

# Succumbing to



## Three books of law

### Part 1 – Leviticus

by Gillian Cooper

Leviticus needs to be read in the context of a relationship between a holy God and an unholy people. It is set in the middle of a story. We have had the excitement of the exodus, the escape across the sea, the early days of hardship in the wilderness, the dramatic meeting with God on Mount Sinai. The Israelites are on their way to their promised land, led by Moses and by God. Leviticus can seem like an unwelcome pause in the story.

We need to think about this book's main purpose. Presented as rules imparted by Moses, it really addresses a much later generation. Centuries later, the people of God had lost their land, their Temple and their king. Their relationship with God had broken down. They had the chance to go back and start over, but there remained a problem. How could they stop things going wrong again? God was still holy, and his people were still incapable of holiness. Leviticus gives them a way to be holy. 🍏

“Lenten practices of giving up pleasures are a good reminder that the purpose of life is not pleasure. The purpose of life is to attain a perfect life, all truth and undying ecstatic love – which is the definition of God. In pursuing that happiness, we find happiness.”

Fulton J. Sheen, (1895-1979), American bishop of the Catholic Church

Georgina Byrne *reflects on* Genesis 2:15-17; 3:1-7 and Matthew 4:1-11

**T**emptation is only ever tempting at all because it offers us something that we think we want. The woman and the man in the Garden of Eden want the fruit because it looks good, because it is a “delight to the eyes” and because they think that eating it will make them wise. In pointing out the fruit, the serpent simply draws attention to their desires.

In Matthew's Gospel, the tempter invites Jesus to turn stones into bread when he is already famished. He invites Jesus to throw himself from the Temple to secure God's salvation and offers him the kingdoms of the world. Food, salvation and kingship might well have been on Jesus' mind – the tempter offers

him a quick way to have all three.

Fruit, wisdom, food, salvation and power – none of these is necessarily bad. They only become problematic if they distract us from following God. The man and woman decide to take the fruit. Jesus, by contrast, ignores the desirable offers and turns back to serve God.

The challenge for Lent is to notice whatever distracts us from God. Even the good and wholesome stuff of life can get in the way of us serving God fully – if we let it. Lent gives an opportunity for us consciously to acknowledge those desires that we sometimes allow to steer us – and then to change our direction back towards God. 🍏

Walk with me in Lent, dear Jesus, and guide me through the temptations of my life. Teach me to desire only the living God and show me how best to serve, for you are all I want or need. Amen.

## A Lenten Camino

### Part 2 – setting off

by Janet Fearn

Legend says Hercules fought and killed the giant Geryon in a battle which lasted three days and nights. As a tribute to Geryon, Hercules ordered the construction of a city – A Coruña. The city's ancient links to pilgrimage and Compostela are shown in the pilgrim's shells which border the insignia. The English Way starts in the old quarter, at the twelfth-century Romanesque church. The church includes a sculpture of St James the pilgrim prepared for his journey. He carries a staff and a

gourd of water, knowing that he must travel light, unsure where his journey will take him and what he will meet on his way. He will have to struggle against his own human weakness which will try to force him to abandon his journey when the going gets tough. He will need courage, determination – and faith – to keep going.

As Lent begins, have I the courage and strength to start my own Camino and to continue until Easter?

Sr Janet's book, *A Lenten Camino*, is available from Redemptorist Publications as an e-book: [www.rpbooks.co.uk/a-lenten-camino](http://www.rpbooks.co.uk/a-lenten-camino) 🍏