treat to enter into huge scholarship wedded to patient, detailed explanation and exposition of the sacred text. Here is Leviticus brought out of obscurity into the light, off the sidelines into the mainstream. The patience of his scholarship calls for patience in our reading, and rewards it.

Alec Motyer

Leviticus

A Mentor Commentary

Robert I. Vasholz

MENTOR



Robert Vasholz is Professor of Old Testament at Covenant Theological Seminary in St Louis, Missouri. His Doctorate is from Stellenbosch and he has also studied at St. Louis University, Brandeis and Harvard. He has also written *Benedictions: A Pocket Resource* (ISBN 978-1-84550-230-0)

Note: The author prefers the use of italics over quotation marks. Almost all citations, including quotations of Scripture in the text, appear in italics.

ISBN 1-84550-044-X
ISBN 978-1-84550-044-3

10 9 8 7 6 5 4 3 2 1

Published in 2007
in the
Mentor Imprint
by
Christian Focus Publications,
Geanies House, Fearn, Tain,
Ross-shire, IV20 1TW, Great Britain

www.christianfocus.com

Cover Design by Danie Van Straaten

Printed and Bound by WS Bookwell, Finland

Abbreviations

ANET	Ancient Near Eastern Texts Related to the Old Testament. James B. Pritchard and W. F. Albright [and others], translators and annotators (Princeton: Princeton University Press), 2nd ed., corrected and enlarged
BDB	A Hebrew and English Lexicon of the Old Testa-ment, eds. Brown, Driver and Briggs (Oxford: Clarendon, 1907)
BT	Babylonian Talmud
CH	The Code of Hammurabi in the Babylonian Laws, eds. Driver and Miles (Oxford: Clarendon, 1955)
EJ	Encyclopedia Judaica, (Jerusalem: Keter Pub-lishing House, 1978)
ESV	English Standard Version
KJV	King James Version
M.	The Mishnah, Translated by Jacob Neusner (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1988)
NASB	New American Standard Bible
NIV	New International Version
REB	Revised English Bible
LXX	Greek Old Testament
TDOT	Theological Dictionary of the Old Testament, eds. Botterweck, Ringgren and Fabry (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1974)
NIDOT	New International Dictionary of Old Testament Theology and Exegesis, ed. Willem A. Van Gemeren (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1997)
TWOT	Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament, eds. Harris, Archer, Jr., and Waltke (Chicago: Moody Press, 1980)





Preface

Sadly, it appears that the Book of Leviticus has been relegated to a secondary status in the church today. While it is considered the classical text of those who have been called fervently Orthodox Jews (some 247 of the 613 laws of the Mishnah are based on Leviticus), Christians have largely relegated the details about such things as sacrifices and purity laws to a bygone era. There is, of course, some reason for that. While rabbinic commentary teaches that this is the first book of Scripture that children should learn, modern readers often view Leviticus as tedious and dull.[1] Reading Leviticus was, in the words of a third-century church scholar, *like having to eat unfit food*.

Candidly, while the practices in Leviticus are distant and perhaps mysterious to the modern Western world, there are fundamental elements in the Book of Leviticus that are both universal and relevant to the contemporary scene. Leviticus highlights cardinal themes and vital interests for the believer. For example, what Christian would argue that *love your neighbor as yourself*, the second greatest commandment, should be relegated to the past? But this verse, which is so often cited in the New Testament, first appears in the Book of Leviticus. And it doesn't stop there. The Epistle to the Hebrews expounds Leviticus to such an extent that it is close to impossible to comprehend parts of Hebrews without reference to Leviticus.

---

[1] *Leviticus Rabbah* vii.3 reads: *Since the children are pure, and the sacrifices are pure, let the pure come and occupy themselves with things that are pure.* The idea is that it takes the pure in heart to understand the pure Word. Cf. Ps. 25:14: *The secret of the Lord is with those that fear Him....* Traditionally, in Judaism, a five-year-old begins his study of the Scriptures with Leviticus.

This can also be said with regard to certain passages in the Gospels.

Not secondary to these concerns are basic interests to all believers. The Book of Leviticus informs its readers how God's nation was to perform when He was in their midst, i.e. how life was to be ordered in the community around the Tent of the Meeting. It provides insight into the prominent mentions of holiness and how a sinful people may fellowship with a holy God. Here is an issue that is never of slight consequence.

