

How then did Yahweh condescend to the importuning Moses in the matter of showing him His glory? "There is a place near Me", He said, "where you may stand on a rock. When My glory passes by, I will put you in a cleft in the rock and cover you with My hand until I have passed by.

Then I will remove My hand and you will see My back; but My face must not be seen".

And that was the closest view of the Lord God Almighty that man had seen since he walked with Him in the Garden of Eden.

(To be continued)

Your Letters



An odd statement

I was fascinated by the article by Brother Peter Cox of the above title ([Apr. 2008, p. 65](#)). We might ask the question, How can humanity so deceive itself as to find credibility in the practice of looking in the liver, and how could the supposed diviner have held such an exalted position as the *baru* (the Babylonian name for the priest who specialised in interpreting the markings on a liver)? The answer is in religious mystique, a phenomenon hard to understand unless one has experienced it. The combination of indoctrination, special buildings and elaborate ritual, combined with an élite priesthood who supposedly were the only ones to have access to divine mysteries, made all this

possible. There can be little doubt that some who practised it really believed in it.

I came close to such an experience a few times as a Roman Catholic. The fusion of all the elements mentioned above, together with a yearning to experience the divine, could become autosuggestive. One interesting aspect of this passage in Ezekiel 21 is found in the words used by the Spirit: ". . . your transgressions are *discovered*, so that in all your doings your sins do appear" (v. 24). The Babylonian *baru* looked in the liver and on the basis of his 'discovery' (based on the markings that 'appeared' in the liver) made his prediction.

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Lessons from the Law for today (2)

John Nicholls

CONTINUING our review of Brother Michael Ashton's book *The Beauty of Holiness*" (for details see [Apr. 2008, p. 46](#)), we come to the Day of Atonement, dealt with in chapter 16 of his book. This was the most important date in Israel's religious calendar. In Leviticus 16:1,2 the instructions to Moses are prefaced by reference to the deaths of Nadab and Abihu, which may suggest that part of their sin was to enter the most holy place.

Only on this day could the high priest enter the most holy place, and, as the writer to the Hebrews says, this underlined the inadequacy of the Law to reconcile men to God (9:8,9). This day

was the tenth day of the seventh month, a day of cleansing the nation that they might rest from their sins (Lev. 16:30,31). It pointed forward to the permanent rest that remains for God's people, both Jew and Gentile, in the Kingdom. On this day the people were to "afflict [their] souls" (v. 29), showing repentance for their sins, underlining the principle throughout Scripture that sins must be repented of and forsaken before there can be forgiveness.

Various offerings were made, including two goats as a sin offering for the people, one of which was released (the scapegoat, or dismissal offering). Aaron could once again wear his robes,

and the joy of the Feast of Tabernacles could follow.

The separation of the nation and the priests

Chapter 17, "Separate from the nations", is about the holy laws that governed Israel. Their sacrifices could not be offered to "devils" (false gods), nor were they to eat blood. Sexual relations could not be entered into with close relatives, nor were they to partake in perverse relationships like homosexuality or bestiality. Child sacrifice was roundly condemned. The continuing belief in gods and devils in New Testament times is also discussed in this chapter.

In his next chapter Brother Michael classifies the crimes described in Leviticus 19 into three categories: those against God (vv. 3-10); those against neighbours (vv. 11-18); and those where Israel might be tempted to compromise with the surrounding nations (vv. 19-37). Leviticus 20 describes sins so serious that they incurred the penalty of death. They are all carefully considered by the author.

Leviticus 21 and 22 concern the responsibilities and qualifications of priests, and Brother Michael calls his chapter 19, "To whom much is given". The separation required of the priests was more stringent than for the ordinary people. The details are listed on page 140. For the high priest it was even greater. He was not allowed to mourn even for his close family, because he symbolised the great high priest to come over whom death no more has dominion. He and his family were to live exemplary lives. Brother Michael suggests that the vocabulary of Leviticus 22 is found in Paul's writings to the Corinthians about marriage out of the Truth (1 Cor. 7:14), and he draws lessons for us.

