

Leviticus 21 Commentary

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[Another Overview Chart of Leviticus](#) - Charles Swindoll
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LEVITICUS THE BOOK OF SANCTIFICATION AND WORSHIP

[Adapted and modified from C. Swindoll](#)

Leviticus 1-17	Leviticus 18-27
The Way to God Access	The Walk with God Lifestyle
The Approach: Offerings	Practical Guidelines
The Representative: Priest	Chronological Observances
The Laws: Cleansing Physically & Spiritually	Severe Consequences Verbal promises
Ritual for Worship Worshipping a Holy God	Practical for Walking Living a Holy Life
Location: Mt Sinai for one full year	
Theme: How sinful humanity can approach and worship a holy God	
Key Verses: Lev 17:11, 19:2, 20:7-8	
Christ in Leviticus: In every sacrifice, every ritual, every feast	
Time: about 1446BC	

Key words:

Holy - 90x/76v (with forms of the root for holy 152x) more than in any OT book (Lev 2:3, 10; 5:15f; 6:16f, 25-27, 29f; 7:1, 6; 8:9; 10:3, 10, 12f, 17; 11:44-45; 14:13; 16:2-4, 16f, 20, 23f, 27, 32f; 19:2, 8, 24; 20:3, 7, 26; 21:6-8, 22; 22:2-4, 6f, 10, 14-16, 32; 23:2-4, 7f, 20f, 24, 27, 35-37; 24:9; 25:12; 27:9f, 14, 21, 23, 28, 30, 32f);

Atonement - 51x/45v - (Lev 1:4; 4:20, 26, 31, 35; 5:6, 10, 13, 16, 18; 6:7, 30; 7:7; 8:15, 34; 9:7; 10:17; 12:7f; 14:18-21, 29, 31, 53; 15:15, 30; 16:6, 10f, 16-18, 24, 27, 30, 32-34; 17:11; 19:22; 23:27f; 25:9)

Offering - 326x/199v (Lev 1:2-4, 6, 9f, 13f, 17; 2:1-16; 3:1-3, 5-9, 11f, 14, 16; 4:3, 7f, 10, 14, 18, 20f, 23-26, 28-35; 5:6-8, 15f, 18f; 6:5f, 9f, 12, 14f, 17f, 20f, 23, 25, 30; 7:1f, 5, 7-11, 13-16, 18, 20f, 25, 29f, 32-35, 37f; 8:2, 14, 18, 21, 27-29, 31; 9:2-4, 7f, 10, 12-18, 21f, 24; 10:12-17, 19; 12:6, 8; 14:10, 12-14, 17, 19-22, 24f, 28, 31; 15:15, 30; 16:3, 5f, 9, 11, 15, 24f, 27; 17:4f, 8; 19:5, 21f, 24; 21:6, 21; 22:12, 18, 21-23, 25, 27; 23:8, 12-14, 25, 27, 36-38; 24:7, 9; 27:9, 11)

Tent of meeting - 43x/41v (Lev 1:1, 3, 5; 3:2, 8, 13; 4:4f, 7, 14, 16, 18; 6:16, 26, 30; 8:3f, 31, 33, 35; 9:5, 23; 10:7, 9; 12:6; 14:11, 23; 15:14, 29; 16:7, 16f, 20, 23, 33; 17:4ff, 9; 19:21; 24:3)

Law - 16x/16v; (Lev 6:9, 14, 25; 7:1, 7, 11, 37; 11:46; 12:7; 13:59; 14:2, 32, 54, 57; 15:32)

Sacrifice - 41x/34v; (Lev 3:1, 3, 6, 9; 4:10, 26, 31, 35; 7:11-13, 15-18, 20f, 29, 32, 34, 37; 9:4, 18; 10:14; 17:5, 7f; 19:5; 22:21, 24, 27, 29; 23:19, 37)

Anoint - 17x/15v; (Lev 4:3, 5, 16; 6:20, 22; 7:36; 8:2, 10-12, 30; 10:7; 16:32; 21:10, 12)

Sin - 111x/90v (Lev 4:2f, 8, 14, 20-29, 32-35; 5:1, 5-13, 15-18; 6:2-4, 17, 25f, 30; 7:7, 37f; 8:2, 14; 9:2f, 7f, 10, 15, 22; 10:16-19; 12:6, 8; 14:13, 19, 22, 31; 15:15, 30; 16:3, 5f, 9, 11, 15f, 21, 25, 27, 30, 34; 19:17, 22; 20:20; 21:21; 22:9; 23:19; 24:15; 25:1, 27; 26:18, 21, 24, 28, 46; 27:34)

Iniquity - 10x/8v (Lev 7:18; 16:21f; 19:8; 26:39-41, 43)

Death - 17/16v (Lev 16:1; 19:20; 20:2, 4, 9-11, 15f, 27; 24:16f, 21; 27:29)

Die - 15x/15v (Lev 7:24; 8:35; 10:2, 6f, 9; 11:39; 15:31; 16:1f, 13; 17:15; 20:20; 22:8f)

Blood - 86x/65v (Lev 1:5, 11, 15; 3:2, 8, 13, 17; 4:5-7, 16-18, 25, 30, 34; 5:9; 6:27, 30; 7:2, 14, 26f, 33; 8:15, 19, 23f, 30; 9:9, 12, 18; 10:18; 12:4f, 7; 14:6, 14, 17, 25, 28, 51f; 15:19, 25; 16:14f, 18f, 27; 17:4, 6, 10-12; 18:6, 12f, 17; 19:26; 20:18f; 25:49)

Sabbath - 13x/10v (Lev 16:31; 23:3, 11, 15f, 32; 24:8; 25:2, 4, 6)

The LORD spoke to Moses - 28x/28v - (Lev 4:1; 5:14; 6:1, 8, 19, 24; 7:22, 28; 8:1; 12:1; 13:1; 14:1; 16:1; 17:1; 18:1; 19:1; 20:1; 21:16; 22:1, 17, 26; 23:9, 23, 26, 33; 24:1, 13; 27:1)

Jubilee - 20x/18v (Lev 25:10-13, 15, 28, 30f, 33, 40, 50, 52, 54; 27:17-18, 21, 23-24)

Consecrate - 24x/23v - (Lev 6:18, 27; 7:35; 8:10-12, 15, 30; 11:44; 12:4; 16:19; 20:7; 21:8, 10; 25:10; 27:14-19, 22, 2)

Covenant - 10x/8v (Lev 2:13; 24:8; 26:9, 15, 25, 42, 44f)

Fat - 52x/33v (Lev 3:3f, 9f, 14-17; 4:8f, 19, 26, 31, 35; 6:12; 7:3f, 23-25, 30f, 33; 8:16, 25f; 9:10, 19f, 24; 10:15; 16:25; 17:6)

Leviticus 21:1 Then the LORD said to Moses, "Speak to the priests, the sons of Aaron, and say to them, 'No one shall defile himself for a dead person among his people,

- Speak (KJV): Ho 5:1 Mal 2:1,4
- There (KJV): Lev 21:11 10:6,7 Nu 19:14,16 Eze 44:25
- [Leviticus 21 Resources - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries](#)

Hyatt - A new MESSAGE to Moses is introduced with these words.

