

**Yahweh, the Almighty God of Israel, is with us**  
"Cry aloud, spare not, lift up thy voice like a trumpet,  
and shew my people their transgression,  
and the house of Jacob their sins." Isaiah 58:1

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## **Divine Law**

### **Study Prayerfully & Study Carefully**

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## **Ceremonial Laws**

### **1. Introduction**

There are many commandments in the Holy Scriptures which **Yahweh the Almighty God of Israel** gave mankind through His servant Moses. They were intended to regulate all life on earth and they fall into several categories:

- **Supreme Laws** about love for God and neighbour
- **The Ten Commandments**
- Laws concerning **Religious Feasts**
- **Dietary laws**
- Ceremonial Laws (briefly explained here)
- **Laws on Marriage and Divorce**
- **Penal laws**
- **Financial laws.**
- **Agricultural laws.**
- **Quarantine & hygiene laws.**
- **Personal Laws etc.**

All these laws are recorded in the first five books of the Bible. As stated above they were initially given to Israel, but were intended for the benefit of all mankind. It is undoubtedly one of humanity's greatest blunders that Yahweh's laws have been rejected by all nations **in favour of countless impotent human regulations, most of which need updating every generation.**

### **2. Facts about Yahweh's Laws**

Before we begin our study of the **ceremonial laws** in Scriptures, there are certain facts we need to recognize about divine law. The facts are as follows:

- **ALL the commandments of Yahweh are perfect**  
Every one of the Almighty's commandments is faultless and is never in need of update no matter how many centuries roll by. Like their divine Author they change not, because they are already absolutely faultless.  
Psalm 19:

- **ALL Yahweh's commandments are eternal**

By this I mean that the **essence**, the **kernel**, the **high level spiritual requirement and objective of every divine commandment is everlasting** and will apply throughout eternity. In other words, at its heart every divine commandment, moral and ceremonial, contains a sacred truth which can never become obsolete! By way of definition we may say that **ceremonial** or **symbolic commandments** are those which employ ceremonies or symbols to point out their inner truths. The symbol or ceremony may in time become unnecessary, but the **moral requirement** of every divine law is everlasting and will apply for all time. More about this fact later.

Psalm 111: 7: *"The works of his hands are verity and judgment; **all his commandments are sure.**  
8: **They stand fast for ever and ever, and are done in truth and uprightness.**"*

Psalm 119: 44: *"**So shall I keep thy law continually for ever and ever.**"*

### 3. Cermonial & Symbolic Commands

When we study the commandments of the Most High we notice that in addition to the above categories they may also be classified as follows:

#### (3.1) Divine Objectives:

These are laws which simply define **Yahweh's objectives**. They tell us what we should be, rather than what we should do or not do. They include directives such as:

- *"**Thou shalt be perfect with the LORD thy God.**"* (Deuteronomy 18: 13)
- *"**Be ye therefore perfect, even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect.**"* (Matthew 5: 48)

#### (3.2) Moral Requirements:

These are moral commandments which explain **how** - with Yahweh's help - those divine objectives may be reached. Moral commandments include the **Ten Commandments** and those listed below:

- *"**And now, Israel, what doth the LORD thy God require of thee, but to fear the LORD thy God, to walk in all his ways, and to love him, and to serve the LORD thy God with all thy heart and with all thy soul.**"* (Deuteronomy 10:12)
- *"**And he (Jesus) answering said, Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy strength, and with all thy mind; and thy neighbour as thyself.**"* (Luke 10:27)

#### (3.3) Ceremonial or Symbolic Commandments

A ceremonial command is one which employs a ceremony or symbolic token to demonstrate or call to mind some **high-level moral lesson or objective**. Unlike plain moral commands (e.g. *Thou shalt have no other gods before me. Thou shalt not kill. Thou shalt not steal* etc.) which quite plainly spell out a moral requirement, **ceremonial commandments** also contain **symbolic activities** or **tokens** which dramatise the **inner moral lesson being taught**. This article has been produced to explain a few (not all) of these **ceremonial commands**. They include commands concerning:

- **Animal Sacrifices** (point 4)
- **Circumcision** (point 5)
- **The wearing of phylacteries** (point 6)
- **Mixing linen with wool** (point 7)
- **Wearing fringed garments** (point 8)
- **An unblemished Priesthood** (point 9)

- **Uncleanness** (point 10)

In these commandments you will notice that symbolic tokens or ceremonies are employed in order to demonstrate or explain the **deep moral lessons contained in the command**: lessons which would otherwise be missed.

