

STRUCTURE IS THEOLOGY: THE COMPOSITION OF LEVITICUS

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By use of repeated words and inner chiasms, and, above all, by the choice of the center or fulcrum around which the introversion is structured, the ideological thrust of each author is revealed. In a word, structure is theology.¹

1. Introduction

This essay is about the formal structure of Leviticus in the form of the book that we have today. While it does not directly address historical issues related to documents that preceded its composition, it does present a new direction for approaching many textual problems. The work is based on a project that was mentored by Jacob Milgrom during the latter years of his life, for which I am deeply indebted.² The goal of the project was to determine the principles of organization that were employed in the construction of the Torah. A singular discovery led to identification of the structures of each of the five books.

The discovery was that all five books are made up of well-defined literary units that share certain characteristics. Specifically, each unit was built

1. Jacob Milgrom, *Leviticus 23–27: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary*, AB 3B (New York: Doubleday, 2001), 2129–30.

2. This essay represents, to the best of my knowledge, the last research project that Jacob Milgrom closely supervised. While this version differs substantially from an earlier version (Moshe Kline, “The Literary Structure of Leviticus,” *The Biblical Historian: Journal of the Biblical Colloquium West* 2 [2005]: 12–29; republished at: [http://chaver.com/Torah-New/English/Articles/The_Literary_Structure_of_Leviticus_\(TBH\).pdf](http://chaver.com/Torah-New/English/Articles/The_Literary_Structure_of_Leviticus_(TBH).pdf)), the structure of Leviticus presented here is the same as that which Milgrom accepted.

as a table or weave, a two-dimensional, nonlinear construct. This discovery made it possible to identify all eighty-six units of the Torah. They produce a very clear picture of the formal structure of each of the five books. Since the same formatting technique was used throughout the Torah, both on the level of individual literary units and on the level of whole books, it was apparently constructed by a single hand or school, which I will refer to as the “author.” The use of the tabular/woven formatting technique was previously identified in the structure of the chapters of the Mishnah, showing that this specific literary form was known and employed until at least the third century CE.³

The present essay is divided into nine parts. Following this introduction, the second part begins with an explanation of the characteristics of the literary units and how their discovery led to the discovery of the structure of Leviticus. The third part discusses two sample units from Leviticus, which consist of chapters 1–3 and chapter 27. The fourth section presents a catalogue of all twenty-two units of Leviticus in outline. The fifth part is a close reading of the overall structure of Leviticus. This is followed by the sixth part, which demonstrates how a structural paradigm defined by the six days of creation can be applied to the structure of Leviticus. The seventh section presents an analogical reading of Leviticus that is offered as an alternative to the one developed by Mary Douglas. The eighth part demonstrates how the discovery of the nonlinear literary units of the Torah has revealed the structure of the books of Genesis and Numbers. This section is intended to indicate directions that future research might follow. The concluding (ninth) section summarizes the findings reported in this essay.

3. See Moshe Kline, “The Literary Structure of the Mishnah: *Erubin* Chapter X,” *Alei Sefer* 14 (1987): 5–28. For a full edition of the Mishnah in which each chapter is arranged according to its nonlinear structure, see my “The Structured Mishnah,” <http://chaver.com/Mishnah-New/Hebrew/Text/Shishah%20Sidrei%20Mishnah.htm>. For an introduction to the structuring of chapters of the Mishnah, see Kline, “An Introduction to the Structured Mishnah,” <http://www.chaver.com/Mishnah-New/English/Articles/Introduction%20to%20the%20Structured%20Mishnah.htm>. Much of what is described there regarding chapters of the Mishnah can be applied to the literary units of the Torah as well. The fact that both the Torah and the Mishnah use the same special formatting of units would seem to imply that the author of the Mishnah was in possession of a tradition regarding the literary format of the Torah that he applied to the composition of the Mishnah. *Deo volente*, this hypothesis will be explored in a future study.

2. The Literary Units of Leviticus

Leviticus contains twenty-two well-defined literary units, whereas printed Bibles divide the book into twenty-seven chapters.⁴ To avoid confusion, I will refer to my units as “Units” (capitalized) and mark them with Roman numerals. Nearly all of the discrepancies between Unit and chapter divisions in Leviticus are found in the first ten chapters, which reduce to four Units. Unit I includes chapters 1–3, II includes chapters 4–5, III spans chapters 6–7, and IV covers chapters 8–10. The first three Units describe various aspects of the sacrificial system. The fourth contains an extended narrative described by Milgrom as “the inauguration of the cult.”⁵

Another place where the division by chapters must be modified is chapter 22. I read this chapter as two Units, consisting of verses 1–25 and 26–33, respectively. This division is based on the subject matter of the two Units. Once we have identified 22:26–33 as a separate Unit, its similarity to chapter 12 becomes apparent. Both consist of just eight verses containing birth, seven days after birth, the eighth day, and sacrifice. The similarity between these two Units will play a significant role in identifying the overall structure. A minor adjustment must be made between chapters 13 and 14. While they remain two literary Units, verses 47–59 at the end of chapter 13 are properly part of the Unit on purification from *צרעת* (so-called “leprosy”) of fabrics (13:47–59), persons (14:1–32), and buildings (14:33–57).

Mary Douglas stated a ground rule for structural analysis: “Everything depends on how clearly the units of structure are identified.”⁶ She explained the importance of clearly defined units thus: “If the analyst can manage not to take responsibility either for selecting the units of structure, or for the principles of relationship between the units of the text, the analysis of the structure will be more secure. The safeguard is to have some principle of selection that makes the interpretation a work of discovery, not of

4. For a color-coded edition of the Torah divided into structured literary units, see Moshe Kline, “The Structured Torah,” <http://www.chaver.com/Torah-New/Hebrew/Text/The%20Five%20Books%20of%20the%20Torah.htm>.

5. Jacob Milgrom, *Leviticus 1–16: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary*, AB 3 (New York: Doubleday, 1991), 491.

6. Mary Douglas, *In The Wilderness: The Doctrine of Defilement in the Book of Numbers*, rev. ed., JSOTSup 158 (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001), preface to the paperback edition, xxiii.

creation.”⁷ The principle of selection that I have employed to identify the Units is itself a discovery. Leviticus displays level upon level of organization in a “powerfully contrived structure.”⁸ It is not composed of a single set of units but rather a set of sets. Each level of organization is based upon its own set of units. In order to speak about “the structure of Leviticus,” we must have an understanding of several levels of order and the set of units associated with each level. Once we have established the levels of organization, we can apply a form of “literary calculus” to define the most useful set of parameters for describing the overall structure of Leviticus.

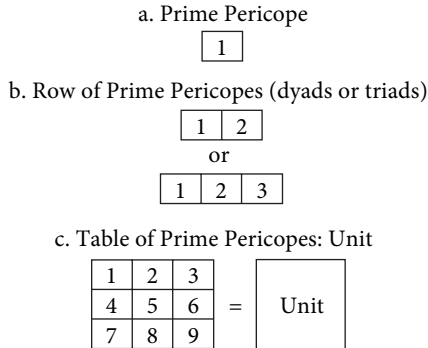
As I have mentioned, on one level Leviticus divides into twenty-two structurally similar Units. I will refer to the internal organization of these Units as the microstructures of Leviticus and the arrangement of the Units together as the macrostructure. The way to apply Douglas’s “discovery” method to Leviticus appeared when I discovered that the macrostructure employs the same rules of organization as the microstructures. The development of a common set of rules for these two levels of structure is the result of an analytic process that I have playfully termed “literary calculus.” The similarity to mathematical calculus is found in the need to postulate a smallest quantum, or in textual terms, “the prime pericope.” This is the smallest block of text that is structurally significant. Like a prime number, it cannot be divided into factors. I will explain now in basic outline just how these prime pericopes are organized in six levels of ascending complexity. For consistency with later sections of this essay, I refer to some

7. *Ibid.*, 94; Wilfred Warning attempted to identify a structure based on the pattern of divine speeches. By his own admission, his analysis did not go beyond attempting to find linguistic patterns: “In making intensive use of one aspect of rhetorical criticism this dissertation focuses on terminological patterns and is therefore not concerned with conceptual structures” (*Literary Artistry in Leviticus* [Leiden: Brill, 1998], 168). Because of the limits he placed upon his study, he never actually attempted to identify an overall plan and the function of each separate divine speech within it. For a discussion of other approaches, see Christophe Nihan, *From Priestly Torah to Pentateuch: A Study in the Composition of the Book of Leviticus*, FAT 2/25 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2007), 76–89.

8. “Another possibility again [for explaining the source of Leviticus] is suggested by the studied elegance and powerfully contrived structure. A literary composition that is so impressive could suggest that writing a theological treatise was the full achievement. The skeptical likelihood that the book is a beautiful fantasy, a vision of a life that never was, hangs heavily over the interpretation” (Mary Douglas, *Leviticus as Literature* [Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999], 7).

groups of textual elements as “rows” and “tables.” I explain the significance of these terms after I present all six levels of order (figs. 1–3).

