

# Leviticus In The New Testament

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**Text:** Leviticus 17-18, *et. al.*

### **Introduction:**

- I. This study will largely focus on Leviticus 17-18, but will also consider various other passages in Leviticus that are quoted or alluded to in the New Testament.
  - A. *Note:* Much of the material in this lecture was first developed for publication in *Is it Lawful? A Comprehensive Study of Divorce*, edited by Gary Fisher and Dennis Allen.
- II. Exegetes draw conclusions regarding the following seemingly unrelated New Testament issues based on the perceived interrelation of Lev. 17-18, Acts 15, 1 Cor. 8, and Mt. 19.
  - A. Incest
  - B. Meats sacrificed to Idols
  - C. Divorce and Remarriage
    1. The exception clause in Mt. 19:9 is regarded as merely an allusion to incestuous relationships that invalidate a marriage.
    2. Therefore it is argued that it is no real exception at all.
  - D. Eating Blood
- III. Most of the perceived interrelation between these passages is imagined.
- IV. The connection between the Jerusalem letter of Acts 15 and Leviticus 17-18 is real, and instructive.

### **Body:**

- I. **Lev. 17-18**
  - A. THE CONNECTION BETWEEN THE JERUSALEM LETTER (ACTS 15) AND LEVITICUS 17-18
    1. Four topics of Lev. 17-18 correspond to the four topics of the Jerusalem letter:
      - a. Guarding against idolatry (17:1-9) corresponds to “abstain from things sacrificed to idols” in Ac. 15:29.
      - b. Prohibition against eating blood (17:10-12) corresponds to “abstain...from blood” in Ac. 15:29.
      - c. Instruction regarding proper slaughtering & eating carcasses (17:13-16) corresponds to “abstain...from things strangled” in Ac. 15:29.
      - d. Warnings against sexual sin (18:6-23) corresponds to “abstain...from fornication” in Ac. 15:29.
    2. These topics are presented in the same order in the letter (Acts 15:29) and again in Acts 21:25, as found in Lev. 17-18.
    3. This section of Leviticus deals with things for which God held all men accountable, thus making it appropriate to remind Gentiles of the warnings therein.
      - a. At the end of Leviticus 18, it is said that the things prohibited in the preceding context were things for which God held the previous tenants of the land accountable, demonstrating that these are not uniquely Jewish regulations.