## 4. Animal Sacrifices

Prior to the Messiah's death on Calvary, if a sinner wanted mercy he/she was obliged to sacrifice an animal and offer its blood to the Most High before forgiveness could be obtained. In short, **no faith in the blood - no mercy**. As the scripture says:

Hebrews 9: 22: *“And almost all things are by the law purged with blood; and **without shedding of blood is no remission.**”*

**Yahweh** called for animal sacrifices in order to demonstrate to the repentant sinner the enormous price the innocent victim had to pay before pardon was possible. Every animal sacrifice was in fact a **practical lesson pointing to Messiah's death on Calvary!** Since the Saviour's sacrifice we sinners no longer need to kill literal animals. Faith in **Yeshua** (Jesus) the Messiah is all that we now need to obtain mercy. In effect **the ceremonial aspect of this law, that is, the slaying of an innocent animal, is obsolete**: it is no longer necessary to sacrifice bulls, lambs or kids.

But, and here is a fact many Christians miss, the main lesson of this ceremonial command (that is the **spiritual requirement** which calls for faith in the Saviour's blood before forgiveness is possible) still stands! **Even now, some 2000 years after the Messiah's death on Calvary, we still need to approach Yahweh's Mercy Seat with blood: though now it is with faith in the blood of His Son, the Lamb of God.** In other words though the dramatized, instructional, **ceremonial element** involving the shedding of a farm animal's blood has ceased, the **spiritual requirement to approach the Most High with faith in the Lamb's blood still stands**. That part of the commandment is eternal: it will never cease to apply. Yes, throughout the ceaseless ages of eternity the redeemed will approach Yahweh's throne through the merits of His Son's shed blood. Sure we will not be everlastingly in need of forgiveness, for we will then be sinless: but we will, nonetheless, always be in need of the Almighty's favour and blessing which were won for us by His Son's blood. That fact, **the inner core of the command**, will never become obsolete; because time and space can never cancel our dependence on the Saviour's blood.

We can now see how that the **essence** of the sacrificial commands, the great moral truths they prefigure, are eternal; even though in ages past they needed a ceremonial drama (the slaughter of innocent animals) to explain their high-level objectives and deep spiritual meanings. For more details, see our online booklet on **Animal Sacrifices**.

## 5. Circumcision

Circumcision is another ceremonial commandment with deep spiritual meaning. It is a physical token, a **symbolic sign** in the flesh, of total commitment and obedience to the God of Israel. It signifies the **absolute degree of holiness** the Most High requires of His people. Yahweh said to Abraham:

Genesis 17: 11: *“And ye shall circumcise the flesh of your foreskin; and it shall be a token of the covenant betwixt me and you.”*

The ceremonial aspect of circumcision was raised by the early church not many years after the Saviour's resurrection. The Apostles and elders met to discuss the matter and, **guided by the Holy Spirit, directed that Gentile believers need not be physically circumcised**. Read about their meeting in Acts 15. The apostle Paul confirmed the decision taken at that meeting by writing:

1 Corinthians 7: 18: *“Is any man called being circumcised? let him not become uncircumcised. Is any called in uncircumcision? let him not be circumcised.  
19: Circumcision is nothing, and uncircumcision is nothing, **but the keeping of the commandments of God.**”*

