

THE THIRD BOOK OF MOSES CALLED

LEVITICUS

Commentary by **ROBERT JAMIESON**

CHAPTER 1

LEVITICUS 1:1-17.

BURNT OFFERINGS OF THE HERD.

1. *the Lord ... spake ... out of the tabernacle* — The laws that are contained in the previous record were delivered either to the people publicly from Sinai, or to Moses privately, on the summit of that mountain; but on the completion of the tabernacle, the remainder of the law was announced to the Hebrew leader by an audible voice from the divine glory, which surmounted the mercy seat.

2. *Speak unto the children of Israel, and say unto them* — If the subject of communication were of a temporal nature, the Levites were excluded; but if it were a spiritual matter, all the tribes were comprehended under this name (^{<R2712>}Deuteronomy 27:12).

If any man of you bring an offering unto the Lord — The directions given here relate solely to voluntary or freewill offerings — those rendered over and above such, as being of standing and universal obligation, could not be dispensed with or commuted for any other kind of offering (^{<R2388>}Exodus 29:38 ^{<R2387>}Leviticus 23:37 ^{<R2385>}Numbers 28:3,11-27, etc.).

bring your offering of the cattle, etc. — that is, those animals that were not only tame, innocent and gentle, but useful and adapted for food. This rule excluded horses, dogs, swine, camels, and asses, which were used in

sacrifice by some heathen nations, beasts and birds of prey, as also hares and deer.

3. *a burnt sacrifice* — so called from its being wholly consumed on the altar; no part of it was eaten either by the priests or the offerer. It was designed to propitiate the anger of God incurred by original sin, or by particular transgressions; and its entire combustion indicated the self-dedication of the offerer — his body and soul — as necessary to form a sacrifice acceptable to God (^{<BIB>}Romans 12:1 ^{<BIB>}Philippians 1:20). This was the most ancient as well as the most conspicuous mode of sacrifice.

a male without blemish — No animal was allowed to be offered that had any deformity or defect. Among the Egyptians, a minute inspection was made by the priest; and the bullock having been declared perfect, a certificate to that effect being fastened to its horns with wax, was sealed with his ring, and no other might be substituted. A similar process of examining the condition of the beasts brought as offerings, seems to have been adopted by the priests in Israel (^{<BIB>}John 6:27).

at the door of the tabernacle — where stood the altar of burnt offering (^{<BIB>}Exodus 40:6). Every other place was forbidden, under the highest penalty (^{<BIB>}Leviticus 17:4).

4. *shall put his hand upon the head* — This was a significant act which implied not only that the offerer devoted the animal to God, but that he confessed his consciousness of sin and prayed that his guilt and its punishment might be transferred to the victim.

and it shall be — rather, “that it may be an acceptable atonement.”

5. *he shall kill the bullock* — The animal should be killed by the offerer, not by the priest, for it was not his duty in case of voluntary sacrifices; in later times, however, the office was generally performed by Levites.

before the Lord — on the spot where the hands had been laid upon the animal’s head, on the north side of the altar.

sprinkle the blood — This was to be done by the priests. The blood being considered the life, the effusion of it was the essential part of the sacrifice; and the sprinkling of it — the application of the atonement — made the

person and services of the offerer acceptable to God. The skin having been stripped off, and the carcass cut up, the various pieces were disposed on the altar in the manner best calculated to facilitate their being consumed by the fire.

8. *the fat* — that about the kidneys especially, which is called “suet.”

9. *but his inwards and his legs shall he wash in water* — This part of the ceremony was symbolical of the *inward* purity, and the holy *walk*, that became acceptable worshippers.

a sweet savor unto the Lord — is an expression of the offerer’s piety, but especially as a sacrificial type of Christ.

10-13. *if his offering be of the flocks* — Those who could not afford the expense of a bullock might offer a ram or a he-goat, and the same ceremonies were to be observed in the act of offering.

14-17. *if the burnt sacrifice ... be of fowls* — The gentle nature and cleanly habits of the dove led to its selection, while all other fowls were rejected, either for the fierceness of their disposition or the grossness of their taste; and in this case, there being from the smallness of the animal no blood for waste, the priest was directed to prepare it *at* the altar and sprinkle the blood. This was the offering appointed for the poor. The fowls were always offered in pairs, and the reason why Moses ordered two turtledoves or two young pigeons, was not merely to suit the convenience of the offerer, but according as the latter was in season; for pigeons are sometimes quite hard and unfit for eating, at which time turtledoves are very good in Egypt and Palestine. The turtledoves are not restricted to any age because they are always good when they appear in those countries, being birds of passage; but the age of the pigeons is particularly marked that they might not be offered to God at times when they are rejected by men [HARMER]. It is obvious, from the varying scale of these voluntary sacrifices, that the disposition of the offerer was the thing looked to — not the costliness of his offering.

CHAPTER 2

◀REB▶ LEVITICUS 2:1-16.

THE MEAT OFFERINGS.

1. *when any will offer a meat offering* — or gift — distinguishing a bloodless from a bloody sacrifice. The word “meat,” however, is improper, as its meaning as now used is different from that attached at the date of our English translation. It was then applied not to “flesh,” but “food,” generally, and here it is applied to the flour of wheat. The meat offerings were intended as a thankful acknowledgment for the bounty of Providence; and hence, although meat offerings accompanied some of the appointed sacrifices, those here described being voluntary oblations, were offered alone.

pour oil upon it — Oil was used as butter is with us; symbolically it meant the influences of the Spirit, of which oil was the emblem, as incense was of prayer.

2. *shall burn the memorial* — rather, “for a memorial”; that is, a part of it.

3. *the remnant of the meat offering shall be Aaron’s and his sons’* — The circumstance of a portion of it being appropriated to the use of the priests distinguishes this from a burnt offering. They alone were to partake of it within the sacred precincts, as among “the most holy things.”

4. *if thou bring an oblation of a meat offering baken in the oven* — generally a circular hole excavated in the floor, from one to five feet deep, the sides of which are covered with hardened plaster, on which cakes are baked of the form and thickness of pancakes. (See on ^{◀REB▶}Genesis 18:6). The shape of Eastern ovens varies considerably according to the nomadic or settled habits of the people.

5. *baken in a pan* — a thin plate, generally of copper or iron, placed on a slow fire, similar to what the country people in Scotland called a “girdle” for baking oatmeal cakes.

6. *part it in pieces, and pour oil thereon* — Pouring oil on bread is a common practice among Eastern people, who are fond of broken bread dipped in oil, butter, and milk. Oil only was used in the meat offerings, and probably for a symbolic reason. It is evident that these meat offerings were previously prepared by the offerer, and when brought, the priest was to take it from his hands and burn a portion on the altar.

11. *ye shall burn no leaven, nor any honey, in any offering of the Lord* — Nothing sweet or sour was to be offered. In the warm climates of the East leavened bread soon spoils, and hence it was regarded as the emblem of hypocrisy or corruption. Some, however, think that the prohibition was that leaven and honey were used in the idolatrous rites of the heathen.

12. *the oblation of the first-fruits* — voluntary offerings made by individuals out of their increase, and leaven and honey might be used with these (^{<OR27>}Leviticus 23:17 ^{<OR51>}Numbers 15:20). Though presented at the altar, they were not consumed, but assigned by God for the use of the priests.

13. *every ... meat offering shalt thou season with salt* — The same reasons which led to the prohibition of leaven, recommended the use of salt — if the one soon putrefies, the other possesses a strongly preservative property, and hence it became an emblem of incorruption and purity, as well as of a perpetual covenant — a perfect reconciliation and lasting friendship. No injunction in the whole law was more sacredly observed than this application of salt; for besides other uses of it that will be noticed elsewhere, it had a typical meaning referred to by our Lord concerning the effect of the Gospel on those who embrace it (^{<OR4>}Mark 9:49,50); as when plentifully applied it preserves meat from spoiling, so will the Gospel keep men from being corrupted by sin. And as salt was indispensable to render sacrifices acceptable to God, so the Gospel, brought home to the hearts of men by the Holy Ghost, is indispensably requisite to their offering up of themselves as living sacrifices [BROWN].

14. *a meat offering of thy first-fruits* — From the mention of “green ears,” this seems to have been a voluntary offering before the harvest — the ears being prepared in the favorite way of Eastern people, by parching them at the fire, and then beating them out for use. It was designed to be an early tribute of pious thankfulness for the earth’s increase, and it was offered according to the usual directions.

CHAPTER 3

◀BRE▶ LEVITICUS 3:1-17.

THE PEACE OFFERING OF THE HERD.

1. *if his oblation be a sacrifice of peace offering* — “Peace” being used in Scripture to denote prosperity and happiness generally, a peace offering was a voluntary tribute of gratitude for health or other benefits. In this view it was eucharistic, being a token of thanksgiving for benefits already received, or it was sometimes votive, presented in prayer for benefits wished for in the future.

of the herd — This kind of offering being of a festive character, either male or female, if without blemish, might be used, as both of them were equally good for food, and, if the circumstances of the offerer allowed it, it might be a calf.

2. *he shall lay his hand upon the head of his offering* — Having performed this significant act, he killed it before the door of the tabernacle, and the priests sprinkled the blood round about upon the altar.

3. *he shall offer of the sacrifice of the peace offering* — The peace offering differed from the oblations formerly mentioned in this respect: while the burnt offering was wholly consumed on the altar, and the freewill offering was partly consumed and partly assigned to the priests; in this offering the fat alone was burnt; only a small part was allotted to the priests while the rest was granted to the offerer and his friends, thus forming a sacred feast of which the Lord, His priests, and people conjointly partook, and which was symbolical of the spiritual feast, the sacred communion which, through Christ, the great peace offering, believers enjoy. (See further on ▶BRE◀ Leviticus 19:1-37 ▶BRE◀ 22:1-33).

the fat that covereth the inwards — that is, the web work that presents itself first to the eye on opening the belly of a cow.

the fat ... upon the inwards — adhering to the intestines, but easily removable from them; or, according to some, that which was next the ventricle.

4-11. *the two kidneys ... of the flock ... the whole rump* — There is, in Eastern countries, a species of sheep the tails of which are not less than four feet and a half in length. These tails are of a substance between fat and marrow. A sheep of this kind weighs sixty or seventy English pounds weight, of which the tail usually weighs fifteen pounds and upwards. This species is by far the most numerous in Arabia, Syria, and Palestine, and, forming probably a large portion in the flocks of the Israelites, it seems to have been the kind that usually bled on the Jewish altars. The extraordinary size and deliciousness of their tails give additional importance to this law. To command by an express law the tail of a certain sheep to be offered in sacrifice to God, might well surprise us; but the wonder ceases, when we are told of those broad-tailed Eastern sheep, and of the extreme delicacy of that part which was so particularly specified in the statute [PAXTON].

12. *if his offering be a goat* — Whether this or any of the other two animals were chosen, the same general directions were to be followed in the ceremony of offering.

17. *ye eat neither fat nor blood* — The details given above distinctly define the fat in animals which was not to be eaten, so that all the rest, whatever adhered to other parts, or was intermixed with them, might be used. The prohibition of blood rested on a different foundation, being intended to preserve their reverence for the Messiah, who was to shed His blood as a stoning sacrifice for the sins of the world [BROWN].

CHAPTER 4

LEVITICUS 4:1,2.

SIN OFFERING OF IGNORANCE.

2. *If a soul shall sin through ignorance against any of the commandments of the Lord* — a soul — an individual. All sins may be considered, in a certain sense, as committed “through ignorance,” error, or misapprehension of one’s true interests. The sins, however, referred to in this law were unintentional violations of the ceremonial laws, — breaches made through haste, or inadvertency of some negative precepts, which, if done knowingly and wilfully, would have involved a capital punishment.

do against any of them — To bring out the meaning, it is necessary to supply, “he shall bring a sin offering.”

LEVITICUS 4:3-35.

SIN OFFERING FOR THE PRIEST.

3. *If the priest that is anointed do sin* — that is, the high priest, in whom, considering his character as typical mediator, and his exalted office, the people had the deepest interest; and whose transgression of any part of the divine law, therefore, whether done unconsciously or heedlessly, was a very serious offense, both as regarded himself individually, and the influence of his example. He is the person principally meant, though the common order of the priesthood was included.

according to the sin of the people — that is, bring guilt on the people. He was to take a young bullock (the age and sex being expressly mentioned), and having killed it according to the form prescribed for the burnt offerings, he was to take it into the holy place and sprinkle the atoning blood seven times before the veil, and tip with the crimson fluid the horns

of the golden altar of incense, on his way to the court of the priests, — a solemn ceremonial appointed only for very grave and heinous offenses, and which betokened that his sin, though done in ignorance, had vitiated all his services; nor could any official duty he engaged in be beneficial either to himself or the people, unless it were atoned for by blood.

11. *the skin of the bullock, and all his flesh* — In ordinary circumstances, these were perquisites of the priests. But in the expiation necessary for a sin of the high priest, after the fat of the sacrifice was offered on the altar, the carcass was carried without the camp (^{CHIEF} Leviticus 4:12), in order that the total combustion of it in the place of ashes might the more strikingly indicate the enormity of the transgression, and the horror with which he regarded it (compare ^{SEED} Hebrews 13:12,13).

13-21. *if the whole congregation of Israel sin through ignorance* — In consequence of some culpable neglect or misapprehension of the law, the people might contract national guilt, and then national expiation was necessary. The same sacrifice was to be offered as in the former case, but with this difference in the ceremonial, that the elders or heads of the tribes, as representing the people and being the principal aggressors in misleading the congregation, laid their hands on the head of the victim. The priest then took the blood into the holy place, where, after dipping his finger in it seven times, he sprinkled the drops seven times before the veil. This done, he returned to the court of the priests, and ascending the altar, put some portion upon its horns; then he poured it out at the foot of the altar. The fat was the only part of the animal which was offered on the altar; for the carcass, with its appurtenances and offals, was carried without the camp, into the place where the ashes were deposited, and there consumed with fire.

22-26. *When a ruler hath sinned, and done somewhat through ignorance against any of the commandments* — Whatever was the form of government, the king, judge, or subordinate, was the party concerned in this law. The trespass of such a civil functionary being less serious in its character and consequences than that either of the high priest or the congregation, a sin offering of inferior value was required — “a kid of the goats”; and neither was the blood carried into the sanctuary, but applied

only to the altar of burnt offering; nor was the carcass taken without the camp; it was eaten by the priests-in-waiting.

27-34. *if any one of the common people sin through ignorance* — In this case the expiatory offering appointed was a female kid, or a ewe-lamb without blemish; and the ceremonies were exactly the same as those observed in the case of the offending ruler [^{CR02}Leviticus 4:22-26]. In these two latter instances, the blood of the sin offering was applied to the altar of burnt offering — the place where bloody sacrifices were appointed to be immolated. But the transgression of a high priest, or of the whole congregation, entailing a general taint on the ritual of the tabernacle, and vitiating its services, required a further expiation; and therefore, in these cases, the blood of the sin offering was applied to the altar of incense [^{CR04}Leviticus 4:6,17].

35. *it shall be forgiven him* — None of these sacrifices possessed any intrinsic value sufficient to free the conscience of the sinner from the pollution of guilt, or to obtain his pardon from God; but they gave a formal deliverance from a secular penalty (^{SR03}Hebrews 9:13,14); and they were figurative representations of the full and perfect sin offering which was to be made by Christ.

CHAPTER 5

LEVITICUS 5:1.

TRESPASS OFFERINGS FOR CONCEALING KNOWLEDGE.

1. *if a soul ... hear the voice of swearing* — or, according to some, “the words of adjuration.” A proclamation was issued calling any one who could give information, to come before the court and bear testimony to the guilt of a criminal; and the manner in which witnesses were interrogated in the Jewish courts of justice was not by swearing them directly, but adjuring them by reading the words of an oath: “the voice of swearing.” The offense, then, for the expiation of which this law provides, was that of a person who neglected or avoided the opportunity of lodging the information which it was in his power to communicate.

LEVITICUS 5:2,3.

TOUCHING ANY THING UNCLEAN.

2. *if a soul touch any unclean thing* — A person who, unknown to himself at the time, came in contact with any thing unclean, and either neglected the requisite ceremonies of purification or engaged in the services of religion while under the taint of ceremonial defilement, might be afterwards convinced that he had committed an offense.

LEVITICUS 5:4-19.

FOR SWEARING.

4. *if a soul swear* — a rash oath, without duly considering the nature and consequences of the oath, perhaps inconsiderately binding himself to do anything wrong, or neglecting to perform a vow to do something good. In

all such cases a person might have transgressed one of the divine commandments unwittingly, and have been afterwards brought to a sense of his delinquency.

5. *it shall be, when he shall be guilty ... that he shall confess that he hath sinned in that thing* — make a voluntary acknowledgment of his sin from the impulse of his own conscience, and before it come to the knowledge of the world. A previous discovery might have subjected him to some degree of punishment from which his spontaneous confession released him, but still he was considered guilty of trespass, to expiate which he was obliged by the ceremonial law to go through certain observances.

6-14. *he shall bring his trespass offering unto the Lord for his sins which he hath sinned* — A trespass offering differed from a sin offering in the following respects: that it was appointed for persons who had either done evil unwittingly, or were in doubt as to their own criminality; or felt themselves in such a special situation as required sacrifices of that kind [BROWN]. The trespass offering appointed in such cases was a female lamb or kid; if unable to make such an offering, he might bring a pair of turtledoves or two young pigeons — the one to be offered for a sin offering, the other for a burnt offering; or if even *that* was beyond his ability, the law would be satisfied with the tenth part of an ephah of fine flour without oil or frankincense.

