

THE SACRIFICIAL LAWS OF LEVITICUS AND THE JOSEPH STORY

In this study, Calum Carmichael offers a new assessment of the Joseph story from the perspective of the biblical laws in Leviticus 1–10. These sacrificial laws, he argues, respond to the many problems in the first Israelite family. Understanding how ancient lawgivers thought about Joseph and his brothers' troubled behavior leads to a greater appreciation of this complicated tale. The study of the laws in Leviticus 1–10 in relation to the Joseph story provides evidence that all biblical laws, over 400, constitute commentary on issues in the biblical narratives. They do not, as commonly thought, directly reflect the societal concerns in ancient Israelite times. Through close reading and analysis of the biblical text, Carmichael reveals how narrators and lawgivers found distinctive and subtle ways of evaluating a single development in a narrative from multiple perspectives. Thus, the sacrificial rules addressing idolatry, keeping silent about a known offense, confessing wrongdoing, and seeking forgiveness become readily understandable when reviewed as responses to the events in the Joseph story.

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The Sacrificial Laws of Leviticus and the Joseph Story

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Cambridge University Press
978-1-107-18967-6 — The Sacrificial Laws of Leviticus and the Joseph Story
Calum Carmichael
Frontmatter
[More Information](#)

CAMBRIDGE UNIVERSITY PRESS

University Printing House, Cambridge CB2 8BS, United Kingdom
One Liberty Plaza, 20th Floor, New York, NY 10006, USA
477 Williamstown Road, Port Melbourne, VIC 3207, Australia
314-321, 3rd Floor, Plot 3, Splendor Forum, Jasola District Centre, New Delhi - 110025, India
103 Penang Road, #05-06/07, Visioncrest Commercial, Singapore 238467

Cambridge University Press is part of the University of Cambridge.

It furthers the University's mission by disseminating knowledge in the pursuit of education, learning and research at the highest international levels of excellence.

www.cambridge.org

Information on this title: www.cambridge.org/9781107189676

DOI: 10.1017/9781316995396

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First published 2017

A catalogue record for this publication is available from the British Library

ISBN 978-1-107-18967-6 Hardback

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CONTENTS

<i>Preface</i>	page vii
<i>List of Abbreviations</i>	ix
Introduction	1
1 Genesis and Exodus as Prelude to Leviticus	15
2 Joseph as Idolater (Lev 1–3)	35
3 Inadvertent Offenses (Lev 4)	60
4 Sins of Israel’s First Family (Lev 5:1–6:7)	77
5 Offenses at Joseph’s Banquet (Lev 6:8–7:10)	104
6 Joseph’s Banquet and Wellbeing Offerings (Lev 7:11–36)	124
7 Aaron as a Parallel Joseph (Lev 8–9)	145
8 Impact of the Golden Calf on Narratives and Rules (Lev 9–10)	159
9 Interpreting Law: Jesus, the Lawyer, and the Parable of the Good Samaritan (Luke 10:25–37)	174
<i>Bibliography</i>	189
<i>Subject Index</i>	194
<i>Index of References</i>	196

PREFACE

I address a topic that turned out to be a considerable surprise, as exciting a quest as I have ever undertaken in my long scholarly career. The sacrificial laws in Lev 1–10, which on the surface seem obscure, dull, and mysteriously sacerdotal in character, become straightforwardly intelligible if we view them as responding to the many issues in the story of Joseph in Gen 37–50. Making judgments on the twists and turns of the saga, the biblical lawgivers produced laws to address the many problems experienced by the first Israelite family. Joseph infuriates his brothers by telling them that in a dream they, represented as sheaves, bow down to him. The brothers slaughter a goat and dip Joseph's coat in its blood to make Jacob believe that a wild beast has killed his son. In Egypt, the guilty brothers confess to this deception among themselves. Sacrificial rules addressing idolatry, keeping silent about a known offense, confessing wrongdoing, and seeking forgiveness become readily understandable when viewed as responses to these events. The Joseph story reverberates even in the New Testament. The parable of the Good Samaritan, including the famed injunction to love one's neighbor as oneself, is a miniature version of that early tale.

In quoting the biblical texts I rely on the King James Authorized Version (AV) but change the translation where necessary. The AV is almost always a more literal rendering of the Hebrew and Greek original than other translations. It also has the merit of helping to remind us that biblical law and literature is the product of ancient times and places.

