

## **Dr. Tremper Longman, God is a Warrior, Session 2, How Warfare is Conducted: Before, During and After a Battle**

© 2024 Tremper Longman and Ted Hildebrandt

This is Dr. Tremper Longman and his teaching on God is a Warrior, session 2, how warfare is conducted before, during, and after a battle.

So, before actually getting into phase one, as I said, I'd like to, first of all, talk about how warfare is conducted in the Old Testament, and what I'm doing here is sort of synthesizing material from a couple of Old Testament sources. First of all, there are two laws that are connected to the waging of warfare in the book of Deuteronomy, Deuteronomy 7 and Deuteronomy 20.

So, the book of Deuteronomy is a covenant renewal, which Moses is leading Israel to do just before he goes up and dies on Mount Nebo, and the second generation of Israelites being led by Joshua go into the Promised Land. So, this is an occasion for them to renew their commitment to God and to commit themselves to obeying Him. And so, the book of Deuteronomy, many people say, and I agree, has many of the components of an ancient Near Eastern treaty, which is basically having, remember we talked about metaphors of God, God is a king, He's a sovereign king, Israel is His vassal people, and so we won't go into all the different parts of the covenant treaty, but especially in a book like Deuteronomy, the law plays a really important point.

And of course, the law begins, Deuteronomy 5, with the Ten Commandments, and then the case law that follows, and this is true in other case law too, like in the book of Exodus, are really taking the principles of the Ten Commandments and applying them to specific cases, situations, kind of like lawyers tell me what we call case law or statutory law and what we have in Deuteronomy 7 and 20 is an application of you must not kill in the context of war. Now it is actually, I just mistranslated the commandment and made a fundamental error, it should actually be translated as, you must not murder. It's not a general prohibition against killing, which would be kind of awkward considering that there are instances that the book of Deuteronomy itself says is legitimate for killing and that's basically what these laws of warfare are doing.

So, I'm going to read them, they're a little lengthy, but I think it's good to have these in mind and hopefully, you have a Bible and you can get it out and follow along with me. I'm happy to be reading in the NIV and it says in Deuteronomy 7, 1 and following, When the Lord your God brings you into the land you are entering to possess and drives out before you many nations, the Hittites, Girgishites, Amorites, Canaanites, Perizzites, Hittites, and Jebusites, seven nations larger and stronger than

you, and when the Lord your God has delivered them over to you and you have defeated them, then you must destroy them totally. We'll come back to this verb and its noun, haram, which is being translated here, you must destroy them totally.

Make no treaty with them and show them no mercy. Do not intermarry with them, do not give your daughters to their sons or take their daughters for your sons, for they will turn your children away from following me to serve other gods, and the Lord's anger will burn against you and will quickly destroy you. This is what you are to do to them, break down their altars, smash their sacred stones, cut down their Asherah poles, and burn their idols in the fire.

For you are a people holy to the Lord your God. The Lord your God has chosen you out of all the peoples on the face of the earth to be his people, his treasured possession. The Lord did not set his affection on you and choose you because you were more numerous than other peoples, for you were the fewest of all people.

But it was because the Lord loved you and kept the oath he swore to your ancestors that he brought you out with a mighty hand and redeemed you from the land of slavery, from the power of Pharaoh, king of Egypt. Know therefore that the Lord your God is God, he is the faithful God, keeping his covenant of love to a thousand generations of those who love him and keep his commandments. But those who hate him he will repay to their face by destruction.

He will not be slow to repay to their faces those who hate him. Therefore, take care to follow the commands, decrees, and laws I give you today. I'm going to skip down to verse 16.

You must destroy all the peoples the Lord your God gives over to you. Do not look on them with pity and do not serve their gods, for that will be a snare to you. You may say to yourselves, these nations are stronger than we are.

How can we drive them out? But do not be afraid of them. Remember well what the Lord your God did to Pharaoh and to all Egypt. You saw with your own eyes the great trials, the signs and wonders, the mighty hand and outstretched arm with which the Lord your God brought you out.

The Lord your God will do the same to all the peoples you now fear. Moreover, the Lord your God will send the hornet among them until even the survivors who hide from you have perished. Do not be terrified by them, for the Lord your God who is among you is a great and awesome God.

The Lord your God will drive out those nations before you little by little. You will not be allowed to eliminate them all at once or the wild animals will multiply around you.

But the Lord your God will deliver them over to you, throwing them into great confusion until you are destroyed.

He will give their kings into your hands and you will wipe out their names from under heaven. No one will be able to stand up against you. You will destroy them, the images of their God.

