



LEVITICUS

Read Leviticus 1

“Tent of meeting” refers to the wilderness sanctuary. It is also called the tabernacle, contained within a portable tent. In Leviticus there is very little narrative; a better description would be *Heilsgesetz* (sacred and saving law). The early chapters of Leviticus deal with the ritual of sacrifices to be offered by the Israelites. A sacrifice is a gift to the deity. In a burnt offering the victim is totally consumed by fire. Only bovines (bulls, cows, calves) and ovines (sheep, lambs, goats, kids) are suitable as sacrificial victims. The purpose of the burnt offering is to render glory to God.

Reflect: Sacrifice evolves from a covenant relationship with God and it symbolizes our commitment to God.

Pray: Pray that we may be aware of the profound significance of sacrifice as a reminder of the covenant relationship.

Act: Our actions must always be consonant with our personal relationship with God.

The Burnt Offering

1 The LORD summoned Moses and spoke to him from the tent of meeting, saying: **2** Speak to the people of Israel and say to them: When any of you bring an offering of livestock to the LORD, you shall bring your offering from the herd or from the flock.

3 If the offering is a burnt offering from the herd, you shall offer a male without blemish; you shall bring it to the entrance of the tent of meeting, for acceptance in your behalf before the LORD. **4** You shall lay your hand on the head of the burnt offering, and it shall be acceptable in your behalf as atonement for you. **5** The bull shall be slaughtered before the LORD; and Aaron’s sons the priests shall offer the blood, dashing the blood against all sides of the altar that is at the entrance of the tent of meeting. **6** The burnt offering shall be flayed and cut up into its parts. **7** The sons of the priest Aaron shall put fire on the altar and arrange wood on the fire. **8** Aaron’s sons the priests shall arrange the parts, with the head and the suet, on the wood that is on the fire on the altar; **9** but its entrails and its legs shall be washed with water. Then the priest shall turn the whole into smoke on the altar as a burnt offering, an offering by fire of pleasing odor to the LORD.

10 If your gift for a burnt offering is from the flock, from the sheep or goats, your offering shall be a male without blemish. **11** It shall be slaughtered on the north side of the altar before the LORD, and Aaron’s sons the priests shall dash its blood against all sides of the altar. **12** It shall be cut up into its parts, with its head and its suet, and the priest shall arrange them on the wood that is on the fire on the altar; **13** but the entrails and the legs shall be washed with water. Then the priest shall offer the whole and turn it into smoke on the altar; it is a

Read Leviticus 2–3

A grain offering is an offering of well-being, also called a communion sacrifice, because it is accompanied by a sacred banquet. A grain offering would be cooked, unleavened semolina (gritty, coarse particles of wheat). This type of offering is fitting for people engaged in agriculture. The offering is seasoned with salt, a symbol of covenant relationship. Salt not only preserves and purifies but also signifies the perpetuity of the covenant. The grain offering does not serve for expiation, but is offered in fulfillment of a vow.

Reflect: The grain offering symbolizes the dedication of our lives and labors to God. Our covenant with God should be as permanent as the sacrifice seasoned with salt.

Pray: Pray that our sacrifice may signify not only an end to warfare but also a harmonious relationship between God and human beings.

Act: Act in such a way as to be on guard never to violate our covenant obligations.

burnt offering, an offering by fire of pleasing odor to the LORD.

14 If your offering to the LORD is a burnt offering of birds, you shall choose your offering from turtledoves or pigeons. ¹⁵ The priest shall bring it to the altar and wring off its head, and turn it into smoke on the altar; and its blood shall be drained out against the side of the altar. ¹⁶ He shall remove its crop with its contents^a and throw it at the east side of the altar, in the place for ashes. ¹⁷ He shall tear it open by its wings without severing it. Then the priest shall turn it into smoke on the altar, on the wood that is on the fire; it is a burnt offering, an offering by fire of pleasing odor to the LORD.

Grain Offerings

2 When anyone presents a grain offering to the LORD, the offering shall be of choice flour; the worshiper shall pour oil on it, and put frankincense on it, ² and bring it to Aaron's sons the priests. After taking from it a handful of the choice flour and oil, with all its frankincense, the priest shall turn this token portion into smoke on the altar, an offering by fire of pleasing odor to the LORD. ³ And what is left of the grain offering shall be for Aaron and his sons, a most holy part of the offerings by fire to the LORD.

4 When you present a grain offering baked in the oven, it shall be of choice flour: unleavened cakes mixed with oil, or unleavened wafers spread with oil. ⁵ If your offering is grain prepared on a griddle, it shall be of choice flour mixed with oil, unleavened; ⁶ break it in pieces, and pour oil on it; it is a grain offering. ⁷ If your offering is grain prepared in a pan, it shall be made of choice flour in oil. ⁸ You shall bring to the LORD the grain offering that is prepared in any of these ways; and when it is presented to the priest, he shall take it to the altar. ⁹ The priest shall remove from the grain offering its token portion and turn this into smoke on the altar, an offering by fire of pleasing odor to the LORD. ¹⁰ And what is left of the grain offering shall be for Aaron and his sons; it is a most holy part of the offerings by fire to the LORD.

11 No grain offering that you bring to the LORD shall be made with leaven, for you must not turn any leaven or honey into smoke as an offering by fire to the LORD. ¹² You may bring them to the LORD as an offering of choice products, but they shall not be offered on the altar for a pleasing odor. ¹³ You shall not omit from your grain offerings the salt of the covenant with your God; with all your offerings you shall offer salt.

14 If you bring a grain offering of first fruits to the LORD, you shall bring as the grain offering of your first fruits coarse new grain from fresh ears, parched with

^a Meaning of Heb uncertain

fire. ¹⁵ You shall add oil to it and lay frankincense on it; it is a grain offering. ¹⁶ And the priest shall turn a token portion of it into smoke—some of the coarse grain and oil with all its frankincense; it is an offering by fire to the LORD.

Offerings of Well-Being

3 If the offering is a sacrifice of well-being, if you offer an animal of the herd, whether male or female, you shall offer one without blemish before the LORD. ² You shall lay your hand on the head of the offering and slaughter it at the entrance of the tent of meeting; and Aaron's sons the priests shall dash the blood against all sides of the altar. ³ You shall offer from the sacrifice of well-being, as an offering by fire to the LORD, the fat that covers the entrails and all the fat that is around the entrails; ⁴ the two kidneys with the fat that is on them at the loins, and the appendage of the liver, which he shall remove with the kidneys. ⁵ Then Aaron's sons shall turn these into smoke on the altar, with the burnt offering that is on the wood on the fire, as an offering by fire of pleasing odor to the LORD.

⁶ If your offering for a sacrifice of well-being to the LORD is from the flock, male or female, you shall offer one without blemish. ⁷ If you present a sheep as your offering, you shall bring it before the LORD ⁸ and lay your hand on the head of the offering. It

shall be slaughtered before the tent of meeting, and Aaron's sons shall dash its blood against all sides of the altar. ⁹ You shall present its fat from the sacrifice of well-being, as an offering by fire to the LORD: the whole broad tail, which shall be removed close to the backbone, the fat that covers the entrails, and all the fat that is around the entrails; ¹⁰ the two kidneys with the fat that is on them at the loins, and the appendage of the liver, which you shall remove with the kidneys. ¹¹ Then the priest shall turn these into smoke on the altar as a food offering by fire to the LORD.

¹² If your offering is a goat, you shall bring it before the LORD ¹³ and lay your hand on its head; it shall be slaughtered before the tent of meeting; and the sons of Aaron shall dash its blood against all sides of the altar. ¹⁴ You shall present as your offering from it, as an offering by fire to the LORD, the fat that covers the entrails, and all the fat that is around the entrails; ¹⁵ the two kidneys with the fat that is on them at the loins, and the appendage of the liver, which you shall remove with the kidneys. ¹⁶ Then the priest shall turn these into smoke on the altar as a food offering by fire for a pleasing odor.

All fat is the LORD's. ¹⁷ It shall be a perpetual statute throughout your generations, in all your settlements: you must not eat any fat or any blood.

Sin Offerings

4 The LORD spoke to Moses, saying, ² Speak to the people of Israel, saying: When anyone sins unintentionally in any of the LORD's commandments about things not to be done, and does any one of them:

³ If it is the anointed priest who sins, thus bringing guilt on the people, he shall offer for the sin that he has committed a bull of the herd without blemish as a sin offering to the LORD. ⁴ He shall bring the bull to the entrance of the tent of meeting before the LORD and lay his hand on the head of the bull; the bull shall be slaughtered before the LORD. ⁵ The anointed priest shall take some of the blood of the bull and bring it into the tent of meeting. ⁶ The priest shall dip his finger in the blood and sprinkle some of the blood seven times before the LORD in front of the curtain of the sanctuary. ⁷ The priest shall

Read Leviticus 4

A sin offering is made in relation to the commission of some fault. It is more properly called a purification offering. It is not to atone for any kind of sin, but is used to cleanse the sanctuary of impurity. Blood acts as a detergent for purging the sanctuary. The fault that requires this offering is not necessarily a moral fault but can also relate to ritual uncleanness. The title “anointed priest” was used in reference to the high priest before the exile (586 BC). The number seven, frequently used in the Bible, is the number of completion.

Reflect: In addition to our individual responsibilities, we are also responsible for the community in which we live and work.

Pray: Pray that we may avoid, to the extent possible, incurring guilt inadvertently.

Act: Be willing to take steps to correct any harm you may have done, even inadvertently.

put some of the blood on the horns of the altar of fragrant incense that is in the tent of meeting before the LORD; and the rest of the blood of the bull he shall pour out at the base of the altar of burnt offering, which is at the entrance of the tent of meeting. ⁸ He shall remove all the fat from the bull of sin offering; the fat that covers the entrails and all the fat that is around the entrails; ⁹ the two kidneys with the fat that is on them at the loins; and the appendage of the liver, which he shall remove with the kidneys, ¹⁰ just as these are removed from the ox of the sacrifice of well-being. The priest shall turn them into smoke upon the altar of burnt offering. ¹¹ But the skin of the bull and all its flesh, as well as its head, its legs, its entrails, and its dung—¹² all the rest of the bull—he shall carry out to a clean place outside the camp, to the ash heap, and shall burn it on a wood fire; at the ash heap it shall be burned.

¹³ If the whole congregation of Israel errs unintentionally and the matter escapes the notice of the assembly, and they do any one of the things that by the LORD’s commandments ought not to be done and incur guilt; ¹⁴ when the sin that they have committed becomes known, the assembly shall offer a bull of the herd for a sin offering and bring it before the tent of meeting. ¹⁵ The elders of the congregation shall lay their hands on the head of the bull before the LORD, and the bull shall be slaughtered before the LORD. ¹⁶ The anointed priest shall bring some of the blood of the bull into the tent of meeting, ¹⁷ and the priest shall dip his finger in the blood and sprinkle it seven times before the LORD, in front of the curtain. ¹⁸ He shall put some of the blood on the horns of the altar that is before the LORD in the tent of meeting; and the rest of the blood he shall pour out at the base of the altar of burnt offering that is at the entrance of the tent of meeting. ¹⁹ He shall remove all its fat and turn it into smoke on the altar. ²⁰ He shall do with the bull just as is done with the bull of sin offering; he shall do the same with this. The priest shall make atonement for them, and they shall be forgiven. ²¹ He shall carry the bull outside the camp, and burn it as he burned the first bull; it is the sin offering for the assembly.

²² When a ruler sins, doing unintentionally any one of all the things that by commandments of the LORD his God ought not to be done and incurs guilt, ²³ once the sin that he has committed is made known to him, he shall bring as his offering a male goat without blemish. ²⁴ He shall lay his hand on the head of the goat; it shall be slaughtered at the spot where the burnt offering is slaughtered before the LORD; it is a sin offering. ²⁵ The priest shall take some of the blood of the sin offering

with his finger and put it on the horns of the altar of burnt offering, and pour out the rest of its blood at the base of the altar of burnt offering. ²⁶All its fat he shall turn into smoke on the altar, like the fat of the sacrifice of well-being. Thus the priest shall make atonement on his behalf for his sin, and he shall be forgiven.

²⁷If anyone of the ordinary people among you sins unintentionally in doing any one of the things that by the LORD's commandments ought not to be done and incurs guilt, ²⁸when the sin that you have committed is made known to you, you shall bring a female goat without blemish as your offering, for the sin that you have committed. ²⁹You shall lay your hand on the head of the sin offering; and the sin offering shall be slaughtered at the place of the burnt offering. ³⁰The priest shall take some of its blood with his finger and put it on the horns of the altar of burnt offering, and he shall pour out the rest of its blood at the base of the altar. ³¹He shall remove all

its fat, as the fat is removed from the offering of well-being, and the priest shall turn it into smoke on the altar for a pleasing odor to the LORD. Thus the priest shall make atonement on your behalf, and you shall be forgiven.

³²If the offering you bring as a sin offering is a sheep, you shall bring a female without blemish. ³³You shall lay your hand on the head of the sin offering; and it shall be slaughtered as a sin offering at the spot where the burnt offering is slaughtered. ³⁴The priest shall take some of the blood of the sin offering with his finger and put it on the horns of the altar of burnt offering, and pour out the rest of its blood at the base of the altar. ³⁵You shall remove all its fat, as the fat of the sheep is removed from the sacrifice of well-being, and the priest shall turn it into smoke on the altar, with the offerings by fire to the LORD. Thus the priest shall make atonement on your behalf for the sin that you have committed, and you shall be forgiven.

Read Leviticus 5

With regard to sin offerings for special cases, an indigent person may substitute two turtledoves or two pigeons, one for a sin offering and one for a burnt offering. Cheating inadvertently requires that a guilt offering ("restitution offering") be made. An offering for an offense and a monetary computation is possible. A confession of fault must be verbalized, just as a curse must be pronounced.

Reflect: Bear in mind that the guilt offering represents reparation for damages caused by the fault committed.

Pray: May we endeavor to avoid even inadvertent offenses.

Act: Act in such a way that our guilt offering will encourage us always to be alert to our human failings.

5 When any of you sin in that you have heard a public adjuration to testify and—though able to testify as one who has seen or learned of the matter—do not speak up, you are subject to punishment. ²Or when any of you touch any unclean thing—whether the carcass of an unclean beast or the carcass of unclean livestock or the carcass of an unclean swarming thing—and are unaware of it, you have become unclean, and are guilty. ³Or when you touch human uncleanness—any uncleanness by which one can become unclean—and are unaware of it, when you come to know it, you shall be guilty. ⁴Or when any of you utter aloud a rash oath for a bad or a good purpose, whatever people utter in an oath, and are unaware of it, when you come to know it, you shall in any of these be guilty. ⁵When you realize your guilt in any of these, you shall confess the sin that you have committed. ⁶And you shall bring to the LORD, as your penalty for the sin that you have committed, a female from the flock, a sheep or a goat, as a sin offering; and the priest shall make atonement on your behalf for your sin.

⁷But if you cannot afford a sheep, you shall bring to the LORD, as your penalty for the sin that you have committed, two turtledoves or two pigeons, one for a sin offering and the other for a burnt offering. ⁸You shall bring them to the priest, who shall offer first the one for the

sin offering, wringing its head at the nape without severing it. ⁹ He shall sprinkle some of the blood of the sin offering on the side of the altar, while the rest of the blood shall be drained out at the base of the altar; it is a sin offering. ¹⁰ And the second he shall offer for a burnt offering according to the regulation. Thus the priest shall make atonement on your behalf for the sin that you have committed, and you shall be forgiven.

