

## **Leviticus**

*by T. Austin-Sparks*

It is important to recognise the spiritual place of Leviticus, that it occupies a position of very special importance, because it represents an inclusiveness which is more than its own content. While there is the narrative of the book of Leviticus, there is a very large range of spiritual truth gathered into it, and it is more than itself.

### **The Title of the Book**

The title "LEVITICUS" is not a Hebrew title, but a Greek title. The Hebrew title of this book is "V'YIKRA", which means simply: "He called". It is the title taken from the first sentence of the book. As we have it it reads: "*And Jehovah called unto Moses, and spake unto him out of the tent of meeting*". More truly it should be: "*And He called*". That clause gives the title to the book. It is God calling out of the tent of meeting.

The book, beginning with a conjunction, is seen to be immediately related to Exodus. "*And...*" links the two books, bringing in a fresh calling of God, something in advance of what has preceded but connected therewith.

This is the third calling of God in relation to Israel.

The first was to Moses out of the bush: "*And God called to Moses out of the bush*" (Ex. 3:4).

The second was to Moses in the mount, out of the cloud.

The third (which is this one) was to Moses out of the tent.

Note the relationship of each of the three calls of God, and try to state their specific meaning.

The first call is to the individual as to himself.

The second call is to the individual in relation to the people for one object.

The third call is to the individual in relation to the people for another object. State the threefold object and value of these calls.

Leviticus has been called the spiritual statute book of Israel as the congregation of God. In the twenty-seven chapters there are no fewer than 56 occurrences of the phrase: "*The Lord spake unto Moses*".

That fact has to be considered in relation to the critical attitude towards this book. Higher criticism says that this book really was not written by Moses, neither was its place in the life of Israel at the beginning. Criticism says that this book is a forgery (not written for a thousand years after Israel's exodus) by certain priests who returned from the Babylonish captivity and imposed it successfully upon the Jews; so successfully that there has never been a question raised by a Jew as to the Mosaic authorship. That may not be of very great interest in itself, *but* it raises the whole question of the authority of Christ.

What was Christ's attitude toward Leviticus in relation to Himself? Find passages in which Christ definitely used Leviticus as a Mosaic work, and how much hangs upon those passages being of Mosaic origin.

The real question is not whether Moses wrote the book in its present form, but whether the Lord said these things to Moses personally, and whether they came by divine

revelation through Moses. When confronted with this difficulty the only adequate answer is to involve Christ personally and His authority in the matter.

There seem to be three broad values in this book:

1. To prepare Israel for Christ.
2. To bring Israel into fellowship with God's holiness.
3. To thus prepare Israel for their world mission.

### **The Link between Leviticus and Genesis**

In Genesis there are two series of spiritual factors, each series having four features.

#### The first series;

1. Sin.
2. Distance (or separation from God).
3. Vanity.
4. Death.

Sin, of course, is patent, obvious.

The first result of sin is separation, distance.

By reason of sin and distance, vanity, of which the thorns are a type (thorns are symbols of a curse, and throughout the Scriptures a curse always shows itself by vanity, failure, disappointment, nothing reaching perfection).

The end is death — death never intended by God, because death speaks of failure.

#### The second series:

This series runs parallel with the first:

1. Remission of sins.
2. Fellowship (as over against distance).
3. Purpose (as against vanity).
4. Life (as against death).

There are four persons who represent the second series in principle:

1. Remission of sins represented by ABEL.

(The principle of Abel was the shedding of blood: "*Without shedding of blood there is no remission.*" He stands in contradistinction from Cain.)

2. Distance removed and fellowship re-established represented by ENOCH: "*Enoch walked with God.*"

3. Vanity set aside and divine purpose recovered is represented by NOAH. (Noah's life is the gathering up of the fact of a world which could never satisfy God, that world set aside and a new purpose introduced.)

4. Death overcome and life established is represented by ABRAHAM.

These are not isolated facts. They are all related on the principle of progress or development. Each is an advance upon its predecessor. Remission leads to fellowship; fellowship leads to purpose; purpose leads to life, in the sense that *divine* purpose demands deathless life if it is to overcome vanity. Notice how true it is that the great divine purpose, which can *never* be frustrated, comes in with Abraham, handed on (we may say) by Noah. But Noah demands this extra factor of life triumphant over death, otherwise vanity returns.

With Genesis the three foundation names of Israel arise: Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. The three are linked together in the Scriptures over 22 times.

The phrase: "*The God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob*" occurs ten times.

The main feature of the association of these names is covenant!

They are used together mainly in connection with God's covenant made with them. The value of the *specific* declaration: "*I am the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob*" is in the spiritual features represented by each of these.

### **Abraham**

The spiritual meaning of Abraham is: Faith and fellowship, or fellowship by faith.

There are four elements of fellowship:

1. Obedience.
2. Death.
3. Resurrection.
4. Righteousness.

Look into the New Testament for that spiritual analysis of Abraham's life, especially in the letter to the Romans.