You are to burn in the fire. Do not cover the silver and gold on them and do not take it for yourselves, or you will be ensnared by it, for it's detestable to the Lord your God. Do not bring a detestable thing into your house, or you, like it, will be set apart for destruction.

That's our word herem again, regarded as vile and utterly detested, for it is set apart for destruction. And then Deuteronomy 20 says, when you go to war against your enemies and see horses and chariots and an army greater than yours, do not be afraid of them, because the Lord your God who brought you up out of Egypt will be with you. When you are about to go into the battle, the priest shall come forward and address the army.

He shall say, hear Israel, today you are going into battle against your enemies. Do not be fainthearted or afraid. Do not panic or be terrified by them, for the Lord your God is the one who goes with you to fight for you against your enemies to give you victory.

The officer shall say to the army, has anyone built a new house and not yet begun to live in it? Let him go home, or he may die in battle and someone else may begin to live in it. Has anyone planted a vineyard and not begun to enjoy it? Let him go home, or he may die in battle and someone else enjoy it. Has anyone become pledged to a woman and not married her? Let him go home, or he may die in battle and someone else marry her.

Then the officer shall add, is anyone afraid or fainthearted? Let him go home so that his fellow soldiers will not become disheartened too. When the officers have finished speaking to the army, they shall appoint commanders over it. When you march up to attack a city, make it to people in offer of peace.

If they accept and open their gates, all the people in it shall be subject to forced labor and shall work for you. If they refuse to make peace and they engage you in battle, lay siege to that city. When the Lord your God delivers it into your hand, put to the sword all the men in it.

As for the women, the children, the livestock, and everything else in the city, you may take these as plunder for yourselves, and you may use the plunder the Lord your God gives you from your enemies. This is how you are to treat all the cities that are

at a distance from you and do not belong to the nations nearby. However, in the cities of the nations the Lord your God is giving you as an inheritance, do not leave anything alive that breathes.

Completely destroy them, the Hittites, Amorites, Canaanites, Perizzites, Hivites, and Jebusites, as the Lord your God has commanded you. Otherwise, they will teach you to follow all the detestable things they do in worshiping their gods, and you will sin against the Lord your God. When you lay siege to a city for a long time, fighting against it to capture it, do not destroy its trees by putting an ax to them, because you can eat the fruit.

Do not cut them down. Are the trees people that you should besiege them? However, you may cut down the trees that you know are not fruit trees, and use them to build siege works until the city at war with you falls. Okay, those were a couple of lengthy scripture passages, and again I'm not going to verse by verse exposit them, but I'm going to use them as a source along with historical reporting of actual battles later, which I'll refer to as I now describe what takes place before, during, and after a battle.

And as we do this, I think we're going to see the fundamentally religious nature of warfare in ancient Israel. So, let's start with before a battle. The most important initial thing before a battle is to inquire of the Lord, or perhaps better, more broadly to say, to come to understand one way or another that it's God's will that they go to battle.

And we can see examples of two different ways that God makes his will known in this matter. And again, the point is that human leaders just can't decide to go into battle. They have to get their instruction, their marching order, so to speak, from the Lord.

So where do we see this happening? Well, let's turn to the end of Joshua chapter 5, and this is on the eve of the battle of Jericho, which we'll come back to from time to time. But we see, starting in verse 13, we read, Now when Joshua was near Jericho, he looked up and saw a man standing in front of him with a drawn sword in his hand. Joshua went up to him and asked, Are you for us or for our enemies? Now, the Hebrew simply says, Lo.

The NIV rightly translates neither, but basically this warrior figure is saying, No. I'm not for us or for our enemy. I'm not in one of the armies.

But he says, but as commander of the army of the Lord, I have now come. Then Joshua fell face down to the ground in reverence and asked him, what message does my Lord have for his servant? The commander of the Lord's army replied, take off your sandals, for the place where you're standing is holy. And Joshua did so.

So, let's start with the question, Who is this figure? And I take my cue from the fact that Joshua is commanded to take the sandals off because the ground is holy, reminding us of, you know, language connected with the burning bush and Moses. This is obviously God himself coming as a warrior. And as such, he's not on Israel's side.

He's not on Jericho's side, but he is the sovereign God of the universe. And here, I believe, is where Joshua gets his literal marching orders since it'll involve a lot of marching around the city. And we'll come back to that later.

But again, that's an example of God making his will known to Joshua before a battle. Now another interesting case is found in 1 Samuel 23, and of course, this is during the time of David. It's a period of David's life where he has been anointed by Samuel as a future king, but he's not yet the king.

