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THE BOOK OF LEVITICUS

COMPOSITION AND RECEPTION

EDITED BY

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THE RHETORIC OF RITUAL INSTRUCTION IN LEVITICUS 1-7

JAMES W. WATTS

Formal and structural features of Leviticus 1-7 distinguish these chapters as some of the most systematic texts in the Hebrew Bible. In a collection of literature otherwise noted for its sweeping narratives and urgent sermons, these methodical instructions for the performance of five kinds of offerings, presented twice in different arrangements, have suggested to many interpreters that they preserve examples of an ancient genre of ritual instruction. However, the identification of a ritual genre in these chapters (and elsewhere in the Pentateuch) has failed to account for all the features of this material. The present form of Leviticus 1-7 can be better understood as a product of the same process of generic mixture and allusion apparent in many other biblical texts.

I have argued elsewhere that the large-scale structure of the Pentateuch and several of its constituent parts has been shaped by a rhetorical strategy that combines diverse materials for persuasive effect. Thus the narratives of Genesis and Exodus ground the authority of the divine law-giver on the basis of past acts of creation, blessing and salvation, the laws and instructions of Exodus, Leviticus, and Numbers stipulate behavior in the present, while the blessings and curses that conclude Leviticus and Deuteronomy, and which in the larger context characterize Deuteronomy as a whole, depict the possible futures determined by Israel's response to the laws. This story-list-sanction pattern can be recognized in some other ancient Near Eastern texts of various types, and reflects a strategy employed in various literary genres to increase their persuasive impact. Thus the macro-structure of the Pentateuch seems designed to maximize its persuasive impact on ancient Jews who read it or, more likely, heard it read.¹

¹ J. W. Watts, *Reading Law: The Rhetorical Shaping of the Pentateuch* (Biblical Seminar 59; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1999).

Persuasion has been a traditional subject of rhetoric, its theories and its modes of analysis.² Though rhetoric has come to be associated in biblical studies with purely literary analysis of structure and style, ancient and modern rhetoric has usually addressed such issues from the larger perspective of argumentation, asking how speakers and writers influence their listeners and readers. Literary study then becomes more than an analysis of the text itself; it aims to understand texts as transactions between authors and audiences.³ Rhetoric therefore calls attention to both the literary features of a text and the real writers and readers whose ideas motivated its formation. When biblical texts give overt indications of being formulated for persuasive purposes, and most do, rhetorical analysis provides the means for bringing together critical observations from both historical and literary studies to explain their form and function.

Leviticus 1-7 furthers the Pentateuch's persuasive agenda and was designed for that purpose. Of course, these chapters also instruct, but instruction frequently involves persuasion as well. Leviticus 1-7 has been shaped not only to instruct worshipers and priests how to perform various offerings, but also to persuade them to do exactly as these texts stipulate and to accept these texts as the ultimate authority for such ritual performances.⁴ To demonstrate these claims regarding the form and function of Leviticus 1-7, I will first argue that previous efforts to describe their form and function on the basis of genre have not accounted for the text as it appears in the Hebrew Bible. I will then compare the rhetorical features of these chapters

² For a survey and discussion of the history of rhetoric in terms of persuasion, see K. Burke, *A Rhetoric of Motives* (Berkeley: University of California, 1950) 49-55, 61-62.

³ See D. Patrick and A. Scult, *Rhetoric and Biblical Interpretation* (JSOTSup 82; Sheffield: Almond, 1990), esp. p. 12.

⁴ More than a decade ago, Baruch J. Schwartz argued similarly for the persuasive formulation of biblical law: "The 'laws' in the Torah form part of a story, according to which they were spoken in order to be proclaimed, they were to be proclaimed in order to convince, they were to convince in order to be observed, and they were to be observed in fulfillment of the Sinai covenant . . . the laws, as well as the story in which they are contained, were composed in order to be read publicly and understood, to have a lasting, pedagogical, persuasive influence on later generations of listeners" ("The Prohibitions Concerning the 'Eating' of Blood in Leviticus 17," in G. A. Anderson and S. M. Olyan [eds.], *Priesthood and Cult in Ancient Israel* [JSOTSup 125; Sheffield: JSOT, 1991] 35 [34-66]; idem, *Selected Chapters of the Holiness Code—A Literary Study of Leviticus 17-19* [Hebrew] [Ph.D. Dissertation, Hebrew University of Jerusalem, 1987], 1-24).

with other ancient Near Eastern texts dealing with rituals, to lay the basis for describing their rhetorical function in the context of Leviticus and the Pentateuch as a whole.

The Search for Ritual Genres

In twentieth-century criticism, the genre of ritual instructions has been analyzed from two different directions: form-critical reconstruction of its oral form and comparative analysis of its ancient parallels. Each approach, however, produced a reconstructed genre quite different from the texts of Leviticus 1-7. The latter was then presumed to have been modified in distinctive ways to fit new social or literary contexts. Reviewing these theories will illustrate the difficulties that genre analysis encounters in Leviticus 1-7.

Interpreters in the mid-twentieth century mounted a major effort to isolate and analyze the forms of oral priestly teaching and categorize them by genre.⁵ This movement found its fullest and most direct application to Leviticus 1-7 in Rolf Rendtorff's monograph, *Die Gesetze in der Priesterschrift* (1954).⁶ Rendtorff isolated in chapters 1 and 3 a genre of short instructions for the performance of offerings that he labeled "ritual." It is characterized by stereotypical short verbal sentences formulated in impersonal perfect verbs except for an introductory imperfect, and by concluding formulas.⁷ Chapters 2, 4 and 5 reflect this form to a lesser extent, so Rendtorff concluded that this material originally took other forms that were secondarily adapted to the "ritual" pattern. Chapters 6-7 do not reflect this form or any other, and probably had a scribal origin.⁸ Klaus Koch built on Rendtorff's analysis, but defined the ritual genre on the basis of sequences of converted perfect verbs alone, which allowed him to find it in more texts in Leviticus 1-7 and in Exodus 25-40.⁹ Rendtorff

⁵ E.g. J. Begriff, *Die priesterliche Tora* (BZAW 66; Berlin: De Gruyter, 1936); G. von Rad, *Deuteronomium-Studien* (rev. ed.; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1948), translated by D. Stalker as *Studies in Deuteronomy* (SBT 9; London: SCM, 1953).

