

**Leviticus 19:1 ¶ And the LORD spake unto Moses, saying,
Leviticus 19:2 Speak unto all the congregation of the children of Israel, and say unto them, Ye shall be holy: for I the LORD your God *am* holy.**

This chapter is a record of various and sundry laws that the LORD established for His people through Moses. The purpose—to make them holy, set apart among the peoples of the nations as unique and distinct because of their relationship to Almighty God. It should stand out to the child of God that every part of our life is to be conducted so as to honor the LORD. This command is repeated in the writings of Peter.

1 Peter 1:14–16 “As obedient children, not fashioning yourselves according to the former lusts in your ignorance: But as he which hath called you is holy, so be ye holy in all manner of conversation [behavior]; Because it is written, Be ye holy; for I am holy.”
[brackets mine – from the Greek]

Leviticus 19:3 Ye shall fear every man his mother, and his father, and keep my sabbaths: I *am* the LORD your God.

This verses command that one revere, respect and honor one’s parents and keep God’s Sabbaths. God has given parents authority to act on His behalf in training up *His* children. He made the following declaration to Ezekiel in rebuke of their worship of Molech.

*Ezekiel 16:20–21 “Moreover **thou hast taken thy sons and thy daughters, whom thou hast borne unto me, and these hast thou sacrificed unto them to be devoured. Is this of thy whoredoms a small matter, That **thou hast slain my children, and delivered them to cause them to pass through the fire for them?**”***

Solomon stated it like this: *Psalms 127:3 “Lo, children are an heritage of the LORD....”*

To honor one’s parents in obedience to God’s command is to honor Him as LORD, and keeping the Sabbath honors Him in the same way. These commands mirror the fourth and fifth commandments.

Exodus 20:8–11 “Remember the sabbath day, to keep it holy. Six days shalt thou labour, and do all thy work: But the seventh day is the sabbath of the LORD thy God: in it thou shalt not do any work, thou, nor thy son, nor thy daughter, thy manservant, nor thy maidservant, nor thy cattle, nor thy stranger that is within thy gates: For in six days the LORD made heaven and earth, the sea, and all that in them is, and rested the seventh day: wherefore the LORD blessed the sabbath day, and hallowed it.”

Exodus 20:12 “Honour thy father and thy mother: that thy days may be long upon the land which the LORD thy God giveth thee.”

Leviticus 19:4 Turn ye not unto idols, nor make to yourselves molten gods: I *am* the LORD your God.

God forbids His people to show any type of respect for false gods or make idols acknowledging them in any way. Moses explained this instruction more completely in Deuteronomy.

Deuteronomy 4:15–19 “Take ye therefore good heed unto yourselves; for ye saw no manner of similitude on the day that the LORD spake unto you in Horeb out of the midst of the fire: Lest ye corrupt yourselves, and make you a graven image, the similitude of any figure, the likeness of male or female, The likeness of any beast that is on the earth, the likeness of any winged fowl that flieth in the air, The likeness of any thing that creepeth on the ground, the likeness of any fish that is in the waters beneath the earth: And lest thou lift up thine eyes unto heaven, and when thou seest the sun, and the moon, and the stars, even all the host of heaven, shouldest be driven to worship them, and serve them, which the LORD thy God hath divided unto all nations under the whole heaven.”

As stated in previous chapter studies, God declares that He is the only true God.

Isaiah 44:6 “Thus saith the LORD the King of Israel, and his redeemer the LORD of hosts; I am the first, and I am the last; and beside me there is no God.”

Leviticus 19:5 And if ye offer a sacrifice of peace offerings unto the LORD, ye shall offer it at your own will.

Leviticus 19:6 It shall be eaten the same day ye offer it, and on the morrow: and if ought remain until the third day, it shall be burnt in the fire.

Leviticus 19:7 And if it be eaten at all on the third day, it is abominable; it shall not be accepted.

Leviticus 19:8 Therefore every one that eateth it shall bear his iniquity, because he hath profaned the hallowed thing of the LORD: and that soul shall be cut off from among his people.

The point of this section of verses is that God only wants offerings that are given to Him freely and willingly, but we are to worship Him on His terms and according to His good pleasure. To try to worship Him in any other way is unacceptable and places one outside the boundaries of His fellowship and blessing.