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- 1) Lev. 18:24: *“for by all these the nations which I am casting out before you have become defiled.”*
  - 2) Lev. 18:25: *“therefore I have brought its punishment upon it, so the land has spewed out its inhabitants.”*
  - 3) Lev. 18:27: *“for the men of the land who have been before you have done all these abominations, and the land has become defiled.”*
- b. What all is included among the things for which Gentiles were accountable? When the text tells us the Canaanites were defiled “by all these,” the question arises, what is included in “all these”? All these things mentioned in the previous two verses? In the previous ten verses?
- 1) Chapters 17-18 seem to be naturally distinct from the larger context, and this suggests that the prohibitions of both chapters are included among the things for which, according to the statements at the end of chapter 18, God holds all men accountable.
    - a) Chapter 16, the description of the Day of Atonement rituals, serves as the conclusion of the first 16 chapters which discuss reconciliation with God through the removal of sin and impurity.
    - b) Chapters 17-18 mark the beginning of a new section focusing on the duties of a sanctified people, but are set off from what follows by the statements in 18:24-30, namely, that things forbidden in this section are the practices for which the Canaanites, the previous tenants of the land, were condemned and expelled from the land.
    - c) In chapter 19, the reader again finds instructions and duties that were peculiar to the Israelites, *e.g.*...
      - 1] Sabbath keeping (19:3)
      - 2] Not reaping the corners of the fields (19:9)
      - 3] Not interbreeding cattle (19:19)
      - 4] Not mixing seed in a field (19:19)
      - 5] Not mixing materials in fabric (19:19)
    - d) The prohibition against eating blood (17:10ff) harks back to Gen. 9:4, a law for all mankind.
      - 1] It is specifically the Israelite and the sojourner who is threatened with being cut off from the people for eating blood.
      - 2] But this does not argue against the universality of the prohibition.
    - e) The requirement that sacrifices be brought to the doorway of the tent of meeting was designed to guard against idolatry (18:7).
      - 1] Certainly not all mankind has been required to bring sacrifices to the doorway of the tent of meeting.
      - 2] But the intent was to discourage idolatry, which has always been universally condemned (Rom. 1:18-25)
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- c. James' proposal to remind the Gentiles of certain prohibitions amounts to a caveat to the general conclusion that Gentiles do not have to keep the law of Moses.
    - 1) The causal relationship between Acts 15:21 ("...For Moses from ancient generations has in every city those who preach him, since he is read in the synagogues every Sabbath") and the preceding, "that we write unto them that they abstain from..." ( Acts 15:20 ) can be understood as a recognition that Gentiles in every city would be aware of Jewish teaching against the mentioned practices, and might wrongly conclude that a statement affirming Gentile freedom from Jewish law also affirmed their freedom from prohibitions regarding these practices, though in fact these practices were condemned for all men.
    - 2) James' reasoning can be paraphrased as, "Since Gentiles think of warnings against these four practices as peculiarities of Jewish law which is taught in every city and therefore known to Gentiles, we need to remind them that while they are not under Moses' law, there are things prohibited in Lev. 17-18 that were prohibited for all men even before Moses' law."
  - d. The stated need for the prohibitions of chapters 17-18 corresponds to the stated circumstance giving rise to the Jerusalem letter.
    - 1) In Leviticus, the need was to warn Israel to avoid falling into the things for which the Gentiles had been condemned.
    - 2) In Acts 15, the need was to remind Gentiles of things that were universally condemned though thought of as part of the law of Moses which was preached in every city and read in the synagogues every Sabbath.
- B. The upshot of this is that THE STIPULATIONS OF THE JERUSALEM LETTER WERE REQUIRED BY GOD, obligations upon all men.
- 1. If the stipulations of the Jerusalem letter were not required by God, they would have amounted to the very thing the letter claimed to reject.
    - a. The letter sent out in Acts 15 denounced those "who went out from us ... subverting your souls" by requiring Gentiles to be circumcised and "to keep the law of Moses."
    - b. It purported, in contrast to those Judaizers, "to lay upon you no greater burden than these necessary things...."
    - c. Does it not seem strange, even hypocritical, for that same letter then to ask for Gentile adherence to Jewish laws which, as far as God was concerned, were not binding upon Gentiles?
  - 2. The message of this letter "seemed good to the Holy Spirit."
  - 3. The stipulations of the letter were ἐπάναγκες, *i.e.*, "by compulsion".
    - a. F.F. Bruce, who viewed the stipulations as merely advisory, acknowledged the significance of ἐπάναγκες, saying, "To be sure, the reference to 'these necessary things' in the decree suggests that the Jerusalem leaders had in mind something more than a voluntary gesture of charity on the part of Gentile Christians, and this may have been a cause of subsequent misunderstanding." (*New Testament History*, 289).
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- b. While Bruce thus faulted the intention of the Jerusalem leaders, Luke portrayed them as being in synch with the Holy Spirit.
- C. THE STIPULATIONS OF THE JERUSALEM LETTER ARE OFTEN MISCONSTRUED AS BEING MERELY ADVISORY, requests wherein Gentiles might accommodate uniquely Jewish sensibilities.
1. Statements to this effect include the following
    - a. “The conditions stipulated in the apostolic decree...had to do, not with the basis of the gospel or the terms of church membership, but with the facilitating of social fellowship between Jewish and Gentile Christians.” (Bruce, *“The Church at Jerusalem”* p. 10)
    - b. “If Gentile Christians found that their practices in food matters raised difficulties for the weaker consciences of Jewish Christians, then let them abstain from these practices, not indeed under compulsion but by their free choice, as a gesture of Christian charity.” (Bruce, *New Testament History*, p. 289)
    - c. “The decree tolerates the existence of Gentile Christianity as such. It only imposes on the Gentiles the avoidance of a few things, in order to enable the Jews to hold intercourse with them without causing grave offence.” (Weizsäcker, 205)
    - d. This is not a new take on Acts 15, but is in fact the view found in John Calvin’s commentary on Acts.
      - 1) “But here appeareth a manifest reason why they gave particular commandment concerning things offered to idols, blood, and that which was strangled. They were, indeed, of themselves things indifferent; yet such as had some special thing in them more than other rites of the law. We know how straitly the Lord commandeth to eschew those things which are contrary to the external profession of faith, and wherein there is any appearance or suspicion of idolatry. Therefore, lest there should any blot of superstition remain in the Gentiles, and lest the Jews should see anything in them which did not agree with the pure worship of God, no marvel if, to avoid offense, they be commanded to abstain from things offered to idols.” (Calvin on Acts 15:19)
      - 2) “[James] teaches that it cannot be that ceremonies can be abolished so quickly, as it were, at the first dash; because the Jews had now a long time been acquainted with the doctrine of the law, and Moses had his preachers; therefore, it stood them upon to redeem concord for a short thee [*sic*], until such time as the liberty gotten by Christ might, by little and little, appear more plainly. This is that which is said in the common proverb, That it was meet that the old ceremonies should be buried with some honor.” (Calvin on Acts 15:21)
      - 3) “For this necessity reached no farther than there was any danger lest the unity should be cut asunder. So that, to speak properly, this necessity was accidental or external; which was placed not in the thing itself, but only in avoiding of the offense, which appeareth more plainly by abolishing of the decree. For laws made concerning things which are of themselves necessary must be continual. But we know that this law was foredone by Paul so soon as the tumult and contention was once ended, when he teacheth that nothing is unclean, (Romans 14:14) and when he granteth liberty to eat all manner

