

# THE PENTATEUCH III: LEVITICUS-NUMBERS

## WEEK 1

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January 15, 2016

# OUTLINE

## INTRODUCTORY MATTERS

## LEVITICUS AND NUMBERS IN CONTEXT

Authorship Basics

Review

Wilderness and the Pentateuch

## HISTORICITY

Tabernacle

Numbering

## SYMBOLS AND TYPES

## COURSE DESCRIPTION

This course is the third of four courses on the Pentateuch. Numbers and Leviticus probably take gold and silver medal in the contest for Books of the Bible least understood by modern Christians. They might switch places in the contest for being the butt of many Christian jokes about the Bible. Nevertheless, Leviticus contains extensive literature on the High Priesthood and the sacrificial system, which is essential to understanding the nature of Christ's atoning work as articulated in the book of Hebrews. Likewise, Numbers contains many lessons concerning the shepherding work of leadership, and God's sovereign appointment thereof. We will also explore the way in which these books elaborate on themes of Seed-Nation, the Name and God's dwelling place developed in Genesis and Exodus.

# COURSE EXPECTATIONS

- ▶ **Attendance** You must attend 4 of 5 classes to receive credit.
- ▶ **Readings** You must turn in at least 3 of 4 of the reading “journals.”

# COURSE OUTLINE

Date	Week	Topic	Reading and Homework
1/13	1	Review & Introduction	–
1/20	2	Sacrifice and Typology	<b>L</b> 1-7; 16-17; <b>N</b> 21
1/27	3	Purity and Holiness	<b>L</b> 11-15;18-27; <b>N</b> 3-9; 15; <b>N</b> 18-19; 28-30; 33-36
2/3	4	Unbelief I: The People	<b>N</b> 1-2; 10-14; 21; 25; 26; 32
2/10	5	Unbelief II: The Leaders	<b>L</b> 8-10, <b>N</b> 12-14; 16-17, 20

Key:

**L**x- Leviticus, chapter x

**N**y- Numbers, chapter y

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# WHY MOSES?

What evidence is there that Moses wrote the Pentateuch?

## THE BIBLICAL CASE FOR MOSES

Here are a few lines of thought that indicate that Moses wrote the Pentateuch with some very small exceptions (final pages of Deuteronomy):

1. The cultural standard at the time was that Moses wrote it and Jesus never challenges that.
2. Jesus makes direct reference to parts of the Pentateuch with remarks like “Moses wrote...” etc. (Mark 7:10, Luke 24:44, John 7:23)
3. There are numerous internal cues that Moses wrote certain sections (Exodus 34:37, Numbers 33:2, Deuteronomy 1:1)



# THE HISTORICAL CASE FOR MOSES

Here is a more “historical” case for Moses:

1. Moses was unanimously believed to be the author through all recorded history until the European Enlightenment.
2. Deuteronomy and 2nd Millenium BC Hittite Suzerain-Vassal Treaties
3. The author and audience are familiar with Egypt and Sinai, and less so with Palestine.
4. Moses and the Criterion of Embarrassment

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# THEMES IN PENTATEUCH

**SEED** The Most Persistent Theme in Genesis

- ▶ Toledot Structure, Genealogies
- ▶ “Be Fruitful and Multiply”
- ▶ Development of the Nation in Exodus

**THE LAND** Canaan is promised to Abraham’s Descendants  
(repeated to Isaac and Jacob)

**THE NAME** God is making himself known to Israel (Ex 6:3)  
and all the nations (Ex 7:5)

**OWNERSHIP** God owns Israel, not Pharaoh

# MAJOR LESSONS IN GENESIS

What are some lessons from Genesis?

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What are some lessons from Genesis?

1. The Fall and Creation: our dominion over the earth is perverted—we toil by it and return to it; our fruitfulness and multiplication is perverted—women suffer in child birth and men and women are alienated.
2. The Fall: suffering is on us (Cf. Gen 3:17 and Romans 8:22)
3. All major characters are liars. This is in contrast with God's fidelity to his own word.
4. God judges but he also saves (Noah:Flood::Believers:Fire)
5. For many characters, frequency of revelation is connected to degree of revelation. (Cf. Abraham and Jacob)

# MAJOR LESSONS IN EXODUS

What are some lessons from Exodus?

# MAJOR LESSONS IN EXODUS

What are some lessons from Exodus?

1. God is supreme over Egypt and its gods
2. God's miraculous displays of power are two steps ahead of the people's grumbling unbelief
3. God desires to dwell among his people

EXO 25:8 Let them construct a sanctuary for Me, that I may dwell among them.

EXO 29:46 They shall know that I am the Lord their God who brought them out of the land of Egypt, that I might dwell among them; I am the Lord their God.

4. ...but He is a holy God (Exodus 20; 32-34)

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# LEVITICUS AS THEOLOGICAL CENTER

As discussed already, Hebrew literature uses the center for emphasis (unlike modern introduction).

- ▶ The Israelites journeyed to Sinai and stayed the longest before 40 year judgment. Sinai is where the narrative pieces of Leviticus take place (Cf. Exodus 19:1; Numbers 10:11-12).
- ▶ Leviticus concerns the ongoing dwelling of God among his people through the functioning tabernacle (Cf. Exodus 29:46).
- ▶ The end of Exodus concerns the construction and assembly of the Tabernacle, the beginning of Numbers concerns its disassembly
- ▶ The Wilderness episodes (Exodus-Numbers) exhibits a concentric pattern with Sinai (Leviticus) at the center.