⁶ R. Rendtorff, *Die Gesetze in der Priesterschrift: eine gattungsgeschichtliche Untersuchung* (FRLANT 44; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1954).

⁷ *Ibid.*, 12.

⁸ *Ibid.*, 14, 19, 20, 33-34.

⁹ K. Koch, *Die Priesterschrift von Exodus 25 bis Leviticus 16: eine überlieferungsgeschichtliche und literarkritische Untersuchung* (FRLANT 53; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1959) 46-76.

admitted that it is difficult to reconstruct the original setting of the "ritual" genre, because its social context is not reflected in Leviticus 1-7 or almost anywhere else in the Hebrew Bible. He suggested, however, that the strict stylization and stereotypical repetition notable in chapters 1 and 3 suggest that they were intended for oral recitation, perhaps as sentences spoken to accompany offerings.¹⁰

Two difficulties hindered this form-critical attempt to establish the genre of these ritual texts. First, it was not able to establish convincing evidence for the original settings in which ritual genres of instruction developed.¹¹ Rendtorff himself has since backed away from any attempt to identify these original settings, preferring to speak of a "ritual style" rather than an oral genre.¹² Second, the observation that much of this material stemmed from editorial modifications of the hypothetical original genres raised the question of whether there ever was an oral tradition behind these edited texts. Rolf Knierim dismissed the case for a ritual genre because it did not account for the form of the present text. He argued that the casuistic ("if... then...") formulation of Lev 1:2b-9 must be taken seriously for genre analysis, in which case the material can only be classified as case law.¹³ Casuistic law is a scribal genre, so there was never an oral form of this material.¹⁴ Yet Knierim, like Rendtorff and Koch, abstracted the material's genre out of the context in God's instructions through Moses (vv. 1-2a). He justified doing so by arguing that, though case-law can be used for didactic purposes, that use does not explain why the material was formulated this way.¹⁵ However, his grounds for this conclusion, that the material's impersonal style does not fit instruction, remained purely impressionistic. Thus Knierim's modification of the form-critical project by focusing on the extant text and on scribal genres still abstracted the text's genre from its role in its literary context. As such, it did not contribute much towards explaining why the text was chosen or written to function within the book of Leviticus as it stands.

¹⁰ Rendtorff, *Gesetze*, 22-23.

¹¹ See the critique of K. Elliger, *Leviticus* (HAT 4; Tübingen: J. C. B. Mohr [Paul Siebeck], 1966) 30-31.

¹² See his *Leviticus* (BKAT 3/1; Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchener Verlag, 1985) 18-19.

¹³ R. P. Knierim, *Text and Concept in Leviticus 1:1-9: A Case in Exegetical Method* (FAT 2; Tübingen: J. C. B. Mohr [Paul Siebeck], 1992) 10, 65, 95.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 103.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 7, 98-100, 106.

The second approach to ritual genre has emphasized scribal practices from the start. Comparative studies of ancient ritual texts have sought to explain the material's form and arrangement through a scenario of textual development. In a series of articles, Baruch Levine has argued that ancient ritual texts began as archival records of offerings. Out of these records the genre of "descriptive ritual" developed, composed of texts that record in indicative verbs the performance of liturgies and rites. Such descriptive rituals appear in Akkadian, Hittite and Ugaritic sources, and probably served as instructions for priests and other liturgical actors. Only much later, however, did such texts get recast in a more hortatory form as prescriptive rituals to reflect their didactic role.¹⁶ In the Hebrew Bible, Levine focused his attention on texts such as Exodus 35-39, Leviticus 8-9, and Num 7:10-88, that describe past ritual events rather than prescribing future ritual actions. His analysis suggested that passages such as Leviticus 1-7 stand at the end of a long process of textual development from temple archive through descriptive rituals to prescriptive rituals.

Levine's isolation of the descriptive ritual genre depended on a survey of texts from a wide variety of cultures, which is both his theory's strength and its weakness. The number of texts strengthens the argument that this form reflects a genre, that is, a recognizable group of literary conventions governing the text's form and contents. The label "descriptive," however, depends on interpreting verbal forms as indicatives that can and have been read otherwise. Some of Levine's Ugaritic examples in particular have been interpreted as prescriptive rituals, despite his arguments to the contrary.¹⁷ The comparative evidence allowed Levine to point to specific examples of each stage of development, which otherwise would be lacking in the

¹⁶ B. A. Levine, "Ugaritic Descriptive Rituals," *JCS* 17 (1963) 105-11; *idem*, "The Descriptive Tabernacle Texts of the Pentateuch," *JAOS* 85 (1965) 307-318; *idem*, "The Descriptive Ritual Texts from Ugarit: Some Formal and Functional Features of the Genre," in C. L. Meyers and M. O'Connor (eds.), *The Word of the Lord Shall Go Forth: Essays in Honor of David Noel Freedman* (Winona Lake: Eisenbrauns, 1983) 467-75; *idem*, *Numbers 1-20* (AB 4; Garden City: Doubleday, 1993) 81-82; *idem*, with W. W. Hallo, "Offerings to the Temple Gates at Ur," *HUCA* 38 (1967) 17-58; *idem*, with J.-M. de Tarragon, "The King Proclaims the Day: Ugaritic Rites for the Vintage (*KTU* 1.41//1.87)," *RB* 100 (1993) 76-115.

¹⁷ J. C. de Moor argued that "The ritual texts of Ugarit are usually of the prescriptive type, listing in a very terse style instructions for knowledgeable people, apparently priests" and translated them accordingly (*An Anthology of Religious Texts from Ugarit* [Nisaba 16; Leiden: Brill, 1987] 157).

biblical material. The Bible does not preserve any examples of the original archival form, which must be hypothesized on the basis of texts from other ancient cultures.¹⁸ Comparative analysis of ritual texts, however, has been able to find parallels for only some of the features of biblical prescriptive texts. It has so far been unable to present good parallels to the divine voicing and hortatory address of these ritual instructions, and has been forced to depend on hypothetical developments in the genre to account for them.¹⁹

Rendtorff, Koch, Knierim and Levine worked by identifying a genre that then became the basis for analyzing the text. Whether using inductive form-critical analysis or comparisons of ancient ritual texts, they attempted to explain the present text as derived from hypothetical oral or written antecedents described on the basis of genre. However, both the form-critical and comparative methods end up as analyses of ideal types rather than of actual biblical texts, because some features of the extant text do not conform to the proposed genres. Invariably they describe the present form of the biblical text as having undergone further textual development that differentiates it from the ritual genres they have described.

