

Tzav Command!

March 26, 2016

This Week's Text

הַמִּקְרִיב אֶת זֶבַח שְׁלָמָיו לַיהוָה יָבִיא אֶת קָרְבָּנוֹ לַיהוָה מִזֶּבַח שְׁלָמָיו. יָדָיו
תְּבִיאֶנָּה, אֶת אֲשֵׁי יְהוָה

Leviticus 7:28-30 The offering to Adonai that is a sacrifice of well-being must be presented by him who offers his sacrifice of well-being to Adonai; his own hands shall present Adonai's offerings by fire.

Linking Our Text to Modern Israel

The opening chapters of Leviticus teach about the types of offerings to be brought by the people to the High Priest. This week's portion outlines the rituals for these offerings. The modern torah commentator Nechama Leibowitz suggests that the first five chapters of Leviticus were instructions for the people while the repetition in *Tzav*, with added regulations, was intended for the priests. Yet, there is something distinctly different in the ritual concerning one offering. In 7:28-30a we read that for the *shelemah* - the wellbeing offering - each individual was to offer up his own sacrifice. It clearly states that the person's "own hands" are to bring the *zevach shelemah*.

Biblical commentaries suggest that the *shelemah* was a lesser offering than that of the other four types of offerings. Therefore the priests handled each of the four primary offerings, while the *shelemah* was handled by the individual himself. An alternative explanation is that the *shelemah* is actually of highest importance and thereby required individuals to manage it themselves (right up until the moment it was laid on the fire by the priest). This latter explanation teaches that one's wellbeing cannot be given over to leadership; individuals must have a hand in their own state of health, comfort, security, and prosperity.

This alternative explanation to the rabbinic one harmonizes with the reasoning that the State of Israel required democracy - people need to have ownership over their own well being, their own fate. The responsibility for leading the country, enacting legal means to ensure the safety and *shelemah* (the welfare of the citizens) may rest on the shoulders of leaders, yet each and every person has a hand in electing those leaders. This kind of democracy is the foundation of the Jewish people and the underlying principle of the State of Israel. Just as the *shelemah* proves that the priesthood was not an autocracy, so too does the system of governance in Israel ensure that the country is not governed by an autocrat. Every citizen's wellbeing is dependent upon that principle. The power to rule in a democracy is derived from the people's beliefs, preferences, and choices. This is true self-determination. There



Additional Resources:

Various offerings mentioned in this week's portion:

1. Burnt Offering (*olah* Leviticus 6:8-13)
2. Grain Offering (*minhah* Leviticus 6:14-23)
3. Sacrifice of Well-Being/ Fellowship Offering (*zevach shelamim* Leviticus 7:11-35)
4. Sin Offering/Purification Offering (*hatta't* Leviticus 4:1 – 5:13; 6:24-30)
5. Guilt Offering (*asham* Leviticus 7:1-10 ;6:7 – 5:14)

Background and context on Zionism can be found in [Early History to 1897](#) and [1898-1948](#) within the section Eras on the [CIE Website](#).

is a contract between the ruler and the ruled—a bill of rights. And, in countries without constitutions such as Britain and Israel, declarations, court cases, and acts form the reference for obligations and limitations imposed between the ruler and the ruled.

It is particularly challenging for Israel to maintain a representative democracy while surrounded by autocracies. In several countries bordering Israel, rights and responsibilities are determined by an autocrat. That was Arafat's way; it is the way of ISIS or Assad in Syria or tribal leaders in Libya.

In the aftermath of Israel's 17th Parliamentary elections last year, it is worthwhile to review the structure of Israel's government. Ultimately, whether our favored party holds the most or the least seats, observers and participants must be satisfied by voting, exercising their rights to be involved in their own wellbeing; to ways Israelis guard their destiny in their own hands.

Discussion Questions:

1. Examine the very basis of Zionism. Jews of various ideological outlooks agreed that individuals should use their human agency to go from weakness and dependency to strength and independence.
2. How will Israel's March 17, 2015 election results translate into a functioning Israeli Parliament? What occurs between the end of the election and the establishment of a new Israeli government?