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# Leviticus and Work

Theology of Work Project

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## Leviticus and Work

## Introduction— does Leviticus have anything to tell us about our work?

Leviticus is a great source for people seeking guidance about their work. It is filled with direct, practical instructions, even though the action takes place in a very different workplace than most of us experience today. Moreover, Leviticus is one of the central places where God reveals himself and his aims for our life and work. The book is at the physical center of the Pentateuch, the third of five books of Moses that form the narrative and theological foundation of the Old Testament. The, second book, Exodus, tells what God took his people *out of*. Leviticus tells what God leads his people *into*,<sup>[1]</sup> a life full of the God's own presence. In Leviticus, work is one of the most important arenas where God is present with Israel, and God is still present with his people in our work today.

Leviticus is also central to Jesus' teaching and the rest of the New Testament. The Great Commandment that Jesus taught (Matthew 22:27-40) comes directly from Leviticus 19:18, "You shall love your neighbor as yourself." The "Year of Jubilee" in Leviticus chapter 25 lies at the center of Jesus' mission statement, "The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he has anointed me to bring good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim release to the captives and recovery of sight to the blind, to let the oppressed go free, to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor [the Jubilee]" (Luke 4:18-19). When Jesus said that "not one letter, not one stroke" of the law would pass away (Matthew 5:18), many of the letters and strokes are found in Leviticus. Jesus offered a new take on the Law, that the way to fulfill the Law is not found in complying with regulations, but in cooperating with the purposes for which God created the Law. We are to fulfill the Law in a "more excellent way" (1 Corinthians 12:31) that surpasses, not ignores, the letter of the law. If we wish to fulfill the Spirit of the Law, as Jesus did, we must begin by learning what the Law actually says. Much of the Law is found in Leviticus, and much of it applies to work.

Because Leviticus is central to Jesus' teaching about work, as followers of Jesus, we are right to go to the book for guidance about God's will for our work. Of course, we must keep in mind that the codes in Leviticus must be understood and applied to the very different economic and social situations today.

Current society does not stand in a close parallel to ancient Israel either in terms of our societal structure or our covenant relationship. Most workers today, for example, have little need to know what to do with an ox or sheep that has been torn apart by wild animals (Lev. 7:24). The Levitical priesthood

to whom much of the book is addressed—priests performing animal sacrifice to the God of Israel—no longer exists. Moreover, in Christ we understand the Law to be an instrument of God’s grace in a different way than ancient Israel did. So we cannot simply quote Leviticus as if nothing has changed in the world. We cannot read a verse and proclaim, “Thus says the Lord,” as a judgment against those we disagree with. Instead, we have to understand the meaning, purposes and mind of God revealed in Leviticus, then ask God’s wisdom to apply Leviticus today. Only so will our lives reflect his holiness, honor his intentions, and enact the rule of his heavenly kingdom on earth.

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## The Foundational Concept of Holiness in Leviticus

The Book of Leviticus is grounded in the truth that God is holy. The word (*qodesh*) occurs 152 times in the Hebrew text of Leviticus. To say that God is holy means that he is completely separate from all evil or defect. Or to put it in another way, God is completely and perfectly good. The Lord is worthy of total allegiance, exclusive worship, and loving obedience.

In the fallen world, remaining holy requires separation from the evil all around. In 132 instances in Leviticus, God separates himself from things that are evil or “unclean.” Moreover, Israel belongs to the Lord because he has separated them from all other nations and made them holy (Lev. 20:26; 21:8). Israel’s identity arises because by God’s actions they *are* holy, yet also because the Lord expects Israel to *act* holy in very practical ways. Israel is called to be holy because the Lord himself is holy (Lev. 11:44, 45; 19:2; 20:7; 21:8). The seemingly disparate laws of Leviticus that deal with the ritual, ethical, commercial, and penal aspects of life all rest on this core notion of holiness.

Just as God’s character remains constantly good, his call for us as his people to be holy is still relevant. Alexander Hill grounds his discussion of Christian business ethics on God’s holiness, justice and love. “A business act is ethical if it reflects God’s holy-just-loving character.”<sup>[2]</sup> Hill claims that Christians in business reflect divine holiness when they have zeal for God who is their ultimate priority, and who then behave with purity, accountability and humility. These, rather than trying to reproduce the commercial code designed for an agrarian society, are what it means to put Leviticus into practice today. This does not mean ignoring the specifics of the Law, but discerning how God is guiding us to fulfill it in today’s context.

Israel’s outward practice of holiness had two spheres of expression. First, God told the people of Israel to practice holiness with one another according to a comprehensive and complex system of regulations. The anthropologist Mary Douglas has shown, for example, that the food laws in Leviticus were neither arbitrary nor primarily based on what is healthy for people. Israel’s daily diet served as a powerful reminder and reinforcement of God’s holiness, in the sense of being set apart.<sup>[3]</sup> This was fundamental to Israel’s identity as a distinctive people. Christians understand that on the cross, Jesus abolished the

distinction between Jews and Gentiles (Ephesians 2:14-16), so that all his disciples could become holy. As Christopher J. H. Wright pointed out, “So since there is no longer any distinction between Jew and Gentile *in Christ*, there is no longer any need *as far as Christians are concerned* for the tangible food distinctions that symbolized it.” [4] The same is true of the laws against mating different kinds of animals, mixing different seeds in the same field, and wearing clothes of dissimilar fabrics (Lev. 19:19) as well as laws concerning cutting hair and tattoos (Lev. 19:27-28).

The second sphere in which the Lord called Israel to be holy was in relation to the other nations. “You shall be holy to me; for I the Lord am holy, and I have separated you from the other peoples to be mine” (Lev. 20:26). Moses said that if Israel would follow God’s laws then the nations would take notice of the Lord’s nearness to his people because of their great wisdom and understanding (Deuteronomy 4:6-8). This is a powerful reason for the people of God to express God’s holiness in their daily behavior. Wright affirms this missional motive by stating, “*Religious* distinctiveness was to be embodied in *ethical* distinctiveness, both of which are included in the rich concept of holiness. And it would be this ethical distinctiveness of Israel that would be a pointer to the presence of the ethical God, *YHWH*, in their midst.” [5]

[Our work matters to God! \(Click to listen\)](#)

So holiness in Leviticus is not separation for separation’s sake, but for the sake of a thriving community of the people of God and the reconciliation of each person to God. Holiness is not only about individuals’ behavior following regulations, but about how what each person does affects the whole people of God in their life together and their work as agents of God’s kingdom. In this light, Jesus’ call for his people to be “salt” and “light” to outsiders (Matthew 5:13-16) makes complete sense. To be holy is to go beyond the law to love your neighbor, to love even your enemy, and to “be perfect, therefore, as your heavenly Father is perfect” (Matthew 5:48, echoing Leviticus 19:2 and 18).

