

Leviticus 20 Commentary

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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 20:1 Then the LORD spoke to Moses, saying,

Hannah's Bible Outlines.

Penalties for unholiness (Judges 20:1-27)

1. For sacrificing to Molech (Judges 20:1-5)
2. For worshipping demons (Judges 20:6-8)
3. For cursing parents (Judges 20:9)
4. For various sexual deviations (Judges 20:10-21)
5. Conclusion (Judges 20:22-27)

Leviticus 20 - Summary by William MacDonald This chapter gives the punishments for some of the offenses listed in chapters 18 and 19. The person who caused a child to go through the fire in an offering to Molech was to be stoned to death (Lev 20:1-3). If the people failed to kill him, God would destroy him and his family (Lev 20:4, 5). The death penalty was also pronounced against one who consulted mediums and wizards (Lev 20:6); one who cursed his father or mother (Lev 20:9); an adulterer and an adulteress (Lev 20:10); one who committed incest with his father's wife (Lev 20:11) or daughter-in-law (Lev 20:12); and a sodomite (Lev 20:13). (Both parties were to be killed in these cases of unlawful intercourse.) In the case of a man having unlawful sexual intercourse with a mother and her daughter, all three offenders were to be burned (Lev 20:14), presumably after being stoned to death. Sexual perversion between humans and animals was a capital crime; both man and beast were to be slain (Lev 20:15, 16). The death penalty (or, as some think, excommunication) was pronounced against intercourse with a sister or half-sister (Lev 20:17) or with a menstruous woman (Lev 20:18). Intercourse with an aunt called forth the judgment, "they shall bear their iniquity," but no details were given (Lev 20:19). Some think it means that they would die childless, as in Lev 20:20, where a man had intercourse with his uncle's wife, and in Lev 20:21, where the offense was with a sister-in-law. Lev 20:21 applied only as long as the brother was alive. If he died without leaving a son to carry on his name, his brother was commanded to marry the widow and name the first son after the deceased (Deut. 25:5). Such unions were known as Levirate marriages. The longing of God's heart was to have a holy people, separated from the abominations of the Gentiles and enjoying the blessings of the Promised Land (Lev 20:22-26). Mediums and wizards were to be exterminated by stoning (Lev 20:27). ([Summary of Every Chapter of Leviticus](#))

Leviticus 20:2 "You shall also say to the sons of Israel, 'Any man from the sons of Israel or from the aliens sojourning in Israel who gives any of his offspring to Molech, shall surely be put to death; the people of the land shall stone him with stones.

- Whosoever (KJV): Lev 17:8,13,15
- giveth (KJV): Lev 18:21 De 12:31 18:10 2Ki 17:17 23:10 2Ch 28:3 33:6 Ps 106:38 Isa 57:5,6 Jer 7:31 32:35 Eze 16:20,21 20:26,31 23:37,39 Ac 7:43, Moloch
- Molech (KJV): The Rabbins describe this idol as made of brass sitting upon a throne of the same metal, in the form of a man, with the head of a calf, adorned with a royal crown, and his arms extended as if to embrace any one. When they offered any children to him, they heated the statue by a great fire kindled within, and the victim was put into his arms, and thus consumed. Others relate, that the idol, which was hollow, was divided into seven compartments within; in one of which they put flour, in the second turtles, in the third a ewe, in the fourth a ram, in the fifth a calf, in the sixth an ox, and the seventh a child; which were all burnt together by heating the statue inside. The account which Diodorus (l. xx.) gives of the statue of Saturn, to which the Carthaginians, descendants of the Canaanites, sacrificed their children, is very similar. For they had a brazen stature of Saturn, stretching out his hands towards the ground, in such a manner that the children placed within them tumbled down into a pit full of fire. To this account Milton alludes, in Paradise Lost, B. 1. 392.
- the people (KJV): Lev 20:27 24:14,23 Nu 15:35,36 De 13:10,11 17:5-7 21:21 Ac 7:58,59

Criswell - Regarding the worship of the Ammonite god Molech, - Human sacrifice was never sanctioned in ancient Israel, though it was wrongly practiced at times (Judg. 11:29-40; 2 Kin. 3:27; 16:3; 17:31; 21:6; 2 Chr. 33:6; Ezek. 16:20, 21). Molech (Moloch or Milcom) was the detestable god of the Ammonites, the worship of whom was characterized by the gruesome sacrifice of children (cf. 20:2-5; 1 Kin. 11:5, 7, 33; 2 Kin. 23:10, 13; Jer. 32:35; 49:1-3; Zeph. 1:5).

Leviticus 20:3 'I will also set My face against that man and will cut him off from among his people, because he has given some of his offspring to Molech, so as to defile My sanctuary and to profane My holy name.

- I will set (KJV): Lev 17:10 1Pe 3:12
- to defile (KJV): Nu 19:20 Eze 5:11 23:38,39
- profane (KJV): Lev 18:21 Eze 20:39 2Co 6:16

GOD'S HOLY NAME

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

Profane (02490)(**chahal** - **see word study**). The **Septuagint (Lxx)** uses **bebeloo** which is discussed in the word study on **chahal**.

Leviticus 20:4 'If the people of the land, however, should ever disregard that man when he gives any of his offspring to Molech, so as not to put him to death,

- hide (KJV): Ac 17:30
- and kill (KJV): De 13:8 17:2-5 Jos 7:12 1Sa 3:13,14 1Ki 20:42 Rev 2:14

Should ever disregard - 'alam - means to conceal or hide. The Hebrew literally reads "hiding they hide their eyes (ayin) from" the abomination. Our modern slang would say they turned a blind eye or they simply looked the other way. What a description of the widespread corruption in America at all levels (government, business, etc). In fact more to the point, many in America turn are hiding their eyes from the unfathomable atrocity of human sacrifices (willful abortions of babies created in the image of God) by the millions. Surely the land cries out for their blood! O God send a revival to America before it is too late! Amen

Leviticus 20:5 then I Myself will set My face against that man and against his family, and I will cut off from among their people both him and all those who play the harlot after him, by playing the harlot after Molech.

- I will (KJV): Lev 17:10
- against his (KJV): Ex 20:5 Jer 32:28-35,39
- whoring (KJV): Lev 17:7 Ps 106:39 Jer 3:2 Ho 2:5,13

Leviticus 20:6 'As for the person who turns to mediums and to spiritists, to play the harlot after them, I will also set My face against that person and will cut him off from among his people.

- Lev 20:27 Lev 19:26,31 Dt 18:10-14 Isa 8:19

DABBLING IN THE OCCULT

God does not stutter when it comes to dabbling in the occult - **Do not do it!**

Lev 19:26 'You shall not eat anything with the blood, nor practice divination or soothsaying.

Lev 19:31 'Do not turn to mediums or spiritists; do not seek them out to be defiled by them. I am the LORD your God.

Deut 18:10 "There shall not be found among you anyone who makes his son or his daughter pass through the fire, one who uses divination, one who practices witchcraft, or one who interprets omens, or a sorcerer, 11 or one who casts a spell, or a medium, or a spiritist, or one who calls up the dead. 12 "For whoever does these things is detestable to the LORD; and because of these detestable things the LORD your God will drive them out before you. 13 "You shall be blameless before the LORD your God. 14 "For those nations, which you shall dispossess, listen to those who practice witchcraft and to diviners, but as for you, the LORD your God has not allowed you to do so.

Mediums and spiritists (KJV = "familiar spirits and after wizards") - Have you seen the television adds to call the 800 number for your fortune? Oh my, how far and how fast has America declined morally once we removed prayer and the Bible (and God) from our schools! Forgive us O Lord! Save us O Lord that we might be saved. Amen

MacArthur on mediums - Mediums are humans who act as "go-betweens" to supposedly contact/communicate with the spirits of the dead, who are actually impersonated by demons. Cf. Lev 20:6, 27. "Spiritists" refers to demons

Medium (0178)(ob/ov) means a bottle (made from animal skin), a necromancer. "masculine noun meaning a conjured spirit, a

medium or necromancer; or a leather bottle. The primary use of the word is connected to the occult practice of necromancy or consulting the dead. It is used to signify a conjurer who professes to call up the dead by means of magic, especially to give revelation about future uncertainties (1 Sam. 28:7; Isa. 8:19); a man or woman who has a familiar spirit (Lev. 20:27; 1 Chr. 10:13; Isa. 29:4); the conjured spirit itself, particularly when speaking through the medium (1 Sam. 28:8; 2 Kgs 21:6; 2 Chr. 33:6). The Israelites were strictly forbidden from engaging in such practices or consulting mediums (Lev. 19:31; Deut. 18:10-12). Interestingly, the word is used once to signify a leather bottle that may burst under pressure (Job 32:19). There is no convincing evidence that this particular reference has any occult connotations. Rather, the connection between the two divergent meanings of this Hebrew word is probably that a medium was seen as a "container" for a conjured spirit." (Baker)

Gilbrant - This word is translated "spirit of the dead" or "necromancer." It occurs 17 times in the Hebrew Bible. Eleven of these times it occurs in conjunction with the noun *yidde'ōnî*, and is commonly translated as "wizard" or "soothsayer." The precise meaning and function of the latter term is not certain. Since the former is feminine and the latter is masculine, many assume that the two are gender determined labels for the same role. In the OT, *'ōv* can refer to the spirit of a dead person (1 Sam. 28:8; Isa. 29:4; 1 Sam. 28:8). A medium can possess a spirit (Lev. 20:27; 1 Sam. 28:7). Generally, an *'ōv* is simply a medium (e.g., Lev. 19:31; 20:6; 1 Sam. 28:3). The practice of necromancy is prohibited by Mosaic Law, subject to the death penalty (Lev. 20:27; Deut. 18:11). Saul prohibits necromancy under the penalty of death, though he employs it himself in hopes of uncovering what the future holds (1 Samuel 28). To the surprise of the medium, Saul does encounter the *'ōv* of Samuel, who brings a curse from Yahweh.

Ob/ov - 11x in 11v -

Leviticus 19:31 'Do not turn to **mediums** or spiritists; do not seek them out to be defiled by them. I am the LORD your God.

Leviticus 20:6 'As for the person who turns to **mediums** and to spiritists, to play the harlot after them, I will also set My face against that person and will cut him off from among his people.

Leviticus 20:27 'Now a man or a woman who is a **medium** or a spiritist shall surely be put to death. They shall be stoned with stones, their bloodguiltiness is upon them."

Deuteronomy 18:11 or one who casts a spell, or a **medium**, or a spiritist, or one who calls up the dead.

1 Samuel 28:3 Now Samuel was dead, and all Israel had lamented him and buried him in Ramah, his own city. And Saul had removed from the land those who were **mediums** and spiritists.

1 Samuel 28:9 But the woman said to him, "Behold, you know what Saul has done, how he has cut off those who are **mediums** and spiritists from the land. Why are you then laying a snare for my life to bring about my death?"

2 Kings 21:6 He made his son pass through the fire, practiced witchcraft and used divination, and dealt with **mediums** and spiritists. He did much evil in the sight of the LORD provoking Him to anger.

2 Kings 23:24 Moreover, Josiah removed the **mediums** and the spiritists and the teraphim and the idols and all the abominations that were seen in the land of Judah and in Jerusalem, that he might confirm the words of the law which were written in the book that Hilkiah the priest found in the house of the LORD.

2 Chronicles 33:6 He made his sons pass through the fire in the valley of Ben-hinnom; and he practiced witchcraft, used divination, practiced sorcery and dealt with **mediums** and spiritists. He did much evil in the sight of the LORD, provoking Him to anger.

Isaiah 8:19 When they say to you, "Consult the **mediums** and the spiritists who whisper and mutter," should not a people consult their God? Should they consult the dead on behalf of the living?

Isaiah 19:3 "Then the spirit of the Egyptians will be demoralized within them; And I will confound their strategy, So that they will resort to idols and ghosts of the dead And to **mediums** and spiritists.

Spiritist (03049) (*yiddeoni* from *yada* = to know) is noun which refers to one who knows and communicates with the unseen world. "A masculine noun meaning a familiar spirit, a conjurer, and a wizard. In Levitical Law, this type of person was considered an abomination to the Lord (Deut. 18:11). King Saul consulted such a medium when he desired to know the outcome of his war against the Philistines (1 Sam. 28:9). King Manasseh's evil deeds included the practice of consulting mediums and wizards (2 Ki. 21:6). Isaiah condemned the people of Israel for turning to the way of the Canaanites, who sought out mediums and wizards in order to hear from their dead (Isa. 8:19)." (Baker)

TWOT - *yidde'ōnî*. Since the root of *yidde'ōnî* is the verb *yāda'* "to know," implied in the title, therefore, is esoteric knowledge not available to the ordinary person. *yidde'ōnî* always occurs parallel to *'ōb* (witch, q.v.). It

may be a description of an 'ôb or it may be the masculine counterpart. (Similarly, "witch" and "wizard" are a feminine and masculine pair in English.) As the Hebrew word yidde'ônî is related to knowledge, so the English word "wizard" is related to wisdom. God forbade his people to consult the yidde'ônî (Leviticus 19:31; Leviticus 20:6, 27; Deut. 18:11) as well as other diviners. Despite the fact that Saul outlawed them, he still consulted an 'ôb "spirit" according to 1 Samuel 28. How the Israelite kings dealt with these spiritists was a significant factor in characterizing the king as good or evil (2 Kings 21:6; 2 Kings 23:24; 2 Chron. 33:6). Isaiah spoke of them with utter scorn (Isaiah 8:19; Isaiah 19:3). (Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament - [TWOT ONLINE](#))

Gilbrant - This masculine noun is translated "wizard" (KJV) and "spiritist" (NIV and NASB). It refers to one who knows and communicates with the unseen world. The word always occurs with 'ôv, which is translated "those who have familiar spirits" (KJV) or "medium" (NIV and NASB). This noun refers to those who seek direction from the dead. The two terms may simply refer to the male and female persons who perform the same kinds of acts. This distinction is also found in English in reference to witches and warlocks. Yidde'ônî is derived from the verb yādha', meaning "to know," in the same way the English word "wizard" is related to the word "wisdom." The Lord forbade Israel to inquire of spiritists. To do so was to commit spiritual prostitution, and the Lord would cut that inquirer off from Israel, meaning they would no longer be a part of God's people (Lev. 20:6). Those who actually practiced spiritism were to be stoned to death (Lev. 20:27). Spiritism occurs in a forbidden list, along with child sacrifice, divination, sorcery, interpretation of omens, witchcraft, casting of spells, mediums and consultation with the dead. So that they would not seek direction for life through these means, the Lord promised He would send the nation prophets who would bring them the word of direction. The people were to listen to the prophets of the Lord and were not to inquire of the dead (Dt. 18:11). ([Complete Biblical Library](#))

