

Dr. Ted Hildebrandt, Old Testament Literature, Session 13, Case Laws, Leviticus

Resources from NotebookLM

1) Abstract, 2) Audio podcast, 3) Study Guide, 4) Briefing Document, and 5) FAQs

Case Laws, Leviticus

1. Abstract of Hildebrandt, Old Testament Literature, Session 13, Case Laws, Leviticus, Biblicalelearning.org, BeL

This lecture by Dr. Ted Hildebrandt covers the Book of Leviticus, focusing on its themes of holiness and purity laws. He examines an Exodus passage regarding injury to a pregnant woman, arguing it doesn't address abortion directly, despite its use in pro-life arguments. The lecture further explores the concepts of "cult" in Old Testament studies, the distinction between intrinsic and extrinsic religion, and how holiness relates to God's separateness yet intimacy with humanity. Finally, it addresses common criticisms of Leviticus concerning scientific accuracy and its laws regarding diet and sexual behavior.

2. 17 - minute Audio Podcast Created on the basis of Dr. Hildebrandt, Old Testament Literature, Session 13 – Double click icon to play in Windows media player or go to the Biblicalelearning.org [BeL] Site and click the audio podcast link there (Old Testament → Introduction → Old Testament Literature).



**Hildebrandt_OTLit_
Session13.mp3**

3. Hildebrandt, Old Testament Literature, Session 13, Case Laws, Leviticus

Leviticus Study Guide

Quiz

Instructions: Answer each question in 2-3 sentences.

1. What is the difference between apodictic law and case law, as explained in the lecture?
2. According to the lecture, does the case law in Exodus regarding a miscarriage caused by a fight between men directly relate to the issue of abortion? Why or why not?
3. What is the main theme of the book of Leviticus? How does this theme relate to God's nature?
4. In Old Testament studies, how is "cult" defined? Give an example of an act of cult.
5. Explain the difference between something being considered "sacred" and something being "secular," according to the lecture.
6. According to the lecture, what does it mean for God to be "holy"? Give an example.
7. What is the significance of the phrase "incomparability of Yahweh" in the context of holiness?
8. How does the lecture explain the fear of God? What did the instructor say regarding the common interpretation of "fear" as "reverence"?
9. According to the lecture, what are the three states of being described in Leviticus, and what is the general movement between them?
10. Name and briefly describe two of the proposed explanations for the purity laws in the Old Testament.

Quiz Answer Key

1. Apodictic laws are general principle laws, such as "Thou shalt not kill," while case laws are "if-then" scenarios that provide specific examples of how the general laws apply. Case law provides specific details and examples for how to enforce a law, while apodictic laws are overarching principles.

2. No, the case law does not directly relate to abortion. The law addresses unintentional harm to a fetus during a fight between two men, and it was not intended to be a statement about abortion.
3. The main theme of Leviticus is holiness, specifically, "Be holy as I the Lord your God am holy." This theme reflects the idea that God is totally other, separate, and unique, and that His people should reflect His nature.
4. In Old Testament studies, "cult" refers to any external actions symbolizing one's religion. This could include practices like bowing one's head in prayer, specific liturgies, or wearing a t-shirt that expresses one's faith.
5. The lecture explains secular as daily life activities like buying gas or groceries, while sacred includes activities like going to church or praying, however, Leviticus suggests that all of life is sacred.
6. To be holy means to be totally other, separate, and unique. God's holiness implies that he is completely different from anything that exists in creation, he is incomparable and distinct from all else.
7. "Incomparability of Yahweh" emphasizes that God is unlike anything else, that there is nothing that can be compared to Him. This reinforces God's transcendence and uniqueness, which are central to the concept of holiness.
8. The lecture says that the fear of God is not just reverence but also includes the idea of terror and dread and includes respect and obedience. The instructor stated that the common interpretation of "fear" as just "reverence" is insufficient.
9. The three states are holy, clean, and unclean, with movement between them generally moving towards holiness. To go from unclean to clean, there needs to be a cleansing; clean to holy requires sanctification, typically using oil; and profaning holiness moves one away from the chart, as does polluting that which is clean.
10. Two explanations are the cultic/cultural view, which suggests purity laws differentiate Israelites from Canaanites through unique cultural practices like building altars from uncut stones, and the hygienic view, which posits that some laws were designed for physical health and hygiene, such as burying waste outside the camp.

