

YAHWEH AND WEAPONS IN THE ISRAEL-PHILISTINE IRON I-AGE WARS

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ABSTRACT

The name of God being attached to weapons and war seem to be an oxymoron or even sacrilegious. Yet, the Bible presents God as a “God of war.” How so? What was the mentality and worldview of the Ancient Near Eastern people that necessitated God being presented as One who is involved with war? This article explored this phenomenon in the biblical stories of the military match-up (or mismatch) between the technologically and militarily advanced Philistines and the peasant army of ancient Israel in the Iron Age I period. As time went on, there seemed to be a balance of weaponry between the two sides. Yet, what was the role of God through these stages? What does this have to do with the concept of “holy war” and “just war?” This paper contributed to this discussion.

KEYWORDS: War; War Theories, Weapons, Philistines, Arms Control, Iron Age I, Metalworking

INTRODUCTION

The biblical record of God’s involvement in war has been the concern of many faithful Christians over the centuries (Clouse, 1981; Hess & Martens, 2008). Associating “Satan and War” would be more appropriate and accurate. Attaching the name of a holy God to weapons and wars seem profane and blasphemous to some. Yet, the Bible presents God as a “God of war.” This article looks at the biblical evidence and the reason for this. It will explore the military match-up (or mismatch) between the technologically and militarily advanced Philistines and the peasant army of ancient Israel in the Iron Age I period and the subsequent balance of weaponry and power.

Ancient Near Eastern Gods and Weapons

Ancient Near Eastern nations believed that their gods were responsible for their military successes (1 Sam 4-6; 1 Kings 20:28; 2 Kings 3:21-26; 18:33-35). Their gods, especially weather gods, are shown riding on various vehicles, including clouds. An Akkadian seal depicts the weather god riding a four-wheeled chariot drawn by a lion-griffin with a goddess holding bundles of rain sitting on it (Pritchard, *ANEP*, 1969 332). This aligns with the motif of “Rider on the clouds” war activities found in the Sumerian hymn to Ishkur (Semitic Adad); the Hurrian Kumarbi myth where the storm-god fights by means of rain, winds, clouds, and carts; Ugaritic “Rider on the clouds;” and in the Creation Epic reporting Marduk mounting the storm-chariot to fight against Tiamat; and other ancient near east art (Pritchard, *ANET*, 1955, pp. 66, 578; Weinfeld, 1973; Chisholm, 1983).

The Bible hints at the worship of weapons by pagan nations: “Therefore he sacrifices to his net and burns incense to his dragnet, for by his net he lives in luxury and enjoys the choicest food” (Hab 1:16). This mention of fishing implements is actually a figurative reference to the Chaldeans weapons of war as they overrun Israel (Hab 1:14-15). Ancient nations often offer sacrifices to their weapons. The Scythians offered yearly sacrifices of cattle and horses to a sword that they set up as a symbol of Mars (Freeman & Chadwick, 1998).

Yahweh's War and Weapons

The Hebrew Scriptures describe Yahweh as such terms: “a Warrior” (Exod 15:3); “triumphs of the Lord” (Judges 5:11); “bloody Yahweh” (Isa 63:1-3); fighting Michael (Dan 12:1-3); and “battles of the Lord” (1 Sam 18:17; 25:28; Deut 32:35; Exod 15:6; 17:16 and Num 21:14). The Bible teaches of “a time to kill . . . a time of war” (Eccl 3:3, 8). God “descends with the warriors” (Judges 5:13) and actively participates in combat (Exod 14:25; Josh 10:14). The “terror of the Lord” fell upon the enemies yielding victories for Israel over superior forces (Jos 10:10-14; Judges 4:12-16; 2 Sam 5:24, 25).

God declares war and sends His people into battle (Ex 17:16; Nm 31:3). War commanders were elected by God and endowed with special spiritual gift for their military roles (Judges 6:34-35; 11:29-33), without which they were doomed to fail (Judges 16:20, 21; 1 Sam 16:14). Participation in such wars required complete surrender, consecration, and dedication to Yahweh as holy servants of Yahweh (Deut 20:5-9; Isa 13:3). Ritual and physical cleanliness was to be maintained during war because God walked “in the midst of the camp;” and the camp was holy eschewing any indecent things that could prevent His holy presence (Deut 23:9-14).