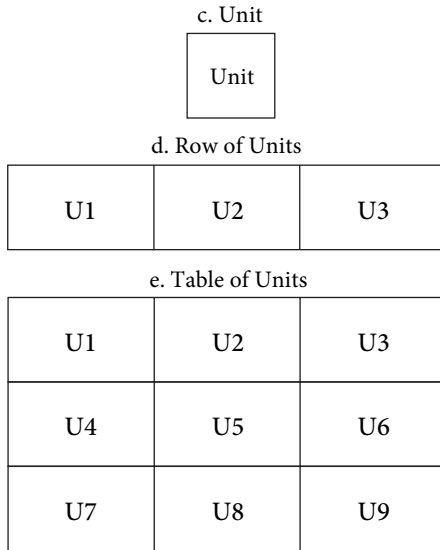
Figure 1. Levels of Order



The first three levels of order are illustrated above, beginning with the prime pericope (a). The second level of organization (b) connects two or three prime pericopes in a set, or row. All of the prime pericopes combine with one or two other consecutive pericopes to form either a dyad or a triad. The next level of order (c) combines consecutive rows of pericopes in tables. This is the level that I have termed Units. Each Unit is made up of dyad rows or triad rows. Of the twenty-two Units, only two combine both dyads and triads within the same Unit. The other twenty are all homogenous, eleven containing only triads and nine only dyads. The arrangement of the different types of Units is one of the objective criteria for defining the structure of the book. For example, the first three Units all consist exclusively of triads, while the next three consist exclusively of dyads. This grouping by inner structure is one of the discoveries that made the identification of the overall structure possible. We will now see how the macrostructure, the arrangement of Units, reflects the microstructure, the structure of a single Unit (see fig. 2 on p. 230).

The Units are to the macrostructure as the “prime pericopes” are to the microstructure. Just as the prime pericopes (a) of the microstructure form rows (b), so also do the Units (c) combine to form rows of Units (d) in the macrostructure. One difference between the rows of consecutive prime pericopes (b) and the rows of consecutive Units (d) is that the Unit rows are all triads, while the pericope rows are divided between triads and dyads. For clarity, I will refer to the Unit rows as Unit-triads. The Unit-

Figure 2. Macrostructure Reflects Microstructure



triad (d) combines with two more Unit-triads to create a table of Unit-triads containing three Unit-triads (e).

We can now see that the organization of the macrostructure in levels c–e precisely reflects the organization of the microstructure in levels a–c. There is one more level of order (f) to take into account in order to grasp the overall plan of Leviticus. The largest structure in the book is based on two tables of nine Units each. The two tables form an introversion around chapter 19, as the following diagram (fig. 3) illustrates:

Figure 3. Leviticus’s Structure: Introversion around Leviticus 19

f. The Nineteen-Unit Introversion

Table 1	U1	U2	U3
	U4	U5	U6
	U7	U8	U9
Chapter 19			
Table 2	U9 ₁	U8 ₁	U7 ₁
	U6 ₁	U5 ₁	U4 ₁
	U3 ₁	U2 ₁	U1 ₁

This structure accounts for nineteen of the twenty-two Units in Leviticus. The three remaining Units are not part of the introversion. Interest-

ingly, the three “superfluous” Units all deal exclusively with impurities. It is as if the author is saying that the symmetrical structure is pure and that the asymmetry created by the addition of the Units on impurities makes the structure itself impure. The reader, like the priest, must remove the impure from the camp (structure) in order to maintain its purity. I develop this point below when discussing my analogical reading of Leviticus.

We have now completed the preliminary survey of the six levels of order that were utilized to create the structure of Leviticus. Each prime pericope combines with other prime pericopes to form five additional levels of order (b–f). Each level of order creates a new context within which a given prime pericope must be understood. It follows that the author formulated and honed each prime pericope to function within multiple structural contexts. Any given term within the prime pericope can serve to connect it with other prime pericopes on any of the levels of order. Multiple levels of organization create multiple contexts. Douglas was quite accurate in describing Leviticus as having a “powerfully contrived structure.”⁹

There are two more structural contexts in the tables of levels (c) and (e). The Units of the microstructure (c) and the tables of the macrostructure (e) share a formal similarity; they can both be read as tables (fig. 4).

Figure 4. Tables in Microstructure and Macrostructure

	L ↓	M ↓	R ↓
A →	A L (1)	A M (2)	A R (3)
B →	B L (4)	B M (5)	B R (6)
C →	C L (7)	C M (8)	C R (9)

The rows of the above table represent consecutive blocks of text (as indicated by the numbers in parentheses) and are marked by consecutive letters, A–C. The columns are marked as L(ef) M(iddle) and R(ight). When the text is arranged in this format, consistencies appear in the columns as well as in the rows. The content of each prime pericope in a Unit (c), as well as the content of each Unit in a table of Units (e), is a function of the intersection of two planning lines, its row and column. The compound labels, such as AL, indicate that the specific element, prime peri-

9. Douglas, *Leviticus as Literature*, 7.

cope or Unit, is a compound composed of the “A” concept, which includes AL, AM and AR, and the “L” concept, which includes AL, BL and CL. In this manner, the tables can be seen as “conceptual space,” Cartesian coordinate systems in which each point (element of a table) is a function of the intersection of two concepts, its column and row.

The columns of the Units (c) and the columns of the tables of Units (e) create two more structural contexts. This brings the total number of structural contexts to seven: levels (b)–(f) plus the columns of the two levels of tables. Note that the rows of the Units and the rows of the tables have been previously identified as levels (b) and (d). A full analysis of the structure of Leviticus should include a reading of each of the twenty-two Units as a table. However, due to constraints of space, I discuss in detail only the inversion of level (f). I show that it can be read as three concentric chiasms or rings, focused on chapter 19. Each ring is associated with an area of the tabernacle: the outer ring with the court, the middle ring with the sanctum, and the inner ring with the inner sanctum. Chapter 19, at the center, is associated with the ark of the covenant, thereby explaining the appearance of elements of the Decalogue within it. Before that discussion, I demonstrate in the next section the tabular characteristics of two Units, followed by a catalogue of all twenty-two Units, in which the structure of each is outlined.

3. Structures of Sample Units in Leviticus

Bible students have to choose between accepting the muddle made by imposing a Western linear reading upon an archaic text, or trying to read the book through its own literary conventions.¹⁰

The two sample Units discussed here are I (Lev 1–3) and XXII (Lev 27), which begin and end the book of Leviticus. The first has been identified as a tabular construct by Didier Luciani.¹¹ Milgrom points out that several scholars have noted that these two Units are complementary:

10. *Ibid.*, 51.

11. Didier Luciani, “Structure et Théologie en Lv 1,1–3,17,” in *The Books of Leviticus and Numbers*, ed. Thomas Römer, BETL 215 (Leuven: Peeters, 2008), 319–27. He notes that the three classes of offerings are ordered according to decreasing degrees of holiness.

“The Book of Leviticus concludes, as it opened, with a chapter of Sanctuary regulations—voluntary contributions to the upkeep of the sanctuary” (Hertz 1941: 2.547). Chapter 27 is “the latch.... (it) locks on to the beginning by speaking both of things consecrated and things belonging to YHWH” (Douglas 1993a: 10).¹²

3.1. Unit I (Lev 1–3)

Unit I consists of Lev 1–3. All three chapters prescribe spontaneously motivated private offerings: burnt, cereal, and well-being. Each is represented by a row in figure 5 (below), and each row is subdivided into three parts shown in three columns.

Figure 5. The Structure of Unit I (Lev 1–3)

		Value		
		L Most Valuable	M Middle	R Least Valuable
Holiness	1 The burnt offering (entirely for the altar)	1L 1:1–9 From the herd	1M 1:10–13 From the flock	1R 1:14–17 Birds
	2 The cereal offering (primarily for the priest)	2L 2:1–3 Pure semolina flour	2M 2:4–13 Cooked	2R 2:14–16 Raw grain
	3 The well-being offering (primarily for the devotee)	3L 3:1–5 From the herd	3M 3:6–11 From the flock	3R 3:12–17 Goat

All Units contain two levels of subdivision, which were noted in figure 1 as prime pericope (a) and row (b). Here in figure 5, the rows are labeled

12. Jacob Milgrom, *Leviticus 23–27*, 2409.

1–3.¹³ Each row contains a single category of offering: 1, burnt; 2, cereal; and 3, well-being. Each of these categories is divided into three components, prime pericopes, which are ordered according to their value from the most valuable to the least. This last point is what leads to the coherence of the columns: L contains the most valuable offerings, R the least, and M the middle value. The rows are also ordered. The top row contains the burnt offering that is entirely for the altar, that is, for God. The bottom row contains the well-being offering that is primarily for the offerer/devotee. In the middle is the cereal offering that is primarily for the priest.

The result of arranging the offerings in this manner is the creation of a visual presentation. The “heavenly” is above, the “earthly” is below, and the priest is in the middle mediating between them. The well-known “hook” connecting 3:1 (וּאִם זֶבַח שְׁלָמִים קָרְבָּנוֹ), “If his offering is a sacrifice of well-being”) to 1:2 (אָדָם כִּי יִקְרִיב מִכֶּם מִהֶבֱהֵמָה), “When any person among you presents an offering of livestock”), thus skipping chapter 2, is explained by this visualization.¹⁴ The role of the priest in Lev 2 is merely to mediate between the two substantial (meaty!) realms: the heavenly above and the earthly below. This hierarchical arrangement from heavenly to earthly establishes a paradigm that is extensively employed in Leviticus.¹⁵

Unit I reflects two independent principles of organization: value (in the columns) and a hierarchy of holiness (in the rows). These are the axes of the previously mentioned coordinate system that determines the contents of each prime pericope in this Unit. They give us insight into the concepts with which the author was working when constructing the Unit. They also present a methodology for interpreting Units as authored compositions. In order to “understand” a Unit, the reader must reconstruct the superstructure, like that which I have suggested surrounding the outlined text within the double border of the table above.

