

Lest We Forget (2020)

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In 1609, a religious group had fled persecution in England and taken up residence in a small place in Holland called Leyden. Although the Protestant Reformation had taken place based on real differences of principle with the Catholic Church, it was more often than not still based on the political motives that drove Henry the VIII to break ties with Rome. There were still many Catholics within England under Queen Elizabeth I, and although she was head of the Anglican Church, religion took a back seat to the power politics and enmity with Catholic Spain and France.

Over her long reign (1558-1603), Queen Elizabeth had ensured a Protestant England, and even though she claimed her defeat of the Spanish Armada was by the hand of God and she had a medallion struck which said, “God Blew and They Were Dispersed,” it was more political than conviction, and those who pointed this type of thing out found themselves persecuted.

According to Dr. William Bennett, in his book *America: The Last Best Hope*,

With James I’s accession, divisions within the English Protestant community began to shake the unity of the Realm. The Scottish king had gained little personal respect or loyalty among many English believers. He lacked Elizabeth’s charm and wit. He was learned without being able to apply his learning. Given to long tedious lectures, he was called by some, “the wisest fool in Christendom.” . . . James attempted to bring all Protestants under the “big tent” of the Church of England. He threatened those who dissented. They will conform, he said, "or I will harry them out of the land."

For all intents and purposes the Anglican Church was as corrupt as the Catholic Church, but anyone who was trying to move away from the trappings of the Catholic and Anglican religions were quick to be persecuted, even though they tried to remain loyal to king, queen and country.

Out of this environment of persecution, a small group of religious separatists fled England and took up residence in the more tolerant, Protestant Holland. But after 10 years, they began to fear they were losing their English roots and they began to consider the possibility of founding, as they put it, "a Holy Commonwealth" of their own.

By this time they had adopted the name "Pilgrims" and this small group set sail for America in the beginning of September on two small ships: *The Mayflower* and *The Speedwell*. However, they were almost immediately forced to turn back when the *Speedwell* started leaking. After returning to port, they loaded themselves and their belongings over the next few weeks on the tiny *Mayflower* and sailing off again later in the same month.

Being blown off course by fierce storms of the early winter, and after suffering through treacherous seas and sea sickness, they landed south of present day Boston on the coast of Massachusetts in what would soon be called New England.

Dr. Bennett writes:

Anchoring offshore on 11 November 1620, the small company took care before disembarking to sign a document known to history as the Mayflower compact. In it, the pilgrims agreed on how they would govern themselves.

Forty-one of the *Mayflower's* 102 passengers affixed their signatures to the document. In it they announced their purpose in founding a colony in the New World "for the glory of God, in advancement of the Christian faith, and the honor of our King and country." By signing the compact, they pledged to covenant together to establish the rules under which they would live. This was the first effort of self-government in New England.

The compact's text contains references to “our dread sovereign Lord King James” and describes him as “King by the grace of God,” even calling him by his title “Defender of the faith.” The pilgrims described themselves as loyal subjects of this King. They apparently saw no inconsistency in the fact that they had removed themselves across a wide ocean in winter expressly to avoid persecution by this same “Dread Sovereign Lord.” They might have stayed at home in England, quietly conformed by attending the King's church and convincing themselves it was for the greater good! Fully half of those who made the voyage would die in the next year of starvation and disease. Yet how strong must have been their determination and their consciences to take such risks. When, in the following spring, the *Mayflower* prepared to return to England, not a single Pilgrim would return with her!

The following article, entitled "Lest We Forget Our Heritage of Faith: Remembering a 400th Anniversary," is by E. Douglas Clark, who is an attorney and Director of UN and International Policy at the International Organization for the Family. The entire article was in my commentary I had finished preparing days ago, but I am only going to read part of it for reasons that will be come clear at the end of this commentary. Mr. Clark wrote,

As rioters in America ransack cities, topple statues, and disparage our heritage, a key quadricentennial is happening largely unheralded. This year marks the 400th anniversary of the momentous voyage of the *Mayflower*, which set sail from England on September 6, 1620, for what its passengers deemed to be, as recorded by William Bradford, “those vast and unpeopled countries of America, which are fruitful and fit for habitation.... It was granted that the dangers were great, but not desperate. The difficulties were many, but not invincible...; and all of them, through the help of God, by fortitude and patience, might either be borne or overcome."

The city of Leiden had proven not to be the spiritual haven they expected, and before sailing back to England to continue on to

America, they engaged in a day of fasting and “pouring out prayers to the Lord with great fervency, mixed with abundance of tears.” With renewed faith in their Creator, they then “left that goodly and pleasant city which had been their resting place near twelve years, but they knew they were pilgrims, and looked not much on those things, but lifted up their eyes to the heavens, their dearest country, and quieted their spirits.”

