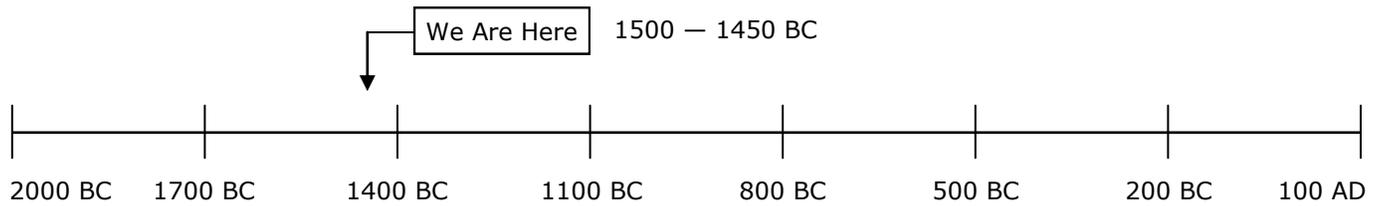


Dare to Be Different

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Week 8: February 19-25 — *Leviticus 9-26*

15.3% Complete — 309 Days to Go



Helpful Resources

Hebrew Calendar (p.61), Festivals of Israel (p.63)

Making Sense of It All

- The Big Picture

The Israelites are still at Mt. Sinai; they have completed the construction of the Tabernacle and have begun the sacrificial system (*Lev. 9*) so that the people will be acceptable to God. In that process of developing a “holy nation” God gave His people His laws for holy living. As was mentioned before, those laws were categorized into the Moral Law (Ten Commandments), the Civil Law (rules for how to live in peace with each other), and the Ceremonial Law (regulations pertaining to worship). In this section, God gave the people more laws pertaining to their civil and ceremonial lives:

Civil Laws: Dietary rules, regulations pertaining to contaminated skin, clothing, and houses, blood laws, sex laws, laws for bodily discharges, personal conduct, property, and more.

Ceremonial Laws: More instructions to the priests pertaining to things that would make them and their offerings unclean, and regulations concerning their festivals.

- The Purpose of God’s Laws

It may seem that these statutes of God were picky or strict and did not allow for much leeway. Why was God so detailed and demanding in this area? Was He really that harsh to His own people? One must remember that the Israelites had been slaves for centuries; they knew nothing about how to be a free, self-sufficient, peaceful nation. The Egyptians met all of their needs, told them what they could and could not do, and did not extend them any liberties to speak of. It is as if Israel was a child that had been set free from his parents and was facing an unfamiliar world, with no training to rely upon. Furthermore, God gave us the reason behind His detailed ordinances. It was His desire for His people to be different than any of the surrounding nations, to be distinguished and set apart (*Lev. 18:1-5; 20:26*); He wanted them to be holy as He Himself is holy (*Lev. 11:44, 45; 19:1, 2; 20:7, 8; 22:31-33*).

- Unholiness Is Unacceptable

When Nadab and Abihu committed sacrilege (treating holy objects in an unholy manner) by offering an prohibited incense on the Golden Altar, God took their lives (*Lev. 10:1-7*). He warned that His punishment for disdain His sanctuary was severe (*Lev. 20:1-24*). Was God being too harsh? The phrase “nip it in the bud” applies here, as the Lord wanted the people to know the punishment for defying His standards. Holiness was no trivial matter!

- Fixed Festivals and Other Key Events

In addition to the laws of daily worship, God gave instructions pertaining to several fixed festivals or holy days. While these events were meant to be occasions of fellowship and celebration, they also served as perpetual memorials (similar to Massebah). These holy days are described in detail in the chart section.

- Pictures of Christ

1. **The Festivals:** All of Israel's holy days and special events were fulfilled in the life and ministry of Christ. See the chart entitled, "Festivals of Israel."
2. **The Priests and Their Practices** represent Christ's work of mediation for us as sinners (*1 Tim. 2:5*). See the visual entitled, "Our Great High Priest" for more details.

- Prophetic Passages

1. **Of Canaanite Tribes** (*Lev. 18:24-28*) committing immorality and their judgment.
2. **Israel's National Sin and Judgment** (*Lev. 26:14-46*): God unveiled the shame in Israel's future, a nation that disobeys and rejects Him. He then laid out the events of their judgment — invasion by foreign enemies, famine, diseases, destruction of cities and places of worship, even exile. However, He also revealed a time when Israel would return to its homeland and again keep its covenant with God.

- Personal Application

1. **Dare to Be Different:** One of God's purposes for the laws He prescribed was that His people were to be set apart from the other nations of the earth. He did not want His people to look like or act like those pagans of their day. Take the fact that God demanded Israel to be monotheistic (worship one God); this alone made them different from those polytheistic tribes around them (many gods). Thus, while His laws were strict and somewhat strange, His reasons were right. He desired for His people to be distinct. Although we live in a much different time today, our world is not much different at all. We are surrounded by idolatrous, immoral pagans, and God still expects His people (Christians) to be set apart and recognizable (*Matt. 5:14-16; Rom. 12:2; 1 John 2:15, 16*).
2. **The Blessedness of Obedience** (*Lev. 26:1-13*): As a child earns the favor and trust of his parents through obedience to their will and way, so shall we find favor with God through our obedience to his will and word (*Joshua 1:8; James 1:22-25*). Likewise, as a child feels the stress and strain of his parents' displeasure when he disregards their instruction, so shall we face a more severe punishment on our lives when we disregard our heavenly Father, as an individual, as a family, as a community, and even as a nation. Obedience is rewarded, while disobedience has its consequences.

The Bottom Line

Like Israel, we are God's *ambassadors* in the world, to *reflect* His glory and goodness.

Questions to Consider

1. What are some ways in which God's people should be different from the world?
2. Trying to live godly lives is not an easy task. How does the world make it so difficult?
3. Do you live in contrast to the world? How have you seen God bless your obedience?