Essay Questions

1. Discuss the significance of the concept of "holiness" in the book of Leviticus and how it shapes the various laws and rituals described in the text, relating it to the idea that the whole of a person's life is sacred.
2. Compare and contrast the different explanations for the purity laws in Leviticus (arbitrary, cultic/cultural, hygienic, and the "yuckiness"/wholeness view) presented in the lecture, and discuss which explanation you find most persuasive.
3. Analyze how the lecture uses specific biblical examples such as Nadab and Abihu, Uzzah, and King Uzziah, to illustrate the consequences of violating God's holiness, and how these examples function in the overall message of Leviticus.
4. Examine the lecture's claim that "the fear of God means the 'fear of God'," including a discussion of whether the idea of fear is compatible with reverence and how this relates to understanding God's holiness.
5. Evaluate the claim that the New Testament concept of Jesus is a continuation of the Old Testament idea of "Messiah" as "the oiled one." Discuss how Jesus fulfills the Old Testament's understanding of holiness and the sacrificial system.

Glossary of Key Terms

- **Apodictic Law:** General principle laws such as "Thou shalt not kill," or "Thou shalt not steal."
- **Case Law:** An "if-then" type of law that gives specific examples.
- **Cult:** In Old Testament studies, any external actions or practices that symbolize one's religion.
- **Elohim:** A Hebrew term for God.
- **Holiness (qadosh):** The state of being totally other, separate, unique, and distinct from all of creation. A key theme in the book of Leviticus.
- **Holy of Holies:** The most sacred space in the Tabernacle or Temple, where God's presence was believed to be most intense.
- **Incomparability of Yahweh:** The idea that there is no one or nothing to whom God can be compared; He is unique and transcendent.

- **Jehovah/Yahweh:** The personal name of God, often represented in English Bibles as LORD (all caps).
- **Kosher:** A term that describes food that meets Jewish dietary requirements.
- **Levites:** Members of the tribe of Levi who were responsible for carrying the Tabernacle equipment.
- **Liturgy:** A set of external acts or formal religious practices in churches, often considered part of the cult.
- **Messiah (Christos):** The “oiled one” in Hebrew, derived from the practice of anointing, translated as "Christ" in Greek.
- **Perez Uzzah:** “The breaking forth on Uzzah” This is what David calls the place where Uzzah died for touching the Ark of the Covenant.
- **Priests:** Descendants of Aaron who ministered at the altar and in the Holy of Holies.
- **Profane:** To treat something sacred with disrespect or contempt; to violate something holy.
- **Sanctification:** The act of making something holy; setting it apart for a special purpose.
- **Sanctuary:** A holy place for worship or a special place, as in a bird sanctuary.
- **Sui Generis:** A Latin term meaning "one of a kind," used to describe God's uniqueness.
- **Shabbat:** The Jewish Sabbath, observed from Friday sunset to Saturday sunset as a day of rest.
- **Secular:** Pertaining to daily life or activities not considered sacred or religious.

4. Briefing Document

Okay, here is a detailed briefing document summarizing the main themes and important ideas from the provided excerpts of Dr. Ted Hildebrandt's lecture on the Book of Leviticus:

Briefing Document: Dr. Ted Hildebrandt on Leviticus

I. Introduction and Course Context

- **Lecture Focus:** This lecture (#13) focuses on the Book of Leviticus, exploring themes of holiness, purity laws, and related problems. Hildebrandt calls Leviticus the most fascinating book in the Old Testament and aims to make it "dance" for the class.
- **Upcoming Assignments:** The class has a break and will then focus on the Book of Joshua, with an associated article on the concept of war, specifically its connection with loving your neighbor.