Leviticus 19:9 And when ye reap the harvest of your land, thou shalt not wholly reap the corners of thy field, neither shalt thou gather the gleanings of thy harvest.

Leviticus 19:10 And thou shalt not glean thy vineyard, neither shalt thou gather every grape of thy vineyard; thou shalt leave them for the poor and stranger: I am the LORD your God.

In these verses the LORD makes provision for the poor. When reaping one's harvest, they were not to go back and collect the gleanings, that part of the harvest left after the original reaping. Implicit in this command was that one was not to reap completely to the edges of the field and that gleanings should be left after reaping the main part of the harvest. The gleanings were to provide food for the poor and the stranger that might be traveling through the land. Again this instruction is stated more completely in Deuteronomy.

Deuteronomy 24:19–22 “When thou cuttest down thine harvest in thy field, and hast forgot a sheaf in the field, thou shalt not go again to fetch it: it shall be for the stranger, for the fatherless, and for the widow: that the LORD thy God may bless thee in all the work of thine hands. When thou beatest thine olive tree, thou shalt not go over the boughs again: it shall be for the stranger, for the fatherless, and for the widow. When thou gatherest the grapes of thy vineyard, thou shalt not glean it afterward: it shall be for the stranger, for the fatherless, and for the widow. And thou shalt remember that thou wast a bondman in the land of Egypt: therefore I command thee to do this thing.”

The LORD will continue to emphasize that these commands are being made on the authority of “the LORD your God,” the only rightful authority over man.

Leviticus 19:11 ¶ Ye shall not steal, neither deal falsely, neither lie one to another.

This verse prohibits God’s people from stealing, being deceitful in dealing with one another and lying. Reminds me of the following verses in Proverbs and two more commandments.

Proverbs 6:16–19 “These six things doth the LORD hate: yea, seven are an abomination unto him: A proud look, a lying tongue, and hands that shed innocent blood, An heart that deviseth wicked imaginations, feet that be swift in running to mischief, A false witness that speaketh lies, and he that soweth discord among brethren.”

Exodus 20:15–16 “Thou shalt not steal. Thou shalt not bear false witness against thy neighbour.”

Leviticus 19:12 And ye shall not swear by my name falsely, neither shalt thou profane the name of thy God: I am the LORD.

This is a repetition of the third commandment: *Exodus 20:7 “Thou shalt not take the name of the LORD thy God in vain; for the LORD will not hold him guiltless that taketh his name in vain.”*

Webster states that to “profane” God’s name is to treat it “with contempt, disrespect, irreverence, or undue familiarity.” Frankly, this is even rife throughout the Christian community today with the use of the phrase “O my God” as a common exclamation. Obviously, to swear to do something with God as your witness or in His name and then not do it profanes His name.

Leviticus 19:13 Thou shalt not defraud thy neighbour, neither rob him: the wages of him that is hired shall not abide with thee all night until the morning.

The Hebrew for “defraud” includes reference to oppression, deceit and violence; to “rob” includes a reference to using force. In context, I think the main thrust of this verse concerns dealing fairly with employees. They should be treated humanely and honestly and should be paid immediately for services rendered.

In today's culture we would translate that to being paid on time (whether daily, weekly, or monthly).

Leviticus 19:14 Thou shalt not curse the deaf, nor put a stumblingblock before the blind, but shalt fear thy God: I *am* the LORD.

Isn't it sad to think that God had to issue a command that one not mistreat or make fun of a handicapped person—especially one that is deaf or blind? Though one may not have to fear repercussion from the handicapped person, God declares that one should fear Him and His judgment against such actions.

Leviticus 19:15 Ye shall do no unrighteousness in judgment: thou shalt not respect the person of the poor, nor honour the person of the mighty: *but* in righteousness shalt thou judge thy neighbour.

If only our courts today were concerned about true justice! God commands His people to be no respecter of persons (no matter their circumstances—rich or poor, highly regarded or not) in matters requiring adjudication.

Leviticus 19:16 Thou shalt not go up and down *as* a talebearer among thy people: neither shalt thou stand against the blood of thy neighbour: I *am* the LORD.

This verse commands that people not gossip about or slander one another. In fact, one shouldn't do anything that could threaten a neighbor's life. In light of the previous verse, this would also be a command that one serve as an honest witness in court.

