

Doctrine of the Soldier

1. The Israelites were not intended by God to be a warlike people with a large standing army at the federal level.

1.1 Instead God wanted each tribe to universally train their own and be ready with a standing force and a reserve force already trained and on call should they be needed.

2. They found it necessary to make adequate preparations for their defense against hostile attacks.

2.1 They did this by requiring the various Tribes to maintain fighting forces and universal military training for all males over 20 years.

3. God is frequently called the Lord of hosts.

3.1 The Word for Host is **TSAVA** and means army; God is often called then the Lord of the Armies.

4. The first recorded use of armed forces in the history of the Jews is that of Abraham's conflict with the king of Elam and his confederates (Genesis chapter 14), in which Abraham displayed heroic military leadership with a band of 318 soldiers.

Gen 14:8 Then the king of Sodom, the king of Gomorrah, the king of Admah, the king of Zeboiim and the king of Bela (that is, Zoar) marched out and drew up their battle lines in the Valley of Siddim

Gen 14:9 against Kedorlaomer king of Elam, Tidal king of Goiim, Amraphel king of Shinar and Arioch king of Ellasar--four kings against five.

Gen 14:10 Now the Valley of Siddim was full of tar pits, and when the kings of Sodom and Gomorrah fled, some of the men fell into them and the rest fled to the hills.

Gen 14:11 The four kings seized all the goods of Sodom and Gomorrah and all their food; then they went away.

Gen 14:12 They also carried off Abram's nephew Lot and his possessions, since he was living in Sodom.

Gen 14:13 One who had escaped came and reported this to Abram the Hebrew. Now Abram was living near the great trees of Mamre the Amorite, a brother of Eshcol and Aner, all of whom were allied with Abram.

Gen 14:14 When Abram heard that his relative had been taken captive, he called out the 318 trained men born in his household and went in pursuit as far as Dan.

Gen 14:15 During the night Abram divided his men to attack them and he routed them, pursuing them as far as Hobah, north of Damascus.

Gen 14:16 He recovered all the goods and brought back his relative Lot and his possessions, together with the women and the other people.

5. Military organization of the Jews began with the Exodus from Egypt.

5.1 The Exodus generation was a nation with Moses as its national leader.

5.2 Israel became a race of people when Abram crossed the river but they were not a nation until they were called out of Egypt some 2,000,000 in number.

6. It was not so much, that they were armed for warfare as that they were arranged by tribes and divisions as a body of troops for the march through the wilderness.

6.1 In fact Israel was directed around the warlike Philistine until they could learn warfare.

Exo 13:17 When Pharaoh let the people go, God did not lead them on the road through the Philistine country, though that was shorter. For God said, "If they face war, they might change their minds and return to Egypt."

Exo 13:18 So God led the people around by the desert road toward the Red Sea. The Israelites went up out of Egypt armed for battle.

7. After Sinai they were divided into divisions or army corps; certain gradations of military rank seemed to exist.

8. Except for the Levites, men of 20 years of age and older who were fit to go to war were assigned a post in the army (Num 1:3).

Num 1:3 From twenty years old and upward, all that are able to go forth to war in Israel: thou and Aaron shall number them by their armies.

9. Certain individuals were exempt from military service: those who were newly married, those who had built a new home or planted a vineyard, the fearful and fainthearted (Deu 20:5-8).

Deu 20:5 And the officers shall speak unto the people, saying, what man is there that hath built a new house, and hath not dedicated it? Let him go and return to his house, lest he die in the battle, and another man dedicate it.

Deu 20:6 And what man is he that hath planted a vineyard, and hath not yet eaten of it? let him also go and return unto his house, lest he die in the battle, and another man eat of it.

Deu 20:7 And what man is there that hath betrothed a wife, and hath not taken her? let him go and return unto his house, lest he die in the battle, and another man take her.

Deu 20:8 And the officers shall speak further unto the people, and they shall say, what man is there that is fearful and fainthearted? Let him go and return unto his house, lest his brethren's heart faint as well as his heart.