[of] meats, yea, even such as were sacrificed to idols, (1 Corinthians 10:25).” (Calvin on Acts 15:28)

- 4) Calvin struggled with the prohibition against “fornication” in a context where he felt the things prohibited were not wrong in and of themselves, and supposed the reference was merely to “concubineship.”
2. Factors contributing to this view of Acts 15 include the following:
    - a. It may be that seemingly necessary and/or permitted instances of sibling marriage make it difficult to conclude that such are and always have been wrong.
      - 1) Abraham’s marriage to his half-sister, Sarai
      - 2) The presumption that the propagation of the human race would have required sibling marriages at the beginning.
    - b. James’ words, “For Moses from ancient generations has in every city those who preach him, since he is read in the synagogues every Sabbath,” may be interpreted so as to suggest the proposed stipulations were intended to accommodate Jewish mores.
      - 1) It is easy to imagine that some would suppose James’ only objection to these practices among Jews is the offense that might be caused to Jewish believers “in every city.”
      - 2) However, this interpretation fails to account for the words “since he is read in the synagogues every Sabbath.”
      - 3) Weizsäcker attempted to explain the reference to the reading of the law in keeping with the idea that James’ motive was to accommodate Jewish attitudes and made the connection with the conclusion that the stipulations are not God’s requirements for all men:
        - a) “The motive that here prompts the synod is respect for the law; it finds expression in James’s proposal, in the addition (xv. 21) about the long-standing custom of reading the law on the Sabbath in all places, *i.e.* in the whole Diaspora. For the words...can only give the motive for the injunction. Because the law had its settlement in these towns, it was necessary for all Christians to follow certain general regulations within the precincts consecrated by its presence. It is, therefore, respect for this reading of the law, and for the Jews, which recommends the condition. From this motive, as well as from the contents of the decree, we obtain two inferences as to its more precise meaning. The injunctions are imposed upon the Gentile Christians, not so much because these things, as a whole, are in themselves God’s first and most indispensable command to all men, but because they contain the minimum necessary on account of their connection with Jews. And, secondly, they have specially in view the conscientious convictions and opinions of the general body of the Jews.” (Weizsäcker, 205)
    - c. The notion that the stipulations of the Jerusalem letter were merely advisory is expressly based on the use of εἰδωλόθυσια in Acts 15:29 and the supposition that Paul’s teaching regarding things sacrificed to idols in 1 Corinthians was merely advice to abstain from something that was actually a liberty.

