

THE STRUCTURE AND MEANING OF LEVITICUS 19

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On reading Leviticus 19 one is struck both by the precision of the various individual commandments and groups of commandments and the apparent confusion of the overall composition. The seemingly random changes from singular to plural throughout and the wide variety of types and formulations of laws suggest a long and complex editorial process. There is at least one climactic point in verse 18, and the attentive reader or listener hears phrases reappearing in the latter part of the chapter that have occurred earlier on. But no obvious overall structure emerges, so that the meaning of the whole, as opposed to the individual commands or prohibitions, remains elusive. This study is an attempt to unravel some of the more obvious organizing factors in the composition of the chapter.

This chapter is clearly designated as bringing together materials that illustrate the requirement of God that Israel be "holy". However, attempts to find any pattern in the collection have foundered and the usual conclusion is that the material has been so overworked that none remains. A theological refinement suggests (Wenham 1979, p. 264) that the very randomness reinforces the idea that "the diversity of material in this chapter reflects the differentiation of life. All aspects of human affairs are subject to God's law."

a. Repeated phrases.

Nevertheless there is apparently some degree of ordering of the contents. Most obviously, certain phrases which help define units within the first part of the chapter reappear towards the end of it.

v3b *ve 'et-šabbetōtay tišmōrū*

v30 *'et-šabbetōtay tišmōrū*

v4a *'al-tipnū 'el-(ha'elilim)*

v31a *'al-tipnū 'el-(ha'ohot)*

v14c	<i>veyàrètá me'elòheká</i>
v32c	<i>veyàrètá me'elòheká</i>
v15a	<i>lò'-ta'asù 'àvel hammišpát</i>
v35a	<i>lò'-ta'asù 'àvel bammišpát</i>
v18c	<i>ve'āhabtá lere'aká kamòka</i>
v34b	<i>ve'āhabtá lô kamòka</i>
v19a	<i>'et-huqqótay tšmorù</i>
v37a	<i>'ušemariem 'et-kol-huqqótay</i>

To this list we should add the repeated *tira ũ* which twice appears in the same construction in conjunction with the command to keep the sabbath:

v3a	<i>šs 'immò ve'abiv tšrã ũ</i>
v30b	<i>'umiqdāši tšrã ũ</i>

The two units defined by these phrases supplement each other in most cases. In addition they help clarify the structure of the chapter. Thus within verses 3-18 there are 5 (or 6 if we include *tira ũ*) phrases which reappear within the section v30-36. This effectively isolates between the two the section from verse 19-29 which is subsumed under the new subheading *'et-huqqótay tšmorù*. Following Daube (1947, p. 74-102) we might recognize the units within 30-36 as additions to the earlier ones in the chapter, but placed at the end of the completed section 1-29 as appendices. Alternatively, we may see them as forming, together with 1-18 a sort of inclusio to the inner section 19-29. It may even be that they form part of a larger unit, since chapter 19 seems strategically placed between 18 which lists forbidden sexual unions, and 20 which lists the punishments for these (and for consulting mediums, specifically condemned in 19:31).

18

19:1-18

19:19-29

19:30-37

20

b. Structures and Structure of vv 11-18.

Three of the five units which are "supplemented" occur within the section vv 11-18, a series of four passages each closed by the same motive clause "I am the Lord" (v12, 14, 16, 18). As Wenham (1979, p. 257) points out, "different words for 'neighbour' are used within this section, so that v18 forms a literary as well as a theological climax to the whole passage.

11-12	fellow citizen,	I am the Lord
13-14		neighbour, I am the Lord
15-16	fellow citizen, people, neighbour,	I am the Lord
17-18	brother, fellow citizen, people, neighbour,	I am the Lord. ¹

This degree of formal composition alerts us to make a closer examination of these four units individually and to look for other factors that help make up its overall structure. Of the four, three are expressed in the singular (vv 13-14, 15-16, 17-18) and one in the plural (vv 11-12). However, this pattern is interrupted at two points: the closing phrase of verse 12 is in the singular and the opening of verse 15 is in the plural. In the first case the statement "and profane the name of your God" may be influenced by the similarly phrased formulations, also in the singular, in Lev 18:21 and 20:3 where they refer to the individual's act in offering his seed to Moloch. Where the verb *hll* occurs elsewhere in connection with profaning God's name it is only found in the plural: in Lev 21:6 and 22:2 and Mal 1:12, where the subjects are the priests and in Ezek 20:39; 36:20-23, where it refers to the actions of the House of Israel in exile among the nations.¹ In the two other instances where the verb occurs within our chapter (v8, 29) it is used in the singular.

