

**BOOK
REVIEW**

*Warfare In the
Old Testament*
Boyd Seevers



By Donald C. McNeeley

***Warfare in the Old Testament*, by Boyd Seevers. Grand Rapids, MI: Kregel Publications, 2013. 317 pages.**

Warfare in the Old Testament provides the reader a very interesting merging of historical fiction and a scholarly assessment of warfare in the Old Testament. Seevers covers the military capabilities of the Old Testament armies, starting with the Israelite army as they crossed the River Jordan into the Promised Land. It is here he tells the first historical story about an Israelite warrior who does not understand some of the events preceding the conquest of Jericho. The events made no sense to the character in the story. Basically, why would a military commander order the circumcision of the men just days before attacking? Why would they be told to walk around the city of Jericho once a day for six days? Why would they not be allowed to take any plunder from the “first fruits” of the new land? For the Israelite army, warriors were told that the main weapon of offense was to do what God had told them through Joshua. Reliance on God did not mean that the Israelite warriors would not use their weapons, a fact the author vividly discusses in the following chapter.

Seevers’ description of the Israelite army’s weaponry, organizational structure, and strategy and tactics demonstrate his knowledge and ability to extract from various sources an excellent understanding of the army being discussed. As a retired member of the Department of Defense (DoD), I appreciated his understanding of the logistical requirements needed to support the strategy and tactics that he discusses in the book.

Seevers continues to use this intriguing technique to introduce the reader to Egyptian and Philistine armies, using a “Chariot-Warrior” in command of ten Egyptian chariots. The historical setting is during the mid-15th century BC, during Thutmose III’s reign and the battle of Meggido. As with the Israelite chapters, Seevers follows the historical story with a full treatment of the Egyptian and Philistine armies and their capabilities.

Seevers then uses the same technique to introduce the

Assyrian, Babylonian and Persian armies. However, in this case, Seevers takes a fascinating turn concerning his soldier in the Assyrian army. Here the main character is a former Samarian “chariot-commander” who, when the Assyrians conquered Samaria, offered his services to the new Assyrian governor. The “chariot-commander” in the story determined that the best way to continue as a warrior was to fit into the Assyrian Empire and survive, rather than attempt to fight against the Assyrians. Becoming an Assyrian warrior turns out to be a good deal for him, as he rose in rank and ultimately became an advisor to King Sennacherib, and was part of the forces that conquered Lachish. In this story Seevers acknowledges the conflict that might have occurred to those who assimilated into the Assyrian culture like the warrior, who ultimately has to fight and kill kinsmen.

After each story there is a short historical background section that describes the overall environment and the relationship of the period under discussion to Scripture. These background sections allow the reader to link the Scriptures to the short story. More importantly, the reader can link the coming chapter on the military organization, weapons, and strategy and tactics to Scripture.

As one reads the chapters concerning the more concrete information associated with warfare in biblical times, it is easy to visualize the participants in biblical events armed with their weapons and to understand the battles that occurred. Each of the illustrations and maps provides the necessary supplements needed to make Scripture come alive. Additionally, the organizational structure discussions assist in understanding many of the historical references in Scripture related to the military. As mentioned earlier, being a retired DoD member, these descriptive chapters and the historical fiction matched in so many ways my experiences through 20 years of service, especially the logistical aspects mentioned earlier. That is not to say that a non-military member would not enjoy this book. I strongly recommend that everyone interested in the Old Testament should read this book. Read the book and become immersed in the fascinating world of warfare in biblical times.

This book is available in the online ABR bookstore at www.BibleArchaeology.org.

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"The whole assembly of the Israelites gathered at Shiloh and set up the tent of meeting there.
The country was brought under their control" Joshua 18:1



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