God is indeed a God of war (Rofé, 1985). Prior to going out to war “enquiry was made of the Lord” (Judges 1:1; 20:18, 23, 27; 1 Sam: 10:22; 14:18). God revealed war strategy to Joshua (Josh 5-6) and to prophet Elisha, even striking their Syrian enemies with blindness (2 Kings 6:15-23). God’s will in battle was determined through the prophetic word (1 Kings 22:5-23), dreams, (Judges 7:9-14), Urim and Thummim (Exod 28:30; Lev 8:8), the ephod (1 Sam 30:7), and the presence of the Ark of the Covenant (Josh 6:6, 8, 33; 1 Sam4:3-4).

Yahweh placed his flaming sword at the Garden of Eden (Gen 3:24). This sharp, glittering, and majestic sword of the Lord judges and destroys as well as delivers (Lev 26:25; Num 22:23, 31; Deut 32:25, 41-42; 33:29; Josh 5:13; 10:30, 42; Judges 7:20; 1 Chron 21:16; Psa 17:13; Isa 34:5-6; 66:16; Ezek 12:14; 21:3, 5, 9-12, 15, 28; 30:24-25; 32:10; Jer 47:6; Amos 7:9). He is also depicted as using bow and arrows (Deut 32:23, 42; 2 Kings 13:17; Job 6:4; 16:13; Psa 7:13; 38:2; 45:5; 120:4; Isa 49:2; Lam 3:13; Ezek 5:16; Hos 7:16; Hab. 3:9, 11; Zech. 9:13-14; 10:4). Finally, He draws the spear and battle-axe (Ps 35:3; Hab. 3:11). Assyria was the rod of His anger (Isa 10:5) while Babylon was His war-club (Jer. 51:20; Day, 2009).

Yahweh is also depicted as riding on the clouds (Exod 20:21; Deut 33:26; Psa 68:4, 33). He comes “riding on the cherub” to help His people (Psa 18:11; Deut 33:26); riding on a swift chariot and coming to Egypt as a Judge (Isa 19:1; Jer 4:8); and riding against the enemies of His people (Psa 104:4; Hosea 3:5; Mowinckel, 1962).

Metaphorically, the Lord possesses and uses deadly and shattering weapons of wrath and destruction in His armory (Psa 7:13; Isa 13:5; 59:17-18; Jer 50:25; Ezek 9:2). Moreover, Yahweh, as the Controller of all things, uses natural phenomena like lightning, thunder, fire, smoke, dark clouds, winds, and rain as war weapons in the cause of defending His people (2 Sam 22:9-15; Psa 18:12-14; 29; 77:17-18; 144:6; Zech 9:14; Kim, 2012). The effect of these was to scatter or rout the enemies (Exod 14:24; 23:27; Num 10:35; Josh 10:10; Judges 4:15; 1 Sam 7:10; 11:11; Psa 68:1).

Yahweh referred to tyrant Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon as “My servant” (Jer 25:9) just as He spoke of “My servant Moses” (Num 12:7) and “David, My servant” (Psa 89:3). They were all instruments in effecting the divine purpose in punishing and destroying (Isa 13:17-18; Jer. 5:15, 17; Hab 1:6-7). God used war as a punishment against His

sinning people (Isa 10; Jer 25; Ezek 21; Hab 1; Pink, 1964).

Theories of War

Over the centuries, Christian struggled with an understanding of the realities of war in this world. In response, several theories have been postulated to explain the war phenomenon. Some of these include the just war theory, pacifism, and the crusade or preventive war theory. One common agreement is that war is evil and it is never the preferred will of a good God. Just war theory posits, however, that war is unavoidable in all cases but must be conducted in a just way. It preaches that war must be brought within the limits and principles of justice, following which many wars would even be eliminated in the first place. Hence it tries to find a peace position without war. It denies private citizens of any right to use force, giving that right exclusively to governments and their agents in order to keep peace and secure a just order, devoid of revenge (Ross, 1939; Childress, 1978; Bax, 1988; Feinberg & Feinberg, 1993; Johnson, 2011).

