

## Some Pointers on the Buildup of Leviticus 1–7

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Reading through Leviticus 1–7 might raise the question how the different parts relate to each other, because some themes are taken up more than once. Section headings (titles) can help or hinder the reader's orientation about the outline of these chapters. The notes below are mainly meant to help translators realize how the different sections belong together, and to use section headings that help their readers to see the same.

### 1. Speech introduction formulas in Leviticus

In Leviticus, we encounter the following formulas in these places (versification as in MT):

- Then the Lord spoke to Moses, saying,

וַיְדַבֵּר יְהוָה אֶל־מֹשֶׁה לֵאמֹר

Lev 4:1; 5:14; 5:20; 6:1; 6:12; 6:17; 7:22; 7:28; 8:1; 12:1; 14:1; 17:1; 18:1; 19:1; 20:1; 21:16; 22:1; 22:17; 22:26; 23:1; 23:9; 23:23; 23:26; 23:33; 24:1; 24:13; 27:1 (and Ex 6:10 *passim*; Num 1:48 *passim*).

+ Lev 16:1 without לֵאמֹר *lē'mōr*.

- Then the Lord spoke to Moses and to Aaron, saying,

וַיְדַבֵּר יְהוָה אֶל־מֹשֶׁה וְאֶל־אַהֲרֹן לֵאמֹר

Lev 11:1; 13:1; 14:33; 15:1 (and Num 2:1 *passim*).

+ Ex 6:13 without לֵאמֹר *lē'mōr*.

- Then the Lord spoke to Aaron, saying,

וַיְדַבֵּר יְהוָה אֶל־אַהֲרֹן לֵאמֹר

Lev 10:8.

+ Num 18:8 without לֵאמֹר *lē'mōr*.

- Speak to Aaron and to his sons, saying,

דַּבֵּר אֶל־אַהֲרֹן וְאֶל־בָּנָיו (לֵאמֹר)

Lev 6:18; 17:2; 22:2; 22:18 (and Num 6:23).

Lev 17:2 and 22:18 are special in that the formula continues “and to all the sons of Israel”.

Further variations included these:

- Speak to Aaron  
Lev 21:17
- Speak to Aaron, your brother  
Lev 16:2
- Speak to Aaron and say to him,  
Num 8:2

- Speak to the sons of Israel, saying,

דַּבֵּר אֶל־בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל לֵאמֹר

Lev 4:2; 7:23/29; 12:2; 23:24/34 (and Ex 31:13; Num 9:10; Josh 20:2).

- Speak to the sons of Israel and say to them,

דַּבֵּר אֶל־בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל וְאָמַרְתָּ אֲלֵהֶם

Lev 1:2; 18:2; 23:2; 23:10; 25:2; 27:2; (and Num 5:12 etc.)

- Speak [plur.] to the sons of Israel and say [plur.] to them,

דַּבְּרוּ אֶל־בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל וְאָמַרְתֶּם אֲלֵהֶם

Lev 15:2.

- The Lord said (with the verb אָמַר 'mr):

In Lev, only twice:

- Lev 16:2: The Lord said to Moses: “Tell your brother Aaron

וַיֹּאמֶר יְהוָה אֶל־מֹשֶׁה דַּבֵּר אֶל־אַהֲרֹן אָחִיךָ

- Lev 21:1: Then the Lord said to Moses, “Speak to the priests, the sons of Aaron, and say to them:

וַיֹּאמֶר יְהוָה אֶל־מֹשֶׁה אָמַר אֶל־הַכֹּהֲנִים בְּנֵי אַהֲרֹן וְאָמַרְתָּ אֲלֵהֶם

(and Ex 4:4 *passim*; Num 3:40 *passim*)

- This is the law for ...

... זֹאת תֹּוֹרַת

Lev 6:2; 6:7; 6:18; 7:1; 7:11; 11:46; 12:7; 13:59; 14:32; 14:57; 15:32 (and Num 5:29; 6:13/21; 2Sa 7:19; Ezk 43:12 (2x)).