In short, ancient Israel did not obey Leviticus as a peculiar set of regulations, but as an expression of God’s presence in their midst. This is as relevant to God’s people today as it was then.

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## Israel’s Sacrificial System (Leviticus 1-10)

The book of Leviticus opens with regulations for Israel’s sacrificial system, conveyed from two perspectives. The first perspective is that of the laypersons who bring the sacrifice and participate in its offering (chapters 1-5). The second perspective is that of the priests who officiate (chapters 6-7). After this, we learn how the priests were ordained and began their ministry at the tabernacle (chapters 8-9), followed by further regulations for the priests in light of how God put the priests Nadab and Abihu

to death for violating God's command about their ritual responsibilities (chapter 10). Do not assume this material is empty liturgy irrelevant to the world of modern work. Instead, we must "look through" the way the people of Israel coped with their problems in order to explore how we, as people in Christ, may cope with ours—including the challenges we face in business and work.

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## The Dwelling of God in the Community (Leviticus 1-10)

The purpose of sacrifice was not merely to remedy occasional lapses of purity. The Hebrew verb for "offering" a sacrifice means literally to "bring (it) near." Bringing a sacrifice near to the sanctuary brought the worshipper near to God. The worshipper's individual degree of misbehavior was not the main issue. The pollution caused by impurity is the consequence of the entire community, comprised of the relative few who have committed either brazen or inadvertent sins *together with* the silent majority that has allowed the wicked to flourish in their midst. The people as a whole bear collective responsibility for corrupting society and thus giving God legitimate reason to depart his sanctuary, an event tantamount to destruction of the nation.<sup>[6]</sup> Drawing near to God is still the aim of those who call Jesus, Immanuel ("God with us"). The dwelling of God with his people is a serious matter indeed.

Christians in their workplaces should look beyond finding godly tips for finding whatever the world defines as "success." Being aware that God is holy and that he desires to dwell at the center of our lives changes our orientation from success to holiness, whatever work God has called us to do. This does not mean doing religious activities at work, but doing all our work as God would have us do it. Work is not primarily a way to enjoy the fruit of our labor, but a way to experience God's presence. Just as Israel's sacrifices were a "pleasing aroma" to the Lord (Lev 1:9 and sixteen other instances), Paul called Christians to "lead lives worthy of the Lord, fully pleasing to him" (Colossians 1:10), "for we are an aroma of Christ to God" (2 Corinthians 2:15).

What might result if we walked through our workplaces and asked the fundamental question, "How could this be a place for God's holy presence?" Does our workplace encourage people to express the best of what God has given them? Is it a place characterized by fair treatment of all? Does it protect workers from harm? Does it produce goods and services that help the community to thrive more fully?

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## The Whole People of God at Work (Leviticus 1-10)

Leviticus brings together the perspectives of two groups who sometimes find themselves at odds, the priests and the people. Its purpose is to bring the whole people of God together, without regard to distinctions of status. In today's workplace, how are Christians to handle offenses between people regardless of their wealth or position in the company? Do we tolerate abuses of power when the result seems expedient to our careers? Do we participate in judging co-workers by gossip and innuendo, or do

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we insist on airing grievances through unbiased systems? Do we pay attention to the harm that bullying and favoritism do at work? Do we promote a positive culture, foster diversity, and build a healthy organization? Do we enable open and trustworthy communication, minimize back-door politicking, and strive for top performance? Do we create an atmosphere where ideas are surfaced and explored, and the best ones put into action? Do we focus on sustainable growth?

**The Bottom Line: Friend or Foe?**

Gunter was reeling. The board of Mastech had brought him in as CEO to move the company forward. He had been selected not only because of his proven business skills, but because he cared about people.

*To continue reading, click [here](#). You can return to this page afterwards.*

Israel's sacrificial system addressed not only the religious needs of the people, but their psychological and emotional ones as well, thus embracing the whole person and the whole community. Christians understand that businesses have aims that are not usually religious in nature. Yet we also know that people are not equivalent to what they do or produce. This does not reduce our commitment to be productive, but reminds us that because God has embraced us with his forgiveness, we have even more reason than others to be considerate, fair, and gracious to all (Luke 7:47; Ephesians 4:32; Colossians 3:13).

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## The Workplace Significance of the Guilt Offering (Leviticus 6:1-7)

Each offering in Israel's sacrificial system has its place, but there is a special feature of the guilt offering (also known as the reparation offering) that makes it particularly relevant to the world of work. The guilt offering of Leviticus is the seed of the biblical doctrine of repentance.<sup>[7]</sup> (Numbers 5:5-10 is directly parallel.) According to Leviticus, God required offerings whenever a person deceived another with regard to a deposit or a pledge, committed robbery or fraud, lied about lost property that had been found, or swore falsely about a matter (Lev. 6:2-3). It was not a fine imposed by a court of law, but a reparation offered by perpetrators who got away with the offense, but then felt guilty later when they came to "realize" their guilt (Lev. 6:4 and 6:5). Repentance by the sinner, not prosecution by the authorities, is the basis of the guilt offering.

Often such sins would have been committed in the context of commerce or other work. The guilt offering calls for the remorseful sinner to return what was wrongfully taken plus twenty percent (Lev. 6:4-5). Only after settling the matter on a human level may the sinner receive forgiveness from God by presenting an animal to the priest for sacrifice (Lev. 6:6-7).

The guilt offering uniquely emphasizes several principles about healing personal relationships that

have been damaged by financial abuse.