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- 1) Some suppose the word refers to meat sold in the market place after having been dedicated to an idol.
  - 2) It is supposed that in 1 Corinthians 8, Paul allowed the eating of such meat as a Christian liberty, except where one might be caused to stumble.
    - a) So reasoned Clarke, who wrote, “In Corinth St. Paul felt at liberty to urge [the Jerusalem letter’s] food regulations on the ground of charity only (1 Cor. viii).” (Clarke, 162)
    - b) So also Bruce reasons. (Bruce, *New Testament History*, 289)
- D. IT IS A MISTAKE TO SUPPOSE EATING “*THINGS SACRIFICED TO IDOLS*” (εἰδωλόθυτα) WAS LESS THAN IDOLATRY.
1. As Gordon Fee shows, εἰδωλόθυτα refers not to meat sold in the marketplace, but to that which is eaten in an idol temple as a sacred meal. (Fee, 172-197)
    - a. 1 Corinthians 8, like 10:14-22, does not have in view eating meat sold in the marketplace, but “sitting at meat in an idol’s temple” (1 Cor. 8:10).
    - b. Though claimed as a liberty by some at Corinth, this was taught by Paul to be wrong on two counts:
      - 1) It was a failure to love (1 Cor. 8)
      - 2) It was communion with demons (10:14-22).
    - c. The word εἰδωλόθυτα is not used of the meat sold in the marketplace (10:25ff), which Christians were permitted to eat.
  2. εἰδωλόθυτα in Acts 15:29 corresponds to the phrase “pollutions of idols” in Acts 15:20, hardly a reference to meat sold in the marketplace (cf. 1 Cor. 10:25).
  3. Evidence supporting the conclusion that εἰδωλόθυτα refers to a great evil is found in observing that in every New Testament context where there is mention of εἰδωλόθυτα, it is classed with fornication.
    - a. The Jerusalem letter (Acts 15:29; 21:25)
    - b. 1 Corinthians 8-10 (note 1 Cor. 10:8)
    - c. The address to the angel of the church at Pergamum (Rev. 2:14)
    - d. The address to the angel of the church at Thyatira (Rev. 2:20)
    - e. As Fee observed, in two of these contexts (1 Cor. 10:8 and Rev. 2:14), there is an allusion to Numbers 25
      - 1) In Numbers 25, idolatry and fornication were combined (Fee, 186).
      - 2) That actual sexual immorality, and not only spiritual fornication, is meant in Revelation 2:14 seems most likely on account of the reference to Balaam’s counsel which led to the corruption of Israel through fornication (Numbers 31:15-16; 25:1ff).
- E. THAT IN ACTS 15 ΠΟΡΝΕΙΑ REFERS ONLY TO INCEST IS A CONCLUSION DERIVED FROM SUPPOSING THAT THE JERUSALEM LETTER WAS MERELY ADVISORY (AND ABETTED BY A NEED TO EXPLAIN THE “EXCEPTION CLAUSES” IN Mt. 5:32 & 19:9)
1. The usual meaning of πορνεία is said to be impossible in Acts 15 because it is supposed that the stipulations of the Jerusalem letter were not divine prohibitions.
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2. “Since the first three articles of the compromise are concerned with practices which were abhorrent to the Jews but seemed innocent enough to the Gentiles, the fourth must be of a similar nature... *πορνεία* here means *marriage within the prohibited Levitical degrees.*” (Clarke, 162)
  3. Appeal is made to Lev. 18 as a basis for arguing that in the Jerusalem letter, *porneia* means “incest”
    - a. Apparently first proposed by an Anglican (Clarke) as an explanation of the exception clauses pertaining to divorce, this view looks to Lev. 18 for evidence of *πορνεία* as a technical term for an incestuous relationship, and thus understands Matthew 19:9 to say, “If anyone divorces his wife, he may not marry again, except when his marriage was not a real one at all, but had only the appearance of one.” (Richards, 30)
      - 1) In 1927, Anglican W. K. Lowther Clarke suggested that in the exception clauses of Matthew 5:32 and 19:9, *πορνεία* be understood to mean “marriage within the prohibited Levitical degrees.”
      - 2) He appealed to 1 Corinthians 5:1 where *πορνεία* is used of the illicit relationship between a man and his father’s wife, and to Acts 15:29 which he viewed as a “compromise” allowing Jewish and Gentile Christians to share a common social life:
        - a) “..The Jews were not to demand circumcision or the ceremonial law; the Gentiles were to abstain from meat sold at the butcher’s which had played its part at a sacrifice, from meat at the killing of which the blood had not been properly drained, from ‘black puddings’ and other repellent ways of using the blood, and from ‘fornication’ (*πορνεία*)....Since the first three articles of the compromise are concerned with practices which were abhorrent to the Jews but seemed innocent enough to the Gentiles, the fourth must be of a similar nature. The passage in 1 Corinthians gives us the clue. *πορνεία* here means *marriage within the prohibited Levitical degrees.* (Clarke, 162)
        - b) Clarke reasoned from several assumptions (161f):
          - 1] He thought Antioch of Syria was the likely place where Matthew’s gospel was written, and therefore started with the question, what would *παρεκτός λόγου πορνείας* (*apart from fornication*, Mt. 5:32) “have meant in the period A.D. 60-80 in the church of Antioch.”
          - 2] Clarke supposed “*πορνεία* could not have meant infidelity within the realm of marriage, for in Matt. xv. 19 it is distinguished from *μοιχεία*.”
          - 3] Clarke ruled out any reference to unfaithfulness during the betrothal period for he said that “would have been adultery (*μοιχεία*), see i. 19.”
          - 4] Clarke ruled out any reference to sexual misconduct prior to the betrothal as “unlikely” for a girl of 14 or 15 years of age.
          - 5] Clarke believed the first three stipulations of the Jerusalem letter were merely Gentile concessions to Jewish sensibilities as part of a “purely local and temporary compromise,” and not prohibitions

made by God, (Calvin had a similar view, but struggled to explain why fornication was grouped with such matters of indifference) and he reasoned the fourth stipulation, that the Gentiles abstain from “fornication,” must be of a similar nature.