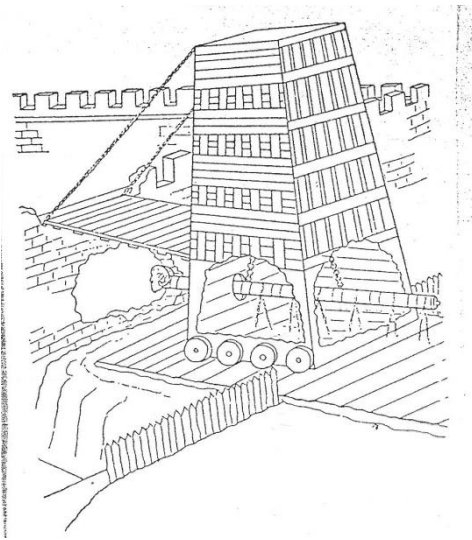
9.1 A good fighting man must be dedicated to his profession.



10. As footmen in the desert their weapons were the simple arms for attack and defense i.e. a sword, a shield, a spear, sling-shots and bows.

10.1 It is evident that their journeyings in the wilderness prepared them for the discipline and tactics of a military company.

11. Under the brilliant leadership of Joshua and following the conquest of Canaan, there was further development of military organization, strategy, and equipment.



11.1 God in His grace actions often however put Israel to the test so that they would never think they had succeeded in their own strength. Examples:

the hand of Moses,

Joshua and the battle of Jericho

Gideon and his small band of courageous men,

12. United action of the armed forces was sometimes jeopardized, however, by tribal jealousies and rivalries which threatened the national solidarity.

Num 32:6 And Moses said unto the tribe of Gad and Reuben, Shall your brethren go to war and you sit here ...

Num 32:23 But if you will not do so, behold ye have sinned against the Lord; and be sure your sin shall find you out ...

Num 32:25 And the tribe of Gad and of Reuben spoke unto Moses, saying, Thy servants will do as my Lord commandeth.

13. Individual tribes generally defended their own territory and people; only great emergencies united the armies of the various tribes in common action.

13.1 Under the Theocracy, the Government functioned not unlike that proscribed under the Articles of the Confederacy.

14. There was no regular permanent Federal army at this time.

15. When emergencies arose, God raised up a leader who summoned the men of Israel to war against their enemies, and when the exigency passed the forces were returned to the various tribes.

15.1 Armies thus drafted were divided into companies of thousands, hundreds, fifties, and still further into families under appointed officers.

16. Provisions for the army were the responsibility of each tribe.

16.1 The soldiers' pay generally consisted only of supplies, plus a portion of the spoil. Defining the rules for division of "spoils" was early-on a problem. After the defeat of the Midianites rules were established:

Num 31:21 Then Eleazar the priest said to the soldiers who had gone into battle ...

Num 31:25 The LORD said to Moses,

Num 31:26 "You and Eleazar the priest and the family heads of the community are to count all the people and animals that were captured.

Num 31:27 Divide the spoils between the soldiers who took part in the battle and the rest of the community.

Num 31:28 From the soldiers who fought in the battle, set apart as tribute for the LORD one out of every five hundred, whether persons, cattle, donkeys, sheep or goats.

Num 31:29 Take this tribute from their half share and give it to Eleazar the priest as the LORD'S part.

Num 31:30 From the Israelites' half, select one out of every fifty, whether persons, cattle, donkeys, sheep, goats or other animals. Give them to the Levites, who are responsible for the care of the LORD'S tabernacle."

Num 31:31 So Moses and Eleazar the priest did as the LORD commanded Moses ...

Num 31:48 Then the officers who were over the units of the army -- the commanders of thousands and commanders of hundreds -- went to Moses Num 31:49 and said to him, "Your servants have counted the soldiers under our command, and not one is missing.

Num 31:50 So we have brought as an offering to the LORD the gold articles each of us acquired -- armlets, bracelets, signet rings, earrings and necklaces -- to make atonement for ourselves before the LORD."

Num 31:51 Moses and Eleazar the priest accepted from them the gold -- all the crafted articles.

Num 31:52 All the gold from the commanders of thousands and commanders of hundreds that Moses and Eleazar presented as a gift to the LORD weighed 16,750 shekels.

Num 31:53 Each soldier had taken plunder for himself.

Num 31:54 Moses and Eleazar the priest accepted the gold from the commanders of thousands and commanders of hundreds and brought it into the Tent of Meeting as a memorial for the Israelites before the LORD.

17. It was not until the monarchy that Israel had a professional or standing army.

17.1 There was universal military training and then the men were to serve certain active duty time and then they were returned to their tribes apparently as reserves.

18. Saul and David had bands of select warriors, the nuclei of which served as the kings' bodyguards.

19. David developed a national militia of 12 regiments, each of which was called up for duty for one month in the year under their appointed officers.

