

NEW STUDIES IN BIBLICAL THEOLOGY 37

# **Who shall ascend the mountain of the Lord?**



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*Series editor: D. A. Carson*

# **Who shall ascend the mountain of the Lord?**

A BIBLICAL THEOLOGY OF  
THE BOOK OF LEVITICUS

*L. Michael Morales*



APOLLOS

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# Series preface

*New Studies in Biblical Theology* is a series of monographs that address key issues in the discipline of biblical theology. Contributions to the series focus on one or more of three areas: (1) the nature and status of biblical theology, including its relations with other disciplines (e.g. historical theology, exegesis, systematic theology, historical criticism, narrative theology); (2) the articulation and exposition of the structure of thought of a particular biblical writer or corpus; and (3) the delineation of a biblical theme across all or part of the biblical corpora.

Above all, these monographs are creative attempts to help thinking Christians understand their Bibles better. The series aims simultaneously to instruct and to edify, to interact with the current literature and to point the way ahead. In God's universe, mind and heart should not be divorced: in this series we will try not to separate what God has joined together. While the notes interact with the best of scholarly literature, the text is uncluttered with untransliterated Greek and Hebrew, and tries to avoid too much technical jargon. The volumes are written within the framework of confessional evangelicalism, but there is always an attempt at thoughtful engagement with the sweep of the relevant literature.

Hebrews 7:11–28 reminds us that the priestly system of the old covenant is so important that should a change take place in the priesthood, there must be a change in the entire law-covenant structure. That strongly underscores the importance of the sacrificial system and its priesthood to the law covenant. One might suppose that such a reflection would drive us to study Leviticus. Most of us, however, find the prospect of teaching or preaching from Leviticus a wee bit discomfiting. We can cite choice bits ('Love your neighbour as yourself'), but we have no feel for the book, little grasp of its structure and movement, no sense of its place in the Pentateuch and in the canon. This book by Dr Michael Morales, carefully read, will for ever banish such limitations. It promises to give us not only a theology of Leviticus, but also a richer theology of the Pentateuch and finally

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of the whole Bible. I predict this volume will spawn some excellent sermon series on Leviticus!

*D. A. Carson*  
*Trinity Evangelical Divinity School*

# Author's preface

As the central book of the Pentateuch, Leviticus contains the heart of its theology and has much to unfold regarding the nature of God and the plight of humanity. The church's understanding of Leviticus is foundational for grasping the story of the Bible in its depth and beauty, and for discernment concerning a whole array of pressing issues, such as the substance and nature of the Mosaic covenant, the worship of God, and the person and work of Jesus Christ. My hope and prayer in this endeavour is to provide the church with a theological entry into Leviticus in the context of both the Pentateuch and the New Testament, an entry that will strengthen feeble hands and make firm the weak knees, and lead to a renewed glorying in her heavenly access to the Father through the new and living way. To pursue this aim has meant that many aspects of Leviticus, from defining atonement to competing methodologies in ritual theory, and so on, which are topics of scholarly debate requiring much nuanced discussion and argumentation, have necessarily been avoided.

Much of this work was written while teaching at Reformation Bible College, and I remain grateful for blessed days there – for the leadership of Dr R. C. Sproul, Mr Chris Larson and Dr Steve Nichols; for the friendship of my former colleagues Dave Briones, Aaron Denlinger, Ben Dunson, Keith Mathison and R. C. Sproul Jr.; for Heidi Fraser and the rest of the kind staff; and for the students who made teaching at RBC such an insightful joy. Keith was kind enough to read a draft of the manuscript and to offer helpful feedback. I also express my gratitude to Mr Ryan Fraser who turned my whiteboard line drawings into digital illustrations, both helpful and beautiful – thank you, my friend.

This book's last chapter was written during my transition to the post of professor of biblical studies at Greenville Presbyterian Theological Seminary, and I offer here my warm gratitude to Dr Joseph Pipa Jr., along with the board of directors, the faculty, staff and students for their kind reception. Rev. Peter van Doodewaard and his dear family hosted me for three weeks during this transition, for which I remain

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grateful. My family and I were then hosted for months by the Ben Daniel family (I write this preface from their basement). May the Lord repay your kindness according to his riches in glory.

Some of this material was taught during courses for which I served as an adjunct at Reformed Theological Seminary in Orlando – my thanks to Drs Ligon Duncan and Scott Swain for those opportunities. Thank you also to Michael Farrell, a most resourceful librarian, who graciously obtained for me so many of the books and articles I needed for this and various other projects.

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My gratitude to the Lord continues to abound for the session (including my father), deacons and flock of Grace Presbyterian Church in America (Stuart, Fla.), and now also for Woodruff Road Presbyterian Church in America (Greenville, S.C.).

Finally, I give thanks for my dear wife, Elise, and for my sons Armando, Diego, Alejandro and Andres. This book is dedicated, with much love and affection, to Elise.

Now unto the GODHEAD all glory be;  
And eternal bliss to Israel, his saints redeemed.  
FATHER, SON and SPIRIT – blessed, hallowed THREE;  
– O happy lot to join that holy COMPANY!

*L. Michael Morales*  
*11 April 2015*

# Abbreviations

<b>AB</b>	Anchor Bible
<b>ABD</b>	<i>Anchor Bible Dictionary</i> , ed. D. N. Freedman, 6 vols., New York: Doubleday, 1992
<b>AnBib</b>	Analecta biblica
<b>ANE</b>	ancient Near East(ern)
<b>AOAT</b>	Alter Orient und Altes Testament
<b>AOTC</b>	Apollos Old Testament Commentary
<b>AR</b>	<i>Adventist Review</i>
<b>AUSS</b>	<i>Andrews University Seminary Studies</i>
<b>BBR</b>	<i>Bulletin for Biblical Research</i>
<b>BBRSup</b>	Bulletin for Biblical Research Supplements
<b>BHS</b>	<i>Biblia Hebraica Stuttgartensia</i> , ed. K. Elliger and W. Rudolph, Stuttgart: Deutsche Bibelstiftung, 1983
<b>Bib</b>	<i>Biblica</i>
<b>BibInt</b>	<i>Biblical Interpretation</i>
<b>BIS</b>	Biblical Interpretation Series
<b>BM</b>	<i>Beth Miqra</i>
<b>BN</b>	<i>Biblische Notizen</i>
<b>BSac</b>	<i>Bibliotheca sacra</i>
<b>BT</b>	<i>Bible Translator</i>
<b>BTB</b>	<i>Biblical Theology Bulletin</i>
<b>BThSt</b>	Biblich-theologische Studien
<b>CBQ</b>	<i>Catholic Biblical Quarterly</i>
<b>CBQMS</b>	Catholic Biblical Quarterly Monograph Series
<b>CC</b>	Concordia Commentary
<b>Chm</b>	<i>Churchman</i>
<b>Colloq</b>	<i>Colloquium</i>
<b>CTJ</b>	<i>Calvin Theological Journal</i>
<b>CTR</b>	<i>Criswell Theological Review</i>
<b>DBI</b>	<i>Dictionary of Biblical Imagery</i> , ed. L. Ryken, J. C. Wilhoit and T. Longman III, Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 1998