1. Mere apology is not enough to right the wrong and neither is full restoration for what was taken. In addition something akin to today's concept of punitive damages was added. But with guilt offerings—unlike court-ordered punitive damages—offenders willingly take on a share of the harm themselves, thereby sharing in the distress they caused the victims.
2. Doing all that is required to right a wrong against another person is not only fair for the offended; it is also good for the offender. The guilt offering recognizes the torment that seizes the conscience of one who becomes aware of their crime and its damaging effects. It then provides a way for the guilty to deal more fully with the matter, bringing a measure of closure and peace. This offering expresses God's mercy in that the pain and hurt is neutralized so as not to fester and erupt into violence or more serious offenses. It also extinguishes the need for the victim (or the victim's family) to take matters into their own hands to exact restitution.
3. Nothing in Jesus' atoning work on the cross releases the people of God today from the need for making restitution. Jesus taught his disciples, "So when you are offering your gift at the altar, if you remember that your brother or sister has something against you, leave your gift there before the altar and go; first be reconciled to your brother or sister, and then come and offer your gift" (Matthew 5:23-24). Loving our neighbors as ourselves lies at the heart of the law's requirements (Lev. 19:18 as quoted in Romans 13:9), and making restitution is an essential expression of any genuine kind of love. Jesus granted salvation to the rich tax-collector Zacchaeus who offered more restitution than the law required, lifting him up as an example of those who truly understood forgiveness (Luke 19:1-10).
4. Jesus' words in Matthew 5:23-24 also teach us that settling matters with people is a necessary prerequisite for making things right with God. Forgiveness from God is a stage of redemption that goes beyond, but does not replace, restitution.

The guilt offering is a potent reminder that God does not exercise his right of forgiveness at the expense of people harmed by our misdeeds. He does not offer us psychological release from our guilt as a cheap substitute for making right the damage and hurt we have caused.

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## The Unclean and the Clean (Leviticus 11-16)

At the heart of it, Leviticus 11:45 explains the thematic logic of this entire section. "I am the Lord who brought you up from the land of Egypt, to be your God; you shall be holy, for I am holy" (Lev. 11:45).

God calls Israel to mirror his holiness in every aspect of life. Leviticus chapters 11-16 deal with the classification of "clean" and "unclean" food (chapter 11) and rites of cleansing (chapters 12-15). It closes with the procedure for celebrating the Day of Atonement to cleanse the people and God's sanctuary (chapter 16).

Christians resonate with this connection between God's gracious provision of salvation that is the basis for everything we subsequently do. But when we look to Leviticus, the subject and scope of these laws tend to baffle us today and make it difficult to appreciate the enduring ethical contribution they make.

For example, it's hard to provide a simple rationale for why God permitted Israel to eat some animals and not others. Why is there such concern for skin diseases (which we cannot even identify today with certainty) and not other, more serious diseases? Of all the ills facing society, is the issue of mold really all that important? Narrowing our focus to matters of work, should we expect these texts to tell us anything we can apply to the food industry, medicine, or environmental contamination of homes and workspaces? As noted before, we will find answers not by asking whether to obey regulations made for a different situation, but by looking for how the passages guide us to serve the welfare of the community.

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## The Permissibility of Eating Particular Animals (Leviticus 11)

There are several plausible theories that seek to provide a central rationale for the rules governing the classification of animals for human consumption in Leviticus 11. Each cites supporting evidence yet none enjoys a general consensus.

1. The *cultic* view holds that Israel must avoid animals that were associated with pagan worship or the realm of death. This view doesn't go very far in explaining the details of Leviticus 11 but it does make sense of Israel's call to live in a distinct way.[\[8\]](#)
2. The long-held *hygienic* view points to the harmful effects of eating unclean animals. From this, one can frame a general (and patently obvious) principle that it is good to take care when selecting and preparing foods so that people don't get sick. Most biblical scholars, however, don't believe that this was ever at the heart of Israel's dietary system. Both the clean and the unclean animals can be unhealthy if one doesn't ensure they are free from parasites or other infections. It is thus doubtful that Leviticus bears a distinctive message for those working in food service industries, at least when it comes to health and safety concerns regarding specific animals.
3. A rationale much more widely accepted among biblical scholars is the *symbolic* view that results from an anthropological study of Israel's society. The opposite of the Hebrew word for "clean" is "mixed," meaning that cleanliness, holiness and separation/purity are closely related concepts. Obeying distinctive cleanliness laws symbolically enacted Israel's commitment to a godly life that would inevitably separate them from those around them.[\[9\]](#) To put it another way, obedience to God's commands doesn't have to be grounded in human reasons. Imputed reasons for God's commands are what ensnared Adam and Eve in sin in the first place (Genesis 3:4). Christians are not called to mark themselves apart in exactly the same manner (Acts 15:19-20), so the specific regulations of Leviticus 11 do not apply to our work in agriculture and food service.
4. Finally, there is a view with deep historical roots that is worth considering. The most recent and expansive exposition of this rationale comes from Jacob Milgrom who presented Israel's dietary laws as an *ethical* system.[\[10\]](#) He noted three dominant elements: God severely limited Israel's choice of animal food, gave them specific rules for slaughter, and prohibited them from eating blood which represents life and therefore belongs to God alone. In light of these, Milgrom concluded that Israel's dietary system was a method of controlling the human instinct to kill. In short, "Though they may satisfy their appetite for food, they must curb their hunger for power. Because life is inviolable it may



not be tampered with indiscriminately.” [11] If God chooses to get involved in the details of which animals may be killed and how it is to be done, how could we miss the point that the killing of humans is even more restricted and subject to God’s scrutiny? This view suggests more applicability to the present day. For example, if every agricultural, animal, and food service facility practiced daily accountability to God for the treatment and condition of its animals, wouldn’t it be all the more attentive to the safety and working conditions of its people?

In spite of the extensive details in Leviticus that initiate the ongoing discussion of food in the Bible, it would be inappropriate for any Christian to try to dictate what all believers must do and avoid doing regarding the provision, preparation, and consumption of food. Nonetheless, whatever we eat or don’t eat, Derek Tidball rightly reminds Christians of the centrality of holiness. Whatever one’s stance on these complex issues, it cannot be divorced from the Christian’s commitment to holiness. Holiness calls upon us even to eat and drink “for the glory of God.” [12] The same applies to the work of producing, preparing and consuming food and drink.

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## Dealing with Skin Diseases and Mold Infections (Leviticus 13–14)

In contrast to the dietary laws, the laws about diseases and environmental contamination *do* seem to be primarily concerned with health. Health is a critical issue today, as well, and even if the book of Leviticus were not in the Bible, it would still be a noble and godly concern. But it would be unwise to assume that Leviticus provides instructions for coping with contagious diseases and environmental contamination that we can directly apply today. At our distance of thousands of years from the time, it is difficult even to be certain exactly what diseases the passages refer to. The enduring message of Leviticus is that the Lord is the God of life and that he guides, honors and ennobles all those who bring healing to people and the environment. If the particular rules of Leviticus do not dictate the way we perform the work of healing and environmental protection, then certainly this greater point does.

