

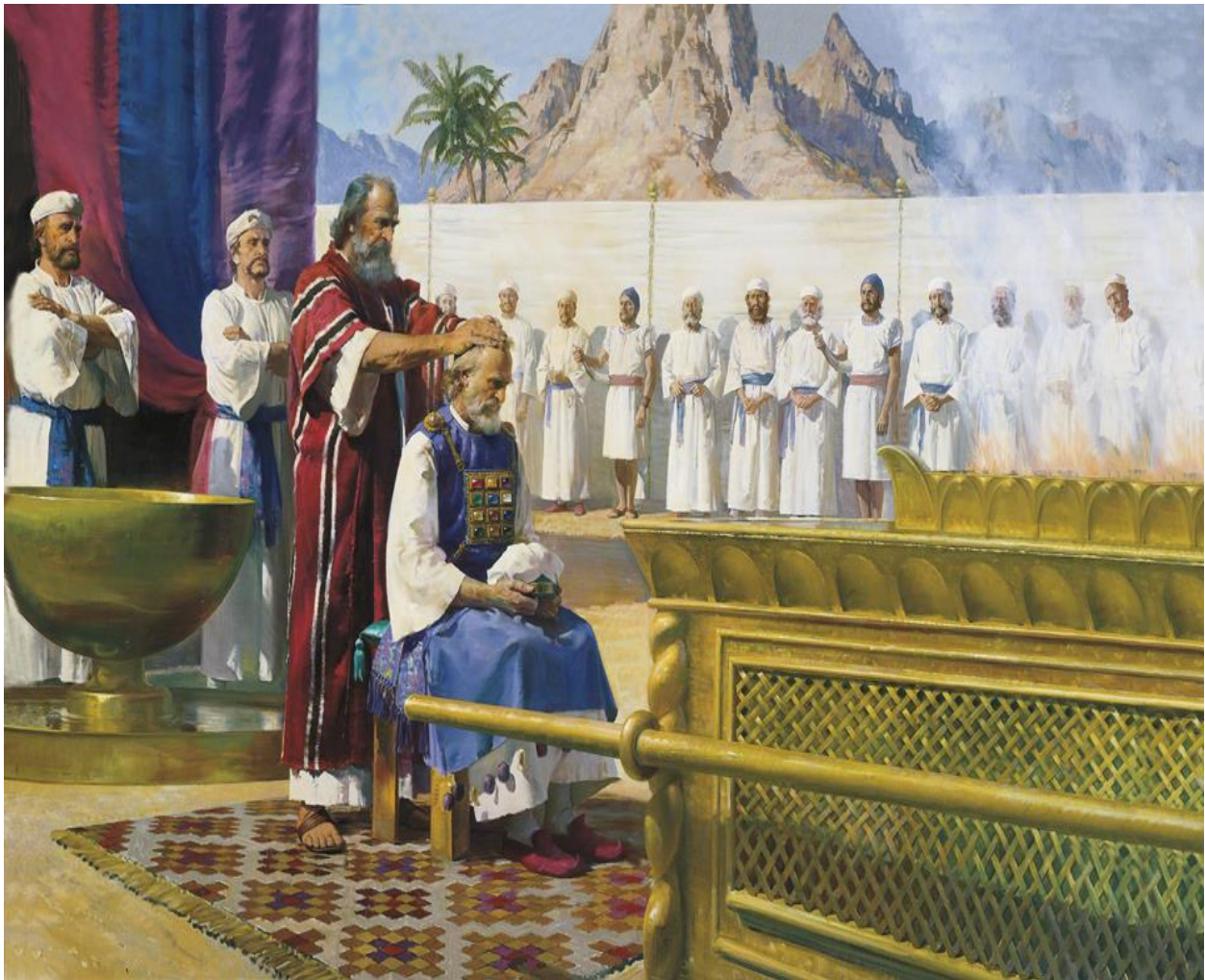
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THE HOLY BIBLE **NKJV** REFERENCE GUIDE

OLD TESTAMENT

BOOK 3

LEVITICUS



Moses Calls Aaron to the Ministry, by Harry Anderson

SUMMARY

Leviticus receives its name from the Septuagint (the pre-Christian Greek translation of the OT) and means "relating to the Levites." Although Leviticus does not deal only with the special duties of the Levites, it is so named because it concerns mainly the service of worship at the tabernacle, which was conducted by the priests who were the sons of Aaron, assisted by many from the rest of the tribe of Levi.

