

LEVITICUS

Chapter 1

Laws for Burnt Offerings

The LORD called Moses and spoke to him from the tent of meeting, saying, 2 “Speak to the people of Israel and say to them, When any one of you brings an offering to the LORD, you shall bring your offering of livestock from the herd or from the flock. 3 “If his offering is a burnt offering from the herd, he shall offer a male without blemish. He shall bring it to the entrance of the tent of meeting, that he may be accepted before the LORD. 4 He shall lay his hand on the head of the burnt offering, and it shall be accepted for him to make atonement for him. 5 Then he shall kill the bull before the LORD, and Aaron's sons the priests shall bring the blood and throw the blood against the sides of the altar that is at the entrance of the tent of meeting. 6 Then he shall flay the burnt offering and cut it into pieces, 7 and the sons of Aaron the priest shall put fire on the altar and arrange wood on the fire. 8 And Aaron's sons the priests shall arrange the pieces, the head, and the fat, on the wood that is on the fire on the altar; 9 but its entrails and its legs he shall wash with water. And the priest shall burn all of it on the altar, as a burnt offering, a food offering[a] with a pleasing aroma to the LORD. 10 “If his gift for a burnt offering is from the flock, from the sheep or goats, he shall bring a male without blemish, 11 and he shall kill it on the north side of the altar before the LORD, and Aaron's sons the priests shall throw its blood against the sides of the altar. 12 And he shall cut it into pieces, with its head and its fat, and the priest shall arrange them on the wood that is on the fire on the altar, 13 but the entrails and the legs he shall wash with water. And the priest shall offer all of it and burn it on the altar; it is a burnt offering, a food offering with a pleasing aroma to the LORD. 14 “If his offering to the LORD is a burnt offering of birds, then he shall bring his offering of turtledoves or pigeons. 15 And the priest shall bring it to the altar and wring off its head and burn it on the altar. Its blood shall be drained out on the side of the altar. 16 He shall remove its crop with its contents[b] and cast it beside the altar on the east side, in the place for ashes. 17 He shall tear it open by its wings, but shall not sever it completely. And the priest shall burn it on the altar, on the wood that is on the fire. It is a burnt offering, a food offering with a pleasing aroma to the LORD.

1:1 Emphasizes that the contents of Leviticus were given to Moses by God at Mount Sinai. Cf. also the concluding verse (27:34). In more than 50 places it is said that the Lord spoke to Moses. Modern criticism has attributed practically the whole book to priestly legislation written during or after the exile. But this is without objective evidence, is against the repeated claim of the book to be Mosaic, is against the traditional Jewish view, and runs counter to other OT and NT witness (Ro 10:5). Many items in Leviticus are now seen to be best explained in terms of a second-millennium B.C. date, which is also the most likely time for Moses to have written the Pentateuch. There is no convincing reason not to take at face value the many references to Moses and his work. (CSB)

The LORD called Moses. Moses wrote Lv under divine inspiration. Ancient Israelites knew Lv as “Now He (God) Called,” a name that emphasized God’s actions instead of the ceremonial rites performed by Levites (“Leviticus” comes from the LXX). God continues the dialogue with Moses begun at the burning bush (Ex 3), beginning some 33 times with “the LORD spoke to Moses” (e.g., 4:1; 5:14; 8:1; 18:1). (TLSB)

Tent of Meeting. The tabernacle, where God met with Israel. (CSB)

Consecrated portable tent where God dwelled among His people. (TLSB)

The first verse of Leviticus makes clear that the book is the sequel to the book of Exodus. Moses' second book ends with Moses setting up the tabernacle and the cloud of the Lord's presence appearing over it. At the very beginning of Leviticus the Lord calls to Moses from the Tent of Meeting, that is, the tent in the tabernacle complex where the Ark of the Covenant was housed. (PBC)

1:2 *brings an offering.* The Hebrew word for "offering" used here comes from the word translated "brings." An "offering" is something that someone "brings" to God as a gift (most offerings were voluntary, such as the burnt offering). *Corban* is the word for "offering" and is used in Mk 7:11, where Mark also translates it "gift." (CSB)

Part of the household and representative of it. Israelites brought to the Lord the firstborn of their animals (27:26) and tithed to Him (27:32). Archaeological discoveries show that animals offered by the Israelites were also offered by other nations. However, Canaanites sacrificed donkeys at Ugarit, Philistines had ritual burials for dogs, and Greeks sacrificed dogs, horses, and pigs. (TLSB)

1:3 *burnt offering.* See further priestly regulations in 6:8–13. A burnt offering was offered every morning and evening for all Israel (Ex 29:39–42). Double burnt offerings were brought on the Sabbath (Nu 28:9–10) and extra ones on feast days (Nu 28–29). In addition, anyone could offer special burnt offerings to express devotion to the Lord. (CSB)

male. The burnt offering had to be a male animal because of its greater value, and also perhaps because it was thought to better represent vigor and fertility. It was usually a young sheep or goat (for the average individual), but bulls (for the wealthy) and doves or pigeons (for the poor) were also specified. (CSB)

without blemish. The animal had to be unblemished (cf. Mal 1:8). As in all offerings, the offerer was to lay his hand on the head of the animal to express identification between himself and the animal (16:21), whose death would then be accepted in "atonement" (v. 4). The blood was sprinkled on the sides of the great altar (located outside the tabernacle—later the temple—in the eastern half of the courtyard), where the fire of sacrifice was never to go out (6:13). The whole sacrifice was to be burned up (v. 9), including the head, legs, fat and inner organs. It is therefore sometimes called a holocaust offering (*holo* means "whole," and *caust* means "burnt"). When a bull was offered, however, the officiating priest could keep its hide (7:8). The burnt offering may have been the usual sacrifice offered by the patriarchs. It was the most comprehensive in its meaning. Its Hebrew name means "going up," perhaps symbolizing worship and prayer as its aroma ascended to the Lord (v. 17). The completeness of its burning also speaks of dedication on the part of the worshiper. (CSB)