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## Holiness (Leviticus 17–27)

Some of the instructions in the holiness code seem relevant only in Israel’s ancient world, while others seem timeless. On the one hand, Leviticus tells men not to mar the edges of their beards (Lev. 19:27), but on the other hand, judges must not render unfair judgments in court but show justice to all (Lev. 19:15). How do we know which ones apply directly today? Mary Douglas helpfully explains how a clear understanding of holiness as moral *order* both grounds these instructions in God and makes sense of their variety.

Developing the idea of holiness as order, not confusion, upholds rectitude and straight-dealing as holy, and contradiction and double-dealing as against holiness. Theft, lying, false witness, cheating

in weights and measures, all kinds of dissembling such as speaking ill of the deaf (and presumably smiling to their faces), hating your brother in your heart (while presumably speaking kindly to him), these are clearly contradictions between what seems and what is.[13]

Some aspects of what leads to good order (e.g., the trimming of beards) may be important in one context but not in another. Others are essential in all situations. We can sort them out by asking what contributes to good order in our particular contexts. Here we shall explore passages that touch directly on matters of work and economics.

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## Gleaning (Leviticus 19:9-10)

Ancient methods of harvesting were not as efficient as today, yet Leviticus 19:9-10 instruct Israelites to make them even *less* so. First, they were to leave the margins of their grain fields unharvested. The width of this margin appears to be up to the owner to decide. Second, they were not to pick up whatever produce fell to the ground. This would apply when a harvester grasped a bundle of stalks and cut them with the sickle as well as when grapes fell from a cluster just cut from the vine. Third, they were to harvest their vineyards just once, presumably taking only the ripe grapes so as to leave the later-ripening ones for their poor as well as the immigrants living among them.[14] These two categories of people—the poor and resident foreigners—were unified by their lack of owning land and were thus dependent on their own manual labor for food. Laws benefiting the poor were common in the ancient near east, but only the regulations of Israel extended this treatment to the resident foreigner. This was yet another way that God’s people were to be distinct from the surrounding nations. Other texts specify the widow and the orphan as members of this category. (Other biblical references to gleaning include Exodus 22:21-17; Leviticus 23:33; Deuteronomy 24:19-21; Judges 8:2; Ruth 2:17-23; Job 24:6; Isaiah 17:5-6, 24:13; Jeremiah 6:9, 49:9; Obadiah 1:5; Micah 7:1.)

We might classify gleaning as an expression of compassion or justice but according to Leviticus, allowing others to glean on our property is the fruit of holiness. We do it because God says “I am the Lord your God” (Lev. 19:10). This highlights the distinction between charity and gleaning. In charity, people voluntarily give to others who are in need. This is a good and noble thing to do, but it is not what Leviticus is talking about. Gleaning is a process in which landowners have an *obligation* to provide poor and marginalized people access to the means of production (the land, in Leviticus) and to work it *themselves*. Unlike charity, it does not depend on the generosity of landowners. In this sense, it was much more like a tax than a charitable contribution. Also unlike charity, it was not given to the poor as a transfer payment. Through gleaning, the poor earned their living the same way as the landowners did, by working the fields with their own labors. It was simply a command that everyone had a right to access the means of provision created by God.

In contemporary societies, it may not be easy to discern how to apply the principles of gleaning. In many countries, land reform is certainly needed so that land is securely available to farmers, rather than being controlled by capricious government officials or landowners who obtained it corruptly. In more industrialized and knowledge-based economies, land is not the chief factor of production. Access to education, capital, product and job markets, transport systems, and non-discriminatory laws and regulations may be what poor people need to be productive. Christians may not be more capable than anyone else of determining precisely what solutions will be most effective, and solutions need to come from across society. Certainly Leviticus does not contain a system ready-made for today's economies. But the gleaning system in Leviticus does place an obligation on the owners of productive assets to ensure that marginalized people have the opportunity to work for a living. No individual owner can provide opportunities for every unemployed or under-employed worker, of course, no more than any one farmer in ancient Israel could provide gleanings for the entire district. But owners are called to be the point people in providing opportunities for work. Perhaps Christians in general are also called to appreciate the service that business owners do in their role as job-creators in their communities.

For more on gleaning in the Bible see "[Exodus 22:21-27](#)" in *Exodus and Work* and "[Ruth 2:17-23](#)" in *Ruth and Work* at [www.theologyofwork.org](http://www.theologyofwork.org).

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## Behaving honestly (Leviticus 19:11-12)

The commands in Leviticus against stealing, dealing falsely, lying, and violating God's name by swearing to false oaths all find more familiar expression among the Ten Commandments of Exodus 20. (For more on honesty, see the sections "[Truth-telling in the Bible](#)" and "[There may be exceptions to truth telling in the workplace](#)," in the article *Truth and Deception* at [www.theologyofwork.org](http://www.theologyofwork.org).) Unique to Leviticus, however, is the Hebrew wording behind "you shall not lie *to one another*" (Lev. 19:11). Literally, it says "a person shall not lie to his *amit*," meaning "companion," "friend," or "neighbor." This surely includes fellow members of Israel's community, but based on Lev. 24:19 in the context of Lev. 24:17-22, it also seems to take in the resident alien. Israel's ethics and morality were to be distinctly better than the nations around them, even to the point of treating immigrants from other nations the same way they treated native-born citizens.

In any case, the point here is the relational aspect of telling the truth versus lying. A lie is not only a misstatement of cold fact, it is a betrayal of a companion, friend, or neighbor. The things we say to each other must truly flow out of God's holiness in us, not merely out of a technical analysis of avoiding blatant lies. When US President Bill Clinton said, "I did not have sex with that woman," he may have had some tortuous logic in mind under which the statement was not technically a lie. But his fellow citizens rightly felt that he had broken trust with them, and he later recognized and accepted this assessment. He had violated the duty not to lie *to another*.

In many workplaces, there is a need to promote either the positive or negative aspects of a product, service, person, organization, or situation. Christians need not refuse to communicate vigorously to make a point. But they must not communicate in such a way that what they convey *to another* is false. If technically true words add up to a false impression in the mind of *another*, then the duty to tell the truth is broken. As a practical matter, whenever a discussion of truthfulness descends into a technical debate about wording, it's wise to ask ourselves if the debate is about whether to lie *to another* in this sense.

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## Treating workers fairly (Leviticus 19:13)

### Growing Apples - Supporting Heroes

Cheryl Broetje, owner of Broetje Orchards describes her calling to include overlooked people in the economy. "We came to believe that those showing up in our orchard were economic refugees. Yes, many were here without legal documents, but they were desperate to work toward a better future." In a statement made in his 1967 pastoral letter, Pope Paul VI said, "The human right to feed the family supersedes the right of a nation to establish borders and control entrance to and from that nation." The Mexican consul, Señor Medraza, calls the Mexican workers in the United States heroes. Together they sent \$16 billion home last year to support their families in Mexico, making this Mexico's number-one income source.

