

Under The Fig Tree



WEEK 7

Introduction

Study of the Book of Leviticus gives a foundation for understanding the New Covenant. This is the main point of the Letter to the Hebrews. We have a greater privilege than many pioneers of the faith who went before us. We are able to understand fully what they understood in part. Even Abraham did not receive, in his lifetime, what God promised. His faith was in Yeshua but he did not know Him as we can now know Him. Though Abraham is our example concerning the life of faith, he could only look forward to what we now understand more clearly. Moses was in a similar situation. He was given the Torah but the full manifestation of all that God intended was not revealed to him. Likewise, the Priests called to the ministry of the Tabernacle did not know what God planned as the greater fulfillment of their ministry. Nevertheless, they were all given the privilege of laying down the foundations of teaching about Yeshua. They practiced and taught principles of holiness. Holiness is what God requires and the Scriptures affirm that no person will see the Lord without holiness.

Now we return to the Book of Leviticus. Let us first consider how we should read the laws of Moses. The principle of the New Covenant is that the Law is written on our heart. The Law on the heart leads to holiness from within. Because of our fallen human nature the external practices of the Law, even though they defined how holiness was to be manifest among the Children of Israel, could not reach the heart to change it. We, like Israel, will not achieve holiness through ritual observance of the laws of Moses. However, discipline is not the same as ritual observance. Disciples of Yeshua must be disciplined – discipline is the root of discipleship. Discipline, is required of everyone – discipline with our time, our prayer, our times of study and the way we live our lives. This discipline must come from within and not by dry acts of duty which, by comparison, are dead works.

When we read Leviticus and the other Books of Moses (the Torah), we find that there are hundreds of instructions. Some are positive commands, what *to do*. Some are negative commands, what *not to do*. Jewish tradition says that there are 613 commandments, but there is much more to the Laws of Moses than 613 things to do or not to do! Each one points to a heart principle. In effect the dos and don'ts of the Law are practical teachings about inner realities that the Holy Spirit, through the New Covenant, will put on our hearts. To read the Torah and think that it pleases God if we only perform the external requirements of the laws is very short-sighted. This approach leads to self-righteousness rather than humility.

Therefore, the way to study the Laws of Moses is to read them prayerfully. See what the Holy Spirit says to you, and seeks to build in you. There are some commandments that we *do* because they are so clear. The Ten *Commandments* are not ten *opinions*. We don't need to question them and wonder if they apply or how they apply. Let us learn and do what is already clear. Let it be, however, with the love of God in us that we do not murder or that we do not commit adultery and that we seek to love God with all our heart. After all, which of these commandments would the Holy Spirit cause us to disobey if we

are obedient to His leading? So the greater commandments can be observed without bondage to ritual. For other commandments there will be times of seeking God. All of us learn at a pace suited to God's programme for us as an individual, a family or a community. The the principle of new covenant discipleship is for each person to be persuaded in his own mind. If we are willing learners, the rest follows through the leading of the Holy Spirit – but we *must be willing learners*, taking every jot and tittle of Scripture seriously.

Day 1

Notes on Today's Readings

Leviticus Chapter 9. The Tabernacle was set up on the first day of the Month of Aviv (also called Nissan). This was at the beginning of the second year after the departure from Egypt. On the fourteenth day of this same month, Passover (Pesach in Hebrew) would be celebrated for the first time after the Exodus. On the eighth day of the month the Priesthood was inaugurated. Aaron offered up a burnt offering for himself and for the people. This offering was made in obedience and faith. It pointed to Yeshua, but they would not have known it at this early stage. Moses took Aaron into God's presence and God sent fire to consume the offering. God came to be among His people according to His promise in a dramatic and awesome way. Similarly, on the day of Pentecost recorded in Acts Chapter 2, when the Holy Spirit fell on the disciples. The first time God commissioned the priests of the Old Covenant. The second time He commissioned the priests of the New Covenant.

Chapter 10. God's ways are not our ways. This is an important lesson for all of us. How many times do we misunderstand what God has said, and think we can please God by doing something our own way? How often do we run ahead of God through presumption? The Bible is full of such lessons, and many of them had serious consequences. Even Abraham ran ahead of God, and Ishmael was born. This chapter of Leviticus contains another serious teaching of this kind. Even at the inauguration of the Priesthood – that wonderful moment in time that God first came to dwell among the nation of Israel gathered at Sinai – carelessness and presumption led to death. It may puzzle us why God should consume Aaron's eldest sons with fire – and then tell Aaron that he could not even mourn for them! But it is not for us to tell God what He should be like, any more than for the Priests to decide how to minister before Him. Just think of the consequences of letting Nadab and Abihu make offerings according to their own design. This would distort the image of the Priesthood and its ministry for all generations. Israel would be in danger of going the way of all nations and inventing ideas for themselves as to what pleased God and what He was like. They, above all people, were being used by God to teach the world about Himself. Consider a comparable thing in our day - the rise of false religions and rejection of Yeshua as the *only way* to the Father. This is leading many people astray and to spiritual death. God made His character clear, through Israel, and what His requirements of holiness are. The lesson through the death of Nadab and Abihu is one that Aaron needed to learn. We need to learn from the incident too.