II. Exodus Law & Case Law

- **Case Law vs. Apodictic Law:** Hildebrandt differentiates between general principle laws ("Thou shalt not kill") and case laws, which are "if-then" scenarios providing specific examples and consequences.
- **Intent and Punishment:** The lecture emphasizes that intent matters in punishment. Accidental death or manslaughter, lacks the "malice and aforethought" that defines murder. He provides the example of a car accident where a driver accidentally kills a bicyclist as an example of manslaughter.
- **Exodus and Abortion:** Hildebrandt discusses a specific case law in Exodus involving a man causing a miscarriage. The lecture emphasizes that this law is not about abortion and should not be interpreted as such. He argues it's about harm to a woman and a fine for the loss of the child and not about taking a position on abortion. He warns against taking verses out of context. *"Be careful about pulling verses out of context of Scripture and using them for a different context for which they were not designed."*

III. Introduction to Leviticus

- **Main Theme:** The central theme of Leviticus is "Be holy as I the Lord your God am holy." The book focuses on the concept of holiness.

- **Levites and Priests:** The book is named after the Levites, who were from the tribe of Levi. Priests are descendants of Aaron and serve at the altar and in the Holy of Holies. Levites are involved in carrying Tabernacle equipment.

IV. Extrinsic and Intrinsic Religion

- Hildebrandt questions if religion is uniquely personal and private, as it often is in our culture. He questions if it is "out of place to speak in the public square."

V. Cult in Old Testament Studies

- **Definition:** In Old Testament studies, "cult" refers to anything done externally to symbolize religion, not a brainwashed group as often thought of today. Examples include bowing heads, crossing oneself, wearing religious attire, or engaging in liturgy. *"Cult is anything you do externally to symbolize your religion."*
- **Cult is not necessarily negative** In this usage it simply refers to external practices and expressions of faith.

VI. Approach to God

- **Holiness and Respect:** The lecture stresses the importance of a proper approach to God, noting God is holy and deserves respect. God does have certain things that are repulsive to him, including gossip.
- **Sacred and Secular:** Leviticus teaches that the whole of a person's life is sacred, not just traditionally "religious" activities. All activities should be done with a view toward God and his presence, including studying, eating, or buying gas. *"What the book of Leviticus tells us is...the whole of a person's life, everything we do is sacred."*

VII. Holiness Theme in Leviticus

- **Key Verse:** "Be holy because I the LORD your God am holy." The "LORD" refers to Yahweh or Jehovah in Hebrew. This concept is mirrored in the New Testament (1 Peter 1:15).
- **Definition of Holiness:** The root idea of holiness is being "totally other"—God is completely different from anything we experience. He is separate from creation, unique, "sui generis," and special. *"The root idea of holiness...totally other. What holiness or qadosh means is that God is totally other, that God is totally different than anything you've ever experienced."*

- **Incomparability of Yahweh:** The lecture refers to Isaiah, highlighting God's incomparability—there is no one to compare him to.

VIII. Holiness and Remoteness

- **Not Remote:** While God is separate and distinct, He is not remote. He dwells with the "contrite and lowly in spirit." This contrasts with the cultural idea of self-promotion. *"He lives with the broken ones."*

IX. Response to Holiness: Fear of God

- **Fear and Terror:** The fear of God includes terror and dread, not just reverence, respect, and obedience. The fear of God is related to his power and ability.
- **Examples of Fear:** Hildebrandt uses his experience at Logan Airport with his son's gun and the possibility of jail as an example of experiencing real fear, which he argues is a proper concept for understanding our relationship with God.

X. Holiness Responses: Cleanness from Sin

- **Shame before God:** Isaiah's encounter with God's holiness (Isaiah 6) leads to a sense of his own uncleanness and shame, but also is followed by purification.

XI. Holiness and a Special People

- **Selection of Israel:** God's holiness led him to select a special, holy people. Israel was to be a kingdom of priests and a holy nation, separate and unique from other nations (Exodus 19:6). *"Out of all the nations of the earth, Israel was special."*

XII. Making Things Holy: Shabbat

- **Sanctification:** Humans can make something holy. The Sabbath is an example of a time set apart and made special.
- **Sabbath Observance:** The Sabbath begins Friday evening and ends Saturday evening. It is a time of rest and celebration.

XIII. Sanctify and Holiness

- **Sanctify:** To sanctify something means "to set it apart." The word "sancti" is the Latin word for holy as in "sanctuary."

XIV. Holy Oil

- **Olive Oil:** In the Bible, oil refers to olive oil and it is considered a holy substance.

- **Anointing:** Oil is used for anointing, which designates a person or object as special. Kings, priests, and objects were often anointed with oil. Messiah means "the oiled one" and the Greek word for "oiled" is "Christos."