It would seem therefore that the immediate context of Leviticus has determined the singular form. However, precisely because it is singular, the phrase seems particularly intrusive at this point, as we shall discuss below.

The other change of person comes with the phrase in verse 15 *lo'-ta'äšû 'ävel bammīšpäi*. As we have noted above, this phrase recurs later in the chapter (v35a) and may have been inserted here for purposes having to do with shaping the overall structure of the chapter rather than as an integral part of the unit itself. It is thus effectively separated from the rest of the verses in the unit which are expressed in the singular form and provides for them a general heading.

Before examining the four units in detail one interesting feature emerges from our discussion of the reference to profaning God's name. It draws our attention to the fact that God is invoked here in a series of laws that refer specifically to actions committed against one's fellow man. It is not clear whether the profaning of God's name is a consequence of all four acts in the unit or only of the last one. Both the singular formulation and the unexpected appearance of the phrase, which interrupts the regular pattern of the command emphasize that the reference to God is being deliberately invoked. God is similarly introduced at the end of the second unit (v14) in the phrase *veyäretä mä 'elöheka*, and again it is not clear whether this

1. For a fuller treatment of the term see Milgrom (1976, p. 86-9).

phrase refers to the whole unit or only the latter part of it. Important for our consideration of the structure of this section is the fact that whereas these two units end with man's relationship to God, expressed in v12 negatively and in v14 positively, the conclusions of the remaining two units express one's relationship to one's "neighbour", again negatively (you shall not stand by the blood of your neighbour) and then positively (you shall love your neighbour as yourself). Given the systematic build-up of terms for "neighbour" as evidence of formal composition, the dual emphasis on God/man within this section would also seem to be deliberate. At this point, however, it becomes difficult to assess what further factors can legitimately be taken into account in identifying elements of the composition. For example, the most obtrusive word in the section is the negative "lô" which occurs a total of eighteen times, divided evenly, nine times each, between the two "God" and the two "neighbour" units. Is this a mere incidental fact or part of the deliberate construction of the section, thus balancing the two parts? It is certainly suggestive though probably unprovable.

One further element worth noting for the overall structure is the shift of person from third to second with regards the object of your actions. The only object in verse 11 is "his" fellow citizen. Although verse 13 introduces "your neighbour", the rest of the unit and the first part of verse 15 speaks of neutral victims of "your" actions. However from the end of verse 15, the suffix *-ka* recurs seven times. There is thus an increasing emphasis on your relatedness to the object of your actions as the passage continues.

vv 11-12

Of the four units this is the simplest in structure providing we set aside the phrase about profaning God's name. Nevertheless there is a question as to what the four prohibitions have in common, assuming it is legitimate to seek here some unity of theme. The latter three: deceiving lying and false swearing are related to verbal acts, whereas the first one, "stealing" is a physical action. It is possible that the phrase *lô tignôbû* is short for the concept of *ganab leb* (Gen 31:20, 26) though it would then overlap with "you shall not deceive". Another way of expressing the connection might be to follow the rabbinic view in *Sifra* that the four are to be seen as consequences, one of the other. Thus the thief in covering up his crime will have to deceive then lie and ultimately take a false oath. There is some support for such a view in the passage in Lev 5:21-24 which shares some of the terms used here and where the sequence suggests that a false oath is the consequence of an act of deception.

Perhaps the most rewarding approach is to focus on the opening verb *g n b*, particularly as the next section employs the contrasting term *g z l*, and complete this evaluation once we have examined vv 13-14.

vv 13-14

There are five prohibitions in this unit, each expressed in the second person singular. The common theme is oppression and exploitation: of one's neighbour (13a) and the hired worker (13c). The last two prohibitions against cursing the deaf or placing a stumbling block before the blind would seem to be meant figuratively rather than literally.