Chapter 11. We come to a chapter that contains the clear list of which animals Israel was allowed to eat. The practical teaching about clean and unclean animals is linked to our physical health. There is also a heart principle pointing to spiritual health. We learn that God requires us to consume only that which is holy. The food we eat teaches us about how we are building our bodies. Should we be like the

unclean animals that gobble up unclean food? Should we feed our bodies on these animals? Should we feed on fish that consumes unclean material at the bottom of lakes and seas and passes this into our bodies? These animals and fish may be useful parts of God's creation but should we poison our bodies with the unclean materials that they absorb? By contrast there are animals that eat carefully, chewing the cud. We should be like these animals concerning spiritual food. We must meditate only on that which is pure and holy. This is like eating a spiritual meal. Just as a cow chews the cud so we must meditate on God's teaching, chewing it over time and again, rejecting the unholy and feeding only on what is pure and true. See how God speaks to you personally as you read this chapter.

Chapter 12. Here we have a teaching on physical hygiene that is also about inner holiness. Within God's laws for Israel are practical issues to consider as well as spiritual lessons. Modern day medical research often confirms that the teaching of the Bible is exactly right. We should not need such confirmation and we should not be surprised that valid science confirms the Bible. We need to be careful to keep our bodies free from harmful bacteria and germs and we discover perfect principles in God's Law. We must be guided by the Holy Spirit and He will show us what to do. Many good principles of hygiene and medical care have been learned by studying what God taught Israel.

There is also spiritual teaching in this chapter. Let us learn to read it in the context of the New Covenant. Read these chapters prayerfully. Do not be headstrong in your interpretations, but be willing disciples, nevertheless. One of the examples from this chapter is circumcision. It has been discovered that the eighth day is the best day to perform this operation, when blood congeals most easily. It has also been discovered to be a good principle of hygiene. Would God have asked Israel to do anything that was not beneficial? It is not a *requirement* of the New Covenant, however. The requirement of the New Covenant is that the spiritual meaning of circumcision be applied in the purification of our hearts. Of itself physical circumcision has no benefit for our salvation from sin.

Day 2

Chapter 13. Once again we have principles of health and hygiene to teach us about inner truths. The Priests were responsible for both the inner and outer health of the Israelites. There are relationships between spiritual health and physical health, but we would be unwise to consider every blemish on our body as a direct result of sin. Sin and sickness are both results of the Fall, but in a general way. Some people who are physically sick *may* have brought it upon themselves through sin, but not always. Sometimes it is someone else's sin that has led to a problem for another person, or simply a general consequence of our fallen race. Sometimes, sickness is to be treated apart from sin. Let us be careful.

Nevertheless, we are to learn lessons about our inner character through matters of physical health. Sin has brought sickness to the world. We need remedies for both sin and physical sickness. We learn our spiritual need through our physical need. When we are sick, sometimes the Lord will heal us through a miraculous answer to prayer and sometimes through principles of hygiene or medical treatment.

Even in our day we have enough physical sickness in the world to remind us of our need for God's help. This continues to teach us spiritual lessons. From this chapter we see how a leper's need for help from God established a foundation on which Yeshua demonstrated the power of God to both heal and to save. So let us consider all aspects of this as we read Chapter 13. Recall how James taught that the Torah is a mirror to our inner being. We look at our body in a mirror and know our physical condition, and this helps us understand our spiritual need. So let us read this chapter with both physical and spiritual health in mind.

Chapter 14. The Covenant promise of God was that if Israel was free of any sin then they would never have any disease. Yet, He also had laws relating to sickness and disease! He knew they would occur. This is a sign that He also knew that Israel would sin. Within the Laws that He gave to Moses was the ability to bring offerings to atone for the sin that brought sickness into the camp. Notice that in verse 33, God refers to times when He Himself brings leprous plague to a house! Sometimes we miss these subtle points of teaching. Why would God do such a thing? We may not fully understand why God Himself brings a plague, but *He* is God and He is teaching us about Himself not asking us to invent ideas about Him. He is who He is.

Now, we must be careful. If someone is sick how did they get sick? Did God bring this to them directly as a result of their sin? We would be unwise to conclude this. Remember the man born blind. We read about him in the Gospel of John. His blindness was not a direct result of his sin or the sin of his parents. There is sin and there is sickness. God knows there will be both. He brought sickness on Israel when they were unfaithful, but on the innocent as well as the guilty. Sometimes a person is sick because of his own sin but not always and not usually. We need to be very discerning.