20. Over the entire army there was a commander-in-chief or "captain of the host" (1Sa 14:47-50; 2Sa 24:2), a role only rarely assumed by the king himself after Saul's reign.

1Sa 14:47 After Saul had assumed rule over Israel, he fought against their enemies on every side: Moab, the Ammonites, Edom, the kings of Zobah, and the Philistines. Wherever he turned, he inflicted punishment on them.

1Sa 14:48 He fought valiantly and defeated the Amalekites, delivering Israel from the hands of those who had plundered them.

1Sa 14:49 Saul's sons were Jonathan, Ishvi and Malki-Shua. The name of his older daughter was Merab, and that of the younger was Michal.

1Sa 14:50 His wife's name was Ahinoam daughter of Ahimaaz. The name of the commander of Saul's army was Abner son of Ner, and Ner was Saul's uncle.

2Sa 24:2 So the king (*David*) said to Joab and the army commanders with him, "Go throughout the tribes of Israel from Dan to Beersheba and enroll the fighting men, so that I may know how many there are."

2Sa 24:3 But Joab replied to the king, "May the LORD your God multiply the troops a hundred times over, and may the eyes of my lord the king see it. But why does my lord the king want to do such a thing?"

2Sa 24:4 The king's word, however, overruled Joab and the army commanders; so they left the presence of the king to enroll the fighting men of Israel.

21. Samuel had warned the leaders of Israel that a professional soldiery would be needed under a monarchy.

1Sa 8:10 Samuel told all the words of the LORD to the people who were asking him for a king.

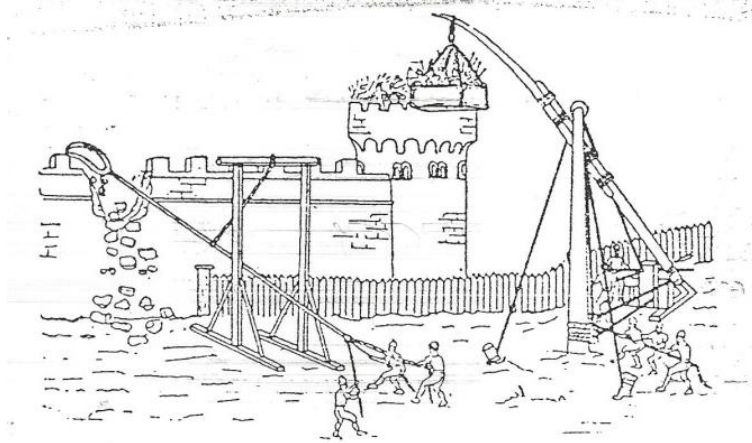
1Sa 8:11 He said, "This is what the king who will reign over you will do: He will take your sons and make them serve with his chariots and horses, and they will run in front of his chariots.

1Sa 8:12 Some he will assign to be commanders of thousands and commanders of fifties, and others to plow his ground and reap his harvest, and still others to make weapons of war and equipment for his chariots.

22. But the severe oppression of the mighty Philistines necessitated systematic military preparations on the part of King Saul to withstand

invasions and to free the people from their heavy yoke of bondage, as well as to achieve a national unity in Israel.

23. General Joab of David's army, though rough and unscrupulous, was well known for his military genius.



24. His tactical brilliance revolutionized Israel's warfare, particularly his skill in the art of siege warfare which he taught David's soldiers.

25. Although peace generally prevailed during Solomon's reign, there was no diminution of the armed forces.

26. Many cities resembled fortresses and required strong garrisons for their defense.

26.1 Solomon disregarded the divine prohibition of horses.

Deu 17:16 The king, moreover, must not acquire great numbers of horses for himself or make the people return to Egypt to get more of them, for the LORD has told you, "You are not to go back that way again."

1Ki 10:26 Solomon accumulated chariots and horses; he had fourteen hundred chariots and twelve thousand horses, which he kept in the chariot cities and also with him in Jerusalem.

26.2 Solomon added vast numbers of horses and chariots to the army's equipment, and later lancers and mounted archers were also added.

27. Palestine's hilly interior was not suited for the use of chariots, but as the foreign relations of Israel extended in the direction of Syria and Egypt, it was thought advantageous and militarily necessary to employ chariots against enemy forces, especially in the “flat plains regions.”

27.1 God's prohibition against the chariot and horse cavalry was to avoid the arrogance of Israel and the tendency to think as the Egyptian.