- c) Thus Clarke concluded that the two “exception clauses” found in Mt. 5:32 and 19:9 were introduced in Antioch with “reference to the local Syrian problem.” But Clarke nonetheless vindicated the introduction saying, “The tradition represented in the First Gospel rightly put the exception on Our Lord’s lips” for Jesus “was dealing with Jewish conditions—the development of His teaching to fit Gentile problems was a legitimate extension of it.” (Clarke, 162)
- 3) In February of 1928, Clarke drew support from F. Gavin
- a) Gavin wrote “In Acts xv. 20, 29 πορνεία seems only to mean incest,” and quoted Strack and Billerbeck. (Gavin, 104)
- b) Strack and Billerbeck: “Here it may not mean ‘fornication’ or ‘unchastity’ in general, since πορνεία in this meaning would surely be forbidden to everyone, hence it could not be taken as a special prohibition incumbent upon Gentile converts to Christianity. It must, however, be taken to mean ‘marriage within the degrees forbidden’ by Lev. xviii. 6-18.” (Strack and Billerbeck, as quoted by Gavin, 104)
- 4) According to Bruce Vawter, it was Roman Catholic J. Bonsirven who turned to Rabbinic literature to show that “marriages held to be invalid because of the impeding laws of Lv 18, 7-18 or otherwise, were called in rabbinic Hebrew *z<sup>e</sup>nut* = porneia,” (hence the designation, “Rabbinic” interpretation). (Vawter, “The Divorce Clauses” 162-163)
- a) In the late 1940’s Hauck & Schulz, in *Theologisches Wörterbuch zum Neuen Testament* affirmed the same view, also appealing to Rabbinic literature. (See TDNT, 6:593)
- b) In 1959, Roman Catholic H. J. Richards affirmed the same view.
- c) Among evangelicals, Charles Ryrie and F.F. Bruce have expressed preference for this interpretation. (Ryrie, 177-192; Bruce, *New Testament History* 287-288, n. 16)
- d) In 1976, Roman Catholic Joseph A. Fitzmeyer turned to codex Damascus of the Qumran literature for support in establishing incest as a “specific understanding of *zenut*.” (221). The same document is cited by Bruce. (*New Testament History*, 287-288 n. 16)
- 1] The relevant passage portrays either Jewish society in general, or specifically the priesthood, as being entrapped in “three nets of Belial,” (a figure based on the language of Is. 24:17 which speaks of a “snare” upon the people).
- 2] One of these nets is *zenut*, and, according to Fitzmyer’s interpretation of the document, two examples of *zenut* are given. The first is taking more than one wife, (whether this means polygamy, remarriage after divorce, remarriage after a wife’s death, or a combination of these is debated, and is of no concern to

us) and the second is, “they take each one the daughter of his brother and the daughter of his sister.” (Fitzmyer, 218)

- b. Most advocates of this view grant that Jesus would not likely have mentioned such an “exception” in the context of the discussion with the Pharisees. They prefer to think that Matthew, or “the Matthean redactor,” added the clause.