13. By coincidence, each of the three rows of Unit I is a whole chapter, and its chapter number coincides with the row number.

14. In this essay, all translations of verses in Leviticus are from Jacob Milgrom, *Leviticus 17–22: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary*, AB 3A (New York: Doubleday, 2000), 1268–1315.

15. Below I will demonstrate that the Unit-triads can be deciphered using this paradigm. The extreme Units can be described as “God-oriented” and “people-oriented.” The middle Unit connects these poles.

3.2. UNIT XXII (LEV 27)

The overall content of XXII (Lev 27) is similar to that of I (Lev 1–3); both contain offerings. The link between the Units is amplified by the use of the term “for (or to) YHWH” over thirty times in the two Units. Yet another similarity comes to light when XXII (Lev 27) is arranged in tabular/woven format according to its structure (see fig. 6 on p. 236).

Unit XXII, like Unit I, is organized according to valuation (in the columns) and degrees of sanctity (in the rows). In order to clarify this point, let us note how the author has indicated the proper alignment of the parts of the Unit. It begins with three offerings that mention priestly assessment: 1L, 1M and 1R. These three cases are then matched with three double cases: 2LA and 2LB; 2MA and 2MB; 2RA and 2RB. Each of the doublets is identified as such by the opening words of its two parts. In 2L they both begin “If a man consecrates a field”; in 2M both begin with אך (“but”) and in 2R with וכל מעשר (“and all tithe”). Once they are aligned according to the nonlinear format of the table/weave, other aspects of composition appear. All three cases in column L refer to the shekel. Its significance as a fixed value is emphasized by its definition at the end of the column: “being twenty gerahs.” In column M, all cases include quadrupeds. In column R, all three contain קדש ליהוה (“holy to YHWH”). Furthermore, there is a fixed distinction between the A and B parts of row 2. All the cases in A allow for redemption, while none of those in B do.

Once the structure of the Unit has been identified, its two axes, the organizing principles embedded in the columns and rows, become accessible. The columns, as in Unit I (Lev 1–3), are ordered according to value. However, it is not simply relative value, as in Unit I, but types of value. Column L is concerned with the set shekel value of the object. In all the cases presented in column R, the value of the object, the house, or the tithe is a function of the wealth of the owner. Column M deals with quadrupeds that have inherent value as potential sacrifices unless they are impure. So the valuation criteria of XXII (Lev 27) are: fixed (L), inherent (M), and relative (R).

The other axis, that which is found in the rows, appears to be based on the manner by which an object may be redeemed or desanctified, as opposed to the rows of Unit I (Lev 1–3), which are organized by degrees of sanctity. In row 1, the desanctification may require a professional evaluation. In row 2, there is no such evaluation, although there may be a simple calculation, as in 27:23. There is a fixed distinction between 2A and 2B.

Figure 6. The Structure of Unit XXII (Lev 27)

		Value		
		Fixed Value Sanctuary Weights	Intrinsic Value Animals	Relative Value Personal Wealth
Desanctification	Priest Shall Assess	<p>1L ¹YHWH spoke to Moses, saying: ²Speak to the Israelites and say to them: When a person makes an extraordinary vow to YHWH concerning the (fixed) valuation of a human being, ³these shall be the valuations: If it is a male from twenty to sixty years of age, the valuation is fifty <i>shekels</i> of silver by the sanctuary weight... ⁸But if he is too poor (to pay) an valuation, he shall be presented before the priest, and the priest shall assess him; the priest shall assess him according to what the vower can afford.</p>	<p>1M ⁹If [the vow concerns] any <u>quadruped</u> that may be brought as an offering to YHWH, any such that may be dedicated to YHWH shall be holy. ¹⁰One may not exchange it or substitute it....¹¹If [the vow concerns] any impure <u>quadruped</u> which may not be brought as an offering to YHWH, the <u>quadruped</u> shall be presented before the priest, ¹²and the priest shall assess it...</p>	<p>1R ¹⁴If a man consecrates his house to YHWH, the priest shall assess it. ...</p>
	Redeemable	<p>2LA ¹⁶If a man consecrates to YHWH any part of his tenured field; its valuation shall be according to its seed requirement: fifty <i>shekels</i> of silver to a homer of barley seed... ¹⁹and if he who consecrated the field wishes to redeem it, he must add one-fifth to the sum at which it was assessed, and it shall pass to him ...</p>	<p>2MA ²⁶However, a firstling of <u>quadrupeds</u>—designated as a firstling to YHWH—cannot be consecrated by anyone; whether bovine or ovine, it is YHWH's. ²⁷But if it is of impure <u>quadrupeds</u>, it may be ransomed at its valuation, with one-fifth added; if it is not redeemed, it may be sold at its valuation.</p>	<p>2RA ³⁰All tithes from the land, whether seed from the ground or fruit from the tree, are YHWH's; they are holy to YHWH. ³¹If a man wishes to redeem any of his tithes, he must add one-fifth to them.</p>
	Nonredeemable	<p>2LB ²²If he consecrates to YHWH a field that he purchased, which is not of his tenured field, ²³the priest shall compute for him the proportionate valuation up to the jubilee year, and he shall pay the valuation as of that day, a sacred donation to YHWH. ²⁴In the jubilee year the field shall revert to him from whom it was bought, to whom the tenured land belongs. ²⁵All valuations shall be by sanctuary weight, the <i>shekel</i> being twenty gerahs.</p>	<p>2MB ²⁸However, anything a man proscribes to YHWH of what he owns, be it persons, <u>quadrupeds</u>, or his tenured land, may not be sold or redeemed; every proscribed thing is totally consecrated to YHWH. ²⁹No human being who has been proscribed can be ransomed: He must be put to death.</p>	<p>2RB ³²All tithes of the herd or flock—of all that passes under the shepherd's staff, every tenth one—shall be holy to YHWH. ³³He must not seek out the healthy as against the emaciated and substitute (the latter) for it (the former). If he does provide a substitute for it, then it and its substitute shall be holy; they cannot be redeemed...</p>

In 2A the redemption requires the payment of a 25 percent fine, while redemption is not possible at all in 2B. So the A and B components of row 2 indicate that the author actually organized the rows according to three criteria: assessment, redemption by fine, and nonredemption.

The vertical format of Unit XXII (Lev 27) can be described as “two rows that are read as three.” This format, like the rows of Unit I (Lev 1–3), also serves as a pattern for interpreting the structure of Leviticus. Its appropriateness can be clarified by noting its similarity to the structure of the tabernacle compound. On the one hand, the compound is divided into two parts: the court and the tent. On the other hand, the tent is divided into two parts, sanctum and inner sanctum. Therefore we can speak of the tabernacle compound as having three functional parts and thus fitting the pattern of “two that are three.” This pattern, like the three-part holiness paradigm in Unit I (Lev 1–3), plays a part in deciphering the overall structure of the book.

4. The Twenty-Two Units in Leviticus

Figure 7. The Complete Structure of Leviticus

A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H
I 1-3	IV 8-10	VII 13:1-46	X 16		XIV 20	XVII 22:26-33	XX 25
II 4-5	V 11	VII 13:47-14:57	XI 17	XIII 19	XV 21	XVIII 23	XXI 26
III 6-7	VI 12	IX 15	XII 18		XVI 22:1-25	XIX 24	XXII 27

The table above (fig. 7) shows the complete structure of Leviticus, which is formed by eight structural elements, A–H, of which seven are Unit-triads (sets of three connected Units) and the eighth (E = Lev 19) is a single Unit. This table can be used as a reference for the following catalogue of Units. We will turn to the structural connections between the Units after first cataloguing in outline all twenty-two of them. The catalogue consists of a structural outline of each of the twenty-two Units, indicating the verses of each prime pericope, a brief heading to each Unit, and with short descrip-

tions of each pericope row. I have tried to follow Milgrom's section headings as they appear in his translation as far as possible.

For consistency with the subsequent sections, the Units are arranged in the catalogue marked according to structural elements A–H. I will explain in detail in the next section how the Unit-triads are identified but have also provided headings for them in the catalogue. The headings reflect the fact that the Unit-triads are identified in two different ways. Unit-triads A, C, and H are identified by the similarity of the contents of the Units within each of them. Unit-triads B, D, F and G are identified as two pairs of Unit-triads. Unit-triads B and D are paired as well as E and F. The reason for identifying these Unit-triads in pairs is that their Units contain similar or complementary material, as indicated in the following table (fig. 8). These similarities will be explored in detail in the discussion following the catalogue.

Figure 8. The Paired Unit-Triads

B	IV (8–10) Death in Tabernacle	V (11) Edible Animals	VI (12) Birth
D	X (16) Potential Death in Tabernacle	XI (17) Slaughter for Meat	XII (18) Intercourse
E	XIV (20) Intercourse	XV (21)	XVI (22:1–25) Potential Death for Desecration
F	XVII (22:26–33) Birth	XVIII (23)	XIX (24) Death for Blasphemy

In paired Unit-triads B and D, Units IV and X have in common death in the tabernacle; V and XI deal with edible meat; VI and XII relate to intercourse and birth. Paired Unit-triads E and F have intercourse and birth in XIV and XVII, as well as death for desecration and blasphemy in XVI and XIX. The repetition of the themes of birth and death, which connect Units in both pairs of Unit-triads—B and D, as well as E and F—indicate that an extensive chiasm connects all four Unit-triads. This chiasmic relationship between Unit-triads will be extensively explored following the catalogue (fig. 9).