These approaches to biblical ritual texts use an overly strict understanding of genre. Even Knierim, who aimed to analyze genre within the present text rather than applying an *a priori* genre to the text, ended up doing so anyway because his conception of the case-law genre was too inflexible.²⁰ The Hebrew Bible demonstrates a flair for juxtaposing and mixing various genres (narrative, law, instruction, oracle, etc.) and modes (prose, poetry) of expression in the same compositions. Psalms and other poems appear in contexts of narra-

tive prose (Genesis 49, Exodus 15, 1 Samuel 2, etc.) and prophetic poetry (Habakkuk 3).²¹ Narrative always surrounds collections of laws in the Pentateuch. These are only some of the most obvious examples of juxtaposed genres in the Hebrew Bible, and they reflect practices also attested in other ancient Near Eastern literatures. Though some inset genres, such as psalmody, are well attested in independent compositions, others seem to conventionally appear as insets in other frameworks, ancient law collections being a notable example. Therefore the large-scale features of Hebrew and other ancient literatures should warn interpreters to expect the juxtaposition of genres and their literary conventions in many texts.

Genres are not immutable forms, but rather repertoires of literary conventions available to speakers and writers that allow them to play on the expectations of their audiences.²² Descriptions of genres are useful for describing the cultural expectations that readers and hearers have of texts. Such expectations come into play in the reading of any text and the hearing of any speech, regardless of how far that text or speech may deviate from conventional forms. Deviations from genre use these conventions no less than do rigid reproductions of a traditional form; they just aim for a different effect on their audience, as David Damrosch noted:

Genre is the narrative covenant between author and reader, the framework of norms and expectations shaping both the composition and the reception of the text. Genre is always a shaping force, though never a determining one in the case of truly creative work, and it can be studied in its uses, its adaptations, its transformations, and even its repressions, over the history of the composition and rewriting of biblical narrative.²³

¹⁸ "Except for brief descriptions of ritual acts in poetic passages ritual content in the Bible is always treated either as a divine command presented prescriptively, or as an event presented in narrative form" (Levine, "Descriptive Tabernacle Texts," 314).

¹⁹ I must note that Levine's goal in describing "descriptive rituals" was to establish a better basis for describing ancient cult practices; he argued that descriptive rituals are more reliable depictions of actual performances than are prescriptive texts that are frequently idealistic (Levine and Hallo, "Offerings to the Temple Gates," 17-18). Thus he isolated the genre for purposes of reconstructing the history of religion, not originally to explain the present form of biblical texts.

²⁰ Similarly E. Gerstenberger, who despite emphasizing the hortatory features of Leviticus, nevertheless regarded them as secondary, because "where in the world are legal books composed in direct, admonitory address?" (*Leviticus: A Commentary* [trans. D. W. Stott; OTL; Louisville: Westminster, 1996] 25). See, however, the examples of second person address cited below.

²¹ For analysis of these combinations, see J. W. Watts, *Psalm and Story: Inset Hymns in Hebrew Narrative* (JSOTSup 139; Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1992); idem, "Psalmody in Prophecy: Habakkuk 3 in Context," in J. W. Watts and P. R. House (eds.), *Forming Prophetic Literature: Essays on Isaiah and the Twelve in Honor of John D. W. Watts* (JSOTSup 235, Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1996) 209-23.

²² For a convenient survey of genre theory and its application to ancient texts, see T. Longman III, *Fictional Akkadian Autobiography: A Generic and Comparative Study* (Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 1991) 3-21. An ambitious attempt to write a genre history linking Mesopotamian and Hebrew literatures can be found in D. Damrosch, *The Narrative Covenant: Transformations of Genre in the Growth of Biblical Literature* (San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1987). I find Damrosch's understanding of genre and his comparative method very congenial, but am not convinced that Hebrew narrative developed out of epic (see my *Psalm and Story*, 194-96).

²³ Damrosch, *Narrative Covenant*, 2.

Genre identification depends on the comparison of large numbers of texts from the same literary culture. The lack of extant extra-biblical Hebrew literature from the centuries in which the biblical texts were composed greatly hampers the identification of genres, because of the small number of examples available. It is no accident, then, that the description of psalm genres rests on much firmer grounds, because of the larger number of examples, than does genre analysis of almost any other kind of Hebrew literature, and it is relatively easy to isolate a psalm within a larger work.²⁴ Detailed descriptions of rituals do not appear nearly as frequently in biblical literature, so describing their various genres and distinguishing them from their frameworks cannot proceed with the same confidence. However, even without knowing which forms were recognized as genres by ancient audiences and which represent creative modifications and amalgamations of diverse genre elements, one can still describe some of the effects that certain literary conventions were intended to have on their audiences by observing their use in other literatures. Such texts often state overtly some of the motives for their composition. Comparisons with other ancient literatures can therefore show how particular devices tended to be used, even if we cannot be sure whether they conventionally appeared together as part of a recognizable genre or not.²⁵ Description of the rhetorical effects produced by conventional features of the text will produce a better understanding of the extant text than will reconstructing some original genre within it.

Rhetorical Features of Leviticus 1–7

Both form-critical and comparative methods have found support from features of Leviticus 1–7 (and other collections of ritual instructions

²⁴ For the latter, see J. W. Watts, “‘This Song’: Conspicuous Poetry in Hebrew Prose,” in J. C. de Moor and W. G. E. Watson (eds.), *Verses in Ancient Near Eastern Prose* (AOAT 42; Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchener Verlag, 1993) 345–58; idem, “Psalmody in Prophecy,” 209–23.

²⁵ Koch reevaluated his earlier form-critical efforts on the basis of such comparisons (“Alttestamentliche und altorientalische Rituale,” in E. Blum et al. [eds.], *Die Hebräische Bibel und ihre zweifache Nachgeschichte: Festschrift für Rolf Rendtorff* [Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchener Verlag, 1990] 75–85). On the basis of Akkadian parallels, he produced a much more flexible definition of ritual genre to include casuistic structures and second person address, rather than just a sequence of perfect verbs. He considered these parallels to be confirmation of the existence of such an originally oral ritual genre. However, on the basis of this handful of texts, one cannot tell whether the ancients would have recognized this as a distinct genre or simply as a combination of conventions used to describe rituals in various genres.

in the Pentateuch); while various of its formal features suggest oral composition and delivery, its structure and contents remind one of ritual texts from ancient Near Eastern archives. However, the narrative framework that casts Leviticus 1–7 as divine prescriptions delivered through Israel’s paradigmatic law-giver, Moses, highlights the persuasive intent behind this text’s formulation as it stands.

