

Walk Through the Bible: a Two Year Trek  
Week 10  
Leviticus 1-15

**Key Concepts:** The key concept of this first half of Leviticus is that God offers God's people an orderly manner in which to approach God in worship. While many of us might see the sacrificial system as a legalistic market place in which people "buy" God's favor; that is not what is intended. The worship rituals laid out in these chapters offer ways in which God's people can physically act out their responses to God's grace, just as we do in our worship services (prayers, offerings, communion, hymns). Though the content of the rituals are different, their intent is not.

**Stories:** This section of Leviticus contains both lists of rituals and some stories. Chapters 1-7 are offerings of various kinds. Chapter 8 concerns the ordination of the priests. Chapter 9 tells us about the initiation of Aaron's priesthood. Chapter 10 concerns what happens to those who do not follow the priestly rules (and it is not good). Chapters 11-16 deal with issues of religious cleanliness/uncleanliness.

**Brief Summary of Stories:** We begin with a listing of the offerings which are to be made to the Lord. These offerings consist of Burnt Offerings (1:1-17), Cereal Offerings (2:1-16), Peace Offerings (3:1-17), the Sin Offering (4:1-5:13) and the Guilt Offering (5:14-6:7). The first three of these offerings are voluntary and the final two are required. Specific instructions for sin offerings are given for priests, the general population, rulers and ordinary people (who are given a wide variety of options depending on their economic status). Please note that both fat and blood belong to God. In a deep and profound sense life is contained within them and so they are to be always brought back to God and not carelessly shed.

Beginning in Chapter 8 we read about the dedication of Aaron and his sons as priests and of the Tabernacle itself. The ordination of these men is necessary because if a community is to have ordered worship they need to have people properly set aside for this purpose. They also need a place set aside in which this worship is going to happen (the Tabernacle). There are several interesting aspects to this event. The most notable is that daubing of blood from the sacrifice on the right ears, thumbs and big toes of the priests. Remembering that blood is life and belongs to God, it has been speculated that this daubing gives the priests the right to move between the people and the very presence of God. They are in essence to straddle two worlds. Note as well the use of the number seven in terms of the ordination process... again reminding all of us of the holiness of seven in the creation story. The final step in this process occurs in Chapter 9 as a sacrifice is made for the priests and people in preparation for the institution of the ritual life of the people. Unfortunately in Chapter 10 we read about what befalls those who do not follow the rules.

Chapters 11-16 offer us a look at how one maintains one's ritual/religious cleanliness in real life. Though there has been much speculation about the purpose for dietary laws we are still a bit uncertain. Speculation centers on 1) separating Israel from their neighbors 2) not preying on defenseless animals. The remaining four chapters deal with bodily impurities; those things that come from the body rather than those things (prohibited animals) which might go into a body. Again we are somewhat unclear as to the exact reasons for these practices.

1. What worship rituals help you deepen your relationship with God?
2. How do you see ordination of ministers/elders/deacons today as being similar to and different from the ordination of Aaron and his sons?
3. What is your guess as to why Leviticus offers us specific cleanliness regulations?