Figure 9. Catalogue of the Twenty-Two Units in Leviticus

Unit-Triad A: The Sacrificial System (all pericope rows triads)

I (1–3) Three Spontaneously Motivated Private Sacrifices

1:1–9	1:10–13	1:14–17	burnt offering, entirely for the altar
2:1–3	2:4–13	2:14–16	cereal offering, primarily for the priest
3:1–5	3:6–11	3:12–17	well-being offering, primarily for the devotee

II (4–5) Sacrifices Required for Expiation

4:1–21	4:22–26	4:27–35	purification offering, classified by sinners
5:1–6	5:7–10	5:11–13	graduated purification offering, classified by object offered
5:14–16	5:17–19	5:20–26	reparation offering, classified by sins

III (6–7) Administrative Order

6:1–6	6:7–11	6:12–16	priestly offerings
6:17–23	7:1–6	7:7–10	offerings of expiation
7:11–21	7:22–27	7:28–38	well-being offering

Unit-Triad B: Pairs with Unit-Triad D (all pericope rows dyads)

IV (8–10) Inauguration of the Cult and Aftermath

8:1–36	9:1–24	consecration and inaugural service
10:1–11	10:12–20	aftermath

V (11) Diet Laws

11:1–23	11:24–40	animals
11:41–42	11:43–47	[insects]

VI (12) Childbirth

12:1–4	12:5	length of impurity
12:6–7	12:8	purification

Unit-Triad C: Impurities and Purification

VII (13:1–46) [Impurity from] Scale Disease

13:1–8	13:9–17	“When a person has ... it shall be reported”
13:18–23	13:24–28	“The skin of one’s body”
13:29–37	13:38–39	“If a man or a woman”
13:40–44	13:45–46	“person stricken with scale disease”

VIII (13:47–14:57) Purification

13:47–50	13:51–55	13:56–59	fabrics
14:1–9	14:10–20	14:21–32	people
14:33–38	14:39–47	14:48–57	buildings

IX (15) Genital Discharges

15:1–15	15:16–18	male
15:19–24	15:25–33	female

Unit-Triad D: Pairs with Unit-Triad B (all pericope rows triads)

X (16) Day of Purgation

16:1–2	16:3–22	16:23–28	the ritual
16:29–32	16:32–33	16:34	the date

XI (17) The Slaughter and Consumption of Meat

17:1–7	17:8–9	17:10–12	sacrificial
17:13–14a	17:14b	17:15–16	nonsacrificial

XII (18) Illicit Sexual Practices

18:1–2	18:3–4	18:5	opening exhortation
18:6–16	18:17–21	18:22–23	the prohibitions
18:24–25	18:26–29	18:30	closing exhortation

Focal Unit E¹⁶

XIII (19) Holiness

19:1–2	19:11–12	
19:3	19:13–14	
19:4	19:15–16	
19:5–10	19:17–19a	
19:19b	19:20–22	19:23–25
19:26–27	19:32	
19:28–30	19:33–34	
19:31	19:35–37	

16. For an extensive analysis of this Unit, see Moshe Kline, “‘The Editor Was Nodding’: A Reading of Leviticus 19 in Memory of Mary Douglas,” *Journal of Hebrew Scriptures* 8 (2008): article 17: http://www.jhsonline.org/Articles/article_94.

This Unit has a unique structure that mirrors the structure of the whole book. It is divided into two blocks of four pairs and three pairs, respectively, by a unique triad (19:19b–25). This mirrors the division of the book into seven Unit-triads, divided into blocks of four Unit-triads (A–D) and three Unit-triads (E–G) by the unique Unit XIII.

Unit-Triad F: Pairs with Unit-Triad G (all pericope rows triads)

XIV (20) Penalties for Molech Worship, Necromancy, and Sexual Offenses

20:1–5	20:6–8	20:9	opening exhortation including penalties for Molech worship and necromancy
20:10–12	20:13–16	20:17–21	penalties for sexual offenses
20:22–24	20:25–26	20:27	closing exhortation

XV (21) Instructions for the Priests

21:1–6	21:7–8	21:9	all priests
21:10–12	21:13–15	21:16–24	the high priest

XVI (22:1–25) Sanctified Objects

22:1–2	22:3	22:4–8	people sanctify
22:9	22:10–16	22:17–25	God sanctifies

Unit-Triad G: Pairs with Unit-Triad F (all pericope rows dyads)

XVII (22:26–33) Animal Birth

22:26–27	22:28–30	animal birth
22:31	22:32–33	closing exhortation

XVIII (23) The Holiday Calendar

23:1–3	23:4–8	seven days
23:9–14	23:15–22	first barley and wheat offerings
23:23–25	23:26–32	alarm blasts and purgation
23:33–38	23:39–44	the Festival of Booths

XIX (24) Tabernacle Oil and Bread; The Case of Blasphemy

24:1–4	24:5–9	oil and bread: the permanent display in the tent of meeting
24:10–12	24:13–23	the case of the blasphemer and talion laws

Unit-Triad H: Redemption

XX (25) Jubilee

25:1–7	25:8–17	25:18–24	the land
25:25–28		25:29–34	property
25:35–38	25:39–46	25:47–55	persons

XXI (26) Blessings, Curses, and the Recall of the Covenant

26:1	26:2	Israel's commitment to God
26:3–13	26:14–41	interaction between God and Israel, blessings and curses
26:42–44	26:45–46	God's commitment to redeem Israel

XXII (27) Consecrations and their Redemption

27:1–8	27:9–13	27:14–15	requiring priestly judgment
27:16–25	27:26–29	27:30–34	not requiring priestly judgment

The sizes of pericope rows (b) used in the Unit-triads create a recurring pattern. Unit-triad A contains only triads in its pericope rows, Unit-triad B contains only dyad pericope rows, and Unit-triad C contains both dyad and triad pericope rows. This pattern is repeated in Unit-triads F–H: F contains only triads, G only dyads, and H both types of pericope rows.

5. The Overall Structure of Leviticus

PLANS without number of the various books both of the Old and New Testament are already before the public. Had they seemed to answer the purpose of developing any thing like regularity in the Sacred Writings, it is possible that the present work would never have appeared. But it is one thing to make a plan for parts of the Scriptures, and another to point out the plan which actually prevails in them. Plans and analyses may be regular in themselves, but little is gained by this. The Sacred Writings, I believe, with all the plans that have been published, are still regarded and read by many as irregular compositions; while those readers, even, who view them in a different light, would find it no easy task to point out wherein their regularity consists.¹⁷

Mary Douglas maintained that the structure of Leviticus reflects the structure of the desert tabernacle. She saw the book divided into three

17. Thomas Boys, *Tactica Sacra*, 1824

consecutive parts analogous to the court, the sanctum, and the inner sanctum.¹⁸

I agree that the structure of Leviticus is related to the structure of the tabernacle but do not agree with Douglas's divisions. I will show that Leviticus contains three concentric "rings" of Units centered on Lev 19. It is possible to see the rings as parallel to the court, the sanctum, and the inner sanctum. The reading of Leviticus would then be analogous to the movements of the high priest on the Day of Atonement, progressing from the court to the sanctum and inner sanctum, then returning to the court by way of the sanctum. According to this reading, Lev 19, with its command to be godlike in holiness, is analogous to the ark, explaining the multiple references to the Decalogue in this chapter. Furthermore, the sixteen first-person revelations, "I am the Lord," mark the parallel to God's revelation to Moses from between the cherubim on the ark (Exod 25:22).

5.1. The Components

As shown above in figure 9, Leviticus contains twenty-two Units, all but one of which combine into seven Unit-triads. If one removes Unit-triad C, for reasons explained below, then each of the first three Unit-triads will pair with one of the last three Unit-triads to create a concentric structure, as displayed in the following table (fig. 10). Here the remaining six Unit-triads form three concentric pairs that have been marked O(uter), M(iddle) and I(nner), with subscripts used to note their Unit-triads.

Figure 10: The Concentric Structure of Leviticus

A O ₁	B M ₁	D I ₁	E Fulcrum	F I ₂	G M ₂	H O ₂
I 1-3	IV 8-10	X 16		XIV 20	XVII 22:26-33	XX 25
II 4-5	V 11	XI 17	XIII 19	XV 21	XVIII 23	XXI 26
III 6-7	VI 12	XII 18		XVI 22:1-25	XIX 24	XXII 27

18. Douglas, *Leviticus as Literature*, esp. chs. 10-12.

With reference to these chiastic pairs of triads, I will adapt the term “ring” as used by Douglas and, following her, Milgrom.¹⁹ While they could also be described as concentric chiastic structures, it would be cumbersome to repeatedly use this phrase when “ring” can serve the same end. Also, the fact that the rings are concentric indicates that we are dealing with a phenomenon that has a visual component, which is more aptly described by “rings” than “concentric chiasms.” I will first describe the characteristics of the symmetrical structure achieved by (temporarily) removing Unit-triad C and later will address the function of C within the book.

5.2. Identifying Rings

Each of the three rings is composed of two Unit-triads. The Outer ring consists of A and H, the middle ring B and G, and the inner ring D and F. Each ring has a common characteristic that appears in five of its six Units. The Units lacking the common element of each ring (II [Lev 4–5], V [Lev 11] and XI [Lev 17]) are found in the identical position within each ring, the middle of the first Unit-triad. Each ring has a different way of indicating its common characteristic. In the outer ring, it is the mention of a place where God spoke to Moses: the tent of meeting (I [Lev 1–3]) or Mount Sinai (III [Lev 6–7], XX [Lev 25], XXI [Lev 26] and XXII [Lev 27]). All five mentions of such a place are at the “outside” of their respective Units, either at the beginning (I [Lev 1–3] and XX [Lev 25]) or at the end (III [Lev 6–7], XXI [Lev 26] and XXII [Lev 27]) and can be read as prologues or epilogues to the Units.