¹¹ But if you cannot afford two turtle-doves or two pigeons, you shall bring as your offering for the sin that you have committed one-tenth of an ephah of choice flour for a sin offering; you shall not put oil on it or lay frankincense on it, for it is a sin offering. ¹² You shall bring it to the priest, and the priest shall scoop up a handful of it as its memorial portion, and turn this into smoke on the altar, with the offerings by fire to the LORD; it is a sin offering. ¹³ Thus the priest shall make atonement on your behalf for whichever of these sins you have committed, and you shall be forgiven. Like the grain offering, the rest shall be for the priest.

Offerings with Restitution

¹⁴ The LORD spoke to Moses, saying: ¹⁵ When any of you commit a trespass and sin unintentionally in any of the holy things of the LORD, you shall bring, as your guilt offering to the LORD, a ram without blemish from the flock, convertible into silver by the sanctuary shekel; it is a guilt offering. ¹⁶ And you shall make restitution for the holy thing in which you were remiss, and shall add one-fifth to it and give it to the priest. The priest shall make atonement on your behalf with the ram of the guilt offering, and you shall be forgiven.

¹⁷ If any of you sin without knowing it, doing any of the things that by the LORD's commandments ought not to be done, you have incurred guilt, and are subject to punishment. ¹⁸ You shall bring to the priest a ram without blemish from the flock, or the equivalent, as a guilt offering; and the priest shall make atonement on your behalf for the error that you committed unintentionally, and you shall be forgiven. ¹⁹ It is a guilt offering; you have incurred guilt before the LORD.

Read Leviticus 6

Additional prescriptions for various types of sacrifices form the substance of this chapter. The daily burnt offering is offered in the morning and again in the early evening.

Reflect: Reflect on the meaning of the fire that is kept burning on the altar. It represents perpetual dedication. The worship of God never ceases. At the beginning of each day, a resolution to serve the Lord is most appropriate.

Pray: Pray that, like the daily offering of fire, our dedication to God may never cease.

Act: Make your resolution to serve the Lord evident in all your actions.

6^a The LORD spoke to Moses, saying: ² When any of you sin and commit a trespass against the LORD by deceiving a neighbor in a matter of a deposit or a pledge, or by robbery, or if you have defrauded a neighbor, ³ or have found something lost and lied about it—if you swear falsely regarding any of the various things that one may do and sin thereby—⁴ when you have sinned and realize your guilt, and would restore what you took by robbery or by fraud or the deposit that was committed to you, or the lost thing that you found, ⁵ or anything else about which you have sworn falsely, you shall repay the principal amount and shall add one-fifth to it. You shall pay it to its owner when you realize your guilt. ⁶ And you shall bring to the priest, as your guilt offering to the LORD, a ram without blemish from the flock, or its equivalent, for a guilt offering. ⁷ The priest shall make atonement on your behalf before the LORD, and you shall be forgiven for any of the things that one may do and incur guilt thereby.

Instructions concerning Sacrifices

^{8^b} The LORD spoke to Moses, saying: ⁹ Command Aaron and his sons, saying: This is the ritual of the

^a Ch 5.20 in Heb

^b Ch 6.1 in Heb

burnt offering. The burnt offering itself shall remain on the hearth upon the altar all night until the morning, while the fire on the altar shall be kept burning. ¹⁰The priest shall put on his linen vestments after putting on his linen undergarments next to his body; and he shall take up the ashes to which the fire has reduced the burnt offering on the altar, and place them beside the altar. ¹¹Then he shall take off his vestments and put on other garments, and carry the ashes out to a clean place outside the camp. ¹²The fire on the altar shall be kept burning; it shall not go out. Every morning the priest shall add wood to it, lay out the burnt offering on it, and turn into smoke the fat pieces of the offerings of well-being. ¹³A perpetual fire shall be kept burning on the altar; it shall not go out.

¹⁴This is the ritual of the grain offering: The sons of Aaron shall offer it before the LORD, in front of the altar. ¹⁵They shall take from it a handful of the choice flour and oil of the grain offering, with all the frankincense that is on the offering, and they shall turn its memorial portion into smoke on the altar as a pleasing odor to the LORD. ¹⁶Aaron and his sons shall eat what is left of it; it shall be eaten as unleavened cakes in a holy place; in the court of the tent of meeting they shall eat it. ¹⁷It shall not be baked with leaven. I have given it as their portion of my offerings by fire; it is most holy, like the sin offering and the guilt offering. ¹⁸Every male among the descendants of Aaron shall eat of it, as their perpetual due throughout your generations, from the LORD's offerings by fire; anything that touches them shall become holy.

¹⁹The LORD spoke to Moses, saying: ²⁰This is the offering that Aaron and his sons shall offer to the LORD on the day when he is anointed: one-tenth of an ephah of choice flour as a regular offering, half of it in the morning and half in the evening. ²¹It shall be made with oil on a griddle; you shall bring it well soaked, as a grain offering of baked^a pieces, and you shall present

it as a pleasing odor to the LORD. ²²And so the priest, anointed from among Aaron's descendants as a successor, shall prepare it; it is the LORD's—a perpetual due—to be turned entirely into smoke. ²³Every grain offering of a priest shall be wholly burned; it shall not be eaten.

²⁴The LORD spoke to Moses, saying: ²⁵Speak to Aaron and his sons, saying: This is the ritual of the sin offering. The sin offering shall be slaughtered before the LORD at the spot where the burnt offering is slaughtered; it is most holy. ²⁶The priest who offers it as a sin offering shall eat of it; it shall be eaten in a holy place, in the court of the tent of meeting. ²⁷Whatever touches its flesh shall become holy; and when any of its blood is spattered on a garment, you shall wash the bespattered part in a holy place. ²⁸An earthen vessel in which it was boiled shall be broken; but if it is boiled in a bronze vessel, that shall be scoured and rinsed in water. ²⁹Every male among the priests shall eat of it; it is most holy. ³⁰But no sin offering shall be eaten from which any blood is brought into the tent of meeting for atonement in the holy place; it shall be burned with fire.

7 This is the ritual of the guilt offering. It is most holy; ²at the spot where the burnt offering is slaughtered, they shall slaughter the guilt offering, and its blood shall be dashed against all sides of the altar. ³All its fat shall be offered: the broad tail, the fat that covers the entrails, ⁴the two kidneys with the fat that is on them at the loins, and the appendage of the liver, which shall be removed with the kidneys. ⁵The priest shall turn them into smoke on the altar as an offering by fire to the LORD; it is a guilt offering. ⁶Every male among the priests shall eat of it; it shall be eaten in a holy place; it is most holy.

⁷The guilt offering is like the sin offering, there is the same ritual for them; the priest who makes atonement with it shall have it. ⁸So, too, the priest who offers anyone's burnt offering shall keep the skin of

^a Meaning of Heb uncertain

Read Leviticus 7

There were three distinct species of offerings of well-being: thanksgiving (*todah*), votive offerings, and freewill offerings. Leavened bread, the loaves not burned on the altar, was consumed at the communion meal following the sacrifice. A wave offering, also called an elevation offering, transferred the object being offered from the offerer to the deity who was represented by the priest.

Reflect: Consider the connection between offerings of well-being and the first letter of John (3:18)—that is, love not simply in words but also in deeds.

Pray: Pray that our offerings may emerge from sincere hearts.

Act: Let us act in such a way that our well-being offerings are compatible with our daily attitudes.

the burnt offering that he has offered. ⁹ And every grain offering baked in the oven, and all that is prepared in a pan or on a griddle, shall belong to the priest who offers it. ¹⁰ But every other grain offering, mixed with oil or dry, shall belong to all the sons of Aaron equally.

Further Instructions

¹¹ This is the ritual of the sacrifice of the offering of well-being that one may offer to the LORD. ¹² If you offer it for thanksgiving, you shall offer with the thank offering unleavened cakes mixed with oil, unleavened wafers spread with oil, and cakes of choice flour well soaked in oil. ¹³ With your thanksgiving sacrifice of well-being you shall bring your offering with cakes of leavened bread. ¹⁴ From this you shall offer one cake from each offering, as a gift to the LORD; it shall belong to the priest who dashes the blood of the offering of well-being. ¹⁵ And the flesh of your thanksgiving sacrifice of well-being shall be eaten on the day it is offered; you shall not leave any of it until morning. ¹⁶ But if the sacrifice you offer is a votive offering or a freewill offering, it shall be eaten on the day that you offer your sacrifice, and what is left of it shall be eaten the next day; ¹⁷ but what is left of the flesh of the sacrifice shall be burned up on the third day. ¹⁸ If any of the flesh of your sacrifice of well-being is eaten on the third day, it shall not be acceptable, nor shall it be credited to the one who offers it; it shall be an abomination, and the one who eats of it shall incur guilt.

¹⁹ Flesh that touches any unclean thing shall not be eaten; it shall be burned up. As for other flesh, all who are clean may eat such flesh. ²⁰ But those who eat flesh from the LORD's sacrifice of well-being while in a state of uncleanness shall be cut off from their kin. ²¹ When any one of you touches any unclean thing—human uncleanness or an unclean animal or any unclean creature—and then eats flesh from the LORD's sacrifice of well-being, you shall be cut off from your kin.

²² The LORD spoke to Moses, saying: ²³ Speak to the people of Israel, saying: You shall eat no fat of ox or sheep or goat. ²⁴ The fat of an animal that died or was torn by wild animals may be put to any other use, but you must not eat it. ²⁵ If any one of you eats the fat from an animal of which an offering by fire may be made to the LORD, you who eat it shall be cut off from your kin. ²⁶ You must not eat any blood whatever, either of bird or of animal, in any of your settlements. ²⁷ Any one of you who eats any blood shall be cut off from your kin.

²⁸ The LORD spoke to Moses, saying: ²⁹ Speak to the people of Israel, saying: Any one of you who would offer

to the LORD your sacrifice of well-being must yourself bring to the LORD your offering from your sacrifice of well-being.³⁰ Your own hands shall bring the LORD's offering by fire; you shall bring the fat with the breast, so that the breast may be raised as an elevation offering before the LORD.³¹ The priest shall turn the fat into smoke on the altar, but the breast shall belong to Aaron and his sons.³² And the right thigh from your sacrifices of well-being you shall give to the priest as an offering;³³ the one among the sons of Aaron who offers the blood and fat of the offering of well-being shall have the right thigh for a portion.³⁴ For I have taken the breast of the elevation offering, and the thigh that is offered, from the people of Israel, from their sacrifices of well-being, and

have given them to Aaron the priest and to his sons, as a perpetual due from the people of Israel.³⁵ This is the portion allotted to Aaron and to his sons from the offerings made by fire to the LORD, once they have been brought forward to serve the LORD as priests;³⁶ these the LORD commanded to be given them, when he anointed them, as a perpetual due from the people of Israel throughout their generations.

³⁷ This is the ritual of the burnt offering, the grain offering, the sin offering, the guilt offering, the offering of ordination, and the sacrifice of well-being,³⁸ which the LORD commanded Moses on Mount Sinai, when he commanded the people of Israel to bring their offerings to the LORD, in the wilderness of Sinai.

Read Leviticus 8

The text describes the ordination of Aaron and his sons. This ritual, a tripartite ceremony consisting of lustration, investiture, and anointing, is to be the model for all future ordinations. Note that Moses is dominant in this ordination scene. This is an indication of the superiority of prophet over priest. The Urim and Thummim worn by the high priest inside the breastpiece were lots cast by the high priest. Their purpose was to determine God's decision in ambiguous or uncertain matters. The ephod is a garment in the shape of an apron, suspended from the shoulders of the high priest. Anointing in the ancient Near East stood for a change in the status of a person or an object.

Reflect: The ordination ceremony illustrates the divine summons of human beings who are called to leadership roles. Note that perfection is not required.

Pray: Pray that all religious leaders may perform their duties with care and concern.

Act: As a member of a community, always be conscious of the necessity to set a positive tone for those around you.

The Rites of Ordination

8 The LORD spoke to Moses, saying:² Take Aaron and his sons with him, the vestments, the anointing oil, the bull of sin offering, the two rams, and the basket of unleavened bread;³ and assemble the whole congregation at the entrance of the tent of meeting.⁴ And Moses did as the LORD commanded him. When the congregation was assembled at the entrance of the tent of meeting,⁵ Moses said to the congregation, "This is what the LORD has commanded to be done."

⁶ Then Moses brought Aaron and his sons forward, and washed them with water.⁷ He put the tunic on him, fastened the sash around him, clothed him with the robe, and put the ephod on him. He then put the decorated band of the ephod around him, tying the ephod to him with it.⁸ He placed the breastpiece on him, and in the breastpiece he put the Urim and the Thummim.⁹ And he set the turban on his head, and on the turban, in front, he set the golden ornament, the holy crown, as the LORD commanded Moses.

¹⁰ Then Moses took the anointing oil and anointed the tabernacle and all that was in it, and consecrated them.¹¹ He sprinkled some of it on the altar seven times, and anointed the altar and all its utensils, and the basin and its base, to consecrate them.¹² He poured some of the anointing oil on Aaron's head and anointed him, to consecrate him.¹³ And Moses brought forward Aaron's sons, and clothed them with tunics, and fastened sashes around them, and tied headdresses on them, as the LORD commanded Moses.

¹⁴ He led forward the bull of sin offering; and Aaron

and his sons laid their hands upon the head of the bull of sin offering, ¹⁵ and it was slaughtered. Moses took the blood and with his finger put some on each of the horns of the altar, purifying the altar; then he poured out the blood at the base of the altar. Thus he consecrated it, to make atonement for it. ¹⁶ Moses took all the fat that was around the entrails, and the appendage of the liver, and the two kidneys with their fat, and turned them into smoke on the altar. ¹⁷ But the bull itself, its skin and flesh and its dung, he burned with fire outside the camp, as the LORD commanded Moses.

¹⁸ Then he brought forward the ram of burnt offering. Aaron and his sons laid their hands on the head of the ram, ¹⁹ and it was slaughtered. Moses dashed the blood against all sides of the altar. ²⁰ The ram was cut into its parts, and Moses turned into smoke the head and the parts and the suet. ²¹ And after the entrails and the legs were washed with water, Moses turned into smoke the whole ram on the altar; it was a burnt offering for a pleasing odor, an offering by fire to the LORD, as the LORD commanded Moses.

²² Then he brought forward the second ram, the ram of ordination. Aaron and his sons laid their hands on the head of the ram, ²³ and it was slaughtered. Moses took some of its blood and put it on the lobe of Aaron's right ear and on the thumb of his right hand and on the big toe of his right foot. ²⁴ After Aaron's sons were brought forward, Moses put some of the blood on the lobes of their right ears and on the thumbs of their right hands and on the big toes of their right feet; and Moses dashed the rest of the blood against all sides of the altar. ²⁵ He took the fat—the broad tail, all the fat that was around the entrails, the appendage of the liver, and the two kidneys with their fat—and the right thigh. ²⁶ From

the basket of unleavened bread that was before the LORD, he took one cake of unleavened bread, one cake of bread with oil, and one wafer, and placed them on the fat and on the right thigh. ²⁷ He placed all these on the palms of Aaron and on the palms of his sons, and raised them as an elevation offering before the LORD. ²⁸ Then Moses took them from their hands and turned them into smoke on the altar with the burnt offering. This was an ordination offering for a pleasing odor, an offering by fire to the LORD. ²⁹ Moses took the breast and raised it as an elevation offering before the LORD; it was Moses' portion of the ram of ordination, as the LORD commanded Moses.