A second war theory is pacifism. A pacifist is someone who is against killing and hence against war. There are different types of pacifism. Universal pacifism, as embraced by Albert Schweitzer, Mohandas Gandhi and Leo Tolstoy, views all killing or violence as always wrong and unjustifiable, whether personal, national, or international. Christian pacifism distinguishes between Christians and unbelievers. While totally banning Christians from any form of killing and violence, unbelievers may justly resort to these in certain instances (Feinberg & Feinberg, 1993).

Private pacifism, as espoused by Augustine, excludes all forms of personal violence at all costs, while allowing that a nation may at times be justified in using force as in a just war. Antiwar pacifism maintains that personal violence may be justified in some cases in defense of one's rights, but nations can never be morally justified in waging war (Feinberg & Feinberg, 1993).

Finally, the crusade or preventive war theory accepts all the fundamental tenets of just war theory but necessarily justifies, not only defensive wars but also crusades and preventive wars (Clouse, 1981). "A preventive war is one begun in *anticipation* of, not in *response* to, an act of aggression. It is an attempt to prevent an evil that has not yet taken place" (Feinberg & Feinberg, 1993, p. 367).

Arms Control

Ancient Greece has the first recorded attempts at arms control with some rules on waging wars and punishment for breaches (Kelly, 1966). Modern history has recorded several arms control treaties and agreements as a way to avoid costly arms races that threaten future peace. The intention is to stop the spread of certain military technologies (such as small arms, nuclear weaponry, chemical weapon, missile technology, and other weapons of mass destruction-WMD), assuring the potential developers that they will not fall victims of those technologies. These arms control agreements also limit the damages to civilians and the environment during wars and the high costs of the development and building of weapons and the prohibitive costs of war itself (OPCW, 1997; Dorn & Scott, 2000; Kolodkin, 2012).

Several countries have agreed to restrict the development, production, stockpiling, proliferation, distribution or usage of these weapons and are supposed to ensure compliance through on-site inspections, verifications by satellite, and/or over flights by airplanes (Shah, 2012). There are also varying gun control laws or policies that regulate the manufacture, sale, transfer, possession, modification, or use of firearms in various countries and states/regions around the

world (Hemenway & Miller, 2000; Hepburn & Hemenway, 2004).

Biblical analogy to arms control is first recorded in 1 Samuel 13:19-22. The Philistines, who held a territorial monopoly on the manufacture of iron implements, prevented the Israelites from having access to swords or spears: "Not a blacksmith could be found in the whole land of Israel, because the Philistines had said, 'Otherwise the Hebrews will make swords or spears!'"²⁰ So all Israel went down to the Philistines to have their plow points, mattocks, axes and sickles sharpened.²¹ The price was two-thirds of a shekel for sharpening plow points and mattocks, and a third of a shekel for sharpening forks and axes and for repointing goads.²² So on the day of the battle not a soldier with Saul and Jonathan had a sword or spear in his hand; only Saul and his son Jonathan had them" (NIV).

The Philistines in the Iron Age I Period

The incidence in this story occurred during the Iron Age I or Early Iron in Palestine. This was the archaeological period during which iron artifacts began to come into common use around 1200 BC. Iron was already in use from 2700 BC in Mesopotamia and Egypt. Its lateness in entering Palestine and Israel particularly is biblically and archaeologically attested to by the slower development of the necessary technology there (Josh 6:24; 17:16; 22:8; 1 Sam 13:19-22; 17; Richards, 2011).

Biblical records mentioned a league of five major Philistine cities (Pentapolis): Ashdod, Ashkelon, Ekron, Gaza, and Gath; each governed by a *seren*, or "lord" (1 Sam 6:17; Jer 25:20). The Philistines are described as proud (Zech 9:6), idolatrous (Judges 16:23; 1 Sam 5:2), superstitious (Isa 2:6), warlike (1 Sam 17:1; 28:1), and men of great strength and stature amongst (1 Sam 17:4-7; 2 Sam 21:16, 18-20). Philistines were a vital aggressive people (Hauer, 1969). 1 Samuel 3:5-6 showed their oppressive strength. They were first interested in trade upon arrival in Palestine since they were a civilized folk and not nomads (Grant, 1936; Mutingh, 1960; Rad, 1970; Westermann, 1984; Rendsburg, 1987). Philistinian trade sophistication is attested to in their wares such as the bichrome and other imported wares which seems to be concentrated along the major trade route: the *via maris* running east from Megiddo through Beth-shemesh and Hazor into Syria (Kassis, 1965, p. 270).