Exodus gave the directions for building the tabernacle, and now Leviticus gives the laws and regulations for worship there, including instructions on ceremonial cleanness, moral laws, holy days, the sabbath year and the Year of Jubilee.

These laws were given, at least for the most part, during the year that Israel camped at Mount Sinai, when God directed Moses in organizing Israel's worship, government and military forces. The book of Numbers continues the history with preparations for moving on from Sinai to Canaan.

Leviticus is a manual of regulations enabling the holy King to set up his earthly throne among the people of his kingdom. It explains how they are to be his holy people and to worship him in a holy manner. Holiness in this sense means to be separated from sin and set apart exclusively to the Lord for his purpose and for his glory.

So the key thought of the book is holiness, the holiness of God and his people (they must revere him in "holiness"). In Leviticus spiritual holiness is symbolized by physical perfection. Therefore the book demands perfect animals for its many sacrifices (chs.1 - 7) and requires priests without deformity (chs.8 - 10).

A woman's hemorrhaging after giving birth (ch.12); sores, burns or baldness (chs.13 - 14); a man's bodily discharge (15:1-18); specific activities during a woman's monthly period (15:19-33) -- all may be signs of blemish (a lack of perfection) and may symbolize human spiritual defects, which break spiritual wholeness.

The person with visible skin disease must be banished from the camp, the place of God's special presence, just as Adam and Eve were banished from the Garden of Eden. Such people can return to the camp (and therefore to God's presence) when they are pronounced whole again by the examining priests. Before they can reenter the camp, however, they must offer the prescribed, perfect sacrifices (symbolizing the perfect, whole sacrifice of Christ).

After the covenant at Sinai, Israel was the earthly representation of God's kingdom (the theocracy), and, as its King, the Lord established his administration over all of Israel's life. Israel's religious, communal and personal life was so regulated as to establish them as God's holy people and to instruct them in holiness.

Special attention was given to Israel's religious ritual. The sacrifices were to be offered at an approved sanctuary, which would symbolize both God's holiness and his compassion. They were to be controlled by the priests, who by care and instruction would preserve them in purity and carefully teach their meaning to the people. Each particular sacrifice was to have meaning for the people of Israel but would also have spiritual and symbolic import.

SUMMARY Continued

Some suppose that the OT sacrifices were remains of old agricultural offerings, a human desire to offer part of one's possessions as a love gift to the deity. But the OT sacrifices were specifically prescribed by God and received their meaning from the Lord's covenant relationship with Israel, whatever their superficial resemblances to pagan sacrifices may have been.

They indeed include the idea of a gift, but this is accompanied by such other values as dedication, communion, propitiation (appeasing God's judicial wrath against sin) and restitution. The various offerings have differing functions, the primary ones being atonement and worship.

NKJV SELECTED SCRIPTURE

- 7:27** *Whoever eats any blood, that person shall be cut off from his people.*
- 18:22** *You shall not lie with a male as with a woman. It is an abomination.*
- 18:23** *Nor shall you mate with any animal, to defile yourself with it. Nor shall any woman stand before an animal to mate with it. It is perversion.*
- 18:29** *For whoever commits any of these abominations, the persons who commit them shall be cut off from among their people.*
- 18:30** *Therefore you shall keep My ordinance, so that you do not commit any of these abominable customs which were committed before you, and that you do not defile yourselves by them: I am the Lord your God.*
- 19:4** *Do not turn to idols, nor make for yourselves molded gods: I am the Lord your God.*
- 19:10** *And you shall not glean your vineyard, nor shall you gather every grape of your vineyard; you shall leave them for the poor and the stranger: I am the LORD your God.*
- 19:31** *Give no regard to mediums and familiar spirits; do not seek after them, to be defiled by them: I am the Lord your God.*
- 26:3** *If you walk in My statutes and keep My commandments, and perform them,*
- 26:6** *I will give peace in the land, and you shall lie down, and none will make you afraid; I will rid the land of evil beasts, and the sword will not go through your land.*
- 26:9** *For I will look on you favorably and make you fruitful, multiply you and confirm My covenant with you.*
- 26:12** *I will walk among you and be your God, and you shall be My people.*
- 27:34** *These are the commandments which the Lord commanded Moses for the children of Israel on Mount Sinai.*

CHARACTER Definitions

ELEAZAR - Eleazar was Aaron's third son by his wife Elisheba. Eleazar became a priest along with his father and three brothers. He married a daughter of Putiel who bore him a son, Phinehas. After his two older brothers, Nadab and Abihu, were killed for making an unholy offering to God, and during his father's lifetime, "he was supervisor over those who had charge of the sanctuary".