15, 16. *sin through ignorance, in the holy things of the Lord*, etc. — This is a case of sacrilege committed ignorantly, either in not paying the full due of tithes, first-fruits, and similar tribute in eating of meats, which belonged to the priests alone — or he was required, along with the restitution in money, the amount of which was to be determined by the priest, to offer a ram for a trespass offering, as soon as he came to the knowledge of his involuntary fraud.

17-19. *if a soul sin ... though he wist it not, yet is he guilty* — This also refers to holy things, and it differs from the preceding in being one of the *doubtful* cases, — that is, where conscience suspects, though the understanding be in doubt whether criminality or sin has been committed. The Jewish rabbis give, as an example, the case of a person who, knowing that “the fat of the inwards” is not to be eaten, religiously abstained from

the use of it; but should a dish happen to have been at table in which he had reason to suspect some portion of that meat was intermingled, and he had, inadvertently, partaken of that unlawful viand, he was bound to bring a ram as a trespass offering [~~OR~~ Leviticus 5:16]. These provisions were all designed to impress the conscience with the sense of responsibility to God and keep alive on the hearts of the people a salutary fear of doing any secret wrong.

CHAPTER 6

<RMS> LEVITICUS 6:1-7.

TRESPASS OFFERING FOR SINS DONE WITTINGLY.

2-7. *If a soul sin, and commit a trespass against the Lord* — This law, the record of which should have been joined with the previous chapter, was given concerning things stolen, fraudulently gotten, or wrongfully kept. The offender was enjoined to make restitution of the articles to the rightful owner, along with a fifth part out of his own possessions. But it was not enough thus to repair the injury done to a neighbor and to society; he was required to bring a trespass offering, as a token of sorrow and penitence for having hurt the cause of religion and of God. That trespass offering was a ram without blemish, which was to be made on the altar of burnt offerings, and the flesh belonged to the priests. This penalty was equivalent to a mitigated fine; but being associated with a sacred duty, the form in which the fine was inflicted served the important purpose of rousing attention to the claims and reviving a sense of responsibility to God.

<RMS> LEVITICUS 6:8-13.

THE LAW OF THE BURNT OFFERING.

9. *Command Aaron and his sons, saying, This ... law of the burnt offering* — In this passage Moses received instructions to be delivered to the priests respecting their official duties, and first the burnt offering — *Hebrew*, “a sacrifice, which went up in smoke.” The daily service consisted of two lambs, one offered in the morning at sunrise, the other in the evening, when the day began to decline. Both of them were consumed on the altar by means of a slow fire, before which the pieces of the sacrifice were so placed that they fed it all night. At all events, the

observance of this daily sacrifice on the altar of burnt offering was a daily expression of national repentance and faith. The fire that consumed these sacrifices had been kindled from heaven at the consecration of the tabernacle [^{<OR24>}Leviticus 9:24], and to keep it from being extinguished and the sacrifices from being burned with common fire, strict injunctions are here given respecting not only the removal of the ashes (^{<OR10>}Leviticus 6:10,11), but the approaching near to the fireplace in garments that were not officially “holy.”

^{<OR14>}LEVITICUS 6:14-18.

THE LAW OF THE MEAT OFFERING.

14-18. *this is the law of the meat offering* — Though this was a provision for the priests and their families, it was to be regarded as “most holy”; and the way in which it was prepared was: on any meat offerings being presented, the priest carried them to the altar, and taking a handful from each of them as an oblation, he salted and burnt it on the altar; the residue became the property of the priests, and was the food of those whose duty it was to attend on the service. They themselves as well as the vessels from which they ate were typically holy, and they were not at liberty to partake of the meat offering while they labored under any ceremonial defilement.

^{<OR18>}LEVITICUS 6:19-23.

THE HIGH PRIEST’S MEAT OFFERING.

20. *This is the offering of Aaron, and of his sons* — the daily meat offering of the high priest; for though his sons are mentioned along with him, it was probably only those of his descendants who succeeded him in that high office that are meant. It was to be offered, one half of it in the morning and the other half in the evening — being daily laid by the ministering priest on the altar of burnt offering, where, being dedicated to God, it was wholly consumed. This was designed to keep him and the

other attendant priests in constant remembrance, that though they were typically expiating the sins of the people, their own persons and services could meet with acceptance only through faith, which required to be daily nourished and strengthened from above.

<ORF2>LEVITICUS 6:21-30.

THE LAW OF THE SIN OFFERING.

25-28. *This is the law of the sin offering* — It was slain, and the fat and inwards, after being washed and salted, were burnt upon the altar. But the rest of the carcass belonged to the officiating priest. He and his family might feast upon it — only, however, within the precincts of the tabernacle; and none else were allowed to partake of it but the members of a priestly family — and not even they, if under any ceremonial defilement. The flesh on all occasions was boiled or sodden, with the exception of the paschal lamb, which was roasted [~~ORF3~~Exodus 12:8,9]; and if an earthen vessel had been used, it being porous and likely to imbibe some of the liquid particles, it was to be broken; if a metallic pan had been used it was to be scoured and washed with the greatest care, not because the vessels had been defiled, but the reverse — because the flesh of the sin offering having been boiled in them, those vessels were now too sacred for ordinary use. The design of all these minute ceremonies was to impress the minds, both of priests and people, with a sense of the evil nature of sin and the care they should take to prevent the least taint of its impurities clinging to them.

CHAPTER 7

LEVITICUS 7:1-27.

THE LAW OF THE TRESPASS OFFERING.

1. *Likewise this is the law of the trespass offering* — This chapter is a continuation of the laws that were to regulate the duty of the priests respecting the trespass offerings. The same regulations obtained in this case as in the burnt offerings — part was to be consumed on the altar, while the other part was a perquisite of the priests — some fell exclusively to the officiating minister, and was the fee for his services; others were the common share of all the priestly order, who lived upon them as their provision, and whose meetings at a common table would tend to promote brotherly harmony and friendship.

8. *the priest shall have to himself the skin of the burnt offering which he hath offered* — All the flesh and the fat of the burnt offerings being consumed, nothing remained to the priest but the skin. It has been thought that this was a patriarchal usage, incorporated with the Mosaic law, and that the right of the sacrificer to the skin of the victim was transmitted from the example of Adam (see on ^{<OR>}Genesis 3:21).

11-14. *this is the law of the sacrifice of peace offerings* — Besides the usual accompaniments of other sacrifices, leavened bread was offered with the peace offerings, as a thanksgiving, such bread being common at feasts.

15-17. *the flesh of the sacrifice of his peace offerings ... shall be eaten the same day that it is offered* — The flesh of the sacrifices was eaten on the day of the offering or on the day following. But if any part of it remained till the third day, it was, instead of being made use of, to be burned with fire. In the East, butcher-meat is generally eaten the day it is killed, and it is rarely kept a second day, so that as a prohibition was issued against any of the flesh in the peace offerings being used on the third day, it has been thought, not without reason, that this injunction

must have been given to prevent a superstitious notion arising that there was some virtue or holiness belonging to it.

18. *if any of the flesh of the sacrifice ... be eaten at all on the third day, it shall not be accepted, neither ... imputed* — The sacrifice will not be acceptable to God nor profitable to him that offers it.

20. *cut off from his people* — that is, excluded from the privileges of an Israelite — lie under a sentence of excommunication.

21. *abominable unclean thing* — Some copies of the Bible read, “any reptile.”

22-27. *Ye shall eat no manner of fat* — (See on ^{CRBT}Leviticus 3:17).

^{CRBT}LEVITICUS 7:28-38.

THE PRIESTS' PORTION.

29-34. *He that offereth the sacrifice of his peace offerings unto the Lord* — In order to show that the sacrifice was voluntary, the offerer was required to bring it with his own hands to the priest. The breast having been waved to and fro in a solemn manner as devoted to God, was given to the priests; it was assigned to the use of their order generally, but the right shoulder was the perquisite of the officiating priest.

35-38. *This is the portion of the anointing of Aaron* — These verses contain a general summing up of the laws which regulate the privileges and duties of the priests. The word “anointing” is often used as synonymous with “office” or “dignity.” So that the “portion of the anointing of Aaron” probably means the provision made for the maintenance of the high priest and the numerous body of functionaries which composed the sacerdotal order.

in the day when he presented them to minister unto the Lord, etc. — that is, from the day they approached the Lord in the duties of their ministry.

CHAPTER 8

◀BIBL LEVITICUS 8:1-36.

MOSES CONSECRATES AARON AND HIS SONS.

2. *Take Aaron and his sons* — The consecration of Aaron and his sons had been ordered long before (◀BIBL Exodus 29:1-46), but it is now described with all the details of the ceremonial, as it was gone through after the tabernacle was completed and the regulations for the various sacrifices enacted.

3-5. *gather thou all the congregation together*, etc. — It was manifestly expedient for the Israelitish people to be satisfied that Aaron's appointment to the high dignity of the priesthood was not a personal intrusion, nor a family arrangement between him and Moses; and nothing, therefore, could be a more prudent or necessary measure, for impressing a profound conviction of the divine origin and authority of the priestly institution, than to summon a general assembly of the people, and in their presence perform the solemn ceremonies of inauguration, which had been prescribed by divine authority.

6. *Moses ... washed them with water* — At consecration they were subjected to entire ablution, though on ordinary occasions they were required, before entering on their duties, only to wash their hands and feet. This symbolical ablution was designed to teach them the necessity of inward purity, and the imperative obligation on those who bore the vessels and conducted the services of the sanctuary to be holy.

7-9. *he put upon him the coat, and girded him with the girdle* — The splendor of the official vestments, together with the gorgeous tiara of the high priest, was intended, doubtless, in the first instance, to produce in the minds of the people a high respect for the ministers of religion; and in the next, from the predominant use of linen, to inculcate upon Aaron and his sons the duty of maintaining unspotted righteousness in their characters and lives.

10-12. *took the anointing oil*, etc. — which was designed to intimate that persons who acted as leaders in the solemn services of worship should have the unction of the Holy One both in His gifts and graces.

14-17. *brought the bullock for the sin offering*, etc. — a timely expression of their sense of unworthiness — a public and solemn confession of their personal sins and a transference of their guilt to the typical victim.

18-21. *brought the ram*, etc. — as a token of their entire dedication to the service of God.

22-30. *brought the other ram*, — etc. After the sin offering and burnt offering had been presented on their behalf, this was their peace offering, by which they declared the pleasure which they felt in entering upon the service of God and being brought into close communion with Him as the ministers of His sanctuary, together with their confident reliance on His grace to help them in all their sacred duties.

33. *ye shall not go out of the door of the tabernacle of the congregation* — After all these preliminaries, they had still to undergo a week's probation in the court of the tabernacle before they obtained permission to enter into the interior of the sacred building. During the whole of that period the same sacrificial rites were observed as on the first day, and they were expressly admonished that the smallest breach of any of the appointed observances would lead to the certain forfeiture of their lives [⁴⁰⁸³Leviticus 8:35].

CHAPTER 9

<B00>LEVITICUS 9:1-24.

THE PRIESTS' ENTRY INTO OFFICE.

1-7. *Moses called ... Take thee a young calf for a sin offering* — The directions in these sacred things were still given by Moses, the circumstances being extraordinary. But he was only the medium of communicating the divine will to the newly made priests. The first of their official acts was the sacrifice of another sin offering to atone for the defects of the inauguration services; and yet that sacrifice did not consist of a bullock — the sacrifice appointed for some particular transgression, but of a calf, perhaps not without a significant reference to Aaron's sin in the golden calf [^{<B22>}Exodus 32:22-24]. Then followed a burnt offering, expressive of their voluntary and entire self-devotement to the divine service. The newly consecrated priests having done this on their own account, they were called to offer a sin offering and burnt offering for the people, ending the ceremonial by a peace offering, which was a sacred feast. This injunction, “to make atonement for himself and for the people” (*Septuagint*, “for thy family”), at the commencement of his sacred functions, furnishes a striking evidence of the divine origin of the Jewish system of worship. In all false or corrupt forms of religion, the studied policy has been to inspire the people with an idea of the sanctity of the priesthood as in point of purity and favor with the Divinity far above the level of other men. But among the Hebrews the priests were required to offer for the expiation of their own sins as well as the humblest of the people. This imperfection of Aaron's priesthood, however, does not extend to the gospel dispensation: for our great High Priest, who has entered for us into “the true tabernacle,” “knew no sin” (^{<B00>}Hebrews 10:10,11).

8. *Aaron ... went unto the altar, and slew the calf of the sin offering* — Whether it had been enjoined the first time, or was unavoidable from the divisions of the priestly labor not being as yet completely arranged,

Aaron, assisted by his sons, appears to have slain the victims with his own hands, as well as gone through all the prescribed ritual at the altar.

17-21. *meat offering ... wave offering* — It is observable that there is no notice taken of these in the offerings the priests made for themselves. They could not bear their own sins: and therefore, instead of eating any part of their own sin offering, as they were at liberty to do in the case of the people's offering, they had to carry the whole carcasses “*without the camp and burn them with fire*” [⁽¹²⁹⁴⁾Exodus 29:14 ⁽¹²⁹⁴⁾Leviticus 4:12].

22. *Aaron lifted up his hand ... and blessed them* — The pronouncing of a benediction on the people assembled in the court was a necessary part of the high priest's duty, and the formula in which it was to be given is described (⁽¹⁴⁶²⁾Numbers 6:23-27).

came down from offering — The altar was elevated above the level of the floor, and the ascent was by a gentle slope (⁽¹²⁹⁴⁾Exodus 20:26).

23. *Moses and Aaron went into the tabernacle* — Moses, according to the divine instructions he had received, accompanied Aaron and his sons to initiate them into their sacred duties. Their previous occupations had detained them at the altar, and they now entered in company into the sacred edifice to bear the blood of the offerings within the sanctuary.

the glory of the Lord appeared unto all the people — perhaps in a resplendent effulgence above the tabernacle as a fresh token of the divine acceptance of that newly established seat of His worship.

24. *there came a fire out from ... the Lord* — A flame emanating from that resplendent light that filled the holy place flashed upon the brazen altar and kindled the sacrifices. This miraculous fire — for the descent of which the people had probably been prepared, and which the priests were enjoined never to let go out (⁽¹²⁹⁴⁾Leviticus 6:13) — was a sign, not only of the acceptance of the offerings and of the establishment of Aaron's authority, but of God's actual residence in that chosen dwelling-place. The moment the solemn though welcome spectacle was seen, a simultaneous shout of joy and gratitude burst from the assembled congregation, and in the attitude of profoundest reverence they worshipped “a present Deity.”

CHAPTER 10

◀BIB▶ LEVITICUS 10:1-20.

NADAB AND ABIHU BURNT.

1. *the sons of Aaron*, etc. — If this incident occurred at the solemn period of the consecrating and dedicating the altar, these young men assumed an office which had been committed to Moses; or if it were some time after, it was an encroachment on duties which devolved on their father alone as the high priest. But the offense was of a far more aggravated nature than such a mere informality would imply. It consisted not only in their venturing unauthorized to perform the incense service — the highest and most solemn of the priestly offices — not only in their engaging together in a work which was the duty only of one, but in their presuming to intrude into the holy of holies, to which access was denied to all but the high priest alone. In this respect, “they offered strange fire before the Lord”; they were guilty of a presumptuous and unwarranted intrusion into a sacred office which did not belong to them. But their offense was more aggravated still; for instead of taking the fire which was put into their censers from the brazen altar, they seem to have been content with common fire and thus perpetrated an act which, considering the descent of the miraculous fire they had so recently witnessed and the solemn obligation under which they were laid to make use of that which was specially appropriated to the service of the altars, they betrayed a carelessness, an irreverence, a want of faith, most surprising and lamentable. A precedent of such evil tendency was dangerous, and it was imperatively necessary, therefore, as well for the priests themselves as for the sacred things, that a marked expression of the divine displeasure should be given for doing that which “God commanded them not.”

2. *there went out fire from the Lord, and devoured them* — rather, “killed them”; for it appears that neither their bodies nor their robes were consumed (◀BIB▶ Leviticus 10:5). The expression, “from the Lord,” indicates that this fire issued from the most holy place. In the destruction of these

two young priests by the infliction of an awful judgment, the wisdom of God observed the same course, in repressing the first instance of contempt for sacred things, as he did at the commencement of the Christian dispensation (^{<40>}Acts 5:1-11).

3. *Moses said ... This is it that the Lord spoke ... I will be sanctified in them that come nigh me* — “They that come nigh me,” points, in this passage, directly to the priests; and they had received repeated and solemn warnings as to the cautious and reverent manner of their approach into the divine presence (^{<02>}Exodus 19:22; ^{<024>}29:44 ^{<035>}Leviticus 8:35).

Aaron held his peace — The loss of two sons in so sudden and awful a manner was a calamity overwhelming to parental feelings. But the pious priest indulged in no vehement ebullition of complaint and gave vent to no murmur of discontent, but submitted in silent resignation to what he saw was “the righteous judgment of God” [^{<015>}Romans 2:5].

4, 5. *Moses called Mishael and Elzaphan* — The removal of the two corpses for burial without the camp would spread the painful intelligence throughout all the congregation; and the remembrance of so appalling a judgment could not fail to strike a salutary fear into the hearts both of priests and people. The interment of the priestly vestments along with Nadab and Abihu, was a sign of their being polluted by the sin of their irreligious wearers.

6. *Uncover not your heads* — They who were ordered to carry out the two bodies, being engaged in their sacred duties, were forbidden to remove their turbans, in conformity with the usual customs of mourning; and the prohibition “neither rend your garments,” was, in all probability, confined also to their official costume. For at other times the priests wore the ordinary dress of their countrymen and, in common with their families, might indulge their private feelings by the usual signs or expressions of grief.

8-11. *Do not drink wine nor strong drink* — This prohibition, and the accompanying admonitions, following immediately the occurrence of so fatal a catastrophe [^{<010>}Leviticus 10:1,2], has given rise to an opinion entertained by many, that the two disobedient priests were under the influence of intoxication when they committed the offense which was

expiated only by their lives. But such an idea, though the presumption is in its favor, is nothing more than conjecture.