This last phrase is cataphoric (pointing forward) in these places:

Lev 6:2; 6:7; 6:18; 7:1; 7:11.

It is anaphoric (referring backwards) in the following places:

11:46; 12:7; 13:59; 14:32; 14:57; 15:32.

**In translation**, this list should be helpful in being consistent in the wording, and in dividing up the text.

As to the first three formulas, they differ in whether Moses is addressed, or Moses and Aaron together, or only Aaron. In the fourth one, Aaron is addressed through Moses. The next two can hardly be distinguished and might be a stylistic variation.

Regarding the last formula, it is noteworthy that the cataphoric and anaphoric cases are almost equal in number – and it so happens that there is no back and forth between them: from 11:46 onward, all are anaphoric.

#### **Additional note: “permanent ordinance”**

The expression “permanent ordinance / perpetual statute” occurs in the following forms:

חֻק־עוֹלָם Lev 6:11/15; 7:34; 10:15; 24:9 (and in Ex 29:28; 30:21; Num 18:8/11/19; Jer 5:22).

חֻקַּת עוֹלָם Lev 3:17; 7:36; 10:9; 16:29/31/34; 17:7; 23:14/21/31/41; 24:3 (and in Ex 12:14/17; 27:21; 28:43; 29:9; Num 10:8; 15:15; 18:23; 19:10/21; Ezek 46:14).

## **2. The themes and outline of Leviticus 4–5 [Engl. 4:1 – 6:7]**

- Chapters 4–5 deal with the purification offering and the reparation offering. Something that ties both these offering types together is the issue of “inadvertence / acting unintentionally” (שְׁגָגָה *šgāgā* 4:2 *passim*; שְׁגָה *šgh* 4:13).
- One slight difficulty for understanding Lev 5:14-26 is that the passage speaks of the “reparation [guilt] offering”, but the procedural details of such an offering are not spelled out until Lev 7:1-7.

**In translation**, two points to pay attention to are the following:

(1) One should use suitable section headings

(2) Regarding Lev 5:6-7, it is crucial what the *Handbook* (UBS, Péter-Contesse and Ellington, 1990) – in agreement with the commentaries – explains like this:

[on v. 6:] the mention of the **guilt offering** in this verse causes a great deal of confusion. The word used here is the same as the technical term for the guilt or repayment offering discussed in verses 14-16, but in this case it is not to be taken in its technical sense. Rather it is used to mean “as his penalty” (see TEV, NEB, NIV, and NJV).

[on v. 7:] ... **As his guilt offering**: as in verse 6 above, this is another nontechnical use of the same word that is also used for the “guilt offering” later in this chapter. Here it means “what he is required to bring,” “as his penalty,” or “as his punishment,” as in the preceding verse.

The table below is simply meant to help a translator understand how the various paragraphs in these two chapters contribute to the teaching about the purification- and the reparation-offerings (traditionally called sin- and guilt-offerings).

<b>Table: The themes of the sections in Leviticus 4–5 [Engl. 4:1 – 6:7]</b>					
<b>Major divisions</b>	<b>Suggested section headings</b>	<b>Reference</b>	<b>Theme</b>	<b>Effect (negative)</b>	<b>Effect (positive)</b>
<b>Purification offering</b> ( <i>trad.</i> sin offering)	The Purification Offering: Requirements	4:1-35	- which kind of animal for which kind of person - procedures		atonement & forgiveness (vv. 20/26/31/35)
	The Purification Offering: Occasions and further procedures ( <i>Or</i> : Cases Requiring Purification Offerings (cf. GNTD) / Additional Regulations for the Purification Offering (cf. NET)	5:1-4	- cases that require a sin offering	sin caused by the neglect to purify oneself, due to unawareness of impurity, etc.	
		5:5-13 (The Hebrew syntax does not demand a paragraph brake at v. 5, but thematically it would be justified.)	- further procedures - exception for the poor		atonement & forgiveness (v. 10/13) (+ v. 6: atonem.)
<b>Reparation offering</b> ( <i>trad.</i> guilt offering)	The Reparation / Repayment Offering	5:14-19	- what requires a guilt offering: withholding of holy things - basic rules	holy things desacrated	atonement & forgiveness (v. 16/18)
	Sins Requiring a Reparation Offering (cf. NLT) / (NET: Trespass by Deception and False Oath)	5:20-26 [Engl. 6:1-7]	- further cases: fraud, robbery etc.	neighbor / fellow incurred loss	atonement & forgiveness (v. 26)

