

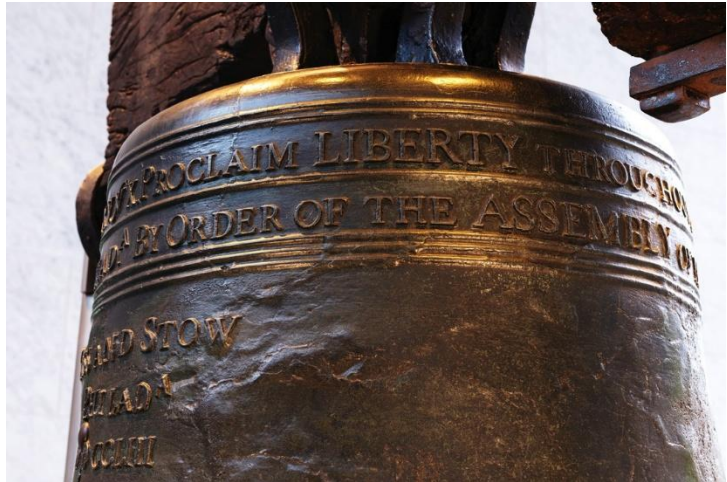
## A SHADOW OF THE KINGDOM

### A Devotional Meditation on Pinchas (Phinehas)

Numbers 25:10-29:40; Jeremiah 1:1-2:3; Leviticus 25:8-12; Isaiah 54:9-10;  
Ezekiel 37:24-28; John 14:20-29; 2 Corinthians 3:17; Philippians 4:4-7

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July 4, 2026

When the Continental Congress adopted the Declaration of Independence on July 4, 1776, it probably never occurred to them that the date on the Hebrew calendar was Tammuz 17 in the year 5536. It probably also never occurred to them that the bell in the Pennsylvania State House where they were assembled bore an inscription from Leviticus 25, the full reference of which is:



Liberty Bell inscription ([National Park Service photo](#)).

And you shall consecrate the fiftieth year, and proclaim liberty throughout the land to all its inhabitants. It shall be a jubilee for you, when each of you shall return to his property and each of you shall return to his clan.

Leviticus 25:10 ESV

That inscription was chosen by Isaac Norris, Speaker of the Pennsylvania Assembly, in 1751 to commemorate the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the founding of Pennsylvania. As a Quaker who knew the Bible, Norris understood the spiritual significance of his choice of inscription for what we now know as the Liberty Bell. So also were the Signers of the Declaration aware that their actions were based in the authority of the Creator and humanity's relationship to him. That's why the Declaration began with an affirmation that all men are created equal, and that their rights come from the Creator, not from human government. That's also why they appealed to the Creator in the closing words of the Declaration:

*We, therefore, the Representatives of the united States of America, in General Congress, Assembled, appealing to the Supreme Judge of the World for the Rectitude of our Intentions, do, in the Name, and by Authority of the good People of these Colonies, solemnly Publish and Declare, That these United Colonies are, and of Right ought to be Free and Independent States. . . .*

Reflecting on the Declaration, Samuel Adams of Massachusetts said,

We have this day restored the Sovereign to Whom all men ought to be obedient. He reigns in heaven and from the rising to the setting of the sun, let His kingdom come.\*

This is the context in which the United States of America came into existence as a nation dedicated to proclaiming liberty. The Founders realized that the liberty they proclaimed was imperfect. Within the borders of the new nation were many thousands of enslaved persons, as well as indigenous nations whose sovereignty in their own territory was in question. The America of 1776 also reflected the global civilization in which women generally had less status and freedom than men. Nevertheless, the Founders who signed the Declaration of Independence, and those who adopted the Constitution as the supreme law of the land after the Revolution, understood something many Americans in our day have forgotten: that our system is self-correcting.

What makes our system self-correcting is its establishment on the biblical truth that God created every human being with intrinsic value. As his images, or representatives, in the earth, we humans have the capacity to think for ourselves, to make judgments, and to act on our conclusions.

With such great freedom comes great responsibility. We submit to the Sovereign Creator, but we have license to dialogue with him and even argue our ways before him. Who knows but that he might take our views under consideration and alter his decrees, as he did in the matter of Zelophehad's daughters? The Torah as originally given specified only males could inherit. That established an injustice for families like Zelophehad's, in which the only offspring were daughters. God found their complaint justified, and adjusted his commandments to allow for female inheritance.

Arguing a case before the court of heaven, however, is not the same as defying that same court. Zimri of the tribe of Simeon did just that when he led the way in an idolatrous sexual revolution with the women of Midian and Moab. That same kind of revolution brought disaster on Israel on the 17<sup>th</sup> day of Tammuz, when Moses discovered the Golden Calf and broke the tablets of the Torah God had just given him. God pronounced judgment on those who had joined the rebellion, and the tribe of Levi responded to carry out his sentence. In the same way, God pronounced judgement on Zimri and his followers, and Phinehas the Levitical priest carried out the sentence by executing Zimri and the Midianite woman with him. In both cases, the righteous response to the evil that could have destroyed Israel resulted in a greater good. The Levites became the priestly tribe responsible for the holy things of God, and Phinehas the priest became the first recipient of God's Covenant of Peace.

God promised to establish the Covenant of Peace with the entire Commonwealth of Israel. That Covenant, empowered by the Spirit of God, operates in the Torah principles that are the framework of our Judeo-Christian civilization. It is the Covenant Messiah Yeshua bestowed on his disciples, saying,

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\* Excerpt from a speech attributed to Samuel Adams, August 1, 1776, quoted in Rev. Charles E. Kistler, *This Nation Under God: A Religious Supplement to American History* (Boston: Richard G. Badger, 1924), 71, <https://hdl.handle.net/2027/uva.x001180994>.

Peace I leave with you; my peace I give to you. Not as the world gives do I give to you. Let not your hearts be troubled, neither let them be afraid.

John 14:27 ESV

This kind of peace is far more than the absence of conflict. It's the *shalom* of God – the wholeness that comes through identity in him, both for individuals and for nations. That kind of peace endures even in times of war and violence, and even when the need arises for people of peace to take righteous action against those who would rob the world of peace. It's the kind of peace that Paul meant when he wrote, "And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus." (Philippians 4:7).

This is why our Republic is worth defending. It is not perfect, but it is a representation of the Kingdom of God, just as certain individuals in the Bible are representations of Messiah. We still await the full manifestation of Messiah's Kingdom. In the meantime, we work through human institutions to uphold God's peace and shine its light into the realm of darkness.