The narrative frame depicts this material as oral instruction. Like all the other instructions and laws in the Pentateuch, these chapters portray themselves as speeches. God is the speaker, as in most of Exodus 20 through Numbers. The immediate audience is Moses, but he is told to repeat these instructions to the people of Israel (1:1; 4:2; 7:23, 29) or to the priests, Aaron and his sons (6:2, 18 [LXX vv. 9, 25]), who are all then the intended recipients within the story. Interpreters are no doubt correct in finding behind the rhetoric of this story the historical conditions and political hierarchies of early Second Temple Judaism, or late monarchic Judea at the earliest: God’s voice delivers the prescriptions of priestly and provincial (or royal) powers to Jews whom the Pentateuch repeatedly urges to identify themselves with Israel of the exodus and wilderness period (e.g. Exod 12:14–27; 13:3–16; 23:9; Lev 19:34; Deut 5:15; 29:14–16; etc.). Casting this material as oral instruction fits such later historical contexts just as well as the period of wilderness wandering depicted in the story, for the Hebrew Bible depicts *torah* even in these later periods being read aloud from written texts to large assemblies of people (2 Kgs 22–23; Nehemiah 8).²⁶ Thus the frequent mention of “you/your” in these chapters seems intended to reinforce in the intended audience the sense of authoritative instructions directed at them.²⁷

That does not mean they originated as oral compositions. Biblical narratives describe law *readings*, that is, secondary orality based on written texts (Exod 24:3–7; Deut 31:9–11; Josh 8:30–35; 2 Kgs 22–23//2 Chr 34; Nehemiah 8). The Sinai traditions themselves vacillate between depicting the original revelation of divine law as written on tablets (Exod 20:12; 31:18; 32:16; 34:1; Deut 5:22; 9:10) or as delivered orally to Moses who then wrote it down (Exod 20:4; Deut 31:9; 34:27–28). This reminder that the interaction between

²⁶ On public readings of law and their rhetorical significance, see Watts, *Reading Law*, 15–60.

²⁷ So rightly Gerstenberger (*Leviticus*, 26), though his arguments for placing this audience exclusively in the Persian-period diaspora are not convincing.

oral and written compositions ran in both directions should warn interpreters against too sharp a distinction between the modes of presentation. And of course, despite the formal features and explicit evocation of oral rhetoric, comparative analysis of oral origins is ultimately forced to depend on written texts, since that is all that survives, and is therefore limited to whatever oral forms the texts happen to preserve.

Increasing numbers of Ugaritic, Hittite, and Akkadian ritual texts (most recently, those from Emar) have been published and anthologized, providing an opportunity to place Leviticus' ritual instructions within a wider cultural context. Yet the prescriptive and hortatory cast of Leviticus 1–7, as well as most other biblical texts containing ritual instructions, does not allow one to simply include them within the same textual genre. Rather than limiting the comparison to texts of a predetermined genre, a comparison of Leviticus 1–7 with *any* ancient texts exhibiting similar features and contents will be more helpful for assessing its rhetorical effect. By not restricting comparisons in advance on the basis of genre, the whole range of literary conventions at work in these chapters can be assessed and their effects analyzed. I will discuss the major literary features of Leviticus 1–7, focusing first on the narrative framework (God tells Moses to tell Israel or the priests), and then turning to the form and style of the contents.

Framework

Leviticus 1:1–2 depicts the material that follows as quoted direct speech by God through Moses to people and priests, and similar introductions that appear with increasing frequency in these chapters (4:1; 5:14, 20; 6:1, 12, 17 [LXX vv. 8, 19, 24], 7:22, 28) keep drawing this scenario to readers' and hearers' attention. Comparative analysis suggests that they do so to increase the text's persuasiveness.

Divine voicing of laws and instructions is the norm in the Hebrew Bible, but rare in other ancient Near Eastern texts. There divine prescriptions appear most often in narratives, where deities are likely to issue orders to each other and humans. As one would expect, such commands tend to be occasional, limited to the situation depicted in the story, such as when Ea or YHWH orders Utnapishtim or Noah to build a boat (Gilgamesh xi; Gen 6:11–9:17). Sometimes deities

prescribe cultic acts in such stories, such as when El commands offerings to start a military campaign in the Ugaritic legend of Keret. More commonly humans present offerings and prayers on their own initiative, such as Utnapishtim/Noah do at the end of the flood stories. The deities' role is to respond appropriately. This pattern of human initiative and divine response appears in many other stories involving cultic worship. Even in Keret where a deity commands offerings, the plot turns not on El's command of offerings but on Keret's initiative in vowing gifts to the goddess Athirat that he later forgets to provide, and so suffers that deity's anger as a consequence.²⁸

Instructional, legal, and didactic literatures are more likely to be presented in human, rather than divine, voices. Kings such as Hammurabi voice the Mesopotamian law codes, though they claim divine support for doing so. Some Hittite ritual texts begin, "Thus says X: if/when . . . then I do as follows . . .,"²⁹ and the Punic tariffs begin by citing a committee of prominent citizens that established them: "Tariff of priestly revenues set up by the thirty men who are in charge of the revenues, in the time when Hillesba'l the mayor, was head."³⁰ More often, the authorities behind ritual instructions remain anonymous.

However, ritual instructions also appear within royal dedicatory inscriptions from various ancient Near Eastern cultures. Here kings regularly claim credit for instituting one or more cults and sometimes for ordaining the rites to be performed there, especially the kinds and amounts of offerings. Thus in a second millennium Akkadian inscription, the Kassite king Kurigalzu reported that, to accompany his land grant to an Ishtar temple, "3 kor of bread, 3 kor of fine wine, 2 (large measures) of date cakes, 30 quarts of imported dates, 30 quarts of fine(?) oil, 3 sheep per day did I establish as the regular offering for all time."³¹ Similar cultic mandates are found in New Kingdom Egyptian inscriptions, e.g. "I assigned to [Amun] thousands of oxen, so as to present their choice cuts,"³² and in the 8th

²⁸ *KTU* 1.14–1.16; translated by N. Wyatt, *Religious Texts from Ugarit: The Words of Ilmilku and his Colleagues* (Biblical Seminar 53; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1998) 176–243; and by D. Pardee in *COS* 1.102.