## CONCENTRIC FORMAT

A	Ex 15:22-25	Provision of Water (Marah)
B	Ex 17:1-7	Water from Rock
C	Ex 17:8-16	Amalekite Battle
D	Ex 18	Relief for Moses
E	Ex 18:27	Moses' In-Laws
F	Ex 19:1-2	Enter Sinai
X		Sinai
F'	Nu 10:10	Exit Sinai
E'	Nu 10:29-32	Moses' In-Laws
D'	Nu 11	Relief for Moses
C'	Nu 14:39-45	Amalekite Battle
B'	Nu 20:1-13	Water from Rock
A'	Nu 21:16-18	Provision of Water (Beer)

## THE CENTER OF LEVITICUS

Leviticus itself has a center, the Day of Atonement:

A	1-7	Sanctuary Laws
B	8-10	Priestly Laws
C	11-15	Personal Laws
X	16	Day of Atonement
C'	17-20	Personal Laws
B'	21-22	Priestly Laws
A'	23-27	Sanctuary Laws

There could be some debate about the labels, but many agree that the Day of Atonement is at the center. Notably, Chapter 16 stands out from the rest in its introduction. All other chapters begin, “The Lord spoke to Moses, saying . . .” (sometimes with Aaron).

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## EGYPTIAN USE OF TENTS

There is abundant evidence that tents were used for religious activities within New Kingdom Egypt (period when Israelites were in captivity).

Ramesses II used a special tent arrangement in his military campaigns very similar to the Hebrews:

1. The width-length ratio of the outer wall is 2:1.
2. The width-length ratio of the inner tent 3:1.
3. Ramesses' tent-structure lay at the center of the camping network

Is there reason to worry about an Egyptian influence in early Hebrew religion?

# MATERIALS AND FEATURES

1. *Acacia*—Only found in Southeastern Israel, but is native to Sinai. (Cf. the Cedar used in temple construction.)
2. *Hides*—The word *t<sup>e</sup>ḥāšîm* (very limited use) is either from the Egyptian leather (*tḥś*) or refers to a very coarse sea hide used in Sinai peninsula. Bottom line: not Palestinian.
3. *Gold*—Many of Hebrew objects of worship have gold foil overlays. Egyptians demonstrate skill in this technique (Tutankhamun's tomb).
4. *Ark*—Portable shrines requiring poles can be found in a variety of Egyptian tombs. Several of them exhibit winged guardian motif as well as a seat for the king.
5. *Misc.*—There are abundant examples of Egyptian loan words appearing in tabernacle descriptions: Acacia, Gold Plate, Turquoise, Amethyst, Priestly Sash, Head Opening for Priestly Robes, etc.

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## THE PROBLEM(S)

There are some puzzles with the extraordinary sizes given in the Exodus and Numbers.

- ▶ Archaeological evidence places estimates of the total population of the Nile Delta was approximately 3.5 million, while the exodus population (when read literally) is between 3-4 million.
- ▶ A force of 600,000 soldiers (even untrained) would probably be able to lead a successful slave revolt
- ▶ Numbers 31:30 puts the division of the plunder at a factor of 1:50, but the actual divisions to follow are all around 1:500.



# GESTURES TOWARDS A SOLUTION

How might we solve these puzzles?

- ▶ Ancient numbering systems can very tricky (Cf. sexagesimal system.) This isn't an option because Egyptian and Semitic people used Decimal Systems.
- ▶ The “problem” word is most likely ‘elep’ (thousand).
- ▶ In Judges 6:15, the same term is translated ‘clan’ or ‘family.’ This is an imprecise term but it shows the word’s semantic range.
- ▶ Cf. English usage of the measurement ‘ounce.’ When I make my coffee in the morning I measure out 4 ounces (volume) which amounts to about 1.41 ounces (weight).

## FUNCTION OF SYMBOLS AND RITUAL

*What then is the essence of religious ritual in the Bible? It is a means of communication between God and man, a drama on a stage watched by human and diving spectators. Old Testament rituals express rituals visually as opposed to verbally. They are the ancient equivalent of television; the ancient equivalent of radio was prophecy and prayer . . . (Wenham, 33)*

## FUNCTION OF SYMBOLS AND RITUAL

*Very few would care for the expense, let alone the messiness of Old Testament sacrifice. It is easy to sing,*

*Just as I am, without one plea,  
But that Thy blood was shed for me;*

*but to bring a whole bull, kill it, skin it, chop it up and then watch the whole lot burn on the altar, would be quite another matter. Yet this was precisely what someone who offered a burnt offering (Lev. 1) was expected to do. Without doubt these Old Testament rituals were a prodigiously powerful teaching medium; the most eloquent modern preacher is dumb by comparison. (Wenham, 34)*

# HERMENEUTICAL CONTROLS

What are some tools we can use in our interpretation to avoid the “whims of imaginative commentators”? (Wenham, 41)

1. Use Explicit Statements of a ritual element’s function! (E.g. Leviticus 16:16)
2. The meaning of an element should be suggested elsewhere in Scripture.
3. Within appropriate limits, (ancient) comparative anthropology can shed some light on certain ritual symbols.
4. Careful analysis of the place of an element within a larger system of rituals (Cf. Hermeneutical Circle)

## REFERENCES

1. Archer, Gleason, L. *Survey of Old Testament Introduction*, Revised and Expanded Edition. Moody Press, 1994.
2. Hoffmeier, James. *Ancient Israel in Sinai: The Evidence for the Authenticity of the Wilderness Tradition*. Oxford University Press, 2011.
3. Morales, L. Michael. *Who Shall Ascend the Mountain of the Lord? A Biblical Theology of the book of Leviticus*. IVP, 2015.
4. Wenham, Gordon J. *Numbers: An Introduction and Commentary*. IVP Academic, 1981.