The Philistines were sophisticated city urban planners and accomplished architects with advanced technology. They had distinctive luxurious bi-chrome ware, artistic pottery, iron, bronze, and ivory artifacts, and other metal works. Typical Philistine pottery shapes include the globular pilgrim jar, the high-stemmed kylix, the pyriform jar, the squat pyxis, and the popular stirrup jar, usually decorated with red and black motifs. Some of the artistic motifs included looped spirals, concentric circles, half circles in a fishscale pattern, checkers, net design, and stylized birds. They practiced elaborate religious rituals, worshipped an array of gods and goddesses and cremated their dead (Dothan & Dothan, 1992; Sinclair, 2000).

Evidences from Philistines and Israelite Settlements

The Israelites lived on the highlands while the Philistines lived on the lowlands and plains. Philistine settlements are identified distinctly through iconography and material remains of cultic, military, dietary, personal-grooming, hygiene features and practices, pottery, botanical and zoological remains. Philistines dined on pork and beef served with sauces rather than on the highland diet of stewed sheep or goat (Hesse, 1990; Finkelstein, 2000; Bloch-Smith, 2003; Mazar, 2009). Their settlements are distinguished based on the Israelites distinguishing traits of: circumcision (1 Sam 18:25-26; 31:4; 2

Sam 3:14), maintaining a short beard (Lev 19:27; Deut 14:2), abstinence from eating pork (Lev 11:7-8; Deut 14:2), and military inferiority (1 Sam 13:5, 19; 17). The Mernaptah describes the Philistines as “of the countries of the sea, who had no foreskins” (Breasted, 1962, p. 249 §588; Olyan, 2000). While the Merneptah describes the Israelites with short beard, the Medinet Habu depicts the Philistines as clean-shaven Sea peoples (Stager, 1985; Medinet Habu, 1930; Olyan, 1998).

The Philistine locations on the plain and coastlands placed them closer to the more elaborate and extensive bronze workshops, metal smelting, casting, and trade in metals. Their coastal advantage gave them the control of exports into the interior and they obtained the new types of weapons introduced into the region. These resulted in the Philistines’ greater resources and easier access to metallurgists and their products than their Israelite counterparts (Bloch-Smith, 2003).

Israel Versus Philistines: Military Match-Up

Metalworking had existed for centuries all over the Near East before it came to Palestine about the 12th century upon the arrival of the Philistines; introducing the Iron Age to Palestine. The Philistines made solid profits from their monopoly of “modern” weaponry over Israel who always had to patronize them for making and maintaining farming implements. The Philistines charged exorbitant prices, as high as two thirds of a shekel, to sharpen or repair farming tools. Such prices made weapons unaffordable to the average Israelite (Smith, 1995; Harris, 2002). If one does not sharpen the axe, the user must exert more strength (Eccl 10:10).

The Philistines were more technologically advanced than the Hebrews, having learned sophisticated metallurgy for weapons from the Hittites or other Anatolian peoples with whom they definitely interacted during the Sea People’s migration from the Aegean Sea area to Canaan around 1200 BC (Merrill, 1985). Their knowledge of iron gave them the ability to make chariots: formidable weapons of war that allowed them to dominate the coastal plains. These chariots, however, were ineffective in the mountainous regions of central Israel. As a result, the Philistines were unable to dislodge their Jewish neighbors (Barry et al, 2012).

Philistines had a superiority and monopoly on metal smelting (1 Sam 13:19, the unspecified metal could be copper, bronze, or iron). They possessed swords (1 Sam 14:20), spears (1 Sam 17:7; 2 Sam 21:16), and bows and arrows (1 Sam 31:3) fought in infantry, cavalry, and chariot units (1 Sam 13:5; 2 Sam 1:6) against Israelite troops that were on foot, equipped only with bows and arrows (1 Sam 13:22). Their dominance is best exemplified in the war regalia of Goliath: a helmet, a breastplate of scale armor, and greaves on his legs, all of bronze. He carried a bronze javelin slung from his shoulders and a spear with a massive iron head. This looks like the Assyrian helmets with no nose-piece, an opening that poorly clad David with only a slingshot and a stick explored to strike Goliath in the forehead (McKenzie, 2000).

