

-Save This Page as a PDF-

## The Holiness Code

### 17:1 to 26:46



It has long been recognized that **Leviticus Chapter 17** begins a new section that addresses the everyday affairs and ethics of **the Israelite** community. And yet, the preceding contents of **Leviticus Chapters 1-16** are presumed throughout. In scholarly literature, **Leviticus Chapters 17-26** has been called **the Holiness Code** because of its demand for **holiness** on the part of **the Israelites (19:2; 20:7-8 and 26; 21:6, 8, 15 and 23; 22:9, 16 and 32)**. As will be illustrated throughout this section, **holiness** addresses every aspect of life. That such an ethical or practical section would immediately follow the legislation for atonement is not surprising since this is often the pattern in biblical revelation, particularly in the B'rit Chadashah. Although the dominant theme of **Leviticus Chapters 1-16** might be encapsulated by the word **atonement**, the dominant word for the rest of the book is **holiness**.

In the TaNaKh as in the B'rit Chadashah, a love for **holiness** and a desire to obey **ADONAI** are evidence of spiritual life. **Holiness** is especially to be demonstrated in relationship to other people. **Leviticus Chapters 1-16** deals primarily with the issue of the proper relationship that is to exist between **Isra'el** and **Ha'Shem**; that is, how **Isra'el** is to **love God with all its soul, mind and strength** (see the commentary on **Deuteronomy, to see link click [Bw](#) - Sh'ma Isra'el**). **Leviticus Chapters 17-26**, on the other hand, focuses primarily on how people are to remain

in fellowship with each other. Thus, **the Holiness Code** is a commentary on the Golden Rule (see the commentary on **The Life of Christ [Dv](#) - Ask and It Will Be Given to You; Seek and You Will Find; Knock and the Door Will Be Opened to You**).

Whereas the contents of the previous sections were addressed to Moshe and Aaron, beginning with **Leviticus 17**, the **LORD** addresses the **Israelite** community at large. The only exception is the **priestly** instructions of **21:1** to **22:33**. Yet even there the theme of **holiness** for **the nation** is still dominant because **the holiness** of **the priesthood** was vital in maintaining **the holiness** of **the nation** at large.

Another distinct feature of **Leviticus Chapters 17-26** is that **YHVH** addresses **the nation** in the first person, particularly in the phrase: **I am ADONAI your God**. These words link the revelation of the divine will to the covenant at Mount Sinai (see the commentary on **Exodus [Di](#) - I Am the LORD, Who Brought You Out of the Land of Slavery**), the introduction to the mitzvot of **Isra'el**. The expression also calls for a divine urgency on the part of **Isra'el** to comply with those commands. The phrase: **I am ADONAI your God** is the final, most complete, and sovereign sentence of all Scripture, without exception.<sup>292</sup>