Saul is still ruling, and Saul's after him to kill him. David is, he's with, he's got a standing army of, I think, about 600 men. And he also has the high priest with him, who will play a role in what I'm about to read.

So, 1 Samuel 23 begins when David is told, look, the Philistines are fighting against Kilah, Kilah is a small town, I think, toward the Negev, and are looting the threshing floors. He inquired of the Lord, saying, shall I go and attack these Philistines? Notice his first impulse is not to go to battle, or say, I'm not going to battle, but to inquire of the Lord. Shall I go and attack these Philistines? The Lord answered him, go attack the Philistines and save Kilah.

But David's men said to him, here in Judah, we are afraid, how much more then if we go to Kilah against the Philistine forces? Once again, David inquired of the Lord, and the Lord answered him, go down to Kilah, for I am going to give the Philistines into your hands. So, David and his men went to Kilah, fought the Philistines, and carried off their livestock. He inflicted heavy losses on the Philistines and saved the people of Kilah.

Now Abiathar, son of Ahimelech, had brought the Ephod down with him when he fled to David at Kilah. Okay, so you get this, what the NIV represents is a parenthetical comment in verse 6, and the original readers would have understood exactly why it was there, but we need to think about it a little bit. Why is it significant at this point that Abiathar, son of Ahimelech, the priest, had brought the Ephod down with him? Well, there are some questions still remaining here, but I'm convinced that what verse 6 is telling us is how David inquired of the Lord.

So, it doesn't mention specifically the so-called Urim and Thummim, which are described in Exodus 28, which are devices that God has given to the high priest to make inquiry of the Lord in certain situations. And the question is, what's the

relationship between the Urim and Thummim, the Ephod? We don't have to get in the weeds of this, there are some texts that seem to indicate that the Ephod is itself different than the linen Ephod, it might be someplace where the Urim and Thummim are kept. But in any case, we do know that there were devices that were used by the high priest to make inquiry of the Lord, and it probably went something like this, and we're speculating a little bit here, but they were probably dice-like objects that because they were hurled or thrown, and since it can come up affirmative, and the high priest would pose the question, should David and his men go up to Kilah and attack the Philistines, then you throw these oracular devices, and they either come up affirmative, negative and here's the interesting thing that keeps it from being divination, it can come up blank.

God can choose not to give an answer to an inquiry, we see that at the end of Saul's life, when he's constantly trying to find a message from God, and they keep sending, he keeps having the Urim and Thummim, and he keeps coming up blank, and that preserves God's freedom, and that's why divination, the way that say Babylonians and Assyrians and others did divination, was forbidden to Israel, because with those forms of divination, the gods are actually being compelled to give an answer, but the Urim and Thummim preserves God's freedom. So, in any case, that's a little bit of an aside, but I'm reading this passage because it indicates yet another method by which David and other Israelite war leaders would find out God's will about a battle. All right so now, assuming God wants Israel to go to battle, the next step is spiritual preparation.

Now this is interesting, and really reveals the religious nature of the type of warfare that we're talking about, because the principle is this, if God wants Israel to go to battle, the army needs to be as spiritually prepared to go into battle as they would need to be prepared to go into the tabernacle, temple, the sanctuary. Why? Because God is present on the battlefield with the people, in many time periods, and in many battles, this is actually represented by the presence of the Ark of the Covenant with the army. The priest would bring the Ark, which is a mobile symbol of God's presence, they would bring the Ark to the battlefield, signifying that God was present with them.

And just like we saw in Joshua 5, when God is present, then Israel needs to be spiritually prepared. And we can see a number of places in Old Testament history where this happens. Remember when after the crossing into the Promised Land, and before the Battle of Jericho, the people who had not been circumcised in the wilderness, wandering, underwent a mass circumcision near a place that they later called Gilgal.

Now if you go back and read Genesis 34, which is about how the sons of Jacob, Levi, and Simeon, essentially massacre a whole city after deceiving them into undergoing circumcision, and just thinking about the procedure of circumcision, you can see that

undergoing, having your army undergo circumcision wouldn't be a real human battle savvy technique, but they knew that they needed to be spiritually prepared to go into battle. So, they undergo circumcision, and they also celebrate Passover before the battle. Another place that you might not think of, and it's a little bit more subtle, but it is very interesting, is found in, let's see 2 Samuel 11, I believe it is.