12-15. *Moses spake unto Aaron*, etc. — This was a timely and considerate rehearsal of the laws that regulated the conduct of the priests. Amid the distractions of their family bereavement, Aaron and his surviving sons might have forgotten or overlooked some of their duties.

16-20. *Moses diligently sought the goat of the sin offering, and, behold, it was burnt* — In a sacrifice presented, as that had been, on behalf of the people, it was the duty of the priests, as typically representing them and bearing their sins, to have eaten the flesh after the blood had been sprinkled upon the altar. Instead of using it, however, for a sacred feast, they had burnt it without the camp; and Moses, who discovered this departure from the prescribed ritual, probably from a dread of some further chastisements, challenged, not Aaron, whose heart was too much lacerated to bear a new cause of distress but his two surviving sons in the priesthood for the great irregularity. Their father, however, who heard the charge and by whose directions the error had been committed, hastened to give the explanation. The import of his apology is, that all the duty pertaining to the presentation of the offering had been duly and sacredly performed, except the festive part of the observance, which privately devolved upon the priest and his family. And that this had been omitted, either because his heart was too dejected to join in the celebration of a cheerful feast, or that he supposed, from the appalling judgments that had been inflicted, that all the services of that occasion were so vitiated that he did not complete them. Aaron was decidedly in the wrong. By the express command of God, the sin offering was to be eaten in the holy place; and no fanciful view of expediency or propriety ought to have led him to dispense at discretion with a positive statute. The law of God was clear and, where that is the case, it is sin to deviate a hair's breadth from the path of duty. But Moses sympathized with his deeply afflicted brother and, having pointed out the error, said no more.

CHAPTER 11

◀BIBL LEVITICUS 11:1-47.

BEASTS THAT MAY AND MAY NOT BE EATEN.

1, 2. *the Lord spake unto Moses and to Aaron* — These laws, being addressed to both the civil and ecclesiastical rulers in Israel, may serve to indicate the twofold view that is to be taken of them. Undoubtedly the first and strongest reason for instituting a distinction among meats was to discourage the Israelites from spreading into other countries, and from general intercourse with the world — to prevent them acquiring familiarity with the inhabitants of the countries bordering on Canaan, so as to fall into their idolatries or be contaminated with their vices: in short, to keep them a distinct and peculiar people. To this purpose, no difference of creed, no system of polity, no diversity of language or manner, was so subservient as a distinction of meats founded on religion; and hence the Jews, who were taught by education to abhor many articles of food freely partaken of by other people, never, even during periods of great degeneracy, could amalgamate with the nations among which they were dispersed. But although this was the principal foundation of these laws, dietetic reasons also had weight; for there is no doubt that the flesh of many of the animals here ranked as unclean, is everywhere, but especially in warm climates, less wholesome and adapted for food than those which were allowed to be eaten. These laws, therefore, being subservient to sanitary as well as religious ends, were addressed both to Moses and Aaron.

3-7. *Whatsoever parteth the hoof, and is cloven-footed, and cheweth the cud* — Ruminating animals by the peculiar structure of their stomachs digest their food more fully than others. It is found that in the act of chewing the cud, a large portion of the poisonous properties of noxious plants eaten by them, passes off by the salivary glands. This power of secreting the poisonous effects of vegetables, is said to be particularly remarkable in cows and goats, whose mouths are often sore, and sometimes bleed, in consequence. Their flesh is therefore in a better state

for food, as it contains more of the nutritious juices, is more easily digested in the human stomach, and is consequently more easily assimilated. Animals which do not chew the cud, convert their food less perfectly; their flesh is therefore unwholesome, from the gross animal juices with which they abound, and is apt to produce scorbutic and scrofulous disorders. But the animals that may be eaten are those which “part the hoof as well as chew the cud,” and this is another means of freeing the flesh of the animal from noxious substances. “In the case of animals with parted hoofs, when feeding in unfavorable situations a prodigious amount of foetid matter is discharged, and passes off between the toes; while animals with undivided hoofs, feeding on the same ground, become severely affected in the legs, from the poisonous plants among the pasture” [WHITLAW, *Code of Health*]. All experience attests this, and accordingly the use of ruminating animals (that is, those which both chew the cud and part the hoof) has always obtained in most countries though it was observed most carefully by the people who were favored with the promulgation of God’s law.

4. *the camel* — It does to a certain extent divide the hoof, for the foot consists of two large parts, but the division is not complete; the toes rest upon an elastic pad on which the animal goes; as a beast of burden its flesh is tough. An additional reason for its prohibition might be to keep the Israelites apart from the descendants of Ishmael.

5. *the coney* — not the rabbit, for it is not found in Palestine or Arabia, but the hyrax, a little animal of the size and general shape of the rabbit, but differing from it in several essential features. It has no tail, singular, long hairs bristling like thorns among the fur on its back; its feet are bare, its nails flat and round, except those on each inner toe of the hind feet, which are sharp and project like an awl. It does not burrow in the ground but frequents the clefts of rocks.

6. *the hare* — Two species of hare must have been pointed at: the Sinai hare, the hare of the desert, small and generally brown; the other, the hare of Palestine and Syria, about the size and appearance of that known in our own country. Neither the hare nor the coney are really ruminating. They only appear to be so from working the jaws on the grasses they live on. They are not cloven-footed; and besides, it is said that from the great

quantity of down upon them, they are very much subject to vermin — that in order to expel these, they eat poisonous plants, and if used as food while in that state, they are most deleterious [WHITLAW].

7. *the swine* — It is a filthy, foul-feeding animal, and it lacks one of the natural provisions for purifying the system, “it cheweth not the cud”; in hot climates indulgence in swine’s flesh is particularly liable to produce leprosy, scurvy, and various cutaneous eruptions. It was therefore strictly avoided by the Israelites. Its prohibition was further necessary to prevent their adopting many of the grossest idolatries practiced by neighboring nations.

9. *These shall ye eat ... whatsoever hath fins and scales* — “The fins and scales are the means by which the excrescences of fish are carried off, the same as in animals by perspiration. I have never known an instance of disease produced by eating such fish; but those that have no fins and scales cause, in hot climates, the most malignant disorders when eaten; in many cases they prove a mortal poison” [WHITLAW].

12. *Whatsoever hath no fins nor scales*, etc. — Under this classification frogs, eels, shellfish of all descriptions, were included as unclean; “many of the latter (shellfish) enjoy a reputation they do not deserve, and have, when plentifully partaken of, produced effects which have led to a suspicion of their containing something of a poisonous nature.”

13-19. *these are they which ye shall have in abomination among the fowls* — All birds of prey are particularly ranked in the class unclean; all those which feed on flesh and carrion. No less than twenty species of birds, all probably then known, are mentioned under this category, and the inference follows that all which are not mentioned were allowed; that is, fowls which subsist on vegetable substances. From our imperfect knowledge of the natural history of Palestine, Arabia, and the contiguous countries at that time, it is not easy to determine exactly what some of the prohibited birds were; although they must have been all well known among the people to whom these laws were given.

the ossifrage — *Hebrew*, “bone-breaker,” rendered in the *Septuagint* “griffon,” supposed to be the *Gypætos barbatus*, the Lammer Geyer of the Swiss — a bird of the eagle or vulture species, inhabiting the highest

mountain ranges in Western Asia as well as Europe. It pursues as its prey the chamois, ibex, or marmot, among rugged cliffs, till it drives them over a precipice — thus obtaining the name of “bone-breaker.”

the ospray — the black eagle, among the smallest, but swiftest and strongest of its kind.

14. *the vulture* — The word so rendered in our version means more probably “the kite” or “glede” and describes a varying but majestic flight, exactly that of the kite, which now darts forward with the rapidity of an arrow, now rests motionless on its expanded wings in the air. It feeds on small birds, insects, and fish.

the kite — the vulture. In Egypt and perhaps in the adjoining countries also, the kite and vulture are often seen together flying in company, or busily pursuing their foul but important office of devouring the carrion and relics of putrefying flesh, which might otherwise pollute the atmosphere.

after his kind — that is, the prohibition against eating it extended to the whole species.

15. *the raven* — including the crow, the pie.

16. *the owl* — It is generally supposed the ostrich is denoted by the original word.

the nighthawk — a very small bird, with which, from its nocturnal habits, many superstitious ideas were associated.

the cuckoo — Evidently some other bird is meant by the original term, from its being ranged among rapacious birds. DR. SHAW thinks it is the safsaf; but that, being a graminivorous and gregarious bird, is equally objectionable. Others think that the sea mew, or some of the small sea fowl, is intended.

the hawk — The *Hebrew* word includes every variety of the falcon family — as the goshawk, the jershawk, the sparrow hawk, etc. Several species of hawks are found in Western Asia and Egypt, where they find inexhaustible prey in the immense numbers of pigeons and turtledoves that abound in those quarters. The hawk was held pre-eminently sacred among the Egyptians; and this, besides its rapacious disposition and gross habits,

might have been a strong reason for its prohibition as an article of food to the Israelites.

17. *the little owl* — or horned owl, as some render it. The common barn owl, which is well known in the East. It is the only bird of its kind here referred to, although the word is thrice mentioned in our version.

cormorant — supposed to be the gull. [See on ^{<6547>}Deuteronomy 14:17.]

the great owl — according to some, the Ibis of the Egyptians. It was well known to the Israelites, and so rendered by the *Septuagint* (^{<6546>}Deuteronomy 14:16 ^{<2941>}Isaiah 34:11): according to PARKHURST, the bittern, but not determined.

18. *the swan* — found in great numbers in all the countries of the Levant. It frequents marshy places — the vicinity of rivers and lakes. It was held sacred by the Egyptians, and kept tame within the precincts of heathen temples. It was probably on this account chiefly that its use as food was prohibited. MICHAELIS considers it the goose.

the pelican — remarkable for the bag or pouch under its lower jaw which serves not only as a net to catch, but also as a receptacle of food. It is solitary in its habits and, like other large aquatic birds, often flies to a great distance from its favorite haunts.

the gier eagle — Being here associated with waterfowl, it has been questioned whether any species of eagle is referred to. Some think, as the original name *racham* denotes “tenderness,” “affection,” the halcyon or kingfisher is intended [CALMET]. Others think that it is the bird now called the *rachami*, a kind of Egyptian vulture, abundant in the streets of Cairo and popularly called “Pharaoh’s fowl.” It is white in color, in size like a raven, and feeds on carrion; it is one of the foulest and filthiest birds in the world. [See on ^{<6547>}Deuteronomy 14:17.]

19. *the stork* — a bird of benevolent temper and held in the highest estimation in all Eastern countries; it was declared unclean, probably, from its feeding on serpents and other venomous reptiles, as well as rearing its young on the same food.

the heron — The word so translated only occurs in the prohibited list of food and has been variously rendered — the crane, the plover, the woodcock, the parrot. In this great diversity of opinion nothing certain can be affirmed regarding it. Judging from the group with which it is classified, it must be an aquatic bird that is meant. It may as well be the heron as any other bird, the more especially as herons abound in Egypt and in the Hauran of Palestine.

the lapwing — or boopoe; found in warm regions, a very pretty but filthy species of bird. It was considered unclean, probably from its feeding on insects, worms, and snails.

the bat — the great or Ternat bat, known in the East, noted for its voracity and filthiness.

20. *All fowls that creep*, etc. — By “fowls” here are to be understood all creatures with wings and “going upon all fours,” not a restriction to animals which have exactly four feet, because many “creeping things” have more than that number. The prohibition is regarded generally as extending to insects, reptiles, and worms.

21, 22. *Yet these may ye eat of every flying creeping thing that goeth upon all four, which have legs above their feet* — Nothing short of a scientific description could convey more accurately the nature “of the locust after its kind.” They were allowed as lawful food to the Israelites, and they are eaten by the Arabs, who fry them in olive oil. When sprinkled with salt, dried, smoked, and fried, they are said to taste not unlike red herrings.

26. *every beast ... not cloven-footed* — The prohibited animals under this description include not only the beasts which have a single hoof, as horses and asses, but those also which divided the foot into paws, as lions, tigers, etc.

29. *the weasel* — rather, the mole.

the mouse — From its diminutive size it is placed among the reptiles instead of the quadrupeds.

the tortoise — a lizard, resembling very nearly in shape, and in the hard pointed scales of the tail, the shaketail.

30. *the ferret* — the *Hebrew* word is thought by some to signify the newt or chameleon, by others the frog.

the chameleon — called by the Arabs the *warral*, a green lizard.

the snail — a lizard which lives in the sand, and is called by the Arabs *chulca*, of an azure color.

the mole — Another species of lizard is meant, probably the chameleon.

31-35. *whosoever doth touch them, when ... dead, shall be unclean until the even* — These regulations must have often caused annoyance by suddenly requiring the exclusion of people from society, as well as the ordinances of religion. Nevertheless they were extremely useful and salutary, especially as enforcing attention to cleanliness. This is a matter of essential importance in the East, where venomous reptiles often creep into houses and are found lurking in boxes, vessels, or holes in the wall; and the carcass of one of them, or a dead mouse, mole, lizard, or other unclean animal, might be inadvertently touched by the hand, or fall on clothes, skin bottles, or any article of common domestic use. By connecting, therefore, the touch of such creatures with ceremonial defilement, which required immediately to be removed, an effectual means was taken to prevent the bad effects of venom and all unclean or noxious matter.

47. *make a difference between the unclean and the clean* — that is, between animals used and not used for food. It is probable that the laws contained in this chapter were not entirely new, but only gave the sanction of divine enactment to ancient usages. Some of the prohibited animals have, on physiological grounds, been everywhere rejected by the general sense or experience of mankind; while others may have been declared unclean from their unwholesomeness in warm countries or from some reasons, which are now imperfectly known, connected with contemporary idolatry.

CHAPTER 12

LEVITICUS 12:1-8.

WOMAN'S UNCLEANNESS BY CHILDBIRTH.

2. *If a woman*, etc. — The mother of a boy was ceremonially unclean for a week, at the end of which the child was circumcised (^{<0170>}Genesis 17:12 ^{<0800>}Romans 4:11-13); the mother of a girl for two weeks (^{<0800>}Leviticus 12:5) — a stigma on the sex (^{<5024>}1 Timothy 2:14,15) for sin, which was removed by Christ; everyone who came near her during that time contracted a similar defilement. After these periods, visitors might approach her though she was still excluded from the public ordinances of religion [^{<0800>}Leviticus 12:4].

6-8. *the days of her purifying* — Though the occasion was of a festive character, yet the sacrifices appointed were not a peace offering, but a burnt offering and sin offering, in order to impress the mind of the parent with recollections of the origin of sin, and that the child inherited a fallen and sinful nature. The offerings were to be presented the day after the period of her separation had ended — that is, forty-first for a boy, eighty-first for a girl.

8. *bring two turtles*, etc. — (See on ^{<0800>}Leviticus 5:6). This was the offering made by Mary, the mother of Jesus, and it affords an incontestable proof of the poor and humble condition of the family (^{<0022>}Luke 2:22-24).

CHAPTER 13

◀BIB▶ LEVITICUS 13:1-59.

THE LAWS AND TOKENS IN DISCERNING LEPROSY.

2. *When a man shall have in the skin*, etc. — The fact of the following rules for distinguishing the plague of leprosy being incorporated with the Hebrew code of laws, proves the existence of the odious disease among that people. But a short time, little more than a year (if so long a period had elapsed since the exodus) when symptoms of leprosy seem extensively to have appeared among them; and as they could not be very liable to such a cutaneous disorder amid their active journeyings and in the dry open air of Arabia, the seeds of the disorder must have been laid in Egypt, where it has always been endemic. There is every reason to believe that this was the case: that the leprosy was not a family complaint, hereditary among the Hebrews, but that they got it from intercourse with the Egyptians and from the unfavorable circumstances of their condition in the house of bondage. The great excitement and irritability of the skin in the hot and sandy regions of the East produce a far greater predisposition to leprosy of all kinds than in cooler temperatures; and cracks or blotches, inflammations or even contusions of the skin, very often lead to these in Arabia and Palestine, to some extent, but particularly in Egypt. Besides, the subjugated and distressed state of the Hebrews in the latter country, and the nature of their employment, must have rendered them very liable to this as well as to various other blemishes and misaffections of the skin; in the production of which there are no causes more active or powerful than a depressed state of body and mind, hard labor under a burning sun, the body constantly covered with the excoriating dust of brick fields, and an impoverished diet — to all of which the Israelites were exposed while under the Egyptian bondage. It appears that, in consequence of these hardships, there was, even after they had left Egypt, a general predisposition among the Hebrews to the contagious forms of leprosy — so that it often occurred as a consequence of various other affections of the

skin. And hence all cutaneous blemishes or blains — especially such as had a tendency to terminate in leprosy — were watched with a jealous eye from the first [GOOD, *Study of Medicine*]. A swelling, a pimple, or bright spot on the skin, created a strong ground of suspicion of a man's being attacked by the dreaded disease.

then he shall be brought unto Aaron the priest, etc. — Like the Egyptian priests, the Levites united the character of physician with that of the sacred office; and on the appearance of any suspicious eruptions on the skin, the person having these was brought before the priest — not, however, to receive medical treatment, though it is not improbable that some purifying remedies might be prescribed, but to be examined with a view to those sanitary precautions which it belonged to legislation to adopt.