Yiddeoni is rendered as - Wizard (KJV); fortune-teller (Berkeley Version); familiar spirit (NEB); spirit (NEB, NAB); magician (JB); sorcerer (JB),

Yiddeoni - 11x in NAS many times with previous word **mediums** - Lev. 19:31; Lev. 20:6; Lev. 20:27; Deut. 18:11; 1 Sam. 28:3; 1 Sam. 28:9; 2 Ki. 21:6; 2 Ki. 23:24; 2 Chr. 33:6; Isa. 8:19; Isa. 19:3

Play the harlot ([02181](#)) ([zanah](#)) is a verb meaning to fornicate, to prostitute and refers to marital infidelity or unfaithfulness. It was word used elsewhere in the OT to describe prostitution (Lev 21:7, Pr 7:10). Many of the uses of zarah are figurative describing Israel's (Jehovah's "wife") commission of "spiritual prostitution" by having "intercourse" so to speak with other gods (cp 1 Co 6:16). Indeed, idolatry is looked upon as prostitution (Isa 50:1, 2, 3; 54:6, 7, 8; Jer 2:1, 2, 3; 3:1ff; Hos 2:1ff; Jas 4:4-note; Rev 2:4-note). In addition zarah describes Israel's improper relationships with other nations (Isa. 23:17; Ezek. 23:30; Nah. 3:4). "The thought seems to be of having relations with these nations for the sake of political and monetary benefit, although in the case of Nineveh the added element of alluring, deceitful tactics leading on to oppressive dominance is implied." A third figurative meaning is found in Isa 1:21, where the Israelites' departure from God's approved moral standards is called harlotry." ([TWOT](#))

Set my face against - 10x in 9v - Lev. 17:10; Lev. 20:3; Lev. 20:5; Lev. 20:6; Lev. 26:17; Jer. 21:10; Jer. 44:11; Ezek. 14:8; Ezek. 15:7

QUESTION - [What does the Bible say about witchcraft / witches? Gotquestions.org WATCH VIDEO](#)

ANSWER - The Bible has a lot to say about witchcraft. Witchcraft and its many cousins, such as fortune-telling and necromancy, are Satan's counterfeits to holy spirituality. The Bible expressly condemns all forms of witchcraft.

Since early times, people have sought supernatural experiences God did not endorse. The nations that surrounded the Promised Land were saturated with such practices, and God had stern words for His people concerning any involvement with them. Deuteronomy 18:9–12 says, "When you enter the land the Lord your God is giving you, do not learn to imitate the detestable ways of the nations there. Let no one be found among you who sacrifices their son or daughter in the fire, who practices divination or sorcery, interprets omens, engages in witchcraft, or casts spells, or who is a medium or spiritist or who consults the dead. Anyone who does these things is detestable to the Lord."

God takes witchcraft very seriously. The penalty for practicing witchcraft under the Mosaic Law was death (Exodus 22:18; Leviticus 20:27). First Chronicles 10:13 tells us that "Saul died because he was unfaithful to the Lord; he did not keep the word of the Lord and even [consulted a medium](#) for guidance." In the New Testament, "sorcery" is translated from the Greek word [pharmakeia](#), from which we get our word *pharmacy* (Galatians 5:20; Revelation 18:23). Witchcraft and spiritism often involve the ritualistic use of magic potions and mind-controlling drugs. Using [illicit drugs](#) can open ourselves up to the invasion of demonic spirits. Engaging in a practice or taking a substance to achieve an altered state of consciousness is a form of witchcraft.

There are only two sources of spiritual power: God and Satan. Satan has only the power that God allows him to have, but it is

considerable (Job 1:12; 2 Corinthians 4:4; Revelation 20:2). To seek spirituality, knowledge, or power apart from God is idolatry, closely related to witchcraft. First Samuel 15:23 says, “For rebellion is as the sin of witchcraft, and stubbornness is as iniquity and idolatry.” Witchcraft is Satan’s realm, and he excels in counterfeiting what God does. When Moses performed miracles before Pharaoh, the magicians did the same things through demonic power (Exodus 8:7). At the heart of witchcraft is the desire to know the future and control events that are not ours to control. Those abilities belong only to the Lord. This desire has its roots in Satan’s first temptation to Eve: “You can be like God” (Genesis 3:5).

Since the Garden of Eden, Satan’s major focus has been to divert human hearts away from worship of the true God (Genesis 3:1). He entices humans with the suggestions of power, self-realization, and spiritual enlightenment apart from submission to the Lord God. Witchcraft is merely another branch of that enticement. To become involved in witchcraft in any way is to enter Satan’s realm. Seemingly “harmless” modern entanglements with witchcraft can include [horoscopes](#), [Ouija boards](#), Eastern meditation rituals, and some video and role-playing games. Any practice that dabbles in a power source other than the Lord Jesus Christ is witchcraft. Revelation 22:15 includes witches in a list of those who will not inherit eternal life: “Outside are the dogs, those who practice magic arts, the sexually immoral, the murderers, the idolaters and everyone who loves and practices falsehood.”

We don’t need to fear Satan’s power, but we should acknowledge it and stay away from it. First John 4:4 says, “Greater is He who is in you, than he who is in the world.” Satan can create much havoc, harm, and destruction, even in the lives of believers (1 Thessalonians 2:18; Job 1:12–18; 1 Corinthians 5:5). However, if we belong to the Lord Jesus Christ, there is no power that can ultimately defeat us (Isaiah 54:17). We are overcomers (1 John 5:4) as we “put on the whole armor of God so that you can take your stand against the devil’s schemes” (Ephesians 6:11). When we give our lives to Christ, we must repent. This repentance should include renouncing any involvement with witchcraft, following the example of the early believers in Acts 19:19.

Isaiah 8:19 says, “When someone tells you to consult mediums and spiritists, who whisper and mutter, should not a people inquire of their God? Why consult the dead on behalf of the living?” When we follow those words to their logical conclusion, we could also ask, “Why seek any power apart from the source of all real power? Why seek spirits who are not the Holy Spirit?” Witchcraft and its many counterparts promise spirituality but lead only to emptiness and death (Micah 5:12; Galatians 5:19–21). Only Jesus has the words of life (John 6:68, 63, cf Dt 32:47).

QUESTION - [What is the occult? | GotQuestions.org](#)

ANSWER - The dictionary defines *occult* as “hidden, secret and mysterious, particularly pertaining to the supernatural.” Examples of occult practices are [astrology](#), [witchcraft \(Wicca\)](#), the [black arts](#), [fortune telling \(divination\)](#), [magic](#) (both [black](#) and [white](#)), [Ouija boards](#), [Tarot cards](#), [spiritism](#), [parapsychology](#), and [Satanism](#). Human beings have always been interested the occult, from ancient times until today. Occult practices and psychic phenomena have captivated millions of people worldwide, and this is not limited to the ignorant or uneducated. There are several factors that make the occult fascinating to everyone, even in our age of technological and scientific advances.

For one thing, occult practices appeal to our natural curiosity. Many people who get involved in the occult begin with “harmless” practices such as playing with a [Ouija board](#) out of simple curiosity. Many who have experimented this way have found themselves going deeper and deeper into the occult. Unfortunately, this type of involvement is akin to quicksand—easy to get into and difficult to get out of. Another fascination of the occult is that it appears to offer quick and easy answers to life’s questions. The astrologer gladly charts your future, the Ouija board and Tarot cards give you direction, and the psychic gets you in touch with your Aunt Esther who tells you all is fine in the afterlife. Occult practices are controlled by demons, who offer just enough information to keep their victims intrigued, while exerting more and more control over gullible hearts and minds.

The danger of occult practices cannot be overstated. God strictly warned the Israelites against being involved with the occult (Leviticus 20:6). The pagan nations that surrounded Israel were steeped in divination, sorcery, witchcraft, and spiritism, and this is one reason why God gave His people the authority to drive them out of the land (Deuteronomy 18:9–14). The New Testament says that the rise of interest in the occult is a sign of the end of the age: “The [Holy] Spirit clearly says that in later times some will abandon the faith and follow deceiving spirits and things taught by demons” (1 Timothy 4:1).

How are we to recognize the occult and those who promote it? An incident involving Paul and Barnabas in the early days of the church is a good place to start. They “traveled through the whole island until they came to Paphos. There they met a Jewish sorcerer and false prophet named Bar-Jesus, who was an attendant of the proconsul, Sergius Paulus. The proconsul, an intelligent man, sent for Barnabas and Saul because he wanted to hear the word of God. But Elymas the sorcerer (for that is what his name means) opposed them and tried to turn the proconsul from the faith. Then Saul, who was also called Paul, filled with the Holy Spirit, looked straight at Elymas and said, ‘You are a child of the devil and an enemy of everything that is right! You are full of all kinds of deceit and trickery. Will you never stop perverting the right ways of the Lord?’” (Acts 13:6–10).

In this account, we see several characteristics of those involved in the occult. They are false prophets (verse 6) who deny the basic doctrines of Christianity: the deity of Christ, the fall of man into sin, heaven, hell, salvation and the atoning work of Christ on the cross. Second, they seek to influence other people, particularly those in positions of power, to turn them from the faith (verses 6-7). Third, they do everything in their power to keep the true gospel of Christ from being spread, opposing His ministers at every turn (verse 8). When the truth of the gospel is curtailed, watered down, or flatly rejected, Satan and his demons rejoice.

There is no mistaking the fact that the occult in all its forms should be avoided. We are to “be self-controlled and alert. Your enemy the devil prowls around like a roaring lion looking for someone to devour” (1 Peter 5:8). Part of being self-controlled and alert is being wise to Satan’s schemes, but not to delve into the details of every occult practice and phenomenon. We are to understand the devil’s ultimate goal—the destruction of our souls—and take the offense by putting on the “full armor of God” (Ephesians 6:10–18). Only then can we stand firm and extinguish the “flaming arrows” of the evil one.

Leviticus 20:7 'You shall consecrate yourselves therefore and be holy, for I am the LORD your God.

- Lev 11:44 Lev 19:2 Eph 1:4 Philemon 2:12,13 Col 3:12 1Th 4:3,7 Heb 12:14 1Pe 1:15,16

Related Passages:

Leviticus 11:44+ 'For I am the LORD your God. Consecrate yourselves therefore, and be holy, for I am holy. And you shall not make yourselves unclean with any of the swarming things that swarm on the earth.

Leviticus 19:2+ “Speak to all the congregation of the sons of Israel and say to them, ‘You shall be holy, for I the LORD your God am holy.

Colossians 3:12+ (HOLINESS CON CARNE - IN REAL LIFE) So, as those who have been chosen of God, holy and beloved, put on a heart of compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience;

1 Thessalonians 4:3; 7+ For this is the will of God, your sanctification; that is, that you abstain from sexual immorality...7 For God has not called us for the purpose of impurity, but in sanctification.

Hebrews 12:14+ **Pursue** ([present imperative](#) see [our need to depend on the Holy Spirit to obey](#)) peace with all men, and the sanctification (HOLINESS) without which no one will see the Lord.

THE CALL ON OUR LIFE CONSECRATION FOR HOLINESS

Shall consecrate (see [sanctifies below - same Hebrew word, qadash](#)) - in this passage it is our responsibility. In Lev 20:8b it is the Lord's provision making holy practice a plausible possibility! To **consecrate** means to set apart deliberately. The verb implies intentional action, not passive intention. God calls His people to make conscious choices and to reject what defiles and while devoting themselves to what honors Him. Consecration involves repentance, obedience, and a decisive break from former ways of living.

See note on Lev 11:44 - 'For I am the LORD your God. Consecrate yourselves therefore, and be holy, for I am holy. And you shall not make yourselves unclean with any of the swarming things that swarm on the earth.

Consecrate (Sanctify, make holy) ([06942](#)) see [qadash](#) in Lev 20:8 below

This is God's will for His people in both testaments

As obedient children, do not be conformed to the former lusts which were yours in your ignorance, 15 but like the Holy One who called you, **be** ([aorist imperative](#) see [our need to depend on the Holy Spirit to obey](#) - JUST DO IT! Don't delay!) holy yourselves also in all your behavior; 16 because it is written, “YOU SHALL BE HOLY, FOR I AM HOLY.” (1Pe 1:14-16+)

Note that the term of conclusion **therefore** ties the command to what precedes it. God has just warned against idolatry and moral corruption; therefore, His people must respond. Holiness is not abstract but it is expected and necessary response to God's revealed will and character, and it is not dependent of fleshly power but energization by the Spirit (even in the Old Testament! The difference for us today is the Spirit lives within us, so we are really without excuses when we disobey! OUCH!)

Be holy - Holiness means separation unto God, which means belonging to Him in conduct, values, and allegiance (in other words, in

every area of our life - thought, word and deed!) It does not mean moral perfection, but does speak of "direction" which results in distinction (distinctiveness of our lifestyle in the midst of a crooked and perverse generation!). God's people are to live differently because they are no longer their own but they belong to Him (1Co 6:19,20+, Titus 2:14+). Holiness is both a calling and a process (aka progressive sanctification) working out enabled by the Spirit of what God demands, for it is also what He enables.

For I am the LORD your God- This (**FOR**) is a STRATEGIC term of explanation, for it gives us the foundation of Yahweh's call for us to be holy as He is holy (1Pe 1:15,16+). Holiness is grounded not in human effort but in God's identity and relationship with His people and is enabled by His Spirit Who is called Holy! Because He is the LORD, self-existent, sovereign, faithful to keep His covenants, and because He is our God, His people should desire and seek to reflect His character. The call to holiness flows from Who God is, not merely from rules He imposes. And remember the only way to work out our salvation in fear and trembling (keeping His rules), is because it is God's Spirit Who is in us continually giving us the desire and the power to walk in a manner which pleases Him. (see Php 2:12+, Php 2:13NLT+).

In summary, holiness begins with God's nature, not our morality. Consecration requires intentional separation from sin, choices enabled by learning to lean on His Spirit. God's people are called to reflect the character of the God they belong to, remembering you may be the only Bible some lost person ever reads!