Leviticus 19:17 Thou shalt not hate thy brother in thine heart: thou shalt in any wise rebuke thy neighbour, and not suffer sin upon him.

Leviticus 19:18 Thou shalt not avenge, nor bear any grudge against the children of thy people, but thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself: I *am* the LORD.

We often hear how Jesus revealed in the Sermon on the Mount (Matthew 5-7) that sin happens in our heart; this verse declares that same truth. The Old Testament is full of verses that tell us that God is just as concerned with what happens in our heart, in our thoughts, just as surely as He is concerned about what we actually do.

1 Samuel 16:7 "...for the LORD seeth not as man seeth; for man looketh on the outward appearance, but the LORD looketh on the heart."

Genesis 6:5 "And GOD saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every imagination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually."

Psalms 95:10 "Forty years long was I grieved with this generation, and said, It is a people that do err in their heart, and they have not known my ways...."

Proverbs 6:16–18 “These six things doth the LORD hate...An heart that deviseth wicked imaginations....”

Proverbs 11:20 “They that are of a froward heart are abomination to the LORD....”
“froward” = Not willing to yield or comply with what is required or is reasonable; perverse; disobedient

Ecclesiastes 9:3 “This is an evil among all things that are done under the sun, that there is one event unto all: yea, also the heart of the sons of men is full of evil....”

Jeremiah 17:5 “Thus saith the LORD; Cursed be the man that trusteth in man, and maketh flesh his arm, and whose heart departeth from the LORD.”

I read many translations of this verse in Leviticus, and didn't really think that any of them were clear. I think the main point is that one isn't to hold a grudge against a neighbor because that just gives root to bitterness and bad behavior. If you have something against your neighbor, tell him, reason with him—then leave it to the LORD. Don't let it lead to thoughts of vengeance. Vengeance rightfully belongs only to God.

Deuteronomy 32:35 “To me longeth vengeance....”

Romans 12:19 “Dearly beloved, avenge not yourselves, but rather give place unto wrath: for it is written, Vengeance is mine; I will repay, saith the Lord.”

The surest way to avoid such evil is to “love your neighbor as yourself.” Easily said, but very hard to do. Jesus takes this command even further.

Matthew 5:43–45 “Ye have heard that it hath been said, Thou shalt love thy neighbour, and hate thine enemy. But I say unto you, Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you, and persecute you; That ye may be the children of your Father which is in heaven: for he maketh his sun to rise on the evil and on the good, and sendeth rain on the just and on the unjust.”

Leviticus 19:19 ¶ Ye shall keep my statutes. Thou shalt not let thy cattle gender with a diverse kind: thou shalt not sow thy field with mingled seed: neither shall a garment mingled of linen and woollen come upon thee.

This commandment prohibits breeding different kinds of animals, planting two kinds of seed in one field and making clothes using two different kinds of materials. Its parallel is found in Deuteronomy.

Deuteronomy 22:9–11 “Thou shalt not sow thy vineyard with divers seeds: lest the fruit of thy seed which thou hast sown, and the fruit of thy vineyard, be defiled. Thou shalt not plow with an ox and an ass together. Thou shalt not wear a garment of divers sorts, as of woollen and linen together.”

There is an obvious difference in the meaning regarding the cattle between the two sections of scripture. The NIV Commentary records that “the LXX on Lev 19:19 can be read, “You shall not hold down your animals with an unequal yoke.” This would seem to make more sense and parallels much more naturally with the record in Deuteronomy.

The instruction on planting was a bit harder to understand. JFB records that “this also was directed against an idolatrous practice, namely, that of the ancient Zabians, or fire-worshippers, who sowed different seeds, accompanying the act with magical rites and invocations.” God very clearly wanted His people to be unique from the heathen nations surrounding them. JFB quotes Whitlaw in stating that there were also health issues to be considered. They inform that mixing seeds of grains and flowers in the same field produce an inferior product when the pollens mix. Such food products can be harmful to both animals and men that eat them.

Again quoting Whitlaw, JFB also provided information regarding the mixing of wool and linen: “...the observations and researches of modern science have proved that ‘wool, when combined with linen, increases its power of passing off the electricity from the body. In hot climates, it brings on malignant fevers and exhausts the strength; and when passing off from the body, it meets with the heated air, inflames and excoriates like a blister.’”