Figure 11: Places of Revelation in Ring O

O ₁	O ₂
I 1–3 YHWH summoned Moses and spoke to him from the tent of meeting (1:1)	XX 25 YHWH spoke to Moses on Mount Sinai (25:1)
II 4–5 Anomalous—No mention of a place where God speaks to Moses	XXI 26 These are the laws ... on Mount Sinai through Moses (26:46)
III 6–7 This is the ritual ... that YHWH commanded Moses on Mount Sinai (7:37–38)	XXII 27 These are the commandments that YHWH commanded Moses ... on Mount Sinai (27:34)

19. Douglas, *Leviticus as Literature*, 50; Milgrom, *Leviticus 17–22*, 1364.

5.3. The Conceptual Middle

Before identifying the common characteristic of the middle ring, I will address the inner ring. The reason for this is didactic and in keeping with the Torah's own rhetoric or logic. We saw that Unit I (Lev 1–3) was organized according to a visual key, with the conceptual middle, the priest, in the textual middle. While this may not seem remarkable at first glance, it runs counter to our normal oral/aural patterns of thought. When expressing a triad containing two poles and a middle, we generally enunciate them in the order “thesis, antithesis and synthesis” because we need to grasp the poles in order to understand the synthesis. The Torah, however, is organized visually, with the middle in the middle: thesis, synthesis, and antithesis. This is true of all the Unit-triads, as well as in triads within Units. It is also true of the three rings of Leviticus.

The middle ring is, in some respects, a conceptual middle between the outer and inner rings. This is expressed through the rhetorical devices used to identify the rings, as well as in the order of the anomalous Units. Logically, therefore, it is desirable to see rings O and I as opposites before seeing how M integrates the opposites.

Ring I does not contain an obvious rhetorical device like that of O. The common characteristic found in five of its Units is based on laws dependent on, or referring to, relatives mentioned in them. These many and varied relations are summarized in the following table (fig. 12):

Figure 12. Familial Terms Mentioned in Ring I

I ₁	I ₂
X 16 sons, brother, household (3x), father	XIV 20 sons, progeny (3x), family, father (6x), mother (5x), wife (2x), daughter-in-law, half-sister (2x), aunt (3x), uncle, sister- in-law
XI 17 anomalous	XV 21 sons (3x), mother (2x), father (3x), daughter (2x), sister (2x), brother, hus- band, wife, widow, divorcee, progeny (3x)

XII 18 relative, father (9x), mother (5x), sister (4x), wife (4x), granddaughter, son (2x), half-sister, paternal aunt, maternal aunt, uncle, daughter-in-law, sister-in-law	XVI 22:1–25 sons (2x), progeny (3x), child, daughter (2x), father (2x)
--	--

The number of familial terms in the five Units of ring I that contain them range from six in X (Lev 16) to over thirty in XII (Lev 18)! The whole gamut of family relations is covered and is part and parcel of these Units, contributing to the theme that identifies the ring, family, or person. In other words, the ring is identified by the substance of the Units, rather than by a rhetorical device appearing as a prologue or epilogue, as in ring O.

It is now possible to understand the character of ring M as a conceptual middle (fig. 13):

Figure 13. Seven and Eight Days in Ring M

M_1	M_2
IV 8–10 your ordination will require seven days. ... On the eighth day (8:33–9:1)	XVII 22:26–33 it shall remain seven days with its mother, and from the eighth day (22:27)
V 11 anomalous	XVIII 23 celebrate the pilgrimage festival of YHWH seven days... on the eighth day (23:39)
VI 12 she shall be impure for seven days... On the eighth day (12:2–3)	XIX 24 Every Sabbath day it shall be set up..., and they shall eat it (on the eighth day) (24:8–9)

Units IV (Lev 8–10), VI (Lev 12), XVII (22:26–33), and XVIII (Lev 23) all contain the phrase “seven days ... and the eighth day.” Unit XIX (Lev 24) does not have this expression but describes the bread on the table in the tabernacle that is displayed for seven days and is eaten on the eighth

day. So the middle ring is like the outer ring in that four of its Units contain a repeating expression, and a fifth Unit fits the pattern established by the other four. However, ring M is also like ring I because the identifying characteristic is part of the substance of the laws and not merely a rhetorical device. The subjects established by the identifiers of each ring are: place (O), time (M), and person (I).²⁰

It appears that the author constructed rings O, M, and I in a manner that reflects their relative positions by means of the characteristic chosen to identify each ring. The outer ring uses a rhetorical device “outside” the body of the Units in prologues and epilogues. The inner ring is identified by the plethora of familial terms within it. The middle ring is identified by a single repeating phrase, like O, that is part of its content, like I.

The observation that the rings were constructed concentrically and ordered from outside to inside is reinforced by the pattern that appears across the three anomalous Units. All three Units contain animals. Unit II (Lev 4–5) in the outer ring presents animals as the means for expiation from sin. In the middle ring, Unit V (Lev 11) has two subjects: animals as food and as sources of ritual impurity. Unit XI (Lev 17), the inner ring, focuses on blood as the life force (נפש) of animals. The Unit of the outer ring connects animals to something extrinsic to them: expiation. The Unit of the inner ring is concerned with what is intrinsic to an animal: its blood. The Unit of the middle ring combines aspects of both adjacent rings. Like the outer ring, it connects animals with something extrinsic to them: ritual purity. Like the inner ring, it is concerned with the animal per se: whether it splits its hoof and so on. So the subjects are appropriate to the locations of the Units: outside, middle, and inside.

The rings are related to the pattern of the tabernacle, but not just by relative positioning: court, outside, and the like. The author has associated each ring with its parallel part of the tabernacle by means of the first Unit of each ring: I (Lev 1–3), IV (Lev 8–10), and X (Lev 16). Unit I (Lev 1–3), prescribing freewill offerings, is associated with the altar in the court, outside the tent. In Unit IV (Lev 8–10), the first Unit of M, Aaron and Moses

20. Interestingly, these three subjects are foundational organizing principles in later Jewish thought. The six orders of the Mishnah are divided into two related to time (זרעים and מועד), two to persons (נשים and נזיקין), and two related to a holy place, the temple (טהרות and קדשים). Similarly, ספר יצירה (Sefer Yetzirah) presents them as the primary “dimensions” in terms of שנה (“year” for time), נפש (“person”), and עולם (“world” for space). Both of these works are based on ancient oral traditions.

enter the sanctum, in the middle, for the first time. Unit X (Lev 16), the first Unit of I, details the high priest's entrance into the inner sanctum on the Day of Atonement. Thus the rings are marked as being connected to the parts of the tabernacle according to their order: O the court; M the sanctum; and I the inner sanctum. This last point will help in the construction of an analogical reading of Leviticus. First, however, we will examine details of the construction of each ring.

Three major points have been established thus far about the structure of Leviticus: (1) the book contains three concentric rings of text; (2) the position of each ring is verified by two devices: the use of different types of repeating phrases to identify the rings and the different uses of animals in the three anomalous Units; and (3) each ring is associated with a specific part of the tabernacle, appropriate to its position.

Three more principles of order will be demonstrated in the following paragraphs. First, the six Units of each ring display a pattern identifiable in the six days of creation. Second each of the six Unit-triads is ordered according to the holiness hierarchy noted in Unit I (Lev 1–3). Third, the two Unit-triads of each ring are chiasmic.

6. Creation Paradigm in Leviticus

The days of creation in Gen 1 form a pattern that is similar to a pattern observable in each of the three rings of Leviticus. The six days can be divided into two consecutive groups of three days each, which differ from each other in several ways. The distinctions between these two sets of three days shed light on the relationships between the two Unit-triads in each ring of Leviticus. In Gen 1, the first group consists of singular, named, immobile creations: light, sky, and earth. Each of these is associated with separation: light from darkness, above from below, and water from dry land. The second group consists of classes of moving objects that were not named by God, as were “day,” “sky,” and “earth,” in the first three days: day four—sun, moon, and stars; day five—fish, birds and amphibians; day six—terrestrial life. So these two triads of days embody fundamental pairs of concepts: one and many, immobile and mobile, named and unnamed.²¹

21. Leo Strauss, “On the Interpretation of Genesis,” in *Jewish Philosophy and the Crisis of Modernity: Essays and Lectures in Modern Jewish Thought*, ed. Kenneth Hart Green (Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 1997), 359–75; repr. from *L'homme: Revue française d'anthropologie* 21 (1981): 5–36.

Commentators in all periods have noted that the creative activities of days 1–3 are paralleled by the creations of days 4–6: the lights of day 4 parallel the light of day 1; the fish and birds of day 5 parallel the sky and water of day 2; the terrestrial creations of day 6 live on the earth and feed on the plants created on day 3.²² The full import of these parallels becomes clearer when the days are arranged in a table (fig. 14).

