

Why I use Shalom and the Aaronic Blessing

Biblical Peace is not that which is often thought!

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KEY SCRIPTURES *Numbers 6:24-26, Isaiah 9:6-7, Isaiah 53:5, Jeremiah 29:11, John 14:27, Ephesians 2:14-17 among others*

Introduction

We start with the word itself – *Shalom* - ??????. This is a most familiar word in the modern world. It used as the greeting in meeting or saying goodbye. It a blessing when offered. It is a title (as of Jesus). To translate it as ‘peace’, is not in itself incorrect. However, it has a much deeper meaning that is lost in that simple translation. It is a very poor understanding of a greater richness of the word, shalom. When I use it, it not just wishing peace. I intend a far greater blessing than that. The Church would be a richer place for people, if it was understood and taught. Hence this study.

When a person with a western mind is offered the word peace, they often immediately think of the absence of war and conflict. They may think of a cessation of war as in a peace treaty, in a way. Perhaps, they hear it as wish for a quiet environment, a safe room. Perhaps it is thought of as a time to quiet the mental stress of the world’s pressures.Or could it be a retreat from a noisy family. Have you ever heard it said, "I can't get a moment's peace!"? This understanding of peace, comes from a Greek-influenced Western world. It is negative It describes the taking away of something: war, noise, disturbance, anxiety.

However, that is not what *shalom* means. It is a warm, positive wish to add to the person or community’s life. It is hoping for the presence of an environment of blessed health and wellbeing. It is huge in its intention to bless. Its understanding will transform Bible passages, as will be shown here in this study.

The Root Meaning — Nothing Missing, Nothing Broken

The Hebrew root of shalom is to be complete. To be whole in every part of your being. It is to have nothing missing or damaged in your life. It is a totally comprehensive prayer for the wellbeing of the recipient of the *shalom*. That is it wishes the complete physical, mental, emotional and spiritual life of the person and of the community, to which it is offered. To have it, is to live fully as a human being as God intended. It is echoed in Jesus' Truth:

John 10:10 “The thief does not come except to steal, and to kill, and to destroy. I have come that they may have life, and that they may have it more abundantly.”

The evil one brings the lack of true shalom. He brings pain, destruction and the stress these things bring. Jesus came to undo all that and bring us true *shalom*. We will see later one of His titles confirms this. To know *shalom* is to know the fullness of life, truly as was intended by God at creation. Before the fall Adam and Eve lived in this perfect *shalom* of God.

There is a massive difference between this Hebrew word and the Greek word, '*eirene*'. This is the way the Greek Septuagint and New Testament translate the original meaning, thus losing the original intention of God's *shalom*. *Eirene* in its primary meaning meant exemption from the rage and havoc of war. It may surprise you to know it is in fact the name of a goddess: The ancient Greek goddess of peace. Its literal secular meaning was to bind or join together that which has separated. Since the referring back to the Hebrew, additional meanings in Biblical dictionaries were added to include what *shalom* truly is. *Eirene* remains a narrow word for what God intended.

In the beginning God created the world and it was in *shalom*. The relationship between Adam and Eve was perfect and complete. The relationship with nature was also perfect and complete. The whole wellbeing of the entire creation was complete. The Word repeats this and says “..God saw that it was good.” The fall would destroy all that and *shalom* was lost. Men and women would be in conflict. The world would make Adam sweat, just to live. Violence and murder would result. Here was a problem for mankind – but God had always

planned a solution to restore *shalom*.

Shalom as a truth for community

Shalom was never meant to be a private affair. It was to be a sharing within a community. Its presence in a community will bring a great quality of life. Relationships, will be fruitful. There will be a care for the outsider. The widow and orphan will know love and care. The leaders and governments will protect the vulnerable of the community. Justice will be fair and offered in grace and love. People will keep their word.

We read in Judges:

Judges 3:11 “*Then the land had shalom 40 years. When Othniel son of Kenaz died..*”

Israel had known rebellion and war and the community was fractured and torn in every way. But Othniel, the first Judge, brought true *shalom* to Israel and then *shalom* remained for those forty years. He was the nephew of the great Caleb and married his daughter. This unity of family with the Holy Spirit, were the ingredients that led to *shalom*.

When there is no unity and there is oppression and injustice - when widows and orphans are neglected – when those in authority and the rich ignore or exploit the poor then *shalom* is not present and unrest comes to the community. In the days of Jeremiah the prophet, God was angry at these things in Israel. The prophet is told:

Jeremiah 6:13 “*For from the least to the greatest, all of them are greedy for gain, and from prophet even to kohen, everyone practices deceit. They healed the wound of My people superficially, saying ‘Shalom,*

shalom!’ when there is no shalom.”

Isaiah confirms:

Isaiah 48:22 “There is no shalom,” says Adonai, “for the wicked.”

Indeed, Paul warned the Thessalonians:

1 Thessalonians 5:2-3 “For you yourselves know very well that the Day of the Lord comes like a thief in the night. When they are saying, “Shalom and safety,” sudden destruction comes upon them like a woman having birth pains in the womb— there is no way they will escape.”