How does one live in the presence of a holy God? Living in God's presence reflects His holiness that can, should, does and will transform the world around us.

In Leviticus, the reader is offered an ongoing picture of Hebrew slaves delivered from Egypt becoming a kingdom of priests, a salvation that began with promises to their forefathers in Canaan. Of course, such deliverance required, and received in Scripture, further clarification for both a changing world and changing times toward a universal application. One must carefully work through the times and culture of that ancient milieu, but the rewards for doing so are very much worthwhile, since the principles of spiritual vitality presented in Leviticus are timeless truth from the Lord to His people in any era of biblical or church history.

It is my challenge to uncover and clarify the ongoing relevancy of the magnificent Book of Leviticus. In that regard, contemporary readers are fortunate that the world of the Old Testament is more known to us now than it has been to past generations. As an author, I also enjoy the advantage of having at my disposal numerous excellent works of both Jewish and Christian scholars who have explored the meaning of this book. This knowledge both informs and enhances the task of illuminating Leviticus' enduring value. My goal is that this work will provide an impetus for both teaching and preaching from its pages for present and future generations.

Above all, though, it is crucial that the reader realize that Leviticus finds its primary relevancy in what it symbolizes. Hebrews 9:8-9 attests that, in many of the details in Leviticus, the Holy Spirit of God signified eternal truths later manifested

in the person of God's Son, Christ, who is over all and blessed by God forever. The things that pertain to Old Testament worship are a mirror and copy of a far higher reality!

This work began with the same mindset that most authors have when they set out to write a commentary on Scripture. The general plan is to explain the meaning of each word and verse as they appear in the chapter. This standard approach is commendable and, obviously, has certain significant advantages. As a result, a number of quality commentaries on Leviticus have followed this method.

However, it was just this point that made me pause. I weighed carefully the value of adding one more commentary employing this approach to the list. Therefore, what I decided to do was to present Leviticus in a different manner, as the unfolding story of God's Word to Moses, because, fundamentally, Leviticus is a narrative about God speaking to Moses repeatedly. Over and over and over, *the Word of the Lord came to Moses* and revealed His will to Moses for His people. While there is little narrative in the book itself, nevertheless it is a kind of history with numerous conversations between God and Moses as its centerpiece.

In addition, the reader will quickly note a brief essay after commentary on every chapter which offers a summation of a number of topics addressed in Leviticus. Naturally, there is some overlapping to be expected.

Robert I. Vasholz
Covenant Theological Seminary, St. Louis, Missouri





Introduction

Leviticus receives its English title from the Greek *Levitikon*, which means *pertaining to the Levites*. Probably, Jewish scribes (who called Leviticus *the Priest's Manual*) influenced the title in the Tannaitic Period (200 BC–200 AD). While the title is appropriate for certain sections – namely, Leviticus 8–10; 16 and 21:1–22:14, it fails to point out that most of the book is directed to all of the people of Israel. The priesthood of Israel was not meant to be a secret society with mysterious practices known only to them. The book bears this out.

The book throughout decidedly attributes its origin to divine revelation given to Moses. It is explicit. *The Lord said to Moses* occurs thirty-five times in the book and the expression is utilized as an organizing feature in this commentary. The work was authored by one of the greatest figures, if not the greatest, in ancient Israel.

As expected, then, Leviticus is an expression of Scripture in terms of Mosaic times and culture.[1] It should be no surprise then that Leviticus reflects the culture of its day. It expresses those things readily understood by one who lived in that milieu. If this was not the case, the reality of Israel's experience could be questioned! In truth, though, it is a demonstration of God's remarkable accommodation to the human condition to speak in terms of that period (cf. Deut. 30:11-14).

In the last two hundred years, the Mosaic authorship of Leviticus has been undermined by writers who assert that it was written considerably later than Moses. Leviticus, it is alleged, was composed by priests who lived at the time of Ezra, i.e. during the post-exilic period (around 450 BC).[2]

---

[1] Moses' life and ministry took place in the middle of the 2nd millennium BC.

