

house of Aaron whose priestly offspring play a major role in the book; or (2) the lesser officials whose role was to serve the priests.²¹ Nevertheless, this book reveals the role of the priests and Levites in the rites of the sacrifice, the statutes of purification, the celebrations of feasts, and the order for vows.²² The name of this book in Hebrew is taken from the first word “wayyiqra” (וַיִּקְרָא) which means “[and the Lord] called.” This name highlights God’s authority and initiative in issuing the form for acceptable worship.²³

Authorship and Writing of Leviticus

In the Holy Tradition of the Church, the author of this book, like the other books of the Pentateuch, is Moses. God addresses him 38 times in this book. There is only one instance, Leviticus 10:8, in which the Lord spoke solely to Aaron. As we will see, these expressions that God spoke or called to Moses (*wayyiqra*) indicate not only that Moses is the author, but also the place and relative time in which the commandments and statutes comprising this book were given to Moses by God.

Leviticus, as with the rest of the books of the Pentateuch, was written by Moses. Moses received the statutes contained within the book of Leviticus while on Mount Sinai and he wrote the words of the law down as God instructed him. Deuteronomy 31:9 states "So Moses wrote down this law and gave it to the Levitical priests, who carried the ark of the covenant of the Lord, and to all the elders of Israel." The laws and instructions were handed down to the people by the elders from generation to generation orally in a process known as "oral transmission."

First, Moses received from God the statutes and commandments comprising the book of Leviticus while on Mount Sinai. At the end of Chapter 7, which concludes the law governing sacrifices, Moses summarizes what God commanded him on Mount Sinai during the sojourn of Israel in the wilderness. Chapter 25, which focuses on the sabbatical year and the Year of Jubilee, begins with the expression that the Lord spoke to Moses on Mount Sinai. The section on blessings and curses (Lv. 26:1-46) is also concluded by “these are the statutes and judgments and laws which the Lord made between Himself and the children of Israel on Mount Sinai by the hand of Moses” (Lv. 26:46). Lastly, the book concludes, “These are the commandments which the Lord commanded Moses for the children of Israel on Mount Sinai” (Lv. 27:34).

Although Moses is traditionally recognized as the author of Leviticus and the rest of the Pentateuch in the sense that he wrote most the vast majority of these books and taught the children of Israel to memorize and understand them, there are many verses indicating he couldn’t have been the only one

²¹ Sanford, La Sor William, et al. *Old Testament Survey: The Message, Form and Background of The Old Testament*. 2nd ed., W.B. Eerdmans, 1996, 81.

²² Malaty, Fr. Tadros Y. *A Commentary on the Book of Leviticus*, 3.

²³ Sanford, La Sor William, et al. *Old Testament Survey: The Message, Form and Background of The Old Testament*. 2nd ed., W.B. Eerdmans, 1996, 81.