

ABSTRACT Nobuyoshi KIUCHI, “Leviticus and the Sixth Commandment.” Based on the understanding that the sixth commandment prohibits an attack on one’s neighbor’s soul, this study discusses murder-related themes in Leviticus where literal murder is not involved. It presupposes the literary unity of the book, and has a secondary interest in how the book can be read as a coherent whole. The study begins with the fact that in Lev. 17:4 God counts the act of shedding animal blood at a place other than the Tent as committing a murder. Then exegetical discussion on the use of *dām/dāmîm* in chs. 17–24 leads to the conclusion that there are several cases that superficially are not related to murder but are counted by God as attacking the neighbor’s soul, such as cursing one’s parents and illicit sexual behavior, which can be explained as grounded on the talionic principle (cf. Lev. 24:17).

As the punishment for violations in Lev. 17:4 is the so-called *karet* (‘cutting off’) penalty, the nature of the punishment is explored by comparison with the death penalty. It is inferred that by violating commandments that deserve the *karet* penalty one puts himself outside the covenantal community, and that the punishment includes the death penalty, at least, in Leviticus chapters 18 and 20.

Next, the question is raised as to the nature of death that a sacrificial animal can substitute for on the altar. It is argued that while the death which one experiences through the death of the animal on the altar is often, and correctly, assumed to be spiritual death, i.e., death before God, ultimately there is no distinction between spiritual death and physical death. This can be inferred when Lev. 18:5, in which ‘to live’ refers to both spiritual and physical life, is set against the provisions for obtaining forgiveness in Lev.

4. If one violates even one prohibitive commandment, he dies unless he obtains forgiveness, though this is not explicitly stated in Leviticus (cf. Ezek. 18:4). These considerations make the death one experiences through the death of the sacrificial animal closer to death that people ordinarily experience, or to death by capital punishment than one might have assumed heretofore.

Lastly, it is reaffirmed (cf. *Exeg* 14 [2003], 7–10) that ‘all the commandments concerning what ought not to be done’ in Lev. 4:2 refers unqualifiedly to all the prohibitive commandments rather than only ‘cultic’ or ‘religious’ prohibitive commandments as some scholars understand, and that *ḥāṭāʾ* (sinning) is a matter on a different level from the act of violating a commandment. Based on this postulate, an attempt is made to harmonize the rules in Lev. 18 onward with the ones on the propitiatory rites in Lev. 4. It is inferred that while forgiveness can be given if one violates a prohibition inadvertently (i.e., sins), it is ruled out for violations that deserve the death penalty or the *karet* penalty.

Thus, Leviticus specifically unfolds the sixth commandment the following way.

(1) Violations of the laws concerning one’s neighbor, that are punishable by the death penalty and/or the *karet* penalty, are equivalent to literal murder before God. These cases are beyond the realm of atonement and forgiveness of sin.

(2) It is implied that the consequence of hating one’s neighbor (Lev. 19:17) is death, even if the emotion does not develop into murder.

These inferences, in turn, make one aware of the significant fact that the sixth commandment stands at the beginning of the latter half of the Ten Commandments, and that the theme of ‘soul/life’ is present not just in the sixth commandment, but in the purpose clause of the fifth commandment, “that your days may be long in the land that the LORD your God is giving you.”