28. But this proved to be an expensive and often impractical addition to Israel's army.

29. The oppressive cost and the forced military service and labor created intense dissatisfaction, eventually contributing to the disruption of the kingdom.

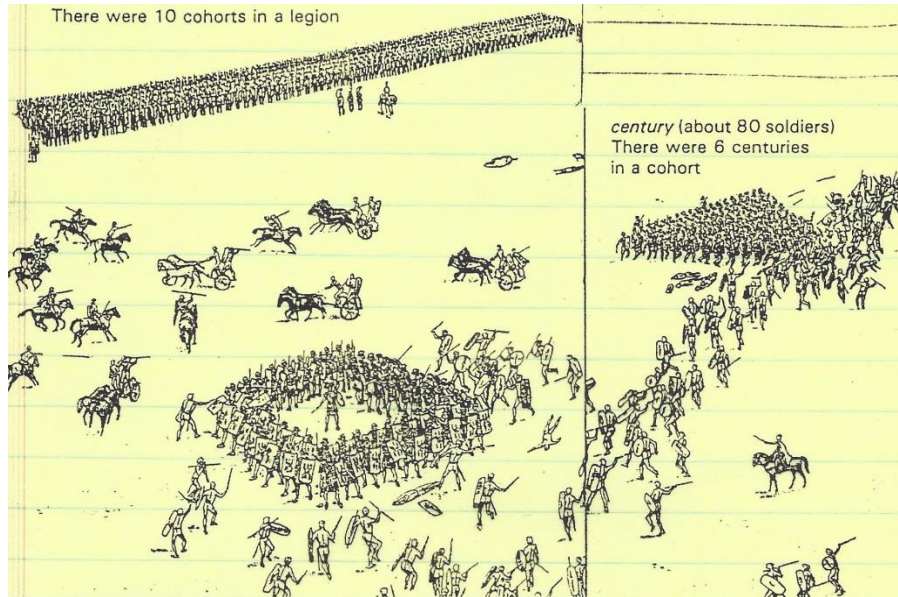
30. Foreign troops, such as the Cherethites and Pelethites, mainly of Philistine origin, were sometimes hired as mercenaries.

31. Extraordinarily large numbers are sometimes given for the military statistics (e.g., 1Sa 11:8; 2Ch 26:13).

1Sa 11:8 And when he numbered them in Bezek, the soldiers of Israel were 300,000 in number. There were 30,000 conscripts from the tribe of Judah.

2Ch 26:13 And under their hand was an army, 305,500 that made war with mighty power to help the King against the enemy.

32. Little is known about the order of battle and the exact arrangement of troops in the field, but it seems that the heavy-armed troops (spear men) came first, followed by slingers and archers, supported by horses and chariots.



33. Divisions of three bodies are frequently mentioned, the heavy-armed troops and two divisions of light-armed soldiers.

34. Various purposes were served by this arrangement: the provision of a center and two wings for combat; various strategic combinations of the divisions according to special needs and relays for the night watches.

35. Maneuvers varied according to the strategy of the enemy forces or the lay of the land.

36. Fighting was generally limited to the dry season. Operations were suspended when the rainy autumn weather came and resumed again in the spring.

37. Sentries were appointed to keep a vigilant guard of the camp at night.

38. When the army went forth into battle a detachment remained to protect the camp and to serve, if necessary, as a reserve or to provide an escape for the chief.

39. In the New Testament, the Roman army is most frequently mentioned, especially the Roman legions (varying from 3,000 to 6,000 soldiers), which were commanded by chief captains or tribunes.

39.1 Legions were divided into bands or cohorts, which were subdivided into maniples, which in turn were divided into centuries (originally comprised of 100 men) under the command of centurions.

39.2 Special groups, independent cohorts of volunteers, are mentioned in Scripture, such as the Italian Regiment, Imperial Regiment and Palace Guard.

Acts 10:1 At Caesarea there was a man named Cornelius, a centurion in what was known as the **Italian Regiment**.

Acts 27:1 When it was decided that we would sail for Italy, Paul and some other prisoners were handed over to a centurion named Julius, who belonged to the **Imperial Regiment**.

Phi 1:13 As a result, it has become clear throughout the whole **palace guard** and to everyone else that I am in chains for Christ.

40. Soldiers were either paid as in the case of the Praetorian Guard or shared in the booty of battle as in the case of Alexander the Great's army.

1Co 9:7 Who serves as a soldier at his own expense? Who plants a vineyard and does not eat of its grapes? Who tends a flock and does not drink of the milk?