³⁰ Then Moses took some of the anointing oil and some of the blood that was on the altar and sprinkled them on Aaron and his vestments, and also on his sons and their vestments. Thus he consecrated Aaron and his vestments, and also his sons and their vestments.

³¹ And Moses said to Aaron and his sons, "Boil the flesh at the entrance of the tent of meeting, and eat it there with the bread that is in the basket of ordination offerings, as I was commanded, 'Aaron and his sons shall eat it'; ³² and what remains of the flesh and the bread you shall burn with fire. ³³ You shall not go outside the entrance of the tent of meeting for seven days, until the day when your period of ordination is completed. For it will take seven days to ordain you; ³⁴ as has been done today, the LORD has commanded to be done to make atonement for you. ³⁵ You shall remain at the entrance of the tent of meeting day and night for seven days, keeping the LORD's charge so that you do not die; for so I am commanded." ³⁶ Aaron and his sons did all the things that the LORD commanded through Moses.

Aaron's Priesthood Inaugurated

9 On the eighth day Moses summoned Aaron and his sons and the elders of Israel. ² He said to Aaron, "Take a bull calf for a sin offering and a ram for a burnt offering, without blemish, and offer them before the

Read Leviticus 9

The goal of the ordination ritual is the revelation of Yahweh's glory. The theophany (divine appearance) is a manifestation of the divine presence and divine power. The glory of Yahweh appeared in the form of fire to guide the Israelites through the wilderness.

Reflect: Reflect on worship as communion with God, that is, an experience of God's presence. If the presence of God is not recognized in worship, then the act is meaningless.

Pray: May we always be guided by an awareness of God's presence; otherwise, our own wilderness wandering may be for naught.

Act: A consciousness of divine presence guarantees that we will be on the right path through life.

LORD. ³ And say to the people of Israel, 'Take a male goat for a sin offering; a calf and a lamb, yearlings without blemish, for a burnt offering; ⁴ and an ox and a ram for an offering of well-being to sacrifice before the LORD; and a grain offering mixed with oil. For today the LORD will appear to you.' ⁵ They brought what Moses commanded to the front of the tent of meeting; and the whole congregation drew near and stood before the LORD. ⁶ And Moses said, 'This is the thing that the LORD commanded you to do, so that the glory of the LORD may appear to you.' ⁷ Then Moses said to Aaron, 'Draw near to the altar and sacrifice your sin offering and your burnt offering, and make atonement for yourself and for the people; and sacrifice the offering of the people, and make atonement for them; as the LORD has commanded.'

⁸ Aaron drew near to the altar, and slaughtered the calf of the sin offering, which was for himself. ⁹ The sons of Aaron presented the blood to him, and he dipped his finger in the blood and put it on the horns of the altar; and the rest of the blood he poured out at the base of the altar. ¹⁰ But the fat, the kidneys, and the appendage of the liver from the sin offering he turned into smoke on the altar, as the LORD commanded Moses; ¹¹ and the flesh and the skin he burned with fire outside the camp.

¹² Then he slaughtered the burnt offering. Aaron's sons brought him the blood, and he dashed it against all sides of the altar. ¹³ And they brought him the burnt offering piece by piece, and the head, which he turned into smoke on the altar. ¹⁴ He washed the entrails and the legs and, with the burnt offering, turned them into smoke on the altar.

¹⁵ Next he presented the people's offering. He took the goat of the sin offering that was for the people, and slaughtered it, and presented it as a sin offering like the first one. ¹⁶ He presented the burnt offering, and sacrificed it according to regulation. ¹⁷ He presented the grain offering, and, taking a handful of it, he turned it into smoke on the altar, in addition to the burnt offering of the morning.

¹⁸ He slaughtered the ox and the ram as a sacrifice of well-being for the people. Aaron's sons brought him the blood, which he dashed against all sides of the altar, ¹⁹ and the fat of the ox and of the ram—the broad tail, the fat that covers the entrails, the two kidneys and the fat on them,^a and the appendage of the liver. ²⁰ They first laid the fat on the breasts, and the fat was turned into smoke on the altar; ²¹ and the breasts and the right thigh Aaron raised as an elevation offering before the LORD, as Moses had commanded.

²² Aaron lifted his hands toward the people and

^a Gk: Heb the broad tail, and that which covers, and the kidneys

blessed them; and he came down after sacrificing the sin offering, the burnt offering, and the offering of well-being. ²³ Moses and Aaron entered the tent of meeting, and then came out and blessed the people; and the

glory of the LORD appeared to all the people. ²⁴ Fire came out from the LORD and consumed the burnt offering and the fat on the altar; and when all the people saw it, they shouted and fell on their faces.

Read Leviticus 10

Nadab and Abihu, Aaron's sons, presented an illicit incense offering that resulted in their death. Those who sin by fire are punished by fire. The holiness of God is so sacred that those who approach the deity without holiness are struck dead. Mishael and Elzaphan are Levites and for that reason could come in contact with the dead. The lack of head covering was a sign of mourning, as were disheveled hair and torn vestments. Eleazar and Ithamar, Aaron's remaining sons, burned the entire goat of the sin offering instead of eating it in a sacred place.

Reflect: Regarding Nadab and Abihu, their intentions were no substitute for obedience to the divine will.

Pray: Pray that we may have some share in the holiness of God, always ready to do his will.

Act: At all times and in every situation, let us act with awareness of God's holiness.

Nadab and Abihu

10 Now Aaron's sons, Nadab and Abihu, each took his censer, put fire in it, and laid incense on it; and they offered unholy fire before the LORD, such as he had not commanded them. ² And fire came out from the presence of the LORD and consumed them, and they died before the LORD. ³ Then Moses said to Aaron, "This is what the LORD meant when he said,

"Through those who are near me
I will show myself holy,
and before all the people
I will be glorified."

And Aaron was silent.

⁴ Moses summoned Mishael and Elzaphan, sons of Uzziel the uncle of Aaron, and said to them, "Come forward, and carry your kinsmen away from the front of the sanctuary to a place outside the camp." ⁵ They came forward and carried them by their tunics out of the camp, as Moses had ordered. ⁶ And Moses said to Aaron and to his sons Eleazar and Ithamar, "Do not dishevel your hair, and do not tear your vestments, or you will die and wrath will strike all the congregation; but your kindred, the whole house of Israel, may mourn the burning that the LORD has sent. ⁷ You shall not go outside the entrance of the tent of meeting, or you will die; for the anointing oil of the LORD is on you." And they did as Moses had ordered.

⁸ And the LORD spoke to Aaron: ⁹ Drink no wine or strong drink, neither you nor your sons, when you enter the tent of meeting, that you may not die; it is a statute forever throughout your generations. ¹⁰ You are to distinguish between the holy and the common, and between the unclean and the clean; ¹¹ and you are to teach the people of Israel all the statutes that the LORD has spoken to them through Moses.

¹² Moses spoke to Aaron and to his remaining sons, Eleazar and Ithamar: Take the grain offering that is left from the LORD's offerings by fire, and eat it unleavened beside the altar, for it is most holy; ¹³ you shall eat it in a holy place, because it is your due and your sons' due, from the offerings by fire to the LORD; for so I am commanded. ¹⁴ But the breast that is elevated and the thigh that is raised, you and your sons and daughters as well

may eat in any clean place; for they have been assigned to you and your children from the sacrifices of the offerings of well-being of the people of Israel. ¹⁵The thigh that is raised and the breast that is elevated they shall bring, together with the offerings by fire of the fat, to raise for an elevation offering before the LORD; they are to be your due and that of your children forever, as the LORD has commanded.

¹⁶ Then Moses made inquiry about the goat of the sin offering, and—it had already been burned! He was angry with Eleazar and Ithamar, Aaron's remaining sons, and said, ¹⁷ "Why did you not eat the sin offer-

ing in the sacred area? For it is most holy, and God^a has given it to you that you may remove the guilt of the congregation, to make atonement on their behalf before the LORD. ¹⁸ Its blood was not brought into the inner part of the sanctuary. You should certainly have eaten it in the sanctuary, as I commanded." ¹⁹ And Aaron spoke to Moses, "See, today they offered their sin offering and their burnt offering before the LORD; and yet such things as these have befallen me! If I had eaten the sin offering today, would it have been agreeable to the LORD?" ²⁰ And when Moses heard that, he agreed.

Clean and Unclean Foods

11 The LORD spoke to Moses and Aaron, saying to them: ² Speak to the people of Israel, saying:

From among all the land animals, these are the creatures that you may eat. ³ Any animal that has divided hoofs and is cleft-footed and chews the cud—such you may eat. ⁴ But among those that chew the cud or have divided hoofs, you shall not eat the following: the camel, for even though it chews the cud, it does not have divided hoofs; it is unclean for you. ⁵ The rock badger, for even though it chews the cud, it does not have divided hoofs; it is unclean for you. ⁶ The hare, for even though it chews the cud, it does not have divided hoofs; it is unclean for you. ⁷ The pig, for even though it has divided hoofs and is cleft-footed, it does not chew the cud; it is unclean for you. ⁸ Of their flesh you shall not eat, and their carcasses you shall not touch; they are unclean for you.

⁹ These you may eat, of all that are in the waters. Everything in the waters that has fins and scales, whether in the seas or in the streams—such you may eat. ¹⁰ But anything in the seas or the streams that does not have fins and scales, of the swarming creatures in the waters and among all the other living creatures that are in the waters—they are detestable to you ¹¹ and detestable they shall remain. Of their flesh you shall not eat, and their carcasses you shall regard as detestable. ¹² Everything in the waters that does not have fins and scales is detestable to you.

¹³ These you shall regard as detestable among the birds. They shall not be eaten; they are an abomination: the eagle, the vulture, the osprey, ¹⁴ the buzzard, the kite of any kind; ¹⁵ every raven of any kind; ¹⁶ the ostrich, the nighthawk, the sea gull, the hawk of any kind;

^a Heb *he*

Read Leviticus 11

This section distinguishes between cleanness and uncleanness with regard to legal purity. Purity is the condition of being free from physical, moral, or ritual contamination. Blood and semen represent the sources of life, and their loss means death. The distinction between what is edible and inedible may be traced back to traditional ideas of hygiene. Impurity and holiness are diametrically opposed. The four sources of impurity are: carcasses, childbirth, scale disease, and genital discharge. Inedible foods are considered unclean to remind the Israelites that they are holy people dedicated to Yahweh. Animals with cloven feet who chew the cud are unclean, and for this reason the pig is unclean. With regard to water creatures, one may eat whatever has both fins and scales. Fish in general, having fins and scales, could be eaten. The somewhat limited variety of species in the Mediterranean may account for the attitude toward fish. Many varieties of birds are unclean and are not to be eaten, nor are certain winged insects to be eaten. The named birds in this chapter cannot be identified with certainty.

Reflect: Holiness, that is, wholeness, completion, and separation, apply in every aspect of life, not simply in religious meals.

Pray: Pray that we may understand the reasons that lie behind these ritual obligations, lest we dismiss them as irrelevant.

Act: Let us act with respect for the meaning of ritual.

¹⁷ the little owl, the cormorant, the great owl, ¹⁸ the water hen, the desert owl,^a the carrion vulture, ¹⁹ the stork, the heron of any kind, the hoopoe, and the bat.^b

²⁰ All winged insects that walk upon all fours are detestable to you. ²¹ But among the winged insects that walk on all fours you may eat those that have jointed legs above their feet, with which to leap on the ground. ²² Of them you may eat: the locust according to its kind, the bald locust according to its kind, the cricket according to its kind, and the grasshopper according to its kind. ²³ But all other winged insects that have four feet are detestable to you.

Unclean Animals

²⁴ By these you shall become unclean; whoever touches the carcass of any of them shall be unclean until the evening, ²⁵ and whoever carries any part of the carcass of any of them shall wash his clothes and be unclean until the evening. ²⁶ Every animal that has divided hoofs but is not cleft-footed or does not chew the cud is unclean for you; everyone who touches one of them shall be unclean. ²⁷ All that walk on their paws, among the animals that walk on all fours, are unclean for you; whoever touches the carcass of any of them shall be unclean until the evening, ²⁸ and the one who carries the carcass shall wash his clothes and be unclean until the evening; they are unclean for you.

²⁹ These are unclean for you among the creatures that swarm upon the earth: the weasel, the mouse, the great lizard according to its kind, ³⁰ the gecko, the land crocodile, the lizard, the sand lizard, and the chameleon. ³¹ These are unclean for you among all that swarm; whoever touches one of them when they are dead shall be unclean until the evening. ³² And anything upon which any of them falls when they are dead shall be unclean, whether an article of wood or cloth or skin or sacking, any article that is used for any purpose; it shall be dipped into water, and it shall be unclean until the evening, and then it shall be clean. ³³ And if any of them falls into any earthen vessel, all that is in it shall be unclean, and you shall break the vessel. ³⁴ Any food that could be eaten shall be unclean if water from any such vessel comes upon it; and any liquid that could be drunk shall be unclean if it was in any such vessel. ³⁵ Everything on which any part of the carcass falls shall be unclean; whether an oven or stove, it shall be broken in pieces; they are unclean, and shall remain unclean for you. ³⁶ But a spring or a cistern holding water shall be clean, while whatever touches the carcass in it shall be unclean. ³⁷ If any part of their carcass falls upon any seed set aside for sowing, it is clean; ³⁸ but if water is put

^a Or pelican

^b Identification of several of the birds in verses 13-19 is uncertain

on the seed and any part of their carcass falls on it, it is unclean for you.

39 If an animal of which you may eat dies, anyone who touches its carcass shall be unclean until the evening. ⁴⁰ Those who eat of its carcass shall wash their clothes and be unclean until the evening; and those who carry the carcass shall wash their clothes and be unclean until the evening.

41 All creatures that swarm upon the earth are detestable; they shall not be eaten. ⁴² Whatever moves on its belly, and whatever moves on all fours, or whatever has many feet, all the creatures that swarm upon the earth, you shall not eat; for they are detestable. ⁴³ You shall not make yourselves detestable with any creature that

swarms; you shall not defile yourselves with them, and so become unclean. ⁴⁴ For I am the LORD your God; sanctify yourselves therefore, and be holy, for I am holy. You shall not defile yourselves with any swarming creature that moves on the earth. ⁴⁵ For I am the LORD who brought you up from the land of Egypt, to be your God; you shall be holy, for I am holy.

46 This is the law pertaining to land animal and bird and every living creature that moves through the waters and every creature that swarms upon the earth, ⁴⁷ to make a distinction between the unclean and the clean, and between the living creature that may be eaten and the living creature that may not be eaten.

Read Leviticus 12

This chapter, which has to do with the uncleanness of childbirth, states that purification of the mother is to take place. After the birth of a male, the mother is unclean for seven days and on the eighth day the child is circumcised. After the birth of a girl, the mother is unclean for fourteen days. No conjugal relations are allowed during these periods. On the occasion of her purification, Mary, the mother of Jesus, made the simple offering of the poor: a pair of turtledoves or two young pigeons (Lk 2:22–24).

Reflect: Circumcision of the flesh is related to the circumcision of the heart. Note also that sexual love is positive, not negative.

Pray: Pray that we may appreciate the true meaning that lies behind these rituals.

Act: Let us act with a mature respect for religious rituals, especially concerning the organs of generation.