"We came to believe that God was calling us not only to grow apples, but also to use that work as a context in which people who were being overlooked or ignored could grow as well."[\[15\]](#)

"You shall not defraud your neighbor; you shall not steal; and you shall not keep for yourself the wages of a laborer until morning" (Lev. 19:13). Day laborers were generally poorer people who lacked land on which to farm themselves. They were especially dependent on immediate payment for their work and thus should be paid at the close of each day (cf. Deuteronomy 24:14-15). In our world, a comparable situation occurs when employers have the power to dictate terms and conditions of labor that take advantage of workers' vulnerabilities. This occurs, for example, when employees are pressed to contribute to their bosses' favored political candidates or expected to continue working after clocking out. These practices are illegal in most places, but unfortunately remain common.

A more controversial situation is day laborers who lack documentation authorizing them for legal employment. Such people often work in agriculture, landscaping, and small projects. Because both employers and employees are working without the law, such workers seldom receive the protections of employment agreements and government regulations. Employers may take advantage of their situation by paying them less per hour than legal workers, to denying benefits, and to providing poor or dangerous working conditions. They may be subject to abuse and sexual harassment. Is it legitimate for employers to treat them this way? Surely not.

But what if people in such situations offer themselves for substandard employment apparently willingly? In many places, undocumented workers are available outside garden and building supply stores, at agricultural markets and other gathering places. Is it right to employ them? If so, is it the employers' responsibility to provide the things legal workers get by rights, such as the minimum wage, health benefits, retirement plans, sick pay and termination benefits? Must Christians be strict about the legality of such employment, or should we be flexible, on the grounds that legislation has not yet caught up with reality? Thoughtful Christians will inevitably differ in their conclusions about this, and so it is difficult to justify a "one size fits all" solution. However a Christian processes these issues, Leviticus reminds us that holiness (and not practical expediency) must be at the core of our thinking. And holiness in labor matters arises out of a concern for the needs of the most vulnerable workers.

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### Rights of People with Disabilities (Leviticus 19:14)

"You shall not revile the deaf or put a stumbling block before the blind; you shall fear your God: I am the Lord" (Lev. 19:14). These commands paint a vivid picture of cruel treatment of people with disabilities. A deaf person could not hear such a curse, nor could a blind person see the block. For these reasons, Leviticus 19:14 reminds Israelites to "fear your God" who hears and sees how *everyone* is treated in the workplace. For example, workers with disabilities do not necessarily need the same office furniture and equipment as those without disabilities. But they *do* need to be offered the opportunity for employment to the full extent of their productivity, like everyone else. In many cases what people with disabilities most need is not to be *prevented* from working in jobs they are capable of doing. Again, the command in Leviticus is not that the people of God ought to be charitable to others, but that the holiness of God gives all people created in his image the *right* to appropriate opportunities for work.

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### Doing Justice (Leviticus 19:15-16)

"You shall not render an unjust judgment; you shall not be partial to the poor or defer to the great: with justice you shall judge your neighbor. You shall not go around as a slanderer among your people, and you shall not profit by the blood of your neighbor: I am the Lord" (Leviticus 19:15-16).

This short section upholds the familiar biblical value of justice, then broadens considerably. The first verse begins with an application for judges, but ends with an application for everyone. Do not judge court cases with partiality, and don't judge your neighbor unfairly, either. The wording of the Hebrew highlights the temptation to judge the external appearance of a person or issue. Woodenly rendered,

Leviticus 19:15 says, “Do not do injustice in judgment. Do not lift up the face of the poor one and do not honor the face of the great one. With rightness you shall judge your neighbor.” Judges must look through their preconceptions (the “face” they perceive) in order to understand the issue impartially. The same is true of our social relationships at work, school and civic life. In every context, some people are privileged and others oppressed because of social biases of every kind. Imagine the difference Christians could make if we simply waited to make judgments until knowing people and situations in depth. What if we took the time to know the annoying person on our team before complaining behind his or her back? What if we dared to spend time with people outside our comfort zone at school, university or civic life? What if we sought out newspaper, TV and media that offer a different perspective from what we are comfortable with? Would digging below the surface give us greater wisdom to do our work well and justly?

The latter part of Leviticus 19:16 reminds us that social bias is no light matter. Literally, the Hebrew says, “Do not stand by the blood of your neighbor.” In the language of the courtroom in the previous verse, biased testimony (“slander”) endangers the life (“blood”) of the accused. In that case, not only would it be wrong to speak biased words, it would even be wrong to stand idly by without volunteering to testify on behalf of the falsely accused.

Leaders in workplaces must often act in the role of an arbiter. Workers may witness an injustice in the workplace and legitimately question whether or not it is appropriate to get involved. Leviticus claims that proactively standing in favor of the mistreated is an essential element of belonging to God’s holy people.

On a larger level, Leviticus brings its theological vision of holiness to bear on the whole community. The health of the community and the economy we share is at stake. Hans Küng points out the necessary interrelationship of business, politics, and religion.

It should not be forgotten that economic thought and actions, too, are not value-free or value-neutral...Just as the social and ecological responsibility of business cannot simply be foisted onto politicians, so moral and ethical responsibility cannot simply be foisted onto religion....No, ethical action should not be just a private addition to marketing plans, sales strategies, ecological bookkeeping and social balance-sheets, but should form the natural framework for human social action.**[16]**

Every kind of workplace—home, business, government, academia., medicine, agriculture and all the rest—have a distinctive role to play. Yet all of them are called to be holy. In Lev. 19:15-16, holiness begins by seeing others with a depth of insight that gets beneath face value.

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## Loving Your Neighbor as Yourself (Leviticus 19:17-18)

The most famous verse in Leviticus may be the command, “Love your neighbor as yourself” (Lev. 19:18). This imperative is so sweeping that both Jesus and the rabbis regarded it as one of the two “great” commandments, the other being “Hear, O Israel: the Lord our God, the Lord is one” (Deuteronomy 6:4; Mark 12:29-31). In quoting Leviticus 19:18, the Apostle Paul wrote that “love is the fulfilling of the law” (Romans 13:10).

