

**Sermon: “Hebraic Covenant”** .....Reverend Derek White

**Scripture: Exodus 18:8-27 (See Order of Worship for Scripture Text)**

## **Introduction**

When the Pilgrims sailed to America to establish a new community, they were faced with the challenge of writing a charter that would establish a system of government so that there would be order and justice. A group of people could not settle and incorporate unless there was a charter that governed the community.

So when the Pilgrims created their charter for the new world, they adopted a system of government that came from Exodus 18 that followed the Hebraic Covenant that Moses adopted from advice given by Jethro, his father-in-law. The new community would have magistrates who would be judges appointed to handle legal cases. In the event there was a challenging case it would be handled by the courts in England by the King.

John Carver with the first magistrate/governor. He died after a couple months of office. Then William Bradford became magistrate/governor for over 30 years. The original form of government of the Massachusetts Bay Company was developed after the model of the Hebraic Covenant that Moses adopted using Judges and the judicial system to govern the people.

## **PART I.**

The story of Moses and the appointing of Judges may seem very common to the world we know today. However, at the time Moses adopted this system it was truly unique and revolutionary. The Kings and the military controlled everything. The delegation of power and authority was given to the military to maintain social order. Moses didn't have an army so the adoption of a judicial system of government where God is King, and the judges make rulings on the basis of a codified law which was written down was truly revolutionary.

## **PART II.**

In the Massachusetts Bay Colony, the first system of government was a judicial system based on the Book of Judges. The Pilgrims saw the model used by Moses as the only true form of government that upheld the idea that people had God given rights. Like the tribes of Israel, the colonies would have judges that would establish a system of justice for all. This is what made the government of the Massachusetts Bay Colony truly unique, like the system of government Moses established with the judges.

### **PART III.**

The king of England was viewed as a sovereign, which means his position of power was ordained by God to rule. However, the complex cases of the colonies in the charter with England required the king to resolve complex cases. King George refused to honor the terms of the charter resolving court cases in England that needed attention. For that reason, a Congregational Minister in Ipswich, Massachusetts preached a famous message saying there should be no taxation without representation. A young lawyer by the name of John Adams who was the grandson of a Deacon saw that the king had failed to honor the terms of the charter by refusing to rule on cases which the people were paying taxes to the courts in England to rule on. Adams and others decided that the king's refusal to provide justice despite the increase in taxation was a failure of the king to follow God, because his role as sovereign was to ensure justice be done. So a group of educated leaders in the colonies decided to withhold taxes and stage protests to remind the king of England to fulfill his role as sovereign. It was finally determined that King George was a tyrant and that the people needed to form a new system of government independent of the royal courts in England.

Next Sunday on July 4th we will celebrate that decision for independence.

### **Conclusion**

I share this to say that justice is something the Lord requires of all of us. We often put so much emphasis on the Executive and Legislative branches of government. But the original history of the Massachusetts Bay Company started with the Pilgrims who believed in the Hebraic Covenant and looked to the wisdom of Moses in appointing judges to ensure justice for all.

The view to keep politics out of church is the exact opposite of what happened with the American Revolution. The Revolution started in the New England churches. And it started with the belief that there should be justice for all.