

Standing With the Whole Armour of G-d

Pinchas (Phineas)

Dark skinned

The message will always get through

Torah:

Num. 25:10-29:40

(1) 25:13. ***It shall be for him and for his posterity a covenant of perpetual priesthood, because he was zealous for his G-d and that he made atonement for the children of Israel.*** (Luke 1:36 – Mary was a blood relative of the house of Aaron, so our L-rd carried the blood of the house of Aaron, even though He inherited the Messianic throne from the line of David). The thread of His promises and of His purposes will never be frayed or broken.

(2) 26:4. ***You shall conduct a census from age twenty and above as the L-RD and ordained by Moses and to the children of Israel, when they came out of the country of Egypt*** (cf. v. 64, none of those who were counted in the first census were still alive). One generation later, nothing had changed – the same renewed, intact people group was again ready to enter the land and to put their wandering years behind them. G-d's objectives never change and neither does the way He wants things done. It will either be done through us or through the people He shall cause to spring up from the rocks. May we always cherish closely the nonnegotiable of our faith.

(3) 28:6. ***It is the perpetual offering which was offered on the mountain of Sinai and it is a sacrifice consumed by fire as a pleasing odor unto YHVH.*** Chapters 28 and 29 outline the most extensive articulation of Jewish time: twice daily, weekly, monthly and seven times annually, we are to gather and renew our contact with the One who first took our people out of Egypt so that He could be as close to us, daily, throughout our generations as He was the first time we encountered Him on the Holy Mountain. In a very real sense, just as we undertake our personal pilgrimage with Him from the cradle to the grave and beyond, to our Fathers' Home in Glory, so The L-rd's presence began its generational pilgrimage with His people (individually and corporately), so that His light would always shine and never be put out. Is your life part of the cycles of renewed intimacy which the L-rd set up for His people – in other words, does your life turn around His temporal centrality in your life (daily, weekly, monthly, annually), in every circumstance of your life and at every stage of your life with the enduring consistency of Jewish time (based on worship and atonement in all seasons).

(4) 29:40 (30:1). ***Moses said to the Children of Israel all that YHVH had commanded Him to say.*** Here is another affirmation that there is nothing missing or hidden in the Scriptures. Moses said it all, nothing more, nothing less. There are things which we are not told (Deut. 29:29), but there is nothing missing in which we should have been told which we were not told. There are not hidden messages and it is not a coded message. It did not change during the time when the new generation was waiting to enter the land and it will not change throughout the generations. G-d will never have anything to say to us which either unsays, or adds codicils to that which He has already said. There is no fine print, nor any hidden clauses in His Word.

Haftarah:

I Ki. 18:46-19:21

(5) 19: 12. ***And after the earthquake, a fire: the L-RD was not in the fire and after the fire, a still small voice (a gentle, soft murmur).*** On the same mountain where the Law was first given, a distressed prophet was in danger of losing perspective, because even after the mighty display on Mount Carmel, the rotten idolatrous core was still trying to extinguish the light of G-d's Word. Elijah receives a private display of the might of G-d's, even greater than the one on Mount Carmel and begins to discover that it is never all about any one of us – it will always be about Him and His voice, which He will always ensure is heard (Prov. 1:20-23), if not through us, through the ones or ones He will recruit, because His message will

always get through.

(6)19:18. ***But I shall leave in Israel (northern Kingdom) 7,000 men who have not bent the knee before Baal and whose mouth has not kissed him.*** The idolatrous core is never the most enduring generational reality of Israel – it is the righteous core. Before the golden calf and in all the tumults right up until the final assault on the plains of Moab, the L-rd always ensured that His righteous core survived intact, and that despite all the machinations of all the spiritual opponents throughout the ages. Elijah had done about all he had the energy for, and as Moses passed the baton to Joshua to finish what he started, so Elijah passed his baton on and it has come right down unto us and will continue to be passed until the final purposes of G-d are fulfilled.

Brit Chadashah:

John 2:13-25

(7) 12:25. ***And He needed no one to testify about anyone, for He Himself knew what was in everyone.*** Chapter 2 contains His first miracle and then jumps ahead to the cleansing of the temple, because both events occurred before a hostile crowd and neither event was performed to prove or demonstrate what His Word had already declared to be true. He will always speak and affirm His Word throughout all generations as He looks for those who will listen and avoids those who just want a good show (who measure the value and the validity of spirituality by its entertainment value, instead of by its essential message).

Psalm 50 First Sabbath of Affliction Jewish Hero: Torah Club Kids

There are three fasts which commemorate the destruction of the first temple: 9, 10 Tevet (December, when the final siege was laid), the 18 of Tamuz (when the walls were breached) and the 9 of Av (when the temple was burned – when both temples were burnt). For the time between the 18 of Tamuz and Tisha B'Av, there are three Sabbaths of Affliction, ending with Black Sabbath, the lowest point of the calendar. From these depths, there are seven Sabbaths of consolation to bring us to Rosh Hashanah and another year for us to reaffirm our lives in the purposes of G-d. Some of the saddest and some of the most comforting prophetic portions will be examined, as the same staple Torah portions keep us focused on the inevitable purposes of G-d. No matter where we are and no matter what is happening around us, His will, will be done and His kingdom will come, whither we are part of this glorious process or are left behind by it.

As we launch into our summer time examination of the whole armour of G-d, there are several initial comments I want to make, so that we are all on the same page in our understanding of what dynamic spiritual martial arts looks like and how we can have these functioning in our lives, both as individuals and as a community.