Jehovah calls His children to holiness not to restrict them, but to reflect Him! Because He is holy and has claimed us as His own, we are to live set apart, and "LOVE THE LORD YOUR GOD WITH ALL YOUR HEART, AND WITH ALL YOUR SOUL, AND WITH ALL YOUR MIND." (Mt 22:37+).

Jerry Bridges - Declaration Of Dependence -- Does holiness come by striving after it or by resting in God! By Jerry Bridges

As I sat in the doctor's waiting room, my attention was drawn to a portrait of a man sculpted out of a block of marble. The sculpture was complete down to about mid-thigh, but below that the partially chipped away marble gradually phased into the outline of the original block.

The man in the sculpture was handsome and robust, the kind of body any man would like to have. But the arresting thing about the picture was that the sculptor's hammer and chisel were in the hands of the man being sculpted. The man was sculpting himself.

As I pondered the painting, I was struck by its graphic portrayal of how many Christians seek to grow in personal holiness. We try, as it were, to sculpt or mold ourselves. We seek to grow in holiness through our own personal efforts and willpower. And we're just as ludicrous as a block of marble trying to sculpt itself.

Holiness is not, as is so often thought, adherence to a set of rules. It is conformity to the character of God—nothing more, nothing less. It is God's plan for us. He has "predestined [us] to be conformed to the likeness of his Son" (Ro. 8:29-note). To this end, Paul says, "We are being transformed into his likeness with ever-increasing glory, which comes from the Lord, who is the Spirit" (2 Cor. 3:18-note).

The words conform and transform in these verses have the same root. A form is a pattern or model. Transformed speaks of the process; conformed speaks of the end result. We are being transformed into the likeness of Christ so that we might finally be conformed to the likeness of Him who is our pattern or model.

Who, then, transforms us? Paul tells us in 2 Cor. 3:18 that it is the Spirit. We are not sculpting ourselves into the likeness of Christ. Only the Holy Spirit can do that. The writer of Hebrews recognized this when he prayed, "May the God of peace . . . work in us what is pleasing to him" (Heb. 13:20–21-note). Paul prayed similarly for the Thessalonian believers, "May God himself, the God of peace, sanctify you [make you holy] through and through" (1 Thess. 5:23-note).

We as believers can no more make ourselves holy than a block of marble can transform itself into a beautiful statue. We are totally dependent on the Holy Spirit to do this work in us.

Yet over and over we place the entire burden for growing in holiness on ourselves. We make resolutions, we try harder, and we may even succeed in changing some of our outward conduct. But we cannot change our hearts. Only God can do that.

It was said of the Lord Jesus, for example, that He "loved righteousness and hated wickedness" (Heb. 1:9). To be transformed into His likeness, then, is to be brought to where we, too, love righteousness and hate wickedness. This is more than merely changing our conduct or conforming to a set of rules. It is a complete renovation of our hearts, something only the Holy Spirit can do.

Is the road to holiness, then, one of dependence on God, or of personal discipline? Surely it is one of dependence on God.

THE MYSTERY OF SANCTIFICATION

We must not, however, carry the analogy of the marble statue too far. After all, a piece of marble is absolutely lifeless. It has no

mind, no heart, no will. The sculptor receives no cooperation from the lifeless block of marble, and expects none.

The same is not true of believers. God has given us mind, heart, and will with which to respond to His work in us, with which to cooperate with His Spirit in the process of transforming us into the likeness of Christ. He intends that we understand His will with our minds, that we yearn to do it with our hearts, and that we actually make choices of obedience with our wills.

We are to “make every effort . . . to be holy” (Heb. 12:14KJV^{[note](#)}). We are to train, or discipline, ourselves to be godly (1 Tim. 4:7^{[note](#)}). We are to put to death the traits of our sinful nature and clothe ourselves with the traits of godly character (Col. 3:5^{[note](#)}, Col. 3:12^{[note](#)}).

The New Testament is filled with injunctions about holy character that address our responsibility. In the pursuit of holiness, we must not be passive blocks of marble in the hands of a sculptor.

Is the road to holiness, then, one of dependence on God, or of personal discipline? Surely it is one of personal discipline.

But how can this be? If the work of transforming us into Christ’s likeness is the Holy Spirit’s ministry, where does our responsibility fit in? How can we be simultaneously responsible for pursuing holiness and totally dependent on the Spirit?

I am an engineer, both by training and by temperament. One characteristic of engineers is that we always want to know how things work. I carried this analytical attitude into the Christian life. For years I tried to analyze the precise relationship between the Holy Spirit and the human personality. I visualized two gears, one representing the Spirit and one representing my own personality, and I wanted to know just how they meshed. I kept trying to answer the question of exactly how my personal responsibility for growing in holiness fit together with the work of the Holy Spirit.

I finally gave up. I concluded that God has not answered that question anywhere in the Bible. The mutual relationship of the Holy Spirit and the human personality in the work of sanctification is a mystery known only to God. But our inability to explain just how God works in and through our personalities should not keep us from believing that He does. He not only instructs us to “work out [our] own salvation with fear and trembling,” but also assures us that He Himself “works in [us] to will and to act according to his good purpose” (Phil. 2:12^{[note](#)} Php 2:13^{[note](#)}).

Although God has not explained to us the mystery of how He works in us, He has made our responsibility clear. He has also made it clear that, in carrying out that responsibility, we are dependent upon Him.

I call this dependent discipline. The word discipline sums up our responsibility to grow in holiness. The qualifying word dependent emphasizes our need for God’s work in all that we do. Apart from Him, we can do nothing (Jn. 15:5). What, then, are our responsibilities for growing in holiness? Let’s look at four words that I believe summarize our responsibilities: renewing, watching, choosing, and praying.

RENEWING OUR MINDS

Paul tells us that we are to be transformed by the renewing of our minds (Ro. 12:2^{[note](#)}). He is not talking of a mere acquisition of information. He is talking about a fundamental change in our values.

Nevertheless, in order to change our values we must know what God’s values are, and this does mean we must acquire new information. In Titus 1:1, Paul writes that “the knowledge of the truth . . . leads to godliness.” We must know the truth about sin and righteousness before we can hate the one and love the other. Our hearts cannot love or hate what our minds know nothing about.

To gain “the knowledge of the truth that leads to godliness” we must diligently study the Word of God. Although there are many different methods of Bible study, all of them require diligence. We are to “look for [the truth of God’s Word] as for silver and search for it as for hidden treasure” (Pr 2:4^{[note](#)}). No Christian who treats the Word of God with casual indifference or approaches it only sporadically and haphazardly will progress much in holiness. We are transformed by the Holy Spirit, but He does this as our minds are renewed by His Word. Not only must we study God’s Word, we must also hide it in our hearts. The psalmist wrote, “I have hidden your word in my heart that I might not sin against you” (Ps. 119:11). The word hidden conveys the thought of storing something up against a time of future need. We do this by meditating continually on God’s Word, by constantly thinking about it, and by applying its truths to the everyday situations of life. I personally have found a systematic Scripture memorization program to be absolutely necessary to continual meditation on God’s Word. I cannot think throughout the day about what I do not have in my memory.

WATCHING AGAINST TEMPTATION

Jesus said, “Watch and pray so that you will not fall into temptation” (Mt. 26:41, emphasis added). This is another area of discipline. It is something we must do. We must continually watch, or guard, against temptation.

We must guard against temptation within ourselves. James wrote, “Each one [of us] is tempted when, by his own evil desire, he is

dragged away and enticed” (Jas. 1:14). We must face the fact that evil desire lurks in our hearts. It searches constantly for occasions to express itself.

Evil desire comes in many forms. We often think of grosser desires like lust, but there are other, more subtle, ones: the acquisitive urge always to have the latest gadgetry; the feeling that we always need one more outfit to complete our wardrobe; the compulsion to “win” in all our relationships; the will to intimidate or manipulate other people. Watching against temptation from within ourselves requires honest, humble self-examination to learn what particular evil desires hide in our hearts and when and how we are most vulnerable to them. We must also guard against temptations that come from the world around us. As our minds are renewed and our values changed, we begin to recognize temptations from our environment that we didn’t notice before. But we must make conscious decisions to keep from falling into those temptations.

I once became aware that my favorite news magazine always ran several articles calculated to appeal to unhealthy sexual interests and that I always read those articles. Conscious decision for me was to cancel my subscription. Someone else, tempted to live beyond his means through the “just say charge it” credit card philosophy, might need to cancel his credit cards.

“The prudent see danger and take refuge,” Solomon said, “but the simple keep going and suffer for it” (Pr27:12). The person pursuing holiness must be prudent. He must watch for the moral danger of temptations. Most of us know our areas of vulnerability; we should take special precautions to guard against temptations in them.

CHOOSING OBEDIENCE

In *The Freedom of Obedience* Martha Thatcher writes of practicing obedience one step at a time. Our daily lives contain a constant stream of moral choices that are made one at a time. Some choices can be made deliberately and with reflection; others must be made spontaneously and instantly. But whether deliberately or spontaneously, we are choosing all day long, every day. Someone sends you an angry letter, unjustly criticizing you. You choose to respond in kind or to be gracious and forgiving. The cashier at a restaurant gives you ten dollars too much change. You choose to keep it or to give it back. We choose to tell the truth or to lie, to forgive or to harbor anger and resentment, to entertain lustful thoughts and looks or to refuse them. We choose to respond to opportunities to show compassion and care for others or to ignore them in favor of our own interests. Choices like these, made over time, develop our character in one direction or the other.

In 2 Pe 2:14, Peter writes of false teachers who “are experts in greed.” Another Bible version says they have hearts “trained in greed” (NASB). The word trained could also be rendered “disciplined.” These false teachers had disciplined themselves in greediness until they were trained in it—experts in greed. They were disciplined, all right, but in the wrong direction. How had they become experts? One choice at a time. God wants us to be experts in purity, experts in honesty, experts in compassion and forgiveness. How will we become such experts? One choice at a time.

Dawson Trotman, founder of The Navigators, used to say, **“You are going to be what you are now becoming.”** The choices we make each day determine the person we will be in the future.

PRAYING FOR HOLINESS

Prayer is not the last in a series of four disciplines but a necessary companion to each of the other three.

We are to pray for God to renew our minds as we study the Bible and meditate on its truths. We are to “call out for insight and cry aloud for understanding” (Prov. 2:3). We should pray not only for understanding of the truth in our minds but also for the rooting and building of biblical convictions in our hearts.

We should pray that God will make us alert as we watch for internal sinful desires and external temptations to which we are vulnerable. We need to ask God to reveal to us matters in which we are not living according to the truth.

And we should pray to God for strength to choose right, to say no to temptation and yes to His will. We should pray that He will change our deeply rooted desires so that we will, like Jesus, love righteousness and hate wickedness.

We cannot effectively renew our minds through God’s Word, watch against temptation, or choose what is right without the enabling power of the Holy Spirit. We must be faithful in these disciplines, but we can only be effective in them as the Spirit both enables us and blesses our efforts.

Prayer for holiness should be of two kinds. First, we must have daily, persistent, persevering prayer asking God to enable us and to bless us in our discipline. We should pray daily about the areas of sin where we are especially vulnerable, whether they involve doing things we should not do or failing to do things we should do, or even harboring sinful attitudes like resentment, self-pity, or covetousness.

Then we should develop the habit of short, spontaneous prayers throughout the day when ever we must make choices. A brief “Lord,

help me," uttered silently in the very face of temptation, is an acknowledgement of our dependence on the Holy Spirit to supply the power to resist temptation and choose His will.

FINAL DEPENDENCE

As successful as we may be in the needed disciplines, however, we must not think that the disciplines themselves make us more like Christ. That is the work of the Holy Spirit. Only He can produce spiritual growth in us.

Consider a farmer and his crops. There are certain "disciplines," or tasks, he must do. He must plow, plant, fertilize, and cultivate. In some areas, he must irrigate. But he cannot make the seed germinate and grow. Only God can do that. The farmer, whether he recognizes it or not, depends on God both for the physical and mental ability to do his tasks and for the capital to buy his supplies and equipment. And he obviously depends on God for the growth of his crops.

In the same way, the Christian depends on God to enable him to perform his disciplines. But the performance of the disciplines does not itself produce spiritual growth. Only God can do that.

Growth in holiness, then, is not a matter of personal discipline plus God's work. It is a matter of dependent discipline, of recognizing that we are dependent on God to enable us to do what we are responsible to do. Then it is a recognition that even when we have performed our duties, we must still look to Him to produce the growth. "So neither he who plants nor he who waters is anything, but only God, who makes things grow" (1 Cor. 3:7).

Leviticus 20:7-8; 1 Peter 1:13-16 - It is written: ""Be holy, because I am holy."" - 1Peter 1:16

TODAY IN THE WORD -John Wesley and his brother Charles were at Oxford University in England when they became part of a group dedicated to prayer, Bible study, self-examination, and works of charity. The group was called the ""Holy Club,"" and it included the great preacher George Whitefield. But even though John Wesley practiced rigid spiritual discipline, he grew increasingly frustrated. After three years in America, he wrote in his journal: ""I went to America to convert the Indians; but oh, who shall convert me?"" It wasn't until after Wesley returned to England in 1737 that he realized he had been trying to practice holiness without a saving relationship with Christ. He was converted in 1738. John Wesley's attempts to please God by religious activity and self-discipline put him in a long line of sincere, well-meaning people who have tried to manufacture holiness. But the Bible is clear that holiness, the state of being dedicated to or set apart for God, is not a matter of human effort. God emphasized that to Israel by one of His names, ""The LORD, who makes you holy"" (Lev. 20:7).

The Israelites were holy not because they were better than everybody else, but because God chose them and set them apart for Himself. God gave Israel His holy law and commanded the people to obey Him, separating themselves from the sins of the pagan nations around them.

Leviticus 20 is a good example of this. The verses in today's reading occur in a chapter detailing gross sins that were so offensive to God they carried the death penalty. The Israelites were called to an entirely different way of life.

But while God's law demanded internal righteousness as well as external obedience, the law itself was incapable of providing that righteousness. It took Christ's death on the cross to pay the debt of sin and allow God to declare sinners holy when they put their faith in Christ for salvation.

As Christians, we have an advantage over the people living under the law. We have been born again, given new spiritual life from God--and we have the power of the Holy Spirit to live holy lives. From beginning to end, holiness is the work of the God ""who makes you holy.""