3-6. *the priest shall look on the plague in the skin of the flesh*, etc. — The leprosy, as covering the person with a white, scaly scurf, has always been accounted an offensive blemish rather than a serious malady in the East, unless when it assumed its less common and malignant forms. When a Hebrew priest, after a careful inspection, discovered under the cutaneous blemish the distinctive signs of contagious leprosy, the person was immediately pronounced unclean, and is supposed to have been sent out of the camp to a lazaretto provided for that purpose. If the symptoms appeared to be doubtful, he ordered the person to be kept in domestic confinement for seven days, when he was subjected to a second examination; and if during the previous week the eruption had subsided or appeared to be harmless, he was instantly discharged. But if the eruption continued unabated and still doubtful, he was put under surveillance another week; at the end of which the character of the disorder never failed to manifest itself, and he was either doomed to perpetual exclusion from society or allowed to go at large. A person who had thus been detained on suspicion, when at length set at liberty, was obliged to “wash his clothes,” as having been tainted by ceremonial pollution; and the purification through which he was required to go was, in the spirit of the Mosaic dispensation, symbolical of that inward purity it was instituted to promote.

7, 8. *But if the scab spread much abroad in the skin* — Those doubtful cases, when they assumed a malignant character, appeared in one of two forms, apparently according to the particular constitution of the skin or of the habit generally. The one was “somewhat dark” [^{CRS}Leviticus 13:6] — that is, the obscure or dusky leprosy, in which the natural color of the hair (which in Egypt and Palestine is black) is not changed, as is repeatedly said in the sacred code, nor is there any depression in the dusky spot, while the patches, instead of keeping stationary to their first size, are perpetually enlarging their boundary. The patient laboring under this form was pronounced unclean by the Hebrew priest or physician, and hereby sentenced to a separation from his family and friends — a decisive proof of its being contagious.

9-37. *if the rising be white* — This BRIGHT WHITE leprosy is the most malignant and inveterate of all the varieties the disease exhibits, and it was marked by the following distinctive signs: A glossy white and spreading scale, upon an elevated base, the elevation depressed in the middle, but without a change of color; the black hair on the patches participating in the whiteness, and the scaly patches themselves perpetually enlarging their boundary. Several of these characteristics, taken separately, belong to other blemishes of the skin as well; so that none of them was to be taken alone, and it was only when the whole of them concurred that the Jewish priest, in his capacity of physician, was to pronounce the disease a malignant leprosy. If it spread over the entire frame without producing any ulceration, it lost its contagious power by degrees; or, in other words, it ran through its course and exhausted itself. In that case, there being no longer any fear of further evil, either to the individual himself or to the community, the patient was declared clean by the priest, while the dry scales were yet upon him, and restored to society. If, on the contrary, the patches ulcerated and quick or fungous flesh sprang up in them, the purulent matter of which, if brought into contact with the skin of other persons, would be taken into the constitution by means of absorbent vessels, the priest was at once to pronounce it an inveterate leprosy. A temporary confinement was then declared to be totally unnecessary, and he was regarded as unclean for life [DR. GOOD]. Other skin affections, which had a tendency to terminate in leprosy, though they were not decided symptoms when alone, were: “a boil” (^{CRS}Leviticus 13:18-23); “a

hot burning,” — that is, a fiery inflammation or carbuncle (^{<REB>}Leviticus 13:24-28); and “a dry scall” (^{<REB>}Leviticus 13:29-37), when the leprosy was distinguished by being deeper than the skin and the hair became thin and yellow.

38, 39. *If a man ... or a woman have in the skin of their flesh bright spots*

— This modification of the leprosy is distinguished by a dull white color, and it is entirely a cutaneous disorder, never injuring the constitution. It is described as not penetrating below the skin of the flesh and as not rendering necessary an exclusion from society. It is evident, then, that this common form of leprosy is not contagious; otherwise Moses would have prescribed as strict a quarantine in this as in the other cases. And hereby we see the great superiority of the Mosaic law (which so accurately distinguished the characteristics of the leprosy and preserved to society the services of those who were laboring under the uncontagious forms of the disease) over the customs and regulations of Eastern countries in the present day, where all lepers are indiscriminately proscribed and are avoided as unfit for free intercourse with their fellow men.

40, 41. *bald ... forehead bald* — The falling off of the hair, when the baldness commences in the back part of the head, is another symptom which creates a suspicion of leprosy. But it was not of itself a decisive sign unless taken in connection with other tokens, such as a “sore of a reddish white color” [^{<REB>}Leviticus 13:43]. The Hebrews as well as other Orientals were accustomed to distinguish between the forehead baldness, which might be natural, and that baldness which might be the consequence of disease.

45. *the leper in whom the plague is, his clothes shall be rent*, etc. — The person who was declared affected with the leprosy forthwith exhibited all the tokens of suffering from a heavy calamity. Rending garments and uncovering the head were common signs of mourning. As to “the putting a covering upon the upper lip,” that means either wearing a moustache, as the Hebrews used to shave the upper lip [CALMET], or simply keeping a hand over it. All these external marks of grief were intended to proclaim, in addition to his own exclamation “Unclean!” that the person was a leper, whose company every one must shun.

46. *he shall dwell alone; without the camp* — in a lazaretto by himself, or associated with other lepers (¹¹⁰⁰2 Kings 7:3,8).

47-59. *The garment ... that the ... leprosy is in* — It is well known that infectious diseases, such as scarlet fever, measles, the plague, are latently imbibed and carried by the clothes. But the language of this passage clearly indicates a disease to which clothes themselves were subject, and which was followed by effects on them analogous to those which malignant leprosy produces on the human body — for similar regulations were made for the rigid inspection of suspected garments by a priest as for the examination of a leprous person. It has long been conjectured and recently ascertained by the use of a lens, that the leprous condition of swine is produced by myriads of minute insects engendered in their skin; and regarding all leprosy as of the same nature, it is thought that this affords a sufficient reason for the injunction in the Mosaic law to destroy the clothes in which the disease, after careful observation, seemed to manifest itself. Clothes are sometimes seen contaminated by this disease in the West Indies and the southern parts of America [WHITLAW, *Code of Health*]; and it may be presumed that, as the Hebrews were living in the desert where they had not the convenience of frequent changes and washing, the clothes they wore and the skin mats on which they lay, would be apt to breed infectious vermin, which, being settled in the stuff, would imperceptibly gnaw it and leave stains similar to those described by Moses. It is well known that the wool of sheep dying of disease, if it had not been shorn from the animal while living, and also skins, if not thoroughly prepared by scouring, are liable to the effects described in this passage. The stains are described as of a greenish or reddish color, according, perhaps, to the color or nature of the ingredients used in preparing them; for acids convert blue vegetable colors into red and alkalis change then into green [BROWN]. It appears, then, that the leprosy, though sometimes inflicted as a miraculous judgment (¹¹²⁰Numbers 12:10 ¹¹⁶⁷2 Kings 5:27) was a natural disease, which is known in Eastern countries still; while the rules prescribed by the Hebrew legislator for distinguishing the true character and varieties of the disease and which are far superior to the method of treatment now followed in those regions, show the divine wisdom by which he was guided. Doubtless the origin of the disease is owing to some latent causes in nature; and perhaps a more extended

acquaintance with the archaeology of Egypt and the natural history of the adjacent countries, may confirm the opinion that leprosy results from noxious insects or a putrid fermentation. But whatever the origin or cause of the disease, the laws enacted by divine authority regarding it, while they pointed in the first instance to sanitary ends, were at the same time intended, by stimulating to carefulness against ceremonial defilement, to foster a spirit of religious fear and inward purity.

CHAPTER 14

LEVITICUS 14:1-57.

THE RITES AND SACRIFICES IN CLEANSING OF THE LEPER.

2, 3. *law of the leper in the day of his cleansing* — Though quite convalescent, a leper was not allowed to return to society immediately and at his own will. The malignant character of his disease rendered the greatest precautions necessary to his re-admission among the people. One of the priests most skilled in the diagnostics of disease [GROTIUS], being deputed to attend such outcasts, the restored leper appeared before this official, and when after examination a certificate of health was given, the ceremonies here described were forthwith observed outside the camp.

4. *two birds* — literally, “sparrows.” The *Septuagint*, however, renders the expression “little birds”; and it is evident that it is to be taken in this generic sense from their being specified as “clean” — a condition which would have been altogether superfluous to mention in reference to sparrows. In all the offerings prescribed in the law, Moses ordered only common and accessible birds; and hence we may presume that he points here to such birds as sparrows or pigeons, as in the desert it might have been very difficult to procure wild birds alive.

cedar-wood, and scarlet, and hyssop — The cedar here meant was certainly not the famous tree of Lebanon, and it is generally supposed to have been the juniper, as several varieties of that shrub are found growing abundantly in the clefts and crevices of the Sinaitic mountains. A stick of this shrub was bound to a bunch of hyssop by a scarlet ribbon, and the living bird was to be so attached to it, that when they dipped the branches in the water, the tail of the bird might also be moistened, but not the head nor the wings, that it might not be impeded in its flight when let loose.

5-9. *the priest shall command that one of the birds be killed ... over running water* — As the blood of a single bird would not have been sufficient to immerse the body of another bird, it was mingled with spring

water to increase the quantity necessary for the appointed sprinklings, which were to be repeated *seven times*, denoting a complete purification. (See ^{<150>}2 Kings 5:10 ^{<150>}Psalm 51:2 ^{<180>}Matthew 8:4 ^{<154>}Luke 5:14). The living bird being then set free, in token of the leper's release from quarantine, the priest pronounced him clean; and this official declaration was made with all solemnity, in order that the mind of the leper might be duly impressed with a sense of the divine goodness, and that others might be satisfied they might safely hold intercourse with him. Several other purifications had to be gone through during a series of seven days, and the whole process had to be repeated on the seventh, ere he was allowed to re-enter the camp. The circumstance of a priest being employed seems to imply that instruction suitable to the newly recovered leper would be given, and that the symbolical ceremonies used in the process of cleansing leprosy would be explained. How far they were then understood we cannot tell. But we can trace some instructive analogies between the leprosy and the disease of sin, and between the rites observed in the process of cleansing leprosy and the provisions of the Gospel. The chief of these analogies is that as it was only when a leper exhibited a certain change of state that orders were given by the priest for a sacrifice, so a sinner must be in the exercise of faith and penitence ere the benefits of the gospel remedy can be enjoyed by him. The slain bird and the bird let loose are supposed to typify, the one the death, and the other the resurrection of Christ; while the sprinklings on him that had been leprosy typified the requirements which led a believer to cleanse himself from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, and to perfect his holiness in the fear of the Lord.

10-20. *on the eighth day he shall take two he lambs without blemish, and one ewe-lamb of the first year without blemish* — The purification of the leper was not completed till at the end of seven days, after the ceremonial of the birds [^{<180>}Leviticus 14:4-7] and during which, though permitted to come into the camp, he had to tarry abroad out of his tent [^{<184>}Leviticus 14:8], from which he came daily to appear at the door of the tabernacle with the offerings required. He was presented before the Lord by the priest that made him clean. And hence it has always been reckoned among pious people the first duty of a patient newly restored from a long and dangerous sickness to repair to the church to offer his thanksgiving, where his body and soul, in order to be an acceptable offering, must be

presented by our great Priest, whose blood alone makes any clean. The offering was to consist of two lambs, the one was to be a sin offering, and an ephah of fine flour (two pints equals one-tenth), and one log (half pint) of oil (^{4811} Leviticus 2:1). One of the lambs was for a trespass offering, which was necessary from the inherent sin of his nature or from his defilement of the camp by his leprosy previous to his expulsion; and it is remarkable that the blood of the trespass offering was applied exactly in the same particular manner to the extremities of the restored leper, as that of the ram in the consecration of the priests [^{4823} Leviticus 8:23]. The parts sprinkled with this blood were then anointed with oil — a ceremony which is supposed to have borne this spiritual import: that while the blood was a token of forgiveness, the oil was an emblem of healing — as the blood of Christ justifies, the influence of the Spirit sanctifies. Of the other two lambs the one was to be a sin offering and the other a burnt offering, which had also the character of a thank offering for God's mercy in his restoration. And this was considered to make atonement "for him"; that is, it removed that ceremonial pollution which had excluded him from the enjoyment of religious ordinances, just as the atonement of Christ restores all who are cleansed through faith in His sacrifice to the privileges of the children of God.

21-32. *if he be poor, and cannot get so much; then he shall take one lamb* — a kind and considerate provision for an extension of the privilege to lepers of the poorer class. The blood of their smaller offering was to be applied in the same process of purification and they were as publicly and completely cleansed as those who brought a costlier offering (^{4834} Acts 10:34).

34-48. *leprosy in a house* — This law was prospective, not to come into operation till the settlement of the Israelites in Canaan. The words, "I put the leprosy," has led many to think that this plague was a judicial infliction from heaven for the sins of the owner; while others do not regard it in this light, it being common in Scripture to represent God as doing that which He only permits in His providence to be done. Assuming it to have been a natural disease, a new difficulty arises as to whether we are to consider that the house had become infected by the contagion of leprosy occupiers; or that the leprosy was in the house itself. It is evident that the latter was the true state of the case, from the furniture being removed out

of it on the first suspicion of disease on the walls. Some have supposed that the name of leprosy was analogically applied to it by the Hebrews, as we speak of cancer in trees when they exhibit corrosive effects similar to what the disease so named produces on the human body; while others have pronounced it a mural efflorescence or species of mildew on the wall apt to be produced in very damp situations, and which was followed by effects so injurious to health as well as to the stability of a house, particularly in warm countries, as to demand the attention of a legislator. Moses enjoined the priests to follow the same course and during the same period of time for ascertaining the true character of this disease as in human leprosy. If found leprous, the infected parts were to be removed. If afterwards there appeared a risk of the contagion spreading, the house was to be destroyed altogether and the materials removed to a distance. The stones were probably rough, unhewn stones, built up without cement in the manner now frequently used in fences and plastered over, or else laid in mortar. The oldest examples of architecture are of this character. The very same thing has to be done still with houses infected with mural salt. The stones covered with the nitrous incrustation must be removed, and if the infected wall is suffered to remain, it must be plastered all over anew.

48-57. *the priest shall pronounce the house clean, because the plague is healed* — The precautions here described show that there is great danger in warm countries from the house leprosy, which was likely to be increased by the smallness and rude architecture of the houses in the early ages of the Israelitish history. As a house could not contract any impurity in the sight of God, the “atonement” which the priest was to make for it must either have a reference to the sins of its occupants or to the ceremonial process appointed for its purification, the very same as that observed for a leprous person. This solemn declaration that it was “clean,” as well as the offering made on the occasion, was admirably calculated to make known the fact, to remove apprehension from the public mind, as well as relieve the owner from the aching suspicion of dwelling in an infected house.

CHAPTER 15

◀GEN▶ LEVITICUS 15:1-18.

UNCLEANNES OF MEN.

2. *When any man hath a running issue* — This chapter describes other forms of uncleanness, the nature of which is sufficiently intelligible in the text without any explanatory comment. Being the effects of licentiousness, they properly come within the notice of the legislator, and the very stringent rules here prescribed, both for the separation of the person diseased and for avoiding contamination from anything connected with him, were well calculated not only to prevent contagion, but to discourage the excesses of licentious indulgence.

9. *what saddle ... he rideth upon that hath the issue shall be unclean* — (See on ◀GEN▶ Genesis 31:34).

12. *the vessel of earth, that he toucheth which hath the issue, shall be broken* — It is thought that the pottery of the Israelites, like the earthenware jars in which the Egyptians kept their water, was unglazed and consequently porous, and that it was its porousness which, rendering it extremely liable to imbibe small particles of impure matter, was the reason why the vessel touched by an unclean person was ordered to be broken.

13, 14. *then he shall number to himself seven days for his cleansing* — Like a leprous person he underwent a week's probation, to make sure he was completely healed. Then with the sacrifices prescribed, the priest made an atonement for him, that is, offered the oblations necessary for the removal of his ceremonial defilement, as well as the typical pardon of his sins.

◀RES9 LEVITICUS 15:19-33.

UNCLEANNES OF WOMEN.

19. *if a woman have an issue* — Though this, like the leprosy, might be a natural affection, it was anciently considered contagious and entailed a ceremonial defilement which typified a moral impurity. This ceremonial defilement had to be removed by an appointed method of ceremonial expiation, and the neglect of it subjected any one to the guilt of defiling the tabernacle, and to death as the penalty of profane temerity.

31-33. *Thus shall ye separate the children of Israel from their uncleanness* — The divine wisdom was manifested in inspiring the Israelites with a profound reverence for holy things; and nothing was more suited to this purpose than to debar from the tabernacle all who were polluted by any kind of uncleanness, ceremonial as well as natural, mental as well as physical. The better to mark out that people as His family, His servants and priests, dwelling in the camp as in a holy place, consecrated by His presence and His tabernacle, He required of them complete purity, and did not allow them to come before Him when defiled, even by involuntary or secret impurities, as a want of respect due to His majesty. And when we bear in mind that God was training a people to live in His presence in some measure as priests devoted to His service, we shall not consider these rules for the maintenance of personal purity either too stringent or too minute (◀SIM04 1 Thessalonians 4:4).

CHAPTER 16

LEVITICUS 16:1-34.

HOW THE HIGH PRIEST MUST ENTER INTO THE HOLY PLACE.

1. *after the death of the two sons of Aaron, when they offered before the Lord, and died* — It is thought by some that this chapter has been transposed out of its right place in the sacred record, which was immediately after the narrative of the deaths of Nadab and Abihu [CR10 Leviticus 10:1-20]. That appalling catastrophe must have filled Aaron with painful apprehensions lest the guilt of these two sons might be entailed on his house, or that other members of his family might share the same fate by some irregularities or defects in the discharge of their sacred functions. And, therefore, this law was established, by the due observance of whose requirements the Aaronic order would be securely maintained and accepted in the priesthood.