Purification of Women after Childbirth

12 The LORD spoke to Moses, saying: ² Speak to the people of Israel, saying:

If a woman conceives and bears a male child, she shall be ceremonially unclean seven days; as at the time of her menstruation, she shall be unclean. ³ On the eighth day the flesh of his foreskin shall be circumcised. ⁴ Her time of blood purification shall be thirty-three days; she shall not touch any holy thing, or come into the sanctuary, until the days of her purification are completed. ⁵ If she bears a female child, she shall be unclean two weeks, as in her menstruation; her time of blood purification shall be sixty-six days.

⁶ When the days of her purification are completed, whether for a son or for a daughter, she shall bring to the priest at the entrance of the tent of meeting a lamb in its first year for a burnt offering, and a pigeon or a turtledove for a sin offering. ⁷ He shall offer it before the LORD, and make atonement on her behalf; then she shall be clean from her flow of blood. This is the law for her who bears a child, male or female. ⁸ If she cannot afford a sheep, she shall take two turtledoves or two pigeons, one for a burnt offering and the other for a sin offering; and the priest shall make atonement on her behalf, and she shall be clean.

Leprosy, Varieties and Symptoms

13 The LORD spoke to Moses and Aaron, saying: ² When a person has on the skin of his body a swelling or an eruption or a spot, and it turns into a leprous^a disease on the skin of his body, he shall be brought to Aaron the priest or to one of his sons the

^a A term for several skin diseases; precise meaning uncertain

Read Leviticus 13–14

The term “leprosy” used here refers to a non-contagious condition, such as psoriasis; the various kinds of skin blemishes are not what we refer to as Hansen’s disease today. In the Bible, one stricken with “leprosy” is to be brought to the priest and the leper is to cry out “Unclean! Unclean!” Also, fabrics (clothing) are subject to affliction, such as mold, fungus, or mildew. The scarlet yarn is associated with blood and the color red is thought to have inherent power to intimidate evil spirits. The Hebrew mentality does not consider secondary causes; it attributes all happenings to God. Hyssop is a small shrub whose branches are used as sprinklers for applying liquids in rituals. Note that blood removes impurity.

Reflect: The Bible shows concern for the body as well as the soul. In like manner, modern missionaries are concerned with both the spiritual and physical dimensions of human life.

Pray: May we always respect those who are physically disabled, especially those disfigured by skin diseases.

Act: Let us act with respect for all people, regardless of their physical or moral limitations.

priests. ³The priest shall examine the disease on the skin of his body, and if the hair in the diseased area has turned white and the disease appears to be deeper than the skin of his body, it is a leprous^a disease; after the priest has examined him he shall pronounce him ceremonially unclean. ⁴But if the spot is white in the skin of his body, and appears no deeper than the skin, and the hair in it has not turned white, the priest shall confine the diseased person for seven days. ⁵The priest shall examine him on the seventh day, and if he sees that the disease is checked and the disease has not spread in the skin, then the priest shall confine him seven days more. ⁶The priest shall examine him again on the seventh day, and if the disease has abated and the disease has not spread in the skin, the priest shall pronounce him clean; it is only an eruption; and he shall wash his clothes, and be clean. ⁷But if the eruption spreads in the skin after he has shown himself to the priest for his cleansing, he shall appear again before the priest. ⁸The priest shall make an examination, and if the eruption has spread in the skin, the priest shall pronounce him unclean; it is a leprous^a disease.

⁹When a person contracts a leprous^a disease, he shall be brought to the priest. ¹⁰The priest shall make an examination, and if there is a white swelling in the skin that has turned the hair white, and there is quick raw flesh in the swelling, ¹¹it is a chronic leprous^a disease in the skin of his body. The priest shall pronounce him unclean; he shall not confine him, for he is unclean. ¹²But if the disease breaks out in the skin, so that it covers all the skin of the diseased person from head to foot, so far as the priest can see, ¹³then the priest shall make an examination, and if the disease has covered all his body, he shall pronounce him clean of the disease; since it has all turned white, he is clean. ¹⁴But if raw flesh ever appears on him, he shall be unclean; ¹⁵the priest shall examine the raw flesh and pronounce him unclean. Raw flesh is unclean, for it is a leprous^a disease. ¹⁶But if the raw flesh again turns white, he shall come to the priest; ¹⁷the priest shall examine him, and if the disease has turned white, the priest shall pronounce the diseased person clean. He is clean.

¹⁸When there is on the skin of one’s body a boil that has healed, ¹⁹and in the place of the boil there appears a white swelling or a reddish-white spot, it shall be shown to the priest. ²⁰The priest shall make an examination, and if it appears deeper than the skin and its hair has turned white, the priest shall pronounce him unclean; this is a leprous^a disease, broken out in the boil. ²¹But if the priest examines it and the hair on it is not white, nor is it deeper than the skin but has abated,

^a A term for several skin diseases; precise meaning uncertain

the priest shall confine him seven days. ²² If it spreads in the skin, the priest shall pronounce him unclean; it is diseased. ²³ But if the spot remains in one place and does not spread, it is the scar of the boil; the priest shall pronounce him clean.

²⁴ Or, when the body has a burn on the skin and the raw flesh of the burn becomes a spot, reddish-white or white, ²⁵ the priest shall examine it. If the hair in the spot has turned white and it appears deeper than the skin, it is a leprous^a disease; it has broken out in the burn, and the priest shall pronounce him unclean. This is a leprous^a disease. ²⁶ But if the priest examines it and the hair in the spot is not white, and it is no deeper than the skin but has abated, the priest shall confine him seven days. ²⁷ The priest shall examine him the seventh day; if it is spreading in the skin, the priest shall pronounce him unclean. This is a leprous^a disease. ²⁸ But if the spot remains in one place and does not spread in the skin but has abated, it is a swelling from the burn, and the priest shall pronounce him clean; for it is the scar of the burn.

²⁹ When a man or woman has a disease on the head or in the beard, ³⁰ the priest shall examine the disease. If it appears deeper than the skin and the hair in it is yellow and thin, the priest shall pronounce him unclean; it is an itch, a leprous^a disease of the head or the beard. ³¹ If the priest examines the itching disease, and it appears no deeper than the skin and there is no black hair in it, the priest shall confine the person with the itching disease for seven days. ³² On the seventh day the priest shall examine the itch; if the itch has not spread, and there is no yellow hair in it, and the itch appears to be no deeper than the skin, ³³ he shall shave, but the itch he shall not shave. The priest shall confine the person with the itch for seven days more. ³⁴ On the seventh day the priest shall examine the itch; if the itch has not spread in the skin and it appears to be no deeper than the skin, the priest shall pronounce

him clean. He shall wash his clothes and be clean. ³⁵ But if the itch spreads in the skin after he was pronounced clean, ³⁶ the priest shall examine him. If the itch has spread in the skin, the priest need not seek for the yellow hair; he is unclean. ³⁷ But if in his eyes the itch is checked, and black hair has grown in it, the itch is healed, he is clean; and the priest shall pronounce him clean.

³⁸ When a man or a woman has spots on the skin of the body, white spots, ³⁹ the priest shall make an examination, and if the spots on the skin of the body are of a dull white, it is a rash that has broken out on the skin; he is clean.

⁴⁰ If anyone loses the hair from his head, he is bald but he is clean. ⁴¹ If he loses the hair from his forehead and temples, he has baldness of the forehead but he is clean. ⁴² But if there is on the bald head or the bald forehead a reddish-white diseased spot, it is a leprous^a disease breaking out on his bald head or his bald forehead. ⁴³ The priest shall examine him; if the diseased swelling is reddish-white on his bald head or on his bald forehead, which resembles a leprous^a disease in the skin of the body, ⁴⁴ he is leprous,^a he is unclean. The priest shall pronounce him unclean; the disease is on his head.

⁴⁵ The person who has the leprous^a disease shall wear torn clothes and let the hair of his head be disheveled; and he shall cover his upper lip and cry out, "Unclean, unclean." ⁴⁶ He shall remain unclean as long as he has the disease; he is unclean. He shall live alone; his dwelling shall be outside the camp.

⁴⁷ Concerning clothing: when a leprous^a disease appears in it, in woolen or linen cloth, ⁴⁸ in warp or woof of linen or wool, or in a skin or in anything made of skin, ⁴⁹ if the disease shows greenish or reddish in the garment, whether in warp or woof or in skin or in anything made of skin, it is a leprous^a disease and shall be shown to the priest. ⁵⁰ The priest shall examine the dis-

^a A term for several skin diseases; precise meaning uncertain

ease, and put the diseased article aside for seven days. ⁵¹ He shall examine the disease on the seventh day. If the disease has spread in the cloth, in warp or woof, or in the skin, whatever be the use of the skin, this is a spreading leprous^a disease; it is unclean. ⁵² He shall burn the clothing, whether diseased in warp or woof, woolen or linen, or anything of skin, for it is a spreading leprous^a disease; it shall be burned in fire.

⁵³ If the priest makes an examination, and the disease has not spread in the clothing, in warp or woof or in anything of skin, ⁵⁴ the priest shall command them to wash the article in which the disease appears, and he shall put it aside seven days more. ⁵⁵ The priest shall examine the diseased article after it has been washed. If the diseased spot has not changed color,

though the disease has not spread, it is unclean; you shall burn it in fire, whether the leprous^a spot is on the inside or on the outside.

⁵⁶ If the priest makes an examination, and the disease has abated after it is washed, he shall tear the spot out of the cloth, in warp or woof, or out of skin. ⁵⁷ If it appears again in the garment, in warp or woof, or in anything of skin, it is spreading; you shall burn with fire that in which the disease appears. ⁵⁸ But the cloth, warp or woof, or anything of skin from which the disease disappears when you have washed it, shall then be washed a second time, and it shall be clean.

⁵⁹ This is the ritual for a leprous^a disease in a cloth of wool or linen, either in warp or woof, or in anything of skin, to decide whether it is clean or unclean.

Purification of Lepers and Leprous Houses

14 The LORD spoke to Moses, saying: ² This shall be the ritual for the leprous^a person at the time of his cleansing:

He shall be brought to the priest; ³ the priest shall go out of the camp, and the priest shall make an examination. If the disease is healed in the leprous^a person, ⁴ the priest shall command that two living clean birds and cedarwood and crimson yarn and hyssop be brought for the one who is to be cleansed. ⁵ The priest shall command that one of the birds be slaughtered over fresh water in an earthen vessel. ⁶ He shall take the living bird with the cedarwood and the crimson yarn and the hyssop, and dip them and the living bird in the blood of the bird that was slaughtered over the fresh water. ⁷ He shall sprinkle it seven times upon the one who is to be cleansed of the leprous^a disease; then he shall pronounce him clean, and he shall let the living bird go into the open field. ⁸ The one who is to be cleansed shall wash his clothes, and shave off all his hair, and bathe himself in water, and he shall be clean. After that he shall come into the camp, but shall live outside his tent seven days. ⁹ On the seventh day he shall shave all his hair: of head, beard, eyebrows; he shall shave all his hair. Then he shall wash his clothes, and bathe his body in water, and he shall be clean.

¹⁰ On the eighth day he shall take two male lambs without blemish, and one ewe lamb in its first year without blemish, and a grain offering of three-tenths of an

^a A term for several skin diseases; precise meaning uncertain

ephah of choice flour mixed with oil, and one log^a of oil. ¹¹ The priest who cleanses shall set the person to be cleansed, along with these things, before the LORD, at the entrance of the tent of meeting. ¹² The priest shall take one of the lambs, and offer it as a guilt offering, along with the log^a of oil, and raise them as an elevation offering before the LORD. ¹³ He shall slaughter the lamb in the place where the sin offering and the burnt offering are slaughtered in the holy place; for the guilt offering, like the sin offering, belongs to the priest: it is most holy. ¹⁴ The priest shall take some of the blood of the guilt offering and put it on the lobe of the right ear of the one to be cleansed, and on the thumb of the right hand, and on the big toe of the right foot. ¹⁵ The priest shall take some of the log^a of oil and pour it into the palm of his own left hand, ¹⁶ and dip his right finger in the oil that is in his left hand and sprinkle some oil with his finger seven times before the LORD. ¹⁷ Some of the oil that remains in his hand the priest shall put on the lobe of the right ear of the one to be cleansed, and on the thumb of the right hand, and on the big toe of the right foot, on top of the blood of the guilt offering. ¹⁸ The rest of the oil that is in the priest's hand he shall put on the head of the one to be cleansed. Then the priest shall make atonement on his behalf before the LORD: ¹⁹ the priest shall offer the sin offering, to make atonement for the one to be cleansed from his uncleanness. Afterward he shall slaughter the burnt offering; ²⁰ and the priest shall offer the burnt offering and the grain offering on the altar. Thus the priest shall make atonement on his behalf and he shall be clean.

²¹ But if he is poor and cannot afford so much, he shall take one male lamb for a guilt offering to be elevated, to make atonement on his behalf, and one-tenth of an ephah of choice flour mixed with oil for a grain offering and a log^a of oil; ²² also two turtledoves or two pigeons, such as he can

afford, one for a sin offering and the other for a burnt offering. ²³ On the eighth day he shall bring them for his cleansing to the priest, to the entrance of the tent of meeting, before the LORD; ²⁴ and the priest shall take the lamb of the guilt offering and the log^a of oil, and the priest shall raise them as an elevation offering before the LORD. ²⁵ The priest shall slaughter the lamb of the guilt offering and shall take some of the blood of the guilt offering, and put it on the lobe of the right ear of the one to be cleansed, and on the thumb of the right hand, and on the big toe of the right foot. ²⁶ The priest shall pour some of the oil into the palm of his own left hand, ²⁷ and shall sprinkle with his right finger some of the oil that is in his left hand seven times before the LORD. ²⁸ The priest shall put some of the oil that is in his hand on the lobe of the right ear of the one to be cleansed, and on the thumb of the right hand, and the big toe of the right foot, where the blood of the guilt offering was placed. ²⁹ The rest of the oil that is in the priest's hand he shall put on the head of the one to be cleansed, to make atonement on his behalf before the LORD. ³⁰ And he shall offer, of the turtledoves or pigeons such as he can afford, ³¹ one^b for a sin offering and the other for a burnt offering, along with a grain offering; and the priest shall make atonement before the LORD on behalf of the one being cleansed. ³² This is the ritual for the one who has a leprous^c disease, who cannot afford the offerings for his cleansing.

³³ The LORD spoke to Moses and Aaron, saying:

³⁴ When you come into the land of Canaan, which I give you for a possession, and I put a leprous^c disease in a house in the land of your possession, ³⁵ the owner of the house shall come and tell the priest, saying, "There seems to me to be some sort of disease in my house." ³⁶ The priest shall command that they empty the house before the priest goes to examine the dis-

^a A liquid measure

^b Gk Syr: Heb *afford*, ³¹ such as he can afford, one

^c A term for several skin diseases; precise meaning uncertain

ease, or all that is in the house will become unclean; and afterward the priest shall go in to inspect the house. ³⁷ He shall examine the disease; if the disease is in the walls of the house with greenish or reddish spots, and if it appears to be deeper than the surface, ³⁸ the priest shall go outside to the door of the house and shut up the house seven days. ³⁹ The priest shall come again on the seventh day and make an inspection; if the disease has spread in the walls of the house, ⁴⁰ the priest shall command that the stones in which the disease appears be taken out and thrown into an unclean place outside the city. ⁴¹ He shall have the inside of the house scraped thoroughly, and the plaster that is scraped off shall be dumped in an unclean place outside the city. ⁴² They shall take other stones and put them in the place of those stones, and take other plaster and plaster the house.

