



# Table of **CONTENTS**

ABOUT THE AUTHOR 5

---

INTRODUCTION 6

---

HOW TO USE THIS STUDY 8

---

LEVITICUS: THE THIRD LOVE NOTE 9

---

♡ WEEK I: LEVITICUS 1 10

---

♡ WEEK II: LEVITICUS 2 12

---

♡ WEEK III: LEVITICUS 3 15

---

♡ WEEK IV: LEVITICUS 4 17

---

♡ WEEK V: LEVITICUS 5 20

---

♡ WEEK VI: LEVITICUS 6 23

---

♡ WEEK VII: LEVITICUS 7 25

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# About the **AUTHOR**



ANDREA L. PALMER

also goes by Mohawkmomma. She enjoys lingering in and teaching from the sixty-six love notes of God's truth—the Bible. She pastors, writes and creates at the intersection of words, images, and faith. She is the author of *Healing & Held: A Book of Blessings and Lament Rooted in Numbers & Habakkuk*, *The Healing Manifesto Devotional Planner*, and the designer of *Es[sense]*, *A Soul Care Study For Girls*, *Experience God's Love*, written by Katie Kemp. At home in Orlando, Florida - she is the wife to Keith and mom to eight souls on this earth and one in heaven.



# Introduction

This Bible study finds its inception over twenty years ago when I determined to read through the Bible for the first time—I was new to living faith. Although I had grown up in church culture in my Big Daddy's church in Little Rock, Arkansas, I was biblically illiterate and my intimacy with God was non-existent. Reading Leviticus awakened a strong yearning for biblical literacy and intimacy with God, this feeling manifested itself early in the third year of my following Jesus. Without a doubt, I found Leviticus to be cryptic, but I had thought that of most of the Bible, still, Leviticus held a different allure.

Biblical writers assumed that their readers were familiar with Near Eastern geography—I was not—nor was I familiar with Near Eastern culture or language. The geography that shaped their culture and language simultaneously shaped their culture. They had an Eastern mindset rather than a Western mindset. My Western gravitational pull to ways of learning and understanding were the only things I knew. "Did you have me in mind when Leviticus was written, Lord?" This was my straightforward question to Jesus.

You could say I became borderline obsessed with Leviticus, perhaps because there are more "words" of God in Leviticus than any other book of the Bible. The direct speech of God to Moses comprises 90% of Leviticus. Ponder the impact of that if you're seeking to discern and lean into the voice of God. "Could it truly be accessible to the modern reader in a meaningfully intimate way?" "Where is Jesus in all of this blood?" Ironically, the question about all of the blood perplexed and fascinated me the most; now my studies have made it most accessible for me to find an intimate connection because wherever there's blood there's life, and the life of Christ is the crimson thread throughout Leviticus, and so it is throughout all of Scripture.

As time would unfold, I would come to understand how Eastern thought emphasizes the process of learning as a process of discovery, not a mere result of an answer. As a curious soul, I delved into discovery; I did want answers, though.

The people whom God chose as holy witnesses—the people who described their world and themselves in concrete terms—were about to help me strengthen my intimacy with God and provide explanations. Indeed, I began to believe that Jesus had me in mind when Leviticus was not only being composed but when it was being benevolently breathed out upon a newly freed people. I believe Leviticus, as well as other scriptural passages, allow us to experience the breath of God's love. 2 Timothy 3:16 reveals, "All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness." This is the only use in the Bible of the Greek word *theopneustos*, which means "God-breathed, due to the inspiration of God," the basic premise of breathing in God's nature and nurture through sacred Scripture is that of being inspired by God.

God's love truly inspires our orthodoxy (what we believe), our orthopraxy (what we practice), and our orthopathy (what we feel)—a range of emotions, from the most breath-taking virtue, the deepest interpersonal affection to the simplest pleasure inspires and invites us into an exquisite love story. Because of this unfolding love story, over twenty years ago, I concluded one thing: Leviticus is a love note—an intimately penned message that shares the inmost thoughts of God's heart.

It was in Larry Crabb's book, *66 Love Letters: A Conversation With God That Invites You Into His Story*, that I discovered someone had written a book on this relational aspect of Scripture: Larry visualizes each chapter (each book of the Bible) as a love letter from God to himself.

My hope and desire are the same in this in-depth study, that you will deeply see and experience the affection of God's heart through this beautiful love story within the third love note—Leviticus.

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Andrea". The letter 'a' at the end of the name is stylized to resemble a heart shape.