When Aaron died at Mount Hor, Eleazar became the high priest. Before Moses died, the Lord instructed Moses to appoint Joshua as his successor, and to "stand before Eleazar the priest and all the congregation". Eleazar served as the high priest through the rest of Moses' life and throughout Joshua's leadership in taking over Canaan.

ITHAMAR - The youngest son of Aaron the High Priest. Following the construction of the Tabernacle, he was responsible for recording an inventory to ensure that the constructed Tabernacle and its contents conformed to the vision given by God to Moses on Mount Sinai.

After the death of his two eldest brothers, Nadab and Abihu, when they had been punished by the Lord for performing an unauthorized sacrificial offering, Ithamar served as a priest along with his elder brother, Eleazar, and Ithamar and Eleazar are regarded as the direct male ancestors of all Kohanim.

Leviticus 10:16-18 records an incident when Moses was angry with Eleazar and Ithamar, for failing to eat a sin offering inside the Tabernacle in accordance with the regulations set out in the preceding chapters of Leviticus regarding the entitlement of the priests to a share of the offerings they made on behalf of the Israelite people.

During the travels of the Israelites in the wilderness, Ithamar was responsible for the work of the sons of Gershon and Merari, the carriers of the Tabernacle fittings and structures, whilst Eleazar was responsible for the work of the sons of Kohath, who carried the cult objects (the ark, the altar and the lampstand). He was also in charge of the work of the Levites in general.

NADAB/ABIHU - Nadab and Abihu were the oldest and second oldest sons of Aaron, the brother of Moses and first high priest of Israel. The names of the sons of Aaron were Nadab the firstborn and Abihu, Eleazar and Ithamar. Those were the names of Aaron's sons, the anointed priests, who were ordained to serve as priests.

Exodus 24 includes Nadab and Abihu as two of the leaders of Israel who came before the Lord. They were given the special privilege of seeing a vision of God: "Moses and Aaron, Nadab and Abihu, and the seventy elders of Israel went up and saw the God of Israel. Under his feet was something like a pavement made of lapis lazuli, as bright blue as the sky. But God did not raise his hand against these leaders of the Israelites; they saw God, and they ate and drank".

Nadab and Abihu are best known, however, for offering "unauthorized fire" before the Lord in the tabernacle and dying as a result. Leviticus 10:1-2 shares this sobering account, stating, "Aaron's sons Nadab and Abihu took their censers, put fire in them and added incense; and they offered unauthorized fire before the LORD, contrary to his command. So fire came out from the presence of the LORD and consumed them, and they died before the LORD."

CHARACTERS Continued

Why did God put Nadab and Abihu to death? Leviticus 10:3 offers the explanation: “Moses then said to Aaron, ‘This is what the Lord spoke of when he said: “Among those who approach me I will be proved holy; in the sight of all the people I will be honored.””

Those who served as priests before the Lord were required to serve Him honorably. If they did not, the consequence was death. In the case of Aaron’s sons, they dishonored the Lord by disobeying His command to only use fire from the brazen altar in the tabernacle. The “unauthorized fire” they offered was taken from another source.

PEACE OFFERING - A peace offering in the Old Testament Law was a voluntary sacrifice given to God in three specific instances. First, a peace offering could be given as a freewill offering, meaning that the worshiper was giving the peace offering as a way to say thank you for God’s unsought generosity. It was basically just a way to praise God for His goodness.

The second way a peace offering could be given was alongside a fulfilled vow. A good example of this was when Hannah fulfilled her vow to God by bringing Samuel to the temple; on that occasion she also brought a peace offering to express the peace in her heart toward God concerning her sacrifice—it was a way to say, “I have no resentment; I am holding nothing back in the payment of my vow.”

The third purpose of a peace offering was to give thanksgiving for God’s deliverance in an hour of dire need. None of these three reasons to sacrifice had anything to do with propitiation, with appeasing God, or with pacifying Him.

There were under the Old Covenant sacrifices intended to represent propitiation but with the understanding that God has always been a God of grace. He does not expect us to appease Him with our works but only to confess our need and dependence on Him. Under the Old Covenant, this relationship was expressed by the sacrificial system, which always looked forward to the sacrifice of the Messiah.

Most sacrifices in the Old Testament system were not eaten by worshipers, but the peace offering was meant to be eaten—only a portion of the animal or grain brought to the altar was burned; the rest was given back to the worshiper and to the poor and hungry.