⁴³ If the disease breaks out again in the house, after he has taken out the stones and scraped the house and plastered it, ⁴⁴ the priest shall go and make inspection; if the disease has spread in the house, it is a spreading leprous^a disease in the house; it is unclean. ⁴⁵ He shall have the house torn down, its stones and timber and all the plaster of the house, and taken outside the city to an unclean place. ⁴⁶ All who enter

the house while it is shut up shall be unclean until the evening; ⁴⁷ and all who sleep in the house shall wash their clothes; and all who eat in the house shall wash their clothes.

⁴⁸ If the priest comes and makes an inspection, and the disease has not spread in the house after the house was plastered, the priest shall pronounce the house clean; the disease is healed. ⁴⁹ For the cleansing of the house he shall take two birds, with cedarwood and crimson yarn and hyssop, ⁵⁰ and shall slaughter one of the birds over fresh water in an earthen vessel, ⁵¹ and shall take the cedarwood and the hyssop and the crimson yarn, along with the living bird, and dip them in the blood of the slaughtered bird and the fresh water, and sprinkle the house seven times. ⁵² Thus he shall cleanse the house with the blood of the bird, and with the fresh water, and with the living bird, and with the cedarwood and hyssop and crimson yarn; ⁵³ and he shall let the living bird go out of the city into the open field; so he shall make atonement for the house, and it shall be clean.

⁵⁴ This is the ritual for any leprous^a disease: for an itch, ⁵⁵ for leprous^a diseases in clothing and houses, ⁵⁶ and for a swelling or an eruption or a spot, ⁵⁷ to determine when it is unclean and when it is clean. This is the ritual for leprous^a diseases.

Concerning Bodily Discharges

15 The LORD spoke to Moses and Aaron, saying: ² Speak to the people of Israel and say to them:

When any man has a discharge from his member,^b his discharge makes him ceremonially unclean. ³ The uncleanness of his discharge is this: whether his member^b flows with his discharge, or his member^b is stopped from discharging, it is uncleanness for him. ⁴ Every bed on which the one with the discharge lies shall be unclean; and everything on which he sits shall be unclean. ⁵ Anyone who touches his bed shall wash his clothes, and bathe in water, and be unclean until the evening. ⁶ All who sit on anything on which the one with the discharge has sat shall wash their clothes, and bathe in water, and be unclean until the evening. ⁷ All who touch the body of the one with the discharge shall wash their clothes, and bathe in water, and be unclean until the

^a A term for several skin diseases; precise meaning uncertain

^b Heb *flesh*

Read Leviticus 15

This chapter also deals with personal uncleanness—male emissions and menstruating women. Female impurity arises from menstruation or an abnormal flow of blood. Male uncleanness results from a loss of semen and the genital secretion resulting from gonorrhea.

Reflect: Reflect on the fact that sexual relations and other aspects of sexuality are good.

Pray: Pray that we may always have a healthy respect for bodily functions.

Act: Let us act with a mature appreciation for the body and all of its parts.

evening. ⁸ If the one with the discharge spits on persons who are clean, then they shall wash their clothes, and bathe in water, and be unclean until the evening. ⁹ Any saddle on which the one with the discharge rides shall be unclean. ¹⁰ All who touch anything that was under him shall be unclean until the evening, and all who carry such a thing shall wash their clothes, and bathe in water, and be unclean until the evening. ¹¹ All those whom the one with the discharge touches without his having rinsed his hands in water shall wash their clothes, and bathe in water, and be unclean until the evening. ¹² Any earthen vessel that the one with the discharge touches shall be broken; and every vessel of wood shall be rinsed in water.

¹³ When the one with a discharge is cleansed of his discharge, he shall count seven days for his cleansing; he shall wash his clothes and bathe his body in fresh water, and he shall be clean. ¹⁴ On the eighth day he shall take two turtledoves or two pigeons and come before the LORD to the entrance of the tent of meeting and give them to the priest. ¹⁵ The priest shall offer them, one for a sin offering and the other for a burnt offering; and the priest shall make atonement on his behalf before the LORD for his discharge.

¹⁶ If a man has an emission of semen, he shall bathe his whole body in water, and be unclean until the evening. ¹⁷ Everything made of cloth or of skin on which the semen falls shall be washed with water, and be unclean until the evening. ¹⁸ If a man lies with a woman and has an emission of semen, both of them shall bathe in water, and be unclean until the evening.

¹⁹ When a woman has a discharge of blood that is her regular discharge from her body, she shall be in her impurity for seven days, and whoever touches her shall be unclean until the evening. ²⁰ Everything upon which she lies during her impurity shall be unclean; everything also upon which she sits shall be unclean. ²¹ Whoever touches her bed shall wash his clothes, and bathe in water, and be unclean until the evening. ²² Whoever touches anything upon which she sits shall wash his clothes, and bathe in water, and be unclean until the evening; ²³ whether it is the bed or anything upon which she sits, when he touches it he shall be unclean until the evening. ²⁴ If any man lies with her, and her impurity falls on him, he shall be unclean seven days; and every bed on which he lies shall be unclean.

²⁵ If a woman has a discharge of blood for many days, not at the time of her impurity, or if she has a discharge beyond the time of her impurity, all the days of the discharge she shall continue in uncleanness; as in the days of her impurity, she shall be unclean. ²⁶ Every

bed on which she lies during all the days of her discharge shall be treated as the bed of her impurity; and everything on which she sits shall be unclean, as in the uncleanness of her impurity. ²⁷Whoever touches these things shall be unclean, and shall wash his clothes, and bathe in water, and be unclean until the evening. ²⁸If she is cleansed of her discharge, she shall count seven days, and after that she shall be clean. ²⁹On the eighth day she shall take two turtledoves or two pigeons and bring them to the priest at the entrance of the tent of meeting. ³⁰The priest shall offer one for a sin offering and

the other for a burnt offering; and the priest shall make atonement on her behalf before the LORD for her unclean discharge.

³¹Thus you shall keep the people of Israel separate from their uncleanness, so that they do not die in their uncleanness by defiling my tabernacle that is in their midst.

³²This is the ritual for those who have a discharge: for him who has an emission of semen, becoming unclean thereby, ³³for her who is in the infirmity of her period, for anyone, male or female, who has a discharge, and for the man who lies with a woman who is unclean.

The Day of Atonement

16 The LORD spoke to Moses after the death of the two sons of Aaron, when they drew near before the LORD and died. ²The LORD said to Moses:

Tell your brother Aaron not to come just at any time into the sanctuary inside the curtain before the mercy seat^a that is upon the ark, or he will die; for I appear in the cloud upon the mercy seat.^a ³Thus shall Aaron come into the holy place: with a young bull for a sin offering and a ram for a burnt offering. ⁴He shall put on the holy linen tunic, and shall have the linen undergarments next to his body, fasten the linen sash, and wear the linen turban; these are the holy vestments. He shall bathe his body in water, and then put them on. ⁵He shall take from the congregation of the people of Israel two male goats for a sin offering, and one ram for a burnt offering.

⁶Aaron shall offer the bull as a sin offering for himself, and shall make atonement for himself and for his house. ⁷He shall take the two goats and set them before the LORD at the entrance of the tent of meeting; ⁸and Aaron shall cast lots on the two goats, one lot for the LORD and the other lot for Azazel.^b ⁹Aaron shall present the goat on which the lot fell for the LORD, and offer it as a sin offering; ¹⁰but the goat on which the lot fell for Azazel^b shall be presented alive before the LORD to make atonement over it, that it may be sent away into the wilderness to Azazel.^b

¹¹Aaron shall present the bull as a sin offering for himself, and shall make atonement for himself and for his house; he shall slaughter the bull as a sin offering for himself. ¹²He shall take a censer full of coals of fire from the altar before the LORD, and two handfuls of crushed sweet incense, and he shall bring it inside the curtain ¹³and put the incense on the fire before the

^a Or the cover

^b Traditionally rendered a scapegoat

Read Leviticus 16

Yom Kippur (Day of Atonement) has to do with expiation for the sins of the community. The high priest entered the most holy place only once a year, on Yom Kippur. Azazel was a demonic figure (in contrast to Yahweh). After laying both hands on the head of the scapegoat, Aaron sent the animal into the wilderness; it was considered to be carrying off the iniquities of the Israelites. The laying of hands on the head of the goat signified the transference of the people's sins to the scapegoat. Blood has a special expiatory quality. It is the seat of life. The daubing of blood on the altar purified it. The fast required the abstinence from all food on Yom Kippur and this is the only fast day prescribed in Mosaic law. Both Israelites and non-Israelite residents were required to fast and to refrain from any form of work on this day.

Reflect: Yom Kippur is the most important day on the Israelite calendar because it is a day of expiation of all sins. With the exception of Jesus Christ, all mortals are weak and therefore subject to sin.

Pray: Pray that Yom Kippur be not just another day on the calendar, but truly a day for atonement.

Act: The fast is to be observed with care as an indication of the solemnity of Yom Kippur.

LORD, that the cloud of the incense may cover the mercy seat^a that is upon the covenant,^b or he will die. ¹⁴ He shall take some of the blood of the bull, and sprinkle it with his finger on the front of the mercy seat,^a and before the mercy seat^a he shall sprinkle the blood with his finger seven times.

¹⁵ He shall slaughter the goat of the sin offering that is for the people and bring its blood inside the curtain, and do with its blood as he did with the blood of the bull, sprinkling it upon the mercy seat^a and before the mercy seat.^a ¹⁶ Thus he shall make atonement for the sanctuary, because of the uncleannesses of the people of Israel, and because of their transgressions, all their sins; and so he shall do for the tent of meeting, which remains with them in the midst of their uncleannesses. ¹⁷ No one shall be in the tent of meeting from the time he enters to make atonement in the sanctuary until he comes out and has made atonement for himself and for his house and for all the assembly of Israel. ¹⁸ Then he shall go out to the altar that is before the LORD and make atonement on its behalf, and shall take some of the blood of the bull and of the blood of the goat, and put it on each of the horns of the altar. ¹⁹ He shall sprinkle some of the blood on it with his finger seven times, and cleanse it and hallow it from the uncleannesses of the people of Israel.

²⁰ When he has finished atoning for the holy place and the tent of meeting and the altar, he shall present the live goat. ²¹ Then Aaron shall lay both his hands on the head of the live goat, and confess over it all the iniquities of the people of Israel, and all their transgressions, all their sins, putting them on the head of the goat, and sending it away into the wilderness by means of someone designated for the task.^c ²² The goat shall bear on itself all their iniquities to a barren region; and the goat shall be set free in the wilderness.

²³ Then Aaron shall enter the tent of meeting, and shall take off the linen vestments that he put on when he went into the holy place, and shall leave them there. ²⁴ He shall bathe his body in water in a holy place, and put on his vestments; then he shall come out and offer his burnt offering and the burnt offering of the people, making atonement for himself and for the people. ²⁵ The fat of the sin offering he shall turn into smoke on the altar. ²⁶ The one who sets the goat free for Azazel^d shall wash his clothes and bathe his body in water, and afterward may come into the camp. ²⁷ The bull of the sin offering and the goat of the sin offering, whose blood was brought in to make atonement in the holy place, shall be taken outside the camp; their skin and their flesh and their dung shall be consumed in fire. ²⁸ The

^a Or the cover

^b Or treaty, or testament; Heb *eduth*

^c Meaning of Heb uncertain

^d Traditionally a scapegoat

one who burns them shall wash his clothes and bathe his body in water, and afterward may come into the camp.

29 This shall be a statute to you forever: In the seventh month, on the tenth day of the month, you shall deny yourselves,^a and shall do no work, neither the citizen nor the alien who resides among you. ³⁰For on this day atonement shall be made for you, to cleanse you; from all your sins you shall be clean before the LORD. ³¹It is a sabbath of complete rest to you, and you shall deny yourselves;^a it is a statute forever. ³²The

priest who is anointed and consecrated as priest in his father's place shall make atonement, wearing the linen vestments, the holy vestments. ³³He shall make atonement for the sanctuary, and he shall make atonement for the tent of meeting and for the altar, and he shall make atonement for the priests and for all the people of the assembly. ³⁴This shall be an everlasting statute for you, to make atonement for the people of Israel once in the year for all their sins. And Moses did as the LORD had commanded him.

Read Leviticus 17

This chapter marks the beginning of the Holiness Code (chapters 17–26), laws regulating both ritual and moral conduct. The sacredness of blood is highlighted here. The life of every living body is the blood; as the sign of life the blood is sacred. The butchering of an animal for its meat has a sacrificial character. Consequently, it is to be executed at the sanctuary. The sacrifice of an animal is a symbolic act that substitutes the animal's life for the life of the offerer. Anyone guilty of bloodshed has committed a capital crime.

Reflect: “You shall be holy, for I the LORD your God am holy” (Lev 19:2; see Mt 5:48) is a perfect summary of the Holiness Code, and it affects every aspect of one's life.

Pray: Pray that we may take seriously the body of laws that constitute the Holiness Code.

Act: Be holy as God is holy.

The Slaughtering of Animals

17 The LORD spoke to Moses: ²Speak to Aaron and his sons and to all the people of Israel and say to them: This is what the LORD has commanded. ³If anyone of the house of Israel slaughters an ox or a lamb or a goat in the camp, or slaughters it outside the camp, ⁴and does not bring it to the entrance of the tent of meeting, to present it as an offering to the LORD before the tabernacle of the LORD, he shall be held guilty of bloodshed; he has shed blood, and he shall be cut off from the people. ⁵This is in order that the people of Israel may bring their sacrifices that they offer in the open field, that they may bring them to the LORD, to the priest at the entrance of the tent of meeting, and offer them as sacrifices of well-being to the LORD. ⁶The priest shall dash the blood against the altar of the LORD at the entrance of the tent of meeting, and turn the fat into smoke as a pleasing odor to the LORD, ⁷so that they may no longer offer their sacrifices for goat-demons, to whom they prostitute themselves. This shall be a statute forever to them throughout their generations.

⁸And say to them further: Anyone of the house of Israel or of the aliens who reside among them who offers a burnt offering or sacrifice, ⁹and does not bring it to the entrance of the tent of meeting, to sacrifice it to the LORD, shall be cut off from the people.

Eating Blood Prohibited

¹⁰If anyone of the house of Israel or of the aliens who reside among them eats any blood, I will set my face against that person who eats blood, and will cut that person off from the people. ¹¹For the life of the flesh is in the blood; and I have given it to you for making atonement for your lives on the altar; for, as life, it

^a Or shall fast

is the blood that makes atonement. ¹² Therefore I have said to the people of Israel: No person among you shall eat blood, nor shall any alien who resides among you eat blood. ¹³ And anyone of the people of Israel, or of the aliens who reside among them, who hunts down an animal or bird that may be eaten shall pour out its blood and cover it with earth.

¹⁴ For the life of every creature—its blood is its life; therefore I have said to the

people of Israel: You shall not eat the blood of any creature, for the life of every creature is its blood; whoever eats it shall be cut off. ¹⁵ All persons, citizens or aliens, who eat what dies of itself or what has been torn by wild animals, shall wash their clothes, and bathe themselves in water, and be unclean until the evening; then they shall be clean. ¹⁶ But if they do not wash themselves or bathe their body, they shall bear their guilt.

Read Leviticus 18–20

Holiness is a separation from the ordinary or profane. It also implies a relationship with Yahweh. These chapters underscore the sanctity of sex. Marriage is forbidden between a man and a woman of specified degrees of relationship. Incestuous relationships are prohibited, as are male homosexuality and bestiality. Molech, a Canaanite god, is associated with child sacrifice which is forbidden by the Holiness Code. Note especially 19:2: Be holy, for I the LORD your God am holy. "Holiness is the life of godliness. Israel acquires holiness by obeying the commandments. Stealing, lying, and swearing falsely are forbidden. Loving one's neighbor as oneself refers to concrete and not abstract love, that is, it means doing something for one's neighbor, including aliens (note Lev 19:34). This is the second most important commandment.