In terms of the structure we have two linked prohibitions (oppression/ robbery // harming deaf/ blind) bracketing an independent middle one. The first pair consists of a long phrase followed by a short one, while the second pair reverses this order - the final line being longer because it is formulated to have a chiasmic relationship with its partner. The long phrase (13a) that stands between them is thus marked off in a formal structural way even before we examine its meaning.

lô ta'âšôq 'ei-rê'âka
velô tigzôl
lô-'âlfîn pe'ullai 'âkir 'itteka 'ad-hôqer
lô-teqallêl herêš
velipnê 'ivvêr lô tittên mikšôl

Whereas the first pair are somewhat general and the last pair are figurative, the central one is quite specific. In such a construction one would expect the central line to be linked in some way with each of the parts around it - as we shall see is also the case in vv 15-16. If we follow Jackson (1972, p19) the first pair of prohibitions are concerned with economic exploitation of the materially weaker. However Milgrom (1976, p89-99) argues forcibly that both 'šq and gz/ refer to the illegal withholding of "life-essentials" with an emphasis upon the violence of the act. In such a context the hired labourer is a prime example of such a victim, though perhaps what makes him a less obvious case is that he is not the victim of action but of inaction. He thus represents an extreme parameter of such exploitation and extends the concept of violence. What, however, is the effect of linking him to the figurative expressions that follow? Perhaps it is to take that limited financial motif and generalize it, because both the latter prohibitions concern exploiting the weakness and helplessness of others *at the precise point of their frailty*. Thus the first two prohibitions, combined with the "hired worker" draw attention to the act of exploitation itself, whereas the latter two, combined with the "hired worker", focus on the

victim and his weakness. The juxtaposition of these laws within this structure does more than merely relay certain specific laws, it forces the reader to evaluate their interaction. Thus the unit as a whole has something of the nature of a riddle, and seems to expect a search for the spirit as well as for the letter of the law.

To return to the problem of the relation of this unit to the previous one, there is a contrast between the verbs *gnb* and *gzl* but various ways of interpreting this. Following Milgrom's conclusions (*ibid*) that the Biblical terms are best understood, as in Tannaitic law, by "theft by stealth" (*gnb*) and "robbery by open force" (*gzl*) it is both these categories of actions that are under consideration. Wenham, however, puts the emphasis elsewhere (1979, p267):

Whereas vv 11-12 forbid crooked dealings between equals, or at least between those capable of taking one another to law if they have a grievance, these verses deal with exploitation of the weak who would not be able to seek such redress.

There is, however, a third possibility, that whereas vv 11-12 focus on crimes concerning the property of others (c.f. the use of *khš* in Lev 5:21-22) vv 13-14 draw our attention to crimes against the person. We shall return to this matter in examining the overall theme of the section.

Before leaving this unit we should consider the closing phrase. In these cases where legal sanctions may not be enforceable a special appeal is made to "the fear of God" as guiding and controlling your actions (c.f. Lev 25:17, 36, 43). This may be meant in the sense used by Abraham to Abimelech (Gen 20:11), the "fear of God" implying either "the rule of law" or some "sense of morality", or it might mean more simply that God is aware of behaviour that man does not see (the blind) or hear (the deaf). The same phrase is evoked in verse 32 with regards to respecting the old, presumably another part of society that is weak and exploitable. Here, however, the positive nature of the command would seem to emphasize the right action to be taken in such situations rather than the correction of wrongdoing. This positive emphasis in the latter section is repeated in two other instances.

vv 15-16

These verses are focused on two key terms *mīšpāt* and *cedeq*, both of which recur in the equivalent passage in the second part, verse 35f. As discussed above, the opening phrase serves as a general heading to the unit. We are thus left with five statements, two sets of prohibitions grouped around a central command. Verse 15 seems to deal specifically with those

making decisions within a legal context, to which the closing phrase serves as a general principle: In justice shall you judge your fellow-citizen. The sense of *cedeq* is expressed by demanding a rigorous fairness neither favouring the poor nor the powerful. This sense of *cedeq* is reinforced by its reappearance in verse 36 where the exact balancing of scales and the precise reliability of your measures is emphasized using this term.