### 3. How do Lev 1–5 and Lev 6–7 relate to each other?

**Chapters 1–5 are mainly for the layman, chapters 6–7 mainly for the priests.** Ch. 6–7 “presume knowledge” of ch. 1–5, and their “supplementary nature” is evident (Milgrom (AB 3, 1991) 438), i.e. they add information that was not included in ch. 1–5.

Milgrom judges (382):

... In chaps. 1–5 the anonymous subject is the layman, and whenever the subject is the priest he is named. In ch. 6 the situation is reversed: the anonymous subject is the priest (6:3, 4, 5, 8, 20). By contrast, 7:1-7 reveals a mixed style (see the Notes) and 7:11-36, addressed to Israel, once again makes the anonymous subject the layman. ... [see also 412f.]<sup>1</sup>

**In translation,** this means that, for instance, in 1:6 we may explicate the 3. person “he” as “the offerer”, whereas 6:8 [English 15] “he” is “the priest / one of the priests”.

Milgrom concludes:

... chaps. 1–5 can be called “didactic,” informing the laity of its role in the sacrificial service, whereas chaps. 6–7 are “administrative,” stressing matters of interest to the priests (Rainey 1970).

**Further discussion:** Hartley (WBC, 1992) (92-96) provides a thorough outline of chs. 6–7 and makes observations on the formulas and summary statements used, but his explanations are rather source-critical. – Anyhow, he takes a slightly different perspective from the above when he concludes regarding chs. 6–7 (p. 95):

In its present form this supplemental corpus contains instructions for the laity regarding additional details about the various sacrifices, particularly about those portions of them that are assigned to the priests. ...

That is, ch. 6–7 are *not only for the priests*, but still, much of it is *about* the priests.

Levine (JPSTC, 1989), on the word תִּוְרָה *tôrâ* in 6:2ff., holds (34):

Frequently reference is to priestly instruction, including what the priests have been taught as well as what they, in turn, teach the Israelite people regarding the performance of religious rituals.

In my view, Wenham (NICOT, 1979) (116-119) offers a decent discussion of the matter. He says:

A comparison of Lev. 1–5 with chs. 6–7 discloses differences of emphasis and arrangement, which may provide a clue to their mutual relationship and particular purpose. Lev. 1:2 and 4:2 preface their remarks on worship by: “Tell the Israelites.” Subsequently individual laws begin with “If a man,” “If anyone,” and so on. Chs. 1–5 are addressed to any Israelite who has to offer a sacrifice. They concentrate on what the worshipper has to do.

In contrast chs. 6–7 focus on the priests’ role in worship. 6:2(9) says “Command Aaron and his sons,” 6:18(25) “Tell Aaron and his sons.” Most of the regulations in these two chapters are for the priests’ information. The rules explain what the priests ought to do, what parts of the sacrifice should be given to them, and so on. Only two paragraphs (7:22ff., 28ff.) are addressed to the people as a whole. They are in fact a kind of digression prompted by the rituals associated with the peace offering, which involved a larger degree of lay participation than the other sacrifices. ...

There is not a hard and fast division between these sections: chs. 1–5 also contain details of ceremonial which chiefly concern the priest, whereas chs. 6–7 for their part contain some instruction for the ordinary Israelite.