F. IT IS A MISTAKE TO CONCLUDE THAT *zenut* (AND THEREFORE, πορνεία) MEANS SPECIFICALLY “INCEST”

1. “Neither has it been shown that *zenut/porneia* during the time in question had such a character as a technical term for this type of illegal relations that the expression would on that ground have been spontaneously interpreted in this way.” (Lovestam, 56)
2. It is not enough to show that incest can be classed as πορνεία. No one denies that.
3. Rather, it must be proven that πορνεία was such a technical term for incest that in a passage such as Matthew 19, where there is no contextual indication that incest is meant, the word itself would have been understood to mean specifically this.
4. In 1 Corinthians 5:1, πορνεία is certainly not a technical term for incest.
  - a. Incest is indicated only by the subsequent explanation, “and such fornication as is not even among the Gentiles, that one of you hath his father’s wife.”
5. Even if Fitzmyer is correct in his reading of Codex Damascus (CD), he still has not demonstrated incest to be a technical meaning of *zenut*, let alone πορνεία.
  - a. That Codex Damascus includes plural marriages as an example of *zenut* in the relevant context is undisputed.
    - 1) This means that *zenut* cannot be a “technical term” for incest if it includes both incest and polygamy.
    - 2) In fact, *zenut* is not a “technical term” for either incest or polygamy; it is a general term that includes all forms of unlawful sexual intercourse.
    - 3) If Fitzmyer is correct in his interpretation of the passage, rather than being understood in its own right to mean incest, *zenut* in CD 4:17 is dependent upon the explanation, “they take each one the daughter of his brother and the daughter of his sister,” and also upon the subsequent reference to Leviticus 18. (CD 5:8,9. Cf. Lovestam, 56, n. 50, and Heth and Wenham, 167)
6. Fitzmyer’s reading of Codex Damascus is open to question.
  - a. Philip R. Davies interprets this section of Codex Damascus differently so as to have plural marriages as the only example given for the net of *zenut*, and incest as falling under the category of the third net, namely defilement of the sanctuary. (Davies, 114-116, 224- 245)
  - b. If Davies is right in his translation, incest is not specifically included as a form of *zenut* in codex Damascus.
7. Justification for taking πορνεία in Acts 15 to mean incest based on correlating each of the four stipulations of the Jerusalem letter with Leviticus 17-18 is flawed.
  - a. Fitzmyer described the correlation as follows: “...the meat offered to idols (Lv 17:8-9 [cf. vs. 7, JS]), the eating of blood (Lv 17:10-12), the eating of strangled, i.e., not properly butchered, animals (Lv 17:15; cf. Ex. 22:31), and intercourse with close kin (Lv 18:6-8).” (Fitzmyer, 209. Cf. Hauck and Schulz, 593, and Richards, 30)

- b. However, incest is not the only sexual sin mentioned in Leviticus 18. Also mentioned are intercourse with a woman “during her menstrual impurity,” adultery, homosexuality, and bestiality.
  - 1) Πορνεΐα, used “of every kind of unlawful sexual intercourse,” (BAG, 693) was the very term one would expect to be used in summarizing such a wide ranging list of sexual sins as found in Leviticus 18.
  - 2) It is hardly reasonable to single out incest as the meaning in Acts 15, and thus attempt to establish a technical meaning whereby Matthew 19:9 is to be interpreted.

## II. Some other NT allusions to or quotations from Leviticus (not all)

### A. Lev. 18:5

- 1. This passage is quoted in Rom. 10:5, Gal. 3:12 and Rom. 7:10. There may also be an allusion to this passage in Luke 10:28, and perhaps in Mt. 19:17.
  - a. Though a Calvinist, Charles Hodge got it right when he described the point of Paul’s use (Rom. 10:5; Gal. 3:12; Rom. 7:10) in his comments on Rom. 10:5...
    - 1) “It is the clear doctrine of the Scriptures, that obedience to the law, to secure justification, must be perfect. For it is said, ‘Cursed is every one who continueth not in all things written in the book of the law to do them;’ and, he that offendeth in one point, is guilty of all. It is not necessary that a man who commits murder should also steal, in order to bring him under the penalty of the law. The legal system, then, which demanded obedience, required perfect obedience. Those, and those only, who were thus free from sin, should *live* ... It is a life which includes the whole man, soul and body, and the whole course of his existence, in this world and in that which is to come.” (Hodge, 337)
  - 2. While it might seem that Paul has gone beyond the meaning of “live” as intended in Lev. 18:5, Hodges remarks that Jewish interpreters understood the passage to refer to eternal life, and moreover, that the principle is applicable to all men rather than just to Jews. (Hodge, 337)

### B. Lev. 19:18, “*You shall love your neighbor as yourself*”

- 1. This passage is quoted in Mt. 5:43, 19:19, 22:39, Mk. 12:31, 12:33, Lk. 10:27, Rom. 13:9, Gal. 5:14, and Jas. 2:8.
- 2. An oft overlooked point is that the Old Law did in fact define the responsibility to love one’s neighbor with only one’s fellow countryman in view
  - a. Various OT passages extended the responsibility of the Israelite to the sojourner among the Israelites.
  - b. But Lev. 19:17-18 clearly defines “your neighbor” as one of “the sons of your people” and as “your brother.”
  - c. The lawyer of Luke 10:25ff would have felt himself perfectly within the intent of the law when, desiring to justify himself, he asked, “who is my neighbor?”
  - d. Jesus expanded the responsibility to love one’s neighbor by expanding the definition of “neighbor.”