TODAY ALONG THE WAY - Holiness is a term that isn't used much anymore. Some people are afraid of it because it sounds too ... well, too holy! But Peter reminds us that holiness is what God wants and expects from us. Holiness is a reflection of God's character, and He wants His children to look like Him. Romans 12:1, 2 is one of the most practical formulas for holy living in the Bible. Why not turn to these familiar verses and make them your prayer today? Also, memorize them if you haven't done so before.

Leviticus 20:1-27 You are to be holy to me because I, the Lord, am holy, and I have set you apart from the nations to be my own. - Leviticus 20:26

TODAY IN THE WORD

"Leviticus reminds me of visiting a factory without a guide," said pastor Ray C. Stedman in a sermon. He described his own experience of going to a steel products factory. At first, he observed what looked like confusion, clamor, and chaos on the factory floor. When a friend gave him a guided tour, however, it all made sense. He understood the machinery's purposes and how the

workers were organized to produce the final product.

“This is what you may experience with the book of Leviticus,” Stedman continued. Dietary laws, miscellaneous regulations, long passages about disease and mildew--what does it all mean? He pointed his audience to our verse for today: God is holy, and His people must reflect that.

This perspective can keep us from getting bogged down. Portions of Leviticus might seem irrelevant to our contemporary walk with God, but it's still all about the principle of holiness. It's about being so committed to obedience that our light shines out for all to see!

The flip side, however, is the consequences of disobedience, as seen graphically in today's reading. Capital punishment or excommunication were the severest penalties, sentences given for sins including idolatry, witchcraft, and sexual immorality. The death penalty was usually carried out by stoning--the whole community participated as a symbolic demonstration that they were resolved to expunge sin. In addition, at least two crimes would be punished by God with childlessness (Leviticus 20:20,21). But the most fearful punishment of all was God's statement that He Himself would set His face against certain sinners (v. 5). Can any worse fate be imagined?

If the Israelites followed the evil example of the Canaanites, they would suffer the same judgment (Leviticus 20:22, 23). Tragically, the worship of the god Molech, for example, endured many years and was one reason God later sent the nation into exile (Acts 7:43).

Leviticus 20 Expulsion and Death: Severe Penalties for Sin

Nathaniel Hawthorne's novel *The Scarlet Letter* tells the story of Hester Prynne and her daughter, Pearl, whom she's borne as a result of an adulterous affair. Because of her sin, Hester suffers a painful expulsion from her seventeenth-century New England community. Hawthorne draws on biblical themes of sin and its penalty: from the very beginning, the penalty of sin has been alienation and exclusion. Adam and Eve were cast out of the garden and alienated from God and each other. Cain, when he murdered his brother, Abel, was excluded from community and condemned to spending his life as a restless wanderer. Sin wrecks the fellowship we were created by God to enjoy.

Many of the sins catalogued in Leviticus carry this same penalty of exclusion. When people are found guilty of certain sins, such as consulting a medium, they are to be cut off from the protection and provisions that the community affords. But there remains an even more severe penalty. Capital punishment, carried out by the members of the community, was legal. A person could be put to death for sins we might find rather innocuous like cursing his parents, or sins we know are serious but not lethal like committing adultery, as well as sins we find horrific such as practicing child sacrifice.

The severity of punishment reveals just how serious God was about the holiness of His people. He had rescued them and set them apart from the surrounding nations. And what was at stake was not only their well-being (for obedience is in fact a means to joy and blessing) but also the proper revering of God's name. Again, we look forward to Christ, knowing that He took the penalty for our sin, suffering alienation, even death, for the sake of making us holy.

Apply the Word - How serious a matter is sin to you? Are you tempted to treat it casually? In what ways are you committed to the practice of regular confession? Who is it that you tell when you're struggling and failing? And what are the evidences of repentance in your life? How have you put off habits of sin and put on new practices of righteousness?

Leviticus 20:8 'You shall keep My statutes and practice them; I am the LORD who sanctifies you.

- And ye (KJV): Lev 18:4,5 19:37 Mt 5:19 7:24 12:50 Joh 13:17 Jas 1:22 Rev 22:14
- sanctify (KJV): Lev 21:8 Ex 31:13 Eze 20:12 37:28 1Co 1:30 1Th 5:23 2Th 2:13

JEHOVAH OUR SANCTIFIER: JEHOVAH M'KADDESH

You shall keep (man's part)... **LORD sanctifies** (God's provision). God's commandments always include His enablements. In the **Septuagint (Lxx)** the Greek verb used to translate the Hebrew word **qadash** is **hagiazō** (**see word study**) which means to make holy, to set apart, to sanctify and is in the present tense here signifying that Jehovah is continually setting them apart. **But remember, God will never force our will. We must continually choose to submit our will to His good and acceptable and perfect will, continually**

surrendering to His commandments, yielding to Him, depending on His enablements -- which ultimately is a call to relinquish self reliance, the futile attempts of the flesh to achieve holiness, and to surrender to the sweet Holy Spirit Who Alone can set us apart. Are you continually being filled by His Spirit child of God? (Eph 5:18-note) If not, you have no power for a supernatural life, a life of holiness. You simply cannot keep God's statutes and practice them in your own (old) strength, but only as you learn to depend on and walk by His Spirit. Gal 5:16-note)

God says...

"You shall consecrate yourselves therefore and be holy, for I am the LORD your God. And you shall keep My statutes and practice them; **I am the LORD Who sanctifies** (Lxx = hagiazo = Present active participle = God's Spirit is the One Who is continually, actively, moment by moment setting us apart from Profanity and unto the Holy) you.

Comment: God's very name speaks of what He desires to do to His people and what He alone is capable of accomplishing in them. His Name here is JEHOVAH M'KADDESH: following the call to consecration and obedience in Lev 20:7-8, the last part of verse 8 links man's responsibility with His ability. In short, our responsibility is "Keep my decrees," while His provision is grace to carry it out "I am the LORD, Who makes you holy."

He is the One Who sets them apart. Surely this is a picture of the New Testament truth that it is His Spirit Who sanctifies us (cp 2Cor 3:18, 1Pe 1:2, 2Thes 2:13). The writer of Hebrews says...

For by one offering He has perfected for all time those who are (present passive = continually being) **sanctified** (This speaks of day to day setting apart).

Sanctifies (06942) (**qadash**) means to set apart for a specific use. Removed from common use. To be holy. To show one's self to be holy. To consecrate or dedicate. To set apart a person or thing from all common or secular purposes to some religious use. Everything consecrated to God was separated from all profane use.

Webster's Dictionary definition #2 for consecrate is convicting - " make or declare sacred; esp **devote irrevocably to worship of God** by a solemn ceremony."

Qadash could refer to anything reserved exclusively for God (Ex 13:2, 12, 13; Nu 18:15)

Qadash signifies an act or a state in which people or things are set aside for use in the worship of God, i.e., they are consecrated or made sacred for that purpose. They must be withheld from ordinary (secular) use and treated with special care as something which belongs to God (Ex 29:21). Otherwise, defilement makes the sanctified object unusable (cf. Dt 22:9; Eze 44:19; 46:20).

Qadash is used with various objects:

- people of Israel - Ex 19:10, 14; Joshua 7:13
- altar in the Temple - Ex 29:36; 1Ki 8:64
- priests - Ex 28:41; 29:1; 1Sa 7:1
- mountain - Ex 19:23
- Sabbath - Ge 2:3; Ex 20:8
- new building - Neh 3:1
- fast - Joel 1:14; 2:15

The root sense of this word group (see cognates below) describes an act of setting something apart from profane or ordinary use. For example in Ex 29:21 we see Jehovah set apart Aaron (and his sons) from the common laity of Israel, in effect consecrating them for His (holy) purposes. In another example, the special anointing oil was to be applied to the Tabernacle, the ark, the table of showbread, the altar of burnt offering, etc, so they were consecrated, made holy and whoever touched them was made holy (see Ex 30:26-29 - don't misinterpret this touching something holy as conferring "transferable divine energy," but that the person "entered into a state of holiness in the sense of becoming subject to cultic restrictions." Thomas McComiskey, TWOT)

The meaning in the various Hebrew constructions (stems):

Qal (simple - expresses causal action of the verb in the active voice) to be holy. Most often Qal describes the state of consecration (e.g., as effected by Levitical ritual).

Piel (intensive) = to pronounce or make holy, consecrate, to transfer something to the state of holiness (e.g., a specific day in Ge 2:3, a specific year, Lev 25:10 = Jubilee; a mountain - Ex 19:23, a part of the Temple court - 1Ki 8:64, of the Tabernacle and Aaron [both with anointing oil] - Lev 8:10-12), dedicate for use before God;

also with declarative meaning: to declare holy: (Qadash is found most often in the piel or intensive stem in the OT and refers to the act of consecration, e.g. the consecration of Mt Sinai by establishing boundaries around it which served to keep out anyone or anything that might profane the holiness of God's presence - Ex 19:23).

Hiphil (causative) = to consecrate; to designate as holy or consecrated

Hithpael (reflexive) = to show oneself holy or consecrate (e.g., Lev 11:44)

Niphal (passive) = to be consecrated, to be treated as holy (Ezek 48:11, Ex 29:43)

Here are the three related Hebrew words (cognates)...

qadash ([06942](#)) = Verb

qadosh ([06918](#)) = Adjective: consecrated, set apart, dedicated to God, opposite of common or profane

qodesh ([06944](#)) = Noun: that which has been consecrated, set aside only for sacred purposes

Qadash - Note that 29 of 152 uses (~20%) of qadash are found in Leviticus -

Ge 2:3; Ex 13:2; 19:10, 14, 22f; 20:8, 11; 28:3, 38, 41; 29:1, 21, 27, 33, 36f, 43f; 30:29f; 31:13; 40:9ff, 13; Lev 6:18, 27; 8:10ff, 15, 30; 10:3; 11:44; 16:19; 20:7f; 21:8, 15, 23; 22:2f, 9, 16, 32; 25:10; 27:14ff, 22, 26; Num 3:13; 6:11; 7:1; 8:17; 11:18; 16:37f; Nu 20:12f; 27:14; Deut 5:12; 15:19; 22:9; 32:51; Josh 3:5; 7:13; 20:7; Jdg 17:3; 1 Sam 7:1; 16:5; 2 Sam 8:11; 11:4; 1 Kgs 8:64; 9:3, 7; 2 Kgs 10:20; 12:18; 1 Chr 15:12, 14; 18:11; 23:13; 26:26ff; 2 Chr 2:4; 5:11; 7:7, 16, 20; 26:18; 29:5, 15, 17, 19, 34; 30:3, 8, 15, 17, 24; 31:6, 18; 35:6; 36:14; Ezra 3:5; Neh 3:1; 12:47; 13:22; Job 1:5; Isa 5:16; 8:13; 13:3; 29:23; 30:29; 65:5; 66:17; Jer 1:5; 6:4; 12:3; 17:22, 24, 27; 22:7; 51:27f; Ezek 7:24; 20:12, 20, 41; 28:22, 25; 36:23; 37:28; 38:16, 23; 39:27; 44:19, 24; 46:20; 48:11; Joel 1:14; 2:15f; 3:9; Mic 3:5; Zeph 1:7; Hag 2:12

Some representative uses of **qadash**...

(First Use in Scripture) Gen 2:3 Then God blessed the seventh day and sanctified (**set it apart - Heb = qadash; Lxx = hagiazo**) it, because in it He rested from all His work which God had created and made.

Jer 12:3 But Thou knowest me, O LORD; Thou seest me; And Thou dost examine my heart's attitude toward Thee. Drag them off like sheep for the slaughter And **set them apart** for a day of carnage!

Num 20:12 But the LORD said to Moses and Aaron, "Because you have not believed Me, **totreat** Me as **holy** in the sight of the sons of Israel, therefore you shall not bring this assembly into the land which I have given them."

Qadash is used three times in Exodus 19 where God declares that Israel "shall be to Me a kingdom of priests and a **holy** (Heb = qadosh = adjective; Lxx = **hagios - NT word translated "holy," or "saint"**) nation." (Ex 19:6)

Ex 19:10) The LORD also said to Moses, "Go to the people and consecrate (**set them apart - Heb = qadash; Lxx = hagiazo** = which is an imperative in the Greek) them today and tomorrow, and let them wash their garments;

Ex 19:14 So Moses went down from the mountain to the people and consecrated (**set them apart - Heb = qadash; Lxx = hagiazo**) the people, and they washed their garments.

Ex 19:22 "And also let the priests who come near to the LORD consecrate themselves, lest the LORD break out against them."

Ex 20:8 "Remember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy (**Heb = qadash; Lxx = hagiazo** = in the present tense calls for this to be a continual consecration of this day.) .

NAS translates qadash a number of ways - become consecrated(2), become defiled(1), become holy(1), consecrate(43), consecrated(35), consecrates(7), consecration(2), declare holy(1), dedicate(2), dedicated(8), dedicating(1), holier(1), holy(5), keep(1), keep it holy(2), keep the holy(3), made it holy(1), manifest my holiness(2), prepare(2), prove myself holy(2), proved himself holy(1), purified(1), regard as holy(1), sanctified(9), sanctifies(10), sanctify(12), set them apart(1), set apart(4), set apart the consecrated(2), show himself holy(1), transmit holiness(2), treat me as holy(3), treated as holy(1), vindicate the holiness(1), wholly dedicate(1).

Leviticus 20:9 'If there is anyone who curses his father or his mother, he shall surely be put to death; he has cursed his

- **curses:** The term {yekallel} signifies not only to curse, but to speak contemptuously, disrespectfully, or to make light of a person: so that all speeches which have a tendency to lessen our parents in the eyes of others, or to render their judgment, piety, etc., suspected or contemptible, is here included; though the act of cursing, or of treating the parent with injurious or opprobrious language, is what is particularly intended. He who conscientiously keeps the fifth commandment, can be in no danger of the judgment here denounced. Ex 21:17 De 27:16 Pr 20:20 30:11,17 Mt 15:4 Mk 7:10
- **bloodguiltiness:** Lev 20:11-13,16,27 Jos 2:19 Jud 9:24 2Sa 1:16 1Ki 2:32 Mt 27:25

HONORING ONE'S PARENTS NOT CURSING THEM

Cursed (07043) (**qalal**) has the basic meaning of to be light and has a range of meanings depending on the context. The first use (Ge 8:8) describes the flood waters as "abated" (dried up, lessened, gone down), the idea being that there was a "lessening" of what had existed.