The religious calendar

Leviticus 23 covers the annual religious calendar, and the various religious "convocations" (assemblies) are considered by the author in his chapter 20. Sabbaths held every seventh day were, as Jesus taught, to be a time of rejoicing, for they pointed to *the* rest of the Kingdom age, when the burdens of sin and death will begin to be lifted in the glorious rule of the Son of David. The Passover, celebrating the deliverance from Egypt, also pointed forward to the Lord as the Passover Lamb, and as the firstfruits sheaf of barley that was waved.

The Feast of Weeks (Pentecost), when the two loaves were waved before the Lord, looked

forward to the preaching to Jews and Gentiles that ensued when Peter preached in Jerusalem at Pentecost, and also to the harvest of firstfruits when Christ returns and raises the dead. The Feast of Tabernacles, after the solemn Day of Atonement, points to the great millennial harvest when the dead are raised at the end of the thousand years and God is all in all as Jesus delivers up the Kingdom to his Father. The author brings out practical exhortation for us at the end of his twentieth chapter.

Leviticus 24 seems at first sight not to fit into the general sequence of chapters dealing with the religious calendar, but Brother Ashton explains why. It deals with the daily devotions of individual Israelites, those days when there was no "holy convocation", but when God still wished His people to remember Him and His ways. Every day in the tabernacle, the lightstand had to be replenished with oil and the wicks trimmed. It was to be attended to "continually". The psalmist brings the lesson home to us: "Thy word is a lamp unto my feet, and a light unto my path" (119:105).

The shewbread was also to be there "continually" and eaten each sabbath in the holy place by the officiating priests. The two rows of loaves spoke of Jews and Gentiles offering faithful service to our God, culminating in fellowship with God on the seventh day. The incident when the Pharisees criticised Jesus' disciples for eating corn on the sabbath, and the Lord's reference to David and his men eating the shewbread, is commented on by the author.

Then the incident of the blasphemer (24:10-16) is dealt with, very well in the reviewer's opinion, and the chapter ends with a brief mention of the more excellent way in Christ for us in this age, who are not a nation but rather individuals called out of all nations for God's Name.

The subject of the religious calendar is resumed in the penultimate chapter of Brother Michael's book, entitled "Liberty and Jubilee". These years were not religious in the sense that there were holy convocations, but they were merciful provisions made by Israel's merciful God, who expected His people to behave in the way that He does towards His people. Sabbath years and Jubilee years are uniquely associated with the God of Israel. They make no business sense, but make every sense if it is accepted that "the land is Mine" (25:23). They are a glimpse of what will come to pass under Christ when the love of money will no longer be the preoccupation of many.

Final thoughts

The last chapter of the book deals with the last two chapters of Leviticus and is called "Perfecting holiness". Blessings for obedience and cursings for disobedience, as in Deuteronomy 28, but not so many, occupy chapter 26. Only through Christ can holiness be perfected, and amongst the people of Israel only the remnant of them will achieve that status. As day by day we strive to follow the example of our Saviour, we can derive much exhortation from Leviticus, for we are not different from the people of those days, although the age we live in has many external differences.

The seemingly curious end to Leviticus in chapter 27 is dealt with by the author, albeit briefly, to round off his book. The closing words of the author are (commenting on the matter of devoting things to God and on the fate of Jephthah's daughter):

"Here is the climax of holiness; all the regulations in Leviticus build up to this great truth. The law recognised that the pursuit of holi-

ness was dogged by man's mortality; he was always being dragged down by submitting to earthly lusts. True and complete devotion to God will only be possible for sinful man when he is freed from sin. If he cannot remain with God for ever, as Christ did, he must die to sin in order that he might live to God: 'No flesh should glory in (God's) presence. But of him are ye in Christ Jesus, who of God is made unto us wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption' (1 Corinthians 1:29,30)".

In conclusion, the book is of value as an introduction to Leviticus to facilitate deeper study, and as a source of exhortation. Those who have not read the other Christadelphian books about the Law (see [Part 1](#) of this review) might be encouraged to do so after reading this book. It is warmly commended to all who strive in the task of "perfecting holiness in the fear of God" (2 Cor. 7:1).

(Concluded)