A. Conduct of an ordinary priest with regard to (21:1b-9):

1. Uncleaness (21:1b-4)

Moses was told to relay this MESSAGE to the priests, the sons of Aaron. It is natural to question why the MESSAGE was not delivered directly to Aaron, as well as to Moses, as was done in Lev. 11:1; 13:1; 14:33; 15:1. Since that information is not given, it is useless to speculate on it, except to notice that at the time this MESSAGE was given the priests were not spending all their time in study and prayer, as they were at the time of those previous MESSAGES were given (see comments on Lev. 8:33-36-note and on Lev. 11:1-note). It is important, however, to notice how faithful Moses was in recording such details as the person to whom each MESSAGE was delivered. If Moses was that careful in recording details about who received the MESSAGE, he must have been just as careful in recording the details of what was spoken to him.

Moses was to deliver this MESSAGE to the priests because it had special application to them. It deals with the way that they were to conduct themselves in the face of the special responsibilities that were theirs.

The first requirement concerning a priest's conduct was that he was not to make himself unclean by touching the dead body of a relative. The word translated "make himself unclean" is often translated "defile himself," but the translation "make himself unclean" more clearly explains the meaning of the original, which referred to symbolic practices Jehovah taught to Israel. Uncleanliness was a ceremonial condition that resulted from a number of conditions that God gave to Israel as symbols of sin. The Israelites were to avoid becoming ceremonially unclean as a reminder that they should be on guard constantly against allowing sin to come into their lives. The priests needed to be especially careful to avoid becoming unclean because of the influence they needed to exercise in encouraging the people to stay away from sin.

The various unclean conditions that symbolized sin are defined in MESSAGES 14-19 (Lev. 11-15-see below). Uncleanliness from touching a human corpse had not been mentioned in those MESSAGES or in any other previous MESSAGE. This verse, however, made it clear that touching a dead person was another of the conditions that would make a person unclean. Full regulations concerning that type of uncleanliness were given in a later MESSAGE recorded in Numbers 19:11-22. In advance of that explanation, it is made clear here that a priest was not to let himself become unclean, even by touching the dead body of a member of his family. "The dead among his people" means the corpse of a member of his family. If a priest was to be so careful about keeping himself away from uncleanliness that he would not even touch the dead body of a relative, he certainly was expected to carefully avoid all other types of ceremonial uncleanliness. ([Leon Hyatt - Leviticus 21:1-15 Commentary](#))

Related Messages by Leon Hyatt:

- [Leviticus 14 - Message 10 - Lev. 8:1-9:24](#)
- [Leviticus 15 - Message 11 - Lev. 10:1-7](#)
- [Leviticus 16 - Message 12 - Lev. 10:8-11](#)
- [Leviticus 17 - Message 13 - Lev. 10:12-20](#)
- [Leviticus 18 - Message 14 - Lev. 11:1-47](#)
- [Leviticus 19 - Message 15 - Lev. 12:1-8](#)

Defile (make unclean) ([02930](#))(**tame**) means to become unclean or make unclean. To become ceremonially unclean. To defile oneself (Hos 5:3, 6:10, Ezek 20:30). A wife defiles herself by adultery (Nu 5:13, Jer 2:23 = speaks of Israel as God's wife who had defiled herself by her spiritual adultery with idols!, Ezek 23:13 = refers to Judah and in context to the 10 Northern tribes - both had defiled themselves). To defile (violate) a girl (Ge 34:5), a woman (Ezek 18:6) The **Septuagint (Lxx)** translates **tame** here in Lev 21:1 and in Lev 11:24, 43, 44 with the verb **miaino**, means literally to dye with another color. As used in the NT figuratively **miaino** describes a mind and conscience that is morally contaminated, corrupted, tainted, tinged and polluted (Titus 1:15-note = "defiled and unbelieving"). In a ceremonial or cultic sense **miaino** means to defile, profane, desecrate, make unclean or to become unacceptable. To **defile** something is to sully (damage the purity or integrity of), mar (impair the appearance of; disfigure) or spoil it. Jude uses **miaino** in a physical and a moral sense of the one's flesh defiled by licentiousness and so to corrupt morally. (Jude 1:8-note)

[What does the Bible mean when it says something is unclean?](#)

Hannah's Bible Outlines.

2. The holiness of the priests (Lev 21:1-22:33)
 - a. The personal holiness of the priests (Lev 21:1-15)
 1. The regular priests (Lev 21:1-9)
 2. The high priest (Lev 21:10-15)
 - b. The physical disqualification of a priest (Lev 21:16-24)
 - c. The ceremonial purity of a priest (Lev 21:1-9)

- d. The reverence of holy things by a non-priest (Lev 21:10-16)
- e. The care in selection of animal sacrifices by a priest (Lev 21:17-33)

THE UNCLEANNESS AND DISQUALIFICATION OF PRIESTS - Pulpit Commentary

The two remaining chapters of this division of the book (Lev. 21, 22) deal with the ease of defilements attaching to the priesthood, over and above those which affect other men, whether ceremonial (Leviticus 21:1-6, 10-12; 22:1-9) or moral (Leviticus 21:7-9, 13-15); with the physical defects disqualifying men of the priestly family from ministering at the altar (Leviticus 21:16-21); with the privilege of eating of the holy things (Lev 22:10-13); ending with the injunction that the sacrificial victims, no less than the priests who sacrificed them, should be unblemished and perfect of their kind. Pulpit Commentary,

POSB - Introduction— Minister of God, Duty of— Priest, Duty of the minister of God is to be holy, totally set apart to God. There are two reasons why: first, the office of the minister is holy. God has ordained the office to be holy, an office that is distinct and different because it is totally set apart to God. Second, God has called the minister to serve in the holy office. Therefore, the person is to honor the office by living a holy life. Simply stated, the minister is the ambassador or representative of God who is called to serve God's people. As the representative of God, the minister is to be totally dedicated and consecrated to God. That is, he is to be holy, totally set apart to God and to the ministry of God's people. The minister is to live a righteous life, a life that will bring honor, not shame, to God. Note this fact: in Leviticus 11-20, God had given the laws that were to govern His people, the laws that showed His people how to live holy lives and build a strong society. Now, in Leviticus 21-22, God gives the laws that were to govern His priests or ministers, laws that would bring honor to God and to the office of the priesthood. The office of the priest was an official office, an office ordained by God to be holy. Therefore, the priest was to live a holy and pure life before God and the people. His office—the office of the priest—demanded a higher standard. The priest was to be more holy, more set apart to God, than other believers. He was to be more holy in word and behavior and in his witness for God. There was a very special reason for this: his holiness pointed to the perfect priesthood of the Lord Jesus Christ. The holy character and behavior of the priest was a symbol or type of Christ, the coming Messiah and Savior of the world. This will be seen throughout the discussion of this Scripture: *Laws That Govern the Priests, the Ministers of God (Part 1): The Basic Requirement and Qualification for the Minister of God*, Lev 21:1-24.

1. The basic requirement for the priest, the minister of God: to be holy, totally set apart to God (Lev 21:1-9).
2. The basic requirement for the High Priest (a type of Christ, the High Priest): must be totally dedicated to the service of God (Lev 21:10-15).
3. The basic qualification for the priest: must be physically perfect, having no blemish, no defect (a symbol of Christ, the perfect Priest) (Lev 21:16-24).

Leviticus 21 - William MacDonald - Chapter Summary

Leviticus 21 and 22, along with 16 and 17, are addressed to Aaron and his sons.

Priests were not to defile themselves by touching the dead except in the case of near kin. Even entering the tent of the dead defiled a person for seven days (Num. 19:14). This would disqualify a priest from serving the Lord during that time, so he was forbidden to make himself unclean for any but his nearest relatives. Lev 21:4 is obscure. It probably means that he must take special precaution to guard against defilement because of his high rank. Practices of the heathen in defacing their bodies with signs of mourning for the dead were forbidden (Lev 21:5). The priest was not permitted to marry a woman profaned by harlotry or a divorced woman (Lev 21:7). However, he could marry a widow. A priest's daughter who became a harlot was burned to death (Lev 21:9).