### C. Lev. 23:29, “*He shall be cut off from his people*”

1. Acts 3:22-23 contains a loose quotation based on the LXX rendering of Dt. 18:15, 18:19 and Lev. 23:29.
  - a. Up to and including “all things whatsoever,” Acts 3:22 (**Προφήτην ὑμῶν ἀναστήσει κύριος ὁ θεὸς ὑμῶν ἐκ τῶν ἀδελφῶν ὑμῶν ὡς ἐμέ· αὐτοῦ ἀκούσεσθε κατὰ πάντα ὅσα...**) is a quotation from Dt. 18:15-16 (**προφήτην ἐκ τῶν ἀδελφῶν σου ὡς ἐμέ ἀναστήσει σοι κύριος ὁ θεός σου, αὐτοῦ ἀκούσεσθε κατὰ πάντα, ὅσα...**) substituting plural pronouns for singular pronouns.
  - b. Verse 23 has language (*every soul that shall not heed that prophet shall be destroyed out of the people*) similar to that of Dt. 18:19 (**καὶ ὁ ἄνθρωπος, ὃς ἐὰν μὴ ἀκούσῃ ὅσα ἐὰν λαλήσῃ ὁ προφήτης ἐπὶ τῷ ὀνόματί μου, ἐγὼ ἐκδικήσω ἐξ αὐτοῦ, and the man, whoever does not heed whatsoever the prophet speaks in my name, I will extract justice out of him**).
  - c. And some of the language in verse 23 is more similar to Lev. 23:29 (**πᾶσα ψυχή, ἣτις μὴ ταπεινωθήσεται ἐν αὐτῇ τῇ ἡμέρᾳ ταύτῃ, ἐξολεθρευθήσεται ἐκ τοῦ λαοῦ αὐτῆς**).
    - 1) The context in Lev. 23:29 pertains to the Day of Atonement observance and to humbling oneself by not working on that day.
    - 2) Peter borrows the language of being *destroyed* (**ἐξολεθρευθήσεται ἐκ τοῦ λαοῦ, shall be destroyed from my people**) from Lev. 23:29 and uses it with reference to anyone who will not listen to Jesus.
  - d. In various places we see this phenomenon wherein a NT writer or speaker uses an amalgamation of phrases from different passages in the OT. (For another example, see 2 Cor. 6:16-18).
  - e. This illustrates the willingness of New Testament writers to borrow language from the OT in order to make a point different from the one that was being made in the OT context from which they borrow the language (for example, compare Rom. 10:6-10).
- D. Lev. 24:20, “*an eye for an eye, a tooth for a tooth*”
  1. This is one place where find the words of Mt. 5:38.
  2. The same phrase is also found in Ex. 21:24 and Dt. 19:21.
- E. Lev. 26:12, “*walk among you and be your God, and you shall be My people*”
  1. Phrases from this passage along with phrases from Ex. 29:45 are combined by Paul in 2 Cor. 6:16. (But see similar phrases also in Jer. 32:38 and Ezk. 37:27).

**Exodus 29:45**  
I will dwell among the sons of Israel and will be their God.

**Leviticus 26**  
I will also walk among you and be your God, And you shall be my people.

**2 Corinthians 6:16**  
...For we are the temple of the living God; just as God said, “I will dwell in them and walk among them; and I will be their God and they shall be my people.”
- F. Lev 6:16-18, 26-28; 7:6, 8-10, 28-36 along with Num. 18:8-19 lie behind Paul’s illustrative argument in 1 Cor. 9:13.

- G. The practice described in Lev. 7:6, 15 (cf. 22:29-30) lies behind 1 Cor. 10:18, “*have not they that eat the sacrifices communion with the altar?*”
1. In the Peace offering, eating the sacrificed flesh continued to have sacrificial, ceremonial significance even on the following day.
  2. This is made evident by the prohibition against eating it on the third day
    - a. The peace offering, if eaten on the third day, “shall not be reckoned to his benefit” (Lev. 7:18, NASB)
    - b. If eaten on the third day, “he has profaned the holy thing of the LORD.” (Lev. 19:8)
    - c. This makes it clear that the act of eating the sacrifice had ritual significance.
- H. Lev. 11:44-45, 19:2, and 20:7 contain the phrase “*You shall be holy, for I am holy,*” with very minor variations, found in 1 Pt. 1:16.