Yes, so 2 Samuel 11 begins in the spring at the time when kings go off to war. David sent Joab out with the king's men and the whole Israelite army. I mean, can you hear the implicit criticism here? In the spring when kings go off to war, David sends Joab, David stays back in Jerusalem, and while he's back in Jerusalem, he sees Bathsheba, and he sleeps with her, and she gets pregnant.

And how does David handle this problem? Well, he calls her husband back from the front line, and on the pretense of receiving a report about the battle. And he gives it, David dismisses him. The next morning, Uriah shows up, and somehow David knows he hasn't slept with Bathsheba, and he calls her, and he asks Uriah why, because that was going to be his cover-up if he had slept with her, and she got pregnant, then he'd think the child is his.

But Uriah replies this way, he goes, how could I sleep with my wife when Joab and the Ark of the Covenant are on the plains of Jabesh-Gilead? Now what's Uriah saying here? A lot of people read it from a modern perspective and say he's one of the guys, you know, he's not going to indulge in pleasure while the guys are out on the battlefield. There's something else going on here, I believe, especially if we remember that the book of Leviticus tells us that if a man has an emission of semen, he's ritually unclean for a period of time. So I think, especially since Uriah bothers to mention the Ark of the Covenant along with the men, what he's saying is, how could I sleep with my wife and render myself temporarily spiritually unclean? We could get at another time into the question why that renders a man unclean, but just as a hint, I think it has to do with the fact that semen is a protected life-giving substance, so it's not denigrating the sexual act as much as promoting its life-giving possibilities.

But whatever reason, Uriah is saying, I can't sleep with my wife because I need to be battle-ready, and if I have an emission of semen, I can't go on the battlefield. Now, when you realize this, you get this incredible contrast, right, between David the King, the divinely anointed king, who's breaking the big laws, right? You must not commit adultery, and ultimately you must not murder, as opposed to Uriah the Hittite, okay? I waited until now to throw in the fact that he's not even a native-born Israelite. He's obviously a person who has come over to the Israelite side and has affirmed Yahweh as his God, kind of like Ruth does in the book of Ruth, Moabitess, and he's being very careful with the details of the law.

I'm not going to sleep with my wife because then I'll be ritually unclean for a brief period of time and can't go to battle. So, in any case, it's an interesting passage that I

think if you understand the background in the purity laws of Leviticus, it really highlights what's going on in that chapter, and also illustrates this idea of the necessity to be spiritually prepared before going into battle. Now, once spiritually prepared, we also have some records before battles of offering sacrifices.

Before going into the battle, the army, under the leadership of the priests who would be with them, would offer sacrifices. And this is illustrated, you usually get the illustrations when something goes wrong in these stories, but 1 Samuel 13. Saul, a newly anointed king, is going to battle against the Philistines, and he knows he needs to have the sacrifices offered, but Samuel, who's a priest, hasn't come on time to offer the sacrifices.

And so, Saul decides that he would offer the sacrifices himself. Samuel shows up, he hears about this, and Samuel goes kind of ballistic, you know, what did you do? And Saul says, well, you didn't show up on time, and the men were deserting and growing afraid and leaving. Kind of like what else could I do? But then you remember Deuteronomy 20, right? Not only should Saul have not worried when his troops grew afraid and left, but he should have been actively telling them to go.

Remember, Deuteronomy 20 says you should go among the troops and say, anybody afraid? Go home. And so Saul is showing a fundamental lack of faith in the Lord and a fundamental fear and worry that is revealing his own lack of trust and confidence in God as a warrior. And so, as we now kind of segue to during the battle, this illustrates another point, that is, the fact that Saul shouldn't have been worried about his troops deserting, illustrates another point about these Old Testament battles, and that is that the number of troops and the quality of their weapons don't matter.

The number of troops and the quality of their weapons don't matter. Why? Because God is the warrior. As a matter of fact, if they matter at all, it's that you should not go into battle with an overwhelming force.

Think of the story of Gideon, which well illustrates this. Gideon is going to battle against the Midianites and apparently has no trouble recruiting because he shows up with an army of 35,000 men. And what does God say? God says, there are too many men.

You know, you need to downsize your army. And so, after doing all the, anybody who's afraid, et cetera, et cetera, still too many men. So, God says, take them down to the Wadi Harod, and tell them to drink water.

And they do. And some of them cup the water to their mouths. Some of them get down on their bellies and lap the water like dogs.



And God says, take those, I think there are 300 dog lappers. And you read some 19th-century commentaries and maybe some 20th-century commentaries, and they're going, yeah, the dog lappers, they know to get down away from incoming arrows and stuff. No, that's not, there's no real reason why they're better soldiers for being dog lappers.

