



76 Things Banned in Leviticus

This paper is a response to a set of articles by skeptics of Christianity, which ask: “Why is it that some laws in Leviticus continue to be observed by Christians while others are ignored? Do Christians cherry-pick the ones they like?” For example, laws related to lying, stealing, and fair treatment of the poor and marginalized are still regarded to some extent, but we do not continue doing things like commanded offerings or animal sacrifice.

The Bible is not just a static list of rules (*do's* and *don'ts*). In it are important commands for Christians today, but there is also story, history, context, drama, poetry, and prophecy. In response to the articles by skeptics, this paper introduces a paradigm or template for deciphering their list through the threefold lens of: **Repeated** (*Is the law observed in the New Testament and beyond?*), **Repealed** (*Is the law no longer observed in the New Testament?*), or **Realized** (*Is the law fulfilled by the coming of Jesus and his completed work?*). This paradigm tackles about 71 of the list provided by skeptics. The remaining laws are admittedly weird and should be dealt with on a case-by-case basis. Explanations for those outliers are also included.

Use this paper and paradigm to help interpret some of the strange or seemingly inconsistent commands of scripture—and remember: **The Bible is so much more than a rulebook.**

REPEATED: IS IT OBSERVED IN THE NEW TESTAMENT AND STILL APPLIES TODAY?			
<i>Leviticus</i>	<i>What is banned</i>	<i>New Testament</i>	<i>Explanation</i>
5:1	Failing to testify against any wrongdoing you've witnessed.	Luke 3:14, 18:20	Jesus condemns bearing false witness.
5:1	Failing to testify against any wrongdoing you've been told about.	Luke 3:14, 18:20	Jesus condemns bearing false witness.
5:4	Carelessly making an oath	Matt 5:34	Jesus reinforces not to carelessly make oaths.
6:2	Deceiving a neighbor about something trusted to them.	Luke 3:14, 18:20	Jesus condemns bearing false witness.
6:3	Finding lost property and lying about it.	Eph 4:28	Paul tells people to no longer steal and to do honest work.

<i>REPEATED (CONTINUED)</i>			
<i>Leviticus</i>	<i>What is banned</i>	<i>New Testament</i>	<i>Explanation</i>
18:7	Having sex with your mother.	Col 3:5; 1 Cor 5:1-2, 6:18	Paul condemns incest and sexual immorality.
18:8	Having sex with your father's wife.	Col 3:5; 1 Cor 5:1-2, 6:18	Paul condemns incest and sexual immorality.
18:9	Having sex with your sister.	Col 3:5; 1 Cor 5:1-2, 6:18	Paul condemns incest and sexual immorality.
18:10	Having sex with your granddaughter.	Col 3:5; 1 Cor 5:1-2, 6:18	Paul condemns incest and sexual immorality.
18:11	Having sex with your half-sister.	Col 3:5; 1 Cor 5:1-2, 6:18	Paul condemns incest and sexual immorality.
18:12-13	Having sex with your biological aunt.	Col 3:5; 1 Cor 5:1-2, 6:18	Paul condemns incest and sexual immorality.
18:14	Having sex with your uncle's wife.	Col 3:5; 1 Cor 5:1-2, 6:18	Paul condemns incest and sexual immorality.
18:15	Having sex with your daughter-in-law.	Col 3:5; 1 Cor 5:1-2, 6:18	Paul condemns incest and sexual immorality.
18:16	Having sex with your sister-in-law.	Col 3:5; 1 Cor 5:1-2, 6:18	Paul condemns incest and sexual immorality.
18:17	Having sex with a woman and having sex with her daughter or granddaughter.	Matt 5:27-28	Jesus condemns adultery and having lustful thoughts.
18:18	Marrying your wife's sister while your wife still lives.	Matt 19:8-9	Jesus reinforces monogamy.
18:20	Having sex with your neighbor's wife.	Matt 5:27-28	Jesus condemns adultery and having lustful thoughts.
18:22	Having sex with a man "as one does with a woman."	Rom 1:26-27, 32; 1 Cor 6:9	Paul condemns homosexual activity.
18:23	Having sex with an animal.	Col 3:5; 1 Thes 4:3-6	Paul condemns sexual immorality.