Qalal means "to make light of" and the antonym is "to make heavy," or "to honor."

Vine writes that "**Qalal** frequently includes the idea of "cursing" or "making little or contemptible": "And he that curses [belittles] his father, or his mother, shall surely be put to death" (Ex 21:17). "To curse" had the meaning of an "oath" when related to one's gods: "And the Philistine cursed David by his gods" (1 Sam. 17:43). The negative aspect of "non-blessing" was expressed by the passive form: "... The sinner being a hundred years old shall be accursed [by death]" (Isa. 65:20). Similar usage is reflected in: "... Their portion is cursed in the earth ..." (Job 24:18)." The causative form of the verb sometimes expressed the idea of "lightening, lifting a weight" (1Sa 6:5; Ex 18:22).

Qalal - 79x in NAS -

Gen 8:8, 11, 21; 12:3; 16:4f; Ex 18:22; 21:17; 22:28; Lev 19:14; 20:9; 24:11, 14f, 23; Deut 23:4; Josh 24:9; Judg 9:27; 1 Sam 2:30; 3:13; 6:5; 17:43; 18:23; 2 Sam 1:23; 6:22; 16:5, 7, 9ff, 13; 19:21, 43; 1 Kgs 2:8; 12:4, 9f; 16:31; 2 Kgs 2:24; 3:18; 20:10; 2 Chr 10:4, 9f; Neh 13:2, 25; Job 3:1; 7:6; 9:25; 24:18; 40:4; Ps 37:22; 62:4; 109:28; Prov 14:6; 20:20; 30:10f; Eccl 7:21f; 10:10, 20; Isa 8:21; 9:1; 23:9; 30:16; 49:6; 65:20; Jer 4:13, 24; 6:14; 8:11; 15:10; Ezek 8:17; 21:21; 22:7; Jonah 1:5; Nah 1:14; Hab 1:8

NAS translates qalal - abated(2), accursed(1), brought a curse(1), contempt(1), contemptible(1), curse(15), cursed(16), curses(8), cursing(2), despise(1), despised(2), ease(1), easier(1), easy(2), insignificant(1), light a thing(1), lighten(5), lightly esteemed(2), make it lighter(2), moved to and fro(1), shakes(1), sharpen(1), slight thing(1), small a thing(1), superficially(2), swift(1), swifter(5), treat us with contempt(1), treated(1), treated and lightly(1), trivial(1), trivial thing(1).

At first reading of this text leaves one a bit aghast, that the offense justly warrants a death penalty! But with more study, it becomes clearer that this penalty is not an unfair, "overkill" (pun intended) command but is fully justified.

First let's examine the context, for context is always the "king" in regard to accurate interpretation. Notice that cursing one's parents is preceded by prohibitions against child sacrifice and occult worship (Lev 20:2-5, 6) both deemed worthy of the death penalty. And then notice that the prohibition on parenteral cursing is immediately followed by the prohibition against (and death penalty for) adultery (Lev 20:10). This juxtaposition between serious offenses calling for serious penalties makes it clear that God considers cursing of one's parents a serious offense.

Now let's see if any other Scriptures help us interpret this text (recalling that the best commentary on Scripture is Scripture). All of us as children have surely said some (very) hurtful things to our parents in a fit of anger, but for most of us what we said fell short of "cursing" our parents. To help understand what **cursing** entails, consider Shimei's continual cursing of David in 2Sa 16:5ff...

2Sam 16:5 When King David came to Bahurim, behold, there came out from there a man of the family of the house of Saul whose name was Shimei, the son of Gera; he came out **cursing** (qalal) continually as he came. 6And he threw stones at David and at all the servants of King David; and all the people and all the mighty men were at his right hand and at his left. 7And thus Shimei said when he cursed, "Get out, get out, you man of bloodshed, and worthless fellow! 8"The LORD has returned upon you all the bloodshed of the house of Saul, in whose place you have reigned; and the LORD has given the kingdom into the hand of your son Absalom. And behold, you are taken in your own evil, for you are a man of bloodshed!" 9Then Abishai the son of Zeruiah said to the king, "Why should this dead dog curse my lord the king? Let me go over now, and cut off his head."

Kenneth Boa feels that

All three of the offenses (child sacrifice, cursing, adultery) involve attempts to wield destructive power from spiritual forces that in fact are evil and demonic. The offense in Lev 20:9 is that of calling upon some deity to bring a curse on one's parents. It is not merely using words like "damn" in reference to one's parents (though that is also wrong).

Jesus quoted from this passage in His criticism of the Pharisees and the Scribes ...

He was also saying to them, "You nicely set aside the commandment of God in order to keep your tradition.¹⁰ "For Moses said, 'HONOR YOUR FATHER AND YOUR MOTHER'; and, 'HE WHO SPEAKS EVIL OF FATHER OR MOTHER, LET HIM BE PUT TO DEATH';¹¹ but you say, 'If a man says to his father or his mother, anything of mine you might have been helped by is Corban (that is to say, given to God),'¹² you no longer permit him to do anything for his father or his mother;¹³ thus invalidating the word of God by your tradition which you have handed down; and you do many things such as that." (Mk 7:9–13)

His bloodguiltiness is upon him - Literally this says "his blood (plural) is in him." The NAB version paraphrases it "he has forfeited his life." The TEV says he "is responsible for his own death."

Wenham writes...

Cursing father or mother is singled out for special censure, partly out of a determination to maintain the structure of the family, and partly because the parents represent God's authority to the child: to curse them is almost tantamount to blasphemy. Nevertheless, rarely if ever can the death penalty have been invoked for this offense. Like other punishments laid down in the law, it represents a maximum not a minimum.

Leviticus 20:10 'If there is a man who commits adultery with another man's wife, one who commits adultery with his friend's wife, the adulterer and the adulteress shall surely be put to death.'

LEVITICUS 20:10-21 PUNISHMENTS FOR VIOLATIONS IN LEVITICUS 18:1-30

See also Dt 22:13–30.

Adultery (Lev 20:10, cf De 22:22-24 2Sa 12:13 Eze 23:45-47 Joh 8:4,5), incest with the father's wife (Lev 20:11), incest with a daughter-in-law (Lev 20:12), and homosexuality (Lev 20:13) all require that both guilty parties be put to death.

Leviticus 20:11 'If there is a man who lies with his father's wife, he has uncovered his father's nakedness; both of them shall surely be put to death, their bloodguiltiness is upon them.'

- Lev 18:8 De 27:20,23 Am 2:7 1Co 5:1
- their (KJV): Lev 20:9

Leviticus 20:12 'If there is a man who lies with his daughter-in-law, both of them shall surely be put to death; they have committed incest, their bloodguiltiness is upon them.'

- lie (KJV): Lev 18:15 Ge 38:16,18 De 27:23
- confusion (KJV): Lev 18:23

Leviticus 20:13 'If there is a man who lies with a male as those who lie with a woman, both of them have committed a detestable act; they shall surely be put to death. Their bloodguiltiness is upon them.'

- Lev 18:22 Ge 19:5 De 23:17 Jud 19:22 Ro 1:26,27 1Co 6:9 1Ti 1:10 Jude 1:7

Detestable (08441) (**toebah**) refers to an abominable custom or thing. Abomination. Loathsome. Detestable thing. Something or someone who is loathsome and abhorrent.

Toebah - 112x in the NAS - Gen 43:32; 46:34; Ex 8:26; Lev 18:22, 26f, 29f; 20:13; Deut 7:25f; 12:31; 13:14; 14:3; 17:1, 4; 18:9, 12; 20:18; 22:5; 23:18; 24:4; 25:16; 27:15; 32:16; 1 Kgs 14:24; 2 Kgs 16:3; 21:2, 11; 23:13; 2 Chr 28:3; 33:2; 34:33; 36:8, 14; Ezra 9:1, 11, 14; Ps 88:8; Pr 3:32; 6:16; 8:7; 11:1, 20; 12:22; 13:19; 15:8f, 26; 16:5, 12; 17:15; 20:10, 23; 21:27; 24:9; 26:25; 28:9; 29:27; Isa 1:13; 41:24; 44:19; Jer 2:7; 6:15; 7:10; 8:12; 16:18; 32:35; 44:4, 22; Ezek 5:9, 11; 6:9, 11; 7:3f, 8f, 20; 8:6, 9, 13, 15, 17; 9:4; 11:18, 21; 12:16; 14:6; 16:2, 22, 36, 43, 47, 50f, 58; 18:12f, 24; 20:4; 22:2, 11; 23:36; 33:26, 29; 36:31; 43:8; 44:6f, 13; Mal 2:11.

Ezekiel 8:5 Then He said to me, "Son of man (addressing Ezekiel), raise your eyes, now, toward the north." So I raised my eyes toward the north, and behold, to the north of the altar gate was this **idol of jealousy** at the entrance. 6 And He said to me, "Son of man, do you see what they are doing, the great **abominations** (**toebah**) which the house of Israel are committing here, that I should be far from My sanctuary? But yet you will see still greater abominations."

Toebah is translated - abominable(5), abominable act(1), abomination(39), abominations(60), detestable(2), detestable act(1), detestable thing(3), detestable things(3), loathsome(2), object of loathing(1).

Baker notes that **toebah** "is primarily understood in the context of the Law. It identifies unclean food (Dt. 14:3); the activity of the idolater (Isa. 41:24); the practice of child sacrifice (Dt. 12:31); intermarriage by the Israelites (Mal. 2:11); the religious activities of the wicked (Pr 21:27); and homosexual behavior (Lev. 18:22). In a broader sense, the word is used to identify anything offensive (Pr 8:7)." (The Complete Word Study Dictionary: OT)

Sometimes **toebah** is used as a synonym for **idol**, a repulsive thing, a worship object, with a focus that it is an item to be rejected (Dt 32:16; 2Ch 34:33; Isa 44:19; Jer 16:18; Eze 5:9; 7:20; 11:18, 21; 16:36). **Toebah** is even used for a specific pagan deity, as in 2Ki 23:13 where Milcom is called "the abomination of the Ammonites." And even prayer is an **abomination** when offered by one who refuses to obey God's Word (Pr 28:9).

Ronald Youngblood - As with the verb, so also with the noun (**toebah**) the **abomination** may be of a physical, ritual or ethical nature and may be abhorred by God or man. Sharing a meal with a Hebrew was ritually offensive to an Egyptian (Gen 43:32), as was offering certain kinds of sacrifices (Ex 8:22). homosexuality and other perversions are repugnant to God and fall under his judgment (Lev 18:22–30; 20:13). Idolatry (Deut 7:25), human sacrifice (Deut 12:31), eating ritually unclean animals (Deut 14:3–8), sacrificing defective animals (Deut 17:1), conducting one's business dishonestly (Deut 25:13–16), practicing ritual prostitution (1 Kgs 14:23f.), and similar acts of disobedience (for seven more abominations, see the list in Pr 6:16–19) were sure to bring God's wrath on those who perpetrated them. Twelve times the book of Proverbs uses the phrase, "is an abomination to the Lord." In Ps 88, a prayer for help written by a man close to death, the physically repulsive appearance of a tō·ēbā is stressed; the man's former friends avoid him because they consider him to be a thing of horror (Ps 88:8 [H 9]). (Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament)

Gilbrant on **toebah** - The word is primarily used of things, persons or practices that are either ritually or morally offensive to the Lord. From an Egyptian point of view, however, several things are abominable: eating with Hebrews, the profession of shepherding (Gen. 43:32; 46:34) and sacrifices made to the Lord (Exo. 8:26).

The laws of the Pentateuch taught Israel what was abominable to the Lord. In general, these consisted of Canaanite customs including a wide range of sexual offenses, specifically homosexuality (Lev. 18:22; 20:13). The expression "abomination to the Lord" indicates anything that could spoil the religious purity of the people. In the Book of Deuteronomy, this included using the gold and silver from images (Lev 7:25f), eating the meat of unclean animals (Lev 14:3), remarrying a divorced woman (24:4), sacrificing unacceptable animals (Lev 17:1), cross-gender dressing (Lev 22:5), using income from cultic prostitution as an offering to the Lord (Lev 23:18), using dishonest measures in business (Lev 25:15f), making carved images or cast idols (Lev 27:15) and sacrificing children by fire in the worship of other gods (Lev 12:31).

Since these laws clarified the boundary between righteousness and sin, the prophets understandably held Israel to account for covenant violations in these specific areas. For example, Isaiah and Jeremiah indicted people for idolatry (Isa. 41:24; 44:19; Jer. 2:7; 44:4, 22), hypocritical offerings of incense (Isa. 1:13), participation in child sacrifice (Jer. 32:35) and intermarriage with foreigners (Mal. 2:11). Jeremiah railed against priests who committed theft, murder, adultery, perjury and the worship of Baal (Jer. 7:9f; 8:12). Ezekiel was especially concerned with impurity in worship. He thus pointed out the abominable sins of adultery and incest (Ezek. 22:11; 33:26), as well as idolatry (7:20; 16:36) and other ritual acts (43:8). After the exile, the abominable sin of intermarriage was found among the community (Ezra 9:1, 11, 14).

The Book of Proverbs also names things which are abomination to the Lord. These include the corrupt person (Prov. 3:32), false weights (11:1), those with a false heart and lying lips (11:20; 12:22) and the sacrifice of the wicked (15:8). In terms of social

relationships, Proverbs also lists a number of abominable things, such as the wrongdoing that kings detest (16:12), the turning from evil that fools detest (13:19), the dishonesty that the righteous detest (29:27), the detestable prayers of those who are deaf to the Law (28:9) and mockers whom society detests (24:9).

The penalties for these abominations included being cut off from the people of Israel (Lev. 18:29), death (20:13; Deut. 17:4), exile (Lev. 18:28), destruction (Deut. 13:14), the withdrawal of the Lord's favor (Ezek. 5:11), as well as death by sword, famine and plague (6:11).

The notion of the "abomination of desolation" uses a different word, *shiqqûts* (Dan. 11:31; 12:11 cf. Matt. 24:15; Mark 13:14). (The Complete Biblical Library Hebrew-English Dictionary)

ABOMINATION From the broadest perspective an abomination is something loathsome and repulsive according to one's cultural and religious values. For the Egyptians the Israelites were an abomination because they were shepherds, an occupation they despised (Gen 46:33–34). For the Israelites an abomination was ritually unclean food (Deut 14:3). For the fool it is turning away from evil (Prov 13:19); and for the wicked and righteous it is each other (Prov 29:27).