lō-tissa penē-dal
velō' tehdar penē gādōl
becedeq tšpōt 'amitekā
lō-telēk rākil be'ammekā
lō ta'āmōd 'al-dam rē'eka

Verse 16 is more difficult to explain. The first part is generally taken to prohibit the spreading of false rumours or slandering others, thus harming them. Perhaps it also implies that this might lead to legal action being taken against them, which would give it an additional forensic tone, thus linking it to the previous verse. The second phrase about "not standing by the blood of your neighbour" is more problematic. Most moderns understand it to mean not to "accuse him falsely of crimes which bring the death penalty" (Wenham 1979, p. 268) c.f. "nor take sides against your neighbour on a capital charge" (New English Bible); "and you must not jeopardize your neighbour's life (by a baseless capital charge)" (Jerusalem Bible). Bamberger (1981, p. 896) cites Ehrlich: "do not act in such a way that you profit by his death or injury" (c.f. the New Jewish Publication Society of America translation: "Do not profit by the blood of your neighbour").

However, there is another line of reasoning that sees it as protecting your neighbour when he is in danger. Thus Sanhedrin 73a requires your intercession when your neighbour is in mortal peril e.g. drowning or attacked by robbers. In Sifra it has a forensic sense: if you have evidence that will save someone accused of a crime, you should not keep silent.

This latter approach would best fit our context here, if we are to take seriously the overall structure of the unit. For if the two prohibitions in verse 15 make a complementary pair, we would expect the two in verse 16 to do likewise. Thus the first one prohibits slander which would bring someone into danger, possibly within a legal context, and the latter would prohibit standing by when your neighbour was actually in danger, possibly also in a legal context, and your intervention could save him. All four are thus immediate and remote instances of acting with *cedeq*: the former demanding a totally disinterested stance of objectivity; the latter demanding a disciplined subjectivity, a mid-point between personal animus on the one hand and indifference on the other. To return to the actual structure of the

verses, we have two complementary pairs of prohibitions placed on each side of 15d, the demand for *cedeq*, so that the form of the section itself is that of a set of scales and exemplifies the balanced actions it demands.

Unlike the other units within this section, however, one further element must enter our evaluation because of the nature of the language used. The pairing of *dal* and *gādōl* is unusual. The more familiar opposite for *dal* would be *'āšir* (Exod 30:15; Prov 10:15; 22:16; 28:11; Ruth 3:10), the only other case where it is linked with *gādōl* being Jer 5:4-5. Conversely, *gādōl* is most commonly contrasted with *qātōn* where status in society is meant (Gen 19:11; 1 Sam 5:9; Jer 6:13; Jon 3:5 etc). If the word *dal* is used as the common legal term for poor (c.f. Exod 23:3) then the introduction of *gādōl* here may be determined not merely as a contrast in status, but also because of the word play between the two terms which share two consonants.

If we now examine the pairing in verse 16, two other word plays come to light. Or rather we may observe a word play, but must decide whether it is deliberate and must thus be taken into account, or is merely a coincidence. In the phrase *telek rākil* we have a reversal of the order of the two consonants "k" and "l". This alone, in a combination of words that occurs elsewhere (Jer 6:28; 9:3; Prov 11:13; 20:19) would not be significant. But when it is paired with *ta'amōd 'al-dam* where a similar reversal occurs between the letters "m" and "d", in a context already using another word play, we may surely recognize a conscious literary device. Certainly part of the obscurity of the phrase "stand by the blood" would be explained if it had been constructed so as to make prominent use of the letter inversion.²

More problematic still is assigning a meaning to these various word plays, though they conform to the riddling nature of both this and the previous unit. Perhaps some clue lies in the use of the word *cedeq* and the demand for "precision" and "discrimination" in legal decisions, the pun extending this idea into the very words themselves, particularly in distinguishing the terms for *dal* and *gādōl*. In the second case the effect is to produce a dramatic deepening of the meaning of the two verbs employed: your very walking (*hlk*) can be itself a betrayal (*rākil*); your mere standing (*'mūd*) can be at the expense of someone's blood (*dam*). At this point we are clearly entering subjective speculations, nevertheless a real question is

2. The use of word plays as a means of underlining a point is of course common in the Bible. The most obvious example is Isaiah 5:7. Inversions of words is not so often recognized, though the play on *mā'ōn/nō'am* in Psalm 90 (2, 17) is a good example. It is also a good illustration of somewhat unusual or imprecise sentences being created because the word play was the primary concern.

raised as to the nature and purpose of the text before us that uses such devices that demand more of the reader than mere casual assent. And what light do they shed on the demand for holiness that underlies the entire chapter?