### Conclusion:

- I. In principle, the prohibitions of Lev. 17-18 were not applicable only to OT Israel, but are applicable to all peoples of all times.
  - A. Thus the prohibitions of the Jerusalem letter were not merely advisory, but served as a caveat to the exemption from the Law, noting that some things mentioned in the law have always been prohibited to all men.
  - B. The issue involving “things sacrificed to idols” pertains to participation in the idol feast, not to meat that ends up in the marketplace.
    1. The New Testament does not merely advise against eating things sacrificed to idols, but condemns the activity.
    2. Outward participation in idolatrous activities is not justified by mental reservation (“I know that the idol is nothing.”)
  - C. Eating blood was prohibited for all men from the beginning of God’s permission to eat animals (Gen. 9:6) and is indeed prohibited for us today.
  - D. The exception clause in the divorce passages is not a reference merely to incest.
    1. The exception clauses are not late additions to Jesus’ words reflecting a concern that Jews in Antioch might be offended by instances among Gentiles of marriage between close relatives.
    2. The exception clauses are not merely an acknowledgement that some marriages may be dissolved because they were in fact null and void from the beginning.
    3. The exception clauses refer to illicit sexual activity on the part of a legitimately married woman as *πορνεία*.
  - E. Incest
    1. The only New Testament teaching prohibiting marriage to a close blood relative is the Jerusalem letter (Acts 15:22, 29 and 21:25) interpreted in light of Leviticus 17-18.
    2. If we were to conclude that the Jerusalem letter was merely advisory, it would necessarily follow that marriage between close blood relatives, such as between a brother and sister, is permissible.
- II. Some difficulties remain:

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- A. One may question whether such specific prohibitions as that against sexual relations during a woman's menstrual period are still to be considered fornication today.
1. But it would seem that this too was part of what God found detestable in the Canaanites.
  2. A question may arise as to how reasonable it is to think that the Canaanites, or anyone else prior to the time of Moses, might have understood that sexual relations during a menstrual cycle were prohibited. Possible answers might include
    - a. Revelation from God apart from the Mosaic law.
    - b. Broader application of the Noahic principle that "the life is in the blood" than we are accustomed to making.
  3. If we are to conclude that this specific prohibition is included as a category of fornication, then obviously there is an application we need to make in our own marriages.
  4. On the other hand, we might ought to distinguish between the universal principle and the Mosaic means of upholding it. With this in mind, I suggest, a possible parallel, although in truth, seeing items b and c below as parallel seems to me to be a stretch.
    - a. A universal principle was that idolatry is wrong.
    - b. The Mosaic means of upholding it set out in Lev. 17 was to bring the sacrifices to the doorway of the tent of meeting.
    - c. In parallel fashion, we could see respecting life through its embodiment, blood, as a universal principle.
    - d. And then we could see abstaining from relations during a woman's menstruation as a Mosaic means of upholding that principle.
- B. The matter of marriage between close blood relations is complex.
1. God's word holds up Abraham, who married his half-sister, as a great example of faith.
  2. We suppose marriage between siblings would have been necessary for the propagation of mankind after the creation of Adam and Eve.
  3. But if the perspective presented in this outline is correct, the "fornication" condemned in Acts 15 includes the various sexual relations described in Lev. 18, including relations between siblings.
  4. Possible solutions to this problem include the following:
    - a. It might be argued that Lev. 18 condemns illicit (non-marital) relations between blood relatives, and marriage to a sister is not condemned by God.
      - 1) On the basis of Lev. 18:18 and 20:14, Keil & Delitzsch supposed the prohibition of Lev. 18:6 pertained especially to marital intercourse, but was also applicable to non-marital intercourse. (412)
      - 2) But the same references (18:18, 20:14) could be used by way of contrast (the language "take a wife" is *not* used in 18:6) to argue that 18:6 does not pertain to marital intercourse, but only to non-marital intercourse.

- b. On the other hand, it might be argued that marriage between siblings is wrong, but only became wrong at some point after creation perhaps when genetic defects became a part of the human condition as a result of the fall (Gen. 3).
- c. It might be argued that marriage between siblings is wrong, and Abram's marriage to Sarai was not in accordance with God's will, but was one of those things that God overlooked during the times of ignorance, much as he tolerated polygamy, divorce, and perhaps other things. (cf. Acts 17:30)

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