From the biblical perspective an abomination callously disregards and actively disdains the values God has established. It affronts God's holiness, sovereignty as Creator and purposes expressed in the Law. There is an irony in the image of abomination. It is not chosen in brazen rebellion against God, but is perceived within the values of the offender as the good and right thing to do. Thus the sacrifice of the wicked (Prov 15:8), the prayer of the lawbreaker (Prov 28:9) and blemished sacrifice (Deut 17:1) are abominations, although their practitioners do not perceive themselves as committing an abomination. Idolatry and its related immorality (Deut 27:15; Jer 13:27; Rev 17:4–5) and witchcraft and sorcery (Deut 18:10–12) characterize dismissal of God's sovereignty. Failures of God's people to separate from pagan practices that are in conflict with the Law (Ezra 9:1) are abominable, as are such practices as lying, arrogance, evil plans, murder (Prov 6:16–19; Rev 21:27) and sexual aberrations (Lev 18:6–23). Images of peril accompany abomination, for those committing abominations are subject to the wrath and judgment of God (Ezek 7:1–4).

The ultimate image of abomination is the Abomination of Desolation, an image of horror from 167 B.C. p 3 when Antiochus IV Epiphanes placed an altar to Zeus on the altar of God in the Jerusalem temple (Dan 9:27; 11:31; 12:11; 1 Macc 1:54, 59; 2 Macc 6:1–2). For Judaism and Christianity this abomination was paradigmatic and prophetic of an evil, pagan individual or force arrayed against God and his people and usurping God's rightful worship by desecrating the temple. In the Gospels, Rome's destruction of Jerusalem and the temple (Mt 24:15; Mk 13:14; Lk 21:20) was just such an abomination. This abomination underlies the eschatological images of the man of lawlessness (2 Thess 2:3–4), the antichrist (1 Jn 2:18; 4:3), the great whore (Rev 17:4) and the beast (Rev 13). (Dictionary of Biblical Imagery)

Related Resources:

- Holman Bible Dictionary [Abomination, Abomination of Desolation](#)
- International Standard Bible Encyclopedia [Abomination](#)
- Kitto Biblical Cyclopedia [Abomination](#)
- McClintock and Strong's Bible Encyclopedia [Abomination](#)
- The Jewish Encyclopedia [Abomination](#)
- American Tract Society [Abomination](#)
- Easton's Bible Dictionary [Abomination](#)
- Fausset Bible Dictionary [Abomination](#)
- Hastings' Dictionary of the Bible [Abomination](#)
- Hastings' Dictionary of the NT [Abomination](#)
- Hawker's Poor Man's Dictionary [Abomination](#)
- Vines' Expository Dictionary [Abomination](#)
- Webster Dictionary [Abomination](#)
- Watson's Theological Dictionary [Abomination](#)

EXCURSUS ON BDELUGMA = ABOMINATION

In Leviticus 20 the Lxx translates *toebah* with *bdelugma* (from *bdelusso* = emit foul odor, turn away from something or someone on account of the "stench". A loathing or disgust, abhor in turn derived from *bdeo* = to stink; cf *bdekluktos*) which describes something foul, that which is extremely hated, disgusted, detested or abhorred. The first NT use of *bdelugma* is in Mt 24:15+ which is fitting as it describes the "**Abomination** (*bdelugma*) of desolation" (the Antichrist) (cp Mk 13:14+). The other 4 uses of *bdelugma* are - Lk 16:15+, Rev 17:4, 5[±], Rev 21:27[±].

Bdelugma is used **100x in the Septuagint!** - Ge 43:32; 46:34; Ex 8:26; Lev 5:2; 7:21; 11:10, 12, 13, 20, 23, 41, 42; 18:22, 26, 27, 29; 20:13; Deut 7:25f; 12:31; 13:14; 14:3; 17:1, 4; 18:9, 12; 20:18; 22:5; 23:18; 24:4; 25:16; 27:15; 29:17; 32:16; 1 Kgs 11:5, 33; 14:24; 21:26; 2 Kgs 16:3; 17:32; 21:2, 11; 23:13; 2 Chr 15:8; 28:3; 33:2; 34:33; 36:14; Ps 88:8; Pr 11:1, 20; 12:22; 15:8f, 26; 16:12; 20:23; 21:27; 27:20; 29:27; Isa 1:13; 2:8, 20; 17:8; 41:24; 44:19; 66:3, 17; Jer 2:7; 4:1; 7:10, 30; 11:15; 13:27; 16:18; 32:35; 44:22; Ezek 5:9, 11; 6:9, 11; 7:3f, 8f, 20; 8:10; 11:18, 21; 20:7f, 30; 33:29; 36:31; Dan 9:25; 11:31; 12:11; Zech 9:7; Mal 2:11.

There are 14 uses of bdelugma in Leviticus - Lev 5:2; Lev 7:21; 11:10, 12, 13, 20, 23, 41, 42; 18:22, 26, 27, 29; 20:13 - Translated in NAS - Detestable (Lev 7:21, 11:10, 20, 23, 41-42, 20:13), Abhorrent (Lev 11:11-13), Abomination (Lev 18:22, 26, 27, 29)

Vine sees three major uses for **toebah**..

(1) Something or someone as essentially unique in the sense of being “dangerous,” “sinister,” and “repulsive” to another individual. (Ge 43:32) for to the Egyptians, eating bread with foreigners was repulsive because of their cultural or social differences (cf. Ge 46:34; Ps. 88:8). Another clear illustration of this essential clash of disposition appears in Prov. 29:27: “An unjust man is an abomination to the just: and he that is upright in the way is abomination to the wicked.” **When used with reference to God, this nuance of the word describes people, things, acts, relationships, and characteristics that are “detestable” to Him because they are contrary to His nature.** Things related to death and idolatry are loathsome to God (Deut. 14:3). People with habits loathsome to God are themselves detestable to Him (Dt. 22:5).

(2) Describes pagan practices and objects (Dt. 7:25-26). In other contexts, toebah describes the repeated failures to observe divine regulations (Ezek. 5:7, 9). Toebah may represent the pagan cultic practices themselves, as in Dt. 12:31, or the people who perpetrate such practices (Dt. 18:12). If Israelites are guilty of such idolatry, however, their fate will be worse than exile: death by stoning (Dt. 17:2-5).

(3) In the sphere of jurisprudence and of family or tribal relationships. Certain acts or characteristics are destructive of societal and familial harmony; both such things and the people who do them are described by toebah (Pr. 6:16-19). God says, “The scorner is an abomination to men” (Pr. 24:9) because he spreads his bitterness among God’s people, disrupting unity and harmony.

Kenneth Boa and R. Bowman...

In Leviticus 20:13 homosexual acts are said to be punishable by death. The argument that homosexuality is immoral and forbidden by God is not based on the premise that Leviticus imposes the death penalty for such acts. Rather, Leviticus shows that homosexuality is immoral because it is ranged with a variety of other sexual sins that are indisputably moral offenses (Lev. 18:6–23; 20:10–21). The death penalty shows how severely this particular act was judged under the Mosaic Law, and does not necessarily translate into a prescription for how the act should be viewed in the criminal codes of modern, non-Israelite nations.

On the other hand, the Mosaic Law did not impose death penalties for trivial offenses. Mel White’s argument is typical. Leviticus, he says, imposes the death penalty “for a variety of other sins as well” as homosexuality. “Imagine killing a child for cursing her parents or putting someone to death for working on Sunday or executing a neighbor for using God’s name in vain.” But White has misconstrued all three of the Levitical laws to which he is referring here. Let’s take them one at a time.

Leviticus 20:9 states that “everyone who curses his father or his mother shall surely be put to death.” Since this statute follows immediately upon statutes condemning child sacrifice (Lev 20:1–5) and occultism (Lev 20:6), it is clear that the offense is a serious one. All three of the offenses involve attempts to wield destructive power from spiritual forces that in fact are evil and demonic. The offense in Lev 20:9 is that of calling upon some deity to bring a curse on one’s parents. It is not merely using words like “damn” in reference to one’s parents (though that is also wrong).

Leviticus 23:30 is said by White to call for the death penalty for “one who works on the Sabbath.” On this supposition he suggests that a modern-day literal application would be to execute anyone working on Sunday. But his reading of the text is either careless or a deliberate misrepresentation, since it has nothing to do with the weekly Sabbath. The death penalty in this passage is imposed on any Israelite who works on the Day of Atonement (Yom Kippur), the most solemn holy day of the Israelite calendar (vv. 26–29). Since there is nothing in Christianity or the general modern culture outside Judaism corresponding to the Day of Atonement, there is no reason to expect that this capital offense in Old Testament religion would apply today.

The third death penalty which White misconstrues is the one associated with blaspheming God's name (Lev. 24:16). White trivializes the offense by describing it as "using God's name in vain." In fact the offense was that someone spoke a curse against God (vv. 10–15). Again, cursing in biblical thought is not merely careless language using God's name, but invoking a deity or spiritual power to bring evil upon someone. To curse the Lord God, then, is to declare spiritual warfare against the true God, the God of Israel. Since Israel's national existence was the direct result of God's miraculous intervention on their behalf, and their nation was constituted legally as a people sworn by a covenant oath to worship and honor the Lord as their God, it is perfectly understandable that the Law would impose the maximum penalty on someone who openly cursed God. Such an act is akin to treason, and in fact more serious than treason, since the government that is betrayed is the kingdom of God.

Again, the few death penalties in the Mosaic Law for offenses relating to the Israelite religious system rather than directly moral offenses do not apply directly to modern non-Israelite nations. But it does not follow that the acts that were punishable by death are not still sins. Christians do not have a Day of Atonement, but the other two offenses are still possible today. Anyone who called upon a false god or occult power to bring harm upon their parents, or who cursed God himself, would surely have to be regarded as having sinned grievously. Even if we decided that none of the capital offenses in Leviticus should be punished by death today, that wouldn't change the fact that they were and are still wrong—they are still sins. White himself slips and admits this when he says that "the death penalty was also demanded for a variety of other sins as well." And indeed all of the capital offenses White cites are all sins: cursing one's parents, adultery, incest, bestiality, occultism, prostitution, cursing God, and sexually violating a woman (even during her period, when she cannot become pregnant) are all surely sins (Lev. 20:9–18, 27; 21:9; 23:30; 24:16). Roughly the same list is produced by Spong, who also fails to notice that even in his radically liberal ethic most of these acts are viewed as immoral. It is therefore purely arbitrary to exclude homosexual acts, which are included in the same section of Leviticus as acts identified as "abominations" to God and as punishable in Israel by death (18:22; 20:13), from the category of sins.

Further confusing the matter, White argues that the laws in this section of Leviticus have no moral force because "even conservative Christian scholars seem to agree that the warnings were not about ethical or moral issues so much as they were a 'Holiness Code' describing acts that caused a Jewish man to be unclean and therefore unable to enter the courtyard of the temple for worship." The confusion is obvious: how can Leviticus impose the death penalty for offenses that merely cause Jewish men to become ritually unclean? If a man is put to death, surely the question of whether he can "enter the courtyard of the temple for worship" is moot!

What White is confusing here are those elements of the "Holiness Code" (a term scholars do often use for this portion of Leviticus) that have to do with ritual purity and those that have to do with moral purity. It should be obvious that such commands as "Do not have sexual relations with an animal" (18:23) and "Do not defraud your neighbor or rob him" (19:13) are moral in their intent and force. The majority of the commands and statutes in Leviticus 18–20 clearly fall into this category. Most of the exceptions fall in one passage (19:19–37), where moral and ritual laws are mixed in order to make the point that Israel was expected to abide by all of the laws regardless of what kind they were. Both of the texts forbidding homosexuality are part of extended passages dealing unambiguously with issues of sexual morality (18:6–23; 20:10–21).

A couple of other objections to reading the Levitical texts as condemning all same-sex unions should be considered. It is sometimes argued that the texts do not condemn all such relations since nothing is said in Leviticus (or anywhere else in the Old Testament) about same-sex unions between two women. The premise is correct, but the argument ignores the form and perspective of Leviticus 18. All of the prohibitions are directed to adult men because the family heads in Israelite society were indisputably the men and therefore the primary responsibility for making certain these laws were obeyed was assigned to the men. Thus Leviticus commands the Israelite man not to have sexual relations with his mother (v. 7), stepmother (v. 8), sister or half-sister (v. 9), granddaughter (v. 10), stepsister (v. 11), aunt (vv. 12–13), uncle's wife (v. 14), daughter-in-law (v. 15), or sister-in-law (v. 16); he is also forbidden to marry or have sexual relations with a woman and her daughter or her granddaughter (v. 17), or to marry or have sexual relations with a woman and her sister (v. 18). Finally, he is forbidden to have sexual relations with a woman during her period (v. 19), to commit adultery with his neighbor's wife (v. 20), to allow any of his children to be sacrificed to Molech (v. 21), to have sexual relations with a man (v. 22), or to have sexual relations with an animal (v. 23). Only the last prohibition, regarding bestiality, explicitly adds a statement specifying that women are also prohibited from that act (v. 23). It is clear that the Israelites were to see these prohibitions as paradigms, not as an exhaustive list; what was

forbidden to the men was also by implication forbidden to the women.

We conclude that there is no way around the clear prohibitions of Leviticus against homosexual acts. The traditional Jewish and Christian understanding, that these verses forbid certain kinds of sexual acts irrespective of how people feel who engage in them, seems to be the only legitimate interpretation. (**An unchanging faith in a changing world: understanding and responding to critical issues that Christians face today**)

In his article in **Themelios** (Vol 21) **J. Glen Taylor** has these comments on Leviticus 18:22 and Lev 20:13

As Wenham notes, because Leviticus 18:22 uses the very general term *zākār*, 'male', the passage clearly prohibits every kind of male—male intercourse (were the word *na'ar*, 'youth', used instead, presumably only pederasty would be condemned). These homosexual relations are further described by the very strong word *tô'ebâ*, 'abomination'. In Leviticus 20:13 the penalty for offenders is death, putting the offence on a par with adultery (Lev 20:10) or the worst cases of incest (20:11, 12). Moreover, three factors make it clear that the sexual relationship here condemned involved mutual consent between two males: (1) both parties are punished; (2) the verb used is simply 'lie' (as opposed to, say, 'seize and lie' which would imply rape); and (3) the further comment is made, 'their blood be upon their own heads', which suggests an awareness of the action and its consequences.¹⁷ Thus, unlike Egypt where only pederasty was condemned or Mesopotamia where apparently only forcible homosexual relations were forbidden, OT law appears to forbid all forms of homosexual relations. Wenham's explanation is probably correct that 'it therefore seems most likely that Israel's repudiation of homosexual intercourse arises out of its doctrine of creation'.¹⁹

Some scholars cast these passages from Leviticus in a very different light, however. For example, it is sometimes maintained that the context for the homosexuality referred to in Leviticus is cultic prostitution within a pagan Canaanite shrine and that the biblical writer is thus concerned more with idolatry than with homosexuality. In support of this view it is sometimes claimed that the term *tô'ebâ*, 'abomination', is a highly specific word that points toward a religious concern for cultic purity in relation to the other nations and their gods. What is in view, so the argument goes, is cultic prostitution in which the participants attempt to procure fertility and fecundity by sympathetic magic through ritual sex acts, as is thought to have taken place in Canaanite culture. In short, the problem is not homosexual relations but their pagan, often idolatrous context(s).²² Which of these perspectives is correct?