[2] Post-exilic writers attribute rituals prescribed in Leviticus to Moses and not to their contemporaries. It is passing strange that the post-exilic writers at the time that it is alleged that Leviticus was written were either unaware

While a full-blown response in favor of Mosaic authorship is not presented here, there is today enough evidence to affirm that Mosaic authorship of Leviticus is indeed highly feasible.[3] Specifically, written materials from Israel's close neighbors during Moses' era and before clearly demonstrate that all that was culturally and materially necessary to write Leviticus was at hand at the time of the Exodus. For example, the tradition that religious instruction was placed under the supervision of priests, a characteristic of Israel's religion, goes back to the ancient Sumerians, who lived about 3000 BC (cf. Lev. 10:11). With this kind of evidence now available, a number of those who have considered Levitical practices largely the product of post-exilic priests now entertain the practicality of acknowledging for entertaining sources considerably earlier.

In fact, all the necessary ingredients for Leviticus originating at the time of Moses were there.[4] Writing and materials for writing are in evidence at least 1000 years before Moses and the writings address a variety of subjects including political history and religious traditions. More specifically, several hundred texts from the ancient city of Ugarit, and dated to the Mosaic era, are inscribed in an alphabetic Semitic language that has a remarkable linguistic similarity to biblical Hebrew. Relatedly, terms for sacrifices, the same mentioned in Leviticus, were inscribed on clay tablets by Israel's next-door neighbors earlier than 1400 BC.

It is also clear from archaeological data that Israel as a people and nation were in Canaan by the thirteenth century BC. A stele of the Egyptian king Merneptah (1229 BC) indicates that, by this time, Israelites were already in possession of their

---

that Leviticus was being composed or were consciously perpetuating a fraud. These writers, then, would have been either naive or unscrupulous (cf. 6:49; 15:15; 2 Chron. 23:18; Ezra 3:2; Neh. 8:14).

[3] For an admirable defense of the Mosaic authorship of the Pentateuch, with helpful bibliography, see Gleason Archer, Jr., *A Survey of Old Testament Introduction* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1994 ed.).

[4] This author holds to the traditional early date of Israel's exodus from Egypt (1446 BC). For an argument supporting that conclusion from an archaeological standpoint, see John Bimson, *Redating the Exodus and Conquest* (Sheffield: Sheffield University Press, 1978).

land and that nationhood had taken place.[5] Also, the field of comparative religion asserts that it would be highly irregular to assume that the nation did not have a priesthood.

An exact date for the writing and compilation of Leviticus is not presented in the biblical text itself. The Scriptures, however, do provide some helpful parameters. It was written in the Desert of Sinai during Israel's wilderness wanderings. The decrees, laws and regulations are said to have been revealed at Mt. Sinai (Lev. 7:38; 25:1; 26:46; 27:34), where the Tent-Sanctuary was set up (Lev. 1:1). From Exodus 19:1 and Numbers 1:1, it appears that Israel stayed in the environs of Mt. Sinai for at least nine months. This provided more than adequate time to compose Leviticus.

The Tent-Sanctuary was an extension of Sinai's glory. The cloud and fire of Sinai never left Israel in the wilderness and that reminded Israel that the God who spoke to Moses at the Mount, spoke to him at this 'portable Sinai' as well. The cloud appeared at the Tent-Sanctuary both to reveal God's presence and to conceal God's presence, as it did at Sinai. As a point of theological reference, Leviticus does not seem to make a distinction between Mt. Sinai and the Tent-Sanctuary. The former validated the latter.

The Desert of Sinai was a designation for one desert among several where Israel stopped during their wilderness trek. They were there from the third month of the first year until the twentieth day of the second month of the second year after they came out of Egypt. Leviticus was composed during this time.

This was not only enough time but also an appropriate time for the few events recorded in Leviticus to take place. The timing of the composition of Leviticus coincided perfectly with the setting up of the Tent-Sanctuary, so that sanctioned worship could begin as soon as possible. *On the first day of the first month you shall set up the tabernacle of the tent of the meeting* (Exod. 40:2).

The ancient world into which Leviticus was introduced was a *hyper-religious* world. It was a world dominated by the kinds

[5] A stele is an ancient stone, slab or pillar that is engraved or inscribed and set upright.

of religious icons, ideas, symbols, superstitions, practices, myths, ceremonies, traditions, fantasies, etc., abundantly evident in pagan religions. Men believed they communicated with god(s), who then meticulously recorded and maintained the messages of their gods.