²⁹ *CTH* 407, 410, 757; translation by B. J. Collins in *COS* 1.62, 1.63, 1.64.

³⁰ *KAI* 69; translation by D. Pardee in *COS* 1.98.

³¹ *HKL* 1.136; translation in B. Foster, *Before the Muses: An Anthology of Akkadian Literature* (2 vols.; Bethesda, MD: CDL, 1993) 1:278–79.

³² A stela of Amenhotep III from his mortuary temple in Thebes; translation by

century Luwian/Phoenician bilingual inscription of Azatiwada: "a yearly sacrifice: an ox; and at the time (season) of plowing: a sheep; and at the time (season) of reaping/harvesting: a sheep."³³ The fourth century Naucratis stela depicts Pharaoh Nectanebo I ordering on behalf of the temple of Neith that "one shall make one portion of an ox, one fat goose, and five measures of wine . . . as a perpetual daily offering . . . My majesty has commanded to preserve and protect the divine offering of my mother Neith."³⁴ These texts testify to royal interests in cultic matters, especially the quantities of offerings to various temples. Priests, on the other hand, rarely claim to be the authorities behind cultic teachings, though the Hittite texts mentioned above are a notable exception.³⁵

Oracular texts are the most likely ancient genre to portray a deity mandating offerings and other rites, as YHWH does in the Pentateuch. Thus an occasional ritual command appears among the oral oracles reported to the king in the eighteenth century Mari letters: ". . . The god sent me. Hurry, write to the king that they are to offer the mortuary-sacrifices for the sha[de] of Yahdun-Li[m]" and "Write to your lord that in the coming month, on the fourteenth day, the sacrifice for the dead is to be performed. Under no circumstances are they to omit this sacrifice."³⁶ The goddess Ishtar addresses the Assyrian king Esarhaddon in a similar fashion in one of the seventh century oracles of her priestesses: "Why did you not act on the earlier oracle which I gave you? Now you shall act on this one. Praise me! When the day declines, let them hold torches facing (me). Praise me!"³⁷

It must be noted, however, that oracles more often portray deities ordering military and building campaigns than issuing cultic instructions, an observation that applies to the narrative and prophetic texts of the Hebrew Bible as well. In this respect, oracular texts mirror the concerns of royal inscriptions, which probably reflect the inter-

M. Lichtheim, *Ancient Egyptian Literature* (3 vols.; Berkeley: University of California, 1973–80) 2:46.

³³ H. Çambel, *Corpus of Hieroglyphic Luwian Inscriptions* (Berlin: de Gruyter, 1999) vol. 2; translations by J. D. Hawkins and K. Lawson Younger, Jr., in *COS* 2.21, 2.31.

³⁴ Translation by Lichtheim, *Ancient Egyptian Literature*, 3:88–89.

³⁵ At Ugarit, while colophons to the major epics credit priests—Ilmilku "the sacrificer" wrote or copied both the Baal cycle (*KTU* 1.6 vi) and Keret (*KTU* 1.16 vi)—no such colophons appear on the ritual texts.

³⁶ ARM 3.40, 2.90; translations by W. B. Moran in *ANET*, 624.

³⁷ H. C. Rawlinson, *The Cuneiform Inscriptions of Western Asia* (London: Harrison, 1861–1864), vol. 4 plate 68; translation by R. D. Biggs in *ANET*, 605.

ests at work in the preservation of these texts more than the inherent tendencies of oracles. The oracles were recorded in the Mari letters and were preserved in Esarhaddon's archive because they dealt with royal concerns. Private oracular pronouncements, which were no doubt very common, were less likely to be written down and preserved. The degree to which they may have dealt with ritual matters can therefore not be ascertained. There is one text, however, that suggests that the royal and oracular genres may have influenced each other and that the speeches of kings and of gods could be interchangeable. The ambiguous "Marduk Prophecy," probably from the twelfth century, ends with the god Marduk mandating a schedule of offerings, apparently for King Nebuchadnezzar (!), that reads:

40 quarts [], of 40 quarts [], of 10 quarts of flour, 1 quart of [], 1 quart of honey, 1 quart of butterfat, 1 quart of figs(?), 1 quart of raisins, 1 quart of alabstron [oil], 1 quart of finest [] without alkali(?), 1 regular sheep, a fatted calf will be burned for this spirit. Month, day, and year I will bless him!³⁸

If this interpretation of the last column is correct, then king and deity here reverse places, with the deity mandating (funerary) offerings on behalf of the king in exactly the same manner that kings mandate divine offerings in royal commemorative inscriptions. Since gods were traditionally thought of as royalty, and some kings were portrayed as gods, the merging of divine and royal voices should come as no surprise.³⁹

The framework of Leviticus 1–7, which periodically introduces God issuing instructions through Moses, resembles not so much the form of ancient ritual texts narrowly defined as it does the forms of expression used in royal and oracular texts dealing with cultic matters among other things. Therefore considerations of the chapters' literary genre need to include this wider range of texts. Furthermore, the royal and oracular genres make explicit rhetorical claims that ritual texts, especially Levine's "descriptive" rituals, may not: they clearly aim to *persuade* their audience to undertake a particular course

³⁸ R. Borger, "Gott Marduk und Gott-König Šulgi als Propheten," *BO* 28 (1971) 3–24; translation by Foster, *Before the Muses*, 1:307; cf. Longman, *Fictional Akkadian Autobiography*, 132–42.

³⁹ Borger compared the Marduk Prophecy with the Prophecy of Šulgi as similar texts: the first has a royal deity speak and the second a deified king ("Gott Marduk," 3–24).

of action, usually to preserve the temple or the king's other accomplishments, particularly the inscription itself. The framework's evocation of royal and oracular genres should not be viewed as applying the conventions of some other genre to a basically "ritual" text, for ritual prescriptions are at home in these genres as well. Rather, the writers of Leviticus 1-7 used various literary conventions traditionally associated with ritual concerns to shape a text to serve their purposes. Their use of royal and oracular rhetoric in the framework emphasizes by literary convention the royal authority of the divine speaker and demonstrates the persuasive intent behind their work.

Contents and Style

Royal and oracular texts, however, contain nothing to compare with Leviticus 1-7's detailed stipulation of ritual performance. For such descriptions, we must turn to those texts usually classified by the term "ritual." Yet even among ritual texts from other ancient cultures, nothing has so far been found that matches the form and content of these chapters. That is less surprising when one notes the diversity of form and content among ancient ritual texts. There is no single ritual genre into which all these texts fit. They share only an emphasis on the details of cultic ritual, and it is therefore for reasons of contents rather than form that they tend to be classified together.