A 12th century decorated vase attests to similar armaments and armor, showing marching warriors, clad in helmets with nose-pieces, coats of mail, and leg guards, carry a long spear (Dothan & Dothan, 1992). The Medinet Habu depictions of Sea Peoples battling Egyptians corroborate this picture of heavily armed, professional Philistine warriors. They fought from ships and were clothed in a helmet and body armor/ribbed corselet, using round shields, spears, and lances/pikes (Bloch-Smith, 2003).

The Philistines used long straight swords, spears, a small round shield, a dagger, a plain upper garment, and perhaps a breastplate for hand-to-hand combat, arranged on foot in phalanges of four men. Two horses usually drew their

war chariots, and their riders are usually armed with two spears (Bloch-Smith, 2003). On the open field, the Philistines relied exclusively on heavy war chariot infantry and armory (2 Sam 1:6) but also used archery barrage masterfully (1 Sam 31:3; Yadin, 1963; Alt, 1966; Hauer, 1969). They kept their knowledge as a military secret from Israel in order to oppress them.

Israelite Army and Weaponry

Biblical record reveals four successive stages in the development of the Israelite army: semi-nomadic bands and peasants' militia in pre-monarchy times up till Saulide reign; and professional heavy infantry and classic ancient Near Eastern chariot army during the rest of the monarchy from David onwards. The first stage would have been like the bands of Habiru marauders depicted by the Amarna texts during the 3rd millennium BCE, such as those led by clan chieftains likes Abraham and Esau. At that stage, they sometimes hired themselves out to or collaborated with the local rulers (Gen 14; Schley, 2000). The peak of this was when every adult male from each tribe "who drew the sword" was conscripted into the army under military officers over 12 monthly levies (Judges 8:10; 20:2; 1 Chron 27).

The Israelite peasant militia forms the backdrop to events in the books Joshua, Judges, and 1 Samuel in the Iron I Age. During the Philistines arms embargo (1 Sam 13:19-22), the Israelites improvised the weapons of the poor: light javelins for throwing, bows and arrows, slings, and clubs or maces made from animal bones such as the thigh bone of an ox or steer and jawbone of an ass (Judges 15:14-17). There was a league of skillful Benjaminite slingers (Judges 20:16), bodyguards (*mišma'at*; 1 Sam. 22:14) and the *rāšîm* ("runners" 1 Sam. 22:17; 2 Kings 10:25). There were also local strongmen surrounded by bands of freebooters or ruffians who survived on the spoils of raiding (Judges 11:3-33) or got direct pay (Judges 9:4). They stripped their slain enemies of their arms (1 Sam 17:54). They became a highly disciplined and mobile force ideally suited to fighting in the hill country of Israel (Schley, 1988, 1990, 2000; Soden, 1994).

The Israelite army was like the underdog to the better-equipped Philistines. King Saul's strategy for Israel was to avoid large-scale offensive operations against the Philistines but to attempt to liberate and secure the ancient Israelite land at the center and the south (Hauer, 1969). Israel's warriors were also creative enough to turn their farm implements and household tools into weapons for war. Only King Saul and his prince, Jonathan, had swords and spears and armour-bearers (1 Sam 13: 22; Riggans, 1994). Unable to match the urbanized Philistines army in armory, the Israelites relied on stratagem, ambush, guerilla warfare, and charismatic leadership of the moment to achieve victory.

Israelite archaeological Iron I sites yielded more projectile points such as heads for an arrow spear, javelin, or lance. These points required a minimal amount of metal and were mounted on inexpensive wooden shafts. These gave the Israelites the advantage of fighting from a distance, with metal-tipped arrows to shoot and metal-tipped shafts to thrust or throw. On the other hand, the Philistine weapons were more of knives/blades, daggers, and long swords, which were produced with more metal and expertise than fashioning points. These Philistines weapons, combined with greater mobility with their chariots, gave them upper hand in hand-to-hand combat (Bloch-Smith, 2003, p. 419).

Copper and tin constitute bronze and the art of casting bronze was already perfected for most domestic, commercial, and military uses. The easy availability of bronze might have hindered the development of iron technology. Also, iron had "only been available in the form of wrought iron, which was softer and less durable than bronze; thus it was regarded as a semiprecious metal" (Myers, 1987, p. 528).