Reflect: Make no mistake in thinking that sin in the area of sexuality is the only sin.

Pray: We pray to remember the Holiness Code.

Act: Let us make neighborliness the center of our lives.

Sexual Relations

18 The LORD spoke to Moses, saying: ² Speak to the people of Israel and say to them: I am the LORD your God. ³ You shall not do as they do in the land of Egypt, where you lived, and you shall not do as they do in the land of Canaan, to which I am bringing you. You shall not follow their statutes. ⁴ My ordinances you shall observe and my statutes you shall keep, following them: I am the LORD your God. ⁵ You shall keep my statutes and my ordinances; by doing so one shall live: I am the LORD.

⁶ None of you shall approach anyone near of kin to uncover nakedness: I am the LORD. ⁷ You shall not uncover the nakedness of your father, which is the nakedness of your mother; she is your mother, you shall not uncover her nakedness. ⁸ You shall not uncover the nakedness of your father's wife; it is the nakedness of your father. ⁹ You shall not uncover the nakedness of your sister, your father's daughter or your mother's daughter, whether born at home or born abroad. ¹⁰ You shall not uncover the nakedness of your son's daughter or of your daughter's daughter, for their nakedness is your own nakedness. ¹¹ You shall not uncover the nakedness of your father's wife's daughter, begotten by your father, since she is your sister. ¹² You shall not uncover the nakedness of your father's sister; she is your father's flesh. ¹³ You shall not uncover the nakedness of your mother's sister, for she is your mother's flesh. ¹⁴ You shall not uncover the nakedness of your father's brother, that is, you shall not approach his wife; she is your aunt. ¹⁵ You shall not uncover the nakedness of your daughter-in-law: she is your son's wife; you shall not uncover her nakedness. ¹⁶ You shall not uncover the nakedness of your brother's wife; it is your brother's nakedness. ¹⁷ You shall not uncover the nakedness of a woman and her daughter, and you shall not take^a her son's daughter or her daughter's daughter to uncover her nakedness; they are your^b

^a Or marry

^b Gk: Heb lacks your

flesh; it is depravity. ¹⁸ And you shall not take^a a woman as a rival to her sister, uncovering her nakedness while her sister is still alive.

¹⁹ You shall not approach a woman to uncover her nakedness while she is in her menstrual uncleanness. ²⁰ You shall not have sexual relations with your kinsman's wife, and defile yourself with her. ²¹ You shall not give any of your offspring to sacrifice them^b to Molech, and so profane the name of your God: I am the LORD. ²² You shall not lie with a male as with a woman; it is an abomination. ²³ You shall not have sexual relations with any animal and defile yourself with it, nor shall any woman give herself to an animal to have sexual relations with it: it is perversion.

²⁴ Do not defile yourselves in any of these ways, for by all these practices the

nations I am casting out before you have defiled themselves. ²⁵ Thus the land became defiled; and I punished it for its iniquity, and the land vomited out its inhabitants. ²⁶ But you shall keep my statutes and my ordinances and commit none of these abominations, either the citizen or the alien who resides among you ²⁷ (for the inhabitants of the land, who were before you, committed all of these abominations, and the land became defiled); ²⁸ otherwise the land will vomit you out for defiling it, as it vomited out the nation that was before you. ²⁹ For whoever commits any of these abominations shall be cut off from their people. ³⁰ So keep my charge not to commit any of these abominations that were done before you, and not to defile yourselves by them: I am the LORD your God.

Ritual and Moral Holiness

19 The LORD spoke to Moses, saying:
² Speak to all the congregation of the people of Israel and say to them: You shall be holy, for I the LORD your God am holy. ³ You shall each revere your mother and father, and you shall keep my sabbaths: I am the LORD your God. ⁴ Do not turn to idols or make cast images for yourselves: I am the LORD your God.

⁵ When you offer a sacrifice of well-being to the LORD, offer it in such a way that it is acceptable in your behalf. ⁶ It shall be eaten on the same day you offer it, or on the next day; and anything left over until the third day shall be consumed in fire. ⁷ If it is eaten at all on the third day, it is an abomination; it will not be acceptable. ⁸ All who eat it shall be subject to punishment, because they have profaned what is holy to the LORD; and any such person shall be cut off from the people.

⁹ When you reap the harvest of your land, you shall not reap to the very edges of your field, or gather the gleanings of your harvest. ¹⁰ You shall not strip your vineyard bare, or gather the fallen grapes of your vineyard; you shall leave them for the poor and the alien: I am the LORD your God.

¹¹ You shall not steal; you shall not deal falsely; and you shall not lie to one another. ¹² And you shall not swear falsely by my name, profaning the name of your God: I am the LORD.

¹³ You shall not defraud your neighbor; you shall

^a Or marry

^b Heb to pass them over

not steal; and you shall not keep for yourself the wages of a laborer until morning. ¹⁴You shall not revile the deaf or put a stumbling block before the blind; you shall fear your God: I am the LORD.

¹⁵You shall not render an unjust judgment; you shall not be partial to the poor or defer to the great: with justice you shall judge your neighbor. ¹⁶You shall not go around as a slanderer^a among your people, and you shall not profit by the blood^b of your neighbor: I am the LORD.

¹⁷You shall not hate in your heart anyone of your kin; you shall reprove your neighbor, or you will incur guilt yourself. ¹⁸You shall not take vengeance or bear a grudge against any of your people, but you shall love your neighbor as yourself: I am the LORD.

¹⁹You shall keep my statutes. You shall not let your animals breed with a different kind; you shall not sow your field with two kinds of seed; nor shall you put on a garment made of two different materials.

²⁰If a man has sexual relations with a woman who is a slave, designated for another man but not ransomed or given her freedom, an inquiry shall be held. They shall not be put to death, since she has not been freed; ²¹but he shall bring a guilt offering for himself to the LORD, at the entrance of the tent of meeting, a ram as guilt offering. ²²And the priest shall make atonement for him with the ram of guilt offering before the LORD for his sin that he committed; and the sin he committed shall be forgiven him.

²³When you come into the land and plant all kinds of trees for food, then you

shall regard their fruit as forbidden;^c three years it shall be forbidden^d to you, it must not be eaten. ²⁴In the fourth year all their fruit shall be set apart for rejoicing in the LORD. ²⁵But in the fifth year you may eat of their fruit, that their yield may be increased for you: I am the LORD your God.

²⁶You shall not eat anything with its blood. You shall not practice augury or witchcraft. ²⁷You shall not round off the hair on your temples or mar the edges of your beard. ²⁸You shall not make any gashes in your flesh for the dead or tattoo any marks upon you: I am the LORD.

²⁹Do not profane your daughter by making her a prostitute, that the land not become prostituted and full of depravity. ³⁰You shall keep my sabbaths and reverence my sanctuary: I am the LORD.

³¹Do not turn to mediums or wizards; do not seek them out, to be defiled by them: I am the LORD your God.

³²You shall rise before the aged, and defer to the old; and you shall fear your God: I am the LORD.

³³When an alien resides with you in your land, you shall not oppress the alien. ³⁴The alien who resides with you shall be to you as the citizen among you; you shall love the alien as yourself, for you were aliens in the land of Egypt: I am the LORD your God.

³⁵You shall not cheat in measuring length, weight, or quantity. ³⁶You shall have honest balances, honest weights, an honest ephah, and an honest hin: I am the LORD your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt. ³⁷You shall keep all my statutes and all my ordinances, and observe them: I am the LORD.

Penalties for Violations of Holiness

20 The LORD spoke to Moses, saying: ²Say further to the people of Israel:

Any of the people of Israel, or of the aliens who reside in Israel, who give any of their offspring to Molech shall be put to death; the people of the land shall stone them to death. ³I myself will set my face against them, and will cut them off from the people, because they have given of their offspring to Molech, defiling my

^a Meaning of Heb uncertain

^b Heb *stand against the blood*

^c Heb *as their uncircumcision*

^d Heb *uncircumcision*

sanctuary and profaning my holy name. ⁴And if the people of the land should ever close their eyes to them, when they give of their offspring to Molech, and do not put them to death, ⁵I myself will set my face against them and against their family, and will cut them off from among their people, them and all who follow them in prostituting themselves to Molech.

⁶If any turn to mediums and wizards, prostituting themselves to them, I will set my face against them, and will cut them off from the people. ⁷Consecrate yourselves therefore, and be holy; for I am the LORD your God. ⁸Keep my statutes, and observe them; I am the LORD; I sanctify you. ⁹All who curse father or mother shall be put to death; having cursed father or mother, their blood is upon them.

¹⁰If a man commits adultery with the wife of^a his neighbor, both the adulterer and the adulteress shall be put to death. ¹¹The man who lies with his father's wife has uncovered his father's nakedness; both of them shall be put to death; their blood is upon them. ¹²If a man lies with his daughter-in-law, both of them shall be put to death; they have committed perversion, their blood is upon them. ¹³If a man lies with a male as with a woman, both of them have committed an abomination; they shall be put to death; their blood is upon them. ¹⁴If a man takes a wife and her mother also, it is depravity; they shall be burned to death, both he and they, that there may be no depravity among you. ¹⁵If a man has sexual relations with an animal, he shall be put to death; and you shall kill the animal. ¹⁶If a woman approaches any animal and has sexual relations with it, you shall kill the woman and the animal; they shall be put to death, their blood is upon them.

¹⁷If a man takes his sister, a daughter of his father or a daughter of his mother,

and sees her nakedness, and she sees his nakedness, it is a disgrace, and they shall be cut off in the sight of their people; he has uncovered his sister's nakedness, he shall be subject to punishment. ¹⁸If a man lies with a woman having her sickness and uncovers her nakedness, he has laid bare her flow and she has laid bare her flow of blood; both of them shall be cut off from their people. ¹⁹You shall not uncover the nakedness of your mother's sister or of your father's sister, for that is to lay bare one's own flesh; they shall be subject to punishment. ²⁰If a man lies with his uncle's wife, he has uncovered his uncle's nakedness; they shall be subject to punishment; they shall die childless. ²¹If a man takes his brother's wife, it is impurity; he has uncovered his brother's nakedness; they shall be childless.

²²You shall keep all my statutes and all my ordinances, and observe them, so that the land to which I bring you to settle in may not vomit you out. ²³You shall not follow the practices of the nation that I am driving out before you. Because they did all these things, I abhorred them. ²⁴But I have said to you: You shall inherit their land, and I will give it to you to possess, a land flowing with milk and honey. I am the LORD your God; I have separated you from the peoples. ²⁵You shall therefore make a distinction between the clean animal and the unclean, and between the unclean bird and the clean; you shall not bring abomination on yourselves by animal or by bird or by anything with which the ground teems, which I have set apart for you to hold unclean. ²⁶You shall be holy to me; for I the LORD am holy, and I have separated you from the other peoples to be mine.

²⁷A man or a woman who is a medium or a wizard shall be put to death; they shall be stoned to death, their blood is upon them.

The Holiness of Priests

21 The LORD said to Moses: Speak to the priests, the sons of Aaron, and say to them:

No one shall defile himself for a dead person among his relatives, ²except for his nearest kin: his mother, his

^a Heb repeats *if a man commits adultery with the wife of*

Read Leviticus 21

The sanctity of the priesthood is the subject of this chapter. Priests are required to be holy. A priest shall marry only a virgin and he is to have no contact with the dead (such as preparing a corpse for burial), with the exception of close family members. Mourning rites (shaving or lacerating) are forbidden, and physical irregularities disqualify a candidate for the priesthood.

Reflect: There is a greater degree of holiness imposed on the leaders than on the laity.

Pray: Pray that all members of the community will make a contribution to the life of the community in terms of their place in it.

Act: We need to act with a holiness commensurate with our place in the community.

father, his son, his daughter, his brother; ³ likewise, for a virgin sister, close to him because she has had no husband, he may defile himself for her. ⁴ But he shall not defile himself as a husband among his people and so profane himself. ⁵ They shall not make bald spots upon their heads, or shave off the edges of their beards, or make any gashes in their flesh. ⁶ They shall be holy to their God, and not profane the name of their God; for they offer the LORD's offerings by fire, the food of their God; therefore they shall be holy. ⁷ They shall not marry a prostitute or a woman who has been defiled; neither shall they marry a woman divorced from her husband. For they are holy to their God, ⁸ and you shall treat them as holy, since they offer the food of your God; they shall be holy to you, for I the LORD, I who sanctify you, am holy. ⁹ When the daughter of a priest profanes herself through prostitution, she profanes her father; she shall be burned to death.

¹⁰ The priest who is exalted above his fellows, on whose head the anointing oil has been poured and who has been consecrated to wear the vestments, shall not dishevel his hair, nor tear his vestments. ¹¹ He shall not go where there is a dead body; he shall not defile himself even for his father or mother. ¹² He shall not go outside the sanctuary and thus profane the sanctuary of his God; for the consecration of the anointing oil of his God is upon him: I am the LORD. ¹³ He shall marry only a woman who is a virgin. ¹⁴ A widow, or a divorced woman, or a woman who has been defiled, a prostitute, these he shall not marry. He shall marry a virgin of his own kin, ¹⁵ that he may not profane his offspring among his kin; for I am the LORD; I sanctify him.

¹⁶ The LORD spoke to Moses, saying: ¹⁷ Speak to Aaron and say: No one of your offspring throughout their generations who has a blemish may approach to offer the food of his God. ¹⁸ For no one who has a blemish shall draw near, one who is blind or lame, or one who has a mutilated face or a limb too long, ¹⁹ or one who has a broken foot or a broken hand, ²⁰ or a hunchback, or a dwarf, or a man with a blemish in his eyes or an itching disease or scabs or crushed testicles. ²¹ No descendant of Aaron the priest who has a blemish shall come near to offer the LORD's offerings by fire; since he has a blemish, he shall not come near to offer the food of his God. ²² He may eat the food of his God, of the most holy as well as of the holy. ²³ But he shall not come near the curtain or approach the altar, because he has a blemish, that he may not profane my sanctuaries; for I am the LORD; I sanctify them. ²⁴ Thus Moses spoke to Aaron and to his sons and to all the people of Israel.

Read Leviticus 22

This chapter deals with sacrificial banquets. Sacred donations include all sacrifices and offerings to the sanctuary. A distinction is made between acceptable and unacceptable victims. Only unblemished males are acceptable. Divine holiness in Israel's midst guarantees divine presence in Israel.

Reflect: Offering God our best is what is expected. God's name is profaned when our lives are lacking in holiness.

Pray: Pray that we may have respect for the sacred offerings we make to the Lord.

Act: Take care not to profane God's name in speech or in action.

The Use of Holy Offerings

22 The LORD spoke to Moses, saying: ²Direct Aaron and his sons to deal carefully with the sacred donations of the people of Israel, which they dedicate to me, so that they may not profane my holy name; I am the LORD. ³Say to them: If anyone among all your offspring throughout your generations comes near the sacred donations, which the people of Israel dedicate to the LORD, while he is in a state of uncleanness, that person shall be cut off from my presence: I am the LORD. ⁴No one of Aaron's offspring who has a leprous^a disease or suffers a discharge may eat of the sacred donations until he is clean. Whoever touches anything made unclean by a corpse or a man who has had an emission of semen, ⁵and whoever touches any swarming thing by which he may be made unclean or any human being by whom he may be made unclean—whatever his uncleanness may be—⁶the person who touches any such shall be unclean until evening and shall not eat of the sacred donations unless he has washed his body in water. ⁷When the sun sets he shall be clean; and afterward he may eat of the sacred donations, for they are his food. ⁸That which died or was torn by wild animals he shall not eat, becoming unclean by it: I am the LORD. ⁹They shall keep my charge, so that they may not incur guilt and die in the sanctuary^b for having profaned it: I am the LORD; I sanctify them.