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<i>DDD</i>	<i>Dictionary of Deities and Demons in the Bible</i> , ed. K. van der Toorn, B. Becking and P. W. van der Horst, 2nd ed., Leiden: Brill, 1995
<i>DOTP</i>	<i>Dictionary of the Old Testament: Pentateuch</i> , ed. T. D. Alexander and D. W. Baker, Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press; Leicester: Inter-Varsity Press, 2003
<i>ECC</i>	Eerdmans Critical Commentary
<i>EgT</i>	<i>Eglise et théologie</i>
<i>ErIsr</i>	<i>Eretz-Israel</i>
<i>EvQ</i>	<i>Evangelical Quarterly</i>
<i>ExpTim</i>	<i>Expository Times</i>
<i>Gen. R.</i>	<i>Genesis Rabbah</i>
<i>HBM</i>	Hebrew Bible Monographs
<i>HBS</i>	Herders Biblische Studien
<i>HBT</i>	<i>Horizons in Biblical Theology</i>
<i>HSM</i>	Harvard Semitic Monographs
<i>HSS</i>	Harvard Semitic Studies
<i>HTR</i>	<i>Harvard Theological Review</i>
<i>IDBSup</i>	<i>Interpreter's Dictionary of the Bible: Supplementary Volume</i> , ed. K. Crim, Nashville: Abingdon, 1976
<i>IEJ</i>	<i>Israel Exploration Journal</i>
<i>Int</i>	<i>Interpretation</i>
<i>IRT</i>	Issues in Religion and Theology
<i>JAAR</i>	<i>Journal of the American Academy of Religion</i>
<i>JANES</i>	<i>Journal of the Ancient Near East Society</i>
<i>JAOS</i>	<i>Journal of the American Oriental Society</i>
<i>JATS</i>	<i>Journal of the Adventist Theological Society</i>
<i>JBL</i>	<i>Journal of Biblical Literature</i>
<i>JETS</i>	<i>Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society</i>
<i>JHS</i>	<i>Journal of Hebrew Scriptures</i>
<i>JNES</i>	<i>Journal of Near Eastern Studies</i>
<i>JPSTC</i>	Jewish Publication Society Torah Commentary
<i>JR</i>	<i>Journal of Religion</i>
<i>JRC</i>	<i>Journal of Religion and Culture</i>
<i>JSHJ</i>	<i>Journal for the Study of the Historical Jesus</i>
<i>JSJ</i>	<i>Journal for the Study of Judaism in the Persian, Hellenistic, and Roman Periods</i>
<i>JSNTSup</i>	Journal for the Study of the New Testament, Supplement Series
<i>JSOT</i>	<i>Journal for the Study of the Old Testament</i>

## ABBREVIATIONS

JSOTSup	Journal for the Study of the Old Testament, Supplement Series
<i>JSQ</i>	<i>Jewish Studies Quarterly</i>
<i>Jub.</i>	<i>Jubilees</i>
<i>LB</i>	<i>Linguistica biblica</i>
<i>Lev. R.</i>	<i>Leviticus Rabbah</i>
LNTS	Library of New Testament Studies
<i>LTJ</i>	<i>Lutheran Theological Journal</i>
LXX	Septuagint
<i>m. Šebu.</i>	<i>Mishna Šebu'ot</i>
MT	Masoretic Text
<i>m. Yom.</i>	<i>Mishna Yoma</i>
NAC	New American Commentary
NCBC	New Century Bible Commentary
NIB	New Interpreter's Bible
NICOT	New International Commentary on the Old Testament
<i>NIDOTTE</i>	<i>New International Dictionary of Old Testament Theology and Exegesis</i> , ed. W. A. VanGemeren, 5 vols., Carlisle: Paternoster; Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1997
<i>NTS</i>	<i>New Testament Studies</i>
NU	<i>Novum Testamentum Graece</i> , 27th ed., ed. E. Nestle, K. Aland et al., Stuttgart: Deutsche Bibelstiftung, 1993; <i>The Greek New Testament</i> , 4th rev. ed., ed. B. Aland, K. Aland et al., Stuttgart: Deutsche Bibelgesellschaft/United Bible Societies, 1993
OBO	Orbis biblicus et orientalis
<i>OtSt</i>	<i>Oudtestamentische Studiën</i>
pl.	plural
<i>ProEccl</i>	<i>Pro ecclesia</i>
<i>Proof</i>	<i>Prooftexts: A Journal of Jewish Literary History</i>
<i>RB</i>	<i>Revue biblique</i>
<i>RestQ</i>	<i>Restoration Quarterly</i>
<i>SBJT</i>	<i>Southern Baptist Journal of Theology</i>
<i>SBLSP</i>	<i>Society of Biblical Literature Seminar Papers</i>
SBS	Stuttgarter Bibelstudien
<i>SEAJT</i>	<i>South East Asia Journal of Theology</i>
<i>SJOT</i>	<i>Scandinavian Journal of the Old Testament</i>
SNTSMS	Society for New Testament Studies Monograph Series

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<i>SR/SR</i>	<i>Studies in Religion/Sciences Religieuses</i>
STDJ	Studies on the Texts of the Desert of Judah
<i>Targ. Neof</i>	<i>Targum Neofiti</i>
TBN	Themes in Biblical Narrative
<i>TDOT</i>	<i>Theological Dictionary of the Old Testament</i> , ed. G. J. Botterweck, H. Ringgren and H.-J. Fabry, 15 vols., Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1974–2006
ThW	Theologische Wissenschaft
<i>TJT</i>	<i>Toronto Journal of Theology</i>
TOTC	Tyndale Old Testament Commentaries
tr.	translation, translated, translated by
<i>TynB</i>	<i>Tyndale Bulletin</i>
<i>VE</i>	<i>Verbum et Ecclesia</i>
<i>VT</i>	<i>Vetus Testamentum</i>
VTSup	Supplements to Vetus Testamentum
WBC	Word Biblical Commentary
<i>WTJ</i>	<i>Westminster Theological Journal</i>
<i>WW</i>	<i>Word and World</i>
WUNT	Wissenschaftliche Untersuchungen zum Neuen Testament
<i>ZAW</i>	<i>Zeitschrift für die alttestamentliche Wissenschaft</i>

## Prologue

# The glory of God's house: the lampstand and the table of the Presence

What is the Sabbath? . . . The Sabbath is an ascent to the summit.

(Abraham Joshua Heschel)

The instructions for making the lampstand of the tabernacle's holy place describe it as a stylized almond tree, hammered out of pure gold and having a central shaft with three branches on either side – all made 'according to the pattern' that was shown to Moses on the mountain of God (Exod. 25:31–40). YHWH gives Aaron, the high priest of Israel, the particular duty of tending the lampstand in the following manner:

And YHWH spoke to Moses saying: 'Speak to Aaron, and say to him, "When you set up the lamps, the seven lamps shall give light in front of the lampstand.'" And Aaron did so; he set up the lamps to face toward the front of the lampstand, as YHWH commanded Moses. Now this workmanship of the lampstand was hammered gold; from its base to its flowers it was hammered work. According to the pattern which YHWH had shown Moses, so he made the lampstand. (Num. 8:1–4)<sup>1</sup>

In his commentary on this passage Gordon J. Wenham notes that the text is insistent on one point in particular, namely on Aaron's duty to direct the menorah's seven lamps forward, ensuring they give light in front of the lampstand. Why such emphasis upon this curious duty of ensuring the lamps beam their light in front of the lampstand? He explains that the meaning of this action becomes apparent when the design of the holy place is taken into account:

<sup>1</sup> All translations are my own, unless otherwise stated.

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If the light beamed forwards it would have fallen on the table of shewbread, where twelve loaves of bread, symbolizing the twelve tribes of Israel, were heaped up (Lev. 24:5–9). Light and fire represent the life-giving presence and blessing of God (e.g. Exod. 13:21–22). Thus Aaron had to arrange the lamps so that their light always illuminated the shewbread. *This arrangement portrayed visually God's intention that his people should live continually in his presence and enjoy the blessing mediated by his priests.*<sup>2</sup>

Wenham further remarks that this priestly duty symbolizes what the Levitical blessing in Numbers 6:23–27 affirms verbally:<sup>3</sup>

YHWH bless you and keep you;  
YHWH make his face shine upon you  
and be gracious to you;  
YHWH lift up his face upon you  
and give you peace.

So shall they put my name upon the sons of Israel, and I myself will bless them.