Shortly after 1300 BC, the Ancient Near East experienced a chaotic political climate that disrupted the trade routes and commercial structures including the import of copper and tin (Myers, 1987). This condition also contributed to the search for alternative methods of tool and weapon manufacture by metal-smiths, especially using iron as raw material. It was later when the iron manufacturing method was found that its use became widespread and the value its strength was heightened (Job 40:18; 41:27; Isa. 48:4; Dan. 2:40). Technology of Iron has been greatly investigated and documented (Wertime & Muhly, 1980; Muhly, 1982; McNutt, 1990).

Iron was the material used in making agricultural implements (1 Sam 13:20-21), weapons (Num 35:16), chariots (Josh 17:16), weights (1 Sam 17:7), pillars (Jer 1:18), bolts for gates (Isa 45:2), nails and hinges (1 Chron 22:3), bedsteads (Deut 3:11), yokes (Deut 28:48), and chains and fetters (Psa 105:18), all of which have been discovered in large numbers in the corresponding strata of many sites in Palestine (Negev, 1990).

Several weapons were documented in the biblical corpus (James, 1966; Aharoni, 1975; Dothan, 1982; Sherratt, 1994; Emery, 1999). A few of them would be considered as a sampling of what obtained in the Iron Age I period. The sword (Heb. *hereb*) is the most frequently mentioned weapon in the Bible. The earliest swords in the ancient world were usually straight, double-edged and more akin to daggers, being used for stabbing. Evidence of these was found at the Royal Cemetery at Ur and from Dorak (Anatolia), all dated about 2500 BC. By the time of the Egyptian New Kingdom, the longer-bladed sword began to be used widely. The Philistines used the long, straight sword.

The spear (Heb. *h^anîl*), consisting of a wooden shaft and a metallic head, in later times of iron (1 Sam 13:19; 17:7), was greatly favored by the Sumerians in the 3rd millennium and also used by Egyptian charioteers in the 19th Dynasty and subsequently. The average spear was 2-3 meters (6.5-10 feet) long. It was a basic weapon of the infantry, and later the chariotry.

Shepherds usually employed the sling (*qela*; 1 Sam 17:40), to ward off wild beasts from their flocks or to prevent animals from straying. However, it was used as a weapon of war by the Egyptian, Assyrian, and Babylonian armies. The Israelites employed companies of slingers in their armies such as the aforementioned ambidextrous Benjaminites (1 Chron 12:2). Sling-stones (pointed or round pebbles) fired by Assyrian besiegers were found in the Lachish excavations.

The use of shields of varying sizes and shapes and materials in battle is attested in the earliest battle scenes from Egypt and Mesopotamia from the 3rd millennium BC. The Hebrew terms were *māgēn*, for the smaller shield (2 Chron 14:8) and *šinnâ* for the larger version (1 Sam 17:7). While the metal shield provided greater protection, it also impeded movement (1 Kings 14:27). The wooden frame shield was covered with hide and oiled (2 Sam 1:21; Isa 21:5). As a compromise, leather shields were also studded with metal discs to increase their effectiveness.

Metal helmets were expensive to make, and in some periods their use was restricted to kings and other military leaders. The Sumerian and Akkadian soldiers were already wearing them by the 3rd millennium BC. Examples of its use are found in the Bible (1 Sam 17:5, 38; Ezek 23:24; 27:10; 38:5).

Peace: God's aim and End of War

God's power over His obedient followers is the reason why no weapon will succeed against them (Isa 54:17). It is His ultimate goal to abolish and break all weapons of war (Josh 24:12; 1 Sam 2:4; 17:47; Psa 76:3; Job 41:29; Ezek. 39:9; Hosea 1:7; 2:18). At last, swords will be turned into ploughshares and spears into pruning hooks, battle bows broken,

and war regalia burnt (Psa 46:9; Isa 2:4; 9:5; Eze 39:7-10; Hos 2:18; Zec 9:10; Micah 4:3).

Psalm 46 belongs to the Israelite cultic use in their great autumnal festival in which they celebrated God's mighty acts of God in creation and in the past, present and future of human history (Davidson, 1998; Waltner, 2006). Psalm 46:8-11 promises that God will end the waging of all wars by personally destroying the war-waging and "raging" power of men, nations, and their weapons of war (See Isa 2:1-4; Micah 4:1-4). God commands: "Be still and know that I am God" (Ps 46:10). This is more than "an invitation to become quiet and relax and meditate" but a command to "leave off waging war, and know that I am God" (Waltner, 2006, p. 236; See Isa 30:1, 15). Neither can weapons of violence ever bring an end to violence (Isa 31:1-3; Zech 4:6; Matt 26:52).