Figure 14. The Six Days of Creation

	L(eft) separation divinely named singular entities immobile	R(ight) connection unnamed classes mobile
A Celestial – Transcendent	1-LA light 1:3–5	4-RA lights 1:14–19
B Middle – Between Separating/Con- necting	2-LB sky (separating waters above from waters below) 1:6–8	5-RB sky/air and water creatures and amphibians (connectors) 1:20–23
C Terrestrial – Immanent	3-LC land plants 1:9–13	6-RC land creatures that feed on plants 1:24–31

The six days of creation are numbered 1–6 in the table. Column L contains days 1–3 and column R contains days 4–6. When these two groups are placed side by side, a picture emerges in the rows (A–C). It is a picture of a three-tiered reality. The upper luminescent level (A), consisting of days 1 and 4, can be considered transcendent, since it is beyond reach. The lower level (C), consisting of days 3 and 6, is literally mundane and immanent. The middle level (B), containing days 2 and 5, demonstrates two different middles, a separator and a connector. Day 2 is described by the text as a separator between above and below, while the creative activities of day 5 connect above and below. The rows weave a philosophical picture of

22. See, for example, Midrash Genesis Rabbah 11:9; Umberto Cassuto, *A Commentary on the Book of Genesis* (Jerusalem: Magnes, 1996), 7.

reality based on three visual levels: above, middle, and below, which can be interpreted as transcendent, immanent, and what is “between,” which both separates and connects. The vertical visual orientation with reference to what is above versus below verifies the proper arrangement of the days in the table. This visualization is directly parallel to the three-tiered holiness visualization of Unit I in Leviticus (see §3.1).

Each six-Unit ring of Leviticus can be read as an iteration of the six-day creation paradigm shown in figure 14. The two Unit-triads of each ring are like the columns of the creation paradigm, distinguished by a dyad similar to “one and many.” The three Units of the first Unit-triad in the ring are paired with the three Units of the second Unit-triad of the ring in a structure similar to the three-tiered hierarchy of the creation paradigm and Unit I (Lev 1–3). However, there is a significant difference. The two triads of the creation paradigm are direct parallels, following the same order, while the parallels in the rings are inverted, or chiasmic. The hierarchy in the rings can be seen in the focus, or orientation, of the Units. In each Unit-triad, one Unit is God-oriented, one people-oriented, and one “between” God and people. The following tables (figs. 15–17) will help to clarify these points vis-à-vis each ring.

Figure 15. The Creation Paradigm in the Outer Ring of Leviticus

Orientation of Paired Units	O₁ Particular The Sacrificial System at the Tent of Meeting	O₂ General Redemption In all of Canaan
God	I 1–3 “for the Lord” (21x) Freewill Offerings	XXII 27 “for the Lord” (16x) Monetizing Offerings and Obligations
Between God and People	II 4–5 Individual Guilt	XXI 26 National Guilt
People	III 6–7 Priestly Prebends Divine Gifts to Individuals “I have assigned it as their portion from my food gifts” (6:10)	XX 25 Jubilee Divine Gifts to the Nation “for the land is mine” (25:23) “For they are my slaves” (25:42)

The order of the Units in O_2 in the above table has been reversed in order to clarify the chiasmic parallels with O_1 . The hierarchy of the creation paradigm can be seen reflected in the orientation of the Units. Units I and XXII are God-oriented; “for the Lord” appears over thirty times in them. Units III and XX are people-oriented, containing the Lord’s gifts to people. The middles, II and XXI, indicate interaction between people and God through the theme of guilt and expiation. The “one and many” dyad of the creation paradigm columns finds expression in several ways. Units II and XXI are distinguished by the audience addressed in each: II speaks to individuals concerning personal guilt, and XXI addresses the whole nation concerning national guilt. The distinction between individual and communal concerns holds for the other pairs as well. Unit III contains God’s gifts to individuals, the officiating priests, while XX contains his gifts to the whole people. Unit I deals with an individual’s freewill offering at the altar, while XXII is concerned with all the types of offerings that can be monetized and are not localized at the altar.

The creation paradigm helps to explain the inner arrangements of rings M and I as well. These two rings also have additional characteristics that link them together. The God-oriented Units in M and I all contain deaths or warnings of death. The people-oriented Units all contain generation of life: intercourse or birth. These points are illustrated in the following tables (figs. 16 and 17).

Figure 16. The Creation Paradigm in the Middle Ring of Leviticus

Orientation of Paired Units	M_1 Individual/Unique	M_2 Communal/Cyclical
God	IV 8–10 Inauguration of the Cult and Death by Divine Initiative	XIX 24 Rituals of the Menorah and the Table Bread and Death by Divine Initiative
Between God and People	V 11 Diet Laws/Ritual Impurity from Animals	XVIII 23 The Holiday Calendar
People	VI 12 Childbirth	XVII 22:26–33 Animal Birth

The God-oriented Units of M reflect the “one and many” dyad by means of the rituals described in them. Unit IV describes a one-time event, and XIX prescribes a daily and a weekly ritual. Both Units contain narratives that tell of death by divine initiative. The people-oriented Units refer to births: childbirth in VI and animal birth in XVII. Unit VI addresses individuals, and XVII addresses the whole community. The poles of “birth” and “death” contribute to a “transitions” theme in M, which is appropriate for its placement between the outside and the inside.

Figure 17. The Creation Paradigm in the Inner Ring of Leviticus

Orientation of Paired Units	I ₁ Individuals	I ₂ Group
God	X 16 Day of Purgation “... lest he die” (16:2)	XVI 22:1–25 Sanctified Objects “... and they die thereby” (22:9)
Between God and People	XI 17 Private Slaughtering for Offering or Food “that person shall be cut off from his kinspeople” (17:9)	XV 21 The Priestly Family
People	XII 18 Illicit Sexual Practices	XIV 20 Penalties Enforced for Illicit Sexual Practices

The death theme of the God-oriented Units in M continues in the parallel Units of ring I with death warnings in X and XVI. These two Units reflect the “one and many” dyad because X is addressed to a single priest, Aaron, and XVI is addressed to all priests. Units XII and XIV are people-oriented, listing various sexual relations, and can be viewed as parallel to the birth Units of ring M. Unit XII lists prohibited practices from the perspective of individuals; XIV lists penalties to be enforced by the community.

To summarize the connection between Leviticus and the creation paradigm: all the Unit-triads in all three rings contain a God-oriented Unit, a people-oriented Unit, and a middle Unit, thus fulfilling the hierarchical aspect of the creation paradigm and Unit I (Lev 1–3). The “one and many” aspect of the paradigm is fulfilled through the distinctions between the

first Unit-triad of each ring focusing on the “one” and the second Unit-triad focusing on the “many.” Finally, the anomalous Unit in each ring is parallel to an anomalous day in creation. The anomalous Unit is the second one in each ring. Similarly, the creation of the second day, the divider, is the only one not seen by God as “good” or “very good.”

7. Significance of the Structure of Leviticus

7.1. The Multidimensional Plan

We have found that each Unit in Leviticus is a function of at least three organizing principles: (1) one and many, like the creation dyad; (2) hierarchical orientation, also like the creation; and (3) the ring identifier. The following table (fig. 18) illustrates this point.

Figure 18. The Three Dimensions of the Units in Leviticus

1. Creation Dyad		One				Many		
2. Ring Identifier		Place O ₁	Time M ₁	Person I ₁	Fulcrum	Person I ₂	Time M ₂	Place O ₂
3. Hierarchical Orientation	God	I 1-3	IV 8-10	X 16	XIII 19	XVI 22:1-25	XIX 24	XXII 27
	God and People	II 4-5	V 11	XI 17		XV 21	XVIII 23	XXI 26
	People	III 6-7	VI 12	XII 18		XIV 20	XVII 22:26-33	XX 25

The table above can be viewed as the general outline of how Leviticus was composed as a book, the loom upon which it was woven. It graphically demonstrates that each individual Unit is the unique combination of three planning “dimensions.” For example, Unit IV combines (1) “one” from the “one/many” dyad; (2) “time” from the ring identifier (see §5.3); and (3) “God-oriented” from the hierarchical orientation. No other Unit has exactly this combination of planning characteristics. For greater clarity, I have left out some of the characteristics of the text, such as I, IV, and X being associated with parts of the tabernacle and II, V and X being anomalous vis-à-vis the ring identifiers. It is clear that the author was required to juggle many variables when constructing the Units. It is equally clear that completion of such a complex plan cannot be attributed to a process of redaction or accretion.

In order to see how many variables are involved, it is also necessary to take into account the inner structure of each Unit. The Units of Leviticus, like all the Units of the Torah, were constructed as tables. So, any given “prime pericope” within a Unit has at least five contextual “dimensions” determining its content: (1) its row within the Unit, (2) its column within the Unit, (3–5) the three dimensions of the Unit itself within the book as they appear in figure 18. The other side of this observation is that each dimension creates a context. Therefore, a reader must understand that any given element of text may “make sense” within any one of at least five different levels of context employed in the book.

7.2. An Analogical Reading

Returning to the connection between the rings and the parts of the tabernacle, it is now possible to add another bit of evidence that the form of the book reflects the structure of the tabernacle. Rings M and I are closely connected by the generation/death theme. The parts of the tabernacle with which they are associated by the first Unit of each ring, the sanctum and the inner sanctum, are chambers within the tent. The outer ring, O, representing the court, does not have as close a connection to M as M does with I. So it is virtually certain that the structure of Leviticus is related to the structure of the tabernacle, as well as to the creation paradigm. Before attempting to construct a theoretical model to explain why Leviticus has been constructed in this manner, it is still necessary to address the function of Unit-triad C, consisting of Units VII–IX (Lev 13–15), and also the function of Unit XIII (Lev 19).