As a matter of fact, the Hebrew is a little awkward there. We're not sure which category he took. But no, it's just getting it down to 300.

Well, why? Why is that so important? Well, obviously, if you go into battle with an overwhelming force and you win, you say, we're strong. Whereas, if you go into battle with a small force against a large force, and you win, then you know that God is the one who has given you the victory. Let's consider the David and Goliath story as an example of this in 1 Samuel 17.

So, 1 Samuel 17 is an example of this. It's a sample of battle by individual combat. And so, it's one of the best-known stories in the Old Testament, where Saul and his army are fighting against the Philistines, and the Philistines have a champion by the name of Goliath.

Now, it's an interesting characteristic of Hebrew storytelling, narrative, that as opposed to other types of literature that we're familiar with, say 19th-century British novels, there's not a lot of physical description of people. And when there is, it's important to the story. So, you read about Bathsheba being beautiful, or Absalom having long hair, they're always instrumental to the story.

And I really know of no longer physical description than the description we get of Goliath. In 1 Samuel 17 verses 4 to 7, it says, a champion named Goliath, who was from Gath, came out of the Philistine camp. His height was six cubits and a span.

He had a bronze helmet on his head and wore a coat of scale armor of bronze weighing 5,000 shekels. On his legs, he wore bronze greaves, and a bronze javelin was slung on his back. His spear shaft was like a weaver's rod, and its iron point weighed 600 shekels.

His shield bearer went ahead of him. So, no one takes up the challenge in the army until David, who's not in the army, shows up to deliver lunch to his older brothers who are fighting in the army. And David hears these taunts, and it enrages him, because it's an attack, he believes, on God.

And so, he volunteers to fight against Goliath. And he's too small to wear Saul's armor. He goes into the battle, famously, with a slingshot.

Now, picture it. You know, in the one corner, you've got this mega-warrior, Goliath, armed to the teeth, experienced. In the other corner, you've got young David.

Yeah, he's protected the sheep from some wild animals, but not exactly battle-savvy. But notice what he says just before they battle. This is verses 45-47.

David said to the Philistine, you come against me with sword and spear and javelin, but I come against you in the name of the Lord Almighty, the God of the armies of Israel, whom you have defied. This day, the Lord will deliver you into my hands, and I'll strike you down and cut off your head. This very day, I will give the carcasses of the Philistine army to the birds and the wild animals, and the whole world will know that there is a God in Israel.

All those gathered here will know that it's not by sword or spear that the Lord saves, for the battle is the Lord's, and he will give all of you into our hands. These few verses are kind of the epitome of the theology of warfare. The battle is the Lord's.

But let's reflect on this from another angle briefly. We can theoretically imagine that the story might have gone something like this, where God says to David, David, you go confront Goliath, and you tell him that. You tell him that the battle is the Lord's.

And then, David, I want you to back up about a hundred yards, because I'm going to fry that guy with a lightning bolt. Right? So, here's the interesting thing, is you have this fascinating interplay of divine sovereignty, but also human responsibility. That, yeah, David, you have to confront him.

You have to throw the sling stones, which he does and knocks him out, and he cuts off his head. But we'll see this in a number of different stories, where sometimes God will finish the job before the army gets there. As a matter of fact, we're about to talk briefly about such a story.

But always, humans have to get involved. And it makes me think of wisdom literature, another area that I love in the Old Testament. If you read through the book of Proverbs, the father is telling the son, to get wisdom.

Basically, study hard. Think about this. Reflect on life.

And then they'll say, for God gives wisdom. So, wisdom is both, takes effort, takes thought, takes observation, and experience. But ultimately, God gives wisdom.

And I also think, on a much more serious note, topic, I think Philippians 2, work out your salvation with fear and trembling, for it's God who saves you, right? Human responsibility, divine sovereignty. So, in any case, what I want to talk about briefly

now is, that also shows the religious nature of warfare in the Old Testament, is to take a look at a couple of stories about a march into battle. A march into battle.

And I think I'll start with the 2 Chronicles 20 example, which I was just alluding to this particular battle, even though my second example is going to be from an earlier period of Israelite history. But 2 Chronicles 20 is talking about how the Moabites and the Ammonites invade Judah, and Jehoshaphat rallies the troops to confront them. And when we get down to verse 20, we see, early in the morning they left for the desert of Tekoa.

And the Moabites, as they set out, Jehoshaphat stood and said, listen to me, Judah, and people of Jerusalem. Have faith in the Lord your God, and you will be upheld. Have faith in His prophets, and you will be successful.