Within the sections the order of sacrifices also differs. In chs. 1–5 the order is burnt, cereal, peace, purification, and reparation offering. In chs. 6–7 the order is burnt, cereal, priest’s cereal (not mentioned in Lev. 1–5), purification, reparation, and peace offering.

In chs. 1–5 the motive for the arrangement seems to be theological: the “food offerings” producing “a soothing aroma for the Lord” are grouped together (chs.

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<sup>1</sup> Milgrom further sees a distinction between voluntary (ch. 1-3) and mandatory (ch. 4-5) sacrifices, and most holy ones (6:1-7:10) and holy ones (7:11-36).

1–3), and then come the purification and reparation offerings (chs. 4–5) securing the forgiveness of sins. In chs. 6–7 the sacrifices are arranged in order of their frequency.<sup>2</sup> The regular daily sacrifices come first, i.e., the burnt offering, cereal, and priest’s cereal offering. This is followed by the purification offering, which was compulsory only at certain festivals or after someone had sinned. The reparation offering was never offered on a regular basis, but was mandatory following certain sins. Finally, the peace offering was generally an optional sacrifice.

<sup>2</sup> See Num. 28–29.

#### 4. The structure of Lev 6–7

These chapters are clearly structured through the use of the introductory formula ... זָרָה תִּזְרָה *zō’ t tôrat* ... “This is the law for ...” in Lev 6:2; 6:7; 6:18; 7:1; 7:11 (cf. above). The different sections talk about the burnt offering, the grain offering, the sin offering, the guilt offering, and the peace offering. This is straightforward enough.

But there are two passages that do not fit into this outline so easily. These are the sections (1) Lev 6:12-16 [Engl. 19-23] and (2) Lev 7:22-27. We should note, however, that both these sections contribute to the overall theme of ch. 6–7, i.e. “**who may eat what, and where**” (Wenham 116).

##### Lev 6:12-16 [Engl. 19-23] The grain offering of the priests

The connection of these verses to the preceding material lies in that there is talk of a priestly grain offering, and the preceding section talked about grain offerings more generally. The *Handbook* explains:

The paragraph which is made up of verses 19-23 deals with the ceremony of consecration of the priests (compare 8.26 and 9.4) and seems to interrupt the more general instructions of the rest of the section. It has no parallel in chapters 1–5 and is omitted from the LXX. In 7.37 these ordination sacrifices are cited after the sin offering and the repayment offering, but in this passage they are dealt with before the others (see 6.24–7.7). This may be explained in the present context by the fact that only grain offerings are mentioned in these regulations. Therefore this paragraph seems to fit more naturally after 6.14-18, which deals with grain offerings. However, it is important that a new paragraph be started here.

**In translation**, starting a new paragraph, as many English versions do, might be enough. One could, however, also insert an extra section heading. If this is done, the model of NLT07 (or, e.g., Elberfelder) should not be followed, because it emphasizes the *interruption*:

Further Instructions for the Grain Offering vv. 14-18

Procedures for the Ordination Offering vv. 19-23

Further Instructions for the Sin Offering vv. 24-30

Recommendable is something like is found in NET08 (or, e.g., HFA), which **shows the connection**:

The Grain Offering of the Common Person vv. 14-18

The Grain Offering of the Priests vv. 19-23

The Sin Offering vv. 24-30

##### Lev 7:22-27 The prohibition of eating fat and blood

That the *fat* belonged to the Lord follows from earlier commands in Lev 3:14-17; 4:8ff; 7:3-5. Thus what is said here is an additional clarification. The prohibition of eating *blood* is taken up and treated more thoroughly in Lev 17. Thus in the present section, the issue is only addressed briefly.

**In translation**, when it comes to section headings, there are three approaches:

(1) GNTD keeps all verses 7:11ff. together under the title “Fellowship Offerings”. The advantage is that the **overall structure of chapters 6–7 is transparent**, and this might be the most important thing.