The phrase: "You shall do no wrong in judgment" which opened verse 15, reappears in verse 25, though with no directly apparent forensic context. This would reinforce the suggestion that it is there to introduce a supplementary law which does not depend on the precise context of the first set. Here again, as in verse 32, the basic idea is now expressed positively: you shall have scales, weights and dry and liquid measures that are accurate and reliable, *cedeq*.

vv 17-18

The fourth unit in this section is the passage culminating in the famous, if linguistically problematic,³ command to love your neighbour as yourself. Its most obvious structural component is the inclusion formed by the contrast between the opening and closing verbs, "to hate" and "to love". The remaining four phrases, one expressed as a command, the other three as prohibitions, seem to link together in two groups. The problematic "and do not incur sin because of him"⁴ is linked to the command to reprove one's neighbour; while another word play, in addition to the conjunction, links the commands not to take vengeance and bear a grudge. These two pairs may be intended as contrasting actions: correct the wrong done to you by your neighbour through reproof but not through actions or bearing a grudge. In terms of the structure, the negative and positive formulations of the various verbs act against the contrasting positive and negative contents of the commands themselves:



As with the previous two units, the "supplement", in vv 33-34, is a positive extension of the original phrase: to loving the resident alien.

c. The remaining "supplements".

If these four units and the phrases within them which recur later deal primarily with man's relationship with his neighbour, with the exception

3. For a recent study see Muraoka (1978, p. 291-297).

4. See Wenham (1979, p. 269).

of the two phrases we noted above, the remaining two prohibitions (v3b/30; v4a/31a) belong in sections that deal with man's relationship to God.

vv 4 and 31 prohibit turning to other gods and to mediums and wizards, presumably the two being linked by their relationship to the supernatural.

The repeated command to "keep My sabbaths" (v3b and v30) is linked in each case to a demand to "fear/revere" something quite different: "mother and father" in v3; "My sanctuary" in 30b. The first sabbath command introduces a section, from 3b-8 which deals with matters between man and God, the forbidding of other gods which we have already noted, and a note about eating sacrifices within two days which expands the rule in Lev 7:16-18. Similarly vv 30-31, with the command to revere the sanctuary and not to consult mediums deal with the human/divine sphere.

The association of reverence for parents and the keeping of the sabbath that heads the chapter and is thus particularly prominent, raises questions about the intention of the chapter as a whole. By putting the parents before the sabbath rule, the latter serves to introduce the sphere of man/God relationships that follow in the next section. These two subjects are also placed side by side in the Decalogue, and are particularly emphasized in the Deuteronomy version by the added phrase "as the Lord your God commanded you" (Deut 5:12, 16). As is often noted they express most concretely the two spheres of man's life, the divine and human, so that their association at the beginning of the chapter helps define the areas in which the command to be holy is to be expressed. One might go further and note that the parallel between "revering" father and mother and "revering" My sanctuary⁵ (a parallel that is inevitably drawn by the reader given the six other similar instances in the chapter) leads to some sort of equation between the two spheres: reverence is demanded of the individual as he stands before his parents, the immediate source of his physical existence, and before the sanctuary, the symbol of God his Creator, in whose image he was created.

To summarise, we have two clearly defined "parallel" sections vv3-18, 30-36, each giving in sequence laws governing the behaviour expected of the Israelite in his relation to God and to his fellow Israelite and the resident alien. Within the man/neighbour group, as we have noted above (vv

5. 19:30 reappears in its entirety in 26:2 as a preface to the listing of blessings and curses that follow obedience or disobedience to God's laws. This emphasises the importance of the two commands it contains, and may reinforce the idea its appearance here introduces a new section and is comparable with 19:3.