This blessing, which in the Hebrew utilizes a threefold use of the divine name plus twelve remaining words, is itself not free of symbolic import. Here two brief observations are in order. First, the divine blessing, in both Numbers 6 and 8, is portrayed as God's shining his light upon his people, which is further explained as putting 'his name' upon them (6:27) – a significant gloss to which we will return later on in this book. Secondly, the significance of the lampstand should be understood together with that of the bread of the Presence, forming one symbolic picture, just as the light of God's countenance in the Levitical blessing of Numbers 6 is cast upon his people. Indeed, the forward-facing arrangement of the lamps is an integral part of the instructions for manufacturing the lampstand (Exod. 25:37), intimately woven into its meaning, not to mention that these instructions follow immediately upon the directions to 'set the bread of the Presence before me always' (v. 30). Aaron's instructions require, then, the reader's awareness of the bread's position before the lampstand in the holy place: according to Exodus 26:35 (cf. 40:24), the golden

<sup>2</sup> Wenham 2008: 106–107; my emphasis.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid. 107.

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table with the twelve loaves of bread was placed on the north side of the holy place, and the golden, seven-branched lampstand was set directly across from it on the south side (the tabernacle itself facing eastward).

In summary, the light of the lampstand represents the life-giving Presence of God, his blessed glory, while the twelve loaves represent the twelve tribes of Israel. Aaron's role of regularly arranging the lamps so that they shone upon the loaves summarizes the role and function of the priesthood to mediate God's blessings to his people. One might say, in short, that these references in Numbers summarize the role of the cultus for Israel's relationship with God, as it relates to the goal of the covenant.<sup>4</sup> Numbers 6:23–27 and 8:1–4 present the blessing of God upon the people of God, mediated by the priesthood of God.

The arrangement of the holy place of the tabernacle, therefore, portrayed the ideal of Israel basking in the light of the divine Presence in the house of God, abiding in the fires of his glory. As we will come to understand in the following chapters, this cultic symbolism depicted the Sabbath day in particular, as Israel entered the renewing Presence of YHWH *through the Levitical way* he had opened for them – a foretaste of life at the consummation of history. Indeed, this glimpse into the glory of the house of God may be appreciated more fully when we recall that the panelled walls of the holy place were overlaid with gold, a feature that, together with the golden lampstand and golden table, would have caused the light of the seven lamps to be reflected in a wondrous manner. And so this symbolic picture of Israel abiding in the blessed Sabbath-day Presence of YHWH is one that portrays life in the house of God, a prospect foretasted in Israel's Sabbath day worship.

Life with God in the house of God – this was the original goal of the creation of the cosmos (which, as we will see, may be thought of as a house), and which then became the goal of redemption, the new creation. The prophets offer glimpses of this reality in their descriptions of God's final redemption of his people, when, after he has purged and made them utterly holy, he dwells with them on his holy mountain:

Then YHWH will create over the whole place of  
Zion's mountain, and over her assemblies,

<sup>4</sup> As Kapelrud (1965: 56) expresses it, 'That ladder [of Jacob's dream, connecting heaven and earth] symbolizes the role of the cult in old Israel.'

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a cloud by day and smoke, and the shining  
of a flaming fire by night –  
for over all the glory there will be a canopy.  
(Isa. 4:5)

‘For I will be to her [Jerusalem]’ – utterance of YHWH –  
‘a wall of fire surrounding her,  
and I will be the glory in her midst.’  
(Zech. 2:5)

In the closing pages of John’s Apocalypse we are given a final glimpse of holy Jerusalem ‘having the glory of God’, a fire with such radiance from YHWH God that there will be neither night nor need of the sun (Rev. 21:10–11, 23; 22:5) as God’s people dwell in the light of his glory. This consummation of the messianic kingdom of God is presented to us by John as the historical fulfilment of the divine intention, as expressed in the covenant formula

And I heard a loud voice from heaven saying, ‘Look! The tabernacle of God is with humanity and he will dwell with them, and they shall be his people and God himself will be with them and be their God.’ (Rev. 21:3)

As the innermost aim of the covenant, dwelling with God in the house of God, for fullness of life in abundant joy and fellowship, is the great promise held out before God’s people, and the ardent desire expressed in Israel’s liturgy:

I will dwell in the house of YHWH for ever.  
(Ps. 23:6)

Those whom YHWH brings into his house receive divine hospitality. Much like a magnanimous ANE host, God spreads a table for his guests, anointing their heads with oil and pouring wine liberally into their cups (Ps. 23:5). Indeed, YHWH’s house is described as the source of all life and abundance:

They are abundantly satisfied with the  
fatness of your house,  
And you give them drink from the  
river of your pleasures [*dm*].

## PROLOGUE

For with you is the spring of life;  
In your light we see light.

(Ps. 36:8–9)

Note the allusion to Eden’s river of life, with the word ‘pleasures’ being merely the plural form of ‘Eden’. Dwelling in the house of God is, more deeply, a hope inflamed with the longing to behold YHWH himself – for he is the fountain of life:

You will make known to me the path of life;  
There is fullness of joy in your Presence;  
And pleasures at your right hand for evermore.

(Ps. 16:9–11)

O YHWH, I love the habitation of your house  
And the place where your glory dwells.

(Ps. 26:8)

The same yearning, to dwell with YHWH in a life suffused by the beatific vision, is expressed as the ‘one thing’ the psalmist asks for in Psalm 27:4:

One thing I have asked of YHWH – that will I seek:  
That I may dwell in the house of YHWH  
all the days of my life,  
To behold the beauty of YHWH,  
And to contemplate in his temple.

But just here the question comes how can this be possible? How is it that God’s own abode may become the end of his people’s journey? How can becoming a member of the household of God be a real hope for creatures made from dust? Considering that only the high priest had been allowed entrance into the holy of holies within the tabernacle and later temple, how is it songs could be sung about dwelling in YHWH’s house ‘for ever’ and ‘all the days of my life’? In many ways, this is the fundamental question of Israel’s cult – and indeed of life itself:

O YHWH, who may abide in your tabernacle?  
Who may dwell on your holy mountain?

(Ps. 15:1)

## WHO SHALL ASCEND THE MOUNTAIN OF THE LORD?

Who may ascend the mountain of YHWH?  
Or who may stand in his holy place?  
(Ps. 24:3)

This question of ascending God's mountain to his house was probably recited by pilgrims upon approaching the temple on Mount Zion during the annual pilgrimage festivals, and is referred to as a gate (or entrance) liturgy. As we will see in the chapters ahead, the gate liturgy runs as an undercurrent throughout the narratives of the Pentateuch, and is found at the heart of its central book, Leviticus. Such a point comes as no surprise when we consider that the Pentateuch itself is a thoroughly Levitical work, a priestly torah, whose traditional author, Moses, was a thoroughgoing Levite (Exod. 2:1–2; 6:14–27). Its dominating concern, as well as that of the rest of the Bible, is the way in which humanity may come to dwell in the house of God. Under the Mosaic covenant, that way opened by YHWH was through the tabernacle and later temple, its priesthood and rituals – that is, through the Levitical cult. The advent of Christ would open a new and living way into the house of God; indeed, that was the goal of his taking our humanity upon himself, of his suffering, of his resurrection and ascension.

This biblical theology of Leviticus, then, is a book about the theme of dwelling with God in the house of God, and how that reality is finally made possible. Israel's deepest hope, to dwell in YHWH's house upon his holy mountain, was not merely a liturgical question but a historical quest. A gravely confounding quest, to be sure, for who may 'dwell with the devouring fire?' (Isa. 33:14). And yet Israel's destiny, nevertheless, is to become just such a wonder, akin to the burning bush, to be 'burning with fire, but not consumed', alight with the glory of the Presence of God (Exod. 3:2–3). In Exodus 15, having just seen the deliverance of YHWH through the sea, Moses leads Israel in song, perhaps the most ancient in Scripture. The theological heart and structural centre of the song, verse 11, is the adoration of God:

Who is like you, O YHWH, among the gods?  
Who is like you, glorious in holiness,  
fearful in praises,  
doing wonders?