For example, Thoth, an Egyptian god in antiquity, was well known as the scribe of divine messages. But, this is not to say that the writings of Moses were *not* decidedly different from ancient surrounding pagan communities. The phenomenal events of the Exodus and Sinai indicate otherwise. Mosaic writings were backed up with divine approval. The one true God went with Israel and that made all the difference. *What else will distinguish me and your people unless you go with us?* (Exod. 33:16).[6]

The religion of Leviticus entered into a world of real people. It entered the world of the ancient Near East and it was in this world's terms that the Lord God graciously condescended to make His will known. That world was, so-to-speak, pressed into service. It is a divine condescension that would only be exceeded in all of Scripture by the Incarnation.

Leviticus was written to show how the Lord God's community was to serve while living in close proximity to the Lord in the wilderness. While the possession of the land of Canaan was anticipated (Lev. 14:34; 18:3; 25:2), Leviticus primarily addressed Israel's situation in the desert. Eighteen references in Leviticus to the *camp* stress this point. The camp pertains to the divinely-sanctioned arrangement of Israel's encampment before settlement in the land of Canaan.

In the middle of the camp was the Tent-Sanctuary, with a cloud hovering over it day and night during Israel's travels. This cloud reassured Israel that the Lord was near. Both the people and the priests who lived in the camp were to maintain a sacred environment fit for true royalty. The precepts in Leviticus were royal statutes as to how this was to be done.

---

[6] For a fuller discussion on this issue, see Robert Vasholz, *The Old Testament Canon in the Old Testament Church: The Internal Rationale for Old Testament Canonicity* (Lewiston: Edwin Mellen Press, 1990), 14-16.

The land of Canaan, no doubt, was to be perceived as an extension of the camp in the wilderness. The whole land of Canaan was to be purged of the Canaanites and their vile practices. Conquest and possession of the land was to make the land a suitable place for the dwelling of a holy Sovereign and His chosen royal priesthood. Though Israel's situation changed dramatically with the occupation of the land, Leviticus, nevertheless, provided a model and instruction for acceptable service for the future. Thus, Leviticus anticipates a transition from dwelling with God in the desert to dwelling with God in Canaan (Lev. 18:34).

The laws concerning the offerings in Leviticus 1–7 follow hard on the heels of the details in Exodus concerning the setting up of Israel's national sanctuary. These details were revealed to Moses at Mt. Sinai to depict the true sanctuary *not made by hands*. While the rituals of Israel's pagan neighbors naturally corresponded to some of Israel's practices, they were all, candidly, shadows of original revelation extending back to the Garden of Eden (Gen. 3:21; 4:4).

In other words, paganism produced skewed patterns, so that Israel, via Moses, was given a fresh vision. Moses, engulfed in a cloud, ascended Mt. Sinai and remained there forty days and nights. There, he viewed the true heavenly sanctuary. At God's command, Moses had his vision copied in an earthly, material form, the Tent-Sanctuary and its accoutrements. Thus, Israel would have a picture of heavenly realities. This is where the Book of Leviticus begins. It begins with a heavenly vision of God's palace/Temple and the way one is to approach His presence.

In addition, the construction of this prescribed sanctuary provided a house for divine visitation, that God might meet in the midst of His people. This is a focal point in Leviticus. It was appropriate, therefore, for God's people to know how to approach their King. For in the world of the Old Testament, it is understood that, when one enters into the presence of royalty, one hardly goes empty-handed. The specificity provided in the description of the Levitical offerings demonstrates the respect and allegiance required to pay homage to the King.

Since Israel's relationship as a nation with the Lord was conveyed in terms of a covenant, the manner of that relationship was expressed by performing ceremonies which indicated covenant relationship. *Gather my godly ones to Me, Those who have made a covenant with Me by sacrifice* (Ps. 50:5). The word *covenant* occurs ten times in the Book of Leviticus and is always in the backdrop of the book's deliberations. It is not going too far to say that covenant/treaty was both a common and an acceptable way of expressing relationships long before Moses.