A high priest was not permitted to mourn in the customary ways or leave the sanctuary to show honor to the dead (Lev 21:10-12). He was to marry a virgin from his own people, and his married life was to be above reproach (Lev 21:13-15).

Physical defects barred a man from the service of the priesthood—blindness, lameness, facial deformities, extra fingers or toes (deformed limb, NASB), foot or hand injuries, hunchbackedness, dwarfism, defective eyes, itching diseases, scabs, or injured sex organs. Any son of Aaron who was defective in any of these ways could share the food of the priests, but he could not serve actively as a priest before the Lord (Lev 21:22, 23). The priests who offered the sacrifices must be without defect because they portrayed Christ as our unblemished High Priest. ([Summary of Every Chapter of Leviticus](#))

Today in the Word Leviticus 21–22 Responsibilities of Leadership: Holiness of Priests

Every time a well-known evangelical leader with public testimony or ministry falls into ethical and moral failure, we all regret the shadows that are cast over the church and the gospel. Christian leaders are accountable to God. That is why the qualifications for

pastors and elders in the New Testament are so stringent and also why it's insisted upon in Leviticus that priests stay morally and ceremonially clean. If they were unclean in any way, they could not be permitted to continue serving in their priestly role and offering daily sacrifices. The old covenant, unlike the new, was dependent upon the priests to represent the nation to God. The priests were not perfect, sinless men. They had to offer sacrifices on their own behalf, needing atonement just as much as any other member of the community. They were as likely to face the possibility of ritual contamination. As was true for others, certain foods were forbidden for consumption by the priests, and they had to maintain separation from anything and anyone unclean. Unlike for other Israelites, stricter regulations were instituted for the priests and especially for the high priest. They were permitted no contact with the dead, except in the case of the death of an immediate family member. The high priest was not even allowed to bury a mother or father. Even in the case of choosing whom they would marry, priests could not marry divorced women or women who had been scandalized by engaging in prostitution. The high priest could not marry a widow: his future wife must be a virgin. Unfortunately, it's not long after the Jews enter the Promised Land that even the priests would be guilty of betraying God's commands. **Apply the Word** - If you have the responsibilities for Bible teaching or any other type of spiritual leadership, you know how much your example means. Do you live the words that you proclaim? Is there integrity to be found in what you say and what you do? While you're not expected to be perfect, it's still a sobering truth that you'll be judged more strictly.

Leviticus 21:2 except for his relatives who are nearest to him, his mother and his father and his son and his daughter and his brother,

- [Leviticus 21 Resources - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries](#)

R C Sproul - Holiness (life) and death are incompatible; therefore priests could not mourn for any save their closest relatives (Lev 21:2-3).

Hyatt - Certain exceptions were allowed to this rule. If an ordinary priest lost his mother, father, son, daughter, brother, or unmarried sister in death, he was permitted to touch that relative's dead body. He would become unclean and afterward would need to go through the prescribed cleansing ceremonies, but becoming unclean for one who was so close to him was allowed because God recognized the special sorrow that comes from losing a member of one's immediate family. God did not forbid the natural emotions of sorrow at time of death, but still he insisted that priests should set a high example by avoiding touching the dead body of anyone except a member of their immediate family. Priests were to put their loyalty to their duties ahead of sorrow for any person other than a close relative. ([Leon Hyatt - Leviticus 21:1-15 Commentary](#))

Leviticus 21:3 also for his virgin sister, who is near to him because she has had no husband; for her he may defile himself.

- [Leviticus 21 Resources - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries](#)

Defile (02490) ([chahal - see word study](#)). The **Septuagint (Lxx)** uses **bebeloo** (see discussion above)

Leviticus 21:4 'He shall not defile himself as a relative by marriage among his people, and so profane himself.

- [Leviticus 21 Resources - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries](#)

Defile (02490) ([chahal - see word study](#)). The **Septuagint (Lxx)** uses **bebeloo** (see discussion above)

Leviticus 21:5 'They shall not make any baldness on their heads, nor shave off the edges of their beards, nor make any cuts in their flesh.

- not make baldness (KJV): This custom is also called rounding the corners of the head, (ch. 19:27,) and seems to have been performed in honour of some idol. Lev 10:6 19:27,28 De 14:1 Isa 15:2 22:12 Jer 16:6 48:37 Eze 44:20 Am 8:10 Mic 1:16
- the corner (KJV): The Hebrew {peath zakon}, may denote the whiskers; as the Syriac {phatho} signifies. These are by the Arabs, according to Niebuhr, still cut entirely off, or worn quite short; and hence they are called by Jeremiah, [qtswtsy p'h,] those with cropped whiskers. Perhaps some superstition, of which we are ignorant, was connected with this; but whether or

not, it was the object of Moses to keep the Israelites distinct from other nations.

- [Leviticus 21 Resources - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries](#)

Leon Hyatt - Grooming of the body and hair always has been important to human beings. Grooming is symbolic of the philosophy and beliefs of the person. Thus, it was important for the priests to show their convictions by avoiding grooming customs that were associated with pagan ideas and religions. Except for shaving the head, the grooming customs mentioned here of rounding off beards and cutting marks in the flesh had been forbidden already to all Israelites in Leviticus 19:27-28, because they were practiced by devotees of false religious of that time (see comments on those verses in MESSAGE 23). Shaving the head in certain ways was forbidden for the same reason. That prohibition, like rounding off beards and cutting the skin, probably were intended for all the people, but the priests were to be especially careful to set an example for all others. This verse shows that it was especially important that the priests set an example for all Israelites by avoiding any grooming practices that might seem to approve of pagan ways or beliefs. ([Leon Hyatt - Leviticus 21:1-15 Commentary](#))

Leviticus 21:6 'They shall be holy to their God and not profane the name of their God, for they present the offerings by fire to the LORD, the food of their God; so they shall be holy.

- holy (KJV): Lev 21:8 10:3 Ex 28:36 29:44 Ezr 8:28 1Pe 2:9
- profane (KJV): Lev 18:21 19:12 Mal 1:6,11,12
- bread (KJV): Lev 3:11 Eze 44:7 Mal 1:7
- therefore (KJV): Isa 52:11
- [Leviticus 21 Resources - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries](#)

DO NOT PROFANE GOD'S HOLY NAME

See more detailed **discussion** and **exhortation** regarding God's Name in **Notes on Leviticus 18:21**