Leviticus 19:20 And whosoever lieth carnally with a woman, that is a bondmaid, betrothed to an husband, and not at all redeemed, nor freedom given her; she shall be scourged; they shall not be put to death, because she was not free.

Leviticus 19:21 And he shall bring his trespass offering unto the LORD, unto the door of the tabernacle of the congregation, *even* a ram for a trespass offering.

Leviticus 19:22 And the priest shall make an atonement for him with the ram of the trespass offering before the LORD for his sin which he hath done: and the sin which he hath done shall be forgiven him.

David Guzik provides a good explanation of these verses: “This is the situation described: A slave girl is engaged to marry a free man, and then a different man has sex with her. Normally, the penalty was death; but because the woman was a slave, and was presumed to be not free to resist (or guarded by a father), the penalty was not death. Yet, she was not marriable to her fiancée, so he must be reimbursed (the punishment mentioned). Then the moral guilt would be settled by sacrifice, and presumably, the man who had sex with her would be obliged to marry her.”

Leviticus 19:23 And when ye shall come into the land, and shall have planted all manner of trees for food, then ye shall count the fruit thereof as uncircumcised: three years shall it be as uncircumcised unto you: it shall not be eaten of.

Leviticus 19:24 But in the fourth year all the fruit thereof shall be holy to praise the LORD *withal*.

Leviticus 19:25 And in the fifth year shall ye eat of the fruit thereof, that it may yield unto you the increase thereof: I am the LORD your God.

The reading of the text seems straightforward, but the reason behind this commandment is not apparent. Obviously, I'm looking heavily to different commentaries to gain understanding. Again JFB provides good information quoting Michaelis: "The wisdom of this law is very striking. Every gardener will teach us not to let fruit trees bear in their earliest years, but to pluck off the blossoms: and for this reason, that they will thus thrive the better, and bear more abundantly afterwards. The very expression, "to regard them as uncircumcised," suggests the propriety of pinching them off; I do not say *cutting* them off, because it is generally the hand, and not a knife, that is employed in this operation."

Leviticus 19:26 Ye shall not eat *any thing* with the blood: neither shall ye use enchantment, nor observe times.

Leviticus 19:27 Ye shall not round the corners of your heads, neither shalt thou mar the corners of thy beard.

Leviticus 19:28 Ye shall not make any cuttings in your flesh for the dead, nor print any marks upon you: I am the LORD.

The prohibitions in these verses are in direct refutation of adopting practices associated with idol worship and the culture of surrounding heathen nations.

It was already noted in Leviticus 17 that the Israelites were not to eat meat with blood. I think the emphasis in that chapter was in connection with the importance of respecting life and God's authority over life. In this section I think the command is given in light of its connection to idol worship.

Enchantment alludes to using magic spells. "Observing times" is also connected to using sorcery and witchcraft in connection with evil spirits.

The rest of these commands address the style of men's hair and beard, body markings and tattoos. Again, these were predominant in the heathen cultures around Israel. Maybe the markings were associated with particular idols similar to how gang members make identifying marks on their bodies today.

Obviously, Christians today do not live under the law. We should, however, pay attention to the principles addressed by these laws. It seems clear to me that the LORD expects His people to stand out as unique and separate from the world in general. Paul stated it as follows in his letter to the Corinthians.

2 Corinthians 6:14–18 "Be ye not unequally yoked together with unbelievers: for what fellowship hath righteousness with unrighteousness? and what communion hath light with darkness? And what concord hath Christ with Belial? or what part hath he that believeth with an infidel? And what agreement hath the temple of God with idols? for ye are the temple of the living God; as God hath said, I will dwell in them, and walk in them; and I will be their God, and they shall be my people. Wherefore come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing; and I will

receive you, And will be a Father unto you, and ye shall be my sons and daughters, saith the Lord Almighty."

Christians need to understand that one's testimony before the world is important. If the way we live does not testify to having higher morals, ethics and deportment than the world around us, why should they think that turning to God in faith for salvation is important?

Leviticus 19:29 Do not prostitute thy daughter, to cause her to be a whore; lest the land fall to whoredom, and the land become full of wickedness.