After consulting the people, Jehoshaphat appointed men to sing to the Lord and to praise Him for the splendor of His holiness. As they went out, the head of the army sang, give thanks to the Lord, for His love endures forever. As they began to sing and praise, the Lord set ambushes against the men of Ammon and Moab at Mount Seir who were invading Judah, and they were defeated.

The Ammonites and Moabites rose up against the men from Mount Seir to destroy and annihilate them. After they finished slaughtering the men from Seir, they helped to destroy one another. When the men of Judah came to the place that overlooks the desert and looked toward the vast army, they saw only dead bodies lying on the ground.

No one had escaped. So, the point is, even in this situation, where the Judahites didn't have to fight, they still had to march into battle, and as they did, they were praising God, because it was an act of worship that they were performing. Now, the other example I want to give, may not have quite thought about this, but if you read the book of Numbers carefully, you can see that the book of Numbers is picturing the wilderness wandering, not as kind of a ragtag, wandering around event, but rather as a march into battle.

They're marching into battle. Now, how can I say that? Well, first of all, notice that in Numbers, the beginning of Numbers, Numbers chapter 1, there's what's commonly referred to as a census, but what it really is, is a military registration. It's picturing, it's counting for each tribe, men 20 years old or more, who are able to serve in the army.

So, basically, what it's doing, is giving kind of a military registration, it's picturing the people of God as an army. Now, then in Numbers 2 and following, there's a picture of the arrangement of the camp, when they settle down and put up their tents, there's a distinct arrangement to it. And in the center is the Tabernacle, okay? Then the

Levites camp around the Tabernacle, and then the various tribes have their place to the northeast, south, and west of the Tabernacle.

Now, scholars have looked at that and have compared it to war camps, ancient Near Eastern war camps, where the general has his tent in the middle, and the Tabernacle is God's home on earth. It's his tent, it's a very elaborate tent, but he's the king. So, the Tabernacle is in the middle, and then the king's bodyguards surround the tabernacle.

We don't have time to develop this in full, but I think one of the best ways of thinking about the priests is as bodyguards of God's holiness. They get their job, by the way, on the occasion of the golden calf, when they're willing to go out and execute the Levites, heed Moses' call, and go out and kill the calf worshipers. And Moses says, on this day, you have been set apart.

And I could give more examples, but in any case, think of the Levites who protect the holy place as God's bodyguards, and then the rest of the army surrounds it. But there's also an analogy in the march itself, because as an ancient Near Eastern army marched, the general, the king often, would be at the head of the army, and then the rest of the troops would follow. And notice, at the beginning of the march, in Numbers chapter 10, what Moses says, it says in verse 35, Numbers 10:35, whenever the ark set out, Moses said, rise up, Lord, may your enemies be scattered, may your foes flee before you.

So, rise up, Lord, is, and you see this in the Psalms, I'll comment a little bit about the Psalms in just a moment, its relationship to warfare. But whenever you hear rise up, it's the idea of the divine warrior getting up, and in this case, scattering the countless enemies of Israel. So, the march in the wilderness is pictured in the book of Numbers as a march into battle.

Okay, so, finally, after a battle, well, first of all, if it is a battle that God has ordered Israel, and they faithfully carry it out, they win. And so, the first order of the day is celebration. The first order of the day is celebration, and we have a number of examples of celebratory hymns.

First of all, in a place like Exodus chapter 15, after defeating the Pharaoh's chariot troops at what we might call the battle of the Yom Suph, the Red Sea, Moses, and the Israelites, it says in Exodus 15 following, sang the song to the Lord. I will sing to the Lord, for he is highly exalted, both horse and driver he has hurled into the sea. The Lord is my strength and my defense, he has become my salvation, he is my God and I will praise him.

My Father's God and I will exalt him. The Lord is a warrior, the Lord is his name. Okay, I want to pause here to say that this is the first time Yahweh is explicitly called a warrior.

The Hebrew is *Ish milhamah*, which means man of war. This is not the first time, as we'll see in our next section, that God acts like a warrior, but it's the first time he's called a warrior. Pharaoh's chariots and his army he has hurled into the sea, the best of Pharaoh's officers are drowned in the Red Sea, the deep waters have covered them, and they sank to the depths like a stone.

Your right hand, Lord, was majestic in power, your right hand, Lord, shattered the enemy. And it goes on to celebrate this great victory. We won't read it, but in your own time you should read Judges 5, which is a hymn celebrating the victory over the Midianites under the leadership of Deborah and Barak and there are others in the historical books as well.

