

# CHARIOTS AND HORSES

– Part Three –

*Some trust in chariots, and some in horses:  
but we will remember the name of the LORD our God.*

– Psalm 20: 7 –

All Scripture citations are to the KJV, unless noted otherwise.

*The previous instalment in this series recounted developments in the Israel-Hamas war as of mid-Jan. 2024, touching briefly on the US-Russia conflict in Ukraine (now in its closing phase), which augured the present imbroglio in the Middle East. We noted the motives of the U.S.A. in this imperial venture and the predicament in which Pres. Biden and PM Netanyahu find themselves. The balance of the article comprised quotations from credible Jewish sources outlining the history of Israel's accession to the Holy Land in 1948 and the social and cultural impact on the resident Palestinian population. As of early February the systematic destruction of the Gaza territory proceeds apace, with no end in sight. Large swathes of citizenry around the world agitate for a cease-fire and increased humanitarian aid for the Gazans, appeals which Israel has rebuffed, the ruling of the International Court of Justice countered and brushed aside.*

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**AS OF** mid-February 2024, Israel continues its horror show, bombing and shelling the Palestinian community under the mantra of collective punishment, as though Palestinians ‘do not count’ as people. Israel is gripped by the *Amalek syndrome* and PM Netanyahu has vowed to press on with that biblical analogy in mind – the extermination of the entire population of Gaza. He is unlikely to succeed in this bloodthirsty aim; at some point the U.S. and its allies will recoil from the slaughter that their own people see on their screens daily and will urge a halt to the carnage, under pressure of uprisings on their streets . . . or other powers may intervene.

The likelihood of an unambiguous victory of the Israel Defence Forces over platoons of Hamas fighters seems small. For every Hamas soldier killed, another will rise in his place. The October 7 trap has been sprung, and the Jewish nation must live with the far-reaching consequences. Equally unlikely is the repatriation to the Gaza Strip of the Palestinian population or any other territory within the border of Israel. The relationship between Jews and Palestinians is now toxic beyond repair, as one by one, family by family, Palestinian Arabs are evicted from their homes in the West Bank. Amity between Israel and Egypt and the countries round about her has hit bottom. In some form or other October 7 will return.

As for the United States, a bombastic and corrosive political actor on the world stage, its predicament is the hole it has dug for itself in west Asia. Having gambled on a misguided war with Russia across the chessboard of Ukraine – the soldiers and civilians of Ukraine the pieces – and suffering a stinging defeat, America is a much-reduced power, now locked in a fatal embrace with Israel.

## **Strife In the Birthing of Israel**

As if decreed, the dire relations between the nascent Jewish state and the Arab population in what under the British mandate came to be known as Palestine was, in the natural progression of matters, inevitable. The clash began long before the onset of the Second World War. The ending of that war, which had cost the Jewish people six million souls in the camps and ovens of the Third Reich, the memory of it abrading the social and cultural milieu of this disputed area – about the size of Wales – wherein two mutually-alienated peoples were required to jostle for living space. It would prove

impossible to accommodate the aspirations of both. ‘Jerusalem’ was set in prophecy to become ‘a burdensome stone for all people, and *all that burden themselves with it shall be cut in pieces*’ (Zech. 12: 3; emphasis added). That year of enforced cohabitation, 1948, the crucible – what the Palestinian Arabs refer to as the Nakba – would project its train of sorrows down the track of history, setting the stage for the brutal conflict we see today. These epochal events will shape the future of the two principal opponents – and our own.

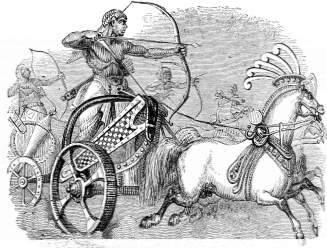
Of that pivotal year, Benny Morris, in his history titled simply, *1948*, offers what has become a familiar glimpse of the struggle now under way in Gaza:

Like most wars involving built-up areas, the 1948 War resulted in the killing, and occasional massacre, of civilians. During the civil war half of the war, both sides paid little heed to the the possible injury or death of civilians as battled raged in the mixed cities and rural landscape of Palestine, though Haganah [the Jewish Defence Force] operational orders frequently specifically cautioned against harming women and children. The IZL [*irgun zvai leumi*, Irgun] and LHI [*lohamei herut Yisrael*, Freedom Fighters of Israel] seem to have indulged in little discrimination, and the Palestinian Arab militias often deliberately targeted civilians. Moreover, the disorganization of the two sides coupled with the continued presence and nominal rule of the [British] mandate government obviated the establishment by either side of regular POW camps. This meant that both sides generally refrained from taking prisoners. When the civil war gave way to the conventional war, as the Jewish militias – the Haganah, IZL, and LHI – changed into the IDF and as the Arab militias were replaced by more or less disciplined regular armies, the killing of civilians and prisoners of war almost stopped, except for the series of atrocities committed by IDF troops in Lydda in July and in the Galilee at the end of October and beginning of November 1948.

After the war, the Israelis tended to hail the ‘purity of arms’ of its militia-men and soldiers and to contrast this with Arab barbarism, which on occasion expressed itself in the mutilation of captured Jewish corpses. This reinforced the Israelis’ positive self-image and helped them ‘sell’ the new state abroad; it also demonized the enemy. In truth, however, the Jews committed far more atrocities than the Arabs and killed far more civilians and POWs in deliberate acts of brutality in the course of 1948. This was probably due to the circumstance that the victorious Israelis captured some four hundred Arab villages and towns during April-November 1948, whereas the Palestinian Arabs and ALA failed to take any settlements and the Arab armies that invaded in mid-May overran fewer than a dozen Jewish settlements.

– Benny Morris, *1948: A History of the First Arab-Israeli War* (Yale University Press, 2008), pp. 404, 405.

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**THE TEXT** at the head of this series, Psa. 20: 7, attributed to the psalmist, King David, sets forth in a single sentence both the military philosophy and the theocratic nature of the biblical Israel:

Some trust in chariots, and some in horses: but we will remember the name of the LORD our God.

In this instance the idea would be that some ‘invoke’ (i.e., trust in) their military might for victory (cf. NEB ‘boast’; NIV ‘trust’; NRSV ‘take pride’). The *New American Standard Bible* has: ‘Some *boast* in chariots and some in horses, but we will boast in the name of the LORD, our God.’ ‘Boast’ not in the sense of *puffery*, but rather *certainty of deliverance*; ‘name’ has a variety of meanings – [God’s] *reputation* would fit here. The ‘some [trust]’ in v. 7 may refer to Israel’s enemies.

Of this legendary war machine we read:

Chariot warfare relied upon the wheel, the horse and the bow. By looking in turn at the evolution of these three critical components, it is possible to chart the charioteer’s amazing rise to prominence. Wagons as well as carts are known to have been used from the beginning of the third millennium BC, but they were heavy, solid-wheeled vehicles, and were more readily drawn by oxen than horses. For the fast-moving chariot a spoked wheel was essential. So light were the best chariots that their owners could pick them up and raise them above their heads.

– Arthur Cotterell, *Chariot: From Chariot to Tank, the Astounding Rise and Fall of the World’s First War Machine* (The Overlook Press, Woodstock & New York, 2005), p. 39.

Of Israel’s kings the LORD demanded (Deut. 17: 16) . . .

he shall not multiply horses to himself, nor cause the people to return to Egypt, to the end that he should multiply horses: forasmuch as the LORD hath said unto you, Ye shall henceforth return no more that way.

### ***Iron Chariots***

Judges 1: 19 stands out as an odd passage as far as its theology goes. The reference to chariots of *iron*, is of additional interest:

And the LORD was with Judah; and *he* drave out the inhabitants of the mountain; *but could not drive out the inhabitants of the valley, because they had chariots of iron.*

In his Commentary Clarke opines:

Strange! were the *iron chariots* too strong for Omnipotence? The whole of this verse is improperly rendered. The first clause, *The Lord was with Judah* should terminate the 18th verse, and this gives the reason for the success of this tribe: *The Lord was with*

*Judah*, and therefore *he slew the Canaanites that inhabited Zephath, &c., &c.* Here then is a complete period: the remaining part of the verse either refers to a different time, or to the rebellion of Judah against the Lord, which caused him to withdraw his support. Therefore the Lord was with Judah, and these were the effects of his protection but afterwards, when the children of Israel did evil in the sight of the Lord, and served Baalim, &c., God was no longer with them, and their enemies were left to be pricks in their eyes, and thorns in their side, as God himself had said.