We recall that James referred to times when elders should be called to pray for a sick person. Such prayer *can* cover both sickness and sin, where there is a direct link, but nowhere do the Scriptures tell us that there is *always* a direct link. How carefully we need to study the Scriptures and seek to grow in maturity, for their application in a variety of circumstances. Chapter 14 of Leviticus reminds us of the time when Yeshua healed some lepers. He sent them to the Priests to fulfill the requirements we find here in Leviticus. When the Priest considered their healing they should have asked who Yeshua really was. He brought healing that only God could bring. Here was evidence that God was in His Son reconciling the world to Himself. Yeshua fulfilled the Law accurately and completely.

Therefore, be careful to pause and consider what Yeshua has done for us. Isaiah 53 is the great chapter that gives a prophetic insight to Yeshua's suffering on the Cross. He suffered for both for our sins and for our diseases. We have both spiritual and physical diseases in this fallen world. Our greatest need is for healing of our spiritual diseases. Yeshua's suffering is in fulfillment of the entire need revealed in Chapter 13 of Leviticus. It is a lesson related to the community in general as well as applying to us individually. In the fallen world, sin and sickness impact us both individually and in our community.

Sometimes we cannot unravel why the innocent are sick or who is directly responsible for the sins prevalent in the community. God calls us as individuals and He is also building a community. Therefore, the word *our* must be carefully studied in the prophecies pointing to Yeshua, as compared with the words, *I, me* and *mine*. Just as for Israel in the wilderness, sins of the entire community were atoned for by His death on the Cross, not just individual sin. He is building a community – a family of faith – not just isolated individuals.

Both sin and physical disease excluded the Israelites from the community. Yeshua opened the way so that those who carried physical infirmity are not excluded from the community of faith, as well as dealing with the sin that excludes us all from His presence. The effect of the Fall was dealt with in all ways, both physical and spiritual, and we are called to receive this by faith in order to be at one with the Father. No longer are we excluded from fellowship with God through physical deformity of any kind, if we approach Him through faith in Yeshua's atoning sacrifice.

Chapter 15. Nothing is concealed from God. In this chapter are details that we would prefer not to discuss – but everything is seen by God. Here then are more principles of hygiene on the most intimate of matters. We learn from this that God demands absolute holiness – a people who are separate from sin, and who are pure in body and spirit, despite the sinful world and all its physical impurities. The Lord even takes account of the “accidents” that happen to us with bodily discharges even when we sleep! After all, we are God's creation in every detail of the design of our body! If He is concerned with these details of our bodily functions, how much more is He concerned with our inner cleanliness? After all this is what He is recreating in every detail – our inner man!

God teaches through contrasts. He has the entire universe at His disposal. He also teaches through our experiences and the experience of others. He founded our teaching on the experiences of the Children of Israel. All Scripture is for our instruction.

If you are the sort of disciple who searches the Scriptures and asks questions of God, from time to time you will notice a new thread of truth in the Bible. For example, one of the ways a person could become unclean was if someone spat on him. There is impurity in our saliva. Yet, when Yeshua healed a blind man He spat on the ground. He then anointed the man's eyes and sent him to wash in the Pool of Siloam (John 9)! This man had committed no sin to account for his blindness. His healing was a miracle to declare the power of God. Though the man would have been unclean through an ordinary man's spittle, he was actually *healed* through Yeshua's. This Man Yeshua was no ordinary man. There was no uncleanness in Him. Likewise when the woman, who suffered from a flow of blood, touched Him, rather than Yeshua being made unclean *she* was made *clean*! (Luke 8) The experiences of Israel in the wilderness were in preparation for these great events when people, who were excluded from the community, reached out to Him in faith. He alone can release us from human and spiritual bondage into freedom to worship God. We are made holy through His holiness.

Chapter 16. Aaron was given precise instructions about when and how he could enter God's presence, in the Most Holy Place. It was to be once a year on the Day of Atonement (Yom Kippur). This was the day in the yearly cycle when all the sins of the community would be atoned for. Not anyone could enter God's presence. Aaron went in on behalf of the people. This is still the holiest day of the year, according to Jewish custom. Now there is no Temple, but still, in the Synagogues, Yom Kippur is the most important day and there are several weeks of preparation, including the Days of Awe, leading up to it. Israel as a nation prepares for the day each year - it is believed that God still deals with sin on that day.

Those who have accepted Yeshua as their Saviour, both Jews and Gentiles, realize that our atonement is now through Him. Chapter 16 of Leviticus was the temporary remedy but now He is our complete atonement. He has entered the Holiest Place of all. The Tabernacle was merely an earthly representation. Study the chapter carefully. Every principle of the High Priest, including every teaching about holiness, is still valid. God is still the same God whom Aaron approached on those awesome days. Sin is to be dealt with as it was in the days of Aaron. The writer to the Hebrews covered all these points when he explored both the Old and New Covenants. The New Covenant brought in a new Priesthood and a new means of Atonement. The principles are still the same, but now the way is made open for all believers to come into the presence of God, by the New and Living Way of Yeshua's Blood. As you read the Chapter, consider what God has done for us in comparison with what went before.

