

Mosaic Covenant. It's a million-dollar phrase, huh? What does it mean? In my words? A deal. God and Moses made a deal. God promised to make the Israelites his treasured possession and a holy nation if they would obey him fully. The Israelites agree to fully obey God. It's a deal. Moses made a sweet deal for the Israelites.

Shortly after they struck the deal, Moses went up to Mount Sinai to receive the Ten Commandments. When he came down from the mountain, he found the Israelites worshipping a golden calf, made by his brother, Aaron, and the people. Worshipping a golden calf they had made with their own hands as their God! Oh, Moses. He called for support from the people to punish the idolaters. Only one tribe came to his aid. His tribe. Only the tribe of Levi, was willing to support him and punish the idolaters. For that...act... of support, the tribe of Levi was set apart for all time. We didn't know what being set apart meant, but we were to find out a few months later.

My name is Nadab of that tribe, the tribe of Levi. I am the oldest son of Aaron, the brother of Moses. Or rather, I *was* the son of Aaron...until God killed me.

Part of the deal that God and Moses made was that the Israelites would obey everything God told them to do. Don't forget that. It turns out that God was very detailed in what he wanted to them to do. His commandments to the Israelites fill page after page after page in your Old Testament. Every detail concerning the priests' duties, feasts, sacrifices, Tabernacle, their clothes, even their health...*everything* laid out in excruciating detail.

You may be thinking to yourself, "God's so picky!" I mean what about the massive effort the priests had to expend in all those details, maybe he could have been more considerate, how do the priests feel about all this work they've suddenly been assigned? I felt exactly the same way. What I didn't realize was that God was trying to set-up a long-term pattern of communication with his people, and it would only succeed if there was 100% transparency and obedience. Another thing I could not have possibly known, until the writer of Hebrews revealed it about fifteen centuries after my death, was that the tabernacle was an exact model of heaven.<sup>1</sup> God was insistent that it and all worship procedures followed his commands precisely.

Let's fast forward to about six or eight months after God and Moses made the deal. Six to eight months, not very long! The Tabernacle is complete, and it is time to consecrate both it and the priests.

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<sup>1</sup> Hebrews 8:5

Even though my father had been a major instigator in the Golden Calf incident, God forgave him. God chose my father and his four sons to be priests over Israel. In a very elaborate ceremony, God had Moses purify the five of us through a ceremonial washing with water. He designated Aaron the high priest by clothing him with a special robe and tunic. He put the ephod garment and breast piece on him. Finally, he placed a turban on Aaron's head, with a sacred gold plate on the front of it. Every step was very detailed.

After consecrating the tabernacle and every single, solitary thing in it, Moses put tunics on all of my brothers and me. He tied sashes around us, and placed caps on our heads. Just as the Lord commanded. Every detail. From that day forward, we were priests. Well, we were priests by name...we just didn't know what to do.

Through Moses, God taught us precisely how to make sacrifices. How to properly take offerings, and accurately follow all of the Lord's commands without error. He told us that our duties were so sacred that if we did not follow his instructions exactly, we would die...and by exactly, I mean *exactly*. Every detail. Or we would die.

Why was God so fanatical about having his instructions followed exactly? He knew that we, the priests, were setting the example others would follow for thousands of years. Any little errors we made would be exaggerated over time until they became giant errors.

After we were consecrated as priests, in front of all of the people, we made sacrifices to the Lord. He was *so* pleased that fire came out of the presence of the Lord and consumed the burnt offerings on the altar. The people were so joyful that God was pleased with their complete obedience, that they fell facedown and worshiped the Lord.

From the first, we priests were maniacs to follow God's instructions perfectly. We certainly had no desire to die because of carelessness. To this day, I still don't know why my brother, and I decided to purposely violate God's instructions. We were prideful, I suppose, but maybe we were just lazy. We were surely being stupid.

Anyway, we were given containers for burning incense, and that incense was required to be burned by fire sourced in a very particular way. But...fire is fire, right? My brother and I knowingly put fire from an alternative source, unauthorized fire, into our containers and offered it to the Lord. We violated the rules of Moses and angered God. Fire came out from the presence of the Lord and burned us to death. To death!

Moses refused to let my father and two remaining brothers mourn openly for us, because that would have made it look like God had done something wrong instead of us. So, my father and brothers stayed at the entrance to the Tabernacle, and continued worshipping God.

I envy Christians. According to your beliefs, you don't have to follow the numerous laws given to Moses for the Hebrews to follow. You have a New Testament that justifies your position for

not following the laws given to the Hebrews through Moses.