2. *Speak unto Aaron thy brother, that he come not at all times into the holy place within the veil*, etc. — Common priests went every day into the part of the sanctuary *without* the veil to burn incense on the golden altar. But none except the high priest was allowed to enter *within* the veil, and that only once a year with the greatest care and solemnity. This arrangement was evidently designed to inspire a reverence for the most holy place, and the precaution was necessary at a time when the presence of God was indicated by sensible symbols, the impression of which might have been diminished or lost by daily and familiar observation.

I will appear in the cloud — that is, the smoke of the incense which the high priest burnt on his yearly entrance into the most holy place: and this was the cloud which at that time covered the mercy seat.

3, 4. *Thus shall Aaron come into the holy place* — As the duties of the great day of atonement led to the nearest and most solemn approach to

God, the directions as to the proper course to be followed were minute and special.

with a young bullock ... and a ram — These victims he brought alive, but they were not offered in sacrifice till he had gone through the ceremonies described between ^(~~CRIB~~) Leviticus 16:3-11. He was not to attire himself on that occasion in the splendid robes that were proper to his sacred office, but in a plain dress of linen, like the common Levites, for, as he was then to make atonement for his own sins, as well as for those of the people, he was to appear in the humble character of a suppliant. That plain dress was more in harmony with a season of humiliation (as well as lighter and more convenient for the duties which on that occasion he had singly to perform) than the gorgeous robes of the pontificate. It showed that when all appeared as sinners, the highest and lowest were then on a level, and that there is no distinction of persons with God [^(~~CHRS~~) Acts 10:34].

5-10. *shall take of the congregation ... two kids of the goats ... and one ram* — The sacrifices were to be offered by the high priest, respectively for himself and the other priests, as well as for the people. The bullock (^(~~CRIB~~) Leviticus 16:3) and the goats were for sin offerings and the rams for burnt offerings. The goats, though used in different ways, constituted only one offering. They were both presented before the Lord, and the disposal of them determined by lot, which Jewish writers have thus described: The priest, placing one of the goats on his right hand and the other on his left, took his station by the altar, and cast into an urn two pieces of gold exactly similar, inscribed, the one with the words “for the Lord,” and the other for “Azazel” (the scapegoat). After having well shaken them together, he put both his hands into the box and took up a lot in each: that in his right hand he put on the head of the goat which stood on his right, and that in his left he dropped on the other. In this manner the fate of each was decided.

11-19. *Aaron shall bring the bullock of the sin offering which is for himself*, etc. — The first part of the service was designed to solemnize his own mind, as well as the minds of the people, by offering the sacrifices for their sins. The sin offerings being slain had the sins of the offerer judicially transferred to them by the imputation of his hands on their head (^(~~CRIB~~) Leviticus 4:4,15,24,29,33); and thus the young bullock, which was to

make atonement for himself and the other priests (called “his house,” ^{LEB}Psalm 135:19), was killed by the hands of the high priest. While the blood of the victim was being received into a vessel, taking a censer of live coals in his right hand and a platter of sweet incense in his left, he, amid the solemn attention and the anxious prayers of the assembled multitude, crossed the porch and the holy place, opened the outer veil which led into the holy of holies and then the inner veil. Standing before the ark, he deposited the censer of coals on the floor, emptied the plate of incense into his hand, poured it on the burning coals; and the apartment was filled with fragrant smoke, intended, according to Jewish writers, to prevent any presumptuous gazer prying too curiously into the form of the mercy seat, which was the Lord’s throne. The high priest having done this, perfumed the sanctuary, returned to the door, took the blood of the slain bullock, and, carrying it into the holy of holies, sprinkled it with his finger once upon the mercy seat “eastward” — that is, on the side next to himself; and seven times “before the mercy seat” — that is, on the front of the ark. Leaving the coals and the incense burning, he went out a second time, to sacrifice at the altar of burnt offering the goat which had been assigned as a sin offering for the people; and carrying its blood into the holy of holies, he made similar sprinklings as he had done before with the blood of the bullock. While the high priest was thus engaged in the most holy place, none of the ordinary priests were allowed to remain within the precincts of the tabernacle. The sanctuary or holy place and the altar of burnt offering were in like manner sprinkled seven times with the blood of the bullock and the goat. The object of this solemn ceremonial was to impress the minds of the Israelites with the conviction that the whole tabernacle was stained by the sins of a guilty people, that by their sins they had forfeited the privileges of the divine presence and worship, and that an atonement had to be made as the condition of God’s remaining with them. The sins and shortcomings of the past year having polluted the sacred edifice, the expiation required to be annually renewed. The exclusion of the priests indicated their unworthiness and the impurities of their service. The mingled blood of the two victims being sprinkled on the horns of the altar indicated that the priests and the people equally needed an atonement for their sins. But the sanctuary being thus ceremonially purified, and the people of Israel reconciled by the blood of the consecrated victim, the

Lord continued to dwell in the midst of them, and to honor them with His gracious presence.

20-22. *he shall bring the live goat* — Having already been presented before the Lord (^{CHAP} Leviticus 16:10), it was now brought forward to the high priest, who, placing his hands upon its head, and “having confessed over it all the iniquities of the people of Israel, and all their transgressions in all their sins,” transferred them by this act to the goat as their substitute. It was then delivered into the hands of a person, who was appointed to lead him away into a distant, solitary, and desert place, where in early times he was let go, to escape for his life; but in the time of Christ, he was carried to a high rock twelve miles from Jerusalem, and there, being thrust over the precipice, he was killed. Commentators have differed widely in their opinions about the character and purpose of this part of the ceremonial; some considering the word “Azazel,” with the *Septuagint* and our translators, to mean, “the scapegoat”; others, “a lofty, precipitous rock” [BOCHART]; others, “a thing separated to God” [EWALD, THOLUCK]; while others think it designates Satan [GESENIUS, HENGSTENBERG]. This last view is grounded on the idea of both goats forming one and the same sacrifice of atonement, and it is supported by ^{SCRIP} Zechariah 3:1-10, which presents a striking commentary on this passage. Whether there was in this peculiar ceremony any reference to an Egyptian superstition about Typhon, the spirit of evil, inhabiting the wilderness, and the design was to ridicule it by sending a cursed animal into his gloomy dominions, it is impossible to say. The subject is involved in much obscurity. But in any view there seems to be a typical reference to Christ who bore away our sins [^{SCRIP} Hebrews 10:4 ^{CRS} 1 John 3:5].

23-28. *Aaron shall come into the tabernacle of the congregation, and shall put off the linen garments* — On the dismissal of the scapegoat, the high priest prepared for the important parts of the service which still remained; and for the performance of these he laid aside his plain linen clothes, and, having bathed himself in water, he assumed his pontifical dress. Thus gorgeously attired, he went to present the burnt offerings which were prescribed for himself and the people, consisting of the two rams which had been brought with the sin offerings, but reserved till now. The fat was ordered to be burnt upon the altar; the rest of the carcasses to be cut down and given to some priestly attendants to burn without the

camp, in conformity with the general law for the sin offerings (^{<B048>}Leviticus 4:8-12 ^{<B048>}8:14-17). The persons employed in burning them, as well as the conductor of the scapegoat, were obliged to wash their clothes and bathe their flesh in water before they were allowed to return into the camp.

29-34. *this shall be a statute for ever unto you, that in the seventh month ye shall afflict your souls* — This day of annual expiation for all the sins, irreverences, and impurities of all classes in Israel during the previous year, was to be observed as a solemn fast, in which “they were to afflict their souls”; it was reckoned a sabbath, kept as a season of “holy convocation,” or, assembling for religious purposes. All persons who performed any labor were subject to the penalty of death [^{<B014>}Exodus 31:14,15 ^{<B02>}35:2]. It took place on the tenth day of the seventh month, corresponding to our third of October; and this chapter, together with ^{<B027>}Leviticus 23:27-32, as containing special allusion to the observances of the day, was publicly read. The rehearsal of these passages appointing the solemn ceremonial was very appropriate, and the details of the successive parts of it (above all the spectacle of the public departure of the scapegoat under the care of its leader) must have produced salutary impressions both of sin and of duty that would not be soon effaced.

CHAPTER 17

LEVITICUS 17:1-16.

BLOOD OF BEASTS MUST BE OFFERED AT THE TABERNACLE DOOR.

3, 4. *What man ... killeth an ox* — The Israelites, like other people living in the desert, would not make much use of animal food; and when they did kill a lamb or a kid for food, it would almost always be, as in Abraham’s entertainment of the angels [¹⁸⁷Genesis 18:7], an occasion of a feast, to be eaten in company. This was what was done with the peace offerings, and accordingly it is here enacted, that the same course shall be followed in slaughtering the animals as in the case of those offerings, namely, that they should be killed publicly, and after being devoted to God, partaken of by the offerers. This law, it is obvious, could only be observable in the wilderness while the people were encamped within an accessible distance from the tabernacle. The reason for it is to be found in the strong addictedness of the Israelites to idolatry at the time of their departure from Egypt; and as it would have been easy for any by killing an animal to sacrifice privately to a favorite object of worship, a strict prohibition was made against their slaughtering at home. (See on ¹²¹⁵Deuteronomy 12:15).

5. *To the end that the children of Israel may bring their sacrifices, which they offer in the open field* — “They” is supposed by some commentators to refer to the Egyptians, so that the verse will stand thus: “the children of Israel may bring their sacrifices which they (the Egyptians) offer in the open field.” The law is thought to have been directed against those whose Egyptian habits led them to imitate this idolatrous practice.

7. *they shall no more offer their sacrifices unto devils* — literally, “goats.” The prohibition evidently alludes to the worship of the hire-footed kind, such as Pan, Faunus, and Saturn, whose recognized symbol was a goat. This was a form of idolatry enthusiastically practiced by the

Egyptians, particularly in the nome or province of Mendes. Pan was supposed especially to preside over mountainous and desert regions, and it was while they were in the wilderness that the Israelites seem to have been powerfully influenced by a feeling to propitiate this idol. Moreover, the ceremonies observed in this idolatrous worship were extremely licentious and obscene, and the gross impurity of the rites gives great point and significance to the expression of Moses, “they have gone a-whoring.”

8, 9. *Whatsoever man ... offereth ... And bringeth it not unto the door of the tabernacle* — Before the promulgation of the law, men worshipped wherever they pleased or pitched their tents. But after that event the rites of religion could be acceptably performed only at the appointed place of worship. This restriction with respect to place was necessary as a preventive of idolatry; for it prohibited the Israelites, when at a distance, from repairing to the altars of the heathen, which were commonly in groves or fields.

10. *I will even set my face against that soul that eateth blood, and will cut him off from among his people* — The face of God is often used in Scripture to denote His anger (¹⁹¹⁰Psalm 34:16 ¹⁹¹⁰Revelation 6:16 ²³⁸⁸Ezekiel 38:18). The manner in which God’s face would be set against such an offender was, that if the crime were public and known, he was condemned to death; if it were secret, vengeance would overtake him. (See on ¹⁰⁰⁰Genesis 9:4). But the practice against which the law is here pointed was an idolatrous rite. The Zabians, or worshippers of the heavenly host, were accustomed, in sacrificing animals, to pour out the blood and eat a part of the flesh *at the place* where the blood was poured out (and sometimes the blood itself) believing that by means of it, friendship, brotherhood, and familiarity were contracted between the worshippers and the deities. They, moreover, supposed that the blood was very beneficial in obtaining for them a vision of the demon during their sleep, and a revelation of future events. The prohibition against eating blood, viewed in the light of this historic commentary and unconnected with the peculiar terms in which it is expressed, seems to have been levelled against idolatrous practices, as is still further evident from ¹⁹¹⁰Ezekiel 33:25,26 ¹⁹¹⁰1 Corinthians 10:20,21.

11. *the life of the flesh is in the blood: and I have given it to you upon the altar to make an atonement for your souls* — God, as the sovereign

author and proprietor of nature, reserved the blood to Himself and allowed men only one use of it — in the way of sacrifices.

13, 14. *whatsoever man ... hunteth* — It was customary with heathen sportsmen, when they killed any game or venison, to pour out the blood as a libation to the god of the chase. The Israelites, on the contrary, were enjoined, instead of leaving it exposed, to cover it with dust and, by this means, were effectually debarred from all the superstitious uses to which the heathen applied it.

15, 16. *every soul that eateth that which died of itself* (^{<1023>}Exodus 22:31 ^{<1072>}Leviticus 7:24 ^{<4150>}Acts 15:20),

be unclean until the even — that is, from the moment of his discovering his fault until the evening. This law, however, was binding only on an Israelite. (See ^{<1542>}Deuteronomy 14:21).

CHAPTER 18

◀BIB▶ LEVITICUS 18:1-30.

UNLAWFUL MARRIAGES.

2-4. *I am the Lord your God* — This renewed mention of the divine sovereignty over the Israelites was intended to bear particularly on some laws that were widely different from the social customs that obtained both in Egypt and Canaan; for the enormities, which the laws enumerated in this chapter were intended to put down, were freely practiced or publicly sanctioned in both of those countries; and, indeed, the extermination of the ancient Canaanites is described as owing to the abominations with which they had polluted the land.

5. *Ye shall therefore keep my statutes, and my judgments: which if a man do, he shall live in them* — A special blessing was promised to the Israelites on condition of their obedience to the divine law; and this promise was remarkably verified at particular eras of their history, when pure and undefiled religion prevailed among them, in the public prosperity and domestic happiness enjoyed by them as a people. Obedience to the divine law always, indeed, ensures temporal advantages; and this, doubtless, was the primary meaning of the words, “which if a man do, he shall live in them.” But that they had a higher reference to spiritual life is evident from the application made of them by our Lord (◀DIB▶ Luke 10:28) and the apostle (◀SIB▶ Romans 10:2).

6. *None of you shall approach to any that is near of kin to him* — Very great laxity prevailed amongst the Egyptians in their sentiments and practice about the conjugal relation, as they not only openly sanctioned marriages between brothers and sisters, but even between parents and children. Such incestuous alliances Moses wisely prohibited, and his laws form the basis upon which the marriage regulations of this and other Christian nations are chiefly founded. This verse contains a general summary of all the particular prohibitions; and the forbidden intercourse is

pointed out by the phrase, “to approach to.” In the specified prohibitions that follow, all of which are included in this general summary, the prohibited familiarity is indicated by the phrases, to “uncover the nakedness” [^{<BES2>}Leviticus 18:12-17], to “take” [^{<BES7>}Leviticus 18:17,18], and to “lie with” [^{<BES2>}Leviticus 18:22,23]. The phrase in this sixth verse, therefore, has the same identical meaning with each of the other three, and the marriages in reference to which it is used are those of consanguinity or too close affinity, amounting to incestuous connections.

18. *Neither shalt thou take a wife to her sister, to vex her* — The original is rendered in the *Margin*, “neither shalt thou take one wife to another to vex her,” and two different and opposite interpretations have been put upon this passage. The marginal construction involves an express prohibition of polygamy; and, indeed, there can be no doubt that the practice of having more wives than one is directly contrary to the divine will. It was prohibited by the original law of marriage, and no evidence of its lawfulness under the Levitical code can be discovered, although Moses — from “the hardness of their hearts” [^{<BES8>}Matthew 19:8 ^{<BES5>}Mark 10:5] — tolerated it in the people of a rude and early age. The second interpretation forms the ground upon which the “vexed question” has been raised in our times respecting the lawfulness of marriage with a deceased wife’s sister. Whatever arguments may be used to prove the unlawfulness or inexpediency of such a matrimonial relation, the passage under consideration cannot, on a sound basis of criticism, be enlisted in the service; for the crimes with which it is here associated warrant the conclusion that it points not to marriage with a deceased wife’s sister, but with a sister in the wife’s lifetime, a practice common among the ancient Egyptians, Chaldeans, and others.

21. *thou shalt not let any of thy seed pass through the fire to Molech*, etc. — Molech, or Moloch, which signifies “king,” was the idol of the Ammonites. His statue was of brass, and rested on a pedestal or throne of the same metal. His head, resembling that of a calf, was adorned with a crown, and his arms were extended in the attitude of embracing those who approached him. His devotees dedicated their children to him; and when this was to be done, they heated the statue to a high pitch of intensity by a fire within, and then the infants were either shaken over the flames, or passed through the ignited arms, by way of lustration to ensure the favor

of the pretended deity. The fire-worshippers asserted that all children who did not undergo this purifying process would die in infancy; and the influence of this Zabian superstition was still so extensively prevalent in the days of Moses, that the divine lawgiver judged it necessary to prohibit it by an express statute.

neither shalt thou profane the name of thy God — by giving it to false or pretended divinities; or, perhaps, from this precept standing in close connection with the worship of Molech, the meaning rather is, Do not, by devoting your children to him, give foreigners occasion to blaspheme the name of your God as a cruel and sanguinary deity, who demands the sacrifice of human victims, and who encourages cruelty in his votaries.

24. *Defile not yourselves in any of these things* — In the preceding verses seventeen express cases of incest are enumerated; comprehending eleven of affinity [^{
}Leviticus 18:7-16], and six of consanguinity [^{
}Leviticus 18:17-20], together with some criminal enormities of an aggravated and unnatural character. In such prohibitions it was necessary for the instruction of a people low in the scale of moral perception, that the enumeration should be very specific as well as minute; and then, on completing it, the divine lawgiver announces his own views of these crimes, without any exception or modification, in the remarkable terms employed in this verse.

in all these the nations are defiled which I cast out before you, etc. — Ancient history gives many appalling proofs that the enormous vices described in this chapter were very prevalent, nay, were regularly practiced from religious motives in the temples of Egypt and the groves of Canaan; and it was these gigantic social disorders that occasioned the expulsion, of which the Israelites were, in the hands of a righteous and retributive Providence, the appointed instruments (^{
}Genesis 15:16). The strongly figurative language of “the land itself vomiting out her inhabitants” [^{
}Leviticus 18:25], shows the hopeless depth of their moral corruption.

