

# Coming Alive: Leviticus

---

Beginning Theology Session 2

# Aims for this session

---

- Overview of the Pentateuch (the first five books of the Bible)
- Introduction to Leviticus, its structure and content
- The law, narrative and theology of Leviticus
- The Scapegoat (Leviticus 16)

---

What is your favourite book of the Old Testament?

# The Pentateuch

---



# The Hebrew Bible or 'TaNaK'

---

## Torah/Pentateuch (law)

Genesis  
Exodus  
Leviticus  
Numbers  
Deuteronomy

## Nevi'im (prophets)

Joshua	Hosea
Judges	Joel
1Samuel	Amos
2Samuel	Obadiah
1Kings	Jonah
2Kings	Micah
Isaiah	Nahum
Jeremiah	Habakkuk
Ezekiel	Zephaniah
	Haggai
	Zechariah
	Malachi

## Ketuvim (writings)

Psalms  
Job  
Proverbs  
Ruth  
Song of  
Songs  
Ecclesiastes  
Lamentations  
Esther  
Daniel  
Ezra  
Nehemiah  
Chronicles

# The Pentateuch

---

Genesis

Exodus

Leviticus

Numbers

Deuteronomy

# The Pentateuch

---

Genesis = *Be'reshit* 'in the beginning'

Exodus = *Shemot* 'names'

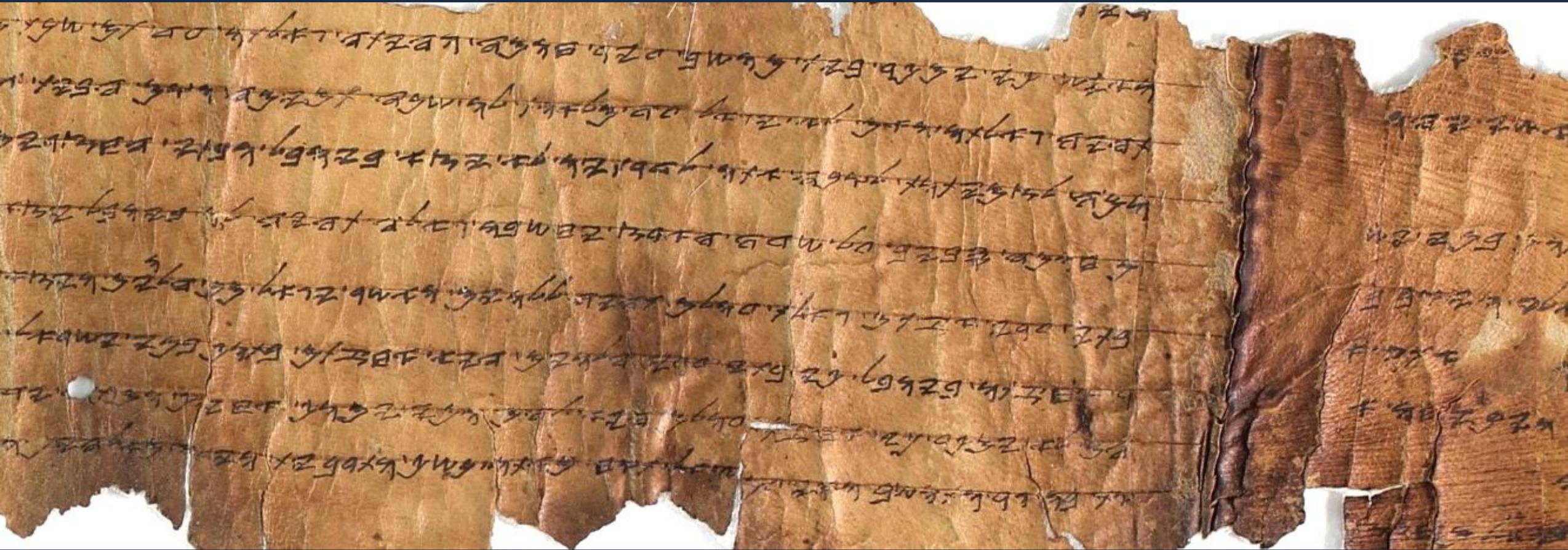
Leviticus = *Vayikra* 'and he called'

Numbers = *Ba'midbar* 'in the wilderness'

Deuteronomy = *Deverim* 'words'

# Leviticus

---



# The Structure of Leviticus

---

- Regulations for sacrifices (1-7)
- Priests and sacrifice (8-10)
- Laws on purity (11-15)
- Day of Atonement (16)
- Laws on holy living (17-26)
- Tithes and offerings (27-34)

*John Hartley, Leviticus Word Commentary (1992) xxxiv*

# Leviticus

---

- The most important concept in Leviticus is ‘holiness’, in Hebrew ‘Kodesh’ (קֹדֶשׁ)

‘...the theological imperative of Leviticus is to articulate how Israel might maintain their holiness in relation to the holy God who dwells in their midst’.

# Leviticus

---

‘Be holy, for I the LORD  
your God am holy’

Leviticus 11:44-45, 20:7, 20:26, 21:8

Moses and the burning bush, Marc Chagall, 1966



# Law in Leviticus

---

- Regulations for sacrifices (1-7)
- Priests and sacrifice (8-10)
- Laws on purity (11-15)
- Day of Atonement (16)
- Laws on holy living (17-26) = the 'Holiness Code'
- Tithes and offerings (27-34)

*John Hartley, Leviticus Word Commentary (1992) xxxiv*

# Law in the Hebrew Bible

---

Found in:

- Book of the Covenant/Covenant Code: Exodus 19-23
- Holiness Code (H): Leviticus 17-26
- Deuteronomistic Code: Deuteronomy 12-26

613 laws according to Jewish tradition



# The Holiness Code

---

Lev 17:1 'Speak to Aaron and to his sons and to all the Israelites...'