Sailing on a northern route across the Atlantic through treacherous storms, the ship made landfall at Cape Cod on November 11. The passengers had no doubt about the power that had preserved them. “Being thus arrived in a good harbor, and brought safe to land,” Bradford recorded, “they fell upon their knees and blessed the God of Heaven who had brought them over the vast and furious ocean, and delivered them from all the perils and miseries thereof.”

Thus began the drama of faith that would eventually forge a new nation under God. . . . Undoubtedly the most famous colonists in world history, their faith and fortitude are legendary. Their perseverance laid the cornerstone of a new Nation,” and their “courage, gratitude to God, and love for one another still inspire people today.... They crafted a region rich in intellect, spirituality, self-government and commerce; a place of creative splendors whose influence on American culture and the world is inestimable.”

To forget the Pilgrims’ ardent faith in God would be to forget the very foundation of America, whose Founders not only acknowledged Creator-endowed unalienable rights but did so in the Declaration of Independence by “appealing to the Supreme Judge of the world for the rectitude of our intentions” and “with a firm reliance on the protection of divine Providence.” Their faith was not in vain, as attested by General Washington following the miraculous victory against far superior British forces. When showered with praise by his grateful countrymen, he refused to take credit: “The praise is due to the Grand Architect of the Universe,” he insisted.

On another occasion he explained, “Disposed, at every suitable opportunity to acknowledge our infinite obligations to the Supreme Ruler of the Universe for rescuing our Country from the brink of destruction, I cannot fail at his time to ascribe all the honor of our late successes to the same glorious Being.”

And if that glorious Being is not expressly mentioned in the Constitution (over whose creation Washington presided), His reality is certainly presupposed. The Declaration’s insistence that the purpose of government is to “secure” God-given rights is echoed in the preamble of the Constitution, whose stated purpose is to “secure the Blessings of Liberty.” “*Blessings* was not an empty word in the eighteenth century. Nor did it equate simply with ‘good luck.’ A blessing was a gift from the Creator. It needed only to be *secured* by law.”

. . . “Our constitution was made only for a moral and religious people. It is wholly inadequate to the government of any other,” for “it is Religion and Morality alone, which can establish the Principles upon which Freedom can securely stand,” cautioned John Adams.

. . . Well did Justice Antonin Scalia remind us (in his dissenting opinion in the 1992 *Lee v. Weisman* decision), “Religious men and women of almost all denominations have felt it necessary to acknowledge and beseech the blessing of God as a people, and not just as individuals, because they believe in the ‘protection of divine Providence,’ as the Declaration of Independence put it, not just for individuals but for societies; because they believe God to be, as Washington’s first Thanksgiving Proclamation put it, the ‘Great Lord and Ruler of Nations.’”

. . . It is time to remember and. . . . It is time to assess whether we . . . “have forgotten God” and “forgotten the gracious hand which

preserved us in peace, and multiplied and enriched and strengthened us.” And it is time to recall Rudyard Kipling’s words that might well serve as a prayer at this critical hour in our history:

Lord God of Hosts, be with us yet,

Lest we forget—lest we forget!

Brethren, last night just before the Sabbath started, it was brought to my attention that there are two separate large groups in Washington today (September 26) for a day of prayer in the nation’s capital. One group, led by Franklin Graham is being called a “Prayer March.” The other, led by Jonathan Cahn, is called “The Return.” I read last night that both men claim they were inspired to choose that date while neither was aware that the other had planned their events for Saturday, September 26, 2020, at their inception.

In an interview I read last night that Jonathan Cahn had recently given to CBN, he said The Return landed on the day called 'Shabbat Shuvah,' which happens to mean 'The Return.' Cahn said of September 26 and the National Mall, "There is something that is very big and spiritual focused on that day and that place."

"'Shuvah' in Hebrew means The Return," Cahn said. "And it's the day set in the Bible's calendar for Return, and specifically for the Return of a nation, back to God for repentance."

Cahn does not think it's just a coincidence. He told CBN News, "God is converging everything. That's how important this day is."

Cahn pointed out the significance of this time, saying, "This will take place not only 40 days before the presidential election but also on the 400th anniversary of the sailing of the Mayflower, in the days of America's founding and dedication to God."

Brethren, make of this what you will, but now you can see why I had to shorten the article by Mr. Clark.

Brethren, how much more does God expect from us to faithfully stay the course, loyally living by His every word, as pilgrim citizens of the Kingdom of God? —lest *we* forget *our* duty in these troublesome times to do what we know we need to do before our Great God!

Although we do not have time now, I would like to suggest that you spend a bit of time later today reading and meditating on the scriptures that Jews traditionally read on Shabbat Shuvah. They are Hosea 14:1-9, Micah 7:1-20, and Joel 2:1-32—lest WE forget!