Again, we are confronted with 'the deepest and innermost nature of

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the God of the Old Testament',<sup>5</sup> his absolute holiness. From the heavens, the angels declare, 'Holy, holy, holy is YHWH of hosts' (Isa. 6:3); that is, YHWH is like 'no other'. This heavenly indicative is matched by an earthly interrogative. From the earth, Israel, having experienced his salvation, cries up, 'Who is like you, O YHWH?' The question itself is the highest acclamation of praise. And yet, even in the depths of such a fearful marvel, the song moves on with undaunted hope to a nearly unimaginable promise – namely, that God's people have been delivered precisely for the purpose of abiding with this One to whom none can be compared:

You in your loving-kindness will lead forth the people  
you have redeemed;  
You will guide them by your strength to your holy  
habitation . . .  
You will bring them in and plant them in the mountain  
of your inheritance,  
In the place, O YHWH, you have made for your  
own dwelling,  
The sanctuary, O Lord, which your hands have  
established.

(Exod. 15:13, 17)

The emphatic threefold 'you will' of these verses is the source of Israel's life and hope for dwelling in God's house. YHWH, out of an eternal love, purposes to make a way – and, is anything too difficult for God? The following pages endeavour to unfold the wonder of that way. Anchored thus to YHWH's own will, his people's longing will not be in vain.

The Heidelberg Catechism, question and answer six, teaches that humanity was created to truly know and love God and to live with him in eternal happiness, all to his praise and glory. Similarly, the Westminster Confession of Faith Shorter Catechism, question and answer one, states that humanity's chief end is to glorify God and enjoy him for ever. These historic confessions capture precisely the biblical theology of the Bible. Entering the house of God to dwell with God, beholding, glorifying and enjoying him eternally, I suggest, is *the* story of the Bible, the plot that makes sense of the various acts, persons and places of its pages, the deepest context for its doctrines.

<sup>5</sup> Sellin 1936: 19.

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For this ultimate end the Son of God shed his blood and poured out the Spirit from on high, even to bring us into his Father's house, in him, as sons and daughters of God.

How lovely is your dwelling, O YHWH of hosts!  
My soul longs, even faints, for the courts of YHWH,  
My heart and flesh cry out with joy to the living God!  
. . . How happy are those who dwell in your house,  
ever singing your praise!

(Ps. 84:1–4)

## Chapter One

# Leviticus within the Pentateuch: a theological structure

### Introduction

The primary theme and theology of Leviticus (and of the Pentateuch as a whole) is *YHWH's opening a way for humanity to dwell in the divine Presence*. This theme will be found to encompass the narrative storyline of the Pentateuch, as well as the prominent role of the tabernacle cultus within it. Indeed, the theme of dwelling in the divine Presence, like a kernel sprouting up from the soil of the Pentateuch's heart, wends its way through biblical history and branches out literally into various cluster-bearing vines, vines never severed from their root.

Increasingly, scholars have come to appreciate the significance of literary structure for determining the meaning of a work: that the form conveys meaning. In this chapter, therefore, we will consider the structure of the Pentateuch in its final form, examining how that structure contributes to the stated theological theme of Leviticus.

### The structure of the Pentateuch

We will now explore the Pentateuch's overarching structure. I will argue that by examining the highest macrostructural level of the Pentateuch one is able to sound out the deepest level – the bedrock – of its meaning. In doing so we will find that the final shape of the Pentateuch sets up the priestly cultus quite literally as a light upon a hill.

#### *The centre of the Pentateuch: Leviticus*

Perhaps the most obvious structural feature of the Pentateuch is that it *is* a 'Pentateuch', a 'five-volume' or 'five-scrolled' book. Many scholars have noted that this five-book structure, with Leviticus at the

centre, is not likely to have been coincidental.<sup>1</sup> The notion that it simply took five scrolls to fit the entire Torah, an idea justly dubbed ‘flimsy’ by Auld,<sup>2</sup> does not adequately account for the cut-off points of each book nor for the symmetry of the collection taken together: Exodus and Numbers are nearly the same length (16,713 and 16,413 words respectively) while Leviticus, the central book, is by far the shortest (11,950 words – half the length of Genesis).<sup>3</sup> Moreover, chronological markers set off all five books of the Pentateuch as separate units.<sup>4</sup> Likewise, that the psalter was deliberately divided into five books manifests a relevant awareness that the Pentateuch’s fivefold structure is theologically significant.<sup>5</sup>

Once the fivefold nature of the Pentateuch is in view, the centrality of Leviticus becomes readily apparent. Thematically, there is also good reason to believe the Pentateuch is structured concentrically. Genesis and Deuteronomy both end with a patriarch (Jacob, Moses) blessing the twelve tribes before dying outside the land,<sup>6</sup> and Exodus and Numbers have many parallel events, framing Leviticus as the central book. A. C. Leder summarizes:

In the concentric structure of the Pentateuch parallels between Exodus and Numbers suggest that they constitute a frame for Leviticus. Parallels between Genesis and Deuteronomy not only frame Exodus, Leviticus and Numbers thematically, they also provide the beginning and conclusion to the linear sequence of the entire pentateuchal narrative. Thus, Genesis through Deuteronomy exhibits an ABCB'A' organizational format in which Deuteronomy returns to and complements the themes of Genesis, and Numbers returns to and complements the themes of Exodus. This leaves Leviticus occupying the narrative centre of the Pentateuch, as illustrated in the chart below.<sup>7</sup>

<sup>1</sup> See e.g. Klingbeil 2007: 155–157; Radday 1972; Shea 1986; Christensen 1996: 539. Sailhamer (1992: 1–2) downplays the Pentateuch’s fivefold structure, a point that may be connected to his marginalization of the cultus.

<sup>2</sup> Auld 1996: 40.

<sup>3</sup> Blenkinsopp 1992: 42–47; Ska 2006: 16–19.

<sup>4</sup> M. Smith 1999: 201; Knierim 1995: 353; Auld 1996; 2003; Bibb 2008: 18–26.

<sup>5</sup> Interestingly, Book Three of the Psalms is ‘dominated by songs of the Levites Asaph, Korah and Ethan’ (Auld 1996: 41), in addition to the further similarity of its being the central and shortest of the five books.

<sup>6</sup> Note also the shared vocabulary, exclusive to the beginning of Genesis (1:2) and end of Deuteronomy (32:10–11).

<sup>7</sup> Leder 2010: 34–35.

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<b>A GENESIS</b>	Separation from the nations/Blessing/ Seeing the land/ Descendants and the land		
<b>B EXODUS</b>		Israel's desert journeys/ Apostasy and plagues/ Pharaoh and magicians/ First-born/Levites	
<b>C LEVITICUS</b>			Sacrifices/ Cleanliness/ Holiness
<b>B' NUMBERS</b>		Israel's desert journeys/ Apostasy and plagues/ Balak and Balaam/ First-born/Levites	
<b>A' DEUTERONOMY</b>	Separation from the nations/Blessing/ Seeing the land/ Descendants and the land		

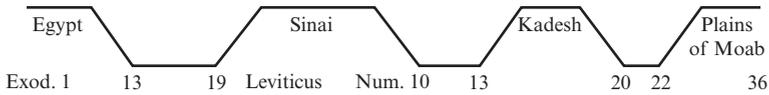
Moshe Kline (2006) proposes a similar schematic structure of the Pentateuch:

Genesis	Prologue
Exodus	Leaving Egypt
	Building the <b>tabernacle</b>
Leviticus	The <b>tabernacle</b> service
Numbers	Dedicating the <b>tabernacle</b>
	Preparing to enter Canaan
Deuteronomy	Epilogue

The symmetry is more than broadly thematic however. Wenham notes, for example, that while Genesis appears to serve as an introductory prologue and Deuteronomy as a reflective epilogue, Exodus, Leviticus and Numbers hang closely together by three extended journey-stop cycles:<sup>8</sup>

<sup>8</sup> Wenham 2008: 18. On pp. 19–20 Wenham charts the journey-and-stops parallels.