12, 14), a reminder is brought in in two places that human relationships are also to be seen within the area of God's concern.

There seems to be some order to the sequence of the "man to man" relations in vv 8-18. It begins with "remote" neighbours, the poor and needy, for whom a part of one's property is to be left - no direct action is required by yourself. It continues (vv 11-12) with illegal actions against your people, with a possible emphasis on the aspect of property. This section is expressed in the plural, which also gives a slight generalizing and thus distancing effect to the crimes. vv 13-14, which introduce for the first time the term "neighbour", speak about improper behaviour to those who are either weaker than you or dependent upon you. Where there are no legal sanctions, your own "conscience", the "fear of God", must operate. Vv 15-16 bring a general principle that should underlie your behaviour - neither - biased in your judgments, nor causing trouble or standing by when your "neighbour" is in trouble. But beyond the realm of actions, the final unit (vv 17-18) attempts to legislate in the area of personal feelings and emotions. You should not hate your "neighbour", for he is ultimately your "brother", but take all necessary steps to remove misunderstandings and wrong feelings, loving him as you love yourself, or as one like yourself. The movement is from duties (to the poor) through wrong actions at a distance, then more personal demands on your right behaviour to the helpless, to a formula of right action and attitude, to a requirement for your inner emotional life as ultimately governing your behaviour, the movement is from outside in.

d. The Middle Section vv 19-29

The overall structure of the chapter isolates a middle section, vv 19-29, containing five seemingly unrelated laws, the section as a whole introduced by a general statement: "My statutes shall you keep". Like the similarly phrased command "My sabbaths shall you keep", it may well serve to define in some way the section that follows. The section would presumably be closed by the command "and you shall keep all My statutes" in v 37. This sentence might have originally closed the unit at verse 30, but the addition of the appendices has displaced it to the end of the chapter, so that, in its expanded form ("and all My judgments") it serves to close the whole chapter. However it must also be noted that a similar sentence serves in the closing of chapters 18 (v26) and 20 (v23) so that all three chapters are further linked together through this device.

Is there anything that links together the five "miscellaneous" laws in vv19-29?

The first one is the highly problematic set of three laws prohibiting "mixtures" - in the breeding of one's animals, in the sowing of one's field and in the clothing one is to wear. The parallel passage in Deut 22:9-11 forbids instead the yoking of ox and ass, and explains that the term *ša'ainēz* (v19c) refers to a mixture of wool and linen. Carmichael (1982, p. 394-415), in his evaluation of the Deuteronomy version postulates that the form of these laws is essentially proverbial, that they are not intended literally, but as metaphors for sexual impropriety based on Jacob's blessings of his sons. The Levitical legislator, however, no longer knowing their real meaning, has attempted to understand them literally and made the necessary adjustments in the texts to clarify and generalize them. Carmichael (1982, p. 412) sees their inclusion under the subsection of "statutes" as suggesting their "sacred, mysterious content. A failure to comprehend their original meaning would encourage the notion of an arcane dimension." He does admit, however, in a footnote, that this latter point is open to the same criticism he makes of the interpreters of the Deuteronomy version, who have recourse to "magical notions" or "primitive religious practices" as a despairing attempt to explain them.

The other line of enquiry, suggested by Wenham (1979, p. 269f), derives from the remarkable chapter on "The Abominations of Leviticus" in Mary Douglas' *Purity and Danger* (1966, p. 41-57), an argument surprisingly ignored by Carmichael. In evaluating the reasons suggested for the various distinctions within the dietary laws, she notes two major lines of reasoning (1966, p. 43): "either the rules are meaningless, arbitrary because their intent is disciplinary and not doctrinal, or they are allegories of virtues and vices."

She argues against scholarly views of the first sort (1966, p. 45-46): "Needless to say such interpretations are not interpretations at all, since they deny any significance to the rules. They express bafflement in a learned way." The "allegorical" interpretations fail "because they are neither consistent nor comprehensive. A different explanation has to be developed for each animal and there is no end to the number of possible explanations." (1966, p. 48). In exploring the biblical view of "holiness" she notes that it also includes the idea of wholeness and completeness.