The world was swamped with selfishness and drunkenness, only concerned with self. There was a false sense of *shalom* that was not real. In the book of numbers, Moses is commanded to tell Aaron the High Priest to pray a blessing over the people of Israel:

Numbers 6:22-27 “Again Adonai spoke to Moses saying, “Speak to Aaron and to his sons saying: Thus you are to bless Bnei-Yisrael, by saying to them: Adonai

bless you and keep you! Adonai make His face to shine on you and be gracious to you! Adonai turn His face toward you and grant you shalom!’ In this way they are to place My Name over Bnei-Yisrael, and so I will bless them.”

This Aaronic blessing is showing the desire of God to grant the blessing of *shalom* on His people. It is a blessing of total favour from God that will bring wholeness and well-being to the community over whom it is prayed. That is why I use it often.

The Title of Jesus – The Prince of Shalom

***Isaiah 9:6** “For unto us a yeled (child) is born, unto us ben (a son) is given; and the misrah (dominion) shall be upon his shoulder; and Shmo (name) shall be called Peleh (Wonderful), Yoetz (Counsellor), El Gibbor (Mighty God), Avi Ad (Possessor of Eternity), Sar Shalom (Prince of Peace).” (Jewish Orthodox Version)*

These wonderful Jewish titles proclaim the great Messiah Saviour who will come. The important one for this study is *Sar Shalom*. Here it is clear that the final Title for the Saviour has the fullest meaning:

Completeness, soundness, welfare, peace, completeness (in number), safety, soundness (in

body and mind), welfare, health, prosperity, peace, quietness, tranquillity, contentment, friendship in human and covenantal relationships especially with God..

In summary, He is the prince of wholeness. Furthermore, His Government, unlike the world's, is one without end. It is a growing *shalom* that will find its fulfilment when He returns. A political Government will never give this. It is not a man-made peace treaty. It is a restoration of the perfect creation that God intended and was lost through Adam.

Paul wrote of Jesus the Saviour, the Sar Shalom:

1 Corinthians 15:45 “So also it is written, “*The first man, Adam, became a living soul.*” *The last Adam became a life-giving spirit.*”

This is the great joy. What Adam destroyed, Jesus came and as the Sar Shalom, He was a life-giving Spirit, that brought us the gift of full life: wholeness, *Shalom*.

The Shalom that was brought to us on the Cross

The prophet Isaiah speaks an extremely important prophecy regarding *Shalom*.

Isaiah 53:5 “*But He was pierced because of our transgressions, crushed because of our iniquities. The chastisement for our shalom was upon Him, and by His stripes we are healed.*”

We have heard this verse often preached wrongly. It is said that the stripes He bore was heal physical sickness. This is not the case. It is greater than that. Firstly, it was to deal with ‘our iniquities’: our sins that separated us from God and destroyed the *shalom* between God and us. Secondly, through the cross and death of Jesus, we are reconciled to God the Father. In that restoration we are again in *shalom* – wholeness of relationship between God and us. In fully embracing this truth and living out the holy life Jesus has provided; we have a full and total restoration of unity with God and all those who have done the same. Truly, what the fall had broken, Jesus on the cross repaired.

Jesus Gives us the gift of Shalom

Jesus was God Himself in human flesh, without sin, and the bearer of true *shalom*. He, in His generosity, did not keep it within Himself. He gave it to His followers:

John 14:27 “*Shalom I leave you, My shalom I give to you; but not as the world gives! Do not let your heart be troubled or afraid.*”

You will see in this verse the truth that the *shalom* of God is not like the Greek understanding as set out above. As we have seen, there is great wholeness. A great completeness for each one and on and their community.

Have you ever considered Paul? When you think he went through so much suffering and rejection how did he keep the *shalom* of God? He writes the answer:

Philippians 4:7 “*And the shalom of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Messiah Yeshua.*”

He, in his imprisonment, kept his heart focussed and remained in joy, contentment and *shalom*. Hebrews eleven is full of men and women who died in the trust and hope of God, looking for the Sar Shalom. Many would have received encouragement from God's Word down the centuries. Jeremiah for example, even in the midst of threatening disaster, writes:

Jeremiah 29:11 “*For I know the plans that I have in mind for you,” declares Adonai, “plans for shalom and not calamity - to give you a future and a hope.”*

You see God's desire for His people are plans for their complete wellbeing, so that they might grow and mature in His love and salvation. As we see here, His plan is not to harm or bring disaster, it is to bring the wholeness of *shalom*.

Finally....

I hope this brings home, the great joy we can have. We can rejoice in the *shalom* of God, brought through the Sar Shalom. We can choose to remain in that *shalom*, brought about at great cost. We can avoid the call of the world who offers a false peace through false words of security. Jesus is the centre of our life in the sunshine or the storm. We stand on that Rock that cannot be shaken. Empires came and fell, even the great Rome who promised the Pax Romana. For two hundred years they claimed it. In reality, within that time, there were revolts and local wars. Eventually, as with all human empires, it fell. Only the government of the Sar Shalom will bring that security and eternal *shalom*. Meanwhile we hide ourselves in Him and live out a life of *shalom*. Paul gives us the way we can do this:

Colossians 3:1 “*Therefore, if you have been raised up with Messiah, keep seeking the things above - where Messiah is, sitting at the right hand of God. Focus your mind on things*

above, not on things on the earth. For you have died, and your life is hidden with Messiah in God.”

Therefore, keep yourself in shalom and bless others in the community, so that the whole community can know wholeness.