But this also gives me an occasion to talk briefly about how Psalms interface with warfare during the Old Testament time period. So this goes back to a study I did at the beginning of my career looking at this question and in that study, it became clear to me that 49 of the 150 Psalms found their setting in the wars of ancient Israel. Now the reason why that sometimes escapes us as Christian readers is that we quickly spiritualize the language, which later I'll talk about as an appropriate thing to do as we move into the spiritual warfare of the New Testament.

But in the Old Testament, the warfare language would have been associated with Israel's wars against their enemies. And as you look at them you can see that there are Psalms that were sung before, during, and after a battle. I'm going to give an example of each.

For one sung before a battle, let's turn to Psalm 7. And I think as I read it, it won't take much explanation once we realize it has to do with physical battles during the Old Testament. During the Old Testament time period, I think it becomes pretty clear, Lord my God I take refuge in you, save and deliver me from all who pursue me or they will tear me apart like a lion and rip me to pieces with no one to rescue me. Lord my God if I have done this and there is guilt on my hands, if I repaid my ally with evil or without cause have robbed my foe, then let my enemy pursue and overtake me.

Let him trample my life to the ground and make me sleep in the dust. Arise, remember we talked about rise or arise. Lord in your anger rise up against the rage of my enemies.

Awake my God, decree justice. Let the assembled peoples gather around you while you sit enthroned over them on high. Let the world judge the peoples, vindicate me Lord according to my righteousness, according to my integrity oh most high.

Bring to an end the violence of the wicked and make the righteous secure. You the righteous God who probes minds and hearts. My shield is God most high who saves the upright in heart.

God is a righteous judge, a God who displays his wrath every day. If he does not relent he will sharpen his sword, he will bend and string his bow. He is prepared his deadly weapons, he makes ready his flaming arrows.

Whoever is pregnant with evil conceives trouble and gives birth to disillusionment. Whoever digs a hole and scoops it out falls into the pit they have made. The trouble they cause recoils on them, and their violence comes down on their own heads.

I will give thanks to the Lord because of his righteousness. I will sing the praises of the name of the Lord most high. So, Psalm 7 and similar psalms were sung before a battle calling on God to rise up and fight against their enemies.

Psalm 91 is a good example of a psalm that was sung during the battle. So, if you categorize Psalm 7 it's a lament but Psalm 91 is best described as a psalm of confidence. Again, I think sung during a battle expressing trust and confidence in God.

Whoever dwells in the shelter of the Most High will rest in the shadow of the Almighty. I will say of the Lord he is my refuge and my fortress, my God and whom I trust. Surely, he will save you from the fowler's snare and from the deadly pestilence.

He will cover you with his feathers and under his wings you will find refuge. His faithfulness will be your shield and rampart. You will not fear the terror of night nor the arrow that flies by day or the pestilence that stalks in the darkness nor the plague that destroys at midday.

A thousand may fall at your side, 10,000 at your right hand but it will not come near you. You will only observe with your eyes and see the punishment of the wicked. If you say the Lord is my refuge and you make the Most High your dwelling no harm will overtake you, no disaster will come near your tent.

For he will command his angels concerning you to guard you in all your ways. They will lift you up in their hands so that you will not strike your foot against a stone. You will tread on the lion and the cobra.

You will trample the great lion and the serpent. Because he loves me says the Lord I will rescue him. I will protect him for he acknowledges my name.

He will call on me and I will answer him. I will be with him in trouble. I will deliver him and honor him.

With long life I will satisfy him and show him my salvation. Okay so finally Psalms 2 have a number of Psalms that celebrate a victory. Now the difference between say Exodus 15 and Judges 5 on the one hand and these Psalms, on the other hand, is the fact that Exodus 15 and Judges 5 are what I might call historically embedded.

They're celebrating a specific victory. Psalms are well known to be historically non-specific because Psalmists write their poems so that other people who come after them can apply it to their own situation and context. That's true of say Psalm 51 which we hear David wrote in the aftermath of being confronted by the Prophet Nathan concerning a sin with Bathsheba which we looked at earlier.

But it doesn't talk about adultery just David is petitioning God to forgive him for sin and then others of us who sin but maybe not the way David did can use that Psalm as a template for our own prayer. So, the couple of Psalms we're going to take a quick look at here are not historically specific and could be used in different ways. Psalm 24 as I read Psalm 24 let me remind you of the role of the ark in the battle.