Day 3

Chapter 17. Throughout all generations, the people of God are to be very careful not to be drawn away to false gods. In this chapter, reference is made to times when sacrifice was made to demons. At the time of the golden calf the entire nation was being seduced away. They would also have been exposed to demon worship in Egypt. God warns them that they will be cut off from His people if they do such things. They must only sacrifice to Him in the way He has instituted. They must take their sacrifices to the Altar of the Tabernacle and not invent different ideas. The life of an animal is in its blood and so they must not eat blood. Nor must they eat meat from animals that have not been slaughtered in the right way, allowing all the blood to be drained. These principles turn up again in Acts 15. Their relevance continues into the New Covenant. What is the Holy Spirit teaching us through this? The blood of animals is impure, so we must not drink their blood. The only Blood that is pure is the Blood of Yeshua and He said that we must indeed drink of His Blood – in other words to drink fully of the life of His Spirit. What the blood of animals could not do to cleanse us, the Blood of Yeshua accomplishes to the uttermost.

Chapter 18. It is very tempting to read these chapters of Leviticus quickly, and not consider the details carefully enough. We must be careful and meditate on all of Scripture. This chapter is referenced in Acts 15. One of the four instructions from the Apostles at the Jerusalem Council was that the Lord's disciples must abstain from sexual immorality. Leviticus 18 contains detailed instructions as to what this is. There is also a passage in the Letter to the Ephesians that we can link to this. In this letter, Paul exhorts his readers to ensure that their marriages are strong. The family is the building block of God's community. Thou shalt not commit adultery is one of the Ten Commandments. Temptations are thrown at God's people by satan's demons, so we must be aware of this. God created men and women for intimate marital relationships and sets the bounds of what He will bless and what is an abomination to Him. It is all here in this chapter, and is as relevant for us as it was for Israel. Other nations, including Ancient Egypt and Canaan followed false gods and committed abominations. God's holy people must not be like them. The consequence would be to defile the Land and to be banished from the Land. Read this chapter carefully. Note how the teaching touches two levels. One level relates to our physical lives. The other relates to our spiritual life. It is possible to commit spiritual adultery with false gods, just as it is possible to commit adultery in the physical world. The God of Abraham likens His relationship with His people to a marriage. Intimacy between a wife and her husband points to intimacy between God and His people. Spiritual adultery is an abomination likened to adultery in human relationships. These profound truths begin here in this chapter.

Chapter 19. "You shall rise before the grey headed and honour the presence of an old man, and fear your God: I am the Lord". This is just one verse of this chapter (verse 32). It takes a moment to read it, yet stop and consider before rushing on. Suppose every young person in the world stood when an old man entered the room they were in? What effect would this have on both the old man and the young person? The old man would be encouraged to live up to the honour shown him. He would feel valued and respected and would seek to be a wise counselor to the young, drawing from all his years of experience. The young person would be encouraged to honour the older man, not just as he entered the room but through the example the older man could be. This simple act is a part of God's teaching about the order of society that pleases Him. It shows us what is best for us, and what He will bless. It is also a teaching about our relationship with Him, our Father, the Ancient of Days. From the practices of

our life we learn principles of the Kingdom. Such are the principles that God would write on our hearts by the power of the Holy Spirit. This begins with our meditation on Torah.

This is just one of the points for meditation in this chapter. The chapter is about holiness. One might stand in the pulpit of a Church today and say these exact words as Moses did. It is God speaking. It is a sermon for today as it was then. Consider the chapter as a whole and make note of the individual points of instruction for you, to come back to time and again, to deepen your understanding of how they apply. We, too, are being made a holy people.

Chapter 20. Read on. Here are more of God's Holy requirements for the Children of Israel. Here are more principles that the Holy Spirit intends to write on our hearts. There are people in the world today following evil practices. These evil practices originate with the same powers of darkness, leading nations astray, just as at the time of Moses. A death sentence lies on all who are led astray through such practices. Only through the sacrifice of Yeshua is the death sentence removed through repentance and faith. Thank God that you have come from under this death sentence - but also realize that God still defines holiness in the same way as He defined it for Israel. Our atonement was at a great price, so let us seek to be holy. We are called to be God's light in a world where darkness remains on many people.

Day 4

Chapter 21. God teaches through contrasts. There is dark and there is light. There is clean and there is unclean. There are clothes of righteousness and of unrighteousness. There is death and there is life. Israel was taught principles of holiness through what they ate, what they wore, what they touched and through their physical health. We are not to be ritualistic but we must learn through meditating upon these principles. The physical world helps us to understand the spiritual world. We know that the physical practices of Torah did not change the hearts of the Children of Israel, so we know that we cannot achieve inner holiness by ritual observance. We learn this from the history of Israel that began in the wilderness. There are, of course, some things that we should do and some things that we should not do as disciplines from the Laws of God. These will be obvious to us. For example we know that we must not murder or commit adultery. There are certain commandments that we simply obey. The Holy Spirit will help us to understand all else. Sometimes the physical requirements are useful and sometimes the Holy Spirit will impart their deeper meanings directly to our hearts as spiritual truths. This is a matter for us to bring to prayer as we read these chapters over and over, and as we seek to walk in obedience to the Holy Spirit.