Hyatt - The reason for this high standard of loyalty was that a priest was a "a leader among his people." Because he was an influential person, he was to follow a high standard as an example of the importance of putting one's responsibility to God first in one's life. The word translated "to be made common" (**profane**) is the word used in Leviticus 10:10 that means objects and persons who were not holy in the sense of being set aside for God's service. It did not necessarily refer to an object or person who was evil, but to an object or person who was not sacred in the sense of being devoted to Jehovah's service. It can be translated "secular" or "common." Here the translation "common" is best, because it cautions the priest against being ordinary. He was devoted to a special holy purpose. If he let himself become unclean, he abandoned that holy purpose and made himself no different than a person who devoted his life to secular purposes (see comments on Lev. 10:10-note in [MESSAGE 12](#) under the heading the holy and the common.....**A second reason for the high standard of conduct expected of the priests was that they were men set apart to Jehovah to bear His name and to offer His fire-offering.** Here "bread of your God" is parallel with "fire offerings of Jehovah," showing that the two terms were synonyms. God's portion of the fire-offerings, especially of the peace-offerings, was considered to be His share of a fellowship meal with His people and with his priests. The words do not mean that the worshiper provided food for Jehovah to eat, so he would not go hungry, like the pagan's believed about their gods. They mean Jehovah, his worshipers, and his priests shared table fellowship together (concerning "fire-offerings," see comments on Lev. 1:9-note in [MESSAGE 1](#) under the heading a fire-offering; concerning "food of your God," see comments on Lev. 3:1-note in [MESSAGE 1](#) under the heading a slaughter-offering of peace-offerings). It was necessary for a priest to conduct himself in such a way as to properly represent the name he bore. Otherwise, he would make God's name common and ordinary. The word translated "make common" is the same word translated in that manner in verse 4 (see comments on that verse above and on Lev. 10:10-note in [MESSAGE 2](#) under the heading the holy and the common). It refers to any object or person that was not set aside for God's service. It means to be dedicated to secular purposes. Nothing is wrong with being secular, unless God has set a person apart to a holy vocation. When a priest acted like a secular person, he secularized the name of Jehovah, which he bore. In other words, he took away its special meaning and made it ordinary. In so doing, he misrepresented the special holy nature of God. ([Leon Hyatt - Leviticus 21:1-15 Commentary](#))

Profane (02490)(**chalal**).has a somewhat confusing etymology (at least to me as I am not a Hebrew scholar). Thus the core meaning of this root and its history in cognate languages is rather uncertain. However from the contextual uses in the OT, the verb **chalal** conveys several different meanings...

(1) To play on the flute (the least common meaning) 1Ki 1:40; Ps 87:7

(2) To pierce or bore Ex 32:26; Ezek 28:9 Messianic passage Isa 53:5

(3) To profane, defile, pollute; prostitute; make common; loose; to break. **(the most common meaning)** In fact the first OT use of **chalal** describes sexual defilement or incest (Ge 49:4)

To profane means to treat (something sacred) with abuse, irreverence, or contempt.

Vine - This may be a ritual defilement, such as that resulting from contact with a dead body (Lev. 21:4), or the ceremonial profaning of the sacred altar by the use of tools in order to shape the stones (Ex. 20:25). Holy places may be profaned (Ezek. 7:24); the name of God (Ezek 20:9) and even God Himself (Ezek. 22:26) may be profaned. The word is often used to describe the defilement which results from illicit sexual acts, such as harlotry (Lev 21:9)

Baker - (To profane speaks) primarily of the ceremonial objects of worship (Ex. 20:25; Ezek 44:7; Dan. 11:31-note); of the Sabbath (Ex. 31:14; Neh. 13:17; Ezek. 23:38); of God's name (Lev. 18:21; Jer. 34:16); of God's priests (Lev. 21:4, 6). However, it also refers to sexual defilement (Gen. 49:4; Lev. 21:9); the breaking of a covenant (Ps. 89:31, 34; Mal. 2:10-note); and making a vineyard common (Deut. 20:6; 28:30).

(4) To begin, to proceed, to launch, to initiate a process (This meaning is seen in the causative form of chalal) (2Chr. 3:2) - "In more than 50 instances, this root is used in the sense of **"to begin."** Perhaps the most important of such uses is found in Gen. 4:26." (Vine)

The **Septuagint (Lxx)** uses **bebeloo** (BDAG = "to cause something highly revered to become identified with the commonplace, violate sanctity, desecrate, profane." **Bebeloo** evolves from "accessible," then "what may be said publicly," then in the LXX "what may be used freely," then "of a profane disposition"). The verb **Bebeloo** is derived from **bebelos** ([see word study](#)) for chalal. Bebelos refers to a disregarding what is to be kept sacred or holy desecrate, violate, ritually defile. The meaning of this adjective is nicely conveyed by our English word profane which describes that which disregards what is to be kept sacred or holy. Bebelos thus describes that which is accessible to everyone and therefore devoid of real significance. Bebelos can thus describe that which is worldly as opposed to having an interest in transcendent (existing apart from and not subject to the limitations of the material universe) matters.

- [Swearing, Profane - Torrey's Topical Textbook](#)
- [Profane - Charles Buck Theological Dictionary](#)
- [Profane - Hastings' Dictionary of the New Testament - Recommended discussion](#)
- [Profane - The Hawker's Poor Man's Concordance And Dictionary](#)
- [Profane - International Standard Bible Encyclopedia](#)
- [Profane - Cyclopedia of Biblical, Theological and Ecclesiastical Literature](#)
- [Profane - Trench's Synonyms of the New Testament](#)

Webster on **to profane** - to treat (something sacred) with abuse, irreverence, or contempt; to violate or debase anything holy by a wrong, unworthy, or vulgar use. To treat something (some One) holy as irreverent. To treat that which is holy as common. The English word **"profane"** is derived from the Latin *profanus* which means *"outside the temple, not sacred"* and in turn is derived from *pro-* 'before' + *fanum* = 'temple'.

Nelson's New Illustrated Bible Dictionary - Profane = to treat anything holy with disrespect. In the Bible, many things could be profaned by disregarding God's laws about their correct use: the Sabbath (Is. 56:6), the Temple (Acts 24:6), the covenant (Mal. 2:10), and God's Name (Ex. 19:22). The term "profane" is often applied to foolish or irresponsible people. Esau, who sold his birthright, was a "profane" person (Heb. 12:16).

Hasting's Dictionary - **'To profane'** is 'to make ceremonially unclean,' 'to make unholy.' And so a 'profane person' (Hebrews 12:16) is an 'ungodly person,' a person of common, coarse life, not merely of speech.

Holy (06944) (**qodesh/kodhesh**) is a masculine noun which means set apart, distinct, unique. **Qodesh** describes that which has been consecrated or set apart for sacred use and was not to be used for common or profane tasks. If it were used for profane things, in simple terms, it became "not holy."

It is fitting that the first OT use of **qodesh** was in God's instruction to Moses - "Do not come near here; remove your sandals from your feet, for the place on which you are standing is **holy** ground." (Ex 3:5). NET Note on Ex 3:5 "What made a mountain or other place holy was the fact that God chose that place to reveal himself or to reside among his people. Because God was in this place, the ground was different – it was holy." About 65x **qodesh** with the definite article is translated as **"sanctuary"** (NAS) (Ex 30:24, Ex 36:1, 3-4, etc) and describes a "building dedicated in service to God, a place in which the LORD is normally present when ritual and

moral purity are practiced." (Swanson) In Isaiah 35:8 qodesh describes the "highway of **holiness**" which in the Millennium is the way leading the redeemed (Isa 35:9) back to Jerusalem, the throne of Messiah.

Qodesh can refer to holiness, which is the "quality of moral purity, with a focus that this is a unique state unlike corrupt humanity (Ex 15:11; 1Ch 16:29; Ps 89:35)." (Swanson)

See comments by **Eugene Merrill** on the phrase ["most holy."](#)

English definition of holy - moral and ethical wholeness or perfection; freedom from moral evil. Holiness is one of the essential elements of God's nature required of His people. (Following from 1828 Webster's) 1. Properly, whole, entire or perfect, in a moral sense. Hence, pure in heart; temper or dispositions; free from sin and sinful affections. Applied to the Supreme Being, holy signifies perfectly pure, immaculate and complete in moral character; and man is more or less holy, as his heart is more or less sanctified, or purified from evil dispositions. We call a man holy, when his heart is conformed in some degree to the image of God, and his life is regulated by the divine precepts. Hence, holy is used as nearly synonymous with good, pious, godly. Be ye holy; for I am holy. [1 Pet. 1. 2](#). Hallowed; consecrated or set apart to a sacred use, or to the service or worship of God; a sense frequent in Scripture; as the holy sabbath; holy oil; holy vessels; a holy nation; the holy temple; a holy priesthood. 3. Proceeding from pious principles, or directed to pious purposes; as holy zeal. 4. Perfectly just and good; as the holy law of God. 5. Sacred; as a holy witness.