<i>REPEATED (CONTINUED)</i>			
<i>Leviticus</i>	<i>What is banned</i>	<i>New Testament</i>	<i>Explanation</i>
19:4	Making idols or “metal gods.”	Gal 5:19-21; 1 Jn 5:21	Paul and John discourage/forbid idols.
19:9	Reaping to the very edges of a field.	Matt 19:21; Luke 11:41	Although this specific law does not continue, Jesus makes clear the expectation of caring for the poor.
19:10	Picking up grapes that have fallen in your vineyard.	Matt 19:21; Luke 11:41	Although this specific law does not continue, Jesus makes clear the expectation of caring for the poor.
19:11	Stealing.	Eph 4:28	Paul tells people to no longer steal and to do honest work.
19:11	Lying.	Matt 5:37; Col 3:9	Jesus and Paul condemn untruthfulness.
19:12	Swearing falsely on God’s name.	Matt 5:34-35	Jesus reinforces not to swear by the Lord.
19:13	Defrauding your neighbor.	Mark 12:31	Love your neighbor as yourself—don’t defraud them.
19:13	Holding back the wages of an employee overnight.	James 5:4	James condemns withholding wages unjustly.
19:14	Cursing the deaf or abusing the blind.	Mark 7:31-37, 8:22-26	Jesus doesn’t mistreat the deaf/blind. Instead, he heals them.
19:15	Perverting justice, showing partiality to either the poor or the rich.	James 2; 1 Tim 5:21	James/Timothy condemn favoritism.
19:16	Spreading slander.	Eph 4:31; James 4:11	Paul/James condemn slander.
19:16	Doing anything to endanger a neighbor’s life.	Mark 12:31	Love your neighbor as yourself—don’t endanger their life.
19:18	Seeking revenge or bearing a grudge.	Rom 12:19	Paul condemns taking revenge into our own hands.

<i>REPEATED (CONTINUED)</i>			
<i>Leviticus</i>	<i>What is banned</i>	<i>New Testament</i>	<i>Explanation</i>
19:20	Sleeping with another man's slave.	1 Cor 6:18; Phm 1: 15-16	Paul forbids sexual immorality and requests that slaves be freed.
19:26	Practicing divination or seeking omens.	Gal 5:19-20	Paul condemns witchcraft.
19:29	Making your daughter prostitute herself.	Eph 6:4	Parents are responsible to raise their kids in a godly manner.
19:31	Turning to mediums or spiritualists.	Acts 19:17-20; Gal 5:19-20	Sorcerers in Ephesus gave up their practices to follow Jesus.
19:32	Not standing in the presence of the elderly.	1 Tim 5:1	While not specific to "standing," Paul instructs us to treat the elderly with respect.
19:33-34	Mistreating foreigners.	Luke 10:25-37	Jesus instructs us to love foreigners as "neighbors."
19:35-36	Using dishonest weights and scales.	Luke 19:1-10	Zacchaeus repents of his dishonest tax collecting.
20:9	Cursing your father or mother.	Eph 6:1	Paul encourages children to honor their parents.
24:14	Blasphemy.	1 Tim 1:13, 20	Paul condemns blasphemy.
25:42	Selling an Israelite as a slave.	Phm 1:1-25	Paul discourages slavery.

REPEALED: IS IT NO LONGER OBSERVED IN THE NEW TESTAMENT AND DOES NOT APPLY TODAY?			
<i>Leviticus</i>	<i>What is banned</i>	<i>New Testament</i>	<i>Explanation</i>
5:2	Touching an unclean animal.	Acts 10:15	God calls all animals “clean” to Peter.
11:4-7	Eating an animal which doesn’t both chew cud and has a divided hoof.	Mark 7:18-19	Jesus declares all foods clean.
11:8	Touching the carcass of any of the above.	Acts 10:15	God calls all animals “clean” to Peter.
11:8	Eating or touching the carcass of any sea creature without fins or scales.	Mark 7:18-19	Jesus declares all foods clean.
11:13-19	Eating or touching the carcass of the eagle, the vulture, the black vulture, the red kite, any kind of black kite, any kind of raven, the horned owl, the screech owl, the gull, any kind of hawk, the little owl, the cormorant, the great owl, the white owl, the desert owl, the osprey, the stork, any kind of heron, the hoopoe, and the bat.	Acts 10:15	God calls all animals “clean” to Peter.
11:20-22	Eating or touching the carcass of flying insects with four legs, unless those legs are jointed.	Mark 7:18-19	Jesus declares all foods clean.
11:27	Eating any animal which walks on all fours and has paws.	Acts 10:15	God calls all animals “clean” to Peter.
11:29	Eating or touching the carcass of the weasel, the rat, any kind of great lizard, the gecko, the monitor lizard, the wall lizard, the skink, and the chameleon.	Mark 7:18-19	Jesus declares all foods clean.
11:41-42	Eating or touching the carcass of any creature which crawls on many legs or its belly.	Mark 7:18-19	Jesus declares all foods clean.

REPEALED (CONTINUED)			
<i>Leviticus</i>	<i>What is banned</i>	<i>New Testament</i>	<i>Explanation</i>
18:19	Having sex with a woman during her period.	Mark 5:25-34	Women are no longer called unclean during their period; however, the New Testament doesn't mention this specific law.
24:17-22	Inflicting an injury; killing someone else's animal; killing a person must be punished in kind (<i>Eye for eye; tooth for tooth</i>).	Matt 5:38-42	Jesus instructs us to "turn the other cheek."