Sacrifices and offerings were commonly utilized in the world of the Old Testament as means of expressing covenant commitments. The practice of making sacrifices as a means of demonstrating covenant relationships was neither primitive nor unsophisticated. Sacrifices had a divine origin (Gen. 3:21; 4:3-4). They were symbolic and charged with nuances of meaning. This was unquestionably understood by the authors of the Old Testament (Ps. 50:7-23; Micah 6:6-8) as well as many in the intertestamental period.[7] In this regard, the details pertaining to the sacrifices and offerings in Leviticus are relevant. They express the means, to some degree, and the nature of the relationship between Israel and Israel's Sovereign Lord. Covenant rituals signified fundamental elements of what a covenant was intended to signify, values like reconciliation, pacification, fellowship, a cessation of hostilities, forgiveness, friendship, communion, expiation, purification, etc. Likewise, there is no difference in the intent of Old Testament covenants and the New Covenant in Jeremiah 31:31-34 and Hebrews 9:15-22.

The Old Testament, however, does not articulate the exact meaning of many details accompanying the Levitical sacrifices. (No doubt they were familiar to the ancient world, but presently escape understanding.[8]) It is best to guard

[7] Cf. Ecclesiasticus 35:1-2: *He who keeps the law makes many offerings; he who heeds the commandments sacrifices a peace offering. He who returns a kindness offers fine flour, and he who gives alms sacrifices a thank offering.*

[8] Biblical texts indicate that Israel and Israel's neighbors used the same terminology for their sacrifices (e.g. Num. 23:15; 1 Kings 18:38; 2 Kings 3:27; 10:24).

against dogmatism on the details when there is little or no explanation. On the other hand, we are told that the sanctuary was an image of the heavenly sanctuary, i.e. the ministry of the pre-incarnate Christ. It is not at all improper to discern Christological interpretation where applicable; indeed, it is necessary.

By means of covenant a relationship between God and the *nation* of Israel was established. Covenant recall and renewal were means of maintaining this relationship, the privilege of a redeemed nation. This was what the Levitical service was designed to do, though Israel was a nation of covenant breakers. They were made up of a rebellious and stiff-necked people. Moses knew when he passed from the scene that his people would turn back to their golden calf ways: *For I know that after my death you will act corruptly and turn from the way which I have commanded you; and evil will befall you in the latter days, for you will do that which is evil in the sight of the Lord, provoking him to anger with the work of your hands* (Deut. 31:29). Nevertheless, Moses prescribed an organized service of offerings for a sinful people precisely in anticipation of inevitable broken covenant relationships so that Israel might retain their favored status among the nations.





Prelude to Leviticus 1–7

Chapters 1–7 of Leviticus are prescriptions for five major kinds of offerings. They are the Burnt, Grain, Peace, Sin and the Guilt offerings. All of these offerings are presented as offerings made by fire upon the altar in the sanctuary. Offerings by fire demonstrate the mystical relationship between the spiritual (i.e. the nonmaterial) and the mundane (i.e. the material). God and man, heaven and earth, must connect. The smoking ascent of sacrifice was to communicate that there is a way to God. Communication and reconciliation, when needed, is provided. And, while Israel's neighbors also shared an understanding of this, though skewed, it was by Israel that the heavenly reality was emphatically displayed in a history peculiar only to them.

The Scriptures teach that animal sacrifice goes back to the dawn of creation. While sacrifice is intimated when the Lord God clothed Adam and his wife with garments of skin (Gen. 3:21), for one can hardly *skin* an animal without killing and sacrificing it, it is explicit in Genesis 4:3ff. Thus, sacrifices were offered long before Israel entered Canaan. In addition, archaeological evidence of sacrifice extends back to the third millennium before Christ in Mesopotamia as well as across the Fertile Crescent.

Among the ancient Mesopotamians and Assyrians, there were fire offerings, the kind of offerings dealt with in the first seven chapters of Leviticus. Generally speaking, all of the reasons for sacrificing suggested in the Old Testament have precedents in the ancient Near East prior to ancient Israel. This is quite understandable, sacrifice was common to humanity

from the beginning as a universal recognition of a need to put oneself in a right relationship with God.

Sacrifice was inextricably bound up in prayer and supplication in order to obtain health, prosperity and wellbeing. So it should not be assumed that God *began* to deal with mankind in this way with Moses or even when He called Abraham. The history of sacrifice predated the patriarchs.

It should not come as a surprise, then, that Israel's way of expressing the nation's relationship with God was similar in many respects to other nations. Like all societies, the children of Israel were people of their times and, thus, employed the same cultural trappings to express their covenantal relationships. The use of shared culture by Israel demonstrates an extraordinary condescension on the part of the Lord God to communicate with His people of old by means of their lifestyle. Today, we view that lifestyle as primitive but, often, there was a depth of meaning that is murky to our more material and technological modern culture.