25. *therefore I do visit the iniquity thereof upon it; and the land itself vomiteth out her inhabitants* — The Canaanites, as enormous and incorrigible sinners, were to be exterminated; and this extermination was manifestly a judicial punishment inflicted by a ruler whose laws had been

grossly and perseveringly outraged. But before a law can be disobeyed, it must have been previously in existence; and hence a law, prohibiting all the horrid crimes enumerated above — a law obligatory upon the Canaanites as well as other nations — was already known and in force before the Levitical law of incest was promulgated. Some general law, then, prohibiting these crimes must have been published to mankind at a very early period of the world's history; and that law must either have been the moral law, originally written on the human heart, or a law on the institution of marriage revealed to Adam and known to the Canaanites and others by tradition or otherwise.

29. *the souls that commit them shall be cut off* — This strong denunciatory language is applied to all the crimes specified in the chapter without distinction: to incest as truly as to bestiality, and to the eleven cases of affinity [^{CRSD7}Leviticus 18:7-16], as fully as to the six of consanguinity [^{CRSD7}Leviticus 18:17-20]. Death is the punishment sternly denounced against all of them. No language could be more explicit or universal; none could more strongly indicate intense loathing and abhorrence.

30. *Therefore shall ye keep mine ordinance, that ye commit not any one of these abominable customs* — In giving the Israelites these particular institutions, God was only re-delivering the law imprinted on the natural heart of man; for there is every reason to believe that the incestuous alliances and unnatural crimes prohibited in this chapter were forbidden to all men by a law expressed or understood from the beginning of the world, or at least from the era of the flood, since God threatens to condemn and punish, in a manner so sternly severe, these atrocities in the practice of the Canaanites and their neighbors, who were not subject to the laws of the Hebrew nation.

CHAPTER 19

◀GEN▶ LEVITICUS 19:1-37.

A REPETITION OF SUNDRY LAWS.

2. *Speak unto all the congregation of the children of Israel* — Many of the laws enumerated in this chapter had been previously announced. As they were, however, of a general application, not suited to particular classes, but to the nation at large, so Moses seems, according to divine instructions, to have rehearsed them, perhaps on different occasions and to successive divisions of the people, till “all the congregation of the children of Israel” were taught to know them. The will of God in the Old as well as the New Testament Church was not locked up in the repositories of an unknown tongue, but communicated plainly and openly to the people.

Ye shall be holy: for I ... am holy — Separated from the world, the people of God were required to be holy, for His character, His laws, and service were holy. (See ◀GEN▶ 1 Peter 1:15).

3. *Ye shall fear every man his mother, and his father, and keep my sabbaths* — The duty of obedience to parents is placed in connection with the proper observance of the Sabbaths, both of them lying at the foundation of practical religion.

5-8. *if ye offer a sacrifice of peace offerings unto the Lord, ye shall offer it at your own will* — Those which included thank offerings, or offerings made for vows, were always freewill offerings. Except the portions which, being waved and heaved, became the property of the priests (see ◀GEN▶ Leviticus 3:1-17), the rest of the victim was eaten by the offerer and his friend, under the following regulations, however, that, if thank offerings, they were to be eaten on the day of their presentation; and if a freewill offering, although it might be eaten on the second day, yet if any remained of it till the third day, it was to be burnt, or deep criminality was incurred by the person who then ventured to partake of it. The reason of this strict

prohibition seems to have been to prevent any mysterious virtue being superstitiously attached to meat offered on the altar.

9, 10. *And when ye reap the harvest of your land, thou shalt not wholly reap the corners of thy field* — The right of the poor in Israel to glean after reapers, as well as to the unreaped corners of the field, was secured by a positive statute; and this, in addition to other enactments connected with the ceremonial law, formed a beneficial provision for their support. At the same time, proprietors were not obliged to admit them into the field until the grain had been carried off the field; and they seem also to have been left at liberty to choose the poor whom they deemed the most deserving or needful ([◊]Ruth 2:2,8). This was the earliest law for the benefit of the poor that we read of in the code of any people; and it combined in admirable union the obligation of a public duty with the exercise of private and voluntary benevolence at a time when the hearts of the rich would be strongly inclined to liberality.

11-16. *Ye shall not steal* — A variety of social duties are inculcated in this passage, chiefly in reference to common and little-thought-of vices to which mankind are exceedingly prone; such as committing petty frauds, or not scrupling to violate truth in transactions of business, ridiculing bodily infirmities, or circulating stories to the prejudice of others. In opposition to these bad habits, a spirit of humanity and brotherly kindness is strongly enforced.

17. *thou shalt in any wise rebuke thy neighbor* — Instead of cherishing latent feelings of malice or meditating purposes of revenge against a person who has committed an insult or injury against them, God's people were taught to remonstrate with the offender and endeavor, by calm and kindly reason, to bring him to a sense of his fault.

not suffer sin upon him — literally, “that ye may not participate in his sin.”

18. *thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself* — The word “neighbor” is used as synonymous with “fellow creature.” The Israelites in a later age restricted its meaning as applicable only to their own countrymen. This narrow interpretation was refuted by our Lord in a beautiful parable ([◊]Luke 10:30-37).

19. *Thou shalt not let thy cattle gender with a diverse kind* — This prohibition was probably intended to discourage a practice which seemed to infringe upon the economy which God has established in the animal kingdom.

thou shalt not sow thy field with mingled seed — This also was directed against an idolatrous practice, namely, that of the ancient Zabians, or fire-worshippers, who sowed different seeds, accompanying the act with magical rites and invocations; and commentators have generally thought the design of this and the preceding law was to put an end to the unnatural lusts and foolish superstitions which were prevalent among the heathen. But the reason of the prohibition was probably deeper: for those who have studied the diseases of land and vegetables tell us, that the practice of mingling seeds is injurious both to flowers and to grains. “If the various genera of the natural order Gramineæ, which includes the grains and the grasses, should be sown in the same field, and flower at the same time, so that the pollen of the two flowers mix, a spurious seed will be the consequence, called by the farmers *chess*. It is always inferior and unlike either of the two grains that produced it, in size, flavor, and nutritious principles. Independently of contributing to disease the soil, they never fail to produce the same in animals and men that feed on them” [WHITLAW].

neither shall a garment mingled of linen and woollen come upon thee — Although this precept, like the other two with which it is associated, was in all probability designed to root out some superstition, it seems to have had a further meaning. The law, it is to be observed, did not prohibit the Israelites wearing many different kinds of cloths together, but only the two specified; and the observations and researches of modern science have proved that “wool, when combined with linen, increases its power of passing off the electricity from the body. In hot climates, it brings on malignant fevers and exhausts the strength; and when passing off from the body, it meets with the heated air, inflames and excoriates like a blister” [WHITLAW]. (See ³⁴¹⁷Ezekiel 44:17,18).

23-25. *ye shall count the fruit thereof as uncircumcised; three years ... it shall not be eaten of* — “The wisdom of this law is very striking. Every gardener will teach us not to let fruit trees bear in their earliest years, but

to pluck off the blossoms: and for this reason, that they will thus thrive the better, and bear more abundantly afterwards. The very expression, “to regard them as uncircumcised,” suggests the propriety of pinching them off; I do not say *cutting* them off, because it is generally the hand, and not a knife, that is employed in this operation” [MICHAELIS].

26. *shall not eat any thing with the blood* — (See on ^{<B77>}Leviticus 17:10).

neither ... use enchantment, nor observe times — The former refers to divination by serpents — one of the earliest forms of enchantment, and the other means the observation, literally, of clouds, as a study of the appearance and motion of *clouds* was a common way of foretelling good or bad fortune. Such absurd but deep-rooted superstitions often put a stop to the prosecution of serious and important transactions, but they were forbidden especially as implying a want of faith in the being, or of reliance on the providence of God.

27. *Ye shall not round the corners of your heads*, etc. — It seems probable that this fashion had been learned by the Israelites in Egypt, for the ancient Egyptians had their dark locks cropped short or shaved with great nicety, so that what remained on the crown appeared in the form of a circle surrounding the head, while the beard was dressed into a square form. This kind of coiffure had a highly idolatrous meaning; and it was adopted, with some slight variations, by almost all idolaters in ancient times. (^{<B10>}Jeremiah 9:25,26 ^{<B11>}25:23, where “in the utmost corners” means having the corners of their hair cut.) Frequently a lock or tuft of hair was left on the hinder part of the head, the rest being cut round in the form of a ring, as the Turks, Chinese, and Hindus do at the present day.

neither shalt thou mar, etc. — The Egyptians used to cut or shave off their whiskers, as may be seen in the coffins of mummies, and the representations of divinities on the monuments. But the Hebrews, in order to separate them from the neighboring nations, or perhaps to put a stop to some existing superstition, were forbidden to imitate this practice. It may appear surprising that Moses should condescend to such minutiae; as that of regulating the fashion of the hair and the beard — matters which do not usually occupy the attention of a legislator — and which appear widely remote from the province either of government or of a religion. A

strong presumption, therefore, arises that he had in mind by these regulations to combat some superstitious practices of the Egyptians.

28. *Ye shall not make any cuttings in your flesh for the dead* — The practice of making deep gashes on the face and arms and legs, in time of bereavement, was universal among the heathen, and it was deemed a becoming mark of respect for the dead, as well as a sort of propitiatory offering to the deities who presided over death and the grave. The Jews learned this custom in Egypt, and though weaned from it, relapsed in a later and degenerate age into this old superstition (²⁸⁶⁹Isaiah 15:2 ²⁴⁰⁵Jeremiah 16:6 ²⁴¹⁵41:5).

nor print any marks upon you — by *tattooing*, imprinting figures of flowers, leaves, stars, and other fanciful devices on various parts of their person. The impression was made sometimes by means of a hot iron, sometimes by ink or paint, as is done by the Arab females of the present day and the different castes of the Hindus. It is probable that a strong propensity to adopt such marks in honor of some idol gave occasion to the prohibition in this verse; and they were wisely forbidden, for they were signs of apostasy; and, when once made, they were insuperable obstacles to a return. (See allusions to the practice, ²³⁴⁵Isaiah 44:5 ⁶¹³⁷Revelation 13:17 ⁶⁴¹14:1).

30. *Ye shall keep my sabbaths, and reverence my sanctuary* — This precept is frequently repeated along with the prohibition of idolatrous practices, and here it stands closely connected with the superstitions forbidden in the previous verses.

31. *Regard not them that have familiar spirits* — The *Hebrew* word, rendered “familiar spirit,” signifies the belly, and sometimes a leathern bottle, from its similarity to the belly. It was applied in the sense of this passage to ventriloquists, who pretended to have communication with the invisible world. The Hebrews were strictly forbidden to consult them as the vain but high pretensions of those impostors were derogatory to the honor of God and subversive of their covenant relations with Him as His people.

neither seek after wizards — fortunetellers, who pretended, as the *Hebrew* word indicates, to prognosticate by palmistry (or an inspection of the lines of the hand) the future fate of those who applied to them.

33, 34. *if a stranger sojourn with thee in your land, ye shall not vex him*

— The Israelites were to hold out encouragement to strangers to settle among them, that they might be brought to the knowledge and worship of the true God; and with this in view, they were enjoined to treat them not as aliens, but as friends, on the ground that they themselves, who were strangers in Egypt, were at first kindly and hospitably received in that country.

37. *I am the Lord* — This solemn admonition, by which these various precepts are repeatedly sanctioned, is equivalent to “I, your Creator — your Deliverer from bondage, and your Sovereign, who have wisdom to establish laws, have power also to punish the violation of them.” It was well fitted to impress the minds of the Israelites with a sense of their duty and God’s claims to obedience.

CHAPTER 20

◀1818▶ LEVITICUS 20:1-27.

GIVING ONE'S SEED TO MOLECH.

2. *Whosoever ... giveth any of his seed unto Molech* — (See on
◀1818▶ Leviticus 18:21).

the people of the land shall stone him with stones, etc. — Criminals who were condemned to be stoned were led, with their hands bound, without the gates to a small eminence, where was a large stone placed at the bottom. When they had approached within ten cubits of the spot, they were exhorted to confess, that, by faith and repentance, their souls might be saved. When led forward to within four cubits, they were stripped almost naked, and received some stupefying draught, during which the witnesses prepared, by laying aside their outer garments, to carry into execution the capital sentence which the law bound them to do. The criminal, being placed on the edge of the precipice, was then pushed backwards, so that he fell down the perpendicular height on the stone lying below: if not killed by the fall, the second witness dashed a large stone down upon his breast, and then the “people of the land,” who were by-standers, rushed forward, and with stones completed the work of death (◀1214▶ Matthew 21:44 ◀4178▶ Acts 7:58).

4. *If the people of the land do any ways hide their eyes from the man*, etc. — that is, connive at their countrymen practising the horrid rites of Molech. Awful was it that any Hebrew parents could so violate their national covenant, and no wonder that God denounced the severest penalties against them and their families.

7-19. *Sanctify yourselves therefore, and be ye holy* — The minute specification of the incestuous and unnatural crimes here enumerated shows their sad prevalence amongst the idolatrous nations around, and the extreme proneness of the Israelites to follow the customs of their neighbors. It is to be understood, that, whenever mention is made that the

offender was “to be put to death” without describing the mode, stoning is meant. The only instance of another form of capital punishment occurs in ^{<B1M4}Leviticus 20:14, that of being burnt with fire; and yet it is probable that even here death was first inflicted by stoning, and the body of the criminal afterwards consumed by fire (^{<B1M5}Joshua 7:15).

20. *they shall die childless* — Either by the judgment of God they shall have no children, or their spurious offspring shall be denied by human authority the ordinary privileges of children in Israel.

24. *I ... have separated you from other people* — Their selection from the rest of the nations was for the all-important end of preserving the knowledge and worship of the true God amid the universal apostasy; and as the distinction of meats was one great means of completing that separation, the law about making a difference between clean and unclean beasts is here repeated with emphatic solemnity.

CHAPTER 21

LEVITICUS 21:1-24.

OF THE PRIESTS' MOURNING.

1. *There shall none be defiled for the dead among his people* — The obvious design of the regulations contained in this chapter was to keep inviolate the purity and dignity of the sacred office. Contact with a corpse, or even contiguity to the place where it lay, entailing ceremonial defilement (^{<0194}Numbers 19:14), all mourners were debarred from the tabernacle for a week; and as the exclusion of a priest during that period would have been attended with great inconvenience, the whole order were enjoined to abstain from all approaches to the dead, except at the funerals of relatives, to whom affection or necessity might call them to perform the last offices. Those exceptional cases, which are specified, were strictly confined to the members of their own family, within the nearest degrees of kindred.

4. *But he shall not defile himself* — “for any other,” as the sense may be fully expressed. “The priest, in discharging his sacred functions, might well be regarded as a chief man among his people, and by these defilements might be said to profane himself” [BISHOP PATRICK]. The word rendered “chief man” signifies also “a husband”; and the sense according to others is, “But he being a husband, shall not defile himself by the obsequies of a wife”; or, “being an husband among his people, he shall not defile himself for his wife” (^{<0425}Ezekiel 44:25).

5. *They shall not make baldness upon their heads ... nor ... cuttings in their flesh* — The superstitious marks of sorrow, as well as the violent excesses in which the heathen indulged at the death of their friends, were forbidden by a general law to the Hebrew people (^{<0128}Leviticus 19:28). But the priests were to be laid under a special injunction, not only that they might exhibit examples of piety in the moderation of their grief, but also by the restraint of their passions, be the better qualified to administer the

consolations of religion to others, and show, by their faith in a blessed resurrection, the reasons for sorrowing not as those who have no hope.

7-9. *They shall not take a wife that is a whore, or profane* — Private individuals might form several connections, which were forbidden as inexpedient or improper in priests. The respectability of their office, and the honor of religion, required unblemished sanctity in their families as well as themselves, and departures from it in their case were visited with severer punishment than in that of others.

10-15. *he that is the high priest among his brethren ... shall not uncover his head, nor rend his clothes* — The indulgence in the excepted cases of family bereavement, mentioned above [^{<62D>}Leviticus 21:2,3], which was granted to the common priests, was denied to him; for his absence from the sanctuary for the removal of any contracted defilement could not have been dispensed with, neither could he have acted as intercessor for the people, unless ceremonially clean. Moreover, the high dignity of his office demanded a corresponding superiority in personal holiness, and stringent rules were prescribed for the purpose of upholding the suitable dignity of his station and family. The same rules are extended to the families of Christian ministers (^{<54D>}1 Timothy 3:2 ^{<50D>}Titus 1:6).

16-24. *Whosoever he be ... hath any blemish, let him not approach to offer the bread of his God* — As visible things exert a strong influence on the minds of men, any physical infirmity or malformation of body in the ministers of religion, which disturbs the associations or excites ridicule, tends to detract from the weight and authority of the sacred office. Priests laboring under any personal defect were not allowed to officiate in the public service; they might be employed in some inferior duties about the sanctuary but could not perform any sacred office. In all these regulations for preserving the unsullied purity of the sacred character and office, there was a typical reference to the priesthood of Christ (^{<81D>}Hebrews 7:26).

CHAPTER 22

LEVITICUS 22:1-9.

THE PRIESTS IN THEIR UNCLEANNES.

2. *Speak unto Aaron and to his sons, that they separate themselves from the holy things* — “To separate” means, in the language of the Mosaic ritual, “to abstain”; and therefore the import of this injunction is that the priests should abstain from eating that part of the sacrifices which, though belonging to their order, was to be partaken of only by such of them as were free from legal impurities.

that they profane not my holy name in those things which they hallow unto me, etc. — that is, let them not, by their want of due reverence, give occasion to profane my holy name. A careless or irreverent use of things consecrated to God tends to dishonor the name and bring disrespect on the worship of God.