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More narrowly, the ring structure of Exodus 15:22 – Numbers 21:18 proposed by A. Schart highlights both the similarities between Exodus and Numbers and the significance of Sinai within the Pentateuch:<sup>9</sup>

- A Exod. 15:22–25 transformation of water from bitter to sweet
- B 17:1–7 water from the rock
- C 17:8–16 Amalekite–Israelite war
- D 18 leadership relief for Moses
- E 18:27 the Midianite Hobab, Moses’ father-in-law
- F 19:1–2 arrival at Sinai

SINAI

- F’ Num. 10:11–23 departure from Sinai
- E’ 10:29–32 the Midianite Hobab, Moses’ father-in-law
- D’ 11 leadership relief for Moses
- C’ 14:39–45 Amalekite–Israelite war
- B’ 20:1–13 water from the rock
- A’ 21:16–18 the spring

The centrality of Sinai, the locus for the archetypal advent of YHWH, demonstrates the theological emphasis of theophany and divine Presence within the Pentateuch.<sup>10</sup> Narrowing further within this central Sinai section (Exod. 19 to Num. 10), which is itself set off by itinerary notices, there are significant signals as to the literary integrity of the book of Leviticus.<sup>11</sup> With reference to the tabernacle, the book is framed by a date notice:

- G Exod. 40:17 1st day of 1st month of 2nd year – ‘the tabernacle was raised up’

SINAI Book of Leviticus

- G’ Num. 1:1 1st day of 2nd month of 2nd year – ‘the tabernacle of meeting’

That the tabernacle structure coincides with the book of Leviticus supports Mary Douglas’s reading of Leviticus as something of a

<sup>9</sup> Schart 1990: 52. J. Milgrom (1990: xvii–xviii) also argues for a general chiasmic arrangement. See also the chiasm of Exod. 19:3 to Num. 10:10 proposed by D. A. Dorsey (1999: 80–81).

<sup>10</sup> See Polak 1996; Lawlor 2011: 30–31.

<sup>11</sup> Cf. Ruwe 2003: 58–59.

literary tour of the tabernacle.<sup>12</sup> C. R. Smith also points out how the second half of Exodus deals primarily with setting up the tabernacle, while the first half of Numbers is concerned with taking it down, Leviticus itself comprising God's speeches from the tabernacle.<sup>13</sup> He notes, along with Knierim,<sup>14</sup> that Leviticus 1:1 ('YHWH summoned Moses, and spoke to him *from the tent of meeting*') signals the highest level in the macrostructure of the Sinai pericope, and is bookended by Numbers 1:1 ('YHWH spoke to Moses in the wilderness of Sinai, *in the tent of meeting*'), betraying a deliberate effort to seclude Leviticus as a distinct section. Rendtorff likewise points out the intentional nature of its composition,<sup>15</sup> being 'the only book in the Pentateuch that takes place completely and exclusively at Sinai – and which at the same time takes place at and in the tent of meeting, the sanctum'.<sup>16</sup> With relative confidence, then, we may affirm Damrosch's statement that Leviticus is the very heart of the Pentateuch's narrative.<sup>17</sup>

### *The centre of Leviticus: day of Atonement*

Setting our focus now within the confines of Leviticus, atonement is one of the major themes of this central book, and several scholars have posited the Day of Atonement in Leviticus 16 as the book's literary centre. This conclusion appears well founded as it can be reached from a variety of approaches. Outlining Leviticus according to its alternating genres of law and narrative, C. R. Smith proposes a sevenfold division: law, narrative, law, narrative, law, narrative, law, with the central section being the narrative description of the Day of Atonement in Leviticus 16.<sup>18</sup> Zenger comes to a concentrically arranged sevenfold structure,<sup>19</sup> with chapters 16–17 at the centre: 1–7,

<sup>12</sup> Douglas 1999a. See also G. Rendsburg's (2008) additional support. While affirming Leviticus as dominated literarily by the tabernacle, I do not embrace Douglas's structural outline (see brief critique below).

<sup>13</sup> C. R. Smith 1996: 18–19. Lawlor (2011: 39–42) posits Exod. 33:7–11 not only as the turning point in the Sinai pericope (which he defines as Exod. 18 to Num. 10) but also as referring to the content of Leviticus and Num. 1–6 (revelation in which the tent of meeting is central).

<sup>14</sup> Knierim 1985: 405.

<sup>15</sup> Rendtorff 2003: 253.

<sup>16</sup> My translation of 'Damit wird zugleich bewusst gemacht, dass Leviticus als einziges der fünf Bücher des Pentateuch ganz und ausschliesslich am Sinai spielt – und das heisst zugleich: am und im Zelt der Begegnung, dem Heiligtum.'

<sup>17</sup> Damrosch 1987: 76. Knierim's (1985: 405) conclusion is much the same, that the 'Sinai-pericope aims at the book of Leviticus. This book is the centre of the Pentateuch.'

<sup>18</sup> C. R. Smith 1996: 22. He (24) also suggests the two goats of the Day of Atonement highlight the concerns of the set of laws on either side of it: cleanness and holiness.

<sup>19</sup> Zenger 1999.

sacrifice regulations; 8–10, priestly duties; 11–15, daily purity; 16–17, atonement and reconciliation; 18–20, daily holiness; 21–22, priestly duties; 23–26, sacrifice and festival regulations – and here Ruwe critiques well his failure to isolate chapter 16.<sup>20</sup> Although Ruwe himself posits Leviticus 1 – 8 and 9 – 26 as the highest structural division of Leviticus, his subdivisions (e.g. positing a concentric structure for chs. 11–15, a coherent independent complex for chs. 17–27 and delineating ch. 16 as its own section due to the chronological notice of v. 1, and the exclusive address to Aaron in v. 2) mark the central character of the Day of Atonement.<sup>21</sup> And in his published doctoral dissertation Warning analyses the structure of Leviticus according to its thirty-seven divine speeches, arriving at Leviticus 16 as the literary centre, with eighteen divine speeches on either side.<sup>22</sup> Finally, based on formal devices, such as repetitions and interconnections, and marking Leviticus 1:1, 16:1–2aa and 25:1 as macrostructural divine-speech introductions, Luciani also proposes a concentric structure, with Leviticus 16 at the centre.<sup>23</sup> Rendtorff’s conclusion appears judicious, therefore, that on both a formal and thematic level there are sound reasons to speak of the central position of chapter 16 within the book of Leviticus.<sup>24</sup> Thus construed, the Day of Atonement becomes the literary and thematic centre of the Pentateuch. Bibb comes to a similar conclusion:

The chapter itself [16] is a microcosm of the book’s ritual world, a subtle integration of narrative past and timeless, disembodied ritual. In any case, it is clearly the central pivot point of the book and any literary analysis must account for its importance in the structure and the message of Leviticus.<sup>25</sup>

Based on an article by Shea (1986), R. M. Davidson’s diagram of the Pentateuch, which I have altered slightly, highlights the structural position and role of Leviticus 16:<sup>26</sup>

<sup>20</sup> Ruwe 2003: 69, n. 35. The second half of Ruwe’s article, furthermore, argues cogently for maintaining chs. 17–26 as a unit – ensuring the distinctness and completeness of ch. 16. On this point, see also Otto 1994: 242–243.

<sup>21</sup> Ruwe 2003: esp. 68–69.

<sup>22</sup> Warning 1999.