If ring I is associated with the inner sanctum, then Unit XIII (Lev 19), which is enclosed by I, could represent the ark of the covenant. God revealed himself to Moses between the cherubim on the ark, and XIII contains sixteen first-person revelations in the form of “I am YHWH” (e.g., 19:2, 3, 4, 10). It also contains both direct and oblique references to the Decalogue within it (e.g., 19:3, 11). In addition, as I have demonstrated, it contains a structural decalogue in two columns, perhaps representing the two tablets of the Decalogue.²³ The two-column, five-pair structure of XIII should be understood as two “tablets,” one “personal” and the other “communal.” This is a perfect fit with the reading of the book, according to

23. Kline, “The Editor Was Nodding,” 22–28.

which the chapters before this point (Lev 1–18) are oriented to individuals and the chapters following it (Lev 20–27) are oriented toward the community. Unit XIII is the meeting point of these two themes, containing both of them in two columns that are analogous to the two tablets of the covenant between the “One” and the “many.”

The opening command of Unit XIII calls for *imitatio Dei*, “You shall be holy for I the Lord your God am holy” (19:2). It is not addressed to the high priest or the priests in general but rather to “all the community of Israelites.” This provides a key to the model that can explain the structure of Leviticus: the book is not figurative, as Douglas proposed, but rather experiential. The reader is invited to share the experience of the high priest. The two halves of the book, before XIII (Lev 19) and after it, represent two paths, inner and outer. The inner path is a process of individualization. The high priest/reader leaves the community in the court in order to turn inward and follow the path that leads to standing alone before God in the inner sanctum and ultimately to experience the *imitatio*. The result of this experience is that the high priest/reader turns around and returns to the community, following the outer path of socialization. This is why the focus changes from “one” to “many” after XIII. It seems that the essence of the *imitatio* experience is to turn the individual toward the community left behind in the court.²⁴

If the analysis is correct up to this point, then one of the author’s purposes in composing the book can be understood as creating an experience for the reader that bears a resemblance to the experience of the high priest on the Day of Atonement. This would imply that the author was in possession of a way to re-create the highest order of religious experience and that this was somehow embedded in the book. Leviticus could then be viewed as a manual for arriving at this experience. While the tabernacle experi-

24. The return to the community is intriguingly similar to the enlightened philosopher’s return to the cave in Plato’s allegory in his *Republic* (514a–520a). The philosopher who has ascended from the cave to see the “good,” the perfection of the individual, returns to the cave for the benefit of those left in the dark and becomes a leader. The high priest/reader who reaches the level of *imitatio* in the holy of holies turns from the path focused on the individual “good” in the first half of Leviticus to identify with the good of the community in the second half. The similarities and dissimilarities between Plato’s philosopher, who must go *out* for enlightenment, and the high priest/reader of Leviticus, who goes *in* for *imitatio Dei*, warrant further exploration.

ence of entering the inner sanctum was limited to one person on one day in the year, Leviticus offers a similar experience to all, at any time.

7.3. The Function of Unit-Triad C: Units VII–IX (Lev 13–15)

The interpretation of Leviticus just expressed is supported by the reintroduction of the Units that I removed in order to clarify the symmetry of the rings. In order to enter the inner sanctum, the high priest/reader must move aside the screen that hides it (cf. Lev 16:2, 12), represented by Unit-triad C, VII–IX (Lev 13–15). This unit deals with impurities that are forbidden in the holy precincts. Not only do these impurities disguise the symmetry of Leviticus; they also demand that the reader recognize the literary device and remove the screen, Units VII–IX, in order to experience the reading of Leviticus as a replication of the experience of the high priest. The activation of the reader to interact with the text is evidently correlative with entry into the mystery of the inner sanctum. According to this reading, the function of the structure of Leviticus is to transform the reader by turning him or her from personal concerns to social concerns, such as from the personal guilt of Unit II to the national guilt of Unit XXI.

8. Leviticus in Relation to Other Books of the Torah

As noted at the beginning of this essay, the discovery of the two-dimensional Units of the Torah has made it possible to identify the structures of all five books. Therefore, the analysis of the structure of Leviticus presented here is only the beginning of a much larger project that must deal with the whole of the Torah and perhaps other parts of the Bible, as well as other ancient Near Eastern literary works, in light of the findings presented here. This section is intended to indicate directions that future research might follow.

8.1. The Structure of Genesis in Relation to that of Leviticus

While Gary A. Rendsburg attempted to define the full literary structure of Genesis, the deficiencies of his analysis were amply detailed by Mark Brettler.²⁵ From the perspective of the research reported in this essay, Rends-

25. See Gary A. Rendsburg, *The Redaction of Genesis* (Winona Lake, IN: Eisen-

burg's reading suffered from an incorrect identification of the literary units employed in creating the structure. The literary units of Genesis, as well as the other books of the Torah, are similar to those of Leviticus in that they are nonlinear, two-dimensional constructs. Once they are identified, it becomes apparent that the structure of Genesis, like that of Leviticus, is based on Unit-triads, as indicated in figure 19 below (p. 258).

Genesis contains nineteen Units divided into four large blocks, marked A–D, and a single Unit, IV (11:1–9). Block A, the creation narratives, contains three Units, each of which has the root ברא ("create") in its opening verse. The remaining three blocks, B–D are the patriarchal narratives: Abraham (B), Isaac–Jacob (C), and Joseph (D). All three share certain characteristics that mark them as planned blocks. Each begins with two "generations of": Shem and Terah (B), Ishmael and Isaac (C), and Esau and Jacob (D). Each block also ends with two deaths and burials in Hebron: Unit X—23:19; 25:9; Unit XVI—35:19, 29; Unit XIX—50:13, 26. However, they do differ in size. The Joseph narrative (D) has three Units, while the other two (B and C) have six Units each. This creates an almost symmetrical structure consisting of three Units in the opening and closing blocks (A and D) and six Units in each of the two middle blocks (B and C).

The two six-Unit blocks have been constructed in a similar manner. Each of them consists of two alternating threads of material. One thread is concerned with family members and the other with covenants and altars. These two themes have been separated in B as B₁ (covenants) and B₂ (family) and in C as C₁ (family) and C₂ (covenants). Regarding these themes, the blocks are mirror images. The family thread is second in B and first in C. The effect of this reversal is to place the family at the center of the book. Leviticus was also designed to have family material in two central blocks of three Units each, the inner ring (see §5.3). The distinction between family material and covenantal material also holds for Unit-triads A and D in Genesis. D, the Joseph narrative, is quintessential family material, while A contains altars and a covenant.

There are thus two strong indications that Genesis and Leviticus have been constructed according to the same, or at least similar, schematic plan. The structure of both books consists of six Unit-triads. While the

brauns, 1986); Mark Brettler, "Rendsburg's *The Redaction of Genesis*," *JQR* 78 (1987): 113–19.

Figure 19: The Structure of Genesis

	A Creation Narratives		B Abraham Narrative		C Isaac-Jacob Narrative		D Joseph Narrative
			B ₁ Covenants (With God and Abimelech) and Altars	B ₂ Brothers' Children (Lot and Rebekah)	C ₁ Brothers (Jacob and Esau)	C ₂ Covenants (With God and Abimelech) and Altars	
1	I 1:1-2:3 "God created" (1:1 NRSV)		V 11:10-13:4	VI 13:5-14:24	XI 25:12-34 <i>Generations of Ishmael and Isaac</i>	XII 26:1-33	XVII 36:1-41:45 <i>Generations of Esau and Jacob</i>
2	II 2:4-4:26 "... when they were created" (2:4 NRSV)	IV 11:1-9 The Tower of Babel	VII 15:1-17:27	VIII 18:1-19:38	XIII 26:34-28:9	XIV 28:10-32:3	XVIII 41:46-47:26
3	III 5:1-10:32 "on the day God created humankind" (5:1 NRSV)		IX 20:1-22:19	X 22:20-25:11 Deaths of Sarah and Abraham	XV 32:4-33:16	XVI 33:17-35:29 Deaths of Rachel and Isaac	XIX 47:27-50:26 Deaths of Jacob and Joseph

two inner rings of Leviticus are closely tied together by the intercourse/birth and death-warning/death pairings between the rings, Genesis intertwines two subject threads—covenants and family—to achieve the same structural effect. Both books have two interlocking six-Unit rings that are bookended by a pair of triads. Both books have family-related material in the middle.

Reading Genesis according to its structure, in light of the above analysis of Leviticus, may offer solutions to some of the thornier problems of Genesis, such as the differences between the creation narratives and the uses of different divine names. Genesis, like Leviticus, is constructed from Unit-triads. Rather than two types of creation, the text actually presents three types in Units I–III (see fig. 19). Each begins with a verse that includes **ברא** (“create”), indicating that the author considered them to be linked creation narratives. The first, Unit I, is based entirely on divine action. The third, Unit III, which includes an introduction to the Noah narrative, is a form of “creation by elimination” and is predicated on human actions. It begins with the heading, “This is a book of human accounts.” The second creation narrative, Unit II, includes both divine initiation, as in the first narrative, as well as divine response to human actions, as in the third narrative. The heading, “These are accounts of heaven and earth,” points to the fact that it mixes divine and human initiatives. The same tripartite paradigm that explained the form of the Unit-triads in Leviticus can be applied to the three creation narratives. One is God oriented (I); one is people oriented—**ספר תולדות אדם**, “a book of human accounts” (III); and one contains interaction between God and people—**תולדות השמים והארץ**, “accounts of heaven and earth” (II).