The beautiful picture here is of God’s provision for His people, both physically and spiritually. His grace and goodness are present throughout the offerings. In the peace offering, God was providing what we need: a way to thank Him for His goodness and physical sustenance.

SIN OFFERING - A sin offering was a sacrifice, made according to the Mosaic Law, which provided atonement for sin. The Hebrew phrase for “sin offering” literally means “fault offering.” The sin offering was made for sins committed in ignorance, or unintentional sins. The ritualistic method of the sin offering and the animal to be offered varied depending on the status of the sinner.

CHARACTERS Continued

For example, a high priest who sinned unintentionally would offer a young bull. A king or a prince would offer a young male goat. People in the private sector would sacrifice a young female goat or lamb, unless they were too poor, in which case they were only required to offer two turtledoves or pigeons.

Again, the sin offering was sacrificed when a person sinned unintentionally by breaking one of the Lord's commandments and later realized his guilt. Sin offerings were also part of the ceremonies on the Day of Atonement, as the high priest made two sin offerings: a bull for himself and a young male goat for the congregation. Unlike some other offerings, the sin offering was not eaten. The live animal was brought to the altar and the sinner was required to lay his hand on the head of the animal.

Then the animal was killed, at which point the priest would take some of the blood and put it on the horns of the altar. In some cases, some of the blood was also sprinkled inside the tabernacle. Then all the rest of the blood was poured at the base of the altar. The fat of the sin offering was removed and burned on the altar.

But all the rest of the carcass was taken "outside the camp to a place ceremonially clean, where the ashes are thrown," and there the carcass was burned "in a wood fire on the ash heap". "In this way the priest will make atonement for them for the sin they have committed, and they will be forgiven".

BURNT OFFERING - The burnt offering is one of the oldest and most common offerings in history. The Hebrew word for "burnt offering" actually means to "ascend," literally to "go up in smoke." The smoke from the sacrifice ascended to God, "a soothing aroma to the LORD".

Technically, any offering burned over an altar was a burnt offering, but in more specific terms, a burnt offering was the complete destruction of the animal (except for the hide) in an effort to renew the relationship between Holy God and sinful man. With the development of the law, God gave the Israelites specific instructions as to the types of burnt offerings and what they symbolized.

The Israelites brought a bull, sheep, or goat, a male with no defect, and killed it at the entrance to the tabernacle. The animal's blood was drained, and the priest sprinkled blood around the altar. The animal was skinned and cut it into pieces, the intestines and legs washed, and the priest burned the pieces over the altar all night. The priest received the skin as a fee for his help. A turtledove or pigeon could also be sacrificed, although they weren't skinned.

A person could give a burnt offering at any time. It was a sacrifice of general atonement—an acknowledgement of the sin nature and a request for renewed relationship with God. God also set times for the priests to give a burnt offering for the benefit of the Israelites as a whole, although the animals required for each sacrifice varied.

GRAIN OFFERING - A grain offering is a type of sacrifice described in the Old Testament that the Israelites offered to God. A grain offering would have most likely been one of wheat or barley, depending on what was available. While other sacrifices had very specific instructions from God as to how they were to be offered, the rules governing grain offerings had some flexibility.

CHARACTERS Continued

A grain offering could be given to God either uncooked or cooked in an oven or pan. The requirements for the grain offering were that it had to be finely ground and have oil and salt in it. It could not have any yeast (also called leaven) or honey in it.

When a person brought a grain offering to the priests, a small portion of it was offered to God, with some frankincense, on the altar. The rest of the grain offering went to the priests. No specific amount of grain was required for an offering; people were free to give what they had.

The grain offering is described as “a most holy part of the food offerings presented to the Lord”. Grain offerings would often be presented after a burnt offering, which was an animal sacrifice God required for the atonement of sin. Blood had to be shed for the remission of sins to take place, so a grain offering would not serve the same purpose as a burnt offering.

Instead, the purpose of a grain offering was to worship God and acknowledge His provision. The burnt offering, which had strict regulations and could have nothing added to it, aptly represents the fact that we take no part in our atonement for sin.

It’s interesting to note that during the Israelites’ forty years of wilderness wandering grain would have been quite scarce. This made grain offerings more costly and precious for the people to offer to God. Giving a grain offering in those circumstances represented the Israelites’ complete dependence on God to provide for their needs each day.