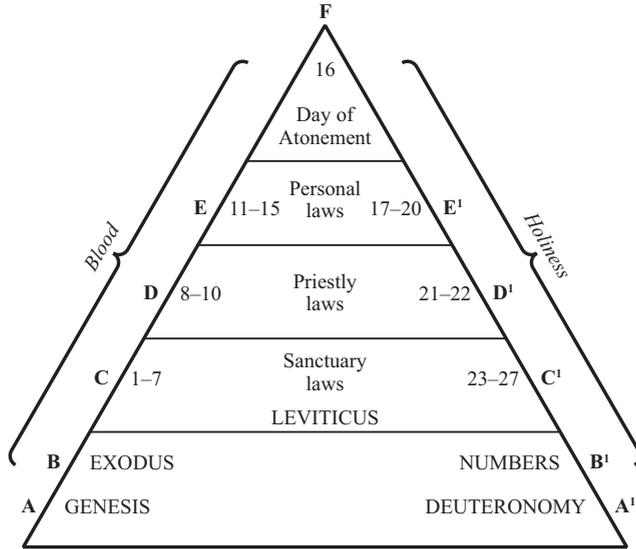
<sup>23</sup> Luciani 2005. He marks the following parallels: chs. 1–7 and 25–27 (A–A’); 8–10 and 23–24 (B–B’); 11–12 and 22:17–33 (C–C’); 13–15 and 17:1 – 22:16 (D–D’); with ch. 16 at the centre.

<sup>24</sup> Rendtorff 2003.

<sup>25</sup> Bibb 2008: 33.

<sup>26</sup> Davidson 1988: 20.

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**Diagram of Leviticus**

Therefore, while precise markers and thematic labels will undoubtedly vary among scholars who propose a sevenfold structure (at some level), the following outline offers a suitable overview to Leviticus:

- |   |                             |                    |
|---|-----------------------------|--------------------|
| Lev 1 – 7 Sacrifices                                    | } <i>Approaching God</i>    |                    |
| 8 – 10 Institution of priesthood/inauguration of cultus |                             | ATONEMENT          |
| 11 – 15 Clean/unclean in daily life                     | —                           | JUDGMENT/CLEANSING |
| 16 Day of Atonement                                     |                             |                    |
| 17 – 20 Holy/profane in daily life                      | } <i>Communion with God</i> |                    |
| 21 – 22 Legislation for the priesthood                  |                             | HOLINESS           |
| 23 – 27 Festivals / sacred time                         |                             |                    |

As is evident from the stepped arrangement, and in agreement with Zenger (1999) and Luciani (2005) among others, I posit a concentric structure, leading up to the Day of Atonement as the ‘capstone of the sacrificial rituals’ and flowing out of that ceremony into ‘the subject of holy living’.<sup>27</sup> From, perhaps, the most basic vantage point, one may consider Leviticus in two halves, with chapter 16 serving as the fulcrum, summing up the sacrificial cult and functioning as a segue to the call for holiness. The first half deals primarily with the approach to God through blood, while the second half is taken up

<sup>27</sup> Shea 1986: 131–132.

with life in God's Presence through increasing holiness, the overall goal being fellowship and union with God.<sup>28</sup> Once more, the *aim* of Levitical legislation must be kept in view. Whether the laws pertain to sacrifice, to distinguishing between clean and unclean, or to ethical and moral behaviour, the aim of the laws is fellowship and union with the living God. For this reason, though Leviticus is often characterized thematically by holiness,<sup>29</sup> it is preferable to discern holiness not as an end in itself but rather as a means to an end, which is the real theme, the abundant life of joy with God in the house of God. This point may be illustrated according to the primary subject matter characterizing each half of Leviticus, blood and holiness, respectively. Leviticus 17:11 sets the whole sacrificial legislation of chapters 1–16 within this framework when it explains *life* as the significance of (cultic or sacrificial) blood:

For the life ['soul', *nepes̄*] of the flesh, it is in the blood, and I myself have given it to you upon the altar to make atonement upon your lives ['souls', *nap̄šōtēkem*], for it is the blood that, by means of the life ['soul', *bannepes̄*], makes atonement.

While the idea of death is certainly present in the ritual immolation of animals, yet the pervasive emphasis throughout the first half of Leviticus upon the blood of animals is to be understood rather as an emphasis upon life. This is especially the case as that life is brought into the divine Presence in the holy of holies in Leviticus 16. The overlap between blood and the holiest place occurs, furthermore, precisely upon the holiest ritual act on the Day of Atonement, at the transition point to the second half of Leviticus, with its emphasis upon

<sup>28</sup> This broad approach to Leviticus also enables one to grasp the twofold nature of reconciliation with God: approaching God through the means he has ordained, namely *atonement* (in the first half of Leviticus); and then deepening fellowship and communion with God by the increase of *holiness* (in the second half of Leviticus). Stated differently, the two halves of Leviticus may also be contemplated under the theological categories of justification and sanctification, respectively (see e.g. *ibid.* 149–151), although this is somewhat overly simplistic – the sacrifices are ever as much about sanctification. It was precisely the cultic foundation for these theological categories that enabled the apostles of the new covenant to understand the accomplished work of Jesus Christ. The apostle Paul, therefore, wrote that we have 'now been justified by his blood', being 'reconciled to God through the death of his Son' and that, having been reconciled, we shall all the more 'be saved by his life' (Rom. 5:8–10; cf. 3:21–26).

<sup>29</sup> Turnbull (1926: 17; emphasis original; cf. 13–14) expresses this well: 'Leviticus was given to direct Israel how she might live as a *holy* nation; that being holy, she might come into God's Presence [chs. 1–16]; that being holy, she might live in communion with God [chs. 17–27].'

holiness – an emphasis that begins with the sanctity of blood in ch. 17, though the root for holiness (*qđš*) is not used. The set-apartness of blood for sacred use, because of its significance as life, leads to the subject of holy living (chs. 17–27). Then, just as with the blood’s signifying life in the first half of Leviticus, so, too, with holiness in the second half. Holiness, properly conceived, pertains to fullness of life, a perspective that will be grasped more clearly when we consider in the next chapter the correspondence between the holy of holies and the garden of Eden. Suffice it to say here that the holy of holies derives its status from being the locale of God’s Presence on earth, and, so, from God’s nature as absolute life, the fountain of life – the God of the living. Understood in this manner, *the tabernacle’s grades of holiness are seen rather as grades of life, with the holy of holies representing fullness of life*. Not only does this point help to explain various requirements for the high priest, as well as to unfold the logic behind aspects of ceremonial uncleanness, but for our present purpose it also enables us to understand holiness legislation as an invitation to life with God: ‘You shall be holy because I YHWH your God am holy’ (Lev. 19:2; cf. Lev. 11:44–45; 20:7; cf. 1 Peter 1:16). The realm outside the gates of Eden is polluted with death; approaching God and communing with him must of necessity entail being set apart from sin and uncleanness (realm of death) to God himself, who is utterly holy (realm of life).

How the Day of Atonement relates to the theme of YHWH’s opening a way for humanity to dwell in the divine Presence is readily recognized when the significance of atonement is understood, namely *that it makes possible life in the divine Presence*.<sup>30</sup> Atonement is reconciliation, at-one-ment. This is in keeping with Nihan’s basic theme for Leviticus as ‘Israel’s gradual initiation (by Yahweh himself) into the requirements of the divine Presence, an initiation taking place in three successive stages’ of growing intimacy.<sup>31</sup> In bringing the divine Presence near, the book of Leviticus itself sharpens the focus of what may be called the central theological dilemma (and drama) of humanity’s relationship with God, namely the danger posed by intimacy with a ‘consuming fire’ – a threat relieved *somewhat* by cultic legislation.<sup>32</sup>

<sup>30</sup> Cf. Crüsemann 1996: 313.

<sup>31</sup> Nihan 2007: 108–110. For a similar reading of the Pentateuch in relation to the divine presence, see Blum 1990; Ruwe 2003.

<sup>32</sup> Cf. e.g. Bibb 2008: 46, 68, 75, 86. Throughout his monograph Bibb notes the tension and ambiguity underlying cultic legislation. The cultus does not amount to ‘magic’ – it can neither control nor contain the deity.