3. *Whosoever he be ... that goeth unto the holy things* — The multitude of minute restrictions to which the priests, from accidental defilement, were subjected, by keeping them constantly on their guard lest they should be unfit for the sacred service, tended to preserve in full exercise the feeling of awe and submission to the authority of God. The ideas of sin and duty were awakened in their breasts by every case to which either an interdict or an injunction was applied. But why enact an express statute for priests disqualified by the leprosy or polluting touch of a carcass (^(**LEV**)Leviticus 22:4), when a general law was already in force which excluded from society all persons in that condition? Because priests might be apt, from familiarity, to trifle with religion, and in committing irregularities or sins, to shelter themselves under the cloak of the sacred office. This law, therefore, was passed, specifying the chief forms of temporary defilement which excluded from the sanctuary, that priests might not deem themselves entitled to greater license than the rest of the people; and that so far from being in any degree exempted from the sanctions of the law,

they were under greater obligations, by their priestly station, to observe it in its strict letter and its smallest enactments.

4-6. *wash his flesh with water* — Any Israelite who had contracted a defilement of such a nature as debarred him from the enjoyment of his wonted privileges, and had been legally cleansed from the disqualifying impurity, was bound to indicate his state of recovery by the immersion of his whole person in water. Although all ceremonial impurity formed a ground of exclusion, there were degrees of impurity which entailed a longer or shorter period of excommunication, and for the removal of which different rites required to be observed according to the trivial or the malignant nature of the case. A person who came inadvertently into contact with an unclean animal was rendered unclean for a specified period; and then, at the expiry of that term, he washed, in token of his recovered purity. But a leper was unclean so long as he remained subject to that disease, and on his convalescence, he also washed, not to cleanse himself, for the water was ineffectual for that purpose, but to signify that he was clean. Not a single case is recorded of a leper being restored to communion by the use of water; it served only as an outward and visible sign that such a restoration was to be made. The Book of Leviticus abounds with examples which show that in all the ceremonial washings, as uncleanness meant loss of privileges, so baptism with water indicated a restoration those privileges. There was no exemption; for as the unclean Israelite was exiled from the congregation, so the unclean priest was disqualified from executing his sacred functions in the sanctuary; and in the case of both, the same observance was required — a formal intimation of their being readmitted to forfeited privileges was intimated by the appointed rite of baptism. If any one neglected or refused to perform the washing, he disobeyed a positive precept, and he remained in his uncleanness; he forbore to avail himself of this privilege, and was therefore said to be “cut off” from the presence of the Lord.

8. *dieth of itself* — The feelings of nature revolt against such food. It might have been left to the discretion of the Hebrews, who it may be supposed (like the people of all civilized nations) would have abstained from the use of it without any positive interdict. But an express precept was necessary to show them that whatever died naturally or from disease,

was prohibited to them by the operation of that law which forbade them the use of any meat with its blood.

(1220) LEVITICUS 22:10-16.

WHO OF THE PRIESTS' HOUSE MAY EAT OF THEM.

10-13. *There shall no stranger eat the holy thing* — The portion of the sacrifices assigned for the support of the officiating priests was restricted to the exclusive use of his own family. A temporary guest or a hired servant was not at liberty to eat of them; but an exception was made in favor of a bought or homeborn slave, because such was a stated member of his household. On the same principle, his own daughter, who married a husband not a priest, could not eat of them. However, if a widow and childless, she was reinstated in the privileges of her father's house as before her marriage. But if she had become a mother, as her children had no right to the privileges of the priesthood, she was under a necessity of finding support for them elsewhere than under her father's roof.

13. *there shall no stranger eat thereof* — The interdict recorded (1220) Leviticus 22:10) is repeated to show its stringency. All the Hebrews, even the nearest neighbors of the priest, the members of his family excepted, were considered strangers in this respect, so that they had no right to eat of things offered at the altar.

14. *if a man eat of the holy thing unwittingly* — A common Israelite might unconsciously partake of what had been offered as tithes, first-fruits, etc. and on discovering his unintentional error, he was not only to restore as much as he had used, but be fined in a fifth part more for the priests to carry into the sanctuary.

15, 16. *they shall not profane the holy things of the children of Israel* — There is some difficulty felt in determining to whom "they" refers. The subject of the preceding context being occupied about the priests, it is supposed by some that this relates to them also; and the meaning then is that the whole people would incur guilt through the fault of the priests, if they should defile the sacred offerings, which they would have done had

they presented them while under any defilement [CALVIN]. According to others, “the children of Israel” is the nominative in the sentence; which thus signifies, the children of Israel shall not profane or defile their offerings, by touching them or reserving any part of them, lest they incur the guilt of eating what is divinely appointed to the priests alone [CALMET].

LEVITICUS 22:17-33.

THE SACRIFICES MUST BE WITHOUT BLEMISH.

19. *Ye shall offer at your own will* — rather, to your being accepted.

a male without blemish — This law (^{ORIG} Leviticus 1:3) is founded on a sense of natural propriety, which required the greatest care to be taken in the selection of animals for sacrifice. The reason for this extreme caution is found in the fact that sacrifices are either an expression of praise to God for His goodness, or else they are the designed means of conciliating or retaining His favor. No victim that was not perfect in its kind could be deemed a fitting instrument for such purposes if we assume that the significance of sacrifices is derived entirely from their relation to Jehovah. Sacrifices may be likened to gifts made to a king by his subjects, and hence the reasonableness of God’s strong remonstrance with the worldly-minded Jews (^{ORIG} Malachi 1:8). If the tabernacle, and subsequently the temple, were considered the palace of the great King, then the sacrifices would answer to presents as offered to a monarch on various occasions by his subjects; and in this light they would be the appropriate expressions of their feelings towards their sovereign. When a subject wished to do honor to his sovereign, to acknowledge allegiance, to appease his anger, to supplicate forgiveness, or to intercede for another, he brought a present; and all the ideas involved in sacrifices correspond to these sentiments — those of gratitude, of worship, of prayer, of confession and atonement [BIB. SAC.].

23. *that mayest thou offer*, etc. — The passage should be rendered thus: “if thou offer it either for a freewill offering, or for a vow, it shall not be accepted.” This sacrifice being required to be “without blemish”

[^(K22)Leviticus 22:19], symbolically implied that the people of God were to dedicate themselves wholly with sincere purposes of heart, and its being required to be “perfect to be accepted” [^(K22)Leviticus 22:21], led them typically to Him without whom no sacrifice could be offered acceptable to God.

27, 28. *it shall be seven days under the dam* — Animals were not considered perfect nor good for food till the eighth day. As sacrifices are called the bread or food of God (^(K22)Leviticus 22:25), to offer them immediately after birth, when they were unfit to be eaten, would have indicated a contempt of religion; and besides, this prohibition, as well as that contained in ^(K22)Leviticus 22:28, inculcated a lesson of humanity or tenderness to the dam, as well as secured the sacrifices from all appearance of unfeeling cruelty.

CHAPTER 23

LEVITICUS 23:1-4.

OF SUNDRY FEASTS.

- 2. *Speak unto the children of Israel, ... concerning the feasts of the Lord*** — literally, “the times of assembling, or solemnities” (²³⁰⁰Isaiah 33:20); and this is a preferable rendering, applicable to all sacred seasons mentioned in this chapter, even the day of atonement, which was observed as a fast. They were appointed by the direct authority of God and announced by a public proclamation, which is called “the joyful sound” (⁴⁹⁰⁵Psalms 89:15). Those “holy convocations” were evidences of divine wisdom, and eminently subservient to the maintenance and diffusion of religious knowledge and piety.
- 3. *Six days shall work be done: but the seventh day is the sabbath of rest*** — (See on ⁰²⁰⁸Exodus 20:8). The Sabbath has the precedence given to it, and it was to be “a holy convocation,” observed by families “in their dwellings”; where practicable, by the people repairing to the door of the tabernacle; at later periods, by meeting in the schools of the prophets, and in synagogues.
- 4. *These are the feasts of the Lord, which ye shall proclaim in their seasons*** — Their observance took place in the parts of the year corresponding to our March, May, and September. Divine wisdom was manifested in fixing them at those periods; in winter, when the days were short and the roads broken up, a long journey was impracticable; while in summer the harvest and vintage gave busy employment in the fields. Besides, another reason for the choice of those seasons probably was to counteract the influence of Egyptian associations and habits. And God appointed more sacred festivals for the Israelites in the month of September than the people of Egypt had in honor of their idols. These institutions, however, were for the most part prospective, the observance being not binding on the Israelites during their wanderings in the

wilderness, while the regular celebration was not to commence till their settlement in Canaan.

LEVITICUS 23:5-8.

THE PASSOVER.

5. *the Lord's passover* — (See Exodus 12:2,14,18) The institution of the passover was intended to be a perpetual memorial of the circumstances attending the redemption of the Israelites, while it had a typical reference to a greater redemption to be effected for God's spiritual people. On the first and last days of this feast, the people were forbidden to work [Leviticus 23:7,8]; but while on the Sabbath they were not to do *any* work, on feast days they were permitted to dress meat — and hence the prohibition is restricted to “no servile work.” At the same time, those two days were devoted to “holy convocation” — special seasons of social devotion. In addition to the ordinary sacrifices of every day, there were to be “offerings by fire” on the altar (see Numbers 28:19), while unleavened bread was to be eaten in families all the seven days (see 1 Corinthians 5:8).

LEVITICUS 23:9-14.

THE SHEAF OF FIRST FRUITS.

10. *ye shall bring a sheaf of the first-fruits of your harvest unto the priest* — A sheaf, literally, an omer, of the first-fruits of the barley harvest. The barley being sooner ripe than the other grains, the reaping of it formed the commencement of the general harvest season. The offering described in this passage was made on the sixteenth of the first month, the day following the first Passover Sabbath, which was on the fifteenth (corresponding to the beginning of our April); but it was reaped after sunset on the previous evening by persons deputed to go with sickles and obtain samples from different fields. These, being laid together in a sheaf or loose bundle, were brought to the court of the temple, where the grain

was winnowed, parched, and bruised in a mortar. Then, after some incense had been sprinkled on it, the priest waved the sheaf aloft before the Lord towards the four different points of the compass, took a part of it and threw it into the fire of the altar — all the rest being reserved to himself. It was a proper and beautiful act, expressive of dependence on the God of nature and providence — common among all people, but more especially becoming the Israelites, who owed their land itself as well as all it produced to the divine bounty. The offering of the wave-sheaf sanctified the whole harvest (^{<5116>}Romans 11:16). At the same time, this feast had a typical character, and pre-intimated the resurrection of Christ (^{<650>}1 Corinthians 15:20), who rose from the dead on the very day the first-fruits were offered.

^{<6295>}LEVITICUS 23:15-22.

FEAST OF PENTECOST.

15. *ye shall count unto you from the morrow after the sabbath* — that is, after the first day of the passover week, which was observed as a Sabbath.

16. *number fifty days* — The forty-ninth day after the presentation of the first-fruits, or the fiftieth, including it, was the feast of Pentecost. (See also ^{<6230>}Exodus 23:16 ^{<6509>}Deuteronomy 16:9).

17. *Ye shall bring out of your habitations two wave loaves of two tenth deals*, etc. — These loaves were made of “fine” or wheaten flour, the quantity contained in them being somewhat more than ten pounds in weight. As the wave-sheaf gave the signal for the commencement, the two loaves solemnized the termination of the harvest season. They were the first-fruits of that season, being offered unto the Lord by the priest in name of the whole nation. (See ^{<6302>}Exodus 34:22). The loaves used at the Passover were unleavened; those presented at Pentecost were leavened — a difference which is thus accounted for, that the one was a memorial of the bread hastily prepared at their departure, while the other was a tribute of gratitude to God for their daily food, which was leavened.

21. *ye shall proclaim on the selfsame day, that it may be an holy convocation unto you: ye shall do no servile work therein* — Though it extended over a week, the first day only was held as a Sabbath, both for the national offering of first-fruits and a memorial of the giving of the law.

22. *thou shalt not make clean riddance of the corners of thy field when thou reapest*, etc. — (See on ^{<B23>}Leviticus 19:9). The repetition of this law here probably arose from the priests reminding the people, at the presentation of the first-fruits, to unite piety to God with charity to the poor.

^{<B23>}LEVITICUS 23:23-25.

FEAST OF TRUMPETS.

24. *In the seventh month, in the first day of the month, shall ye have a sabbath* — That was the first day of the ancient civil year.

a memorial of blowing of trumpets — Jewish writers say that the trumpets were sounded thirty successive times, and the reason for the institution was for the double purpose of announcing the commencement of the new year, which was (^{<B25>}Leviticus 23:25) to be religiously observed (see ^{<B29>}Numbers 29:3), and of preparing the people for the approaching solemn feast.

27-32. *there shall be a day of atonement ... and ye shall afflict your souls* — an unusual festival, at which the sins of the whole year were expiated. (See ^{<B16>}Leviticus 16:29-34). It is here only stated that the severest penalty was incurred by the violation of this day.

34-44. *the feast of tabernacles, for seven days unto the Lord* — This festival, which was instituted in grateful commemoration of the Israelites having securely dwelt in booths or tabernacles in the wilderness, was the third of the three great annual festivals, and, like the other two, it lasted a week. It began on the fifteenth day of the month, corresponding to the end of our September and beginning of October, which was observed as a Sabbath; and it could be celebrated only at the place of the sanctuary, offerings being made on the altar every day of its continuance. The Jews

were commanded during the whole period of the festival to dwell in booths, which were erected on the flat roofs of houses, in the streets or fields; and the trees made use of are by some stated to be the citron, the palm, the myrtle, and the willow, while others maintain the people were allowed to take any trees they could obtain that were distinguished for verdure and fragrance. While the solid branches were reserved for the construction of the booths, the lighter branches were carried by men, who marched in triumphal procession, singing psalms and crying “Hosanna!” which signifies, “Save, we beseech thee!” (^{<4385>}Psalm 118:15,25,26). It was a season of great rejoicing. But the ceremony of drawing water from the pool, which was done on the last day, seems to have been the introduction of a later period (^{<4157>}John 7:37). That last day was the eighth, and, on account of the scene at Siloam, was called “the great day of the feast.” The feast of ingathering, when the vintage was over, was celebrated also on that day [^{<1236>}Exodus 23:16 34:22], and, as the conclusion of one of the great festivals, it was kept as a sabbath.

CHAPTER 24

LEVITICUS 24:1-23.

OIL FOR THE LAMPS.

2. *Command the children of Israel* — This is the repetition of a law previously given (^{<0271>}Exodus 27:20,21).

pure oil olive beaten — or cold-drawn, which is always of great purity.

3, 4. *Aaron shall order it from the evening unto the morning* — The daily presence of the priests was necessary to superintend the cleaning and trimming.

4. *upon the pure candlestick* — so called because of pure gold. This was symbolical of the light which ministers are to diffuse through the Church.

5-9. *take fine flour, and bake twelve cakes* — for the showbread, as previously appointed (^{<0253>}Exodus 25:30). Those cakes were baked by the Levites, the flour being furnished by the people (^{<0302>}1 Chronicles 9:32 ^{<0329>}23:29), oil, wine, and salt being the other ingredients (^{<0123>}Leviticus 2:13).

two tenth deals — that is, of an ephah — thirteen and a half pounds weight each; and on each row or pile of cakes some frankincense was strewed, which, being burnt, led to the showbread being called “an offering made by fire.” Every Sabbath a fresh supply was furnished; hot loaves were placed on the altar instead of the stale ones, which, having lain a week, were removed, and eaten only by the priests, except in cases of necessity (^{<0123>}1 Samuel 21:3-6; also ^{<0123>}Luke 6:3,4).

10. *the son of an Israelitish woman*, etc. — This passage narrates the enactment of a new law, with a detail of the circumstances which gave rise to it. The “mixed multitude” [^{<0123>}Exodus 12:38] that accompanied the Israelites in their exodus from Egypt creates a presumption that marriage connections of the kind described were not infrequent. And it was most

natural, in the relative circumstances of the two people, that the father should be an Egyptian and the mother an Israelite.

11. *And the Israelitish woman's son blasphemed the name of the Lord* —

A youth of this half-blood, having quarrelled with an Israelite [^{<LEVI>}Leviticus 24:10], vented his rage in some horrid form of impiety. It was a common practice among the Egyptians to curse their idols when disappointed in obtaining the object of their petitions. The Egyptian mind of this youth thought the greatest insult to his opponent was to blaspheme the object of his religious reverence. He spoke disrespectfully of One who sustained the double character of the King as well as the God of the Hebrew people; as the offense was a new one, he was put in ward till the mind of the Lord was ascertained as to his disposal.

14. *Bring forth him that hath cursed without the camp* —

All executions took place without the camp; and this arrangement probably originated in the idea that, as the Israelites were to be “a holy people” (^{<DEUT>}Deuteronomy 7:6 ^{<LEVI>}14:2,21 ^{<LEVI>}26:19 ^{<DEUT>}28:9), all flagrant offenders should be thrust out of their society.

let all that heard him lay their hands upon his head, etc. — The imposition of hands formed a public and solemn testimony against the crime, and at the same time made the punishment legal.

16. *as well the stranger, as he that is born in the land, when he blasphemeth the name of the Lord, shall be put to death* —

Although strangers were not obliged to be circumcised, yet by joining the Israelitish camp, they became amenable to the law, especially that which related to blasphemy.

17-22. *he that killeth any man shall surely be put to death* — These verses contain a repetition of some other laws, relating to offenses of a social nature, the penalties for which were to be inflicted, not by the hand of private parties, but through the medium of the judges before whom the cause was brought.

23. *the children of Israel did as the Lord's commanded* — The chapter closes with the execution of Shelomith's son [^{<LEVI>}Leviticus 24:14] — and stoning having afterwards become the established punishment in all cases

of blasphemy, it illustrates the fate of Stephen, who suffered under a false imputation of that crime [⁴⁰⁵Acts 7:58,59].