First of all, spiritual combats do not wait for us to be ready and will strike us, no matter what the level of our preparation readiness is. Instead of being afraid that we are not ready to meet these challenges when they are sprung at us (I Cor. 10:13), we need to understand that His grace takes into account our level of spirituality, so that both the bottom line and His objectives are fulfilled.

The best laid plans of mice and soccer teams gang aft aglay, because the race is not to the swift nor is it to the thick headed. He is with us and whenever we turn to Him, He will bring us through the whatever's until we learn to fight first with what we have in hand and then as we learn to order our lives to be able to live and to fight the way his Word will keep on reminding us is both our mandate and our heritage. It is only if we are unprepared to fight that we are in any real danger.

Second of all, spiritual warfare is not a series of increasingly intense, psychotic episodes where we straddle

a pile of dead and dying demons, as we climb every mountain and ford every stream, barely having enough time to clean the blood off our sword between each blood pumping encounter – as if our calling was to live in an endless action movie that is a spiritual version of Indian Jones, the Terminator and Star Wars. David lived through so many encounters that we forget that he all the time in the world to compose the Psalms for which he is most known.

Spirituality is all about stability in the midst of conflict and the greatest battle of our spiritual warfare will always be about what is going on in the inside, than it will be about what is going on, on the outside. The real super heroes are those whose inner life reflects the spiritual dynamism of Psalm 23 in the midst of the storms of life. Our spirituality should always first be all about the house we are building on the rock, than it is ever about the storms which will always be coming and going.

Standing with the whole armour of G-d, is first all about standing, then it is about knowing who you are fighting and then about knowing how you are supposed to fight – and it is never a kamikaze finish, because if He needs to, He can give us a dose of Elijah's mountain top, so that we learn to stay tuned to the still small voice.

Before I run through the armour again, let me say a few more things. The sevenfold list is not intended to be exhaustive, as much as it is intended to see that G-d wants us to live so that we get better at fighting and standing and do not spend our time doing laps around the mountain or cooling our heals in Babylon, because we either refused to fight or ran way before He showed us how to win. Are you winning or losing? If you are losing, are you learning how to win or just repeating the same mistakes over and over again?

The list speaks to me about the three major factors we have to consider as we come more proficient at the art of successful spiritual warfare: technique, equipment and terrain.

Technique means we do not let the enemy, the flesh or the world, tell us how to fight or who to fight or even when to fight (Prov. 22:3). The more we learn to fight G-d's way, the more spiritual success we will have. Too many soldiers and too many believers buckle under pressure and forget their training. How about you? Under pressure, we need to respond from the heart and learn how to fight. More about this later on in the series.

Equipment means that we are aware of what we need to become proficient with if we want to win. I hate new cares, new clothes and new situations where I have not got things figured out. I realize that life is going to always be filled with new situations, but not so that I become a perpetual novice, but so that I learn to always bring the sevenfold equipment into the whatever's of life and become proficient with the unchanging equipment of His grace. Loose lips sink ships and sloppy spirituality may cause us to regularly snatch defeat out of the jaws of victory. Keep your equipment current and bring it all into every new situation and stage of life you have to wander through.

Finally, understand that your life will be a series of encounters and instead of dreading the inevitable conflicts, we need to fight when it is time to fight and rest and recharge when it is time to chill. If we spend our time charging windmills, or cowering in caves because we have become deceived into thinking the sky is falling, then we will have squandered our time and energy and will fail when the real spiritual challenges come our way. Living on red alert is not wise, nor is forgetting to change the batteries in the fire alarm.

How is your technique doing? How is your equipment doing? Are you living with combat readiness, without wearing yourself out between engagements?

Next week:

The belt of **truth** (are your loins girded or does your lifestyle trip you up?)

The breastplates of **righteousness** (holes need to be plugged, not indulged)

The shoes of **Proclamation** (what is the focus of your constant attention?)

The shield of **faith** (are you letting the lies of this age disarm your faith?)

The sword of the **Spirit** (who are you taking your instructions from)

The helmet of **salvation** (is your personal spiritual destiny secure?)

The artillery of **Prayer** (are you supporting your personal war effort by softening the opposition?)

We will all be at different places in our spiritual walk at different times in our lives, but we are all called to the same level and kind of spiritual integrity, whether we are going through the ringer or resting by still waters for a spell.

Final thought: Sometimes a strategic retreat is the best way to prepare for victory. In WWII, Yugoslavia was one of the key battlefields, because when they overthrew their pro-Hitler government, it took the Nazis seven weeks to conquer the country and delayed the invasion of Russia long enough for it to be bogged down in the mud and falter. However, it was never really subdued, because one man, Tito, kept retreating up and down the mountains so effectively, the Germans could not catch him or corner him, even with the help of Yugoslav collaborators.

Sometimes, we may lose control over part of our lives and have to retreat, like David, until we are strong enough to recapture the territory we lost. Tito knew he could not hold onto the whole country, so instead of losing the war by fighting a losing defensive war, he won the war by fighting a successful offensive campaign of hit and run.

I do not know the issues all of you are facing, but this I know, there is a successful spiritual strategy for us to creatively and persistently integrate into our lives, even when we have to retreat and go into hiding for a while.

Listen to Him and allow Him to show you how to fight and win so that you become spiritually stable in the midst of the storms of life. How storm proof is your spirituality?

Let's pray.