### **Isaac**

The spiritual meaning of Isaac is: Sonship. There are four elements of sonship.

#### 1. Spirituality.

Analyse and confirm that the nature of Isaac's sonship was the embodiment of spirituality. He differs entirely from Ishmael, for instance, who is not the spiritual son, but a son of the flesh.

#### 2. Death.

This is death in a different sense from that related to Abraham. Death in the case of Abraham is the necessity (the natural man must die). Death in the case of Isaac is marked by his attitude towards it, and is best expressed by the word "yieldedness". Abraham acts under divine commandment. Isaac does not do that, but yields himself.

#### 3. Resurrection.

"*Declared to be the Son of God with power by the resurrection from the dead*" is a statement concerning Christ, but the central truth in that is that sonship is constituted by a life which has been yielded to death and has conquered death.

#### 4. The Bride.

Out of all that comes the bride of Isaac. The great issue for Isaac is the securing of the bride for him, and it is this which is gathered up in reality in Christ. Sonship on the ground of resurrection. The Bride, the Church, comes in on that ground and becomes related in that life.

### **Jacob**

The spiritual meaning of Jacob is: service. There are four features of service:

#### 1. Vision.

The first outstanding thing in the life of Jacob is vision at Bethel — an opened heaven.

#### 2. Subjection.

The most difficult lesson in the life of Jacob was subjection. All his battles were along that line. It is a very vital factor in service. A true spiritual vision demands a true and utter spiritual captivity, and for twenty years after the vision Jacob was up against the whole law of subjection. Those twenty years issued in the final battle of wills at Jabbok, when personal strength was broken, and the mastery of heaven was established.

### 3. Suffering.

He suffered *in himself*, and eventually went from Peniel to the end of his life leaning upon a staff in conscious weakness.

He suffered *through his sons*. What suffering over Joseph and over Benjamin on the one hand, and through the rest of his sons in another way!

He suffered *in the sorrow of his wife*.

His life is touched very deeply by suffering.

### 4. Fruitfulness.

As represented by the twelve sons and the twelve tribes.

This is something of the meaning of that declaration ten times repeated: "*The God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob*".

## Joseph

Joseph is not one of the three foundation names of Israel, but he embraces all the spiritual features of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. See how all the above is gathered up into Joseph. Fellowship in yieldedness, death, resurrection, sonship, vision, subjection, etc.

Note this: Joseph embraces all that, and takes it through to the throne in world dominion.

The fullest revelation of Genesis is sonship carried through to the throne in an individual. Joseph is publicly introduced in relation to visions of world dominion. Because of that he is sold for thirty pieces of silver, and put into the pit. He is exiled. During his being cast out and rejected he gains a throne. Eventually, in his absolute supremacy, those who rejected him bow the knee to him and acknowledge him lord.

Joseph is a wonderful type of Christ.

You see now what it was that brought Christ to the Throne, what constitutes His being there. It is all that has been noted in connection with Abraham, Isaac and Jacob.

## The Link between Leviticus and Exodus

Exodus sees four things:

1. The twelve tribed people in Egypt where Joseph had brought them, *but* all the above mentioned spiritual features — so far as they are concerned — are in death.

2. The new personal representative — Moses. "*A prophet shall the Lord your God raise up from among your brethren like unto me*". That put Moses in a representative place.

3. That representative has all those spiritual features wrought into himself.

Look into the life of Moses as the personal representative, and see the spiritual features of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, which have been worked into him through experience. Moses becomes the embodiment of all those by the Lord's dealings with him.

4. All this is taken up in relation to a corporate body.

Look again at the four major things;

1. Faith and divine fellowship. A great basic thing. That is brought over in relation to a corporate body. That leads to:
2. Sonship through death and resurrection. That in turn leads to:
3. Service. That again in turn leads to:
4. Dominion.

That is the history of Israel; so that Israel as a corporate body is the embodiment of Abraham, Isaac, Jacob and Joseph. The instrument to bring all those things in the former into life in the corporate body is Moses, and he has to have them wrought in himself.

These four things in the book of Exodus bring us to the point where we recognise that each of these things takes value and virtue from what is before.

Exodus begins with what these people are from the divine standpoint, and not from what they are actually at the time; from what God ever intended them to be and is going to make them, rather than what they are in themselves for the moment.

That is explained by looking at how Exodus begins: "*Now these are the names of the sons of Israel*". What is Israel? Israel means "*a prince with God*", so that Exodus begins with: Now these are the names of the sons of a prince with God. All that full spiritual value is taken up here, but as they are found here there is no mark whatever of the prince with God. These twelve tribes in Egypt are anything but on the basis of a prince with God. They are in defeat, weakness, shame, and everything other than the dignity of princeliness, but before God has done with them they will approximate to that.

Israel was made a nation at Sinai, and Exodus as a whole sees a people separated and constituted.

All this is gathered up in Leviticus, for each book hands its quota on to the next, and the next becomes the embodiment of what has gone before. So that Leviticus is the embodiment of Genesis and Exodus in spiritual principle.