TRESPASS OFFERING - The other mandatory sacrifice was the trespass offering, and this sacrifice was exclusively a ram. The trespass offering was given as atonement for unintentional sins that required reimbursement to an offended party, and also as a cleansing from defiling sins or physical maladies. Again, the fat portions, kidneys, and liver were offered to God, and the remainder of the ram had to be eaten inside the court of the tabernacle.

TABERNACLE - The phrase “tent of meeting” is used in the Old Testament, specifically in Exodus, Leviticus, and Numbers, as the name of a place where God would meet with His people, Israel. Usually, the “tent of meeting” was used as another name for the Tabernacle of Moses.

However, before the tabernacle was constructed, God met with Moses in a temporary tent of meeting: Moses used to take a tent and pitch it outside the camp some distance away, calling it the ‘tent of meeting.’ Anyone inquiring of the Lord would go to the tent of meeting outside the camp.

As Moses went into the tent, the pillar of cloud would come down and stay at the entrance, while the Lord spoke with Moses”. The fact that Moses set up the tent of meeting outside of the camp underscored that the people had broken fellowship with God at Sinai when they had made the golden calf. After the tabernacle was built, Moses no longer needed his temporary tent, and the term tent of meeting began to be applied to the tabernacle.

CHARACTERS Continued

In the Law that God gave Moses, God provided specific instructions to build a place of worship. This “tent of meeting” or tabernacle could be taken up and moved each time they changed locations while wandering in the wilderness. The tabernacle was a temporary dwelling place for the Ark of the Covenant and the other holy items that the Israelites were instructed to use in the worship of and sacrifice to Yahweh.

MOLECH - Molech was an ancient god worshiped by the people neighboring Israel during Old Testament times. While much about Molech's nature and origin are uncertain, the Bible mentions Molech on eight occasions, providing some context regarding the problems associated with this ancient god.

The worship of Molech clearly involved ritual child sacrifice, something God's people were not to practice. This act was punishable by death according to Leviticus 20:2 which states, "Any one of the people of Israel or of the strangers who sojourn in Israel who gives any of his children to Molech shall surely be put to death."

Further, child sacrifice to Molech was considered profanity against God's holy name. Leviticus 20:3 says, "I myself will set my face against that man and will cut him off from among his people, because he has given one of his children to Molech, to make my sanctuary unclean and to profane my holy name." Not only were those who sacrificed their children to be stoned to death, those who ignored such a sacrifice would be abandoned by God.

LEPER - Leprosy is a terrible form of skin disease, still occurring in various parts of the world. Lepers were forbidden by the law to enter any walled city. If a stranger approached, the leper was obliged to cry “unclean.” The disease was regarded as a living death, indicated by bare head, rent clothes, and covered lip.

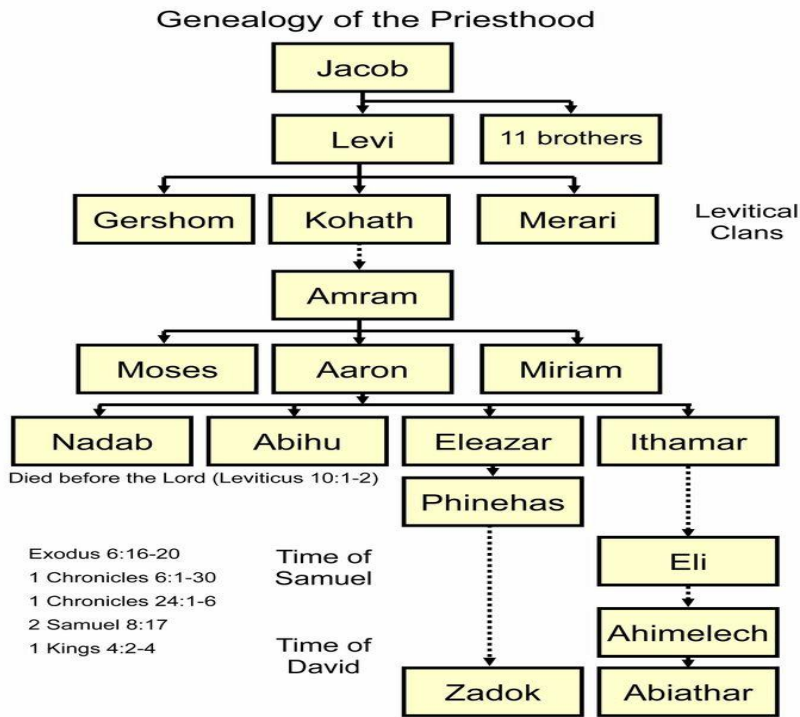
EPHAH - The Hebrew word "ephah" means a particular measure for grain, and "measure" in general. The measurement for an ephah is about 21.14 litres, or ten omers. A dry measure of about 3/5 of a bushel capacity.

