



Is Voting a Mitzvah?

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Democracy

1) Devarim 17

¹⁴ When you enter the land that the LORD your God is giving you and have taken possession of it and settled in it, and you say, 'Let us set a king over us like all the nations around us' ¹⁵ You shall surely appoint over you a king whom Hashem your God chooses. He must be from among your fellow Israelites. Do not place a foreigner over you, one who is not an Israelite

2) B. Talmud Berachot 55a

R. Yitzchak said: We do not appoint a leader over a community without their consent, as it says (Shemot 35:30): 'And Moshe said to the Children of Israel: See, the Lord has called by name Betzalel'...The Holy One, blessed be He, said to Moshe: Do you consider Betzalel suitable? He replied: Sovereign of the Universe, if You consider him suitable, surely I must also! God said to him: still, go and consult them (the community). He (Moshe) went and asked Israel: Do you consider Betzalel suitable? They replied: If the Holy One, blessed be He, and you consider him suitable, surely we must as well!

Dual Loyalty?

3) Vayikra 16

²⁹ This is to be a lasting ordinance for you: On the tenth day of the seventh month you must afflict yourselves and not do any work—whether native-born or a foreigner residing among you—³⁰ because on this day atonement will be made for you, to cleanse you. Then, before the LORD, you will be clean from all your sins.

Vayikra 23

⁴² You shall in booths for seven days: Every native in Israel shall dwell in booths
⁴³ So that your generations will know that I caused the Children of Israel to dwell in booths when I brought them out of the land of Egypt. I am the LORD your God.

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Jewish Civic Responsibility in Exile

4) Yirmiyahu 29

⁴This is what the LORD Almighty, the God of Israel, says to all those whom I carried into exile from Jerusalem to Babylon: ⁵Build houses and settle down; plant gardens and eat what they produce. ⁶Marry and have sons and daughters; find wives for your sons and give your daughters in marriage, so that they too may have sons and daughters. Increase in number there; do not decrease. ⁷And seek the peace and prosperity of the city to which I have carried you into exile. Pray to the LORD for it, for in its prosperity, you will prosper.

Universal Collective Responsibility

5) Bereishit 1

²⁷ So God created Humankind in His image; in the image of God he created them; male and female he created them. ²⁸ And God blessed them and said to them: Be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth and subdue it. And have dominion over the fish in the sea and the birds in the sky and over every living creature that moves on the ground.

6) R. JB Soloveitchik, Lonely Man of Faith

The brute's existence is an undignified one because it is a helpless one... Man of old who could not fight disease and succumbed in multitudes to yellow fever or any other plague with degrading helplessness could not lay claim to dignity. Only the man who builds hospitals, discovers therapeutic techniques and saves lives is blessed with dignity. Man of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries who needed several days to travel from Boston to New York was less dignified than modern man who attempts to conquer space, boards a plane at the New York airport at midnight and takes several hours later a leisurely stroll along the streets of London. The brute is helpless and therefore, not dignified. Civilized man has gained limited control of nature and has become, in certain respects, her master, and with his mastery he has attained dignity as well. (pg .16-17)



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On reaching the shores of the United States, Jews found a safe haven. The rights guaranteed by the United States Constitution and the Bill of Rights have allowed us the freedom to practice our religion without interference and to live in this republic in safety.

A fundamental principle of Judaism is hakaras hatov -- recognizing benefits afforded us and giving expression to our appreciation. Therefore, it is incumbent upon each Jewish citizen to participate in the democratic system which guards the freedoms we enjoy. The most fundamental responsibility incumbent on each individual is to register and to vote.

Therefore, I urge all members of the Jewish community to fulfill their obligations by registering as soon as possible, and by voting. By this, we can express our appreciation and contribute to the continued security of our community.

m. Feinstein

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