

WHEN WE TAKE OFF OUR ARMOR

A Devotional Meditation on Pekudei (Accounts Of)

Exodus 25:8-9, 32:9-13, 38:21-40:30; 1 Kings 7:51-8:21, 20:11; Isaiah 2:2-4, 11:1-16;
Jeremiah 31:31-34; Ezekiel 47:13-23; Matthew 10:6, 15:24; Luke 14:25-34;
John 14:27, 16:33; Ephesians 2:11-22; Hebrews 8:8-12

Albert J. McCarn
March 16, 2024

Sometimes wisdom comes from surprising sources, such as little children. We appreciate the wise observations of children whose innocence allows them to say things adults choose not to say, but we're less likely to appreciate wise sayings from people outside our belief system and comfort zone. That's why we overlook the wisdom in statements like this:

The king of Israel answered and said, "Tell him: 'Let not the one who puts on his armor boast like the one who takes it off.'"

1 Kings 20:11 TLV

Israel's wicked King Ahab said these words in response to King Ben-Hadad of Damascus, who had invaded Israel and demanded Ahab's unconditional surrender. Ahab may have been speaking out of desperation and anger, but there is a wise principle in his words: those who start a matter should not boast until they have finished what they started.

It's one thing to declare what we intend to do, but until we have done it, our declarations mean very little. That's what Messiah Yeshua conveys in this teaching:

"For which of you, wanting to build a tower, doesn't first sit down and figure out the cost, to see if he has enough to finish it? Otherwise, when he has laid a foundation and isn't able to finish everything, all who see it begin to mock him, saying, 'This man began to build and wasn't able to finish!'"

"Or what king, going to make war against another king, won't first sit down to consider whether he is able with ten thousand to confront the one coming against him with twenty thousand? If not, while the other is still far away, he sends an ambassador and asks for peace. So in the same way, whoever does not renounce all that he has, cannot be My disciple."

Luke 14:28-33 TLV

Yeshua taught this because He had learned it from His Father, the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Israel. It's the operative principle in this exchange between God and Moses:

ADONAI said to Moses, "I have seen this people, and behold, it is a stiff-necked people. Now therefore, leave Me alone, so My wrath may burn hot against them, and so I may consume them—and make from you a great nation!"

Then Moses sought *ADONAI* his God and said, "*ADONAI*, why should Your wrath burn hot against Your people, whom You have brought forth out of the land of



A knight and his horse. Photo by Sean Tbear, July 20, 2012, via Flickr.

Egypt with great power and with a mighty hand? Why should the Egyptians say, 'He brought them out to do evil, to slay them in the mountains, and to annihilate them from the face of the earth?' Turn from Your fierce wrath, and relent from this destruction against Your people. Remember Abraham, Isaac and Israel, Your servants, to whom You swore by Your own self, and said to them, 'I will multiply your seed as the stars of heaven, and all this land that I have spoken of I will give to your offspring, and they will inherit it forever.'"

Exodus 32:9-13 TLV

That conversation was God's test of Moses to ensure he was humble enough to complete the task of mentoring Israel through the transition from a family of slaves to a kingdom of priests. Moses demonstrated not only his humility, but also his understanding of the larger process by reminding God that He had staked His own name and reputation on the outcome. The Creator of the universe had risked everything on making the Covenant Nation of Israel and maturing them into the agent of redemption for all nations. The peril in that enterprise was that the Creator determined to work in partnership with frail, unreliable human beings – the stiff-necked people of Israel who, like all peoples in all ages, tended to promote their own short-sighted selfishness above the priorities of God.

And yet, God will have His way. That's why the concluding chapters of Exodus are so important. They tell us that God, in partnership with His Chosen People, did accomplish the purposes He had declared:

So all the work of the Tabernacle, the Tent of Meeting, was finished. *Bnei-Yisrael* [children of Israel] did everything according to what *ADONAI* had commanded Moses—they did it just so. Then they brought the Tabernacle to Moses, along with the tent and all of its furnishings . . . as well as the woven garments for ministering in the Sanctuary, the holy garments for Aaron the *kohen* [priest] and for his sons to serve as *kohanim* [priests]. According to everything that *ADONAI* had commanded Moses, *Bnei-Yisrael* had done all the work just so. When Moses saw the entire work, and that they had done it just as *ADONAI* had commanded, Moses blessed them.

Then *ADONAI* spoke to Moses saying, "On the first day of the first month, you will set up the Tabernacle of the Tent of Meeting. . . ." So Moses finished the work. Then the cloud covered the Tent of Meeting, and the glory of *ADONAI* filled the Tabernacle. Moses was unable to enter into the Tent of Meeting, because the cloud resided there and the glory of *ADONAI* filled the Tabernacle.

Exodus 39:32-33, 41-43, 40:1-2, 33-35 TLV

God had declared that Israel would build Him a sanctuary so He could dwell in their midst, and that's exactly what they did. It was a precondition for continuing the march toward the Promised Land and the ultimate fulfillment of God's promises.

It may come as a surprise that we are on that same journey. We study the scriptures to see how God has fulfilled His promises, and learn what other promises He will fulfill in time. Because He has proven Himself reliable in ages past, we can trust Him to do in the end all that He declared from the beginning. That is why we should expect such wonders as these:

- The end of Jew hatred, especially that which comes from Christians who should know better. That will happen when we finally realize we are part of the same Commonwealth of Israel, and therefore need not be jealous of the place the Jewish people hold in God's esteem. Until then, we continue to advocate for our Jewish kin, knowing that any inheritance we might have in the Kingdom cannot be secured until their inheritance is secure. (Isaiah 11:1-16; Ephesians 2:11-22)
- All of Israel's tribes are regathered into the land God promised them. They are no longer threatened by strangers in their midst because those strangers will receive an inheritance among them. Until then, we continue to seek and to save the lost sheep of the House of Israel. (Ezekiel 47:13-23; Matthew 10:6, 15:24)
- Evangelism will be unnecessary because everyone will know the LORD. Until then, we exhort everyone to know Him, not just by words, but by thoughts and deeds. (Jeremiah 31:31-34; Hebrews 8:8-12)
- We shall no longer learn war, because in Messiah's Kingdom, true peace shall cover the earth. Until then, we study and practice war by all means, both physical and spiritual, to resist evil and create the conditions for Messiah's peace. (Isaiah 2:2-4; John 14:27, 16:33)

I used to think that life was simply a matter of hanging on until Jesus comes back, but now I know that He expects us to play our part in making these things happen. That's why He equips us with the finest armor to withstand the assaults of our enemy, and to liberate occupied territory with the truth. We do this humbly and wisely. The weapons and ways of warfare of the righteous are often indistinguishable from those of the wicked, but the wise will understand why the one preserves life while the other promotes death. That's why we never boast in our battles, but instead look toward the day when we may take off our armor.