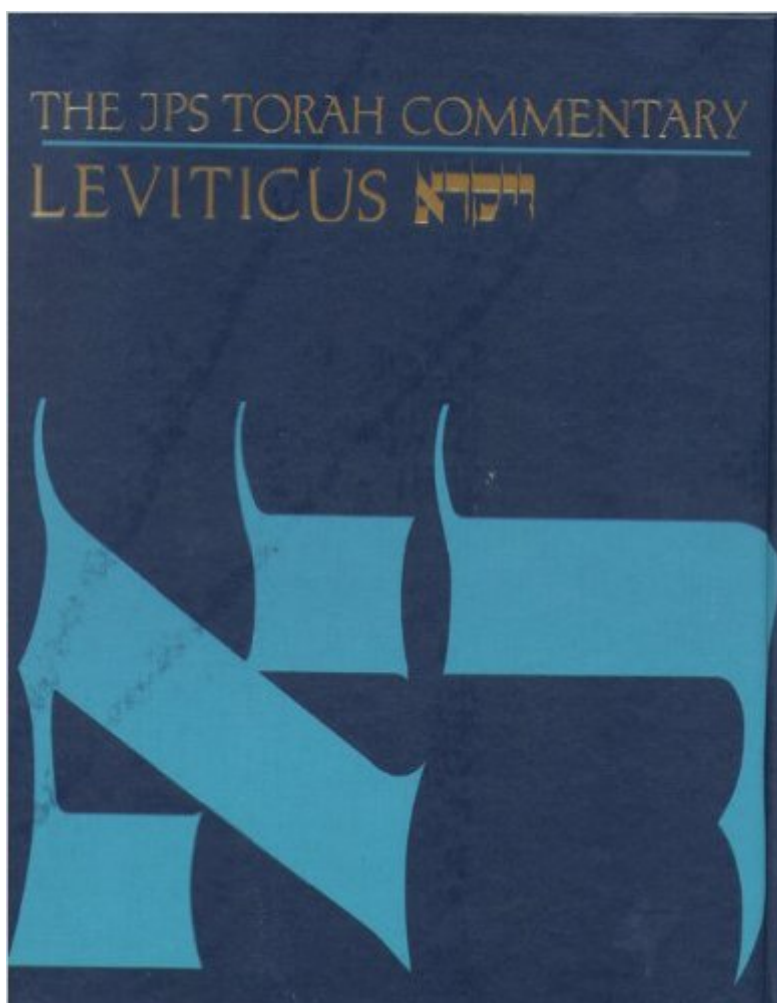


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# The JPS Torah Commentary: Leviticus



## Synopsis

The JPS Torah Commentary series guides readers through the words and ideas of the Torah. Each volume is the work of a scholar who stands at the pinnacle of his field. Every page contains the complete traditional Hebrew text, with cantillation notes, the JPS translation of the Holy Scriptures, aliyot breaks, Masoretic notes, and commentary by a distinguished Hebrew Bible scholar, integrating classical and modern sources. Each volume also contains supplementary essays that elaborate upon key words and themes, a glossary of commentators and sources, extensive bibliographic notes, and maps.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

Baruch Levine's commentary on Leviticus/Vayikra is commendable. The Hebrew text is easy to read with the English translation set out alongside it and the commentary appearing below. Levine ably brings modern scholarship as well as rabbinic commentary to bear when discussing the text. However, for my money, a far better commentary on Leviticus has been done by Jacob Milgrom in the Anchor Bible series. Milgrom's work is far more thorough and groundbreaking. I would recommend that you look at Milgrom's commentary before purchasing Levine's.

Like all the volumes in the JPS Torah commentary series, this volume is simply the best in its area. It contains the complete Hebrew text of Genesis, the JPS's new English translation, and an extensive

original commentary that illuminates the text like a 1000 watt searchlight. On average, each four or five lines of text gets a full page of explanation and commentary, so every subject gets covered in detail. Levine, like all the JPS Torah commentators, makes use of traditional rabbinic commentaries, and the Mishna, Midrash and Talmud. But it doesn't end here: The commentary goes on to make good use of literary analysis and comparative Semitics; intertextual commentary relating each book to other biblical books, and evidence from modern archaeological discoveries. Especially illuminating is his treatment and analysis of the meaning of Temple sacrifices, described in the context of the Biblical world's era and oeuvre. Unlike the Reform commentary, this work manages to be respectful, religious, and authentic to the Jewish tradition, while at the same time rigorously adhering to the highest standards of biblical criticism and intellectual honesty. Highly recommended!

This is another well-done JPS commentary. However, it does have a different flavor from Nahum Sarna's work on Exodus and Genesis: Levine focuses more on close reading of the text, and a bit less on history and comparative analysis.

This is the third in the five book JPS series on the Five Books of Moses, called by its Greek name, the Pentateuch. The name Leviticus was also derived from the third century BCE Greek translation, called the Septuagint. The title focuses on the contents of the volume, which deals primarily with the Levitical Priests. The great Jewish philosopher Moses Maimonides (1138-1204) stated in his Guide of the Perplexed that God neither wants nor needs sacrifices. Since most modern people would agree with this sage and since the volume focuses mostly on sacrifices, Baruch A. Levine, who wrote the commentary to this biblical book, would be expected to have problems explaining the sacrifices. However, he draws on ancient and modern writings, Jewish and non-Jewish, and he handles his task well. In addition to his commentaries on each verse, Levine includes an extensive three-dozen page introduction that addresses the scriptural text, the book's content, when it was written, the priesthood, the sanctuary and its cult, among other matters. He also introduces some twenty sections with additional extensive explanations on such subjects as the types of sacrifices, the laws of kosher, the unique Yom Kippur Tabernacle ritual, the laws of holiness, and the Jewish calendar. An example of his commentary is his comment that the usual translation of *benei yisrael* as the "children of Israel" is unsatisfactory. It fails to express the concept of peoplehood. The proper translation of this idiomatic phrase is, Levine explains, "the Israelite people."

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