CHAPTER 25

LEVITICUS 25:1-7.

SABBATH OF THE SEVENTH YEAR.

2-4. *When ye come into the land which I give you* — It has been questioned on what year, after the occupation of Canaan, the sabbatic year began to be observed. Some think it was the seventh year after their entrance. But others, considering that as the first six years were spent in the conquest and division of the land (⁴⁰⁵²Joshua 5:12), and that the sabbatical year was to be observed after six years of agriculture, maintain that the observance did not commence till the fourteenth year.

the land keep a sabbath unto the Lord — This was a very peculiar arrangement. Not only all agricultural processes were to be intermitted every seventh year, but the cultivators had no right to the soil. It lay entirely fallow, and its spontaneous produce was the common property of the poor and the stranger, the cattle and game. This year of rest was to invigorate the productive powers of the land, as the weekly Sabbath was a refreshment to men and cattle. It commenced immediately after the feast of ingathering, and it was calculated to teach the people, in a remarkable manner, the reality of the presence and providential power of God.

LEVITICUS 25:8-23.

THE JUBILEE.

8-11. *thou shalt number seven sabbaths of years* — This most extraordinary of all civil institutions, which received the name of “Jubilee” from a *Hebrew* word signifying a musical instrument, a horn or trumpet, began on the tenth day of the seventh month, or the great day of atonement, when, by order of the public authorities, the sound of trumpets proclaimed the beginning of the universal redemption. All

prisoners and captives obtained their liberties, slaves were declared free, and debtors were absolved. The land, as on the sabbatic year, was neither sowed nor reaped, but allowed to enjoy with its inhabitants a sabbath of repose; and its natural produce was the common property of all. Moreover, every inheritance throughout the land of Judea was restored to its original owner.

10. *ye shall hallow the fiftieth year* — Much difference of opinion exists as to whether the jubilee was observed on the forty-ninth, or, in round numbers, it is called the fiftieth. The prevailing opinion, both in ancient and modern times, has been in favor of the latter.

12. *ye shall eat the increase thereof out of the field*, etc. — All that the ground yielded spontaneously during that period might be eaten for their necessary subsistence, but no persons were at liberty to hoard or form a private stock in reserve.

13. *ye shall return every man unto his possession*, etc. — Inheritances, from whatever cause, and how frequently soever they had been alienated, came back into the hands of the original proprietors. This law of entail, by which the right heir could never be excluded, was a provision of great wisdom for preserving families and tribes perfectly distinct, and their genealogies faithfully recorded, in order that all might have evidence to establish their right to the ancestral property. Hence the tribe and family of Christ were readily discovered at his birth.

17. *Ye shall not oppress one another, but thou shalt fear thy God* — This, which is the same as ^{<RES>}Leviticus 25:14, related to the sale or purchase of possessions and the duty of paying an honest and equitable regard, on both sides, to the limited period during which the bargain could stand. The object of the legislator was, as far as possible, to maintain the original order of families, and an equality of condition among the people.

21, 22. *I will command my blessing upon you in the sixth year, and it shall bring forth fruit for three years*, etc. — A provision was made, by the special interposition of God, to supply the deficiency of food which would otherwise have resulted from the suspension of all labor during the sabbatic year. The sixth year was to yield a miraculous supply for three continuous years. And the remark is applicable to the year of Jubilee as

well as the sabbatic year. (See allusions to this extraordinary provision in ^{<2419>}2 Kings 19:29 ^{<2374>}Isaiah 37:30). None but a legislator who was conscious of acting under divine authority would have staked his character on so singular an enactment as that of the sabbatic year; and none but a people who had witnessed the fulfillment of the divine promise would have been induced to suspend their agricultural preparations on a recurrence of a periodical Jubilee.

23-28. *The land shall not be sold for ever* — or, “be quite cut off,” as the *Margin* better renders it. The land was God’s, and, in prosecution of an important design, He gave it to the people of His choice, dividing it among their tribes and families — who, however, held it of Him merely as tenants-at-will and had no right or power of disposing of it to strangers. In necessitous circumstances, individuals might effect a temporary sale. But they possessed the right of redeeming it, at *any time*, on payment of an adequate compensation to the present holder; and by the enactments of the Jubilee they recovered it free — so that the land was rendered inalienable. (See an exception to this law, ^{<3721>}Leviticus 27:20).

29-31. *if a man sell a dwelling house in a walled city, then he may redeem it within a whole year after it is sold* — All sales of houses were subject to the same condition. But there was a difference between the houses of villages (which, being connected with agriculture, were treated as parts of the land) and houses possessed by trading people or foreigners in walled towns, which could only be redeemed within the year after the sale; if not then redeemed, these did not revert to the former owner at the Jubilee.

32-34. *Notwithstanding the cities of the Levites* — The Levites, having no possessions but their towns and their houses, the law conferred on them the same privileges that were granted to the lands of the other Israelites. A certain portion of the lands surrounding the Levitical cities was appropriated to them for the pasturage of their cattle and flocks (^{<0650>}Numbers 35:4,5). This was a permanent endowment for the support of the ministry and could not be alienated for any time. The Levites, however, were at liberty to make exchanges among themselves; and a priest might sell his house, garden, and right of pasture to another priest, but not to an Israelite of another tribe (^{<2417>}Jeremiah 41:7-9).

35-38. *if thy brother be waxen poor, ... relieve him* — This was a most benevolent provision for the poor and unfortunate, designed to aid them or alleviate the evils of their condition. Whether a native Israelite or a mere sojourner, his richer neighbor was required to give him food, lodging, and a supply of money without usury. Usury was severely condemned (¹⁹⁵¹Psalm 15:5 ¹⁸⁸⁸Ezekiel 18:8,17), but the prohibition cannot be considered as applicable to the modern practice of men in business, borrowing and lending at legal rates of interest.

39-46. *if thy brother ... be waxen poor, and be sold unto thee, thou shalt not compel him to serve as a bond-servant* — An Israelite might be compelled, through misfortune, not only to mortgage his inheritance, but himself. In the event of his being reduced to this distress, he was to be treated not as a slave, but a hired servant whose engagement was temporary, and who might, through the friendly aid of a relative, be redeemed at any time before the Jubilee. The ransom money was determined on a most equitable principle. Taking account of the number of years from the proposal to redeem and the Jubilee, of the current wages of labor for that time, and multiplying the remaining years by that sum, the amount was to be paid to the master for his redemption. But if no such friendly interposition was made for a Hebrew slave, he continued in servitude till the year of Jubilee, when, as a matter of course, he regained his liberty, as well as his inheritance. Viewed in the various aspects in which it is presented in this chapter, the Jubilee was an admirable institution, and subservient in an eminent degree to uphold the interests of religion, social order, and freedom among the Israelites.

CHAPTER 26

◀BIB LEVITICUS 26:1,2.

OF IDOLATRY.

1. *Ye shall make you no idols* — Idolatry had been previously forbidden (◀BIB Exodus 20:4,5), but the law was repeated here with reference to some particular forms of it that were very prevalent among the neighboring nations.

a standing image — that is, “upright pillar.”

image of stone — that is, an obelisk, inscribed with hieroglyphical and superstitious characters; the former denoting the common and smaller pillars of the Syrians or Canaanites; the latter, pointing to the large and elaborate obelisks which the Egyptians worshipped as guardian divinities, or used as stones of adoration to stimulate religious worship. The Israelites were enjoined to beware of them.

2. *Ye shall keep my sabbaths, and reverence my sanctuary* — Very frequently, in this Book of the Law, the Sabbath and the sanctuary are mentioned as antidotes to idolatry.

◀BIB LEVITICUS 26:3-13.

A BLESSING TO THE OBEDIENT.

3. *If ye walk in my statutes* — In that covenant into which God graciously entered with the people of Israel, He promised to bestow upon them a variety of blessings, so long as they continued obedient to Him as their Almighty Ruler; and in their subsequent history that people found every promise amply fulfilled, in the enjoyment of plenty, peace, a populous country, and victory over all enemies.

4. *I will give you rain in due season, and the land shall yield her increase* — Rain seldom fell in Judea except at two seasons — the former rain at the end of autumn, the seedtime; and the latter rain in spring, before the beginning of harvest (³¹⁵³Jeremiah 5:24).

5. *your threshing shall reach unto the vintage, and the vintage shall reach unto the sowing time*, etc. — The barley harvest in Judea was about the middle of April; the wheat harvest about six weeks after, or in the beginning of June. After the harvest came the vintage, and fruit gathering towards the latter end of July. Moses led the Hebrews to believe that, provided they were faithful to God, there would be no idle time between the harvest and vintage, so great would be the increase. (See ³¹⁹³Amos 9:13). This promise would be very animating to a people who had come from a country where, for three months, they were pent up without being able to walk abroad because the fields were under water.

10. *ye shall eat old store* — Their stock of old corn would be still unexhausted and large when the next harvest brought a new supply.

13. *I have broken the bands of your yoke, and made you go upright* — a metaphorical expression to denote their emancipation from Egyptian slavery.

³¹⁹⁴LEVITICUS 26:14-39.

A CURSE TO THE DISOBEDIENT.

14, 15. *But if ye will not hearken unto me*, etc. — In proportion to the great and manifold privileges bestowed upon the Israelites would be the extent of their national criminality and the severity of their national punishments if they disobeyed.

16. *I will even appoint over you terror* — the falling sickness [PATRICK].

consumption, and the burning ague — Some consider these as symptoms of the same disease — consumption followed by the shivering, burning, and sweating fits that are the usual concomitants of that malady. According to the *Septuagint*, “ague” is “the jaundice,” which disorders the

eyes and produces great depression of spirits. Others, however, consider the word as referring to a scorching wind; no certain explanation can be given.

18. *if ye will not yet for all this hearken unto me, then I will punish you seven times more* — that is, with far more severe and protracted calamities.

19. *I will make your heaven as iron, and your earth as brass* — No figures could have been employed to convey a better idea of severe and long-continued famine.

22. *I will also send wild beasts among you* — This was one of the four judgments threatened (^{<244>}Ezekiel 14:21; see also ^{<1104>}2 Kings 2:4).

your highways shall be desolate — Trade and commerce will be destroyed — freedom and safety will be gone — neither stranger nor native will be found on the roads (^{<2308>}Isaiah 33:8). This is an exact picture of the present state of the Holy Land, which has long lain in a state of desolation, brought on by the sins of the ancient Jews.

26. *ten women shall bake your bread in one oven*, etc. — The bread used in families is usually baked by women, and at home. But sometimes also, in times of scarcity, it is baked in public ovens for want of fuel; and the scarcity predicted here would be so great, that one oven would be sufficient to bake as much as ten women used in ordinary occasions to provide for family use; and even this scanty portion of bread would be distributed by weight (^{<2016>}Ezekiel 4:16).

29. *ye shall eat the flesh of your sons* — The revolting picture was actually exhibited at the siege of Samaria, at the siege of Jerusalem by Nebuchadnezzar (^{<2510>}Lamentations 4:10), and at the destruction of that city by the Romans. (See on ^{<655>}Deuteronomy 28:53).

30. *I will destroy your high places* — Consecrated enclosures on the tops of mountains, or on little hillocks, raised for practising the rites of idolatry.

cut down your images — According to some, those images were made in the form of chariots (^{<1231>}2 Kings 23:11); according to others, they were of a conical form, like small pyramids. Reared in honor of the sun, they were usually placed on a very high situation, to enable the worshippers to have

a better view of the rising sun. They were forbidden to the Israelites, and when set up, ordered to be destroyed.

cast your carcasses upon the carcasses of your idols, etc. — Like the statues of idols, which, when broken, lie neglected and contemned, the Jews during the sieges and subsequent captivity often wanted the rites of sepulture.

31. *I will make your cities waste* — This destruction of its numerous and flourishing cities, which was brought upon Judea through the sins of Israel, took place by the forced removal of the people during, and long after, the captivity. But it is realized to a far greater extent now.

bring your sanctuaries unto desolation, and I will not smell the savor of your sweet odours — the tabernacle and temple, as is evident from the tenor of the subsequent clause, in which God announces that He will not accept or regard their sacrifices.

33. *I will scatter you among the heathen*, etc. — as was done when the elite of the nation were removed into Assyria and placed in various parts of the kingdom.

34. *Then shall the land enjoy her sabbaths, as long as it lieth desolate*, etc. — A long arrear of sabbatic years had accumulated through the avarice and apostasy of the Israelites, who had deprived their land of its appointed season of rest. The number of those sabbatic years seems to have been seventy, as determined by the duration of the captivity. This early prediction is very remarkable, considering that the usual policy of the Assyrian conquerors was to send colonies to cultivate and inhabit their newly acquired provinces.

38. *the land of your enemies shall eat you up*, etc. — On the removal of the ten tribes into captivity, they never returned, and all traces of them were lost.

40-45. *If they shall confess their iniquity*, etc. — This passage holds out the gracious promise of divine forgiveness and favor on their repentance, and their happy restoration to their land, in memory of the covenant made with their fathers (⁴¹¹¹ Romans 2:1-29).

46. *These are the statutes and judgments and laws* — It has been thought by some that the last chapter was originally placed after the twenty-fifth [ADAM CLARKE], while others consider that the next chapter was added as an appendix, in consequence of many people being influenced by the promises and threats of the preceding one, to resolve that they would dedicate themselves and their possessions to the service of God [CALMET].

CHAPTER 27

LEVITICUS 27:1-18.

CONCERNING VOWS.

2-8. *When a man shall make a singular vow*, etc. — Persons have, at all times and in all places, been accustomed to present votive offerings, either from gratitude for benefits received, or in the event of deliverance from apprehended evil. And Moses was empowered, by divine authority, to prescribe the conditions of this voluntary duty.

the persons shall be for the Lord, etc. — better rendered thus: — “According to thy estimation, the persons shall be for the Lord.” Persons might consecrate themselves or their children to the divine service, in some inferior or servile kind of work about the sanctuary (^{CH11} Samuel 3:1). In the event of any change, the persons so devoted had the privilege in their power of redeeming themselves; and this chapter specifies the amount of the redemption money, which the priest had the discretionary power of reducing, as circumstances might seem to require. Those of mature age, between twenty and sixty, being capable of the greatest service, were rated highest; young people, from five till twenty, less, because not so serviceable; infants, though devotable by their parents before birth (^{CH11} Samuel 1:11), could not be offered nor redeemed till a month after birth; old people were valued below the young, but above children; and the poor — in no case freed from payment, in order to prevent the rash formation of vows — were rated according to their means.

9-13. *if it be a beast, whereof men bring an offering unto the Lord* — a clean beast. After it had been vowed, it could neither be employed in common purposes nor exchanged for an equivalent — it must be sacrificed — or if, through some discovered blemish, it was unsuitable for the altar, it might be sold, and the money applied for the sacred service — such as an ass or camel, for instance, had been vowed, it was to be appropriated to the use of the priest at the estimated value, or it might be redeemed by the

person vowing on payment of that value, and the additional fine of a fifth more.

14, 15. *when a man shall sanctify his house to be holy unto the Lord,* etc. — In this case, the house having been valued by the priest and sold, the proceeds of the sale were to be dedicated to the sanctuary. But if the owner wished, on second thought, to redeem it, he might have it by adding a fifth part to the price.

16-24. *if a man shall sanctify unto the Lord some aprt of a field of his possession,* etc. — In the case of acquired property in land, if not redeemed, it returned to the donor at the Jubilee; whereas the part of a hereditary estate, which had been vowed, did not revert to the owner, but remained attached in perpetuity to the sanctuary. The reason for this remarkable difference was to lay every man under an obligation to redeem the property, or stimulate his nearest kinsman to do it, in order to prevent a patrimonial inheritance going out from any family in Israel.

26, 27. *Only the firstling of the beasts* — These, in the case of clean beasts, being consecrated to God by a universal and standing law (^{([Exodus 13:12 34:19](#))}), could not be devoted; and in that of unclean beasts, were subject to the rule mentioned (^{([Leviticus 27:11,12](#))}).

28, 29. *no devoted thing, that a man shall devote unto the Lord of all that he hath, ... shall be sold or redeemed* — This relates to vows of the most solemn kind — the devotee accompanying his vow with a solemn imprecation on himself not to fail in accomplishing his declared purpose.

29. *shall surely be put to death* — This announcement imported not that the person was to be sacrificed or doomed to a violent death; but only that he should remain till death unalterably in the devoted condition. The preceding regulations were evidently designed to prevent rashness in vowing (^{([Ecclesiastes 5:4](#))}) and to encourage serious and considerate reflection in all matters between God and the soul (^{([Luke 21:4](#))}).

30-33. *all the tithe of the land, whether of the seed of the land* — This law gave the sanction of divine authority to an ancient usage (^{([Genesis 14:20 28:22](#))}). The whole produce of the land was subjected to the tithe tribute — it was a yearly rent which the Israelites, as tenants, paid to

God, the owner of the land, and a thank offering they rendered to Him for the bounties of His providence. (See ^{<203B>}Proverbs 3:9 ^{<401L>}1 Corinthians 9:11 ^{<401F>}Galatians 6:6).

32. *whatsoever passeth under the rod*, etc. — This alludes to the mode of taking the tithe of cattle, which were made to pass singly through a narrow gateway, where a person with a rod, dipped in ochre, stood, and counting them, marked the back of every tenth beast, whether male or female, sound or unsound.

34. *These are the commandments*, etc. — The laws contained in this book, for the most part ceremonial, had an important spiritual bearing, the study of which is highly instructive (^{<501F>}Romans 10:4 ^{<501F>}Hebrews 4:2 ^{<502B>}12:18). They imposed a burdensome yoke (^{<4150>}Acts 15:10), but yet in the infantine age of the Church formed the necessary discipline of “a schoolmaster to Christ” [^{<401F>}Galatians 3:24].