The prescriptive formulation of most rituals in the Bible contrasts with the predominance of descriptive rituals in other ancient cultures, as Levine has demonstrated. Nevertheless, prescriptive rituals are not unknown in Ugaritic, Akkadian and Punic sources. These sources also parallel specific features of Leviticus 1-7. The systematic repetition that characterizes especially Leviticus 1-3 can also be found in Punic tariffs that consist principally of repeated introductory phrases: "In (the case of) a X, (whether it be) a whole offering, or a presentation offering, or a whole wellbeing offering, the priests receive Y. . . ."⁴⁰ An atonement ritual from Ugarit repeats six times an almost identical liturgy applied to three types of offerings (ox?, sheep, donkey) and two kinds of worshippers (men, women).⁴¹

⁴⁰ *KAI* 69; translation by Pardee in *COS* 1.98.

⁴¹ *KTU* 1.40; translation by Wyatt, *Religious Texts*, 342-47.

The casuistic ("if/when . . . , then . . .") formulation that is characteristic of priestly style throughout P's legal and instructional corpus also appears as a prominent structural feature of some Hittite and Ugaritic descriptive rituals. Several Hittite texts begin: "If the troops are defeated by the enemy, then they prepare the 'behind the river' ritual as follows" or "When [they] cleanse a house . . . , its treatment is as follows. . . ."⁴² Among the Ugaritic corpus, a prescriptive list of required offerings and actions begins, "When Athtart-of-the-Window enters the pit in the royal palace, pour a libation . . . ," and another list of offerings ends with a liturgy introduced casuistically: "Here begins (the liturgy): If a strong one attacks your gates, a warrior your walls, raise your eyes to Baal (saying)."⁴³

Even the second person address, "you shall . . .," that appears frequently in Leviticus 1-7 as well as other ritual instructions in the Hebrew Bible, appears also in ritual materials from other ancient cultures, such as the Ugaritic list of offerings (*KTU* 1.119), otherwise in third person, that ends with the second person liturgy quoted above. The Ugaritic atonement rite (*KTU* 1.40) mixes first and second person exhortations in its casuistic introductions ("whenever you sin . . . this is the sacrifice we make . . .") and continues to alternate between them throughout. Several Akkadian texts from the Seleucid era describing rituals for repairing temples are consistently structured in second person casuistic form.⁴⁴

Though many ancient ritual texts focus on just one aspect of a ritual, others reflect the same range of interests as Leviticus 1-7: types of offering, nature of the animals, worshiper's duties, priestly duties, priestly prebends, etc. Thus some of the rituals from Emar list the types and amounts of offerings due every deity on particular days, but also describe the course and timing of processions, various ritual actions, and the distribution of offered meats and other commodities, including priestly prebends.⁴⁵

These comparisons illustrate that the literary features of Leviticus 1-7 also appear in ancient texts dealing with rituals in other Near

⁴² *CTH* 426, 446; translation by Collins in *COS* 1.61, 1.68.

⁴³ *KTU* 1.43, 1.119; translations by Wyatt, *Religious Texts*, 357-59, 416-22.

⁴⁴ F. Thureau-Dangin, *Rituels accadiens* (Paris: E. Leroux, 1921) 34ff., translated by A. Sachs, *ANET* 339-42. For other Akkadian rituals in the second person, see *ibid.*, 334-38, 343-45.

⁴⁵ *Emar* 3 73, 3 85, 3 87, 446; translated by D. Fleming, *COS* 1.123, 1.124, 1.126.

Eastern cultures, but dispersed throughout various texts in such a way as to undermine efforts to identify specific genres by constellations of features. There is no evidence, therefore, that the priestly writers started with some pure genre, whether oral or written, and then modified it through successive scribal additions taken from other literary contexts. That does not mean that no genre conventions influenced the writing of these chapters, but simply that every writer and editor who left a mark on these chapters worked, as we should expect, with various literary conventions traditionally used to portray rituals. Every stage of the text's development was influenced by such genre conventions. Though this conclusion might seem like an obvious observation about the constraints on virtually any writer or editor of any culture, it has a negative consequence for critical study of biblical texts: genre distinctions cannot be used as evidence for editorial modifications of texts. If writers and editors could use and mix genre conventions at will, and evidence from many parts of the Hebrew Bible suggest that they could and did, then hypothetical reconstructions of the original text or tradition that exemplified the "pure" genre are creative fantasies. I do not mean by this to deny that editorial modifications of biblical texts occurred. Other evidence suggests that they are pervasive throughout the biblical books, but genre analysis provides no basis for recognizing them.⁴⁶ Comparative analysis of literary conventions does, however, provide a powerful tool for exposing the intentions that shaped the extant text.

The Rhetorical Purpose of Leviticus 1-7

Interpreters have offered many suggestions for what purpose the instructions in Leviticus 1-7 may have originally served. Some of the more recent comments show the range and nature of the opinions. For example, Anson F. Rainey described chapters 1-5 as a "Handbook for Priests."⁴⁷ Similarly, Meir Paran suggested that this material was designed to facilitate rote memorization by priests.⁴⁸ Martin Noth ventured the opinion that the original audience for

⁴⁶ Contra Koch, "Alttestamentliche und altorientalische Rituale," 78.

⁴⁷ "The Order of Sacrifices in Old Testament Ritual Texts," *Bib* 51 (1970) 487.