Chapter 22. When Yeshua rose from the dead, after His sacrifice on the Cross, He appeared to His disciples. Mary Magdalene was among the first to see the risen Lord in Garden where His body had been laid in the Tomb. He told Mary not to touch Him because He had not yet ascended to the Father. He is the High Priest who replaced Aaron. In this chapter we consider the instructions to Aaron and the other Priests about not touching any unclean thing so that they could go into God's presence. Here, then, we continue to meditate on the principle of holiness, as first defined through the Levitical Priesthood. Yeshua demonstrated to Mary that the principles have not changed. We have been called into the Priesthood of all believers and we are to learn to be holy people acceptable to God. We cannot simply copy what we read here in Leviticus, but we must ask the Lord to show us how these principles are to be put on our hearts and manifest in our lives today.

Chapter 23. This chapter describes the Feasts *of the Lord*. They are not called the Feasts of Israel. They are the Lord's own Feasts to be shared with His people. The Sabbath day is the first such Feast Day. The Sabbath is a weekly Feast. It is a weekly rehearsal of the eternal rest that is promised for us in the Kingdom of Heaven. Even Gentile nations have been blessed by God for keeping the Sabbath as a day of rest.

The exact instructions for each of the other Seven Feasts are given in this chapter (Passover, Unleavened Bread, Firstfruits, Weeks, Trumpets, Atonement and Tabernacles). Make careful note of them. This is the yearly cycle that God ordained. They are built into the cycle of the harvests. The early Feasts are in the Spring, beginning at Passover (Pesach), and is the yearly reminder of the exodus from Egypt. There are two other main Feasts where all of God's people were called to present themselves to God. One is Shavuot, the Feast of Weeks, 50 days after the Feast of Firstfruits. The other is Sukkot, an Autumn Feast, following Yom Kippur (the Day of Atonement). Shavuot is usually called Pentecost in the Christian Church because of the Greek word used in the Book of Acts. Sukkot is also called the Feast of Tabernacles.

This yearly cycle has layer upon layer of interpretations. It is symbolic of the wilderness experience of Israel. It is also a cycle where God can meet with His people and accept their offerings at the various

harvests of the year. We, also, are pilgrims passing through this world, which to us is like a spiritual wilderness. Most importantly, it is a picture of the plan of salvation, with each of the Feasts being representative of a stage in the outworking of God's plan. The Spring Feasts are fulfilled in Yeshua's first coming and the Autumn Feasts point to His second coming. Passover points to His sacrificial death where He was our sinless offering (unleavened bread) and became the Firstfruit offering to God. Shavout is fulfilled in the giving of the Holy Spirit. The first celebration of Shavuot was the giving of the Law at Sinai, pointing to how this was to be fulfilled through the giving of the Holy Spirit to write the Law on our hearts.

In the future, at a time set by God, the heavenly trumpet will sound (fulfilling the Feast of Trumpets). Full atonement will be declared for those who have lived by faith in Yeshua. He will return to *Tabernacle* (dwell) once more among His people, to gather them to Himself as a farmer gathers his harvest. He is the High Priest who has gone into the Most Holy Place to intercede for His people. Consider these principles carefully as you read them and also take them to prayer as to their relevance to us today.

Chapter 24. Here we have a picture of the Holy Place where the Priests minister. A light was always to burn before the Holiest Place and Twelve Loaves were before the Lord representing the Tribes of Israel. This was where the Priest offered up prayers for all of the Tribes. It has many symbols for us to consider, including the oil, the light, the bread, holiness in the place for prayer, and the intercessory prayers themselves. How might these symbols be relevant to our ministry before the Altar of God - now from within our hearts? There is a contrast in the chapter. The Holy place before God is first described and then we read about the man who blasphemed, later in the same chapter. Sometimes sin entered the camp in the world outside the Tabernacle, where ordinary life went on. By contrast to the Holy Place the camp became defiled through sin. This man who sinned is known through all generations because of the Bible record. For this sin the death penalty was pronounced by God.

There is a sin that leads to death – spiritual death. The Apostle John wrote about this in one of his letters. There are other sins, for which the principle of eye for eye and tooth for tooth is God's scale of justice.

Meditate, therefore, on what we find in this chapter. There is the Holy Place before God, where we seek Him on behalf of the people who are in the world outside. We ask for God's help. In the world outside there is sin, nevertheless, and sin is to be accounted for in the balance of justice and righteousness. Our countries still need righteous laws founded on these same principles. The world needs to be taught God's principles of righteousness and justice. This world, is the place where Adam and Eve were banished and where we were born, contrasted with the Holiest Place where Yeshua is.