¹⁰No lay person shall eat of the sacred donations. No bound or hired servant of the priest shall eat of the sacred donations; ¹¹but if a priest acquires anyone by purchase, the person may eat of them; and those that are born in his house may eat of his food. ¹²If a priest's daughter marries a layman, she shall not eat of the offering of the sacred donations; ¹³but if a priest's daughter is widowed or divorced, without offspring, and returns to her father's house, as in her youth, she may eat of her father's food. No lay person shall eat of it. ¹⁴If a man eats of the sacred donation unintentionally, he shall add one-fifth of its value to it, and give the sacred donation to the priest. ¹⁵No one shall profane the sacred donations of the people of Israel, which they offer to the LORD, ¹⁶causing them to bear guilt requiring a guilt offering, by eating their sacred donations: for I am the LORD; I sanctify them.

Acceptable Offerings

¹⁷The LORD spoke to Moses, saying: ¹⁸Speak to Aaron and his sons and all the people of Israel and say to them: When anyone of the house of Israel or of the aliens residing in Israel presents an offering, whether in payment of a vow or as a freewill offering that is offered

^a A term for several skin diseases; precise meaning uncertain

^b Vg: Heb incur guilt for it and die in it

to the LORD as a burnt offering, ¹⁹ to be acceptable in your behalf it shall be a male without blemish, of the cattle or the sheep or the goats. ²⁰ You shall not offer anything that has a blemish, for it will not be acceptable in your behalf.

²¹ When anyone offers a sacrifice of well-being to the LORD, in fulfillment of a vow or as a freewill offering, from the herd or from the flock, to be acceptable it must be perfect; there shall be no blemish in it. ²² Anything blind, or injured, or maimed, or having a discharge or an itch or scabs—these you shall not offer to the LORD or put any of them on the altar as offerings by fire to the LORD. ²³ An ox or a lamb that has a limb too long or too short you may present for a freewill offering; but it will not be accepted for a vow. ²⁴ Any animal that has its testicles bruised or crushed or torn or cut, you shall not offer to the LORD; such you shall not do within your land, ²⁵ nor shall you accept any such animals from a for-

eigner to offer as food to your God; since they are mutilated, with a blemish in them, they shall not be accepted in your behalf.

²⁶ The LORD spoke to Moses, saying: ²⁷ When an ox or a sheep or a goat is born, it shall remain seven days with its mother, and from the eighth day on it shall be acceptable as the LORD's offering by fire. ²⁸ But you shall not slaughter, from the herd or the flock, an animal with its young on the same day. ²⁹ When you sacrifice a thanksgiving offering to the LORD, you shall sacrifice it so that it may be acceptable in your behalf. ³⁰ It shall be eaten on the same day; you shall not leave any of it until morning: I am the LORD.

³¹ Thus you shall keep my commandments and observe them: I am the LORD. ³² You shall not profane my holy name, that I may be sanctified among the people of Israel: I am the LORD; I sanctify you, ³³ I who brought you out of the land of Egypt to be your God: I am the LORD.

Appointed Festivals

23 The LORD spoke to Moses, saying: ² Speak to the people of Israel and say to them: These are the appointed festivals of the LORD that you shall proclaim as holy convocations, my appointed festivals.

The Sabbath, Passover, and Unleavened Bread

³ Six days shall work be done; but the seventh day is a sabbath of complete rest, a holy convocation; you shall do no work: it is a sabbath to the LORD throughout your settlements.

⁴ These are the appointed festivals of the LORD, the holy convocations, which you shall celebrate at the time appointed for them. ⁵ In the first month, on the fourteenth day of the month, at twilight,^a there shall be a passover offering to the LORD, ⁶ and on the fifteenth day of the same month is the festival of unleavened bread to the LORD; seven days you shall eat unleavened bread. ⁷ On the first day you shall have a holy convocation; you shall not work at your occupations. ⁸ For seven days you shall present the LORD's offerings by fire; on the seventh day there shall be a holy convocation: you shall not work at your occupations.

The Offering of First Fruits

⁹ The LORD spoke to Moses: ¹⁰ Speak to the people

^a Heb *between the two evenings*

Read Leviticus 23

In the ritual calendar the festivals are ordered according to the agricultural year. Holy days are based on the lunar calendar, and all festivals begin in the evening. The three major festivals are Passover, Pentecost and Tabernacles. Passover, combined with the feast of Unleavened Bread, was celebrated continuously for seven days during which nothing leavened could be eaten. Pentecost, celebrated fifty days after Passover, was also known as the festival of Weeks. Pentecost was a thanksgiving feast observed at the end of the grain harvest. Later it commemorated the giving of the law at Sinai. Booths (or Tabernacles) was a seven-day festival during which people lived in huts. It celebrated the final harvest and reminded the people of divine providence. New Year's day (Rosh Ha-shanah) was unknown before the beginning of the Christian era.

Reflect: In addition to holy people and holy objects, there are holy times. Consider the significance of the festivals just mentioned.

Pray: Pray that our observance of religious festivals will give us a deeper appreciation of their origin and meaning.

Act: Act always with the conduct appropriate to the religious festivals being celebrated in your community.

of Israel and say to them: When you enter the land that I am giving you and you reap its harvest, you shall bring the sheaf of the first fruits of your harvest to the priest. ¹¹ He shall raise the sheaf before the LORD, that you may find acceptance; on the day after the sabbath the priest shall raise it. ¹² On the day when you raise the sheaf, you shall offer a lamb a year old, without blemish, as a burnt offering to the LORD. ¹³ And the grain offering with it shall be two-tenths of an ephah of choice flour mixed with oil, an offering by fire of pleasing odor to the LORD; and the drink offering with it shall be of wine, one-fourth of a hin. ¹⁴ You shall eat no bread or parched grain or fresh ears until that very day, until you have brought the offering of your God: it is a statute forever throughout your generations in all your settlements.

The Festival of Weeks

¹⁵ And from the day after the sabbath, from the day on which you bring the sheaf of the elevation offering, you shall count off seven weeks; they shall be complete. ¹⁶ You shall count until the day after the seventh sabbath, fifty days; then you shall present an offering of new grain to the LORD. ¹⁷ You shall bring from your settlements two loaves of bread as an elevation offering, each made of two-tenths of an ephah; they shall be of choice flour, baked with leaven, as first fruits to the LORD. ¹⁸ You shall present with the bread seven lambs a year old without blemish, one young bull, and two rams; they shall be a burnt offering to the LORD, along with their grain offering and their drink offerings, an offering by fire of pleasing odor to the LORD. ¹⁹ You shall also offer one male goat for a sin offering, and two male lambs a year old as a sacrifice of well-being. ²⁰ The priest shall raise them with the bread of the first fruits as an elevation offering before the LORD, together with the two lambs; they shall be holy to the LORD for the priest. ²¹ On that same day you shall make proclamation; you shall hold a holy convocation; you shall not work at your occupations. This is a statute forever in all your settlements throughout your generations.

²² When you reap the harvest of your land, you shall not reap to the very edges of your field, or gather the gleanings of your harvest; you shall leave them for the poor and for the alien: I am the LORD your God.

The Festival of Trumpets

²³ The LORD spoke to Moses, saying: ²⁴ Speak to the people of Israel, saying: In the seventh month, on the first day of the month, you shall observe a day of complete rest, a holy convocation commemorated with trumpet blasts. ²⁵ You shall not work at your occupa-

tions; and you shall present the LORD's offering by fire.

The Day of Atonement

26 The LORD spoke to Moses, saying: 27 Now, the tenth day of this seventh month is the day of atonement; it shall be a holy convocation for you: you shall deny yourselves^a and present the LORD's offering by fire; 28 and you shall do no work during that entire day; for it is a day of atonement, to make atonement on your behalf before the LORD your God. 29 For anyone who does not practice self-denial^b during that entire day shall be cut off from the people. 30 And anyone who does any work during that entire day, such a one I will destroy from the midst of the people. 31 You shall do no work: it is a statute forever throughout your generations in all your settlements. 32 It shall be to you a sabbath of complete rest, and you shall deny yourselves;^a on the ninth day of the month at evening, from evening to evening you shall keep your sabbath.

The Festival of Booths

33 The LORD spoke to Moses, saying: 34 Speak to the people of Israel, saying: On the fifteenth day of this seventh month, and lasting seven days, there shall be the festival of booths^c to the LORD. 35 The first day shall be a holy convocation; you shall not work at your occupations. 36 Seven days you shall present the LORD's offerings by fire; on the eighth day you shall observe a

holy convocation and present the LORD's offerings by fire; it is a solemn assembly; you shall not work at your occupations.

37 These are the appointed festivals of the LORD, which you shall celebrate as times of holy convocation, for presenting to the LORD offerings by fire—burnt offerings and grain offerings, sacrifices and drink offerings, each on its proper day—³⁸ apart from the sabbaths of the LORD, and apart from your gifts, and apart from all your votive offerings, and apart from all your freewill offerings, which you give to the LORD.

39 Now, the fifteenth day of the seventh month, when you have gathered in the produce of the land, you shall keep the festival of the LORD, lasting seven days; a complete rest on the first day, and a complete rest on the eighth day. 40 On the first day you shall take the fruit of majestic^d trees, branches of palm trees, boughs of leafy trees, and willows of the brook; and you shall rejoice before the LORD your God for seven days. 41 You shall keep it as a festival to the LORD seven days in the year; you shall keep it in the seventh month as a statute forever throughout your generations. 42 You shall live in booths for seven days; all that are citizens in Israel shall live in booths, 43 so that your generations may know that I made the people of Israel live in booths when I brought them out of the land of Egypt: I am the LORD your God.

44 Thus Moses declared to the people of Israel the appointed festivals of the LORD.

The Lamp

24 The LORD spoke to Moses, saying: 2 Command the people of Israel to bring you pure oil of beaten olives for the lamp, that a light may be kept burning regularly. 3 Aaron shall set it up in the tent of meeting, outside the curtain of the covenant,^e to burn from evening to morning before the LORD regularly; it shall be a statute forever throughout your generations. 4 He shall set up the lamps on the lampstand of pure gold^f before the LORD regularly.

The Bread for the Tabernacle

5 You shall take choice flour, and bake twelve loaves

^a Or shall fast

^b Or does not fast

^c Or tabernacles: Heb succoth

^d Meaning of Heb uncertain

^e Or treaty, or testament; Heb eduth

^f Heb pure lampstand

Read Leviticus 24

The sanctuary light (lamp) was a seven-branched lampstand depicted as a stylized tree of life. The showbread, fresh bread prepared for each sabbath, consisted of twelve wheat loaves placed before God as a sacrificial offering, to be eaten only by the priests. The punishment for blasphemy was stoning and whoever killed another person was to be executed. The law of retaliation (*lex talionis*) limits the retaliation in accordance with the severity of the crime.

Reflect: The lampstand is a symbol of the people as “light to the nations.” Both Old and New Testament use the expression, “You are the light of the world.”

Pray: Pray that we may be disinclined to practice any kind of retaliation.

Act: All of us should remember our call to be a light to the nations.

of it; two-tenths of an ephah shall be in each loaf. ⁶You shall place them in two rows, six in a row, on the table of pure gold.^a ⁷You shall put pure frankincense with each row, to be a token offering for the bread, as an offering by fire to the LORD. ⁸Every sabbath day Aaron shall set them in order before the LORD regularly as a commitment of the people of Israel, as a covenant forever. ⁹They shall be for Aaron and his descendants, who shall eat them in a holy place, for they are most holy portions for him from the offerings by fire to the LORD, a perpetual due.

Blasphemy and Its Punishment

10 A man whose mother was an Israelite and whose father was an Egyptian came out among the people of Israel; and the Israelite woman’s son and a certain Israelite began fighting in the camp. ¹¹The Israelite woman’s son blasphemed the Name in a curse. And they brought him to Moses—now his mother’s name was Shelomith, daughter of Dibri, of the tribe of Dan—¹²and they put him in custody, until the decision of the LORD should be made clear to them.

13 The LORD said to Moses, saying: ¹⁴Take the blasphemer outside the camp; and let all who were within hearing lay their hands on his head, and let the whole congregation stone him. ¹⁵And speak to the people of Israel, saying: Anyone who curses God shall bear the sin. ¹⁶One who blasphemes the name of the LORD shall be put to death; the whole congregation shall stone the blasphemer. Aliens as well as citizens, when they blaspheme the Name, shall be put to death. ¹⁷Anyone who kills a human being shall be put to death. ¹⁸Anyone who kills an animal shall make restitution for it, life for life. ¹⁹Anyone who maims another shall suffer the same injury in return: ²⁰fracture for fracture, eye for eye, tooth for tooth; the injury inflicted is the injury to be suffered. ²¹One who kills an animal shall make restitution for it; but one who kills a human being shall be put to death. ²²You shall have one law for the alien and for the citizen: for I am the LORD your God. ²³Moses spoke thus to the people of Israel; and they took the blasphemer outside the camp, and stoned him to death. The people of Israel did as the LORD had commanded Moses.

The Sabbatical Year

25 The LORD spoke to Moses on Mount Sinai, saying: ²Speak to the people of Israel and say to them: When you enter the land that I am giving you, the land shall observe a Sabbath for the LORD. ³Six years you shall sow your field, and six years you shall prune your vineyard,^a and gather in their yield; ⁴but in the sev-

^a Heb pure table

Read Leviticus 25

During the seventh year (sabbatical year), sowing the field, pruning the vineyard, and harvesting the wheat were forbidden. The jubilee year (the fiftieth year) derives its name from Hebrew *yobel*, meaning ram's horn. The horn was blown on this occasion to inaugurate the year. During the jubilee, slaves were set free and landed property was restored to its original owner. The law forbade, at any time, the enslavement of one Israelite to another.

Reflect: All Israelites belong to Yahweh as servants. The land belongs to God and the jubilee legislation is based on love and kindness toward one's neighbor.

Pray: Pray that the spirit of the jubilee year may influence all of our actions throughout every year.

Act: Act with an understanding of the liberty entailed by the requirements of the jubilee year.

enth year there shall be a sabbath of complete rest for the land, a sabbath for the LORD: you shall not sow your field or prune your vineyard. ⁵ You shall not reap the aftergrowth of your harvest or gather the grapes of your unpruned vine: it shall be a year of complete rest for the land. ⁶ You may eat what the land yields during its sabbath—you, your male and female slaves, your hired and your bound laborers who live with you; ⁷ for your livestock also, and for the wild animals in your land all its yield shall be for food.

The Year of Jubilee

⁸ You shall count off seven weeks^a of years, seven times seven years, so that the period of seven weeks of years gives forty-nine years. ⁹ Then you shall have the trumpet sounded loud; on the tenth day of the seventh month—on the day of atonement—you shall have the trumpet sounded throughout all your land. ¹⁰ And you shall hallow the fiftieth year and you shall proclaim liberty throughout the land to all its inhabitants. It shall be a jubilee for you: you shall return, every one of you, to your property and every one of you to your family. ¹¹ That fiftieth year shall be a jubilee for you: you shall not sow, or reap the aftergrowth, or harvest the unpruned vines. ¹² For it is a jubilee; it shall be holy to you: you shall eat only what the field itself produces.