REALIZED: IS IT FULFILLED SPECIFICALLY IN THE WORK OF JESUS, THEREFORE NO LONGER BINDING?			
<i>Leviticus</i>	<i>What is banned</i>	<i>New Testament</i>	<i>Explanation</i>
2:11	Burning any yeast or honey in offerings to God.	Luke 22:19; John 6:35	Jesus is our final bread offering.
2:13	Failing to include salt in offerings to God.	Luke 22:19; John 6:35	Jesus is our final bread offering.
3:17	Eating fat (<i>From the fellowship offering</i>).	Mark 7:18-19; Heb 7:27	Jesus fulfills/satisfies the sacrificial system completely and declares all foods clean.
3:17	Eating blood (<i>From the fellowship offering</i>).	Mark 7:18-19; Heb 7:27	Jesus fulfills/satisfies the sacrificial system completely and declares all foods clean.
10:1	Bringing unauthorized fire before God.	Heb 4:14-16, 9:24-26	Jesus himself fulfills laws about the priesthood/tabernacle.
10:6	Letting your hair become unkempt (<i>Priests in the tabernacle</i>).	Heb 4:14-16, 9:24-26	Jesus himself fulfills laws about the priesthood/tabernacle.
10:6	Tearing your clothes (<i>Priests in the tabernacle</i>).	Heb 4:14-16, 9:24-26	Jesus himself fulfills laws about the priesthood.
10:9	Drinking alcohol in holy places (<i>Priests in the tabernacle</i>).	Heb 4:14-16, 9:24-26	Jesus himself fulfills laws about the priesthood/tabernacle.

<i>REALIZED (CONTINUED)</i>			
<i>Leviticus</i>	<i>What is banned</i>	<i>New Testament</i>	<i>Explanation</i>
12:4	Going to the tabernacle within 33 days after giving birth to a boy.	1 Cor 3:16	Because of Jesus, God's people become the temple/tabernacle.
12:5	Going to the tabernacle within 66 days after giving birth to a girl.	1 Cor 3:16	Because of Jesus, God's people become the temple/tabernacle.
19:19	Mixing fabrics in clothing.	1 Cor 3:16	Such mixtures were reserved for the temple; God's people become the temple/tabernacle because of Jesus.
19:19	Crossbreeding animals.	1 Cor 3:16	Such mixtures were reserved for the temple; God's people become the temple/tabernacle because of Jesus.
19:19	Planting different seeds in the same field.	1 Cor 3:16	Such mixtures were reserved for the temple; God's people become the temple/tabernacle because of Jesus.
21:7, 13	Marrying a prostitute, divorcée, or widow if you are a priest.	Heb 4:14-16, 9:24-26	Jesus himself fulfills laws about the priesthood.
21:11	Entering a place where there's a dead body if you are a priest.	Heb 4:14-16, 9:24-26	Jesus himself fulfills laws about the priesthood.
22:28	Slaughtering a cow/sheep and its young on the same day.	Heb 7:27	Jesus is a complete and final sacrifice for all and fulfills laws about the priesthood.
23:3	Working on the Sabbath.	Matt 12:1-14	Jesus repeals while simultaneously fulfilling.
25:33	Selling land permanently.	Luke 4:16-21	This law pertains to the Year of Jubilee, of which Jesus claims to be the embodied fulfillment (as in Isa 61:1-2).

CASE-BY-CASE: DOES IT DISTINGUISH ISRAEL FROM THE CANAANITES? SOMETHING ELSE?			
<i>Leviticus</i>	<i>What is banned</i>	<i>Other Passages</i>	<i>Explanation</i>
18:21	Giving your children to be sacrificed to Molek.	1 Kings 11:4-6, Jer 32:35	Although the Israelites disobeyed this law, this practice was long abandoned by the time of Jesus. The law still applies today.
19:23	Eating fruit from a tree within four years of planting it.	Lev 23:25	This purpose of this law was most likely for the Israelites' agricultural benefit in the specific land they inherited.
19:27	Cutting your hair at the sides.	Isa 15:2, Jer 48:37	These were customs to distinguish the Israelites from worshippers of other gods.
19:27	Trimming your beard.	Isa 15:2, Jer 48:37	These were customs to distinguish the Israelites from worshippers of other gods.
19:28	Cutting yourself or getting tattoos.	1 Kings 18:28	These were customs to distinguish the Israelites from worshippers of other gods.

Written by

Mark Ashton, Caleb Baumann, Joshua Lillie, and Stephen Russell.

Sources

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