Trust in God's unfailing love rather than weapons of war, is the source of true and lasting security. "No king is saved by the size of his army; no warrior escapes by his great strength. A horse is a vain hope for deliverance; despite all its great strength it cannot save. But the eyes of the LORD are on those who fear him, on those whose hope is in his unfailing love, to deliver them from death and keep them alive in famine" (Psa 33:16-19; See also Deut 1:41-44; 20:1-4; 1Sam 17:45-47; 2 Chron 20:20-24; 32:7-8; Psa 20:7-8; 76:3; 147:10-11; Prov 21:31; Eccl 9:18; Isa 22:8-11; 31:1; 54:16-17; Zech 4:6).

God teaches His followers that the way to win battles is to trust in God and not in one's weapons of war. Reliance on arms is futile (Amos 2:13-16; Hosea 10:13-14; Micah 1:15; 5:10-11; Isa 29:15). Foreign alliance is strongly denounced for Israel (Isa 31:1ff). When Israel was disobedient, their armaments are valueless (James, 1929). God delivers the enemy into Israel's hand (Judges 3:28; 7:15), not because of Israel's but by God's own righteousness, judgment against the wickedness of the idolatrous nations, and because of God's faithfulness to the covenant which he swore to their fathers, to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob (Deut 9:4, 5).

God has been describing Himself as bringing about what He permits, even though the Devil is to blame for all the calamities in this world. This is the biblical way to distance God from the dualist views of ancient Persians and modern Zoroastrianism, which teaches that there are two equal and competing gods presiding over this world: one good and the other evil (Pink, 1964). In the final analysis, Satan would be crushed and annihilated (Gen 3:15).

CONCLUSIONS

The Israel-Philistine military match-up in the Iron I Age demonstrates that weapons of war were mere formalities. At the beginning, the Philistines were the only ones with chariots of iron. Later on, David also acquired, as war ransom, thousands of chariots and horsesto which Solomon added, putting them in cities (2 Sam 8:3-4; 1 Kings 4:26; 10:26). Not matter the amount of weaponry; God was still the true Warrior-Champion. To be with God is to be on the winning side, no matter the presence or not of armory. "In spite of the Philistine attempt at armament control, the Israelites were able to defeat both the Philistines (1 Sam 14) and Amalakites (1 Sam 15) in battle" (Wright, 2003, p. 693).

There were several instances of lack of weapons arms in Israel at which time God still gave Israel victory. Deborah sang victory song over Sisera and his 900 chariots of iron and a numerous well-equipped fighters while "not a shield or spear was seen among forty thousand in Israel (Judges 5:8). Samson tore the lion with no weapon in his hand (Judges 14:6). David had no sword in his match-up against iron-clad Goliath (1 Sam. 17:50). The solo-armed eccentric King Saul was chasing the unarmed David (1 Sam. 21:8). At last, David lamented Saul's death: "how have the weapons of

war perished” (2 Sam. 1:27)! It is not about weapon but about God.

God needed to show Himself as the conquering One in that ANE context and in that phase of Israeli nation-building when they needed to possess their promised territory.

God’s reputation is at stake in the great controversy going on between good and evil in the world. It appears that the military successes or failure of a given people is tantamount to the power or impotence of the deity of such people. Often God’s servants appealed to this and God Himself seems to be concerned about his reputation (Exod 32:12; Num 14:15-16; Deut 9:28; 32; Josh 7:9; Ezek 20:9, 14, 22; 36:20-21). Psalm 79:9-10 echoes this theme: “Help us, O God our deliverer, for the sake of the glory of your name. . . Let the nations not say, ‘Where is their God?’ Before our eyes let it be known among the nations that you avenge the spilled blood of your servants” (Glatt-Gilad, 2002).

In this current dispensation, all attention is drawn to the spiritual dimension of the war between good and evil into which all humanity is drawn, without an exception and without respite. God is still our spiritual Champion through and in whom victory is sure.

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