The **A Voice In The Wilderness - Canada** sermon Note **98** concerning **circumcision** further explains that

decision and how that even though the **ceremonial aspect** of the circumcision command was **suspended for Gentile believers**, its moral objective (**holiness**) for all believers - abides forever! This leads us to the opinion that if the ceremonial law concerning **physical circumcision**, which is by far one of the most powerful in Scripture, was **suspended for Gentile believers**, then the ceremonial laws, concerning **'the wearing of phylacteries,' 'mixing wool with linen,' 'wearing fringed garments'** etc., which are all far less permanent than being **physically circumcised**, are also temporarily suspended for Gentile believers - **during this age at any rate.**

## 6. The Wearing of Phylacteries

Phylacteries are prayer bands containing short extracts from Yahweh's law. They were worn on the forehead and forearm.

Deuteronomy 6: 4: *"Hear, O Israel: The LORD our God is one LORD:  
5: And thou shalt love the LORD thy God with all thine heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy might.  
6: And these words, which I command thee this day, shall be in thine heart:  
7: And thou shalt teach them diligently unto thy children, and shalt talk of them when thou sittest in thine house, and when thou walkest by the way, and when thou liest down, and when thou risest up.  
8: **And thou shalt bind them for a sign upon thine hand, and they shall be as frontlets between thine eyes.**  
9: And thou shalt write them upon the posts of thy house, and on thy gates."*

This ceremonial law symbolizes the need to keep the Almighty's commandments in thought, word and deed. Phylacteries also informed an onlooker that the wearer was a believer in Israel's God. **This law also prefigures the time when Yahweh will personally inscribe his law on our minds and actions.**

Hebrews 8: 8: *"...Behold, the days come, saith the lord, when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah:  
9: Not according to the covenant that I made with their fathers in the day when I took them by the hand to lead them out of the land of Egypt; because they continued not in my covenant, and I regarded them not, saith the Lord.  
10: **For this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, saith the Lord; I will put my laws into their mind, and write them in their hearts: and I will be to them a God, and they shall be to me a people."***

## 7. Mixing Linen with Wool

Linen is cloth made from flax, a blue flowered plant cultivated for its textile fibre and its seed called linseed. Garments made of linen were used primarily in the worship of Yahweh. Linen was not to be mixed with wool any more than the sacred is to be mingled with the secular, or truth mixed with error. This law symbolizes, amongst other things, the need to keep holy and secular things apart.

Leviticus 19: 19: *"Ye shall keep my statutes. Thou shalt not let thy cattle gender with a diverse kind: thou shalt not sow thy field with mingled seed: neither shall a garment mingled of **linen** and **woollen** come upon thee."*

The Scriptures tell us that linen was used in the following instances:

- The Tabernacle curtains and court were made of linen. (Exodus 26:1, Exodus 27:9)
- The Temple Veil was linen. (2 Chronicles 3:14)
- The Priest's garments were linen. (Leviticus 16,1 Samuel 22:18, Ezekiel 44:17-19)
- The temple singers wore linen. (2 Chronicles 5:12)
- The prophet Samuel and king David wore linen ephods on special occasions. (1 Samuel 2:18, 2 Samuel 6:14)
- The state dress of Joseph and Mordecai were made of linen. (Genesis 41:42, Esther 8:15)
- Heavenly messengers wore linen. (Ezekiel 9:2, Daniel 10:5)
- The Saviour's body was wrapped in linen before being placed in the tomb. (Matthew 27:59)
- The Lamb's Wife will be clothed in linen, which represents holiness and righteousness. (Revelation 19:8)

If you read these passages you will see that linen is a special material with rich symbolic meaning. Besides its pure white appearance it has the added advantage that it does not cause sweat as does wool, the material worn by the common working man.

Ezekiel 44: 18: *“They shall have linen bonnets upon their heads, and shall have linen breeches upon their loins; they shall not gird themselves **with any thing that causeth sweat.**”*

## 8. Fringed Garments

Another symbolic command Israel was given concerned the wearing of **fringed borders of blue** on their garments. Like the phylacteries on the forehead and forearm these fringed borders would also remind the wearer to keep the commandments of the Lord: each tassel being a symbol of an individual command.