This is the turn given to the verse by *Jonathan ben Uzziel*, the Chaldee paraphrast: “And the WORD of Jehovah was in the support of the house of Judah, and they extirpated the inhabitants of the mountains but afterwards, WHEN THEY SINNED, they were not able to extirpate the inhabitants of the plain country, because they had chariots of iron.” They [Israel] were now left to *their own strength*, and their adversaries prevailed against them.

From a work called the *Dhunoor Veda*, it appears that the ancient Hindoos had war chariots similar to those of the Canaanites. They are described as having many wheels, and to have contained a number of *rooms*. – *Ward’s Customs*.

According to *Strong’s Exhaustive Concordance*, the Hebrew word for a chariot is *reckeb*, and has the following meanings: a *vehicle*; by implication a *team*; by extension, *cavalry*; by analogy, a *rider* (similar to *rakkab*, a *charioteer*).

Ezek. 23: 2-24 pictures Israel’s defensive plight under the figure of two women. Clarke elaborates:

*Son of man, there were two women* – All the Hebrews were derived from *one source*, Abraham and Sarah; and, till the schism under Rehoboam, formed but one people: but as these ten tribes and a half separated from Judah and Benjamin, they became two distinct people under different kings; called the kingdom of Judah, and the kingdom of Israel. They are called here, because of their consanguinity, *two sisters*. The elder, Samaria, (for there was the *seat of government* for the kingdom of Israel,) was called *aholah*, ‘a tent.’ The younger, Judah, was called *aholibah*, ‘my tent is in her,’ because the temple of God was in Jerusalem, the seat of the government of the kingdom of Judah.

Verse 24 concerns the Babylonians, who ‘. . . shall come against [Israel] with *chariots, wagons, and wheels*, and with an assembly of people, which shall set against thee buckler and shield and helmet round about: and I will set judgment before them, and they shall judge thee according to their judgments’. ‘Chariots’ is the translation of the Hebrew, *hotsen*, meaning ‘sharp’ or ‘strong’ – that is, a weapon of war.

### **Chariot in the New Testament**

In Acts 8: 26-28 we read that the evangelist, Philip, striding ‘toward the south unto the way that goeth down from Jerusalem unto Gaza, which is desert’ encountered ‘a man of Ethiopia, an eunuch of great

authority under Candace queen of the Ethiopians, who had the charge of all her treasure, and had come to Jerusalem for to worship, [and] was returning, and sitting in his *chariot* reading Esaias the prophet.’ The relevant Greek word here is *harmos*, and denotes *joined* by a draught pole – that is, *an articulated vehicle*.

### **The Weapons Of Our Warfare**

Adverting now to *spiritual* Israel, those reckoned by God as the seed of Abraham *by faith* – the Christian Church of the Gospel Age – the Apostle Paul declares the nature of their particular battle (2 Cor. 10: 2-5):

. . . I think to be bold against some, which think of us as if we walked according to the flesh. For though we [do] walk in the flesh, we do not war after the flesh: (For the weapons of our warfare are not carnal, but mighty through God to the pulling down of strong holds;) Casting down imaginations, and every high thing that exalteth itself against the knowledge of God, and bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ . . . .

The principle enunciated in this passage – that Christians are not to brandish physical weapons to defend themselves – will hold true for the Jewish nation in the end time, when Gog and Magog come upon her, to ‘take a spoil’ (Ezek. 38: 12). For whilst other nations will then boast of their armies and weaponry and turn them against her, Israel will be obliged to depend solely on the LORD for their victory. She will not need ‘carnal’ weapons – no ‘chariots and horses’ required.