The weight of evidence at present seems clearly to favour the former construal. Recent OT scholarship questions seriously the extent to which the traditional model for understanding cultic prostitution was in evidence at all either in Canaan or in Israel. Moreover, it is clear from the use of the term 'abomination' elsewhere in the Bible and in other literature that an abomination could refer generally to various things abhorrent to God and that it could even refer to practices of the Gentiles, in which case the word cannot be limited to a specific concern within Hebrew religion for purity in relation to other nations.²⁴ Thus, given the uncertainties concerning this narrower understanding of the context and the clear generality of the condemnation of men lying with men, the view of Wenham that all forms of homosexual relations are condemned seems preferable.

A problem still possibly remains with these passages, namely their applicability to a setting in the NT and beyond to our own day. For example, on what grounds should the law concerning homosexuality be upheld and the law concerning intercourse with a woman during menstruation, mentioned in the same context, be dismissed? Though alien to the OT itself and difficult to sustain, the theological distinction between moral laws which are binding and ceremonial, ritual, and civil laws which are not, has long been upheld in Christian tradition (note for example Article 7 of the Thirty-Nine Articles of Religion). The problem in the present case is nonetheless mitigated significantly by the fact that the OT attitude to homosexuality is picked up and carried into the NT, which clearly has binding authority for Christians.²⁷ Certainly, early Christian writers considered the levitical laws concerning homosexual intercourse to be relevant to the issue of sexual behaviour in their own day, a point denied by Boswell but convincingly reaffirmed by Wright. ([The Bible and Homosexuality by J. Glen Taylor](#))

Leviticus 20:14 'If there is a man who marries a woman and her mother, it is immorality; both he and they shall be burned with fire, so that there will be no immorality in your midst.

- a wife (KJV): Lev 18:17 De 27:23 Am 2:7
- burnt (KJV): Lev 21:9 Jos 7:15,25

Immorality (lewdness) (both uses in this verse are zimmah) ([02154](#)) (**zimmah - see word study**) Zimmah signifies 1) a plan, device, wickedness, evil plan, mischievous purpose 1a) plan, purpose 1b) evil device, wickedness 1c) not chaste, incest, licentiousness, adultery, idolatry, harlotry.

All three parties are guilty and are to be burned

Leviticus 20:15 'If there is a man who lies with an animal, he shall surely be put to death; you shall also kill the animal.

- Lev 18:23 Ex 22:19 De 27:21
- [What does the Bible say about bestiality?](#)

IF A MAN WHO LIES (sexual lying with, copulation) **WITH AN ANIMAL**: = Bestiality (cp Lev 18:23). There it is forbidden; here it has the death penalty attached. Also in Ex22:19 it is listed among capital offenses; and in Dt27:21 it is included among the curses at Mount Ebal. The stories of the so-called "gods" and "goddesses" of Ugarit frequently exhibit such practices. Israel's pagan neighbors probably followed their gods in these revolting practices.

Leviticus 20:16 'If there is a woman who approaches any animal to mate with it, you shall kill the woman and the animal; they shall surely be put to death. Their bloodguiltiness is upon them.

- and the beast (KJV): Ex 19:13 21:28,32 Heb 12:20

TSK - We are assured by Herodotus (in Euterp.) that the abominations here referred to existed among the Egyptians, and even formed part of their superstitious religious system, and we have reason to believe that they were not uncommon among the Canaanites. (See ch. 18:24, 25). Need we wonder then, that God should have made laws of this nature, and appointed the punishment of death for these crimes? This one observation will account for many of those strange prohibitions which we find in the Mosaic law.

Leviticus 20:17 'If there is a man who takes his sister, his father's daughter or his mother's daughter, so that he sees her nakedness and she sees his nakedness, it is a disgrace; and they shall be cut off in the sight of the sons of their people. He has uncovered his sister's nakedness; he bears his guilt.

- Lev 18:9 Ge 20:12 De 27:22 2Sa 13:12 Eze 22:11
- [Is it wrong to have a relationship with a close relative?](#)

A man who takes his sister - Take indicates that he engages in sexual intercourse (However NIV interprets it as "Marry" - Lev 20:17NIV - see similar comment on Lev 20:21).

Leviticus 20:18 'If there is a man who lies with a menstruous woman and uncovers her nakedness, he has laid bare her flow, and she has exposed the flow of her blood; thus both of them shall be cut off from among their people.

- having (KJV): Lev 15:24 18:19 Eze 18:6 22:10

Leviticus 20:19 'You shall also not uncover the nakedness of your mother's sister or of your father's sister, for such a one has made naked his blood relative; they will bear their guilt.

- mother's (KJV): Lev 18:12,13-30 Ex 6:20

- uncovereth (KJV): Lev 18:6

Lev 20:19-21 do not specify death and are thus a lesser punishment.

Leviticus 20:20 'If there is a man who lies with his uncle's wife he has uncovered his uncle's nakedness; they will bear their sin. They will die childless.'

- uncle's wife (KJV): Lev 18:14
- childless (KJV): Job 18:19 Ps 109:13 Jer 22:30 Lu 1:7,25 23:29

While death is not decreed, for one to die childless means "death" of the family name and line. In addition in ancient Israel a childless couple carried a social stigma because it was considered a judgment from the Lord (Ge 30:1-2, Dt 7:14).

Nelson Study Bible - If this situation were an extramarital affair, as implied by the verb lies with, the childlessness would affect two families. The man would have no heirs, and the woman would lose her status as a faithful wife.

Leviticus 20:21 'If there is a man who takes his brother's wife, it is abhorrent; he has uncovered his brother's nakedness. They will be childless.'

- his brother's (KJV): Lev 18:16 Mt 14:3,4

Takes his brother's wife - The NET Note says " The verb "to take" in this context means "to engage in sexual intercourse." Versions such as NIV interpret it "if a man marries his brother's wife."

Interestingly, v21 was appealed to by Henry VIII of England in his divorce of Catherine, his first wife. She had been married to Henry's older brother who had died while still quite young. Catherine declared that the first marriage had not been consummated, but Henry's marriage produced no heir; so he went ahead with the famous divorce that had such far-reaching consequences for the church in England and for the royal succession. See the discussion of levirate marriage on 18:16.

The same instruction appears in Leviticus 18...

Lev 18:16 'You shall not uncover the nakedness of your brother's wife; it is your brother's nakedness.

NLT - Do not have intercourse with your brother's wife; this would violate your brother.

NIV - "'Do not have sexual relations with your brother's wife; that would dishonor your brother.

Matthew records a related NT incident (which eventually resulted in John the Baptist's beheading!)...

Mt 14:3 For when Herod had John arrested, he bound him, and put him in prison on account of Herodias, the wife of his brother Philip. 4 For John had been saying to him, **"It is not lawful for you to have her"**

Levirate marriage is an exception to this punishment. In other words if a man died childless before his father's death and the division of the family property, his brother was to marry the widow. The firstborn of this couple would then be considered as the dead brother's heir.

NLT Study Bible Note - If the woman involved was a widow without a male heir, the law of levirate marriage could be invoked (Deut 25:5–6; see note on 18:16). Since those situations don't seem to apply, it would appear that this law refers to marrying an aunt or a sister-in-law after she has been divorced from her husband. John the Baptist apparently applied this law to condemn Herod Antipas's marriage to Herodias (see Mark 6:17–29)... **Adultery** is dealt with elsewhere and would bring death to both parties (Deut 22:22).

They will be childless - See comments on Lev 20:20.

Leviticus 20:22 'You are therefore to keep all My statutes and all My ordinances and do them, so that the land to which I am bringing you to live will not spew you out.'

- **statutes:** Lev 18:4,5,26 19:37 Ps 19:8-11 105:45 119:80,145,171 Eze 36:27
- **Ordinances:** Ex 21:1 De 4:45 5:1 Ps 119:20,106,160,164,175 Isa 26:8,9
- **spew:** Lev 18:25-28 26:33 De 28:25,26)

Land... spew out - In short a defiled people produces a defiled land.

ESV Study Bible has an interesting note on Lev 20:22–26 - This section of exhortations toward holiness concludes Lev 18–20 (cf. Lev 20:22–24 with Lev 18:3–5, 24–28). Moreover, in light of its reference to clean and unclean creatures in 20:25 (cf. Lev 11:1ff), this section may conclude not only Lev 18–20 but Lev 11–20 as well. (Crossway Bibles)

Leviticus 20:23 'Moreover, you shall not follow the customs of the nation which I will drive out before you, for they did all these things, and therefore I have abhorred them.

- **Customs:** Lev 18:3,24,30 De 12:30,31 Jer 10:1,2
- **therefore:** Lev 18:27 De 9:5 Ps 78:59 Zec 11:8

The heinous sins described in this chapter were practiced by the Canaanites. God abhorred them - became disgusted, distressed, vexed, grieved, weary. Note it is translated in lxx = bdelusso [from bdeo = to stink]

Abhorred (06973)(**quts**) means to be or make disgusted, to loathe, to be sick of. It denotes deep emotional reaction of issuing in a desired repulsion (or destruction) of the object abhorred. Lxx uses **bdelusso** (see word study) is derived from **bdéo** (to stink or reek) and which means to emit a foul odor, to render foul and figuratively to strongly detest something on the basis that it is abominable (to abho). To turn oneself away from a stench and so to feel disgust. **Quts** refers to God's revulsion toward pagan practices (Lev. 20:23); by Israel toward manna (ungratefully and wrongly) after eating it for years (Num. 21:5; cf. Ps. 78:22-25); by Rebekah toward her Hittite daughters-in-law (Gen. 27:46); and by Solomon's son toward the Lord's rebuke (Prov. 3:11). It also signified the loathing felt by enemies toward Israel's prosperity (Ex. 1:12; Num. 22:3). In Isaiah 7:6, the causative sense means to vex. By taking over, the enemies planned to cause Judah to abhor them.

Gilbrant - The verb **qûts** means "to loathe" or "to dread." Strong's concordance lists two other verbs with this same spelling, but modern lexicons list these two words under the root **qîts**. **Qûts** is a by-form of the verb **qôt**, which also means "to loathe." The Jewish Aramaic verb **qûts** means "to be or feel disgust(ed)." Generally, **qûts** is used to describe people who cause feelings of loathing and abhorrence within others. Rebekah loathed her own life because of the Hittite women Esau had married (Gen. 27:46). The Lord abhorred the Canaanite nations because of their evil way of life (Lev. 20:23). This human causation is also true when the word means "to dread." The Egyptians were in dread of the growing number of Israelites in their land (Exo. 1:12). The Moabites were in dread of the huge number of Israelites moving into their area (Num. 22:3). In this passage, the verb appears in a parallel statement with the verb **gûr**, which also means "to dread," "to fear." Three references have an object rather than a person as the source of loathing or dread. Israel loathed the manna after eating it for nearly forty years (Num. 21:5). Pr 3:11 admonishes the reader not to loathe the Lord's correction. In this passage, the verb appears in a parallel statement with the verb **mā'as**, which means "to despise." Isaiah prophesied that the lands of Ephraim and Syria, which Ahaz dreaded, would soon be overthrown (Isa. 7:16). This verb appears in the Hiphil stem in Isa. 7:6, and translators have gone a few different directions with this word. Assuming this root, the Hiphil means "to cause someone to fear or dread." The KJV, translating the word as "vex," the NASB, translating the word as "terrorize," and the RSV, translating the word as "terrify," all assume **qûts** came from this root, and this is most likely correct. The margin of the KJV, however, suggests that **qûts** might instead mean "to waken." This assumes that the verb comes from the root **qîts** (HED #7301). The advantage of assuming this root is that all occurrences of **qîts** appear in the Hiphil stem, while the root meaning "to dread" only occurs in the Hiphil stem in Isa. 7:6; the rest are in the Qal. The NIV translates the verb as "to tear it apart." This translation assumes that it is an Arabic cognate of *qada*. In Aramaic and Mishnaic Hebrew, **qûts** is a by-form of **qātsats**, which means "to cut down" or "to destroy." Though some scholars assume this separate root and cite Isa. 7:6 as having this meaning of "to tear apart" or "to demolish," the goal of the kings of Syria and Ephraim was not to destroy Judah but to force it to join their coalition against the Assyrian Empire. Therefore, "to cause dread" fits the context better.

Quts - 9x in 9v in NAS - Translated - abhorred(2), dread(3), loathe(2), terrorize(1), tired(1).

Genesis 27:46 Rebekah said to Isaac, "I am tired of living because of the daughters of Heth; if Jacob takes a wife from the daughters of Heth, like these, from the daughters of the land, what good will my life be to me?"

Exodus 1:12 But the more they afflicted them, the more they multiplied and the more they spread out, so that they were in dread of the sons of Israel.

Leviticus 20:23 'Moreover, you shall not follow the customs of the nation which I will drive out before you, for they did all these things, and therefore I have abhorred them.

Numbers 21:5 The people spoke against God and Moses, "Why have you brought us up out of Egypt to die in the wilderness? For there is no food and no water, and we loathe this miserable food."

Numbers 22:3 So Moab was in great fear because of the people, for they were numerous; and Moab was in dread of the sons of Israel.

1 Kings 11:25 So he was an adversary to Israel all the days of Solomon, along with the evil that Hadad did; and he abhorred Israel and reigned over Aram.