Numbers 15: 38: *“Speak unto the children of Israel, and bid them that they make them fringes in the borders of their garments throughout their generations, and that they put upon the fringe of the borders aribband of blue:  
39: And it shall be unto you for a fringe, **that ye may look upon it, and remember all the commandments of the LORD, and do them; and that ye seek not after your own heart and your own eyes, after which ye use to go a whoring.**”*

## 9. An Unblemished Priesthood

In ancient Israel no **physically blemished** descendant of Aaron was allowed to officiate as a priest. **Blindness, lameness, a flat nose, the itch, a broken foot, a hunch back**, all these and other physical blemishes were enough to keep a person out of the officiating priesthood. Yahweh wanted His priests to be **physically perfect**; the lesson being that they should be **spiritually perfect**. That is, they shouldn't be **spiritually** blind, deaf, deformed, ugly or impotent.

Leviticus 21: 16: *“And the LORD spake unto Moses, saying,  
17: Speak unto Aaron, saying, Whosoever he be of thy seed in their generations that hath any blemish, let him not approach to offer the bread of his God.  
18: For whatsoever man he be that hath a blemish, he shall not approach: a blind man, or a lame, or he that hath a flat nose, or any thing superfluous,  
19: Or a man that is brokenfooted, or brokenhanded,  
20: Or crookbackt, or a dwarf, or that hath a blemish in his eye, or be scurvy, or scabbed, or hath his stones broken;  
21: **No man that hath a blemish of the seed of Aaron the priest shall come nigh to offer the offerings of the LORD made by fire: he hath a blemish; he shall not come nigh to offer the bread of his God.**  
22: He shall eat the bread of his God, both of the most holy, and of the holy.  
23: Only he shall not go in unto the vail, nor come nigh unto the altar, because he hath a blemish; that he profane not my sanctuaries: for I the LORD do sanctify them.”*

## 10. Uncleaness of Men & Women

The ceremonial laws concerning uncleaness are further examples of commandments which contain deep spiritual truths. When we study these laws we soon realize that **symbolic uncleaness** is all around. A very brief reference to them is given below.

Leviticus 15:  
16: *“And if any man's seed of copulation go out from him, then he shall wash all his flesh in water, and be unclean until the even.  
17: And every garment, and every skin, whereon is the seed of copulation, shall be washed with water, and be unclean until the even.  
18: The woman also with whom man shall lie with seed of copulation, they shall both bathe themselves in water, and be unclean until the even.  
19: And if a woman have an issue, and her issue in her flesh be blood, she shall be put apart seven days: and whosoever toucheth her shall be unclean until the even.  
20: And every thing that she lieth upon in her separation shall be unclean: every thing also that she sitteth upon shall be unclean.*



21: *And whosoever toucheth her bed shall wash his clothes, and bathe himself in water, and be unclean until the even.*

22: *And whosoever toucheth any thing that she sat upon shall wash his clothes, and bathe himself in water, and be unclean until the even.*

23: *And if it be on her bed, or on any thing whereon she sitteth, when he toucheth it, he shall be unclean until the even.”*

Numbers 19: 16: *“And whosoever toucheth one that is slain with a sword in the open fields, or a dead body, or a bone of a man, or a grave, shall be unclean seven days.”*

What do these laws mean for believers in the 20th/21st century? What deep spiritual lessons do they contain which are relevant in this day? The answer is: they teach us that **all mankind is spiritually impure and unclean!** Never a month goes by but that most of us will come in contact with someone with a *skin disease, a menstruating woman, a corpse, or furniture used by such folk*. In ancient days all such physical contacts resulted in a person becoming **ceremonially unclean**. But what of today? Do the ceremonial aspects of these laws still apply? To be sure **physical uncleanness** should be washed away with soap and water as soon as possible; (or some disinfectant used if a contagious disease is involved) but what of the **spiritual uncleanness** those physical conditions symbolized in those commandments? How can the human race be purified from spiritual uncleanness? We echo the words of the prophet Isaiah who, after a brief glimpse at Yahweh's holiness, cried out:

Isaiah 6: 5: *“Woe is me! for I am undone; because I am a man of unclean lips, and I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips: for mine eyes have seen the King, the LORD of hosts.”*

Is there escape from the frightening variety of sin and its resulting **spiritual uncleanness**? I am happy to report that there is: and it is found in the Saviour. Sure, we could and should wash with soap and water and be **physically clean**: but how can we wash away the filth of unbelief and sin? The answer is: we need the blood of Jesus Christ to cleanse us from all sin. Nothing else will cleanse us.

