

Where Have All the Blacksmiths Gone?

It's midnight in America!

The church is asleep and slumbering in the night. Like Samson, we haven't realized that the power has departed, and like those who sleep, we are unaware of what is happening around us. We cling to our comfort like a child holding a toy.

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It's midnight in America!

The spirit of fear has paralyzed us into believing the ancient lie that appeasement is better than courage and conformity is preferable to freedom. The church is so hungry to be accepted by the world that it has relinquished its power, forfeited its birthright and accepted its place as nonessential.

It's midnight in America!

Lost in a maze of appeasement, the church expects little from God. Gone are the Elijahs of old who called down the power of God. Gone are the days of bold prophets who spoke out against the sins of a nation. Is it any wonder why we don't see more signs, wonders and miracles?

It's midnight in America!

We are on the doorstep of the return of Christ. Each day we see more and more signs of His return.

But are we ready?

Will It Be a Happy 4th of July, 2026?

America will celebrate its 250th birthday in 2026. Or will it?

I'm beginning to wonder if we'll still be a nation by the time we celebrate that anniversary. Rabbi Daniel Lapin has been asking the same question. He has conducted a study of history and confirmed that when large numbers of people unite to build a society, their efforts seem to last an average of 250 years. Many of the dates can't be precise, but he cites several examples:

- > Babylonian Empire (approx. 1780 B.C. to 1530 B.C.): 250 years
- > Assyrian Empire (approx. 860 B.C. to 612 B.C.): 246 years
- > Pax Romana of the Roman Empire (27 B.C. to A.D. 213): 240 years
- > Spanish Empire (approx. 1492 to 1742): 250 years
- > Pre-Communist Russian Empire (1682 to 1916): 234 years
- > British Empire (1700 to 1950): 250 years

What's the significance of 250 years? Estimates for the length of a biblical generation can vary, but Rabbi Lapin notes with interest how in Genesis we see 10 generations as repeated blocks of time: specifically, the 10 generations from Adam to Noah (Gen. 5:1–29) and then from Noah to Abraham (Gen. 11:10–26). More than seeing generations merely as specific time spans, he observes the significance of the Hebrew names provided and discerns a pattern of how empires grow and then decline:

- >> First Generation: bold breakout and conquest
- >> Second Generation: commercial expansion
- >> Third Generation: large-scale splendid buildings

- >> Fourth Generation: widespread affluence
- >> Fifth Generation: zenith and the best of days
- >> Sixth Generation: extending influence beyond borders with money instead of military
- >> Seventh Generation: rising political power of women and of the intellectual and academic elite
- >> Eighth Generation: influx of foreigners
- >> Ninth Generation: eat, drink and be merry
- >> Tenth Generation: internal political and civic fracture

A democracy cannot exist as a permanent form of government. It can only exist until the voters discover that they can vote themselves largesse from the public treasury. From that moment on, the majority always votes for the candidates promising the most benefits from the public treasury. That results in a democracy collapsing over loose fiscal policy, always followed by a dictatorship. If you look back into our history and review the courage and faith of our founders, and then return to our present governments and society, it doesn't take long to detect selfishness, complacency and apathy, with underlying motivations of greed and lavish lifestyles. We appear to be at the tail end of a cycle that has eroded many empires of the past. Maybe we've come to expect that from our secular institutions. But I fear we're seeing this same pattern spreading through our churches.

Where Strength Is Forged

So, as we approach our 250th year, is America already on borrowed time as a democracy? We might be, if we ignore the lessons of history and don't make any changes. I believe if the church leads the way in effecting change, it's not too late to reverse the decline, yet we need to face some hard truths.

I hear people saying, "I just want everything to get back to normal." By that, they usually mean easy, comfortable Christianity. I don't believe we'll ever go back to easy Christianity. Our faith must be more than a hobby in our lives, more than a tepid complacency where we expect God to bless us for what little commitment we show. It's time to rise up and be warriors for God—to prepare ourselves for battle.

I have a theory of my own: I believe America needs more blacksmiths.

The blacksmith used to be a respected and revered figure of society. My granddad was a farmer who did his own blacksmithing to make his tools. He took me out to the garage one day to show me how to make a chisel. I never was very good at it, but I learned a lot. We would heat up the coals to get them red-hot while I put on a mask and gloves. I would put the steel into the fire until it was glowing and then pull it out and begin to pound it with a hammer. When it started to cool, I'd put it back into the fire, let it get red-hot again, and resume pounding. I quickly learned that the blacksmith's job isn't an easy one, but it's a necessary one.