Let us also thank God for Yeshua's sacrifice which avails for all who turn to Him. Therein, is the righteousness of the law fulfilled, and where intercessory prayers are answered. This is where mercy and justice meet together, and where mercy triumphs over justice. But, nevertheless, there is a sin that leads to death. That sin comes from an unregenerate blasphemous heart. This is what we learn from the man stoned to death in our reading today.

Day 5

Chapter 25. God created the universe and built many principles into His creation. One of the principles is rest. It is a law of God's creation that there are cycles for rest. We may not understand why – it is a principle of faith.

From the time of Adam and Eve God told men and women what they must do. We were meant to trust Him and obey Him, and not necessarily ask, "why?" If He told them not to touch a tree it was not for them to know why. If He told them to rest every seven days, it was not for them to know why. Blessing came simply be through obedience and trust. He told the Israelites to rest the land every seven years. It was not for them to know why, but if they did this and all else that was expected, then their crops would be bountiful. If they rested on the Sabbath Day there was no shortage of manna for the day of rest. If they rested the Land every seven years there would be enough food for the years of rest and replanting. Modern scientists want to know why. This is the Greek philosophical mindset, not the Hebraic mindset. The Hebraic mindset is to be built on trust in God. Even among the Gentile nations it has been discovered that when farming is done according to biblical principles crops have become more plentiful. This seems to be a natural law. How much more is this so when God brings His own blessings for obedience!

Through His creation, and through the agricultural cycle, God shows Himself as the God of new beginnings. Hence the Year of Jubilee is taught alongside the principles of farming. This was the year of new beginnings for those in slavery and those who had gone into debt. What a wonderful set of principles. God did not put those principles into the cycle of life for nothing. They are the principles that He would bless on this earth and in preparation for eternal fulfillment. What a Day of Jubilee it will be when all of God's people find their spiritual debts cancelled and begin a new life in the Kingdom of Heaven! All the principles of life on this earth are intended to be rehearsals for that great day.

Notice another principle in this chapter - the principle of inheritance. Israel inherited the Promised Land. It was their land, but they were also tenants because it was really God's land. They did not inherit the land in order to live separately from Him, but to work the land in partnership with Him. He was with them in all they did. This is how close God wants to be with His people. Notice another principle of inheritance. They were given the land as a place to live but they were also to work in the land. Inheritance is a free gift but also requires diligent labour. These are core principles of *Halakah* – our walk with God.

Chapter 26. Take careful note of what God said very clearly in this chapter. These are the blessings and the cursings of the Covenant with Moses. How wonderful are the principles of the laws of God! Yet, they were not to be taken as "good ideas" or "good suggestions". Obedience would bring God's blessing – all that a nation would want, but quite the opposite would result through disobedience. Many people do not like what these chapters say. They would prefer to invent a god of their own choosing. Some people decide that this is the God of the Old Testament while Yeshua is the God of the New Testament – two different Gods! Not so, God is One God! He and His Son are One!

Sometimes we bring hardship on ourselves through our actions – natural law we might say. Foolish action bears its consequences. For Israel, the law of reaping and sowing of good and of evil went beyond natural law. Notice that any curse that the nation might experience, due to disobedience, would come directly from God – He said clearly that *He will bring these curses on them!* We must not construct or imagine gods of our own design. This is the first teaching from this chapter. The history of Israel

conforms precisely to the principles of the blessings or cursings from this chapter. We read this in the historical books of the Bible and in the Prophets. Indeed, the Prophets simply warned Israel that the signs in the nation – including poor crops, broken marriages and invasion by their enemies – were signs to call the people back to Him – signs that they were being punished for disobedience. God was simply doing what had been agreed by covenant. Notice, however, that the principle of repentance is also included. There is always a way back for the Children of Israel!

So what is the relevance of the New Covenant? God made a Covenant with Abraham. This is the overarching Covenant. The Covenant with Israel, through Moses, was a step along the way to the fulfillment of Abraham's Covenant. We all must learn lessons through the experiences of Israel. We learn about God and about ourselves through all that they experienced – and are still experiencing. The Covenant through Moses was within the outworking of the Covenant with Abraham, but was not the final end that was in view. If this was the end, then all mankind would remain under the curse of the Law. The curse of the Law is not the Law itself but the consequence of disobedience. Indeed, but for disobedience, the Law would be a blessing – the blessing of the Law. Israel experienced the curse of the law to show us all that we cannot inherit the blessing through our own efforts. Thus, to fulfill the Covenant with Abraham, a New Covenant was needed to account for the curse of the Law. Yeshua paid the penalty for sin. He took the curse fully upon Himself. In Him the curse is removed so that the blessings promised to Abraham might burst forth upon all who live by faith from all nations, both Jews and Gentiles. Think on these things as you put the pieces together through the reading of the entire Bible this year.

Chapter 27. A value is put on everything, man and beast. The values are symbolic if we compare them with the value of a life. Silver shekels were the currency of the day and through them God taught the Israelites that everything must be accounted for. Everything comes from God and belongs to Him, but stewardship of families, workers, animals and crops is our responsibility in partnership with Him. If we lived in the days of the Israelites, both in the wilderness and in the Promised Land, we would have learned many lessons about ownership and stewardship in partnership with God. We can learn these lessons by reading and meditating upon the Scriptures.

