Written: In the middle of the first millennium BCE (due to similar language and style of books like Ezekiel and 1 & 2 Chronicles).

It is the **shortest** of the five books of The Torah. Leviticus is placed in the center of the Torah. Between the (1) Completion of the Tabernacle in Exodus and (2) the Wilderness Wanderings in Numbers The Hebrew name meaning is “And he (God) called”. Greek and Latin meaning is “the book of the Levites.”

**Levites** were a tribe of Israel assigned to be priests. Some trace the family line back to Aaron (Israel’s first high priest). Better description is its early rabbinic name, *“The Priests’ Manual.”* Priests were responsible for teaching the differences between holy and common, clean, and unclean. Leviticus shows the Priests how to help the people worship God. **BUT** the book focuses on the Priests (Aaron and his sons), not the larger tribe of Levites of which they were part.

**FACTOID**: All but THREE of the chapters consist of God speaking to Moses (and sometimes Aaron). Moses must repeat these instructions to the priests and the people. Exceptions: (1) The death of Nadab and Abihu (Ch. 10) (2) The Brawling Egyptian (Ch. 24)

BOOK IN THREE PARTS

1. **The Priestly Code (chapters 1-16)**
   1. Instructions for Offerings (1:1-7:38)
   2. Inauguration of Worship (8:1-10:20)
   3. Instructions for Purifications (11:1-15:33)
   4. Instructions for the Day of Reconciliation (16:1-34)
2. **The Holiness Code (17-26)**
   1. Instructions for Food and Worship (17:1-15)
   2. Instructions for Holy Relationships (18:1-20:27)
   3. Instructions for Priestly Purity (21:1-22:33)
   4. Instructions for Holy Events (23:1-25:55)
   5. Covenant Blessings and Curses (26:1-46)
3. **Appendix on Vows and Tithes (27:1-34)**

***The book is more than a collection of rituals! The Monotheistic God vs. The Immature***

The book calls the people of God to live lives that **honor FOUR things**:

1. God
2. The worship of God
3. God’s people
4. The land/earth

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **Four Chief Instruments used in Leviticus:** | | |
| **Instrument** | **Association** | **Realm of existence** |
| Fire | The Deity | Divine |
| Blood | The Life of the Living Animal | The Living |
| Oil (olive oil) | The social/political realms | Product of Agriculture |
| Water | Purifying agent | From Nature, w/out human intervention |

**Why burn all the offering?** To model an ideal of worship as selfless service to God. Priests and the people would get to eat most of the meat from other offerings, but burning an animal entirely left no food for them.

**Why is Leviticus so hard to read?** The instructions involve things that most people do not do anymore. Neither Jews nor Christians make offerings like those lists in Chapters 1-7. Many Jews follow the Food Rules (Ch. 11), and some follow the Purity Rules (Ch. 12 & 15). However, very few Christians do. It’s a confusing mix for both traditions. You have:

1. Inspiring moral teachings- The Love Commandments (19:18; 34)
2. Obscure regulations- Rule against mixtures (19:19)
3. Laws who applications could lead to social upheaval- Returning all real property every 50 years (25:10, 14-18)

Cheap alternatives to cattle, sheep, and goats: **Doves and pigeons**. They were cheaper. They had little fat so one needed to offer two. **FACTOID**: Mary and Joseph made bird offerings to complete her purification after Jesus’ birth.

6:13 **“Eternal flame”** ancient people kept fires burning all night in cold weather, so they didn’t have to light them again in the morning. The continuous altar fire came to symbolize God’s presence in the sanctuary. (OUR ALTAR HAS ONE)

**PJ’S PICKS:**

Chapters 8-10- Longest story in Leviticus. Moses speaks for first time in this chapter.

Chapter 19: Echoes of the Ten Commandments which appear in Ex. 20:2-17 and Deut. 5:6-21. 19:18 neighbor; 33-34 immigrant (expansion of “love” to beyond the neighbor but also the stranger)

Ch. 20- DEATH!

Ch. 26- 44-45: **God promises to preserve the covenant no matter what**. For those in exile who lost their land, this message provided hope for restoration