The enemies of Israel realized the influence of a blacksmith during the days of King Saul. The Philistines had invaded and overrun Israel and implemented a strategy to prevent the Israelites from rebounding. By eliminating all the Hebrew blacksmiths, the Philistines not only ensured the Israelites couldn't produce new weapons, but they also charged exorbitant fees for basic tool maintenance, which imposed a financial burden. The absence of a blacksmith implies a society bereft of its tools for change, defense and progress. It's an image of vulnerability, subjugation and loss of self-sufficiency.

The strategy of the enemy is much the same today. I see the godly pastors across our land as blacksmiths. They're the ones who are calling you to forge the swords, make the plows and stand in the presence of God. If you remove the blacksmith,

then there is no gathering place, no prophetic voice to be heard. An online voice in the air is not a sufficient replacement. A blacksmith with no fire has little to offer.

The blacksmith holds a symbolic significance that goes far beyond the literal. The profession itself is a craft that requires skill, strength and meticulous attention to detail. As the blacksmith works, the raw material is transformed in the crucible of creation, under the hammer and against the anvil, in the heart of the forge. The transformative processes of blacksmithing represent stages of character formation, resilience and creative adaptation.

Forging. The process of shaping metal through heat and hammering. In a metaphorical sense, life's trials and challenges are the heat that tests us, and our responses are the hammer strokes that shape us. We're formed and defined by how we respond to adversity just as the raw iron is shaped under the blacksmith's hammer.

Bending. Occurs when the metal is softened by heat, making it flexible and malleable. It symbolizes adaptability and resilience in the face of changing circumstances. In life, we often have to bend and adapt to new situations, changing our perspectives or strategies without losing our fundamental essence, just as metal retains its nature despite its change in form.

Welding. Involves joining separate pieces of metal into a single cohesive whole. This stage can represent unification or the forging of alliances. Whether it's combining our strengths with others to achieve common goals or integrating various aspects of our personality into a harmonious whole, welding symbolizes unity and connection.

Finishing involves smoothing and polishing the forged metal, removing any rough edges or imperfections. Similarly, our personal development is an ongoing process of refinement, of

continuously improving ourselves, smoothing out our flaws, and polishing our skills.

Weapons Check

Isaiah has more to say about the significance of the blacksmith. He portrays the blacksmith as a divine creation: “Behold, I have created the blacksmith who blows the coals in the fire, who brings forth an instrument for his work; and I have created the spoiler to destroy. No weapon formed against you shall prosper, and every tongue which rises against you in judgment you shall condemn. This is the heritage of the servants of the Lord, and their righteousness is from Me,” says the Lord,” (Isa. 54:16–17).

In this passage, God says He is the one who creates the blacksmith, a figure who “brings forth an instrument for his work,” symbolizing the human capacity for creativity, invention and transformation. The blacksmith here is also a beacon of hope against “the spoiler to destroy,” indicating resilience and the power to rebuild in the face of destruction.

The blacksmith metaphor thus captures the essence of personal and societal growth and transformation. It emphasizes our ability to shape our own destiny through resilience, adaptability, unity and continuous self-improvement, regardless of the adversities we face. And in the larger context, it signifies a society’s capacity for self-reliance, innovation and sustained development. The Philistines realized that by removing the blacksmiths from Israelite society, their subjects would remain helpless and unable to retaliate. By removing the blacksmiths—metaphorically, the creative, transformative force—they leave a void, hindering societal progress and growth.

The enemy’s strategy to remove the blacksmith as a means of conquering is a powerful metaphor for suppressing the tools

and mechanisms of resistance in a society. This could take the form of censorship, limiting access to education, or stifling the voice of the people. By removing the blacksmith, the enemy attempts to ensure that society cannot defend itself or form any substantive resistance.

The blacksmith in this metaphor embodies not only literal weapon-making but also the fostering of ideas, innovation and resilience. He represents the capacity of a society or individual to adapt, change, stand firm in the face of adversities and fight back when necessary.

This Is Your Wake-Up Call

If we want our nation to continue to its 250th year and beyond, we need more blacksmiths to emerge in our tumultuous landscape—not just as a maker of weapons, but as a symbol of steadfastness, creation and renewal. Forging, bending, welding, finishing—these actions define the process of building resistance, of creating change, yet there is always the threat of the blacksmith's absence, a warning of a society left defenseless, without tools or weapons for survival, much less revival.

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