Ironically, the book is named, *Hebrews*. The writer of *Hebrews* says that Jesus is able to completely save those who come to God through him, because he intercedes for them.<sup>2</sup> It also says that since Jesus is the perfect high priest, he doesn't have to sacrifice day after day for his sins and the sins of the people. Instead, He sacrificed for their sins once and for all when he offered himself up as the perfect sacrifice.<sup>3</sup>

Because the laws of Moses are not directly binding on Christians, many Christians don't bother to read the book of *Leviticus*. This third book of the Bible sets out detailed instructions of sacrificial offerings and other intricate rules for the Hebrews and their priests to follow. However, since the New Testament writers refer to *Leviticus*, it is to your benefit to know about it and how its principles are applicable to you and your family.

My death, for instance, is one example for you. God is very serious about being honored and worshiped in the appropriate way. And by appropriate, I mean in the way that he has set forth to be worshiped, *not* in the way you feel like you want to offer worship.

*Leviticus* is a lengthy lesson in understanding that worship is all about God and what he wants, not about you and what you want. That doesn't change from the Old Testament to the New Testament.

It is a reminder of a theme that runs from *Genesis* to *Revelation*. God wants to live among people. In *Leviticus*, people are able to do that through appropriate offerings, rituals, and actions that allow the covering of their sins.

*Leviticus* opens with five chapters concerning types of offerings to the Lord. One lesson to be learned from these chapters is that God expects offerings to him to be without flaws. Without blemish is how it's often stated. They are to be the type that God wants, given in a manner that God wants.

Another lesson to be learned from the offerings is that people can sin unintentionally and unknowingly. Even so, it is still sin. That may not square up with your modern notion of fairness, but take it from me, it is something to seriously keep in mind.

After the first five chapters concerning offerings, there are five chapters concerning instructions to the priests, and institutions of the priesthood for Aaron and his sons. This is where you will find my story. God knows that the priests will guide the people on religious matters for many, many centuries. He makes every aspect of their responsibilities perfectly clear.

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<sup>2</sup> Hebrews 7:25

<sup>3</sup> Hebrews 7:26-27

After the five chapters on offerings and five chapters about the priesthood, there are five chapters on cleanliness and uncleanness, and the correct procedures for treating them, or at least dealing with them.

On a practical basis, the Hebrews have moved from a moderate climate with plenty of water, to a desert climate with little water. They have moved from a place where Egyptian masters told them what to do to a time of freedom. They have moved from permanent dwellings to permanent journey. They have moved into a season where a mass of people live in close proximity to one another, and to herds of animals.

Some of the regulations seem to be purely for sanitation and health reasons. Other regulations have a ritual basis for cleanliness before God.

Chapter 16 is about the Day of Atonement and its highly structured and detailed sacrifices. Once a year, the High Priest is to make reparations for himself, the Most Holy Place, the Tabernacle, the altar, and the people. He does this through a sacrifice of a bull to atone for the sins of his family, a goat to atone for the sins of the people, and two rams as burnt sacrifices. Another goat is known as the scapegoat. It is taken in the wilderness and released. This is to be done for the sins, wickedness and rebellion of the Israelites. When all of this is done properly, down to the last detail, the sins of the Israelites for that year are covered. *However*, the sins start piling up again immediately but won't be covered until the next Day of Atonement.

The following ten chapters are about different aspects of personal holiness. In excruciating and exacting detail, God instructs the Israelites about how to live peacefully with one another, and with him. Among other things, these rules of behavior prescribe a life that is significantly different than those of the peoples they live around now, and those they will displace from the Promised Land.

These chapters touch on matters of food, sexual behavior, neighborliness, and crimes. They talk of rules for sacrifices, festivals, and blasphemy. The last chapter in this group explains the benefits of obeying God, and the punishments for disobeying God. When you read these chapters, it makes you wonder...why anybody would consider disobeying God. It also makes you realize that sin must be a very powerful, attractive force.

The last chapter of *Leviticus* should be precious to Christians, because it establishes the concept of redemption. Redemption is the idea that something that belongs to the Lord can be purchased for a reasonable price plus a premium. This exact Old Testament concept does not translate to Christianity, but the *idea* of redemption does.

The New Testament teaches that the sacrifice of Jesus Christ is the necessary price to pay to redeem people from spiritual death. From *Leviticus*, you can infer that Christ had to be sinless to be an acceptable, perfect sacrifice. From *Leviticus*, you see why only a perfect sacrifice is acceptable to a holy God.

Even though Christians are not bound by the rules of Moses that are set out in *Leviticus*, many of the things you learn in *Leviticus* will help you understand the heart and nature of God. And that is a good thing, because, unlike me, you want to make sure you offer God a perfect and pleasing sacrifice. The Apostle Paul says it best, “Offer yourself as a living sacrifice, holy and pleasing to God.”<sup>4</sup> And from the way I see it, it’s your end of the deal, and you definitely want to keep it.

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<sup>4</sup> Romans 12:1