The principles are still relevant when we consider that a value was put on our life too. We were ransomed by Yeshua – His life for ours. Judas was paid 30 pieces of silver when He was betrayed. That was the value put on Him and the lawyers of the day would have measured His value against the standards here in Leviticus. What they thought they were doing is one thing. What they were doing in fulfillment of prophecy was another! The transaction that took place at the Cross, between God and man through Yeshua, the Son of Man, fulfills a multitude of types and shadows. This is included, in the deepest meaning of what we read here in the last chapter of Leviticus, the paying of the ransom price.

Psalms 19. Let us also read from the Psalms today. Psalm 19 causes us to look upwards into the skies and all around us. We find that God has been faithful through all generations by the way His laws rule the universe. The sun rose again today as we knew it would! If God is faithful in His creation we have visible evidence that He is faithful and trustworthy in all else. The Book of Leviticus is a wonderful book about the way Israel was to order their nation. God's laws are altogether trustworthy. The universe is vast but it is made up of tiny parts. God's laws are vast in scope but they take account of every small detail. Both the universe and God's community are ordered through the attention to minute details. Similarly, our individual lives are understood by God - in every small detail. He even sees and understands what we do

not understand about ourselves and our needs. He cares more about us than we do ourselves, and He cares more about us than He cares for the rest of His massive universe. This is what David realized when he wrote this Psalm. Look out into the wonderful universe on this new day. Consider what we have read in God's laws. Now see if you can echo the prayers of the Psalmist for God's good work in your life.

Day 6

1 Peter. Compared with the Books of Moses the First Letter of Peter is quite short. We can read it in one day and consider what Peter teaches. It is relevant to what we have studied throughout the week. The Book of Leviticus concerns the Levitical Priesthood. Peter was an Israelite, whose nation was founded on the traditions of the Covenant with Moses. Based on the Levitical Priesthood, his fuller understanding was opened. The Holy Spirit showed him that Yeshua is the High Priest of the New Covenant. Therefore, he was in a position to understand how disciples of Yeshua are now Priests of the New Covenant, having access to the Highest Heaven through Him. We are a Royal Priesthood. The principles learned through Leviticus are now fulfilled in Yeshua and is being fulfilled in us.

Chapter 1. Read the letter as if it were written directly to you. The letter reminds us of the great privilege of being called out of the world into the community of God through the sacrifice of Yeshua. As you read the letter, recall the principles of the community that were taught through Moses now fulfilled in a new way through Yeshua. Notice that Peter calls us to holiness, just as God's people were always called. Holiness means to be set apart from the world and cleansed by the power of the Holy Spirit working in us. This is the life of Yeshua - the life that is in Him. Just as for the animals on the Altar, His life is in His blood. This is a new spiritual reality built on the foundations of the Old Covenant. We are being sanctified as people of the New Covenant.

Chapter 2. The Temple, the Priesthood, principles of Holy Living both before God and before men, pilgrims through a wilderness - these principles echo out of Leviticus. Now we are the Temple, and we are the Royal Priesthood. We are the pilgrims on a walk of faith with God. We are to live a life worthy of our calling. The principles are straight out of Torah. They are accomplished through the sacrifice of Yeshua and through the gift of His Spirit to us.

Chapter 3. God has an order for His people. This was true from the time of Adam and Eve, through the time of Noah and that of Abraham, and to the days of Moses. God builds His community on the foundation of the family. Peter, like Paul, emphasises the mutually submissive roles of husband and wife. The order of the entire community is to be built on this.

Justice and mercy, through compassion and love, are other principles that have been passed on to us. Righteousness and discipline are now to be learned and practised through the indwelling Spirit. We are to live sanctified lives. These are lives made pure by the inner cleansing of the Holy Spirit, and evidenced by the fruit of our lives on this earth. In both word and deed, we are the ambassadors of Yeshua and ministers of His Gospel.

Peter draws attention to these principles. They were first made known to the pilgrim people of old. Now they are to be fulfilled within the new community of faith – pilgrims in an alien world.

Chapter 4. When Israel was being instructed by God, from the time of Moses on, the Gentile world went its own way. Then, at the right time, Yeshua brought in the New Covenant, and the Gospel also went to the Gentiles. This required them to recognize how the Gentile world, in going its own way, had adopted practices which were contrary to God's path of holiness. It became the time for the worldwide community of God's people to learn what Israel knew, that they must abstain from unholy practices

that were prevalent in the Gentile nations. Trials would come because there would be times when the world's pressures would be imposed on the believing community. Sometimes trials must be endured as God's means of discipline. At other times God's enemies will bring trials of other kinds, because they are enemies of God and of His people. Just as Yeshua was subject to the abuse of ungodly men so will His disciples. These trials are an opportunity for standing firm in faith and a testimony to those who persecute God's people. God will perfect us through all our trials.