Animals presented before God must be perfect, as He is perfect (22:20–25). "They were not called sacrifice because they merited the forgiveness of sins before God, but because they merited the forgiveness of sins according to the righteousness of the Law, so that those for whom they were made might not be excluded from that commonwealth <from the people of Israel>. Therefore, for a trespass, the sacrifices were called sin offerings and burnt offerings" (Ap XXIV 21). Animal sacrifices were commanded by God as a precursor to the ultimate sacrifice of Jesus Christ at Calvary (1Pt 1:18–19). "We teach that the sacrifice of Christ dying on the cross has been enough for the sins of the whole world. There is no need for other sacrifices, as though Christ's sacrifice were not enough for our sins. So people are justified not because of any other sacrifices, but because of this one sacrifice of Christ, if they believe that they have been redeemed by this sacrifice" (Ap XIII 8). (TLSB)

entrance to the Tent of Meeting. Where the altar of burnt offering was (see Ex 40:29). (CSB)

accepted before the LORD. See Ro 12:1; Php 4:18. (CSB)

1:4 *lay his hand on.* Vouched that the animal belonged to the person presenting the sacrifice and could be used on his behalf to secure God's approval and acceptance. (TLSB)

1:5 Only after the offerer killed the animal (symbolizing substitution of a perfect animal sacrifice for a sinful human life) did the priestly work begin. (CSB)

Priestly work began once the offerer slit the throat of his sacrifice. The sacrificial blood was collected in a basin and applied to the altar. (TLSB)

throw...it against the sides of the altar. See Ex 24:6; Heb 9:19–21. (CSB)

A priest sprinkled the sacrificial blood on the sides of the altar in the rite of atonement: the animal's death atoned for the life of the offerer. (TLSB)

1:6–7 Before the sacrifice was placed on the altar for total consumption by fire, the priest removed the skin and cut it into pieces. (TLSB)

altar. Most holy; where God met His people each morning and evening (Ex 29:38–43). (TLSB)

1:8 *the fat.* Many pagan religions believed that an animal's power and strength were found in the fat and blood once the animal was sacrificed to their deities. To overturn this idea, God reserved the fat for Himself (3:16) and designated the blood for atonement (17:11). An Israelite found guilty of eating fat or drinking blood was "cut off from his people" (7:25–27). (TLSB)

1:9 *wash.* In the butchering process, fecal material, blood, or even dirt may end up on the sacrifice. Thorough washing was necessary before the offering was incinerated on God's holy altar. Uncleanliness desecrated God's altar. (TLSB)

food offering. Most assuredly, God does not eat in the sense that we eat. The altar fire turns the sacrifice into smoke, which ascends into God's heavenly domain. (TLSB)

1:9, 13, 17 *aroma pleasing to the LORD.* The OT sacrifices foreshadowed Christ, who was a "fragrant offering" (Eph 5:2; cf. Php 4:18). (CSB)

Indicates God's acceptance of the offering and, therefore, acceptance of the offerer. Unlike pagan deities, God offers forgiveness. With sacrifices, people tried to manipulate these deities into providing rain, bringing forth abundant crops, or instilling power and strength.(TLSB)

1:10–17 Additional ordinances for burnt offerings, including sheep, goats, and birds. (TLSB)

1:10 *male without blemish.* Males were less valuable to breeding stock because only one male was needed to populate a herd. Moreover, male animals were the head of the flock or herd and as such could represent the male head of the Israelite family for sacrificial purposes. (CSB)

1:12 The head represented the whole animal and the person who presented it. (TLSB)

1:14 *birds.* Three categories of sacrifices are mentioned: (1) herds (vv. 3–9), (2) flocks (vv. 10–13) and (3) birds (vv. 14–17). Sacrifices of birds were allowed for the poor (see 5:7; 12:8; Lk 2:24). (CSB)

turtledoves or pigeons. In His grace, God provided a less expensive sacrifice for those of poorer means. (TLSB)

1:16 *crop*. Because the crop of the bird was unclean and could not be offered in sacrifices, it was placed in an ash heap on the east side of the altar. The ash heap was cleaned up every morning (6:10–11). (TLSB)

1:1–17 In His grace, God provides a means through which He can “dwell” among a sinful people: the sacrifice of animals on behalf of the people. This priestly system culminates in the atoning sacrifice of Jesus Christ. Today just as the Israelites faithfully confessed their sins and prayed to the Lord, present your confession of sins and prayers of repentance and faith before Him in the name of “the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world!” (Jn 1:29). • Almighty Father, may we always rejoice in Your abundant grace, through Christ, our Lord. Amen. (TLSB)