# How to Use **THIS STUDY**

Welcome to *Leviticus: Lingering with Jesus in Today's Culture!*

I pray this study guides your heart to witness more of Jesus through the layers of faithful study of God's Word.

In each session, you'll find a group guide along with four sections of personal study. If you are leading a group through this study, check out the Leader Guide on pages 168-172.

## **IN THE BIBLE STUDY BOOK**

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### **LISTEN**

Listen to the audio for each session of the study, answering the questions as you do. Continue answering the questions on this page together as a group and discuss your answers.

### **PERSONAL STUDY**

The following sections are for your personal study throughout the week. There are four sections for each week (and a fifth section on the last week of study). You can complete one section each day or spread them out over multiple days. This study will require you to dive deep into Scripture—take your time! This study will also ask questions that are meant to provoke critical thinking and personal worship. You may not have the answer to every question and that's OK. The goal is to develop the skills to study God's Word and apply the truth found in Scripture to our everyday lives.

### **LEADER GUIDE**

If you are leading a group, the Leader Guide will walk you through an optional session outline with additional discussion questions and prompts for your group time.



# Leviticus

## The Third Love Note

### TITLE

Vayyiqra or vayikra" is the Hebrew title of the third book (third love note) of the Torah, it is the first word in the Hebrew text of the book and means "And He [that is, the LORD] called." Interestingly, very little space is given to the tribe of Levi (those who assisted the priests—Aaron and his sons—in the service of worship), a small mention of the Levites is in one passage of Leviticus (25: 32-34). In Hellenistic times, the term "Levites" meant priests, and this is what the Septuagint (Greek) and Vulgate (Latin) title Levitikon 'Leviticus' means. Exodus gave the direction and construction of the Tabernacle and priestly vestments, and now Leviticus converts this picture into scenes of living, communal worship. For the most part, these laws were given during the year Israel camped at Mount Sinai when God directed Moses to organize Israel's government, worship and military forces. Numbers follow with laws of the community in motion, with preparation for moving on from Sinai to Canaan.

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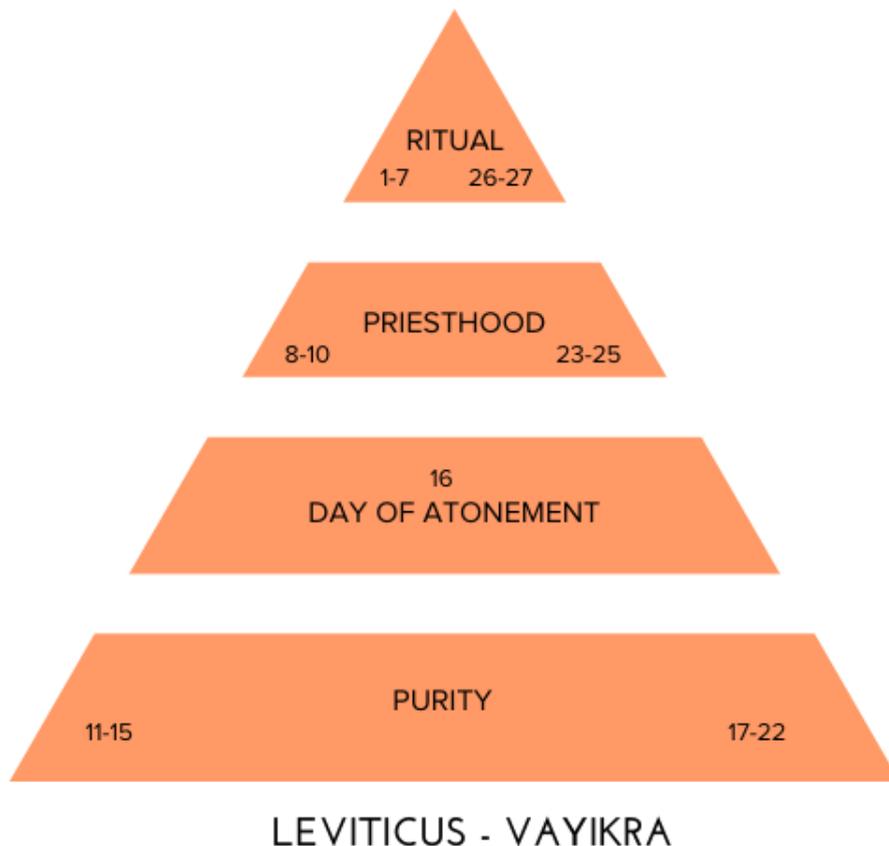
Although the focus of Leviticus is on the priests, only a few laws are reserved for them alone (i.e., 6:1 -7: 21; 10:8-15; 16: 2-28). The reason is made apparent by the context—Leviticus includes such diverse matters as sacrifices, dietary regulations, ceremonial impurity, sexual relations, the festival calendar, blasphemy, the sabbath year and the Year of Jubilee. These subjects concern the entire community of Israel, it is hardly surprising that the laws are mainly addressed to Israel.