Related Resources:

- [Holy Place - International Standard Bible Encyclopedia](#)
- [Holiness - International Standard Bible Encyclopedia](#)
- [Holiness - Hastings' Dictionary of the Bible](#)
- [Holy, Holiness - Baker's Evangelical Dictionary of Biblical Theology](#)
- [Holy - Holman Bible Dictionary](#)
- [Holiness - Torrey's Topical Textbook](#)
- [Sanctify, sacred, holy \(transliterates it as "kadash"\) - Girdlestone's Synonyms of the OT](#)

Things that were **holy** (qodesh) in the OT - assembly (an assembly of the people at the sanctuary for religious purposes-a convocation [means they were "called together" & in Nu 10:2 by trumpets]) and 7th day (Ex 12:16), Jehovah = "majestic in holiness," (Ex 15:11); God's "holy habitation" (Ex 15:13); sabbath (Ex 16:23 = *shabbat-qodesh*, "a holy Sabbath" meaning a "cessation of/for holiness" for Yahweh. The rest was to be characterized by holiness); the people (Israel) (Ex 22:31); holy (qodesh) place and holy (qodesh) of holies (qodesh) (Ex 26:33-34); garments of the priests (Ex 28:2 - garments of holiness would be ones that would distinctive from ordinary garments, for they set Aaron apart to sanctuary service and ministry); the holy place (Ex 28:29); engraving on the plate to be attached to Aaron's turban (Ex 28:36-37); Holy of holies (or "most holy" = superlative genitive) (Ex 29:37); altar designated as "most holy to the LORD" (means that the altar cannot be used for any other purpose than what is stated here - NET Note); anointing oil (Ex 30:25, 31, 32); tabernacle altars, utensils, ark of covenant (Ex 30:29, 27-28); incense (Ex 30:35-37); sabbath (Ex 31:14-15, 35:2); some offerings are most holy (Lev. 2:3, 10; Nu 18:9). Various things could be consecrated as holy: warriors (1Sa 21:6); food (Ex. 29:33); and the places where the holy ark had been located (2Chr. 8:11). Only **holy** priests could go into the Temple (2Chr. 23:6).

Qodesh is used 20x in the phrase "holy mountain" which refers to Mt Zion in Jerusalem. (Ps 2:6; 3:4; 48:1; Isa 11:9; 27:13; 56:7; 57:13; 65:11, 25; 66:20; Ezek 20:40; 28:14; Dan 9:16, 20-[note](#); Da 11:45-[note](#); Joel 2:1; 3:17; Obad 1:16; Zeph 3:11; Zech 8:3) Some of the uses refer to the time of the [Millennium](#) ([Isa 11:9-note](#)).

The [Septuagint \(Lxx\)](#) translates **qodesh** most often with the noun [hagios](#) which basically means set apart from the common and profane and unto the sacred (unto God). In the Old Testament many things and people were divinely set apart by God for His purposes - the Tabernacle and Temple and all their furnishings-supremely the Ark of the Covenant and the holy of holies; the tribe of Levi set apart for His priesthood; the entire nation of Israel set apart as His people ([Ex 22:31](#)); the tithes and offerings were set apart for God.

Leviticus 21:7 'They shall not take a woman who is profaned by harlotry, nor shall they take a woman divorced from her husband; for he is holy to his God.'

- that is a whore (KJV): Lev 21:8 Eze 44:22 1Ti 3:11
- put away (KJV): De 24:1-4 Isa 50:1
- [Leviticus 21 Resources - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries](#)

Leon Hyatt - Marriage (Lev 21:7-9) Of a priest (Lev 21:7-8). **They must not take [in marriage] a prostitute or a common woman. They must not take [in marriage] a woman divorced from her husband, because he is holy to His God.** Another area in which the priest and his family were to set a high example for the people was in their marriage relationships. Three limitations were set on whom a priest might choose for his wife. He was not to marry: (1) a woman who was a prostitute, (2) a common woman, that is, one who was not set apart to God's service, or (3) a divorcee. The word translated "common" is the same word translated in that manner in verses 4 and 6. A "common" person was a "secular" person, that is, someone who had not been set apart to the service of Jehovah. A priest was to marry a woman who had been set apart for Jehovah's service, as he had been. At that time, the plan was that all firstborn males in Israel would be set apart to Jehovah because Jehovah had spared Israel's firstborn when he killed all the firstborn males of Egypt for refusing to allow the Israelites to go free (Ex. 13:2). However, a little later Jehovah substituted the tribe of Levi for Israel's firstborn males (Num. 3:12-13). Therefore, the effect of this command was that the priests were to take their wives from among the women of the tribe of Levi. The wives of the priests were chosen for their places of service just as the priests were. They were to come from the tribe that gave them the best opportunity to have the temperament and training necessary to understand the holy responsibilities that had been given to their husbands, making it possible for them to assist their husbands effectively.

The three requirements for a priest's wife in this verse all show that God's priests needed to have wives who were as devoted to God as they were and who were ready to join him in unselfish service to God. ([Leon Hyatt - Leviticus 21:1-15 Commentary](#))

Leviticus 21:8 'You shall consecrate him, therefore, for he offers the food of your God; he shall be holy to you; for I the LORD, who sanctifies you, am holy.

- sanctify (KJV): Lev 21:6 Ex 19:10,14 28:41 29:1,43,44
- for I (KJV): Lev 11:44,45 19:2 20:7,8 Joh 10:36 17:19 Heb 7:26 10:29
- [Leviticus 21 Resources - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries](#)

Hyatt - Verse 8. You must hallow him, because he offers the bread of your God. He must be holy to you, for I Jehovah who hallows you am holy.

The Israelites were to respect the priests as holy people because they offered the offerings that pictured the fellowship Jehovah shared with His people and because God had made the whole nation a special holy people.

Leviticus 21:9 'Also the daughter of any priest, if she profanes herself by harlotry, she profanes her father; she shall be burned with fire.

- the daughter (KJV): 1Sa 2:17,34 3:13,14 Eze 9:6 Mal 2:3 Mt 11:20-24 1Ti 3:4,5 Tit 1:6
- she shall be burnt (KJV): Lev 20:14 Ge 38:24 Jos 7:15,25 Isa 33:14
- [Leviticus 21 Resources - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries](#)

Leon Hyatt - Verse 9. And the daughter of a man priest, if she makes herself common to become a prostitute, she is making her father common. She must be burned with fire.

