

*Reflections on Nation Building in
the Twenty-First Century*

Finding America in Leviticus

Michael J. Broyde
Reuven Travis

It would seem that we have taken on an impossible task in this book: trying to demonstrate to modern Americans, be they secular or religious, Jews or Christians, that the sacrificial rites found in Leviticus have any germaneness to their lives. After all, to the extent that any modern reader turns to the pages of Leviticus at all, the notion that they would be inspired by the text and pine for the restoration of animal sacrifices is ludicrous! However, Leviticus is more than laws of sacrifices. As we demonstrate, Leviticus sets forth a template for nation-building via large, regularly-scheduled communal gatherings intended to foster national unity and identity among the Jewish people.”

“A tour de force of subtle, nuanced biblical exposition that also manages to paint a magnificent rich portrait of a national identity being formed and defined by ritual and law. In addressing an increasingly divided society—one groaning for unity—a compelling picture of hope is birthed from the writings of Leviticus. One where the table and the festival become the central elements of unification.”

—**BRAD DAUGHERTY**, COO and lead navigator, Replicate Ministries

“A fascinating argument for the importance of ‘deistic ceremonialism’ in the construction of a national religious identity, this book adds a new layer of meaning and complexity to the modern American hesitation, even in the face of widespread secularization, to completely turn its back on the rituals, traditions, and symbols that still give (many of) its people meaning, comfort, and a sense of enduring belonging.”

—**MARK GOLDFEDER**, director, National Jewish Advocacy Center

“What is the relationship between religious ritual and nation building? Drawing on the Bible, rabbinic sources, and American law, Rabbis Michael Broyde and Reuven Travis show that biblical-rabbinic tradition shapes religion into a nation-building ritual. They then propose a fascinating reshaping of the American civil calendar to do just that. Every reader will have to rethink his or her position on American holidays.”

—**DAVID R. BLUMENTHAL**, retired professor of Judaic studies, Emory University

Michael J. Broyde is a law professor at Emory University in Atlanta, who has served in a variety of rabbinic positions throughout the United States. He was a Senior Fulbright Scholar at Hebrew University in Jerusalem and a visiting professor at Stanford University. He additionally teaches Jewish Law at Columbia Law School.

Reuven Travis taught a wide range of classes over his twenty-year career as an educator, including Jewish law, Bible, and Jewish history. He has published three scholarly works on the book of Job, the book of Numbers, and the book of Genesis, respectively.

Broyde · Travis

Finding America in Leviticus

ISBN 978-1-6667-6787-2



9 781666 767872

COVER DESIGN: Savannah N. Landerholm
www.wipfandstock.com

WS WIPF & STOCK
An Imprint of WIPF and STOCK Publishers