At the heart of the Pentateuch, then, one finds humanity's deepest penetration into the divine Presence – this by way of the cultic means opened by YHWH. As we will see, however, the book of Leviticus holds out the prospect of deeper communion with God, through the Day of Atonement, but also beyond it. That is, the Day of Atonement represents the deepest *cultic* penetration into God's Presence, while chapters 17–27 of Leviticus will draw out the prospect of life with God enabled through the tabernacle cultus, as Israel grows steadily sanctified through its mediation.

Returning to the book's outline, while academic dispute over the structure of Leviticus will probably continue, it is significant that a number of scholars, perhaps the widest consensus,<sup>33</sup> accept Leviticus 16 as the literary and theological centre. A few who have posited Leviticus 19 as the centre of Leviticus nonetheless suggest that atonement appears thematically central to the book. Mary Douglas infers that atonement is the central theme of Leviticus,<sup>34</sup> as does Moshe Kline, who believes the reader of Leviticus is placed in a position analogous to the high priest on the Day of Atonement, following the path of holiness through the courtyard, holy place and holy of holies to the centre of the book.<sup>35</sup>

Nihan has given a satisfactory critique of Douglas's proposed structure,<sup>36</sup> and I merely add that positioning the reader analogously to the high priest on the Day of Atonement is a more reasonable premise when the Day of Atonement itself is found to be the literary and thematic focus of the book.

Finally, turning our attention to the shape of Leviticus 16 itself, a number of scholars have posited a chiastic arrangement for this chapter.<sup>37</sup> My own objective does not require being dogmatic on the form of Leviticus 16, as we are considering the thematic importance of the chapter (and Day of Atonement) as a whole. However, such a structure, if valid, serves to isolate Leviticus 16 as a textual unit, fits the central function of the chapter and further focuses attention

<sup>33</sup> See e.g. Averbeck 1997a: 910; Davidson 2000a; Hartley 1992: 217; Luciani 2005; Radday 1972; Rendtorff 2003; Rooke 2007: 342; Shea 1986; C. R. Smith 1996; Zenger 1999: 71; Jürgens 2001: 126–86 (Zenger and Jürgens both posit chs. 16–17 as the centre).

<sup>34</sup> Douglas 1999a: 231–234.

<sup>35</sup> Moshe Kline 2006: 11.

<sup>36</sup> Nihan (2007: 84) notes e.g. the significant incongruity whereby the high priest's only entrance into the holy of holies in Lev. 16 is assigned in Douglas's schema to the outer court, representing the structural parallel to Lev. 2.

<sup>37</sup> Luciani 2005: 386; Hartley 1992: 232; Rodriguez 1996.

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upon the purpose of the ritual (vv. 16–17) – a salient point, given my suggested theme. Rodriguez argues for the following concentric outline,<sup>38</sup> to which I have made slight alterations and have added the concentrically arranged Pentateuch:

- FRAME: 'And YHWH said to Moses . . .' (16:1)
- A. Aaron should not go into holy of holies any time he wishes (16:2)
  - B. Aaron's sacrificial victims, special vestment (16:3–4)
  - C. Sacrificial victims provided by people (16:5)
  - D. Aaron's bull, goat for sin-offering, goat for Azazel (16:6–10)
  - A. Genesis E. Aaron sacrifices bull (16:11–14)
  - B. Exodus F. Goat sacrificed as sin-offering (16:15)
  - X. Leviticus – ch. 16 → X. Atonement (16:16–20a)
  - B.' Numbers F.' Goat sent to wilderness (16:20b–22)
  - A.' Deuteronomy E.' Aaron's closing activities (16:23–25)
  - D.' Goat for Azazel, Aaron's bull, goat for sin-offering (16:26–28)
  - C.' People rest and humble themselves (16:29–31)
  - B.' Anointed priest officiates wearing special garments (16:32–33)
  - A.' Anointed priest makes atonement once a year (16:34)
- FRAME: 'As YHWH commanded Moses . . .' (16:34)

Notably, Luciani's chiasmic outline of the same chapter contains significant overlap,<sup>39</sup> tending to confirm the general structure's focus on the accomplished purgation of the tabernacle and camp of Israelites – 'so shall he make atonement . . .' (v. 16):

- 16:1–2a Narrative Speech Frame
- I. 16:2aβ–10
    - A. YHWH's address to Moses (2aβ–b)
    - B. Animals, clothes and bath to begin the ritual and penetrate into the holy of holies (3–5)
    - C. Presentation of the sacrificial animals and drawing of lots (6–10)
  - II. 16:11–20
    - X. Entrance, in 2 phases, into holy of holies with the blood of the *hatta't* bull, with frankincense and with the blood of the *hatta't* goat (11–15)
      - Y. The purpose of the ritual: Purge the holy of holies and the holy place of the impurities of the assembly of Israel (16–17)
    - X.' Exit to the sacrificial altar and completion of cleansing the sanctuary (18–20)

<sup>38</sup> Rodriguez 1996: 283.

<sup>39</sup> Luciani 2005: 386.

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### III. 16:21–34a

C.' Load the sins of Israel onto scapegoat and drive it into the desert (21–22)

B.' Procedures for ritual exit: disrobe, bath of the high priest and his assistants, burnt offerings, a provision of the remains of sacrificial materials (23–28)

A.' YHWH addresses the Community (29–34)

### 16:34b Narrative Speech Frame

At issue, once more, is the significance, thematic and theological, of this Day of Atonement chapter as a whole. Nihan, for example, who sees a threefold structure to the book of Leviticus (chs. 1–10, 11–16 and 17–26 [+27]), each section concluding with a reference to the divine Presence (chs. 9–10, 16, 26), notes the centrality of chapter 16, 'undoubtedly the most important ritual in the whole book', for the following reasons: (1) it is the annual occasion whereby both the sanctuary and the community are purified from all impurities, (2) it is the only ceremony whereby Aaron is given entrance into God's Presence in the holy of holies, (3) formal devices, utterly unique and unparalleled so far in Leviticus, set off the chapter.<sup>40</sup>

In basic agreement with Nihan's proposal, I will approach the drama of Leviticus by a threefold movement, even as I highlight the significance of its central chapter.

While, certainly, not every detail of the Pentateuchal structures reviewed thus far is equally convincing,<sup>41</sup> yet the structural centrality of the Sinai pericope (Schart's outline), the framing of Leviticus (with Exodus and Numbers mirroring each other) and the theological centrality of the Day of Atonement within Leviticus are firm and widely held positions. Accepting the role of the Day of Atonement as the structural keystone and theological centre of Leviticus,<sup>42</sup> it will, however, require the rest of this present study to affirm that *YHWH's opening a way for humanity to dwell in the divine Presence* – particularly through atonement – is a theme that stretches throughout the horizon of the Pentateuch, its rays finding their source at its highest arc, the Day of Atonement in Leviticus 16.

<sup>40</sup> Nihan 2007: 96–97. See also Ruwe (2003: 63–64), who speaks of a 'theology of encounter'.

<sup>41</sup> See C. Nihan's (2007: 76–95) review and critique of the main proposals.

<sup>42</sup> Hartley 1992: xxxv.