Working for others as much as for ourselves

### **Whose benefit is this really for?**

I was a salesman for a computer company that also sold office copiers. I didn't think our copiers were a very good value, so I didn't spend much time trying to interest customers in them. Then one day I received word that unless I sold at least one, I wouldn't make my annual quota. I couldn't stomach trying to convince anyone that our copiers would be a good purchase. So I called my best customer and admitted I was asking a favor. “I have to sell one of these to make quota this year,” I said. “I want you to buy it. I know you need a new copier, and ours is as good as anyone else's. It's just overpriced and bulky. But as you know, I've provided outstanding customer service on the computer side. In the context of a mutually beneficial relationship, I hope it's worth it to you to spend a bit more to buy one copier from me.”

The customer bought one, and I made my quota. I learned two things from the episode. First, if you provide more value than you charge on a daily basis—in other words if you create a good business relationship—customers will put up with a few days where you cost more than the value you provide. Second, if you need someone to do you a favor, just admit it. Don't try to pretend you're doing it for their sake.

The crux of the command lies in the words, “as yourself.” At least to some degree, most of us work to provide for ourselves.” There is a strong element of self-interest in working. We know that if we don’t work, we won’t eat. Scripture commends this motivation (2 Thessalonians 3:10), yet the “as yourself” aspect of Lev. 19:18 suggests that we should be equally motivated to serve others through our work. This is a very high call—to work as much to serve others as to meet our own needs. If we had to work twice as long to accomplish it—say one shift a day for ourselves and another shift for our neighbor—it would be nearly impossible.

Providentially, it is possible to love ourselves and our neighbors through the same work, at least to the degree that our work provides something of value to customers, citizens, students, family members and other consumers. A teacher receives a salary that pays the bills and at the same time imbues students with knowledge and skills that will be equally valuable to them. A hotel maid receives wages while providing guests a clean and healthy room. In most jobs, we would not stay employed for long if we don’t provide a value to others at least equal to what we draw in pay. But what if we find ourselves in a situation where we can skew the benefits in favor of ourselves? Some people may have enough power to command salaries and bonuses in excess of the value they truly provide. The politically-connected or corrupt may be able to wring large rewards for themselves in the form of contracts, subsidies, bonuses, and make-work jobs, while providing little of value for others. Nearly all of us have moments when we can shirk our duties yet still get paid.

[An invitation for us to offer our work in worship to God \(Click to listen\)](#)

Thinking more broadly, if we have a wide range of choices in our work, how much of a role does serving others make in our job decisions, compared to making the most for ourselves? Almost every kind of work can serve others and please God. But that does not mean that every job or work opportunity is of equal service to others. We love ourselves when we make work choices that bring us high pay, prestige, security, comfort, and easy work. We love others when we choose work that provides needed goods and services, opportunities for marginalized people, protection for God’s creation, justice and democracy, truth, peace, and beauty. Leviticus 19:18 suggests that the latter should be as important to us as the former.

Be nice?

Instead of striving to meet this high calling, it is easy to relax our understanding of “Love your neighbor as yourself” into something banal like “be nice.” But being nice is often nothing more than a façade and an excuse for disengaging from the people around us. Leviticus 19:17 commands us to do the opposite. “Reprove your neighbor, or you will incur guilt yourself” (Lev. 19:17). These two commands—both to love and to reprove your neighbor—seem like unlikely fellows but they are brought together in the



proverb, “Better is open rebuke than hidden love” (Proverbs 27:5).

Regrettably, too often the lesson we absorb at church is to always be nice. If this becomes our rule in the workplace, it can have disastrous personal and professional effects. Niceness can lull Christians into allowing bullies and predators to abuse and manipulate them and to do the same to others. Niceness can lead Christian managers to gloss over workers’ shortcomings in performance reviews, depriving them of a reason to sharpen their skills and keep their jobs in the long run. Niceness may lead anyone into holding on to resentment, bearing a grudge, or seeking revenge. Leviticus tells us that loving people sometimes means making an honest rebuke. This is not a license for insensitivity. When we rebuke, we need to do so with humility—we may need to be rebuked in the situation too—and compassion.

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## Who is My Neighbor? (Leviticus 19:33-34)

Leviticus teaches that Israelites must not “oppress” resident foreigners (Lev. 19:33). (The same Hebrew verb appears in Lev. 25:17, “You shall not cheat one another.”) The command continues, “The alien who resides with you shall be to you as the citizen among you; you shall love the alien as yourself, for you were aliens in the land of Egypt: I am the Lord your God” (Lev. 19:34). This verse is a particularly strong example of the unbreakable connection in Leviticus between the moral force of the law (“love the alien as yourself”) and the very being of God, “I am the Lord your God.” You do not oppress foreigners because you belong to a God who is holy.

Resident aliens, along with widows and the poor (see Lev. 19:9-10 above), typify outsiders lacking power. In today’s workplaces, power differentials arise not only from nationality and gender differences, but from a variety of other factors as well. Whatever the cause, most workplaces develop a hierarchy of power that is well known to everyone, regardless of whether it is openly acknowledged. From Lev. 19:33-34, we may conclude that Christians should treat other people fairly in business as an expression of genuine worship of God.

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## Trading Fairly (Leviticus 19:35-36)

### **GOD LOVES HONEST SCALES**

*From Brian Bauer, a financial manager at Boeing*

Modern finance is the set of scales relied upon by business leaders, owners, and customers. Accounting reports tell owners about the performance of their business. A cash flow analysis tells a buyer whether or not they are getting a good deal when acquiring a company or manager when launching a project. And here’s where things get interesting. Accounting is governed by a set of rules, but the rules must be interpreted and the methods for adhering to those rules spark vigorous debate....

Click [here](#) to continue reading.

This passage prohibits cheating in business by falsely measuring length, weight or quality, and is made more specific by reference to scales and stones, the standard equipment of trade. The various measurements mentioned indicate that this rule would apply across a wide spectrum, from tracts of land to the smallest measure of dry and wet goods. The Hebrew word *tsedeq* (NRSV “honest”) that appears four times in Lev. 19:36 denotes character that is right in terms of having integrity and being blameless. All weights and measures should be accurate. In short, buyers should get what they have paid for.

Sellers possess a vast array of means to deliver less than what buyers think they are getting. These are not limited to falsified measurements of weight, area and volume. Exaggerated claims, misleading statistics, irrelevant comparisons, promises that can't be kept, “vaporware,” and hidden terms and conditions are merely the tip of the iceberg. For applications in various workplaces, see “[Truth-telling in the Workplace](#)” at [www.theologyofwork.org](http://www.theologyofwork.org).