Chapter 5. God shepherds His people through our ministry to one another. This is most apparent in the ministry of those called to be a pastor – one who serves God by leading the flock to good pasture. There is an authority structure ordained within our families and within the community. We serve one another. God will also appoint those who have acquired spiritual wisdom, in order to be used as overseers of His people. Overseers are like under-shepherds, looking out for the good of God's people and to protect them from the evil one. Satan is likened to a roaring lion around the flock of God. This reminds us of Psalm 23, where the Good Shepherd protects the flock and leads them to good pasture. We serve one another in humility and not self-exaltation. In due time, the servants of God will be exalted to their heavenly inheritance. Meanwhile we serve each other as the Lord served us. Moses was our example of a shepherd to God's people and he was known as the most humble man on earth.

Day 7

A Day for Rest and Further Reflection

Law and Grace. Our Bible reading programme is establishing foundations from the Tanakh (Old Testament), which find fulfillment in the New Covenant. We are digging deeply and the purpose is to ensure that we have the whole truth in balance. Often the Law of Moses is contrasted with the grace that was manifest in Yeshua. If these principles are not in balance we neglect one principle at the expense of the other. God the Father was always full of grace before even the creation of the world. All that He covenanted through Abraham came from His heart of grace. Grace is the free undeserved gift of God.

The Laws of Moses were not the end point of the promise, but came from the gracious heart of God as a part of His teaching (Torah). This teaching pointed to Yeshua and all that He has done for us. In John 1:17 we read in most English translations, *For the law was given through Moses, but grace and truth came through Jesus Christ (Yeshua HaMashiach).* The word *but* is not, however, in the original Greek. The verse is more like *For the law was given through Moses, grace and truth came through Jesus Christ.* Even better, it reads *For the law was given through Moses, grace and truth became through Jesus Christ.* We must be careful how we understand the balance and inter-relationship between law and grace.

For hundreds of years before Yeshua the Israelites were known, by other nations, to be serving the God of Abraham. It was also known that they established their nation on the laws given through Moses. This fact was known throughout the world. Scholars made a Greek translation of the Tanakh (Old Testament), called the Septuagint, and placed it in the prominent library in Alexandria. Furthermore, all the major Empires of the world had established themselves in the Land of Israel and thereby come into close contact with the Israelites. In many ways, the Laws of Moses were known, even among the Gentile nations, as preparation for the Gospel among all nations. Then, at the right time, Yeshua was revealed in all His glory and the teaching of the New Covenant was taught all around the world.

Yeshua brought the grace of God to the world in all fullness, fulfilling the Torah to its uttermost intent. Through Him came the grace that was already in the Torah and in the Laws of Moses. This same grace then burst into the world at the highest level when He became our sacrifice. Thus, to separate grace from its roots and foundations in the Torah is to take it out of context. Both grace and truth were fulfilled. Through Him we received the full measure of grace that was received, in part, through religious observance of the Laws of Moses. Through Him came the fullness of truth: the full and final manifestation of the Torah (teaching). That is why we must meditate upon the whole of Scripture. Make this your aim as we continue with our Bible reading programme, interweaving the concepts from both New and Old Testament and bringing them to prayer, so that in faith and obedience, you too can live fully in the grace of God.

Psalm 119. This is the longest Psalm in the Bible. For that reason it can be the least read Psalm. If you have begun to touch the depth and wonder of God's Torah you will enjoy reading this today. It can be your prayer just as it was the prayer of the Psalmist.

The Hebrew alphabet consists of 22 letters. This Psalm has 22 sections, each linked to one of these Hebrew letters. The writer is expressing the thought that every letter and every word of the Torah comes from God. In some of our translations the word *law* is used instead of the word *Torah*. *Torah* is the correct translation. The Psalm still has meaning if the word *law* is used, especially when we understand the Laws of God as a preparation for God's blessings through Yeshua. Nevertheless, the

heart cry, *Oh Lord I love your Torah*, is more meaningful than *Oh Lord I love your law*. God uses His laws to teach us and that is the fuller meaning of God's purpose in our life. He is our teacher and so this Psalm is praise to God who teaches us through all His ways. This is especially fulfilled through the New Covenant where the curse for disobedience is removed through the sacrifice of Yeshua. This truth is for all whose hearts are set on a path of true discipleship, seeking to be holy and to be willing learners, living by faith in Him. This was true for the writer of this Psalm who perceived that God had more wonderful purposes through His teaching than were yet realised.

Since Yeshua is the fulfillment of the Torah, you might take one more step today. Having read the entire Psalm with *Torah* in mind, read some of the verses again with *Yeshua* in mind. You might explore the idea of replacing the word *law* or the word *Torah* with the word *Yeshua*. For example, *Oh Lord I love Yeshua. I meditate in Him all the day*. If you are able to do this and retain balance, then you are touching the truths of Scripture very deeply. See how the Lord blesses you through this.
