



Session Six

THE REST OF THE PENTATEUCH (Books of The Law)

*O Lord our God,
Awaken our minds in righteousness for you.
By day and by night
And at all times
Make us, your servants,
Reflect always on the love of your commandments.*

St. Hovhannes Mantakuni (5th c)



Word Watch

Tabernacle: a portable sanctuary that served as a place of worship for the Israelites from the time of their wanderings until Solomon built the first Temple.



Did You Know?

Aaron is considered the first priest and many of the vestments and temple paraphernalia mentioned in Exodus (28-40) are the inspiration for vestments and church vessels in today's Armenian Church.

In Leviticus 16: 21, Aaron is told to symbolically place all the sins of Israel onto the head of a goat and then drive the goat into the wilderness as part of the ritual on the Day of Atonement. This is where we get the expression "scapegoat" – something we designate to bear the blame.



The Torah Continued

The book of Genesis covers a very long period of time, stretching from the creation of the world to the exodus from Egypt. By contrast, the four following books of the Pentateuch (Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, and Deuteronomy) cover only forty years—the period when the Hebrew people wandered in the desert, having made the exodus from Egypt and were journeying to Canaan, the Promised Land.

We looked at the Book of Exodus in the previous session. Now we can say something about the three remaining Books of the Law: Leviticus, Numbers, Deuteronomy.

The Book of Leviticus

You remember that Jacob the Patriarch had twelve sons, and that the twelve tribes of Israel had the same names as his sons. One of these tribes was Levi, or the Levites, and it's from that tribal name that the Book of Leviticus gets its name. God gave each tribe a special responsibility, and He called the Levites to be priests, to lead the sacred worship of the tabernacle, and to guide the people in moral living.

The Book of Leviticus tells us about the religious organization of Israel under the leadership of Moses and his brother, the high priest Aaron.

Leviticus contrasts the absolute holiness of God with the deep sinfulness of human beings, and describes the ways that people can be reconciled with God. The book describes many rituals of service, sacrifice, and worship that can bring sinners back to the Lord.

Read *Leviticus 16:20-22* and *29*, which describes a yearly "Day of Atonement." (*Atonement* means repenting and making things right when you have sinned.) In the Hebrew language this Day of Atonement is called *Yom Kippur*. You may have Jewish friends who observe this special day every year.

The 17th to 27th chapters of Leviticus are sometimes called the *Holiness Code*. They have much to say about the relationship between the rituals of tabernacle worship and living a good, moral life. Marriage, family, respect for parents, compassion toward the poor, being a good neighbor, as well as the proper way to observe the Sabbath, Passover, and tithing are all discussed in these chapters. (Examples: *Leviticus 19: 17, 18, 32*)

Codes of Living

Every community develops rules by which it lives, from traffic laws to the American Constitution. The first experience we have of living by rules is in our own family. Think of the "rules and regulations" that exist in your home. Now

complete the following:

My favorite

rule: _____

My least favorite

rule: _____

The Book of Numbers

This book begins with a census, or numbering, of the able-bodied men in the tribes of Israel—those who would be able to fight in case of war. Only the Levites were not counted; God had commanded that they were not to take part in any fighting. As we saw when we looked at the Book of Leviticus, their job was to lead worship, observe religious traditions faithfully, and keep the tabernacle safe and in good order.

The Book of Numbers gives details about the political and social organization of Israel under Moses' guidance, and also tells us of the preparations the Israelites (another name for the Hebrew or Jewish people of the time) made for occupying the land of Canaan.

Unfortunately, the journey to Canaan was not as straightforward as it might have been. We might expect that the Israelites would enter the Promised Land soon after the renewal of the covenant at Mount Sinai (when Moses received a second set of tablets with the Ten Commandments). But because the people continued to doubt God's authority and ability to govern them, He punished them by extending their wandering in the wilderness to a period of forty years. They suffered during this time, and their faith faltered often. But God continued to be patient with His "very stiff-necked people." Read about an example of this in *Numbers 21:5-9*.

The Book of Deuteronomy

The name of this book is based on the word "second" (*deutero*). Moses is approaching the end of his life; the people are approaching the time when they will enter the Promised Land. So in three great speeches to the people, Moses gives them God's law a second time, so that they will remember it and be guided by it in the future.

Read *Deuteronomy 34:1-12*. This is a beautiful account of Moses' death and of the great respect and love the people had for him. But notice that even after all his service to God, Moses was not allowed to enter the Promised Land. By some standards, this doesn't seem "fair." Yet we know that God loved Moses and chose

The Armenian Angle

The Armenian name for Deuteronomy is "Yergrot Orinatz" which, like the Greek, literally means "second law."

him for greatness. God does not do things by our standards, but the greatest of believers have been those who trusted Him and were willing to follow His way under any circumstances. The question for us is, Are we willing to do the same? How would you answer that question for yourself?

A Bible Passage to Learn: And now, Israel, what does the Lord your God require of you, but to fear the Lord your God, to walk in all His ways, to love Him, to serve the Lord your God with all your heart and soul, and to keep the statutes and commandments of the Lord, which I command you this day for your good? (the words of Moses, in *Deuteronomy 10:12-13*)

Looking In

Read *Leviticus 22:17-22*.

What do you make of all this detail about what makes an offering acceptable in ancient times? How about your offering to God in the twenty-first century? List 5 ways you can offer your best to God.

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.
- 5.

Quick Quiz #6

- ① **The tribe of Levi was chosen by God to serve as:**
- a. prophets b. priests
c. scribes d. soldiers
- ② **Yom Kippur is:**
- a. Hebrew term for the Ten Commandments
b. the day the Israelites reached the Promised Land
c. a Jewish day of celebration
d. a special day of repentance for the Jews
- ③ **To which of the 10 tribes of Israel did Aaron belong?**
- ④ **What happened to Moses when the Israelites reached the Promised Land?**
- ⑤ **What are the first five books of the Old Testament called?**
- ⑥ to ⑩ **Put the correct letter next to each phrase**
- | | |
|---|----------------|
| Holiness Code___ | |
| a census of the tribes of Israel___ | a. Genesis |
| Moses dies___ | b. Exodus |
| Some of the vestments of an Armenian priest are first described here___ | c. Leviticus |
| Joseph is sold into slavery___ | d. Numbers |
| | e. Deuteronomy |