XV. Holy Places

- **God's Presence:** Places become holy because of God's presence. Examples include the burning bush, the Holy of Holies, the Temple, Mount Zion, and Mount Sinai. *"God's presence in a place makes it holy."*
- **Special Places:** Individuals can have special places where they have experienced God which they consider holy.

XVI. Holy Days

- **Holidays:** Holy days are special times. "Holy days" become "holidays."
- **Sabbath and Feasts:** The Sabbath and the Jewish feasts are holy days of importance for the Levitical priests. Leviticus chapter 23 details the feasts.

XVII. Violation of Holiness: Nadab and Abihu

- **Consequences:** Nadab and Abihu, Aaron's sons, were consumed for offering unauthorized fire. *"They violate the holiness of God and the holiness of God consumes them."* The lecture highlights the serious consequences for violating holiness.

XVIII. Violating God's Holiness: Uzzah

- **Uzzah's Death:** Uzzah died for touching the ark of the covenant. This shows the seriousness of violating God's holiness. David originally delayed bringing the ark to Jerusalem because of this event.

XIX. Violating Holiness: King Uzziah

- **Leprosy:** King Uzziah was struck with leprosy for offering incense, an action only priests were allowed to do. This is a reminder to not overstep boundaries with God.

XX. Sanctifying Holy Things

- **Designation:** Things are made holy through being designated or sanctified, often by anointing with oil and through touch (laying on of hands).

XXI. Jesus and Holiness

- **Power of Touch:** Jesus is an example of one who can transmit holiness through touch. The woman with the issue of blood is healed when she touches Jesus, and Jesus feels power leave him.

XXII. The Book of Leviticus Chart

- **Three States:** The book of Leviticus involves three states of being: "holy," "clean," and "unclean."
- **Movement Between States:** A major component of the book of Leviticus is movement between these states. One moves from unclean to clean through cleansing, and from clean to holy through sanctification.
- **Profaning and Polluting:** Profaning what is holy is a "slippery slope" that leads one off the chart, meaning it is the worst possible condition. Polluting what is clean has a similar effect.

XXIII. Purity Laws

- **Foreign Culture:** The lecture emphasizes understanding that the purity laws of Leviticus are from a very different culture than our own, and should be examined within their historical and cultural context.
- **Deformity:** Priests with deformities were not allowed to serve in order to keep a pure focus on God.

XXIV. Explanations of Purity Laws

- **Arbitrary:** The idea that God gave purity laws arbitrarily is rejected. God acts with a purpose.
- **Cultural/Cultic:** Some laws were intended to differentiate the Israelites from the Canaanites. *"Hey, you guys, I want you guys to be different than the Canaanites."*
- **Hygienic:** Many purity laws had a hygienic purpose, promoting health and preventing disease.
- **Yuckiness/Wholeness:** Many purity laws are intended to ensure that anything in the presence of God is seen as normal and not yucky to avoid distraction. *"I don't want that which is non-normal...When you come to my presence, everything should be normal so you can focus on me and not be distracted with this other stuff."*

XXV. Kosher Laws

- **Land Animals:** Land animals must have split hooves and chew the cud to be kosher.
- **Sea Creatures:** Sea creatures must have scales and fins to be kosher.
- **Flying Creatures:** Birds of prey are not allowed. Birds that eat blood are prohibited.
- **Insects:** Hoppers (locusts, grasshoppers) are okay. Flyers (bees, mosquitoes) are prohibited.

XXVI. Three Problems in Leviticus

- **Hares:** The claim that hares chew the cud is examined as either a language of appearance (they re-chew food, but it doesn't come from their stomach), a translation problem or as perhaps referring to a rock badger.
- **Bats:** The classification of bats as birds in Leviticus is explained as a difference in classification systems. *"Does the whole world have to use the American classification system?"*
- **Homosexuality:** The prohibition against homosexual behavior in Leviticus is a third problem, which the lecture does not elaborate on at this point.

Conclusion

The lecture provides a comprehensive overview of the Book of Leviticus, focusing on the core concept of holiness and exploring its implications for the lives of the ancient Israelites and, by extension, us. The lecture explores what it means to be holy, how God is holy, how his holiness affects us, and how we are to approach him. It offers various interpretations of the purity laws, and introduces common areas of questions and problems within the book.