I began the book during my time as the Herbert P. Smith Distinguished Visiting Professor of Law, University of Cambridge, England, and wish to thank the Cambridge Faculty of Law for inviting me. I am much indebted to my wife, Debbie, for her critical comments and close attention to every facet of the manuscript.

ABBREVIATIONS

AB	Yale Anchor Bible
<i>AJCL</i>	<i>American Journal of Comparative Law</i>
<i>ANET</i>	<i>Ancient Near Eastern Texts Relating to the Old Testament</i> , ed. J. B. Pritchard (3rd edition, Princeton, 1969)
AV	Authorized Version
BDB	F. Brown, S. R. Driver, and C. A. Briggs, <i>A Hebrew and English Lexicon of the Old Testament</i> (Oxford, 1906)
<i>BLL</i>	<i>Studies in Comparative Legal History: Collected Works of David Daube</i> , Volume 3, <i>Biblical Law and Literature</i> , ed. Calum Carmichael (Berkeley, 2003)
CH	Code of Hammurabi
D	The Deuteronomic literary strand in the Pentateuch
<i>EOW</i>	<i>Studies in Comparative Legal History: Collected Works of David Daube</i> , Volume 4, <i>Ethics and Other Writings</i> , ed. Calum Carmichael (Berkeley, 2006)
ET	English text
<i>GRBS</i>	<i>Greek, Roman, and Byzantine Studies</i>
H	The Holiness Code of Lev 17–26
HBM	Hebrew Bible Monographs
HCB	The HarperCollins Study Bible, ed. Wayne A. Meeks (London, 1993)
HCOT	Historical Commentary on the Old Testament
HL	Hittite Laws
HSS	Harvard Semitic Series
HT	Hebrew text
<i>HTR</i>	<i>Harvard Theological Review</i>
ICC	International Critical Commentary
<i>JBL</i>	<i>Journal of Biblical Literature</i>
<i>JBQ</i>	<i>Jewish Bible Quarterly</i>
JE	The Y(J)ahwistic and Elohist literary strand in the Pentateuch

x *List of Abbreviations*

<i>JHBH</i>	<i>Journal of the History of the Behavioral Sciences</i>
JPS	Jewish Publication Society
JPSTC	Jewish Publication Society Torah Commentary
JSB	Jewish Study Bible, eds. Adele Berlin and Marc Zvi Brettler (Oxford, 2003)
<i>JJS</i>	<i>Journal of Jewish Studies</i>
JSJSup	Supplements to the Study for the Journal of Judaism
<i>JSOT</i>	<i>Journal for the Study of the Old Testament</i>
JSOTSS	Journal for the Study of the Old Testament Supplement Series
<i>LQR</i>	<i>Law Quarterly Review</i>
LXX	The Septuagint
MAL	Middle Assyrian Laws
MT	The Masoretic Text
NEB	New English Bible
NICOT	New International Commentary on the Old Testament
NOAB	New Oxford Annotated Bible, 3rd edition, ed. Michael Coogan (Oxford, 2001)
<i>NTJ</i>	<i>Studies in Comparative Legal History: Collected Works of David Daube, Volume 2, New Testament Judaism</i> , ed. Calum Carmichael (Berkeley, 2000)
OSB	Oxford Study Bible, eds. Jack Suggs, Katherine Sakenfeld, James Mueller (New York, 1992)
OTL	Old Testament Library
P	The Priestly literary strand in the Pentateuch
PL	Patrologia Latina, ed. J.-P. Migne, 217 vols. (Paris, 1844–64)
<i>RIDA</i>	<i>Revue Internationale des Droits de l'Antiquité</i>
<i>RJ</i>	<i>Rechtshistorisches Journal</i>
RSV	Revised Standard Version
SBLDS	Society of Biblical Literature Dissertation Series
<i>SHR</i>	<i>Scottish Historical Review</i>
SJ	<i>Studia Judaeoslavica</i>
SVT	Supplement Vetus Testamentum
<i>TL</i>	<i>Studies in Comparative Legal History: Collected Works of David Daube, Volume 1, Talmudic Law</i> , ed. Calum Carmichael (Berkeley, 1992)
TSAJ	Texts and Studies in Ancient Judaism
<i>VT</i>	<i>Vetus Testamentum</i>
VTSup	Vetus Testamentum Supplements
WBC	Word Bible Commentary
<i>ZAW</i>	<i>Zeitschrift für die alttestamentliche Wissenschaft</i>
<i>ZSS</i>	<i>Zeitschrift der Savigny-Stiftung für Rechtsgeschichte</i>