HIN - Hin is an ancient Hebrew unit of liquid measure equal to about 1.5 United States gallons (5.7 liters)

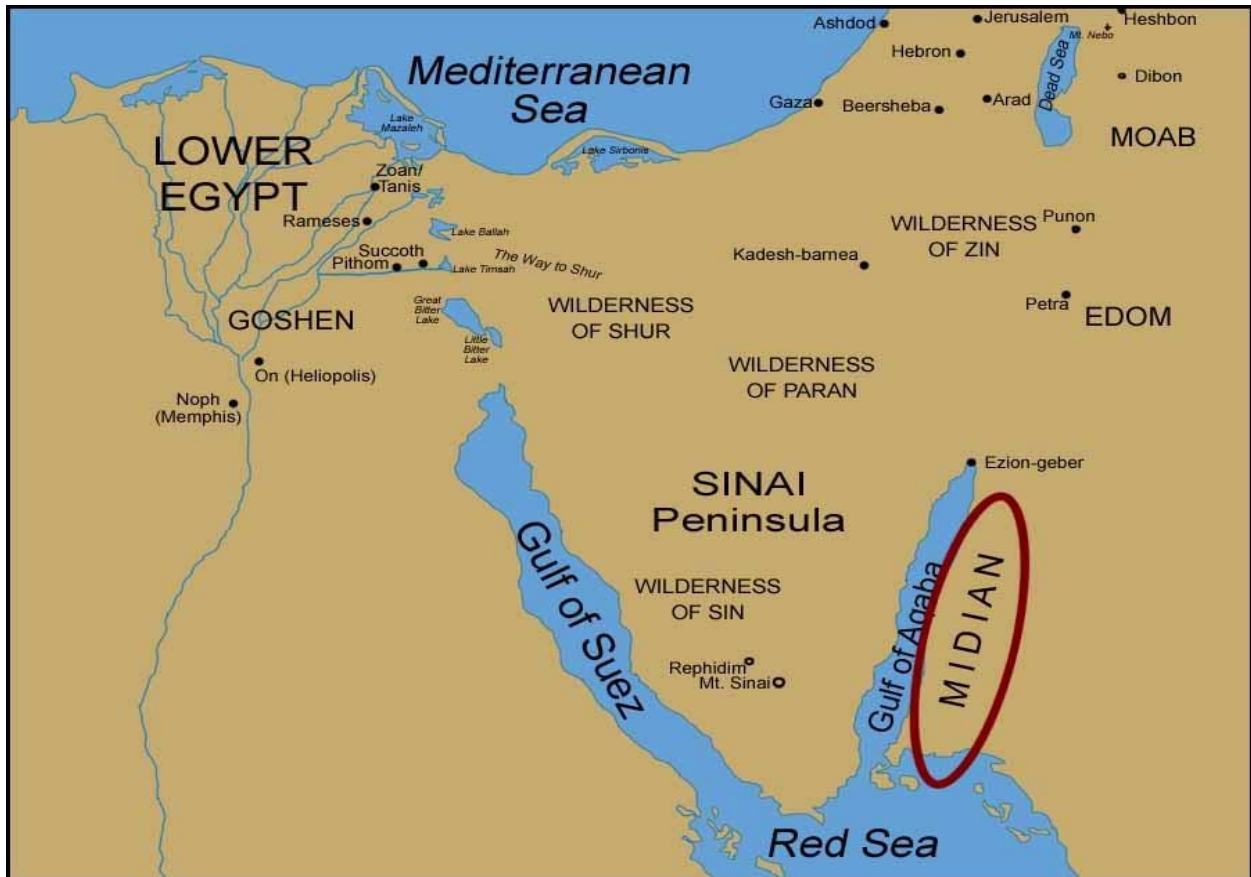
BIBLE TIMELINE

1445 BC	Laws for Sacrifices and Offerings	Leviticus 1 - 7
1445 BC	Aaron and His Sons Consecrated	Leviticus 8, 9
1445 BC	The Sin of Nadab and Abihu	Leviticus 10
1445 BC	Laws of Purity	Leviticus 11 - 19
1445 BC	Punishments and Regulations	Leviticus 20 - 22
1445 BC	Feasts and Jubilee	Leviticus 23

MAP REFERENCES



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