5. FAQs on Hildebrandt, Old Testament Literature, Session 13, Case Laws, Leviticus, Biblicalelearning.org (BeL)

Okay, here's an 8-question FAQ based on the provided source, formatted using markdown:

FAQ on Leviticus and Holiness

1. **What is the central theme of the Book of Leviticus?** The primary theme of Leviticus is holiness. It repeatedly emphasizes the command, "Be holy, because I the Lord your God am holy." This call to holiness extends beyond mere ritualistic purity, encompassing all aspects of life. God's holiness serves as the standard that the Israelites, and by extension, believers are to strive towards. It isn't simply about rules, but about reflecting God's very nature in daily life.
2. **How does the Old Testament understanding of "cult" differ from its common modern usage?** In Old Testament studies, "cult" refers to *any* external action that symbolizes religious beliefs or practices. It is not limited to negative connotations like brainwashing or manipulation. Things like bowing one's head in prayer, taking off hats in respect, liturgical practices, or even wearing a T-shirt with a religious message, are considered part of the "cult." In short, it's about the external expression of one's inner faith.
3. **What does it mean for something to be "holy" according to the lecture?** Holiness, or "qadosh" in Hebrew, means "totally other." It signifies that God is completely different and separate from anything else in creation. He is unique, special, and incomparable. Holiness also conveys a sense of separateness and distinction. This separation isn't just about remoteness; it's about God's unique character that transcends any earthly experience. God is totally different from anything we can imagine or compare Him to.
4. **Does God's holiness imply that He is remote and unapproachable?** While God is separate and distinct, His holiness does not mean that He is remote. On the contrary, the Bible emphasizes that God dwells with the "contrite and lowly in spirit," those who are broken and humble. This shows that while God is the "High and Lofty One," He is also deeply concerned about and present with those who are humbled before Him. This emphasizes God's approachability despite his awe-inspiring holiness.

5. **How does Leviticus address the concept of sacred versus secular?** Leviticus teaches that all of life is sacred. This means that every activity, from eating and childbirth to personal hygiene and work, should be considered within the context of God's presence and commands. It moves away from a limited understanding of sacred things being only associated with religious rituals (such as going to church) to the understanding that everything can be sacred if done with a right heart and for the purpose of God. Even the seemingly mundane aspects of life are opportunities for God-honoring living.
6. **What is the significance of anointing with oil in the context of Leviticus?** Anointing with oil is a common practice to set something or someone apart for a specific purpose. It is a symbolic way to designate something as "holy" or specially dedicated to God. This act of anointing was done for priests, kings and certain sacred objects such as the altar. The Messiah is referred to as "the oiled one." In the New Testament, the Greek word for "oiled," Christos, becomes the title for Jesus. It represents consecration, empowerment, and being set apart for God's purposes.
7. **What were some of the explanations given for the purity laws in Leviticus?** Several explanations for the Levitical purity laws were discussed:
 - **Arbitrary:** This view, that God commanded things simply because He willed it, was deemed the least likely explanation.
 - **Cultural/Cultic:** Some laws served as cultural markers, distinguishing the Israelites from Canaanites and emphasizing their unique identity.
 - **Hygienic:** Many rules were understood to have a sanitary purpose (such as disposing of waste outside the camp), suggesting God's concern for their physical wellbeing.
 - **Yuckiness/Wholeness:** Many laws, especially dietary restrictions, are understood through the concept of what a culture deems "yucky" or out of place, therefore making them a distraction from focused worship of God. The main goal was to encourage the Israelites to come to God without being distracted by any outside unclean or "yucky" element.

1. **How does the lecture address the common issues with Leviticus such as the classification of bats and rabbits?** The lecture presents a few examples of things in Leviticus that are often used as "proof" of errors in the Bible: the classification of rabbits as chewing cud and bats as birds. However, the lecture explains that it is important to read these scriptures from a historical and cultural perspective. It is possible that the way the ancients classified the animals were different than modern classifications, or even different translations could create problems. The core point is not to be distracted by such classification and miss the main points that God is trying to convey in Leviticus.