In the ancient Near East, sacrifices were offered as food for the gods in both Egyptian and Mesopotamian cults. Cereal, animals, spices and liquids were offered for food as a central feature. Sacrifices were also given as gifts, for the purpose of averting the wrath of gods, to obtain favor for specific petitions, as a substitution for the one giving the offering, to forge a union, to remove guilt, to placate and to reconcile. And, all of these motives are in concert with reasons for sacrifice in Leviticus. The God of Israel by nature was no less demanding and, above all, no less deserving than His rivals.

It is apparent that these concepts were already understood long before the Israelites made their special covenant with the Lord, for so little of the rationale behind some of the offerings is explained to the original audience.[1] At the outset of Leviticus, Moses announces the procedure for a burnt offering without delineating what the purpose of a burnt offering is. One must, therefore, extrapolate as best as one can its meaning from the text.

[1] Two offerings in which the purposes of the sacrifice are expressed in Scripture are the sin and guilt offerings.

Subsequent meaning to the sacrifices by Israel must also illuminate meanings that are not explicit in Leviticus. There is no explicit mention of bringing personal petitions and vows at the Tent-Sanctuary in Leviticus and yet that is what God's people did. That doesn't seem to have been necessary to state. Hannah *wept much and prayed to the Lord* when she went with her husband Elkanah to offer sacrifice (1 Sam. 1:10; cf. 2 Sam. 24:25; 1 Kings 8:54; 2 Kings 19:14-19; 30:27; Num. 6:21; 15:3; Ps. 50:14; 56:12; 66:13; John 1:16).

Sacrifice in Leviticus, however, does present special features. There is a pronounced emphasis on the importance of death and the application of blood in the sanctuary. It is blood that makes atonement. Blood was deemed intrinsically sacred.[2] The High Priest dare not enter the very presence of God without blood (Heb. 9:7).[3] It was never to be eaten even apart from the altar. Even today, among the fervently Orthodox, extensive efforts are followed in order to cleanse meat from blood, as much as it is humanly possible. Also in Leviticus, the sacrifice was condemned to death. The animals received the judgment of the covenant keeper. In death, the embodiment of sin represented by the flesh of the sacrifice was destroyed and new life via its blood brought restoration.

The Gospels drew from these rituals, which rituals we moderns might suppose to be primitive or even crude. But, such an outlook is a mistake. The concepts and ideology of Old Testament ritual underlie New Testament theology regarding the fundamental problem of man's sin and death and his reconciliation to God by means of atonement. It is brought out by references like Romans 8:3: ... *he* [God] *condemned sin in the flesh* [by sending his Son], *in order that the righteous requirements*

---

[2] Gerard Van Groningen, *Messianic Revelation in the Old Testament* (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1990), 230-231, sees making atonement as the messianic concept most clearly presented in Leviticus. In many passages, particularly in Leviticus, *the term make atonement is followed by the verb ... meaning 'to forgive'.... This term added emphasis to the thought of a complete removal of sin – the wiping or canceling of any debt of sin.*

[3] Likewise, Christ as High Priest did not enter the Most Holy Place without blood (Heb. 9:13-14). Blood, the mark of life freely surrendered through death, is absolutely essential for atonement.

of the law might be fully met. This, most assuredly, is depicted in the death of so many animals slain in Old Testament ritual whose flesh suffered condemnation.

The instructions for the sacrifices in the first seven chapters of Leviticus are *prescriptive* rather than *descriptive*. A law is prescriptive when it describes how the law is to be obeyed precisely. For example, Leviticus 21:3 states that every grain offering must be salted. *Every grain offering of yours, moreover, you shall season with salt....* 'Descriptive' pertains to narrative texts that describe what actually happened when a prescription was practiced, e.g. a sacrifice was offered. 2 Chronicles 29:22-23 is descriptive when it reports what Hezekiah and his officials did: *They slaughtered the bulls, and the priests took the blood and sprinkled it on the altar. They also slaughtered the rams and sprinkled the blood on the altar; they slaughtered the lambs also and sprinkled the blood on the altar, etc.* While descriptive examples offer interpretive value, it cannot be assumed that the Old Testament community always followed rigidly the prescriptions for sacrifices given by Moses.