A woman who works for a large credit card issuer tells a disturbing story along these lines.

Our business is providing credit cards to poor people with bad credit histories. Although we charge high interest rates, our customers' default rate is so high that we can't make a profit simply by charging interest. We have to find a way to generate fees.

One challenge is that most of our customers are afraid of debt, so they pay their monthly balance on time. No fees for us that way. So we have a trick for catching them off-guard. For the first six months, we send them a bill on the 15<sup>th</sup> of the month, due the 15<sup>th</sup> of the following month. They learn the pattern and diligently send us the payment on the 14<sup>th</sup> every month. On the seventh month, we send their bill on the 12<sup>th</sup>, due on the 12<sup>th</sup> of the next month. They don't notice the change, and they send us the payment on the 14<sup>th</sup> as usual. Now we've got them. We charge them a \$30 service charge for the late payment. Also, because they are delinquent, we can raise their interest rate. Next month they are already in arrears and they're in a cycle that generates fees for us month after month.<sup>[17]</sup>

It is hard to see how any trade or business that depends on deceiving or misleading people to make a profit could be a fit line of work for those who are called to follow a holy God.

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## The Sabbath Year and the Year of Jubilee (Leviticus 25)

Leviticus 25 ordains a sabbath year, one in every seven (Lev. 25:1-7), and a jubilee year, one in every

fifty (Lev. 25:8-17), to sanctify Israel's internal economy. In the sabbath year, each field was to lie fallow, which appears to be a sound agricultural practice. (CONTENT NOT YET AVAILABLE: For an exploration of the sabbath, see *\*Rest and Work* at [www.theologyofwork.org](http://www.theologyofwork.org)). The year of jubilee was much more radical. Every fiftieth year, all leased or mortgaged lands were to be returned to their original owners and all slaves and bonded laborers were to be freed (Lev. 25:10). This naturally posed difficulties in banking and land transactions, and special provisions were designed to ameliorate them (Lev. 25:15-16), which we will explore in a moment. The underlying intent is the same as seen in the law of gleaning (Lev. 19:9-10), to ensure that everyone had access to the means of production, whether the family farm or simply the fruits of their own labor.

There is no clear evidence that Israel ever actually observed the jubilee year or the antislavery provisions associated with it (e.g., Leviticus 26:25-26). Regardless, the sheer detail of Leviticus 25 strongly suggests that we treat the laws as something that Israel potentially could have implemented. Rather than see the jubilee year as a utopian literary fiction, it seems better to believe that Israel neglected it not because it was unfeasible but because the wealthy were unwilling to accept its social and economic implications that would have been costly and disruptive to them.<sup>[18]</sup>

## PROTECTION FOR THE DESTITUTE

After Israel conquered Canaan, the land was assigned to Israel's clans and families as described in Numbers 26 and Joshua 15-22. This land was never to be sold in perpetuity for it belonged to the Lord, not the people (Lev. 25:23-24).<sup>[19]</sup> The effect of the jubilee was to prevent any family from becoming permanently landless through sale, mortgage or permanent lease of its assigned land. In essence, any sale of land was really a term lease that could last no longer than the next year of jubilee (Lev. 25:15). This provided a means for the destitute to raise money (by leasing the land) without depriving the family's future generations of the means of production. The rules of Leviticus 25 are not easy to figure out, and Milgrom makes good sense of them as he lays out three progressive stages of destitution.<sup>[20]</sup>

1. The first stage is depicted in Lev. 25:25-28. A person could simply become poor. The presumed scenario is that of a farmer who borrowed money to buy seed but did not harvest enough to repay the loan. He therefore must sell some of the land to a buyer in order to cover the debt and buy seed for the next planting. If there was a person who belonged to the farmer's clan who wished to act as a "redeemer", he could pay the buyer according to the number of remaining annual crops until the jubilee year when it reverted to the farmer. Until that time, the land belonged to the redeemer, who allowed the farmer to work it.
2. The second stage was more serious (Lev. 25:35-38). Assuming that the land was not redeemed and the farmer again fell into debt from which he could not recover, he would forfeit all of his land to the creditor. In this case, the creditor must lend the farmer the funds necessary to continue working as a tenant farmer on his own land, but must not charge him interest. The farmer would amortize this loan with the profit made from the crops, perhaps eliminating the debt. If so, the farmer would regain his

land. If the loan was not fully repaid before the jubilee, then at that time the land would revert back to the farmer or his heirs.

3. The third stage was more serious still (Lev. 25:39-43). Assuming that the farmer in the previous stage could neither pay on the loan or even support himself and his family, he would become temporarily bound to the household of the creditor. As a bound laborer he would work for wages, which were entirely for reduction of the debt. At the year of jubilee when, he would regain his land and his freedom (Lev. 25:41). Throughout these years, the creditor must not work him as a slave, sell him as a slave, or rule over him harshly (Lev. 25:42-43). The creditor must “fear God” by accepting the fact that all of God’s people are God’s slaves (NRSV “servants”) whom he graciously brought out from Egypt. No one else can own them because God already does.

The point of these rules is that Israelites were never to become slaves to other Israelites. It was conceivable, though, that impoverished Israelites might sell themselves as slaves to wealthy resident aliens living in the land (Lev. 25:47-55). Even if this happened, the sale must not be permanent. People who sold themselves must retain the right to buy themselves out of slavery if they prospered. If not, a near relative could intervene as a “redeemer” who would pay the foreigner according to the number of years left until the jubilee when the impoverished Israelites were to be released. During that time, they must not be treated harshly but be regarded as hired workers.

## WHAT DOES THE YEAR OF JUBILEE MEAN FOR TODAY?

The year of jubilee operated within the context of Israel’s kinship system for the protection of the clan’s inalienable right to work their ancestral land, which they understood to be owned by God, to be enjoyed by them as a benefit of their relationship with him. These social and economic conditions no longer exist, and from a biblical point of view, God no longer administers redemption through a single political state. We must view the jubilee from our current vantage point.

Christopher Wright has written extensively on the Christian appropriation of Old Testament laws.<sup>[21]</sup> He identifies principles implicit in these ancient laws in order to grasp their ethical implications for today. His treatment of the jubilee year thus considers three basic angles: the theological, the social, and the economic.<sup>[22]</sup>

*Theologically*, the jubilee affirms that the Lord is not only the God who owns Israel’s land; he is sovereign over all time and nature. His act of redeeming his people from Egypt committed him to provide for them on every level because they were his own. Therefore, Israel’s observance of the sabbath day, year, and the jubilee was a function of obedience and trust. In practical terms, the jubilee year embodies the trust all Israelites could have that God would provide for their immediate needs and for the future of their families. At the same time, it calls on the rich to trust that treating creditors compassionately will still yield an adequate return.