⁴⁸ *Forms of the Priestly Style in the Pentateuch: Patterns, Linguistic Usages, Syntactic Structures* (Jerusalem: Magnes, 1989) xiii (Hebrew).

these instructions in oral or written form were lay people needing instruction on how to make their offerings.⁴⁹ David W. Baker concluded that, like the Punic tariffs, this material was inscribed on a monument at the sanctuary to inform both laity (chapters 1-5) and priests (chapters 6-7).⁵⁰ Rendtorff suggested tentatively that the material's strict stylization and stereotypical repetition suggest that it was intended for liturgical recitation, perhaps as sentences to accompany the offerings.⁵¹ Knierim argued that ritual case-law was written to systematize ritual performance.⁵²

What these suggestions all share in common is an attempt to find the *original* purpose for this material, that is, before it was excerpted into Leviticus and the Pentateuch and therefore before it was refashioned to fit this context. Evaluations of its purpose in its present context tend to be mechanical and topical, noting that the instructions for offerings must logically precede the stories about those offerings in Leviticus 8-10. Though this explanation for the position of these chapters is no doubt correct, it offers no insight into how their present shape and contents were intended to affect their audiences. All the efforts to imagine the purpose served by these texts have focused on their presumed original rather than their actual shape, under the influence of the idea that only from the pure genre can the text's setting and purpose be discerned. However, if all features of the present text were written under the influence of genre conventions, as I have argued above, then the shape of the present text should also be intended to evoke certain kinds of responses, and should theoretically offer clues as to what motivated its construction in this form. Furthermore, reconstruction of the form and function of earlier strata in the text can only proceed confidently if the form and function of the extant text has been fully analyzed first, for only then (if at all) can editorial seams be distinguished from intentional literary features.

Because of their focus on hypothetical original genres, the suggestions listed above miss the persuasive orientation of Leviticus 1-7.

⁴⁹ *Leviticus: A Commentary* (OTL; Philadelphia: Westminster, 1965) 20.

⁵⁰ "Leviticus 1-7 and the Punic Tariffs: A Form Critical Comparison," *ZAW* 99 (1987) 193-94; see also "Division Markers and the Structure of Leviticus 1-7," in E. A. Livingstone (ed.), *Studia Biblica* 1978 (JSOTSup 11; Sheffield: JSOT, 1979) 193-94.

⁵¹ *Gesetze*, 22-23.

⁵² *Text and Concept*, 103-6.

Comparisons with other biblical texts also obscures this persuasive element, because within the Hebrew Bible, Leviticus 1–7 looks less hortatory than, e.g. Deuteronomy, the Wisdom literature, the prophets, or the priestly Holiness Code (Leviticus 17–27). As a result, readers of the Bible are struck by these chapters' systematic, impersonal, and repetitive style. Knierim, for example, argued that "Deuteronomy's appeals to joy are based on the parenetic and therefore inevitably psychological language and intentionality of Deuteronomy. The priestly legal corpus is composed in 'legislative' language. It is not parenetic."⁵³ Mary Douglas took this distinction further, arguing that Leviticus contains only analogic reasoning of a mytho-poetic form, in contrast to Deuteronomy's discursive and abstract logic. Only in the latter is speech "used for persuasion, challenge, and argument."⁵⁴ If, however, one shifts the basis of comparison to other ancient Near Eastern ritual texts, the picture changes. Many ancient descriptive rituals and temple records outdo Leviticus 1–7 for mechanical repetition of detail and the absence of all hortatory devices.⁵⁵ On the other hand, those texts that parallel these chapters' use of an authoritative royal/divine speaker also make explicit their persuasive agenda: royal and oracular texts clearly express their goal of persuading readers and hearers to engage in certain behaviors and not others.

Once we have noted the persuasive shaping of Leviticus 1–7, the systematic and repetitive style appears in a different light. Repetition that may well seem redundant to a silent reader can sound very motivating to a skilled speaker's audience. The repetition of structural elements and of refrains have a long history in oral rhetoric because they help an audience anticipate a speaker's direction and respond appropriately to the speaker's cues. Within such repetition, slight variation can convey considerable emphasis.⁵⁶ Therefore the systematic and repetitive character of these chapters can be under-

⁵³ *Text and Concept*, 81.

⁵⁴ M. Douglas, *Leviticus as Literature* (Oxford: Oxford University, 1999) 40; see also 20, 29, 36–38, 41–65.

⁵⁵ See Levine's discussion of Ugaritic administrative records of rituals, such as *KTU* 1.91 and 1.104 ("Ugaritic Ritual Texts," 468), and of descriptive rituals in all his publications listed in n. 16 above.

⁵⁶ The Roman theorist, Quintilian, emphasized the need for repetition in legal argumentation: "We shall frequently repeat anything which we think the judge has failed to take in as he should" (*Inst. Orat.* 8.2.22–24). For a discussion of the rhetorical function of repetition and variation throughout the Pentateuch, see Watts, *Reading Law*, 68–74.

stood as bearing out, rather than conflicting with, the framework's presentation of them as oral speeches.⁵⁷ God is represented as a speaker who, through Moses, urges people and priests to engage in specific behaviors. If these speeches seem much less vivid than other biblical texts, that is only because the hortatory emphasis is even more pronounced elsewhere.

Leviticus 1–7 has been composed of repetitive structures bounded by refrains (e.g. *אִשָּׁה רִיחַ נִיחֻחַ לַיהוָה* "a fire-offering of soothing scent for YHWH" 1:9, 13, 17; 2:2, 9, 11, 16; 3:5, 16; *כִּפַּר עֲלֵהֶם הַכֹּהֵן* "the priest will make atonement for them and they will be forgiven" 4:20, 26, 31, 35; 5:6, 10, 13, 16, 18, 26 [LXX 6:7]), with minor variations in the structure and refrains marking changing emphases and subjects (e.g. the pronouns in the refrain of forgiveness punctuating chapters 4–5). Major shifts in structure draw special attention and mark climaxes, such as the prohibition on consuming fat and blood (3:16b–17) that breaks out of and concludes the description of routine offerings in chapters 1–3. Damrosch rightly noted that the three-fold structure of Leviticus 1–3 "gives these chapters a certain lyrical aspect" and that the presentation of the offerings is staged dramatically.⁵⁸ Despite the longstanding tradition of reading such repetitive structures as dull and uninspiring, their effect in oral readings would instead be exciting and motivating. Indeed, since repetition and refrains often mark the climax of speeches, their appearance here provides further evidence that the Pentateuch reaches its climax in Leviticus.⁵⁹

To whom was Leviticus 1–7's persuasive rhetoric addressed, and to what end? Is the intended audience composed of religious professionals like the priests, diviners, and exorcists for whom many of the Ugaritic, Hittite, and Emar ritual texts seem to be intended? Or are they lay people, such as those to whom the Punic tariffs, most royal inscriptions,⁶⁰ and perhaps even a few of the Ugaritic rituals

⁵⁷ Contra Knierim, *Text and Concept*, 7, 99–100.

⁵⁸ D. Damrosch, "Leviticus," in R. Alter and F. Kermode (eds.), *The Literary Guide to the Bible* (Cambridge, Mass.: Belknap/Harvard, 1987) 67–68.