In context with the previous verses, I would assume this command also to be related to idol worship. History records that in many pagan cultures it was considered to be an honor to be chosen to serve as a temple prostitute in connection with the worship of false gods.

Leviticus 19:30 ¶ Ye shall keep my sabbaths, and reverence my sanctuary: I am the LORD.

Having given so many commands forbidding His people to adopt any practices associated with idol worship, the LORD again declares that His people are to keep His Sabbaths and honor His sanctuary. He is the self-existent, eternal God—the one and only. I don't think this truth can be declared too often.

Isaiah 44:6 "Thus saith the LORD the King of Israel, and his redeemer the LORD of hosts; I am the first, and I am the last; and beside me there is no God."

Leviticus 19:31 Regard not them that have familiar spirits, neither seek after wizards, to be defiled by them: I am the LORD your God.

Those who claim to make contact with familiar spirits are today known as mediums; they claim to be able to make contact with the dead. Sometimes they make actual contact without knowingly using deceit—but that contact is with evil spirits that deceive the foolish (both the medium and the client) by impersonating the dead.

The Hebrew for "wizard" makes reference to one who can call up ghosts, just another term for the same kind of deception common to evil spirits. The penalty for disobedience—death by stoning.

Leviticus 20:27 "A man also or woman that hath a familiar spirit, or that is a wizard, shall surely be put to death: they shall stone them with stones: their blood shall be upon them."

Again the statement, "I am the LORD your God." Implied—whether you choose to accept me as such or not. And sadly, scripture reveals that few relative to the whole will accept Him.

Matthew 7:13–14 “Enter ye in at the strait gate: for wide is the gate, and broad is the way, that leadeth to destruction, and many there be which go in thereat: Because strait is the gate, and narrow is the way, which leadeth unto life, and few there be that find it.”

Leviticus 19:32 Thou shalt rise up before the hoary head, and honour the face of the old man, and fear thy God: I *am* the LORD.

This verse commands that God’s people honor and respect their elders, the old among them. This command comes with a warning; one should obey because he fears and reverences God. The old person may be helpless, but God is not.

When people do not honor God as their Creator or accept the morals and ethics established in His word, the culture quickly grows to have no respect for the life of the unborn, the weak, the elderly or anyone else considered not useful or a burden on society.

Leviticus 19:33 And if a stranger sojourn with thee in your land, ye shall not vex him.

Leviticus 19:34 But the stranger that dwelleth with you shall be unto you as one born among you, and thou shalt love him as thyself; for ye were strangers in the land of Egypt: I *am* the LORD your God.

These verses command that God’s people welcome strangers among them and treat them like they belong. The reminder—You were once strangers in the land of Egypt. Implied—remember how badly you were treated.

When Jacob and his family took up residence in Egypt, it was at the invitation of and as honored guests of the Pharaoh who was honoring Joseph. At one point in that 400 year period a new king came to power that did not know Joseph and was threatened by the sheer numbers and strength of the people of Israel in his land. So he made them slaves, and they suffered greatly until God sent Moses to deliver them.

Again the refrain—“I *am* the LORD your God.”

Leviticus 19:35 Ye shall do no unrighteousness in judgment, in meteyard, in weight, or in measure.

Leviticus 19:36 Just balances, just weights, a just ephah, and a just hin, shall ye have: I *am* the LORD your God, which brought you out of the land of Egypt.

Leviticus 19:37 Therefore shall ye observe all my statutes, and all my judgments, and do them: I *am* the LORD.

This command instructs the people to conduct business honestly. They were not to cheat others by using faulty weights and measures. Once more, there is a mirror passage in Deuteronomy.

Deuteronomy 25:13–16 “Thou shalt not have in thy bag divers weights, a great and a small. Thou shalt not have in thine house divers measures, a great and a small. But thou shalt have a perfect and just weight, a perfect and just measure shalt thou have: that thy

days may be lengthened in the land which the LORD thy God giveth thee. For all that do such things, and all that do unrighteously, are an abomination unto the LORD thy God."

Again the command comes with a warning. Remember that I am the LORD your God that brought you out of the land of Egypt with a mighty show of my power authority through miracles. In light of that truth, you should obey everything I tell you to do.