1 John 1: 7: *“But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship one with another, and the **blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin.**”*

Titus 2: 14: *“Who gave himself for us, that he might **redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works.**”*

James 4: 8: *“Draw nigh to God, and he will draw nigh to you. **Cleanse your hands, ye sinners; and purify your hearts, ye double minded.**”*

Yes, cleansing from sin is only possible by faith in the **Lamb of God** who taketh away the sin of the world.

## 11. The Big Question Is

**Do modern believers in Yahweh the Almighty God of Israel need to keep the ceremonial (instructional) requirements of the above named commandments?** In other words: do we need to offer *'animal sacrifices, 'circumcise our baby sons, 'wear phylacteries' and 'fringed garments?'* Is it a sin to mix fibres: i.e. *'wool with nylon, 'polyester with cotton, 'linen with wool?'* Is it wrong for a physically blind or blemished person to minister in the church? Are undertakers, doctors and nurses to be classified as **'unclean'** seeing that they daily come in contact with symbolically unclean bodies? How do we relate to the ceremonial aspects of these commands?

My answer, which is based on the spirit-directed decision of the Apostles concerning **circumcision** in Acts 15, is as follows: The **moral directives and objectives** of ceremonial commandments stand forever: they are eternal. But the **symbolic tokens or instructional ceremonies** given to teach those moral lessons are not required of **Gentile followers of the Most High**: not in this age at any rate. That is why we in A Voice In The Wilderness - Canada do not *'sacrifice animals, 'circumcise our sons, 'wear phylacteries' or 'treat doctors, nurses and undertakers as ceremonially unclean.'* Nor would we refuse to listen to a preacher who was *'physically blemished'* in some way.

Having said that, we are ever conscious of the **moral lessons** the ceremonial commands contain: and since most of them aim at **forgiveness, holiness, obedience and purity** we are happy to study them in depth and live up to their moral requirements.

## 12. Summary

We have seen that **Yahweh's** commandments fall into several categories and that each law contains at its heart an **eternal truth**. As the Scriptures teach:

Psalm 111: 7: **“...All his commandments are sure.  
8: They stand fast for ever and ever...”**

We have also seen that the **ceremonial aspect** of certain commands is no longer called for, though the moral core of every command abides forever. This translates as follows:

- **Animal Sacrifices**
  - Before we can approach Yahweh's throne for mercy or blessing we must come with faith in the blood of Yeshua (Jesus) the Messiah, the Lamb of God.
- **Circumcision**
  - All true believers must put away the sins of the flesh and aim for holiness and total commitment to the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob.
- **Phylacteries**
  - We must constantly keep the laws of Yahweh in mind (symbolized by the forehead) and put them into practice (symbolized by the forearm or hand.)
- **Linen / Wool / Fringed Garments**
  - We must never mix or dilute the sacred with the secular. Nor should we forget or be ashamed of the eternal laws of the Most High.
- **Unblemished Priesthood**
  - Those who officiate in spiritual matters should be people of the very highest moral standards: because spiritual defects disqualify from service.
- **Spiritual Impurity**
  - We live in a sinful world and daily come in contact with sin's effects. **Only the blood of Jesus Christ (Yeshua the Messiah) can cleanse us from sin.** See our **Everlasting Gospel Library** for details about spiritual cleansing, salvation and life eternal.

**AMEN!**

**In the Son's Name - For the Father's glory.**

**Elder: Max W. Mader**

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