

COMMENTARY ON BENJAMIN FRANKLIN'S BIBLICAL REFERENCES
AT THE CONSTITUTIONAL CONVENTION

1. Benjamin Franklin, in his address to the delegates of the Constitutional Convention in 1787, referred to several passages in the Bible and quoted a portion of Psalms 127:1. The entirety of the verse reads:

Unless the Lord builds the house, they labor in vain who build it; Unless the Lord guards the city, the watchman keeps awake in vain.

Lesson: When man looks only to his own strength and his own efforts, eliminating God from the equation, the endeavor will eventually fail (i.e., when humanistic, man-centered, secular philosophy became the prevalent ideology in Europe, the result was Nazism, Communism and Fascism--all of which failed).

2. Benjamin Franklin might just as well have quoted from the Jewish Torah (first five books of the Old Testament), Numbers 6:22-27, regarding the benefits of public, vocal prayers/blessings over gatherings of people:

Then the Lord spoke to Moses saying, "Speak to Aaron and his sons saying, `Thus you shall bless the sons of Israel; You shall say to them: `May the Lord bless you and keep you, May the Lord make His face shine on you and be gracious to you; May the lord lift us His countenance on you and give you peace." So they shall invoke my name on the sons of Israel, and I then will bless them." (emphasis added).

Lesson: Note that this particular directive from God to Moses is not that private prayers be said over the people, but that public and vocal prayers be said ("say to them;" "invoke my name on [them]"). When God's name is invoked publicly and vocally, God says, "I then will bless them." The public and vocal recognition of God apparently releases something that brings an extraordinary blessing on the gathered crowd that is otherwise not achievable through private prayers alone. Otherwise, there would have been no purpose for this directive. God does not waste words. The fact that this is found in the Torah is significant since the Torah is considered authoritative by all Jews, Christians and Moslems.

3. Benjamin Franklin might just as well have quoted the first commandment listed in Exodus 20, from the Torah:

You shall have no other gods before Me...for I, the Lord your God, am a jealous God...

Lesson: If this is true, then we better not treat the vocal and public recognition and honoring of God as if there is something inappropriate with doing so. We better not keep God "in a closet" as if we are ashamed of Him. Students must not be given the message that there is something improper about mentioning or honoring "God" in public. To the contrary. If we expect God's protection and blessing over our public schools, we should honor, respect and reverence God publicly and vocally (as is done every morning in the House of Representatives; as is done every morning in the Senate; and as is done every morning in the United States Supreme Court and every other federal court in America).

4. Or, Benjamin Franklin might just as well have quoted from Deuteronomy 6:4-9, in the Torah:

Hear, O Israel! The Lord is our God, the Lord is one! And you shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your might. And these words, which I am commanding you today, shall be on your heart; and you shall teach them diligently to your sons, and shall talk of them when you sit in your house, and when you walk by the way and when you lie down and when you rise up.... (emphasis added).

Lesson: This directive speaks of not only a verbal recognition and reverence for God in one's own home (i.e., "you shall teach them diligently to your sons") but speaks also of a public and vocal recognition of God in the public square ("talk of

them...when you walk by the way"). Again, an instruction to vocally and publicly honor and reverence God--not to be confined to the walls of our home or to the walls of our institutional places of worship.