- The Holiness Code lies at the centre of Leviticus and is addressed to the whole people of Israel
- 'Be holy, for I the LORD your God am holy...'

# Question for reflection

---

Do Christians need to read the biblical law? Why or why not?

# The Scapegoat: Leviticus 16

---



The Scapegoat, William Holman Hunt 1856

# The Scapegoat: Leviticus 16

---



Historical questions?

Questions about the text?

Theological questions?

The Scapegoat, William Holman Hunt 1856

# The Scapegoat: Leviticus 16:6-10

---

<sup>6</sup> “Aaron shall offer the bull as a purification offering for himself and shall make atonement for himself and for his house. <sup>7</sup> He shall take the two goats and set them before the LORD at the entrance of the tent of meeting, <sup>8</sup> and Aaron shall cast lots on the two goats, one lot for the LORD and the other lot for Azazel. <sup>9</sup> Aaron shall present the goat on which the lot fell for the LORD and offer it as a purification offering, <sup>10</sup> but the goat on which the lot fell for Azazel shall be presented alive before the LORD to make atonement over it, that it may be sent away into the wilderness to Azazel.

# The Scapegoat: Leviticus 16:21-22

---

<sup>21</sup> Then Aaron shall lay both his hands on the head of the live goat and confess over it all the iniquities of the Israelites, and all their transgressions, all their sins, putting them on the head of the goat and sending it away into the wilderness by means of someone designated for the task.<sup>22</sup> The goat shall bear on itself all their iniquities to a barren region, and the goat shall be set free in the wilderness.

# The Scapegoat: Leviticus 16:21-22

---

- What interests you about this passage?
- What seems strange?
- What kinds of questions might you want to ask about it?
- What does this have to say to Christians today?

# The Scapegoat: Textual or Historical Questions

---

Who or what is Azazel?

- Is it simply a reference to the goat (the Hebrew word is 'ez – עֵז and 'azel *might* be translated as 'depart')?
- Does it refer to 'rough' or 'rocky' terrain, eg the wilderness, where the goat will find itself when sent away?
- Is Azazel a demon?

Jacob Milgrom, *Leviticus 1-16*, p 1020

# The Scapegoat: Leviticus 16:21-22

---

‘...instead of being an offering or a substitute, the goat is simply the vehicle to dispatch Israel’s impurities and sins to the wilderness/netherworld’.

Jacob Milgrom, *Leviticus 1-16*, p 1020



# The Scapegoat: Theological Questions

---

- What other parts of the Bible might address similar themes or ideas?
- What does it mean for God to separate our sins from us?

Psalm 103:12

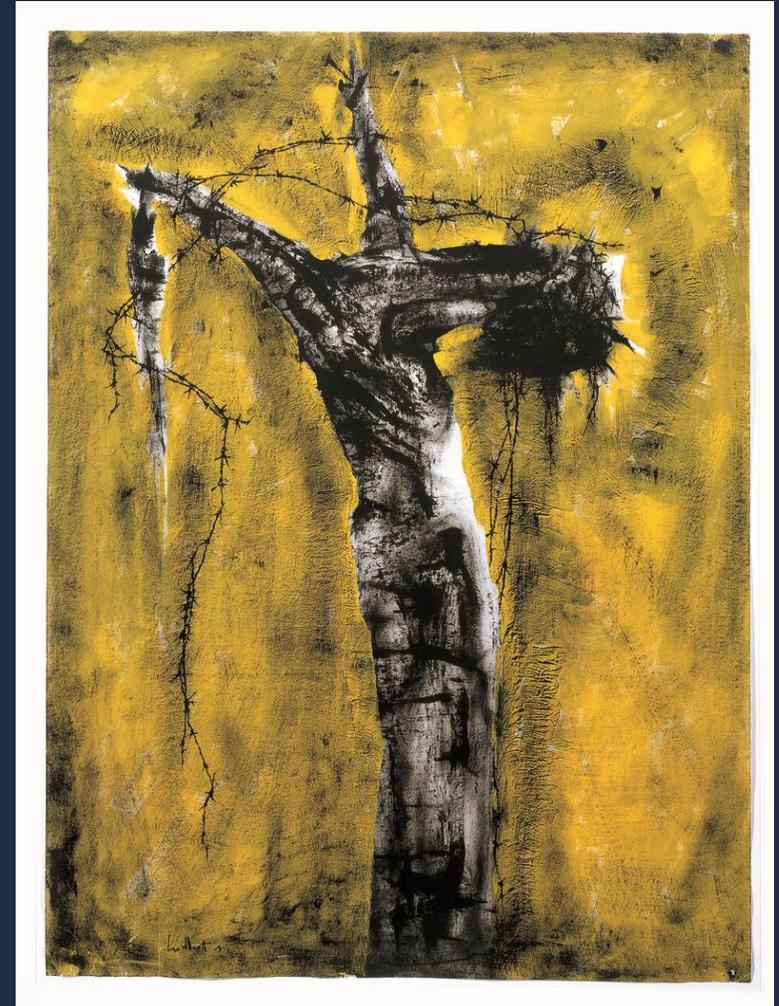
‘as far as the east is from the west,  
so far has he removed our transgressions from us’

# The Scapegoat: Theological Questions

---

- In what way does the scapegoat point forward to the cross?

Lev 16:22a 'The goat shall bear on itself all their iniquities...'



Theyre Lee-Elliott: Crucified tree form, the agony

# Summary: What have we covered?

---

- The Pentateuch
- Leviticus, its structure and focus on holiness
- Law codes in the Old Testament
- The Scapegoat in Lev 16: Historical and theological questions

What questions has this session sparked for you?