Much of Leviticus is taken up with stating the physical perfection that is required of things presented in the temple and of persons approaching it. The animals offered in sacrifice must be without blemish, women must be purified after childbirth, lepers should be separated and ritually cleansed before being allowed to approach once they are cured. All bodily discharges are defiling and disqualify from approach to the temple . . . (1966, p. 51).

This sense of completeness extends into social spheres and into species and categories. Citing Lev 19:19 she concludes (1966, p. 53) that:

holiness requires that individuals shall conform to the class to which they belong. And holiness requires that different classes of things shall not be confused . . . Holiness means keeping distinct the categories of creation. It therefore involves correct definition, discrimination and order.

We shall return to her views later, but note for the moment that by her reasoning, a law prohibiting mixtures of species, and indeed materials for clothing, is precisely relevant in a chapter defining the requirements of holiness.

The second law, v20-22, discusses a complicated legal situation where two categories of status come into conflict with each other. An adulterous union is punishable with death for both parties - the same applying in the case of a betrothed girl (Deut 22:22-24). Here the case is of a slave girl, "betrothed" to a man, but not yet released. Because of her slave status, the death penalty is not to be exacted, nevertheless since a sin is involved a guilt offering must be brought to the sanctuary.⁶

The third law discusses the produce of newly-planted fruit trees. For three years they are not to be eaten, in the fourth year they are "holy" and should go to the sanctuary, but in the fifth year they are available to the owner. It is an extension of regulations concerning the dedication of the first-fruits of crops and animals to God in this special instance. In the context in Leviticus 19 it bears a striking resemblance to verses 5-8 which again deal with when dedicated food may be eaten, the precise number of days/years being decisive.

The fourth section seems at first glance a somewhat miscellaneous collection (vv26-8). The first part prohibits eating flesh with blood in it, presumably echoing the fuller command in Lev 17:10-12. It is followed by prohibitions against divination and sorcery. vv27-28 have a more homogeneous collection of laws: "You shall not round off the hair of your temples or mar the edges of your beard. You shall not make any cuttings in your flesh on account of the dead or tattoo any marks upon you: I am the Lord." Wenham (1979, p. 272) notes that this is usually taken as a prohibition of pagan mourning rites. However, as Mary Douglas (1966, p. 49) also points out, such remarks tell us nothing, since Israel absorbed much of the "pagan" culture around it, and the question remains why it was selective in what it took in and what it rejected.

6. For a detailed discussion of the matter see Milgrom (1976, p. 129-137).

But it is no explanation to represent Israel as a sponge at one moment and as a repellent the next, without explaining why it soaked up this foreign element but repelled that one. What is the value of saying that seething kids in milk and copulating with cows are forbidden in Leviticus because they are the fertility rites of foreign neighbours, since Israelites took over other foreign rites. ((1966, p. 49).

Wenham (1979, p. 272) therefore suggests that:

mourning was not discouraged, only those customs which involved physical disfigurement. This law conforms to other holiness rules which seek to uphold the natural order of creation and preserve it from corruption . . . God created man in his image and pronounced all creation very good . . . Man is not to disfigure the divine likeness implanted in him by scarring his body. The external appearance of the people should reflect their internal status as the chosen and holy people of God (Deut 14:1-2).

If Wenham is right and the essential point here is the abuse of the body, does that principle extend to the preceding verse as well? The first command concerns the food one takes into the body, and its position may have been influenced by the previous section on produce that may be eaten. What, however, would be the connection with divination? The only reference that gives some idea of what may be involved in divining (using the same verb *n h š*) is in the account of the stealing of Joseph's cup (Gen 44:5, 15). Though it is generally assumed that Joseph performs hydromancy, the juxtaposition in 44:5 of the fact that he both drinks and divines from this cup, may suggest that the drinking was a part of the divination process - in which case we might have a further aspect of the "abuse" of the body through "drinking" as well as "eating". That would at least make for a consistent "run" of laws as is the case with the other lists within this chapter.

v 29 prohibits profaning one's daughter by making her a prostitute. This is generally assumed to refer to "cultic prostitution."⁷ If the principle of Lev 21:9, that a daughter of a priest who becomes a prostitute thereby defiles him, is more generally operative, then her actions are also effectively an abuse of his person. However, it is worth noting that the term *zimmā* ("wickedness") is applied to this situation, a term which occurs in both Lev 18:17 and 20:14 where it deals respectively with a man who sleeps with a woman and her daughter or granddaughter, or a woman and her mother. So perhaps an incestuous act is also implied here.