In addition to the priest and his wife, it was also important for their children to set a high example for the people. If a daughter of a priest departed so far from the ideal as to become a prostitute, she was to be executed and then her body incinerated with fire, that is, cremated (see comments on Lev. 20:14-note in [MESSAGE 24](#)). Her becoming a prostitute made both her and her father unholy or secular (see comments on Lev. 10:10-note in [MESSAGE 12](#) under the heading the holy and the common and on Lev. 21:4,6,7 above). Her sin was a sign of complete rebellion against God and against her calling. The punishment for complete rebellion was death by stoning. Since she was a priest's daughter, her body was to be cremated also (see comments on Lev. 20:14-note in [MESSAGE 24](#)). ([Leon Hyatt - Leviticus 21:1-15 Commentary](#))

Leviticus 21:10 'The priest who is the highest among his brothers, on whose head the anointing oil has been poured and who has been consecrated to wear the garments, shall not uncover his head nor tear his clothes;

- upon (KJV): Lev 8:12 10:7 16:32 Ex 29:29,30 Nu 35:25 Ps 133:2

- consecrated (KJV): Lev 8:7-9 Ex 28:2-4
- uncover (KJV): Lev 10:6,7 13:45 2Sa 15:30 Es 6:12, not rend, Ge 37:34 Job 1:20 Mt 26:65
- [Leviticus 21 Resources - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries](#)

All human corpses were considered as unclean. Whoever touched one was unclean for seven days, and was obliged on the third and seventh day to purify himself according to the Mosaic instructions. In the case of the priest it went still farther; insomuch, that even mourning for the dead by any external sign, such as tearing their clothes, defiled them. Hence such mournings were absolutely forbidden to be used in any case, and by the other priests also, except in the case of their very nearest relations, for whom they were allowed to mourn. This statute is founded on the importance of sustaining the decency and purity of Divine worship. The servants of the Deity were to keep themselves at a distance from every thing that in the least degree savoured of uncleanness.

Criswell - The high priest was forbidden to tear his garments. Caiaphas, however, broke this law at the trial of Jesus (Matt. 26:65; Mark 14:63).

Leon Hyatt -

10 And the chief priest among his brothers, upon whose head was poured the oil of anointment and whose hands were filled to wear the [holy] clothes must not loosen [the hair of] his head, and he must not tear his clothes

11 He must not go in toward any dead body. He must not make himself unclean for his father or for his mother.

12 He must not go out of The Tabernacle, and he must not make common The Holiness of his God, because the commitment of the oil of anointment is on him. I am Jehovah.

Jehovah set an even higher standard of devotion and faithfulness for the high priest when he was on duty at The Tabernacle. Even greater faithfulness was required of him because of his higher office and heavier responsibilities. He was not to leave his duties at The Tabernacle to mourn for anyone, not even for his father or his mother. He was not to show the customary signs of mourning, or to touch the dead body of his loved one. He was to put his duty to God above all personal feelings of sorrow. He was not forbidden to be sorrowful, but he was expected not to leave His duties to God at The Tabernacle even to express sorrow for a member of his immediate family. His position and duties were that important.

"The Holiness of his God" is a variation of the term for The Tabernacle that is explained in Leviticus 12:4. It identifies The Tabernacle as a

place that was holy because it was dedicated to God's service. This verse adds words that state that The Tabernacle was holy because it was devoted to Jehovah God and the high priest was holy because he had been anointed to set him aside to Jehovah's service. (see comments on Lev. 12:4-note in [MESSAGE 15](#) under the heading The Holiness).

The reason for these high expectations of the high priest was that he served Jehovah, who was distinct and above all other gods. Because Jehovah was distinct, His high priest also needed to excel above priests of all other gods. ([Leon Hyatt - Leviticus 21:1-15 Commentary](#))

Leviticus 21:11 nor shall he approach any dead person, nor defile himself even for his father or his mother;

- his father (KJV): Lev 21:1,2 Nu 6:7 19:14 De 33:9 Mt 8:21,22 12:46-50 Lu 9:59,60 Lu 14:26 2Co 5:16
- [Leviticus 21 Resources - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries](#)

Defile (02490) ([chahal - see word study](#)). The **Septuagint (Lxx)** uses **bebeloo** (see discussion above)

Leviticus 21:12 nor shall he go out of the sanctuary nor profane the sanctuary of his God, for the consecration of the anointing oil of his God is on him; I am the LORD.

- go out (KJV): Lev 10:7
- for the crown (KJV): Lev 8:9-12,30 Ex 28:36 29:6,7 Isa 61:1 Ac 10:38
- [Leviticus 21 Resources - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries](#)

Consecration of the anointing oil of his God is upon him - A foreshadowing of the greater High Priest to come about which Peter declared "You know of Jesus of Nazareth, how **God anointed Him with the Holy Spirit and with power**, and how He went about doing good and healing all who were oppressed by the devil, for God was with Him." (Acts 10:38)

Leviticus 21:13 'He shall take a wife in her virginity.

- Lev 21:7 Eze 44:22 2Co 11:2 Rev 14:4
- [Leviticus 21 Resources - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries](#)

Leon Hyatt -

13 And he must take [in marriage] a wife in her virginity.

14 He must not take [in marriage] these: a widow or a divorced woman or a common woman, a prostitute. He must take a wife of his people.

Also a higher standard in marriage relationships was expected of the high priest. In addition to the requirements for marriages of ordinary priests in verses 7-9, Jehovah added that the high priest was not to marry a widow. The high priest's wife was to be so devoted to her husband and to his service to God that she was required to be a woman who had never had a relationship with any other man. Also, the high priest's wife, like an ordinary priest's wife, was to be "of his own people," meaning that she was to be of the tribe of Levi. This statement shows that Jehovah already planned to substitute the Levites for the firstborn of Israel, even though their formal separation and hallowing did not take place until Numbers 3 (see comments on Lev. 21:7 above and on Lev. 25:32-34-note in [MESSAGE 37](#)). She was to come from the family God was going to set aside as special servants devoted to His holy service. She needed to be called to her place of service as much as her husband did. ([Leon Hyatt - Leviticus 21:1-15 Commentary](#))

Leviticus 21:14 'A widow, or a divorced woman, or one who is profaned by harlotry, these he may not take; but rather he is to marry a virgin of his own people,

- [Leviticus 21 Resources - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries](#)

Leviticus 21:15 so that he will not profane his offspring among his people; for I am the LORD who sanctifies him."

- profane (KJV): Ge 18:19 Ezr 2:62 9:2 Ne 13:23-29 Mal 2:11,15 Ro 11:16 1Co 7:14
- for I the (KJV): Lev 21:8
- [Leviticus 21 Resources - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries](#)

Leon Hyatt - Of the high priest's seed (21:15) Verse 15. He must not make common his seed among his people, because I am Jehovah who hallows him.

The high priest's seed or descendants also needed to separate themselves to a holy life. The whole family of the high priest, including all of his descendants, held especially significant positions. They needed to recognize their responsibilities by living a life devoted to God and not try to live like secular people whose lives were not separated out for God's service. Only the daughter of a regular priest had been mentioned to be punished if she failed to live by the high standards set for the priest's family. All the seed or descendants of the high priest are mentioned as responsible for not being common or secular in their interests. All the high priest's seed probably included his daughters, his sons before they were of age to serve as priests, and also his grandchildren. All of them were to live in such a way as to show that their lives were set apart to God's service. Their lives were to stand out as being more than ordinary because they set their lives apart to serve God.

The reason for these special requirements for a high priest's family were that the One who had set them aside was Jehovah, and Jehovah was distinct and above all other gods. ([Leon Hyatt - Leviticus 21:1-15 Commentary](#))

Application Christian ministers are leaders among the people of today, set aside to represent the name and

cause of Jesus. Therefore, they must be exemplary in their conduct. They do not live by a different set of morals, but they have a special obligation to live strictly by those morals. They must set an example of faithfulness to God's commands because of their influential position. They are responsible to show their faith in times of sorrow and death. They are not required to refrain from touching the dead body of their loved ones like Israel's priests were, because the symbols of clean and unclean are no longer required of God's people. However, Jesus' ministers are expected to put loyalty to God ahead of their sorrow and show their faith in the face of death.