⁵⁹ For other arguments for this conclusion, see J. Blenkinsopp, *The Pentateuch: An Introduction to the First Five Books of the Bible* (New York: Doubleday, 1992) 47; R. P. Knierim, *The Task of Old Testament Theology: Method and Cases* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1995) 367; Watts, *Reading Law*, 59.

⁶⁰ Royal inscriptions that employ the story-list-sanction strategy usually address other kings and royal officials, and a less defined lay audience beyond them; see J. W. Watts, "Story-List-Sanction: A Cross-Cultural Strategy of Ancient Persuasion"

were aimed? Clearly, ancient texts with ritual contents could address either group or both, so neither of the audiences mentioned in Leviticus is inherently improbable. In fact, if it were not for the fact that Leviticus explicitly distinguishes between these two audiences (Moses is directed to the people in 1:2; 4:1; 7:22, 28; to the priests in 6:2, 18 [LXX 6:9, 25]), one might think the sharp distinction between them to be anachronistic.

One effect of presenting the major sacrifices twice, once explicitly addressed to the people of Israel as a whole (chapters 1–5) and once explicitly addressed to the priests (6:1–7:21), is to subject both groups to the words that God spoke to Moses, that is, to *this* law. That may explain why the phrase *זאת תורה* “this is the law for . . .” appears exclusively in the materials directed at priests (6:2, 7, 18 [LXX vv. 9, 14, 25]; 7:1, 11).⁶¹ Perhaps *זאת תורה* here does not name a genre, as many interpreters have thought, but rather serves to emphasize the authority of these instructions over the priests, precisely those who are mandated to teach divine law (Lev 10:10–11). The point then would be to insist that *this*, and not anything else, is the authoritative regulation governing each particular offering. The prominence of negative stipulations—what should *not* be done (6:5, 6, 10, 16, 23 [LXX 6:12, 13, 17, 23, 30]; 7:15, 18, 19, 23, 24, 26)—in these latter chapters and their rarity in chapters 1–5 (only 3:17) confirms that these rules were written to supplant competing practices: “this is torah (not that).”

The text asserts its authority over those who teach it. No one in Israel can claim to be exempt from its provisions or to have other instructions that supersede it. That is not to say that these instructions cannot be supplemented; their incomplete character in fact requires supplementation in many ways. Among other things, nowhere in these chapters or elsewhere in the Bible is it specified exactly how the animals are to be killed, what prayers or liturgies (if any) are to be spoken or sung to accompany the offerings, etc. But by addressing explicitly both religious professionals and laity, Leviticus 1–7 enhances its own authority over all who participate in the cult and

in R. Binkley and C. Lipson (eds.), *Rhetoric Before/Beyond the Greeks* (Albany: SUNY Press, forthcoming).

⁶¹ Though 7:11–21 seem to be aimed at the worshiper despite the superscription in 6:18.

so reinforces its status as authoritative cultic legislation. Despite the technical nature of many of these instructions, they address all Israel to persuade the people not only to perform the offerings as instructed, but even more to recognize and accept this text’s authority to dictate religious obligations. The address to the priests, framed as it is within the divine speeches directed to the people, simply reinforces this claim by making clear that even the cultic professionals in the performance of their office are not exempt from this text’s authority. For example, by saying *זאת תורה העלה* “this is the law of the ‘*olā*-offering,” Lev 6:2 [LXX v. 9] requires what 1 Chr 16:40 reports, that the priests *להעלות עלות . . . לכל הכתוב בתורה יהוה אשר צוה על ישראל* “offer the ‘*olā*-offering . . . in accordance with everything written in the law of YHWH which he commanded Israel.”

No doubt these chapters, like the royal and oracular texts that their framework evokes, intend to persuade the people of Israel and their priests to perform their religious offerings, and to do so correctly, as specified here. However, within the wider context of the priestly writings and the Pentateuch as a whole, these chapters aim also to reinforce the authority of Torah, specifically its authority over religious performance in the Jerusalem Temple. By publicly stipulating the forms of Israel’s offerings, they position priests and laity to monitor each other’s performance with the text as arbiter of correct practice. Thus an ironic consequence of Leviticus 1–7’s role in the Pentateuch was to shift cultic authority from the priesthood to the book. Of course, the priests continued to wield enormous influence, because they not only controlled the Temple rites but also were authoritative interpreters of the book. But the presence of ritual legislation in the Pentateuch made the basis for their performances available to the public and therefore open to public scrutiny. The record of fierce debates over cultic practice between temple priests, Pharisees and Qumran covenanters in later Second Temple times shows that this rhetorical potential in the Pentateuch’s ritual texts did not go unrecognized.⁶²

⁶² See e.g. the halakhic letter from Qumran, 4QMMT (E. Qimron and J. Strugnell, *Qumran Cave 4. V. Miqṣat Ma’ase ha-Torah* [DJD 10; Oxford: Clarendon, 1994]), and Josephus, *Ant.* 12§297; 18§15.

Conclusion

Like any other composition, Leviticus 1–7 weaves together various literary conventions to affect its audience. The framework that repeatedly and with increasing frequency designates the speaker as YHWH claims not only divine but also royal authority for these instructions. Its designation of the intended audience as all Israel, with the priests explicitly included, specifies these laws' jurisdiction over all proper cultic performance. The contents' repetitive formulation in prescriptive casuistic style lends a heightened intensity to its provisions that is reminiscent of oral rhetoric. The frequent second person forms of address make clear the direct application to its intended audience.

All of these features of Leviticus 1–7 fit comfortably in the range of literary conventions typical of ancient ritual texts. None are likely to have been considered unusual or exceptional by Leviticus' intended audience. Though there is insufficient comparative evidence to determine if their combination produced a recognizable genre in Hebrew literature, neither is there any evidence that they were written through some dramatic modification of prevailing genres, whether oral or written.

These chapters were shaped to be read aloud to Jews as part of the larger Pentateuch. They contribute to the Pentateuch's rhetoric by emphasizing the supreme authority and jurisdiction of this Torah in Israel, especially over Israel's worship in the Temple. They therefore do more than instruct readers and hearers in proper religious performance. They aim to persuade them that these instructions must be normative, along with the rest of Pentateuchal law.⁶³

⁶³ This article has benefited from the comments and suggestions of Carol Babiracki, Gay Washburn, Tazim Kassam, and Dixie Evatt, for which I am most grateful.