Regarding the divine names, it is necessary to consider the division of figure 19 into rows 1–3. All of the Units in row 1 contain a single divine name. In Unit I, it is **אלהים**. In the five other Units of row 1—V, VI, XI, XII, XVII—only the name YHWH is used. Since the Babel story and Jacob’s vision place YHWH “above,” as in these five Units, it would appear that the visual component of the table reflects embedded meaning. YHWH alone is above in V, VI, XI, XII and XVII in the upper row. Similarly, the three creation narratives reflect a visual component according to the arrangement of the rows. The purely divine, “heavenly” (I) is above in row 1, the human-based, earthly (III) is below in row 3, and the narrative that combines “accounts of heaven and earth” (II) is in the middle in row 2.

8.2. The Context of Leviticus in the Torah

Hendrik Koorevaar has argued that the books of Exodus, Leviticus, and Numbers should be viewed as a single composition.²⁶ The three-ring structure of Leviticus supports this view. Exodus and Numbers can be seen as forming two additional rings surrounding Leviticus, as shown in figure 20 (p. 261).

This table shows that Leviticus is surrounded by two concentric narratives: (1) the forty-year historical narrative, and (2) the tabernacle narrative. The historical narrative, from the redemption in Egypt to the border of Canaan, begins in Exod 1 and is suspended at the end of Exod 27. It is taken up again at Num 10:11. The tabernacle narrative is placed within the historical narrative, starting with Exod 28 and ending with Num 10:10. Leviticus continues the concentric arrangement with its three rings focused on Lev 19. Thus, it appears that the structure of Leviticus is part of a larger plan that includes Exodus and Numbers.

Let us consider the possibility that the author has planned the format of the three central books of the Torah to simulate the structure of the camp described in the first chapters of Numbers: the Israelite camp surrounds the Levitical camp that surrounds the tabernacle (Num 1:43; 2:2). The historical narrative of Exodus and Numbers can be considered parallel to the outer Israelite camp and the tabernacle narrative parallel to the Levitical camp within the Israelite camp. Identifying the ring describing the construction and maintenance of the tabernacle with the Levites would be appropriate, since they assembled and maintained the tabernacle (Num 4:1–33). So the three central books of the Torah, organized as five concentric rings, reflect the structure of the Israelite camp during the forty-year journey described in these three books. Exodus, Leviticus, and Numbers contain the central “story” of the Torah: the redemption from Egypt that leads to an independent Israelite nation in Canaan. It is a forty-year educational process that takes a group of slaves and turns them into an organized society. The large picture shows creation of a nation from individuals. This theme is consistent with the experiential reading of Leviticus, which involves creating social consciousness. Just as the forty-year trek in the desert served to transform the group of slaves into a social and politi-

26. Hendrik Koorevaar, “The Books of Exodus–Leviticus–Numbers and the Macro-structural Problem of the Pentateuch,” in *The Books of Leviticus and Numbers*, ed. Thomas Römer, BETL 215 (Leuven: Peeters, 2008), 423–53.

Figure 20. The Five Concentric Rings of Exodus, Leviticus, and Numbers

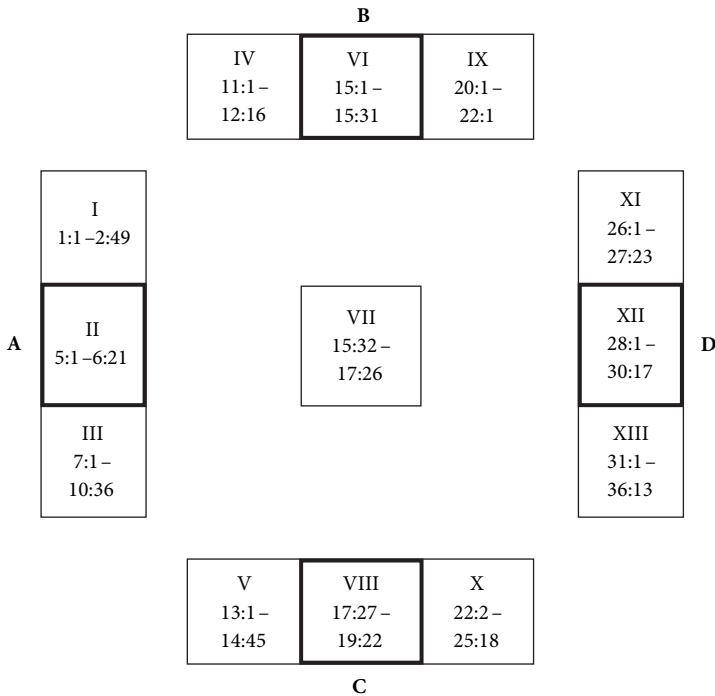
Characteristic of Ring										
1. History	Exod 1-24									Num 10:11-36
2. Tabernacle		Exod 25-40								Num 1-10:10
3. Place			O ₁							O ₂
4. Time				M ₁						M ₂
5. Person					I ₁					I ₂
	Fulcrum/imitatio Dei									
						Lev 19				

cal body, so, too, can the reading of these books transform the reader from self-concerned to community-oriented.

8.3. The Structure of Numbers in Relation to that of Leviticus

The educational process spread across the three central books of the Torah crystallizes in the structure of Leviticus with the shift from laws addressed to individuals to those addressed to a community. The pivot point in Leviticus is Unit XIII (Lev 19). The demands of *imitatio Dei* coalesce the individuals who left Egypt into a political body capable of displacing the residents of Canaan. This theme is captured in the structure of Numbers, which is modeled on the structure of the Israelite camp in the wilderness.

Figure 21. The Structure of Numbers



The format of Numbers is the most ambitious of all the five books in its complexity. It seems that the author wanted to create an image of the twelve tribes camped in the desert around the Levitical camp, represented by Unit VII. The challenge was to create a four-sided literary figure that

would reflect the four sides of the camp, A–D in the illustration above. The solution to this problem was the employment of “flags.” In the description of the camp in Numbers, each side contains three tribes (2:1–31). Here the central tribe of the three is described as the “flag” tribe, which is flanked by the other two. The four “flag tribes” in the table are II, VI, VIII, and XII. Each of these Units consists entirely of laws without narrative, while none of the others Units do. The purely legal Units are the “flags.” The way the author solved the problem of how to flag the sides of the camp created a problem of comprehension for readers who read the book linearly, without an understanding of the underlying structure. For them, it reads like a haphazard arrangement of narrative and laws.²⁷

At the center of the “camp,” Unit VII contains the Korah narrative, a dispute over divine election to serve in the sanctuary. Korah disputed the election of Aaron and his sons from among the Levites to preside over the tabernacle and its services. In other words, the dispute was about who would stand at the focal point of the camp. Ultimately, God signals Aaron’s election with the sprouting of his staff inside the tabernacle before the ark of testimony. This places the sanctuary, and with it the divine presence, at the center of the structure of Numbers.²⁸ The Korah narrative is preceded by a law that seems out of place: the requirement to place colored fringes on the four sides of garments (15:37–41). I see this law as reflecting the structure of the book. The four flags placed on the sides of the camp with the flag tribes are parallel to the fringes placed on the four sides of garments. This analogy is supported by the reason given for wearing the colored fringe: “So that you will be mindful of my commandments, and you shall be holy to your God” (15:40). The laws of Numbers, of which they are to be mindful, are found in the “flag” Units analogous to the fringes. According to this analogy, the Israelite camp is to be viewed as God’s garment. Thus, wearing the fringes is another instance of *imitatio Dei*; here also, as in Leviticus, it is associated with the requirement to be holy. Structure is theology.

27. “Julius Wellhausen regarded the book of Numbers as a kind of attic used for storing biblical materials that did not fit into other books” (Mary Douglas, *Thinking in Circles: An Essay on Ring Composition*, Terry Lectures Series [New Haven: Yale, 2007], 43).

28. “And the Lord’s glory appeared to all the community” (16:19).

9. Conclusion

The Torah is composed of nonlinear, two-dimensional literary Units that can be viewed as tabular, or woven. The identification of these building blocks has made it possible to identify the compositional structure of Leviticus. I have presented examples of Units, a detailed reading of Leviticus according to its three-concentric-ring structure, and a comparison between this structure and that of Genesis. Thematically, I have suggested that the structure of Leviticus leads to an experiential reading that consists of a two-step process of individualization and socialization pivoting on a core experience of *imitatio Dei*. The structural context of Leviticus, within two concentric rings created by Exodus and Numbers, indicates that the three central books of the Torah were constructed as five concentric rings, as shown in figure 20, reflecting the structure of the Israelite encampment in the desert. The historical narrative in the first half of Exodus, which is resumed in Num 10:11, parallels the Israelite camp; the second half of Exodus and Num 1:1–10:10 represent the Levitical camp; and the three concentric rings of Leviticus represent the court, the sanctum, and the inner sanctum. This structure is reinforced by the structure of the book of Numbers, which itself is formatted to reflect the structure of the camp.

In his discussion of R. Norman Whybray's *The Making of the Pentateuch*,²⁹ Gordon J. Wenham observed, "though I think this model for the composition of the Pentateuch is essentially correct, *i.e.* that of one major author using a variety of sources, he has not demonstrated this by giving detailed attention to the texts."³⁰ In the present essay, the detailed analysis of Leviticus (and also of Genesis and Numbers, to some extent) gives credence to the view that the Torah was composed by "one major author." This essay also resoundingly affirms Milgrom's assertion that "structure is theology."³¹

29. R. Norman Whybray, *The Making of the Pentateuch: A Methodological Study*, JSOTSup 53 (Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1987).

30. Gordon J. Wenham, "Pentateuchal Studies Today," *Themelios* 22 (1996): 8.

31. Milgrom, *Leviticus 23–27*, 2129–30.