The dress and grooming of a minister is also important. Grooming standards change. No abiding rules can be set to detail a minister's dress and grooming, but it is important that his grooming show that he is not of the world and is set apart unto God. This responsibility does not mean that he is obligated to wear distinctly "ministerial" dress but that he should avoid dress and grooming that is recognized as worldly, indecent, or even unkempt and sloppy.

The marriage and home of a minister is of special importance. He must take care to marry a woman who shares his high standards of righteousness and unselfish devotion to God's service. A minister's children should also feel the special privilege and responsibilities that are theirs. They should especially take care to avoid serious infractions of God's marriage and moral standards. The higher the standard by which they live, the more their father's ministry will be strengthened. ([Leon Hyatt - Leviticus 21:1-15 Commentary](#))

Leviticus 21:16 Then the LORD spoke to Moses, saying,

- [Leviticus 21 Resources - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries](#)

Leviticus 21:17 "Speak to Aaron, saying, 'No man of your offspring throughout their generations who has a defect shall approach to offer the food of his God.

- blemish (KJV): Lev 22:20-25 1Th 2:10 1Ti 3:2 Heb 7:26
- let him (KJV): Lev 21:21 10:3 Nu 16:5 Ps 65:4
- bread (KJV): or, food, Lev 3:11,16
- [Leviticus 21 Resources - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries](#)

Criswell - Lev 21:17-23) Any physical blemish or imperfection disqualified a descendant of Aaron from the office of priest. It was necessary that the offerer, as well as the offering, be without blemish to represent Christ, the perfect High Priest, adequately (cf. Heb. 4:15; 7:26; 1 John 3:5). This principle also serves as an example for all believers to be a "holy priesthood" (1 Pet. 2:5).

Leon Hyatt - BLEMISHES DISQUALIFYING A PRIEST FROM SERVING BEFORE THE VEIL OR AT THE ALTAR Leviticus 21:16-24

Introduction - This MESSAGE is the first of four MESSAGES dealing with factors disqualifying the priests, their families, and animals from being used in roles assigned to them in The Tabernacle offerings. This MESSAGE deals with factors disqualifying the priests themselves. Two of the roles assigned to the priests were to officiate over fire-offerings at the altar and to present holy oil and face bread in The Holy Place, the outer room of the tent portion of The Tabernacle. Certain physical blemishes disqualified a priest from performing those services. Those physical blemishes are explained in this MESSAGE.

It should be noted that this MESSAGE nowhere states that a priest with a blemish was forbidden to serve as a teacher of the law, which was also a responsibility of the priests (Lev. 10:11). Also, a special point is made of the fact that he could eat of the holy portions of the offerings, which were eaten by the priests and their families in their homes. He could also eat of the most holy portions, which were eaten only by the priests in the court of The Tabernacle (v. 22). Thus, a physical blemish did not keep a priest from being a part of the people of God or a part of the priestly family. It simply disqualified him from officiating at the altar or serving inside the Tent of Meeting.

The purpose of these requirements was ceremonial and symbolic. The Tabernacle offerings were symbols of spiritual experiences with God. It was important for every aspect of their observance to be whole, perfect, and pure in order to properly represent the wonder of the spiritual experiences they represented. A priest with a physical blemish could not be an adequate symbol of those holy experiences. He was disqualified, not because he was spiritually unworthy or because he was out of favor with God, but for the

sake of the symbolism. He was as welcome as anyone to approach the altar to offer an offering for himself. He was disqualified to officiate over another person's offering there, because when he officiated at the altar he symbolized God's receiving the worshiper's offering. He was also disqualified from performing symbolic services inside the Tent of Meeting. The reason he was disqualified was that in those ceremonies, he symbolized God as He received a worshiper's offering or prayers.

Verse 17. Speak to Aaron, saying, A man of your seed unto your generations who has a blemish must not come to offer the bread of His God.

This MESSAGE was to be delivered by Moses to Aaron. Possibly the reason why Moses was told to deliver the MESSAGE to Aaron rather than to all the priests was that the high priest was responsible for supervising the priests to prevent any priest with a blemish from serving at the altar. The practice was to continue for generations into the future, but the statement is not literally "throughout your generations." The wording is literally "to your generations," which leaves open the possibility that God could discontinue the practice at some time in the future, which he did in Christ. "To offer the bread of God," means to officiate over altar offerings. The actual "bread of God" was the portion of an offering that was roasted on the altar or eaten by the priests and their families. Those portions were God's part of a fellowship meal that He enjoyed with the worshiper. That expression did not mean that God was dependent on being fed by his worshiper or else he would go hungry, as the pagans believed about their gods. (see comments on Lev. 3:1-note in MESSAGE 1 under the heading a slaughter-offering of peace offerings and on Lev. 21:6-note in MESSAGE 25). ([Leon Hyatt - Leviticus 33 - Lev. 21:16-24](#))

Leviticus 21:18 'For no one who has a defect shall approach: a blind man, or a lame man, or he who has a disfigured face, or any deformed limb,

- a blind man (KJV): Isa 56:10 Mt 23:16,17,19 1Ti 3:2,3,7 Tit 1:7,10
- superfluous (KJV): Lev 22:23
- [Leviticus 21 Resources - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries](#)

Leon Hyatt - BLEMISHES DISQUALIFYING A PRIEST FROM SERVING BEFORE THE VEIL OR AT THE ALTAR Leviticus 21:16-24

**Verse 18-20. 18 For any man who has a blemish must not come near—a man blind or lame or condemned or mutilated,
19. Or a man who has a damaged foot or a damaged hand,
20. Or a crooked back or [is] shrunk, or a man with a defect in his eyes, or an itch or psoriasis or a severed testicle,**

Physical blemishes that prevented a man from serving at the altar are listed in these verses. The meaning of "blind" and "lame" are well known and easily understood. The word translated "condemned" is the word used to refer to a person or a group of people who were condemned to death because they had absolutely and deliberately rejected Jehovah as their God. It has usually been interpreted to mean "mutilated," "damaged," or "broken"; but that understanding makes the word mean the same as the word that follows it. Interpreters try to make a distinction by supposing that the first applies to the face, while the second applies to the limbs. Those distinctions are not in the meaning of the words, so it is best to hold to the meaning that the word has in all other passages where it is found. Some reject the usual meaning of the word on the basis that a priest would not be guilty of such an offense, but Nadab and Abihu were (Lev. 10:1-3-note). A stronger reason for rejecting the usual meaning would be that condemnation to death and destruction is not a physical blemish. However, it certainly is a terrible condition.

The meanings of "damaged foot" and "damaged hand" are clear. The word translated "crooked" is translated "humpback" in most English translations, but the word literally means "twisted." It probably refers to a crooked spine. The word translated "shrunk" is often translated as "dwarf," but the word literally means "small" or "thin." It might refer to a dwarf, but it more likely referred to a person who was bent or emaciated.

"A defect in his eyes" probably refers to a damaged eye or to being cross eyed, rather than to imperfect sight. The word translated "itch" occurs only two other times in the Old Testament (Lev. 22:22; Deut. 28:27). Neither of those references gives much of a clue as to its meaning, but it is usually understood to refer to a rash that causes serious itching. The word translated "psoriasis" occurs only in this verse and in Leviticus 22:22. It is generally understood to refer to some kind of a disease that causes red and scaly patches on the skin.