# Leviticus

## The Third Love Note

### LITERARY DESIGN

In our modern times, we have different ways of highlighting a point, whether in speech through a pause or when we emphasize different syllables or raise our voice; and in written text, we have many different markers to draw in our attention: bold, italics, paragraphs. However, throughout the Bible, chiasms are used—a way of arranging words and ideas in a mirror-image, meaning that there's a parallel of a series of thoughts in reverse order. Leviticus is arranged in this common, artistic literary structure. This powerful, mirror-image tool used in the oral culture of that time was vital for a memorable impact (and it is for us today). But this concept is best understood visually.



Notice that the first and final chapters match—chapters 1-7 mirror chapters 26 and 27. These both describe rituals, whether sacrifices and offerings. The next chapters—8-10 moving inwards, are parallel with chapters 23-25: they both address the ordination of the priesthood and worship.

Moving inwards we find chapters 11-15, (ceremonial purity) parallel with chapters 17-22 (moral purity and the moral requirements of the priests). This brings us to the final and central unit, the **Day of Atonement**, which finds no parallel within the book. This means that it is the center of Leviticus itself. In fact, the Day of Atonement is the center of the Torah, given that Leviticus is the central love note (another chiasmic structure). This design results in a seven-fold structure (a number that occurs frequently within the book).

### **SIGNIFICANCE OF THE NUMBER SEVEN**

The idea of resting and the number seven are intimately connected in the Bible. In Genesis 1, the word or number "seven" has two key symbolic meanings: seven represents a **full** and **complete** world. This numerical symbolism is completely intentional. God wants us to learn that seven represents both a whole completed creation and a journey to that completeness.

### **KEY TAKEAWAYS**

Understand that Leviticus is not a flat landscape where we find all practices equally binding. It has a particular shape to it, a shape whose contours, emphases and priorities are outlined and filled in by Jesus Himself, who said: "Do not think that I have come to abolish the Law or the Prophets; I have not come to abolish them but to fulfill them" - Matthew 5:17. Leviticus takes place during the month or month-and-a-half between the completion of the Tabernacle (Exodus 40:17) and the Israelites' departure from Sinai (Numbers 1:1, 10:11).

Leviticus is about the everyday liturgical lives of people and of families—those of yesterday and today whose lives revolve around God as the first thing. All else—your relationships, your finances, your everything in between—is a second thing.

Leviticus presents Jesus through rituals, legal and moral practices, which influenced and shaped their emotional, spiritual, and cultural beliefs. It tells of a holy people who met with a holy God in meals, in menstruation, and marked festivals and feasts on terms that were not their own: they do so through relationship through a provisional and purposeful God.

Provisionally, the Shepherd of our souls is foregrounded in every sacrifice and offering to set the stage for our ultimate atonement—His sacrifice on the cross. Purposefully, the beloved Son devotedly served as the perfect High Priest to set the stage for the ultimate intercession for perfectly imperfect people—people who have much to learn about the audacity of justice and mercy expressed through love.

I'm going to be straightforward with you, Leviticus can't help but challenge you right away. When I taught it for the first time in 2014, some of the women didn't finish the course.

I'm asking you to sign up for the long haul—to refuse to go on with life as usual. I mean literally ... sign up. You see that line under my signature? That's for you. Sign your name once you've prayerfully agreed to go this distance with me. It's our commitment to each other to do serious business with God to pay attention to the life of worship and redemption rhythms that are woven into the fabric of Leviticus. Require yourself to answer the difficult questions, and make the life adjustments that those answers direct.

SOULjourner, you can find room to breathe and linger in this love letter. We can do it together. It'll help you live from where Love has graced you to see yourself truly as He sees you. Ready? Let's go. Freedom is already ours!



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YOUR SIGNATURE

**MY PRAYER FOR US**

*"God, incline our ears and hearts toward the truth about your nature and nurture through Leviticus, your third love note."*