Looking at the *social* angle, the smallest unit of Israel's kinship structure was the household that would have included three to four generations. The jubilee provided a socioeconomic solution to keep the family whole even in the face of economic calamity. Family debt was a reality in ancient times as it is today, and its effects include a frightening list of social ills. The jubilee sought to check these negative social consequences by limiting their duration so that future generations would not have to bear the burden of their distant ancestors.[23]

The *economic* angle reveals the two principles that we can apply today. First, God desires equitable distribution of the earth's resources. According to God's plan, the land was assigned equitably among the people. The jubilee was not about redistribution, but restoration. According to Wright, "The jubilee thus stands as a critique not only of massive private accumulation of land and related wealth but also of large-scale forms of collectivism or nationalization that destroy any meaningful sense of personal or family ownership." [24] Second, family units must have the opportunity and resources to provide for themselves.

In modern times, bankruptcy laws are intended to fulfill much of the same purpose. Generally, people cannot be sold into slavery to pay debts. Descendants are not liable for ancestors' debts. The basic property needed for survival may be protected from seizure. Nonetheless, Leviticus 25 seems to offer a broader foundation than contemporary bankruptcy laws. It is founded not on merely protecting the personal liberty and a bit of property for destitute people, but on ensuring that everyone has access to the means of making a living and escaping multi-generational poverty. As the gleaning laws in Leviticus show, the solution is neither handouts nor mass appropriation of property, but social values and structures that give every person an opportunity to work productively. Have modern societies actually surpassed ancient Israel in this regard? What would it take for Christians to be capable of offering real solutions?

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## Conclusions from Leviticus

The single most important conclusion we can draw from Leviticus is that our call as God's people is to reflect God's holiness in our work. This calls us to separate ourselves from the actions of any around us who oppose God's ways. When we reflect God's holiness, we find ourselves in God's presence, whether at work, home, church or society. We reflect God's holiness not by hanging scripture verses, reciting prayers, wearing crosses, or even by being nice. We do it by loving our co-workers, customers, students, investors, competitors, rivals and everyone we encounter as much as we love ourselves. In practical terms, this means doing as much good for others through our work as we do for ourselves. This enlivens our motivation, our diligence, our exercise of power, our skill development, and perhaps even our choice of work. It also means working for the benefit of the entire community and working in harmony with the rest of society, so far as it depends on us. And it means working to change the

structures and systems of society to reflect God’s holiness as the one who delivered Israel from slavery and oppression. When we do this, we find by God’s grace that his words are fulfilled: “I will live among you, and I will not despise you. I will walk among you; I will be your God, and you will be my people” (Leviticus 26:11-12).

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## ENDNOTES

- [1] Nine times the book of Leviticus refers to the Lord having brought Israel out of Egypt, often as a motive for Israel’s future obedience (11:45; 19:36; 22:33, 23:43; 25:38, 42, 55; 26:13, 45).
- [2] Alexander Hill, *Just Business: Christian Ethics for the Marketplace*, 2nd ed. (Downers Grove: IVP Academic, 2008), 15.
- [3] Mary Douglas, *Purity and Danger: An Analysis of the Concepts of Pollution and Taboo* (London: Routledge, 1966).
- [4] Christopher J. H. Wright, *Old Testament Ethics for the People of God* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 2004), 299 (emphasis original).
- [5] Christopher J. H. Wright, *The Mission of God* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 2006), 336 (emphasis original).
- [6] Jacob Milgrom, *Leviticus: A Book of Ritual and Ethics, A Continental Commentary* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2004), 15.
- [7] Jacob Milgrom, *Leviticus 1-16*, (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1998), 345.
- [8] Derek Tidball, *The Message of Leviticus*, (InterVarsity Press: Downers Grove, IL, 2005), 152.
- [9] The literature on this matter is extensive, though much of it refers to the seminal work of Mary Douglas, *Purity and Danger* (referenced above). For a useful survey of issues and critique, see Walter J. Houston, *Purity and Monotheism: Clean and Unclean Animals in Biblical Law* (London: Bloomsbury, 2009).
- [10] Jacob Milgrom, *Leviticus 1-16*, (Yale University Press: New Haven, 1998), 704-42.
- [11] Jacob Milgrom, *Leviticus 1-16*, (Yale University Press: New Haven, 1998), 105.

- [12] Derek Tidball, *The Message of Leviticus*, (InterVarsity Press: Downers Grove, IL, 2005), 155.
- [13] Mary Douglas, *Purity and Danger, : An Analysis of Concepts of Pollution and Taboo* (London: Routledge, 1966), 53-54.
- [14] Jacob Milgrom, *Leviticus 1-16*, (Yale University Press: New Haven, 1998), 225.
- [15] Al Erisman, "Cheryl Broetje - An Orchard With Fruit That Lasts", *Ethix* 44, Nov.-Dec. 2005. Available online at <http://ethix.org/2005/12/01/an-orchard-with-fruit-that-lasts>.
- [16] Hans Küng, *Global Responsibility: In Search of a New World Ethic* (New York: Continuum, 1993), 32-33 quoted in Gane, *Leviticus, Numbers*, 352.
- [17] Name withheld by request, as told to TOW Project editor William Messenger, March 15, 2013.
- [18] Name withheld by request. Told to TOW Project editor William Messenger at a meeting of the Fordham Consortium at Seattle Pacific University, August 5, 2011.
- [19] Christopher J. H. Wright, *The Mission of God*, (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 2006), 296.
- [20] Bruce Waltke and Charles Yu, *An Old Testament Theology* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2007) 528.
- [21] Jacob Milgrom, *Leviticus, : A Book of Ritual and Ethics, A Continental Commentary* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2004), 299-303.
- [22] Christopher J. H. Wright, *Old Testament Ethics, for the People of God* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 2004), chapter 9.
- [23] The following discussion of these three angles is indebted to Wright's exposition in *The Mission of God*, 296-300. Chapter 5 titled "Economics and the Poor" in *Old Testament Ethics* is also helpful and relevant, but ranges far beyond the jubilee concerns of Leviticus 25.
- [24] [www.jubileedebtcampaign.org.uk](http://www.jubileedebtcampaign.org.uk)
- [25] Christopher J. H. Wright, *The Mission of God*, (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 2006), 296-97.