Charles Haddon Spurgeon, in his sermon, ‘Chariots of Iron’, writes:

The tribe of Judah, then, was commissioned to lead the way, and we see two things in its conduct of the enterprise. First, the Lord’s power was trusted and magnified, for ‘the Lord was with Judah, and Judah drave out the inhabitants of the mountain.’ Secondly, by this very tribe, this right royal tribe, the Lord’s power was distrusted, and therefore restrained; for ‘Judah could not drive out the inhabitants of the valley, because they had chariots of iron.’ Yet, as if to rebuke them, they had a singular incident set before them for the vindication of God’s power, and of that we read in the twentieth verse. Caleb, that grand old man, who still lived on, the sole survivor of all who came out of Egypt, had obtained Hebron as his portion, and he went up in his old age, when his bones were sore and set, and slew the three sons of Anak, even three mighty giants, and took possession of their city. In this way the Lord’s power was trusted and vindicated from the slur which Judah had brought upon it. . . .

### **How Far is Near?**

At 8,019 sq. miles, Israel lacks what one geopolitical analyst calls ‘strategic depth’ – that is, the distances between the forward battle lines and the urban centre. All towns and cities within Israel are within easy reach of a regional enemy firing short- or medium-range missiles. Given the latest advances in air, land and sea systems and packs of drones, now in the hands of Israel’s enemies, the Jewish nation is right to be neurotic. A large invading army, moving at

speed *en masse* from several directions – ‘like a storm . . . thou and all thy bands’ (Ezek. 38: 9) – with missile support, could overwhelm Israel’s air defence systems and a thinly-stretched IDF. Israel’s principal advantage is the known ferocity of its response, along with its electronic and intelligence assets, and mobile armour. Assuming a non-nuclear conflict on all sides, just how the assault of Gog and Magog will unfold is uncertain. One element is sure: Israel cannot save herself by military force alone but *will be* rescued by the Almighty when the Mashiach appears. (See [Why Israel must win this war — and why it cannot.](#))

### **Does Today’s Israel Believe In The Promise Of Jehovah’s Rescue?**

Hoshea, a king of ancient Israel [Samaria], one of the northern kingdom’s less corrupt sovereigns (2 Kings 17: 2), was fearful of invasion by Shalmaneser, king of Assyria – to whom he was subject by an pre-existing treaty. Craftily, he forged a secret alliance with the ruler of Egypt, named *So*, a sort of insurance policy against attack from the hated Assyrian. The implication of the biblical narrative is that Hoshea *lacked faith in Divine deliverance*. For this sin, Hoshea’s kingdom was subsequently set upon by Shalmaneser, and Hoshea taken prisoner (2 Kings 17: 1-4).

Israel today is closely aligned with Western culture – its hubris, lewdness, materialism and secularism. The country is proud of its armaments, which include the god of the atom bombs – the ‘Samson Option’ – a weapon they may consider deploying either to deter invasion or to exact vengeance in the event they are overrun, should the world turn against them:-

In 1991, American investigative journalist and Pulitzer Prize winning political writer Seymour Hersh authored the book *Samson Option: Israel’s Nuclear Arsenal & American Foreign Policy*. In the preface of the book he writes: ‘This is a book about how Israel became a nuclear power in secret. It also tells how that secret was shared, sanctioned, and, at times, willfully ignored by the top political and military officials of the United States since the Eisenhower years.’

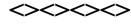
– [Samson Option](#), *Wikipedia*

In the same article, military historian, Martin van Creveld, is quoted thus:-

We possess several hundred atomic warheads and rockets and can launch them at targets in all directions, perhaps even at Rome. Most European capitals are targets for our air force. Let me quote General Moshe Dayan: ‘Israel must be like a mad dog, too dangerous to bother.’ I consider it all hopeless at this point. We shall have to try to prevent things from coming to that, if at all possible. Our armed forces, however, are not the thirtieth strongest in the world, but rather the second or third. We have the capability to take the world down with us. And I can assure you that that will happen before Israel goes under.

One wonders how deep into Israeli society such sentiments penetrate.

... *to be continued*



**Further reading:-**

The Masada Complex; *The Jerusalem Post*, Jan. 26, 2012; by Jamie Levin.

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