(2) NIV11R has separate sections headings at v. 22 (“Eating Fat and Blood Forbidden”), and v. 28 (“The Priests’ Share”) – NLT07 is very similar. While these headings clearly name the topics of the paragraphs, they do not help to show how they belong to the preceding paragraph, i.e. the peace offering in general.

(3) NET08 does better in **tying the paragraphs together**:

at v. 11: “The Peace Offering”

at v. 22: “Sacrificial Instructions for the Common People: Fat and Blood”

at v. 28: “Priestly Portions of Peace Offerings”

## 5. The summary statements in Lev 7:35-36 and 7:37-38

There are questions about which verses each of these summary statements refer to.

Hartley, in his outline of ch. 6–7, offers the following division:

III. Summary statements (7:35-38)

A. First summary statement concerning priestly portion (7:35-36)

B. Second summary statement concerning authority of sacrificial regulations (7:37-38)

### Lev 7:35-36

V. 35 begins: “**This** is that which is consecrated to Aaron ...”

There are three questions:

(1) What does “this” refer to?

(2) Does the LORD’s speech end before or after vv. 35-36?

(3) How far back does the paragraph go which is concluded by these two verses?

Re: (1): Keil explains “this” as “the wave-breast and heave-leg”. Similarly Milgrom.

Re: (2) and (3): The *Handbook* says:

Verses 35-36 are somewhat ambiguous in Hebrew. Do they form a part of the direct discourse begun in verse 29 as indicated by the punctuation of RSV? Or are they rather a part of the conclusion to the section verses 28-34 (NJB, NAB and FRCL)? If indirect discourse is used throughout this section, there is less of a problem here. But it may be wise to begin a new paragraph at this point, if the latter interpretation is accepted. By not starting a new paragraph here, TEV seems to follow the first option.

**The use of the 3. person in vv. 35-36 leads me to go with the second option**, i.e. they do not belong to God’s speech anymore.

Re: (3), Keil says:

With vers. 35, 36, the instructions concerning the peace-offering are brought to a close.

This section began at v. 11 (see his comment there).

Likewise, Milgrom (433), after rejecting the view that “this” might refer to all of ch. 6-7, says that vv. 35-36 “are a summary of only the well-being offering pericope (vv 11-34) ...” Some other commentaries do not offer any explanation.

### Lev 7:37-38

These verses are **a summary foremostly to ch. 6–7**. Milgrom, in his translation, sets vv. 37-38 as a separate paragraph and comments (436):

37-38a. This is a summary and subscript to chaps. 6-7 for the following reasons:

(1) the order of the sacrifices (which follows that of chaps. 6-7 but not that of chaps. 1-5), (2) its use of tôrâ ‘ritual’ (6:2, 7, 18; 7:1, 11; not found in chaps. 1-5), and (3) its mention of bêhar sînây ‘Mount Sinai’ (whereas chaps. 1-5 were revealed in the Tent of Meeting, 1:1). ...

However, on a broader scale, **these verses also conclude the whole section ch. 1–7**, as several commentators affirm:

Keil says:

With vers. 37 and 38 the whole of the sacrificial law (chap. i.-vii.) is brought to a close.

Hartley says:

These additional regulations conclude with a double summary statement (7:35–38), which belongs primarily to 6:1(8)–7:34, for the order of sacrifices in the summary corresponds to the list in chaps. 6–7, not chaps. 1–5. Nevertheless, in the setting of the book the second summary statement concludes the entire sacrificial corpus (chaps. 1–7; cf. Elliger, 91–93). ...

The *Handbook* says (on 7:37):

While verses 35 and 36 serve as a minor conclusion to chapters 6 and 7, verses 37 and 38 provide at the same time a further conclusion to these chapters ... and also a major conclusion to the entire first section of Leviticus (chapters 1–7).

**In translation,** the layout should show that vv. 35-36 close the paragraph that began in v. 11, and that vv. 37-38 close all of chapters 6–7.

Lev 1–7 has a reputation for being a tedious text, but if translators provide their readers with insightful titles, part of the obstacles to understanding and appreciating it can be alleviated.