Proverbs 3:11 My son, do not reject the discipline of the LORD Or loathe His reproof,

Isaiah 7:6 "Let us go up against Judah and terrorize it, and make for ourselves a breach in its walls and set up the son of Tabeel as king in the midst of it,"

Isaiah 7:16 "For before the boy will know enough to refuse evil and choose good, the land whose two kings you dread will be forsaken.

Leviticus 20:24 'Hence I have said to you, "You are to possess their land, and I Myself will give it to you to possess it, a land flowing with milk and honey." I am the LORD your God, who has separated you from the peoples.

- But I (KJV): Ex 3:8,17 6:8
- which (KJV): Lev 20:26 Ex 19:5,6 33:16 Nu 23:9 Dt 7:6 14:2 1Ki 8:53 Joh 15:19 2Co 6:17 1Pe 2:9

Possess - take something from someone else and possess it for yourself; occupy, take possession of, inherit. The idea is to supplant -- to take the place of and serve as a substitute for especially by reason of superior excellence or power = put out of a usual or proper place or into the place of another & implies either a dispossessing or usurping of another's place, possessions, or privileges or an uprooting of something and its replacement with something else

TSK Note on land - Milk and honey were the chief dainties of the ancients as they are now among the Arabs, particularly the Bedouins. Hence not only the Hebrews, but also the Greeks and Romans, painted the highest pleasantness and fertility by an abundance of milk and honey. The image used in the text, and frequently by ancient authors on similar subjects, is a metaphor, derived from a breast, producing copious streams of milk.

Separated (0914)(**badal**) carries the basic connotation = be separated or to separate or divide as clearly portrayed by the 1st Biblical use (Ge 1:4 "...and God separated the light from the darkness.") In Lev 20:24 badal is used of God Who separated Israel from the Gentile nations and unto a place of privilege. As a result Israel is to make a distinction (badal) between clean and unclean animals (Lev 20:25).

Baker - This word is used most often of the various words that indicate these ideas. It is used both literally and figuratively in two different stems. The first stem is reflexive or passive in its function, and the second is causative. The reflexive sense of the word is used to express Israel's separation of themselves from intermarriage and the abominations and pollution of the nations around them (Ezra 6:21; 10:11) in order to dedicate themselves to the Lord and His Law (Neh. 10:28[29]). Its passive usage indicates those being set apart for something (1 Chr. 23:13) or, in a negative sense, being excluded from something (e.g., from the community of Israel [Ezra 10:8]). (Complete Word Study Dictionary – Old Testament)

Gilbrant on badal - This verb root carries the fundamental meaning of "to separate" or "to be divided." Its use in the OT is limited to two stems, the Niphal (passive) and the Hiphil (causative). In most cases, it expresses intentions which come from sacred contexts and which speak of consecration or holiness, either regarding the community, its priests, its service, or activities. The term thus arises from and is used by priestly people whose domain connects with temple regulations. Bādhāl occurs with God as the subject, and means "God selects/chooses" (Num. 16:6-9). Similarly, God is the subject of Deut. 10:8; 29:21. There, God set apart the tribe of Levi as ministers (cf. also Num. 8:14). When examining the particular occurrences, special features emerge. Most of the occurrences of the Niphal are in the post-exilic literature. The reflections brought about by the Exile and the return to the homeland manifest themselves this word. Here, ethnic and socio-religious meanings emerge forcefully. It is significant that the noun form of this root does not occur in this late literature. These writers, then, emphasize the activity of separation. This verb enforces the boundary lines of the post-exilic community and clearly manifests its identity. The verb discerns between undefiled Israelites and defiled peoples, either Israelites who have not "separated themselves" from these other people, or Gentiles themselves. Another significant element regarding the Niphal stem emerges. Usually the Niphal is passive. In most instances, however, the Niphal of this

word is emphatic and reflexive. Thus, the people are commanded to "separate themselves" (cf. Ezra 6:21; Neh. 10:28; in Ezra 10:8 the third person, personal pronoun is used to emphasize "expel"). The Niphal is used another way. It can distinguish within the community. For instance, in 1 Chr. 23:13 Aaron is "set apart" as priest. The Niphal here clearly has a passive meaning. This is different from the emphatic and reflexive occurrences in Ezra and Nehemiah and is similar to the Hiphil used in Num. 16:9. Thus, the writer of 1 Chronicles used the word in a way more similar to the earlier writers than to Ezra and Nehemiah (cf. Ezra 8:24, though). Most of the Hiphil stem uses are in the Pentateuch and clearly manifest a sacred concern. Bādhāl occurs five times in Genesis 1 to distinguish among pairs of created elements: light/darkness, day/night, and water/water. In Leviticus, the verb furnishes one of the regulations for preparing a bird for offering. The bird is not to be torn apart (Lev 1:17; 5:8). It also denotes the criteria of holiness, which is required to maintain Yahweh's community. Further, Yahweh has set apart the people and they are to remain so (i.e., undefiled Lev 10:10; 11:47). In Lev 20:24-26, Yahweh himself has "set apart" his people and established dietary preferences which identify them as his. In response, his people are to obey. The term is also used to distinguish objects in space. In Deuteronomy, the verb involves the setting aside of three cities of refuge (Dt 4:41; 19:2, 7). In Ex. 26:33, the curtain "separates" the holy place from the holy of holies. Elsewhere the verb "separates" the sacred from the profane, and betrays a priestly influence. First Chronicles 25:1 "sets apart" some for the charismatic activity of singing and playing musical instruments, in the temple. In 2 Chr. 25:10, Amazziah, the general, "separated" the troops from Ephraim and sent them home. He had been warned that God would not bless the battle efforts with these men present. After sending them home, Amazziah had success. At any rate, the idea of holiness is still present. Often, as other references have implied, this verb carries with it the idea of election. In 1 Ki. 8:53, this idea is clearly expressed. There, from among all people of the earth, Yahweh has singled out Israel. In Ezekiel and Isaiah the concept of holiness dominates. In Ezek. 22:26, the priests are corrupt. They do not distinguish between sacred and profane things. Later in Ezek 39:14, Yahweh sends righteous men throughout the land to find what is unclean and to dispose of it appropriately. The verb thus means "to separate from the unclean." In Ezek 42:20, in the temple vision, the prophet measures a wall which "separates" the common from the sacred. The division of the world into sacred and profane is both a common and rigid practice among most world religions. Sacred space is contaminated by contact with the profane. Separation and elaborate purification rituals are the means by which the sacred remains sacred, different, from the ordinary or profane. Isaiah uses the verb three times with the sense of holiness. In Isa 59:2, the sins of Israel separated the people from God. In Isa [56:3](#) the nuance of holiness dominates as the idea of ethnicity drops away. The foreigner can still be part of God's people, providing he keeps justice and the sabbath.

Badal - 40v - Usage: came over(1), dismissed(1), divide(1), excluded(2), made a separation(1), made...distinction(1), make a distinction(3), partition(1), selected(1), separate(6), separated(10), serve(1), set you apart(1), set apart(6), set aside(2), sever(2), single(1), surely separate(1).

Gen. 1:4; Gen. 1:6; Gen. 1:7; Gen. 1:14; Gen. 1:18; Exod. 26:33; Lev. 1:17; Lev. 5:8; Lev. 10:10; Lev. 11:47; Lev. 20:24; Lev. 20:25; Lev. 20:26; Num. 8:14; Num. 16:9; Num. 16:21; Deut. 4:41; Deut. 10:8; Deut. 19:2; Deut. 19:7; Deut. 29:21; 1 Ki. 8:53; 1 Chr. 12:8; 1 Chr. 23:13; 1 Chr. 25:1; 2 Chr. 25:10; Ezr. 6:21; Ezr. 8:24; Ezr. 9:1; Ezr. 10:8; Ezr. 10:11; Ezr. 10:16; Neh. 9:2; Neh. 10:28; Neh. 13:3; Isa. 56:3; Isa. 59:2; Ezek. 22:26; Ezek. 39:14; Ezek. 42:20

Leviticus 20:25 'You are therefore to make a distinction between the clean animal and the unclean, and between the unclean bird and the clean; and you shall not make yourselves detestable by animal or by bird or by anything that creeps on the ground, which I have separated for you as unclean.'

- **Make a distinction:** Lev 11:1-47 De 14:3-21 Ac 10:11-15,28 Eph 5:7-11
- **Detestable:** Lev 11:43

Unclean (adjective) ([02931](#)) (**tame - see word study**) - Lxx translates tame here with **akathartos**.

Clean... unclean - This instruction is a repetition of the dietary laws, which were meant to distinguish Israel as a holy people from the surrounding nations (Lev 11:44-45). Unfortunately, just as with the rite of circumcision, the Jews perverted God's good laws and made them into meritorious works, missing the truth that these external rules, were a call to a internal change. Circumcision was but a picture of a circumcised (new, regenerate) heart. Keeping food distinctions was ultimately a call to be holy as God was holy, a call for an internal change, something that could only be achieved by faith, not by the works of keeping "kosher."

And so one modern rabbi writes that

By keeping kosher we separate ourselves out from the other nations and into the purposes of the Jewish people. Thus we become holy, sanctifying our bodies, by hallowing that which is ordinary, for which the mitzvot (commandments) are our guides. The root meaning of the Hebrew word kadosh (holy) is separation or

withdrawal, to be separated out for a special purpose and to forgo other purposes. We thus remind ourselves everyday by keeping kosher that we choose holiness not as individuals, but to join the historic mission of the Jewish people to be doers of righteousness and justice, keepers of sacred time and space, propagators of the Torah's vision and path—and thereby a light to the other nations and to ourselves. Contrary to popular misconceptions, then, the laws of kashrut have nothing to do with physical bodily health, but are aimed to energize our free-willed moral spiritual powers, raising us up as humankind from the morally un-free animal world...

And the tradition answers: "Understand ... that the mitzvot have been given only to refine and purify humankind..." (Tanhuma Shemini 8) So the goal of kashrut is to teach us unceasing reverence for life by raising us up from the animal nature within us to our greatest capacity for free-willed moral spirituality—and thus through dietary ritual to fulfill us by bringing us closer to God's Divine Providence for humankind with every mouthful of food we consume. (www.gatherthepeople.org/Downloads/KASHRUT.pdf)

Another Jewish source says...

The Torah calls the Jews a "holy people" and prescribes a holy diet (see Deut. 14:2-4). You are what you eat. Kosher is God's diet for spirituality. Jewish mysticism teaches that non-kosher food blocks the spiritual potential of the soul. Kosher animals properly slaughtered and prepared have more "sparks of holiness" (according to the Kabbalah) which are incorporated in our being. ([Why Kosher](#))

Peter had to be taught a lesson on foods he could eat in Acts 10...

And on the next day, as they were on their way, and approaching the city, Peter went up on the housetop about the sixth hour to pray. 10 And he became hungry, and was desiring to eat; but while they were making preparations, he fell into a trance; 11 and he beheld the sky opened up, and a certain object like a great sheet coming down, lowered by four corners to the ground, 12 and there were in it all kinds of four-footed animals and crawling creatures of the earth and birds of the air.

13 And a voice came to him, "Arise, Peter, kill and eat!" 14 But Peter said, "By no means, Lord, for I have never eaten anything unholy and unclean." 15 And again a voice came to him a second time, "**What God has cleansed, no longer consider unholy.**"

Comment: The cleansing work of Christ on the Cross applied not only to the forgiveness of sins, but even to the distinction between clean and unclean animals (See also 1Ti 4:3-5). It also served to remove the barrier between Jew and Gentile, as was made plain to Peter by this vision (Ephesians 4:11-22).

Leviticus 20:26 'Thus you are to be holy to Me, for I the LORD am holy; and I have set you apart from the peoples to be Mine.'

- the Lord (KJV): Lev 20:7 19:2 Ps 99:5,9 Isa 6:3 30:11 1Pe 1:15,16 Rev 3:7 4:8
- severed (KJV): Lev 20:24 De 7:6 14:2 26:18,19 Tit 2:14

THE THEME OF LEVITICUS

THUS YOU ARE TO BE HOLY (pure, consecrated, set apart) **TO ME:** haya qadowsh: Ex 6:7; Ex 19:6 Lv 11:44,45,20:7,26 ,19:2, Dt 7:6,14:2, 1Pe 1:15,16 We are commanded to continually Pursue (picture of one running swiftly toward the goal) HOLINESS w/o which no one will see the Lord (Heb 12:14) & w/o which the dying world will not see His Light in the midst of a crooked & perverse generation (Php 2:15). We are not our own but have been bought with a price to be His bondslaves out of a heart of loving devotion (1 Co 6:19,20, Titus 2:14)

FOR I THE LORD AM HOLY: The reason they (we) are to be holy = because that is what God is and we are strive (enabled by the Spirit) to be like His holy Son.

AND I HAVE SET YOU APART FROM: (badal): This Hebrew word used in Ex 26:33 of the veil separating the Holy place from Holy of holies.

THE PEOPLES: 'am: 'Am is different from "goy" (foreign nation) in that it is view of an insider of the group or it refers to "people" in general. Usually, it denotes a group of people which is larger than a tribe or a clan, but less numerous than a race (IEom). An 'am is

a group which has certain unified, sustained relationships within itself.

TO BE MINE (cf Dt 26:18-19): we are His possession now. Study these passages - Titus 2:14, Ro 14:7-9, 1 Co 6:19,20, 2 Co 5:15, 2 Pe 2:1, 1 Pe 2:9; Rev 1:6; 5:10, Ex 19:5, Dt 7:6; 14:2 Isa 43:21; Mal 3:17, Ps 4:3

Leviticus 20:27 'Now a man or a woman who is a medium or a spiritist shall surely be put to death. They shall be stoned with stones, their bloodguiltiness is upon them.'"

- **Medium:** Lev 20:6 19:31 Ex 22:18 Dt 18:10-12 1 Sa 28:7-9
- **Bloodguiltiness:** Lev 20:9

MacArthur on medium - Mediums are humans who act as “go-betweens” to supposedly contact/communicate with the spirits of the dead, who are actually impersonated by demons. Cf. Lev 20:6, 27.

Morris on medium - There are many capital crimes listed in this chapter and others that are not considered that bad in some modern "enlightened" nations. However, it is noteworthy that other nations of the time had criminal justice systems that were much more severe. The Mosaic law does not include crimes against property or against the state, for example, as capital crimes. The evils described here are either against God or against the integrity of the families of God's chosen people and had already so contaminated the land of Canaan that God would not allow the same to destroy His elect nation.