*A sacred journey to YHWH's abode*

Finally, I supplement here my conclusions by an alternative angle of approach, which also enables me to map out the place of Leviticus within the Pentateuch. M. Smith persuasively demonstrates a symmetrical shaping of Exodus and Numbers by studying their geographical and temporal markers, long considered by commentators a staple of the priestly organization of Pentateuchal material.<sup>43</sup> The itinerary notices in Exodus and Numbers balance one another with six notices charting the Israelites' journey from Egypt to Rephidim, the station before Sinai (Exod. 12:37a; 13:20; 14:1–2; 15:22a; 16:1; 17:1) and six notices following the Israelites from Sinai to the plains of Moab in Numbers (Exod. 19:2; Num. 10:12; 20:1, 22; 21:10–11; 22:1), manifesting a correspondence between the journey to and from Sinai:<sup>44</sup>

Exodus	1:1 – 15:21 in Egypt 15:22 – 18:26 in the wilderness chs. 19–40 at Mount Sinai
Numbers	1:1 – 10:10 at Mount Sinai 10:11 – 21:35 in the wilderness chs. 22–36 in Transjordan

The chronological markers are no less significant, marking special events according to Israel's liturgical calendar. In the book of Exodus, for example, the chronological markers (12:2, 41; 19:1, 16; 40:17) 'suggest a year arranged primarily according to the first two of three main pilgrimage feasts: Passover begins the series with the exodus from Egypt, the Israelites arrive at Sinai on the feast of Weeks, and the tabernacle (*miškān*) is completed around the New Year'.<sup>45</sup> The same is true for the book of Numbers, so that Passover is celebrated not only to begin the journey to Sinai (Exod. 12 – 13) but to begin the journey from Sinai (Num. 9 – 10). Sacred time, Smith observes, is arranged chiasmatically around Leviticus: while Genesis 1 to Exodus 12 and Numbers 10 to Deuteronomy 34 are reckoned by years, Exodus

<sup>43</sup> M. Smith 1999. See also Ruwe 2003: 58–67.

<sup>44</sup> M. Smith 1999: 186–187. 'In general, the priestly arrangement of Exodus and Numbers presents the geographical progression in the book of Numbers in part as an inversion of the progression in Exodus' (ibid. 187).

<sup>45</sup> Ibid. 193.

12 to Numbers 10 is counted by months, evoking the liturgical year through the feasts of Passover, Weeks and Booths.<sup>46</sup>

Thus illustrating a deliberate concern with sacred space and time, Smith also notes throughout how the book of Leviticus itself contains neither itinerary notices nor chronological markers, that the book is, in a sense, timeless and spaceless and thus marked out as a separate book. Indeed, he stresses the central position of Leviticus in the Pentateuch, with the tabernacle being the centre of Israel's holy and liturgical life.<sup>47</sup> However, because it lacks chronological markers, Leviticus is left out of Smith's examination.<sup>48</sup> Still, Smith's structuring categories of space and time are equally operative within the bounds of Leviticus, though of a different nature. The tabernacle plan structures the book in such a way that emphasis is placed upon both sacred space and time as they converge in ch. 16 – the most sacred time, within the most sacred space. Smith's argument that the Exodus to Numbers material has been shaped and structured according to the categories of sacred space and liturgical time, and this so as to stress the centrality of the book of Leviticus, I suggest, leads inevitably to the threshold of the veil – that is, to the Day of Atonement, the highest holy day of Israel's calendar, the day of humanity's nearest approach into the Presence of YHWH.

As we pan back once more beyond the Sinai narrative to the literary structure of the Pentateuch, particularly with the central Exodus, Leviticus and Numbers material in view, the following 'geographic' pattern is evident, providing a double frame around the tabernacle:

wilderness journey – Mt Sinai – tabernacle – Mt Sinai – wilderness journey

This sequence, then, is not merely linear, but has the tabernacle as the culminating centre. In ancient literature the literary centre is often thematically central, form following function – especially so within a chiasmic structure. Yehudah Radday, for example, stated that the centre of a chiasmic structure is

a key to meaning. Not paying sufficient attention to it may result in failure to grasp the true theme . . . Biblical authors and/or editors

<sup>46</sup> Ibid. 206–207.

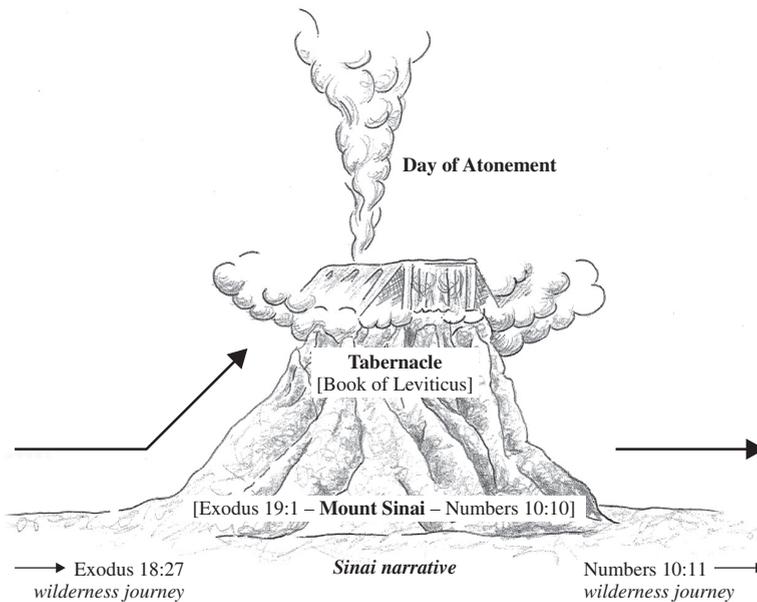
<sup>47</sup> Ibid. 204. He also quotes (202) favourably J. W. Watts (1995): 'The close relationship between P's narratives and lists suggests that the priestly writers and editors worked with the larger context in mind and intentionally structured the whole to highlight Levitical legislation as the central lists in the Pentateuch's rhetoric.'

<sup>48</sup> Although he (1999: 206–207) does note, interestingly, that Lev. 16:1, in referring back to the deaths of Aaron's sons in Lev. 10, does assume some lapse of time.

LEVITICUS WITHIN THE PENTATEUCH

placed the main idea, the thesis, or the turning point of each literary unit, at its center . . . If true, the significance of this salient feature cannot be overestimated.<sup>49</sup>

Thus reading an ancient work may be likened justly to traversing a mountain, with the two halves – the ascent and descent – mirroring each other, and the central summit constituting the literary height. Applying this insight to both the shape and content of the Pentateuch renders a reading along the lines of a journey to the abode of YHWH atop his holy mountain:<sup>50</sup>



Like the psalmist’s journey to the abode of God in Psalm 23 (a pertinent analogy to which we will return later in this work) the Pentateuch is shaped as a journey led by YHWH to himself at Mount Sinai – and particularly to his abode, the tabernacle. As Blenkinsopp noted, the Pentateuch’s narratives ‘lead up to the moment when God has

<sup>49</sup> Radday 1981: 51. Cf. also Dorsey 1999: 31; Waltke and Yu 2007: 120. V. M. Wilson (1997: 49; emphasis original) refers to the centre of a chiasm as its ‘theological heart’.

<sup>50</sup> The sketches on pp. 37, 50 and 101 are my own. For somewhat similar approaches, highlighting the centrality of the divine Presence, albeit for the hexateuch, see Newing 1981; 1985; Milgrom 1990: xviii.

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ordained to be indefectibly present to his people through its legitimate cult'.<sup>51</sup> Keeping in mind that when reading 'linearly' one must be ever mindful that both halves of a work inform and are informed by the centre, focusing attention upon the centre and deriving meaning from it will help us to read the Pentateuch, as it were, with 'cultic glasses'.

### Conclusion

Like moving inwardly along the rings of a target, this chapter has surveyed the structure of the Pentateuch concentrically, moving from its fivefold arrangement to the inner books of Exodus, Leviticus and Numbers, then to the Sinai narrative (Exod 19 to Num 10), then to the central book of Leviticus, and, finally, to the innermost ring itself, the Day of Atonement in Leviticus 16 – the narrowest aim of the Pentateuch's formation. The shape of the Pentateuch, I posit, follows (and forms) its unifying theme: *YHWH's opening a way for humanity to dwell in the divine Presence*. The essence of that way and the heart of the Pentateuch's theology is the Day of Atonement.

<sup>51</sup> Blenkinsopp 1976: 282. Although Blenkinsopp himself limits this remark to the purported priestly strand in relation to the covenants (Gen. 9:16; 17:7, 13), it nevertheless remains true within a final-form reading of the Pentateuch.