¹³ In this year of jubilee you shall return, every one of you, to your property. ¹⁴ When you make a sale to your neighbor or buy from your neighbor, you shall not cheat one another. ¹⁵ When you buy from your neighbor, you shall pay only for the number of years since the jubilee; the seller shall charge you only for the remaining crop years. ¹⁶ If the years are more, you shall increase the price, and if the years are fewer, you shall diminish the price; for it is a certain number of harvests that are being sold to you. ¹⁷ You shall not cheat one another, but you shall fear your God; for I am the LORD your God.

¹⁸ You shall observe my statutes and faithfully keep my ordinances, so that you may live on the land securely. ¹⁹ The land will yield its fruit, and you will eat your fill and live on it securely. ²⁰ Should you ask, "What shall we eat in the seventh year, if we may not sow or gather in our crop?" ²¹ I will order my blessing for you in the sixth year, so that it will yield a crop for three years. ²² When you sow in the eighth year, you will be eating from the old crop; until the ninth year, when its produce comes in, you shall eat the old. ²³ The land shall not be sold in perpetuity, for the land is mine; with me you are but aliens and tenants. ²⁴ Throughout the land that you hold, you shall provide for the redemption of the land.

²⁵ If anyone of your kin falls into difficulty and sells

^a Or sabbaths

a piece of property, then the next of kin shall come and redeem what the relative has sold. ²⁶If the person has no one to redeem it, but then prospers and finds sufficient means to do so, ²⁷the years since its sale shall be computed and the difference shall be refunded to the person to whom it was sold, and the property shall be returned. ²⁸But if there are not sufficient means to recover it, what was sold shall remain with the purchaser until the year of jubilee; in the jubilee it shall be released, and the property shall be returned.

²⁹If anyone sells a dwelling house in a walled city, it may be redeemed until a year has elapsed since its sale; the right of redemption shall be one year. ³⁰If it is not redeemed before a full year has elapsed, a house that is in a walled city shall pass in perpetuity to the purchaser, throughout the generations; it shall not be released in the jubilee. ³¹But houses in villages that have no walls around them shall be classed as open country; they may be redeemed, and they shall be released in the jubilee. ³²As for the cities of the Levites, the Levites shall forever have the right of redemption of the houses in the cities belonging to them. ³³Such property as may be redeemed from the Levites—houses sold in a city belonging to them—shall be released in the jubilee; because the houses in the cities of the Levites are their possession among the people of Israel. ³⁴But the open land around their cities may not be sold; for that is their possession for all time.

³⁵If any of your kin fall into difficulty and become dependent on you,^a you shall support them; they shall live with you as though resident aliens. ³⁶Do not take interest in advance or otherwise make a profit from them, but fear your God; let them live with you. ³⁷You shall not lend them your money at interest taken in advance, or provide them food at a profit. ³⁸I am the LORD your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt, to give you the land of Canaan, to be your God.

³⁹If any who are dependent on you become so impoverished that they sell themselves to you, you shall not make them serve as slaves. ⁴⁰They shall remain with you as hired or bound laborers. They shall serve with you until the year of the jubilee. ⁴¹Then they and their children with them shall be free from your authority; they shall go back to their own family and return to their ancestral property. ⁴²For they are my servants, whom I brought out of the land of Egypt; they shall not be sold as slaves are sold. ⁴³You shall not rule over them with harshness, but shall fear your God. ⁴⁴As for the male and female slaves whom you may have, it is from the nations around you that you may acquire male and female slaves. ⁴⁵You may also acquire them from among the aliens residing with you, and from their families that are with you, who have been born in your land; and they may be your property. ⁴⁶You may keep them as a possession for your children after you, for them to inherit as property. These you may treat as slaves, but as for your fellow Israelites, no one shall rule over the other with harshness.

⁴⁷If resident aliens among you prosper, and if any of your kin fall into difficulty with one of them and sell themselves to an alien, or to a branch of the alien's family, ⁴⁸after they have sold themselves they shall have the right of redemption; one of their brothers may redeem them, ⁴⁹or their uncle or their uncle's son may redeem them, or anyone of their family who is of their own flesh may redeem them; or if they prosper they may redeem themselves. ⁵⁰They shall compute with the purchaser the total from the year when they sold themselves to the alien until the jubilee year; the price of the sale shall be applied to the number of years: the time they were with the owner shall be rated as the time of a hired laborer. ⁵¹If many years remain, they shall pay for their redemption in proportion to the purchase price; ⁵²and if few years remain until the jubilee year, they

^a Meaning of Heb uncertain

shall compute thus: according to the years involved they shall make payment for their redemption. ⁵³As a laborer hired by the year they shall be under the alien's authority, who shall not, however, rule with harshness over them in your sight. ⁵⁴And if they

have not been redeemed in any of these ways, they and their children with them shall go free in the jubilee year. ⁵⁵For to me the people of Israel are servants; they are my servants whom I brought out from the land of Egypt: I am the LORD your God.

Read Leviticus 26

This chapter lists the rewards for obedience and the punishments for disobedience. The format for blessings and curses is similar to that found in Near Eastern treaties. For the Israelites, treaties were a paradigm for the covenant relationship between God and people. "High places" were local shrines for the worship of foreign gods. The sanctions for disregarding the law outnumber the blessings, but punishment is meant to be medicinal.

Reflect: The Holiness Code is not simply for the regulation of external practices of religion; its primary purpose is internal, namely repentance and change of heart.

Pray: May repentance (change of heart) be of more concern to us than merely mechanical observance of ritual.

Act: Act with a profound appreciation of the formula of the Holiness Code—"You shall be holy, for I the LORD your God am holy."

Rewards for Obedience

26 You shall make for yourselves no idols and erect no carved images or pillars, and you shall not place figured stones in your land, to worship at them; for I am the LORD your God. ²You shall keep my sabbaths and reverence my sanctuary: I am the LORD.

³If you follow my statutes and keep my commandments and observe them faithfully, ⁴I will give you your rains in their season, and the land shall yield its produce, and the trees of the field shall yield their fruit. ⁵Your threshing shall overtake the vintage, and the vintage shall overtake the sowing; you shall eat your bread to the full, and live securely in your land. ⁶And I will grant peace in the land, and you shall lie down, and no one shall make you afraid; I will remove dangerous animals from the land, and no sword shall go through your land. ⁷You shall give chase to your enemies, and they shall fall before you by the sword. ⁸Five of you shall give chase to a hundred, and a hundred of you shall give chase to ten thousand; your enemies shall fall before you by the sword. ⁹I will look with favor upon you and make you fruitful and multiply you; and I will maintain my covenant with you. ¹⁰You shall eat old grain long stored, and you shall have to clear out the old to make way for the new. ¹¹I will place my dwelling in your midst, and I shall not abhor you. ¹²And I will walk among you, and will be your God, and you shall be my people. ¹³I am the LORD your God who brought you out of the land of Egypt, to be their slaves no more; I have broken the bars of your yoke and made you walk erect.

Penalties for Disobedience

¹⁴But if you will not obey me, and do not observe all these commandments, ¹⁵if you spurn my statutes, and abhor my ordinances, so that you will not observe all my commandments, and you break my covenant, ¹⁶I in turn will do this to you: I will bring terror on you; consumption and fever that waste the eyes and cause life to pine away. You shall sow your seed in vain, for your enemies shall eat it. ¹⁷I will set my face against you, and you shall be struck down by your enemies;

your foes shall rule over you, and you shall flee though no one pursues you. ¹⁸ And if in spite of this you will not obey me, I will continue to punish you sevenfold for your sins. ¹⁹ I will break your proud glory, and I will make your sky like iron and your earth like copper. ²⁰ Your strength shall be spent to no purpose: your land shall not yield its produce, and the trees of the land shall not yield their fruit.

²¹ If you continue hostile to me, and will not obey me, I will continue to plague you sevenfold for your sins. ²² I will let loose wild animals against you, and they shall bereave you of your children and destroy your livestock; they shall make you few in number, and your roads shall be deserted.

²³ If in spite of these punishments you have not turned back to me, but continue hostile to me, ²⁴ then I too will continue hostile to you: I myself will strike you sevenfold for your sins. ²⁵ I will bring the sword against you, executing vengeance for the covenant; and if you withdraw within your cities, I will send pestilence among you, and you shall be delivered into enemy hands. ²⁶ When I break your staff of bread, ten women shall bake your bread in a single oven, and they shall dole out your bread by weight; and though you eat, you shall not be satisfied.

²⁷ But if, despite this, you disobey me, and continue hostile to me, ²⁸ I will continue hostile to you in fury; I in turn will punish you myself sevenfold for your sins. ²⁹ You shall eat the flesh of your sons, and you shall eat the flesh of your daughters. ³⁰ I will destroy your high places and cut down your incense altars; I will heap your carcasses on the carcasses of your idols. I will abhor you. ³¹ I will lay your cities waste, will make your sanctuaries desolate, and I will not smell your pleasing odors. ³² I will devastate the land, so that your enemies who come to settle in it shall be appalled at it. ³³ And you I will scatter among the nations, and I will unsheathe the sword

against you; your land shall be a desolation, and your cities a waste.

³⁴ Then the land shall enjoy^a its sabbath years as long as it lies desolate, while you are in the land of your enemies; then the land shall rest, and enjoy^a its sabbath years. ³⁵ As long as it lies desolate, it shall have the rest it did not have on your sabbaths when you were living on it. ³⁶ And as for those of you who survive, I will send faintness into their hearts in the lands of their enemies; the sound of a driven leaf shall put them to flight, and they shall flee as one flees from the sword, and they shall fall though no one pursues. ³⁷ They shall stumble over one another, as if to escape a sword, though no one pursues; and you shall have no power to stand against your enemies. ³⁸ You shall perish among the nations, and the land of your enemies shall devour you. ³⁹ And those of you who survive shall languish in the land of your enemies because of their iniquities; also they shall languish because of the iniquities of their ancestors.

⁴⁰ But if they confess their iniquity and the iniquity of their ancestors, in that they committed treachery against me and, moreover, that they continued hostile to me—⁴¹ so that I, in turn, continued hostile to them and brought them into the land of their enemies; if then their uncircumcised heart is humbled and they make amends for their iniquity, ⁴² then will I remember my covenant with Jacob; I will remember also my covenant with Isaac and also my covenant with Abraham, and I will remember the land. ⁴³ For the land shall be deserted by them, and enjoy^a its sabbath years by lying desolate without them, while they shall make amends for their iniquity, because they dared to spurn my ordinances, and they abhorred my statutes. ⁴⁴ Yet for all that, when they are in the land of their enemies, I will not spurn them, or abhor them so as to destroy them utterly and break my covenant with them; for I am the LORD their God; ⁴⁵ but I will remember in

^a Or *make up for*

their favor the covenant with their ancestors whom I brought out of the land of Egypt in the sight of the nations, to be their God: I am the LORD.

46 These are the statutes and ordinances and laws that the LORD established between himself and the people of Israel on Mount Sinai through Moses.

Read Leviticus 27

This chapter is a later supplement, meaning that it is a separate unit. It deals with dedicatory gifts. The term “under the ban” (*herem*) means something devoted exclusively to God. Tithing was practiced to provide for the requirements of the Levites and the indigent.

Reflect: Holiness lies at the heart of Leviticus; it means the giving of oneself to God.

Pray: Pray that we may respect the property of others, bearing in mind that everything, especially the land, is God’s possession.

Act: Act with a proper understanding of holiness as a share in the life of God.

Votive Offerings

27 The LORD spoke to Moses, saying: ² Speak to the people of Israel and say to them: When a person makes an explicit vow to the LORD concerning the equivalent for a human being, ³ the equivalent for a male shall be: from twenty to sixty years of age the equivalent shall be fifty shekels of silver by the sanctuary shekel. ⁴ If the person is a female, the equivalent is thirty shekels. ⁵ If the age is from five to twenty years of age, the equivalent is twenty shekels for a male and ten shekels for a female. ⁶ If the age is from one month to five years, the equivalent for a male is five shekels of silver, and for a female the equivalent is three shekels of silver. ⁷ And if the person is sixty years old or over, then the equivalent for a male is fifteen shekels, and for a female ten shekels. ⁸ If any cannot afford the equivalent, they shall be brought before the priest and the priest shall assess them; the priest shall assess them according to what each one making a vow can afford.

⁹ If it concerns an animal that may be brought as an offering to the LORD, any such that may be given to the LORD shall be holy. ¹⁰ Another shall not be exchanged or substituted for it, either good for bad or bad for good; and if one animal is substituted for another, both that one and its substitute shall be holy. ¹¹ If it concerns any unclean animal that may not be brought as an offering to the LORD, the animal shall be presented before the priest. ¹² The priest shall assess it: whether good or bad, according to the assessment of the priest, so it shall be. ¹³ But if it is to be redeemed, one-fifth must be added to the assessment.

¹⁴ If a person consecrates a house to the LORD, the priest shall assess it: whether good or bad, as the priest assesses it, so it shall stand. ¹⁵ And if the one who consecrates the house wishes to redeem it, one-fifth shall be added to its assessed value, and it shall revert to the original owner.

¹⁶ If a person consecrates to the LORD any inherited landholding, its assessment shall be in accordance with its seed requirements: fifty shekels of silver to a homer of barley seed. ¹⁷ If the person consecrates the field as of the year of jubilee, that assessment shall stand; ¹⁸ but if the field is consecrated after the jubilee, the priest shall compute the price for it according to the years that remain until the year of jubilee, and the assessment

shall be reduced. ¹⁹And if the one who consecrates the field wishes to redeem it, then one-fifth shall be added to its assessed value, and it shall revert to the original owner; ²⁰but if the field is not redeemed, or if it has been sold to someone else, it shall no longer be redeemable. ²¹But when the field is released in the jubilee, it shall be holy to the LORD as a devoted field; it becomes the priest's holding. ²²If someone consecrates to the LORD a field that has been purchased, which is not a part of the inherited landholding, ²³the priest shall compute for it the proportionate assessment up to the year of jubilee, and the assessment shall be paid as of that day, a sacred donation to the LORD. ²⁴In the year of jubilee the field shall return to the one from whom it was bought, whose holding the land is. ²⁵All assessments shall be by the sanctuary shekel: twenty gerahs shall make a shekel.

²⁶A firstling of animals, however, which as a firstling belongs to the LORD, cannot be consecrated by anyone; whether ox or sheep, it is the LORD's. ²⁷If it is an un-

clean animal, it shall be ransomed at its assessment, with one-fifth added; if it is not redeemed, it shall be sold at its assessment.

²⁸Nothing that a person owns that has been devoted to destruction for the LORD, be it human or animal, or inherited landholding, may be sold or redeemed; every devoted thing is most holy to the LORD. ²⁹No human beings who have been devoted to destruction can be ransomed; they shall be put to death.

³⁰All tithes from the land, whether the seed from the ground or the fruit from the tree, are the LORD's; they are holy to the LORD. ³¹If persons wish to redeem any of their tithes, they must add one-fifth to them. ³²All tithes of herd and flock, every tenth one that passes under the shepherd's staff, shall be holy to the LORD. ³³Let no one inquire whether it is good or bad, or make substitution for it; if one makes substitution for it, then both it and the substitute shall be holy and cannot be redeemed.

³⁴These are the commandments that the LORD gave to Moses for the people of Israel on Mount Sinai.