Psalm 24 begins, The earth is the Lord's and everything in it the world and all who live in it for he founded it on the seas and established it on the waters who may ascend the mountain of the Lord who may stand in his holy place the one who has clean hands and a pure heart who does not trust in an idol or swear by false God they will receive a blessing from the Lord vindication from God their Savior such as the generation of those who seek him who seek your faith God of Jacob.

And then the rest of the Psalm has this interesting ritual back and forth made famous by Handel's Messiah but it's a little hard to see unless you study the ancient background exactly what's going on here but there's as I say a kind of ritual back and forth here there are two voices that are speaking to each other. I would argue that they're priestly voices and that the situation is that they're returning from battle with the Ark of the Covenant which they're about to place back into the temple.

So, the voice that I would argue is with the army and the Ark says, lift up your heads you gates be lifted up you ancient doors that the king of glory may come in. So, lift up your heads we don't know all the technicalities but simply means open up the gates that the king of glory may come in.

Then the second priestly voice which may be at the wall of either the city or the temple says who is this king of glory and the response is the Lord strong and mighty

the Lord mighty in battle. That mighty in battle is one of the indications that that this scenario is returning from a battle. Lift up your heads you gates lift them up you ancient doors that the king of glory may come in. Who is this king of glory, the Lord said translated here the Lord Almighty but probably better translated the Lord of Heaven's armies. He is the king of glory.

Okay, so, a second example and one of my favorite Psalms is Psalm 98. Sing to the Lord a new song for he has done marvelous things. His right hand and his holy arm have worked salvation for him. The Lord has made salvation known and revealed his righteousness to the nations. He has remembered his love and his faithfulness to Israel. All the ends of the earth have seen the salvation of our God.

Again, we have got to be a little careful not to read Christian theology immediately into the text where we hear salvation and we think of conversion. Now this is better translated as victory. This is what it's celebrating is a victory and we could see that for the language of his right hand and his holy arm which is in Exodus and in Isaiah connected with God's warring activity.

It's interesting and I did a study on this years ago if you look at the dozen times this phrase new song is used in Psalms, Isaiah, and even in the book of Revelation, it's always connected to God's warring activity.

So, it's not like this is a new song that's never been sung before. It's rather I believe more like a victory song celebrating how God makes all things new again by his battling. So, this first stanza is praising God for winning a victory in the past. It's Israel that's praising God. O Israel praise God, he's just won a victory for you.

Then shout for joy to the Lord all the earth burst into jubilant song with music make to the Lord with the harp with the harp and the sound of singing with trumpets and the blast of the ram's horn shout for joy before the Lord, the king.

So, in the second stanza notice how the circle of praise goes to all the inhabitants of the earth not just Israel but all the inhabitants of the earth should praise God for being our king in the present.

And then, finally, let the sea resound and everything in it the world and all who live in it let the rivers clap their hands let the mountains sing together for joy let them sing before the Lord for he comes to judge the earth. He will judge the world in righteousness and with the people and the peoples with equity.

So, in the third stanza, the circle of praise expands even beyond all the inhabitants of the earth through poetic personification. Now even the rivers and the mountains join



in the praise and they're to praise God for being judge in the future. And so, you have three stanzas, Victor God is our Victor God is our King God is our judge.

And even though the first stanza is most directly connected to God's warrior activity it is the case that in the broader ancient Near East as well as in the Bible God's kingship is established by his warring activity, and God coming as judge is a warring activity in itself.

The reason why the whole creation I believe is praising it is celebrating God's future role as judge is as I say setting all things right because, as Paul reminds us in Romans 8:18 and following, all creation is groaning as in frustration but waiting for that time when God will come and set everything right again.

Okay, so one last point before we conclude our survey of what takes place before during and after a battle which is setting up our exploration of the biblical theological theme under five phases. That is the herem as we saw in Deuteronomy 20. God says for those nations in the land as opposed to outside. You are to totally destroy them And so, that is something that we see happen on occasion it means not taking the plunder for yourself. But it also is turning it over to the Tabernacle or temple and the priests. But also, it means executing the citizens which again is very controversial these days. We'll come back and discuss the ethical aspects of it, but I do want to mention it now. We can see it if you read Joshua chapter 7 which describes how after the battle they turn all the plunder over but they also execute the citizens of the city.

So that's our review of what took place before during and after a battle and so now we're going to turn our attention to phase one of those accounts in the Old Testament where God fights the physical blood and flesh enemies of Israel.

This is Dr. Tremper Longman and his teaching on God is a Warrior, session 2, how warfare is conducted before, during, and after a battle.