

INTRODUCTION TO SECTION III
ADDITIONAL MESSAGES ON THE RELIGIOUS SYSTEM OF ISRAEL
Leviticus 21:1-24:9

The next eleven MESSAGES in Leviticus return to discussing additional aspects of the religious system of Israel. This group of MESSAGES was the third group given to Moses on that topic. The first group described the physical equipment for the system, that is, The Tabernacle, its furnishing, and the officiating clothing of the priests. Those MESSAGES were delivered to Moses in the mountain and are recorded in Exodus 25-31. The second group of MESSAGES on the religious system of Israel was delivered from The Tabernacle immediately after it was set up for the first time. They dealt with the offerings to be presented at The Tabernacle (MESSAGES 1-13, Lev. 1-10), the clean-unclean ceremonies (MESSAGES 14-19, Lev. 11-15), and the Day of Coverings (MESSAGE 20, Lev. 16).

This third group of MESSAGES on the religious system of Israel deals with aspects of the religious system that were not covered adequately in the previous MESSAGES. Specifically, they deal with the conduct of the priests and their families (MESSAGE 25, Lev. 21:1-15), factors disqualifying priests from serving at the altar (MESSAGE 26, Lev. 21:16-24), factors disqualifying a priest or members of his household from eating holy foods (MESSAGE 27, Lev. 22:1-16), blemishes disqualifying an animal from being used as an offering (MESSAGE 28, Lev. 23:17-25), other factors disqualifying an animal from being used as an offering (MESSAGE 29, Lev. 22:26-33), the holy convocations (MESSAGES 30-34, Lev. 23), and the oil and bread for the Tabernacle of Meeting (MESSAGE 35, Lev. 24:1-9).

Critical Note

Interpreters of the critical school hold that Leviticus 17-26 was copied and edited from a different document than Leviticus 1-16. They call Leviticus 1-16 the Priestly Code and Leviticus 17-26 the Holiness Code. Their arguments for that view are based on differences in vocabulary and style they purport to find in the two sections. Those arguments are answered in INTRODUCTION TO LEVITICUS [see (5) *Differences in style and vocabulary*]. Additional evidence against that view comes from the content of the two Sections of Leviticus that deal with the religious system of Israel, rather than from the much more elusive question of style. The MESSAGES in the two Sections of Leviticus on the religious system of Israel are too dependent on each other for it to be feasible to believe that they could have come from separate sources. All the information contained in the MESSAGES in this Section III of the Book was necessary to complete the Israelites' understanding of the previous MESSAGES in Section I. The MESSAGES in Section III answer questions that were left unanswered by the previous MESSAGES in Section I and give information without which the Israelites would have been left puzzled and confused in their effort to carry them out. In addition, so many ceremonial requirements are mentioned in Section I (MESSAGES 1-13) that are not adequately explained until Section III (MESSAGES 25-35) and so many details in Section III are total mysteries without the general references to the same items in Section I that it is most unreasonable to hold that the MESSAGES in two Sections of the Book could have come from separate and independent documents, as the critics contend. The information given in Section III of the Book fits too perfectly into the previous revelations and provides too many missing details too adequately for it to be possible for it to have come from a separate document.

One example of the interrelatedness of the two Sections of the Book is that the MESSAGES in Section I often say that an animal had to be pristine to be accepted at the altar, but the qualifications that kept an animal from being pristine are not given until Section III (MESSAGES 28 and 29, Lev. 22: 1-25). Another example is that Section I speaks in various places about feast days to be held once a year, but nothing tells what the Israelites were to do in celebration of those days until Section III (MESSAGES 30-34, Lev. 23). Another example is that MESSAGES 30-34 in Section III (Lev. 23) speak about offerings to be offered on certain feast days, but instructions about how to conduct those offerings were given in Section I (MESSAGES 1-9 Lev. 1-7). Still another example is that Leviticus 1-16 in Section I speaks in a number of places about incense and bread to be displayed in the Holy Place of the Tabernacle, but nothing tells about how to prepare the bread or how to present the incense or the bread until MESSAGE 35 in Section III (Lev. 24:1-9). Still

another example is that Leviticus 17-26, which supposedly was derived from the “Holiness Code,” speaks often of clean and unclean conditions, but the description of what constituted those conditions is found in Leviticus 11-15, which supposedly was derived from the “Priestly Code.”

Because the two Sections of Leviticus that deal with the religious system of Israel are so dependent on each other, either Section without the other would be an almost complete mystery. The differences in style and vocabulary in the two Sections, which the critics emphasize so highly, are not sufficiently striking to overrule the much more obvious fact that the MESSAGES of Section III fit into the MESSAGES I in Section I so perfectly that they complete each other like the pieces of a jig-saw puzzle. When these facts are given their proper weight, they devastate the theory of a separate Holiness document that supposedly formed the basis for Chapters 17-26.