Probably the most problematical term in the list of blemishes is translated "severed testicle" above. Both

Hebrew words in the phrase are found only in this verse in the whole Old Testament. One of the words almost surely means “testicle.” The other word means “rubbed off” or perhaps “squeezed off.” The phrase likely refers to castration, a practice that was somewhat common among pagans of that day. It may refer to a method of castrating human males that was done by tying off the testicles to cut off circulation to them until they died and were easily removed from the body.

Whatever the exact meaning of some of the words, clearly the blemishes could be caused by birth defects, injury, or illness. When the blemish was caused by an injury, apparently it could result from an accident or a deliberate action. Some of the blemishes possibly were able to be corrected in some cases, especially those caused by diseases. Correcting or healing the blemish would then allow the priest to serve again at the altar and in The Tent of Meeting. ([Leon Hyatt - Leviticus 33 - Lev. 21:16-24](#))

Leviticus 21:19 or a man who has a broken foot or broken hand,

- [Leviticus 21 Resources - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries](#)

Leviticus 21:20 or a hunchback or a dwarf, or one who has a defect in his eye or eczema or scabs or crushed testicles.

- a dwarf (KJV): or, too slender
- or hath (KJV): De 23:1
- [Leviticus 21 Resources - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries](#)

Leviticus 21:21 'No man among the descendants of Aaron the priest who has a defect is to come near to offer the LORD'S offerings by fire; since he has a defect, he shall not come near to offer the food of his God.

- a blemish (KJV): In the above list of blemishes, we meet with some that might render the priest contemptible in the eyes of men; and others that would be very great impediments in the discharge of his ministerial duties.
- to offer (KJV): Lev 21:6,8,17
- [Leviticus 21 Resources - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries](#)

Leon Hyatt - Verse 21. Any man of the seed of Aaron the priest who has a blemish must not come near to offer Jehovah's fire-offerings. [One who has] a blemish must not come near to offering the bread of his God.

This statement is inclusive of any kind of physical blemish that a man of the priestly family might have. Probably the list of blemishes in verses 18-20 was not meant to be all inclusive, but to illustrate the kinds of blemishes that would prevent a man of the priestly family from serving at the altar.

Because God is perfect in every aspect of His being, any kind of physical imperfection would prevent a man from being a fit symbol of God's receiving the worship of His people. ([Leon Hyatt - Leviticus 33 - Lev. 21:16-24](#))

Leviticus 21:22 'He may eat the food of his God, both of the most holy and of the holy,

- both (KJV): Lev 2:3,10 6:16,17,29 7:1 24:8,9 Nu 18:9,10
- and of the holy (KJV): Lev 22:10-13 Nu 18:10,19
- [Leviticus 21 Resources - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries](#)

Ryrie - Verse 22. He may eat the bread of his God of the holiness of holinesses and of the holinesses.

A man of the priestly family who had a physical blemish could eat of the offerings and gifts which were set aside for the support of the priests and their families. It is specifically stated that he could eat both holinesses (holy foods) and holiness of holinesses (most holy foods). Holy food could be eaten by the priests and their families in their homes, and most holy foods could be eaten only by the priests in the court of The Tabernacle (see comments on Lev. 2:3-note in [MESSAGE 1](#) under the heading [It is] a holiness of holinesses, on Lev. 5:15-note in [MESSAGE 3](#) under the heading against holy items belonging to Jehovah; on Lev. 6:16-note in

MESSAGE 5 under the heading It must be eaten in The Holy Place. They must eat it in the court of the Tent of Meeting, on Lev. 6:17-note in [MESSAGE 5](#), and on Lev. 6:26-30-note; Lev 7:6-7-note in [MESSAGE 7](#)). Permission for a priest with a blemish to eat of both the holy foods and most holy foods showed that a priest with a physical blemish was still loved and received by God. He was still a priest and still belonged to the group that was separated out for full time service to Jehovah. Even though he could not officiate at the altar, he could still serve in many ways. Thus, he still deserved support as a person hallowed to the service of Jehovah, and was entitled to eat of the priest's portions of the offerings. ([Leon Hyatt - Leviticus 33 - Lev. 21:16-24](#))

Leviticus 21:23 only he shall not go in to the veil or come near the altar because he has a defect, so that he will not profane My sanctuaries. For I am the LORD who sanctifies them."

- go in (KJV): Ex 30:6-8 40:26,27 Eze 44:9-14
- profane (KJV): Lev 21:12 15:31
- for I the Lord (KJV): Lev 21:8
- [Leviticus 21 Resources - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries](#)

Leon Hyatt - Verse 22. But he must not come near the veil. He must not come near the altar when he has a blemish, so that he will not make My Holinesses common, for I am Jehovah who hallows them.

A priest with a physical blemish was prohibited from two places of service. The first was to "come near the veil." This prohibition means he was not to enter the outer room of The Tabernacle of Meeting and stand before the veil that separated it from the most holy portion of The Tabernacle (see comments on Lev. 4:6-note in [MESSAGE 2](#)). The second was to "come near the altar." This prohibition means he was not to officiate over a fire-offering. For him to perform either of these services would make God's "Holinesses" common or secular.

The word "Holiness" was used to refer to any object that was made holy by being dedicated to Jehovah's use (see comments on Lev. 12:4-note in [MESSAGE 15](#) under the heading The Holiness). Since the word is used in the plural here, the reference seems to have been to both holy objects that a priest with blemishes was forbidden to handle, that is, the tent portion of The Tabernacle and the altar of rededication-offerings. This explanation is much more consistent with other uses of the word "Holiness" and with the context than understanding it to refer to several parts of The Tabernacle.

The priests were to take care not to make The Tent of Meeting and the altar common, because keeping it holy was commanded to them by Jehovah, who had made them holy to His service. ([Leon Hyatt - Leviticus 33 - Lev. 21:16-24](#))

Leviticus 21:24 So Moses spoke to Aaron and to his sons and to all the sons of Israel.

- Aaron (KJV): Mal 2:1-7 Col 4:17 1Ti 1:18 2Ti 2:2
- [Leviticus 21 Resources - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries](#)

Leon Hyatt - Verse 24. So Moses spoke to Aaron and to his sons and to all the people of Israel.

This verse is a concluding Summary Note, added by Moses to show how he carried out the instructions that had been given to him. It is consistent with other Summary Notes found throughout the Book of Leviticus (see comments on Lev. 11:46-47-note in [MESSAGE 14](#)). In verse 2, Jehovah told Moses to speak this MESSAGE to Aaron, because he had a special responsibility to see that it was carried out; however, those instructions were not intended to imply that only Aaron was to know about it. When Moses carried out the instructions Jehovah had given to him, he relayed the MESSAGE to Aaron, to Aaron's sons, and to all the children of Israel. Obviously, Moses did not understand Jehovah's instruction to mean that only Aaron was to know about this MESSAGE, because Moses told it to all the priests and all the people. The people needed to know about the priests' duties, so they would know how to follow them. Moses obeyed the instructions Jehovah gave him and went beyond them, knowing that his additional action was certainly not outside of Jehovah's will.

Application Since the requirements of this MESSAGE were for symbolic purposes that were connected with The Tabernacle offerings that now have been abolished, the disqualifications listed do not apply to the Christian ministry. No physical blemish or disability can disqualify a person from ministering to Jehovah today, as long as that person has the strength for the responsibilities that are involved. However, the instructions in this MESSAGE should be understood to teach that a person who serves in any aspect of Christian ministry should be spiritually whole and mature. A person with weak, immature, faulty, or blemished character will bring shame on the ministry and on the Lord. Such a man is not qualified to serve in the ministry of the holy and perfect God. ([Leon Hyatt -](#)