What unites these five sections?

7. Noth (1965, p. 143); Wenham (1979, p. 272).

We can analyze them in terms of the subject matter each unit deals with and the specific injunctions present in each unit.

There is one factor that links up all five units and indeed fits them into the overall structure of the chapter. As we have seen vv3-8 deal with man's relationship to God, and vv9-18 with his relationship to his neighbour. vv19-29 all deal in some way with a man's relationship to his own possessions: his animals, crops and clothing (v19); his slaves (20-22); his land (23-25); his body (26-28); his offspring, his daughter (v29). This would also explain their juxtaposition with the commandment to "love your neighbour as yourself" by exploring your relationship to your "self" as expressed through a sequence, again moving from outer to inner: your property, your body, your seed.

If one's possessions are the common link between the five units, is there also a theme that ties together the specific injunctions? They seem to each pivot around two central but closely interrelated concepts: the limits imposed upon your freedom to use your property, expressed through prohibitions on making "unnatural" mixtures.

v19. Your animals may not be interbred, thus interfering with the natural order of creation.

v20-22. Boundaries exist between the states of slavery and freedom which raise subtle problems when they are crossed.

v23-25. The land is yours only provided you acknowledge that God is the real owner and you the tenant, so that there are boundaries to your freedom to utilize its produce.

v26-28. There are limits on the physical abuse to which you may subject your body. It is possible here, however, that the combined themes of divination and mourning customs, may highlight boundaries between life and death that may not be crossed.

v29. Your offspring may not be misused through sexual mistreatment. It is also possible here that a boundary is being drawn between legitimate and illegitimate religious practices.

e. *Summary*

If we now return to our original question about the relationship between structure and meaning within Leviticus 19, we can recognize two principles involved in the organizing of the legal materials of the chapter. The first has to do with the sequence of topics, the second with their content.

(i) After the introductory call to holiness the chapter is organized in five sections:

A	3-8
	B 9-18
	C 19-29
A'	30-31
	B' 32-36

A, A' deal with man's relationship to God; B/B' with his relationship to his fellowman; C with his relationship to "himself". (This is an oversimplification since within each of the three categories individual laws are found which specify a relationship with God. There is also a play throughout on the term *qōdeš* and the verb *hll* (vv8, 12, 24, 29) which indicates the illegitimate crossing of boundaries between the human and the divine realms.)

Sections B and C are arranged so that the sequence of laws moves from without to within: in B from actions to attitudes to feelings; in C from property to one's body to one's seed.

(ii) With regards understanding what "holiness" may mean here, we can begin with Mary Douglas' remarks on our chapter (1966, p. 53f):

Developing the idea of holiness as order, not confusion, this list 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 face), hating your brother in your heart (while presumably speaking kindly to him), these are clearly contradictions between what seems and what is.

In the same vein we may add that the central section dramatizes a whole series of instances where a right order is abused or contradicted, or two different orders overlap or stand in tension with one another. Holiness for the society and for the individual lies in conforming to these standards of inner and outer integrity and preserving the order and distinctions that God has made in His universe.

However, it may be that in addition to listing laws that are important in defining "holy" behaviour, the structure of parts of the chapter may itself be intentionally working on the reader so as to refine his own sense of discrimination. Thus the central section could have explored man's relationship to his "self" in many ways, but the compiler chose to assemble laws that dramatize the problems of boundaries. Similarly we have seen the "riddles" posed by verses 13-16 that lead the reader to see beyond the letter. If we recognize that not merely the details of the laws but their organization and the very structure of the chapter itself convey meaning, then questions are raised about the nature and purpose of texts such as

this. Once we have begun to unravel the problems of structure and meaning there remains still the question of its purpose.

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