

That is the blessing and encouragement that God's people always need. Not only to have that a new direction in life—and not only to have that empowerment for the fight, but to have that focus. That there is a battle to fight. It isn't just personal. It isn't just the daily struggle. It is cosmic, and life hangs in the balance.

This is about what God can and does through you. For we are soldiers dressed for the fight, (2nd Timothy 2) if we take up the whole armor of God. (Ephesians 6:13-18) For there is a battle which we also must fight, as we are faced with the hosts of hell. (Ephesians 6:12) But if God is for you, then who can stand against you? (Romans 8:31)

Oh, but—one says—we are meant to just love! Love our enemies! Yes, OUR enemies. This is true. In the struggle in which we find ourselves we must not let OUR interpersonal conflict get in the way of our true mission or the real fight we are to engage with the true enemies in this world. And they are the enemies of God.

As David says in Scripture:

Psalms 139:19-22 KJV

19) Surely thou wilt slay the wicked, O God: depart from me therefore, ye bloody men.

20) For they speak against thee wickedly, *and* thine enemies take *thy name* in vain.

21) Do not I hate them, O LORD, that hate thee? and am not I grieved with those that rise up against thee?

22) I hate them with perfect hatred: I count them mine enemies.

This passage, then, is important for believers today, as we are meant to be a good soldier dressed for the fight. Not personally focused, but spiritually prepared and equipped, taking down strongholds.

Sadly, for the Jewish generations that would follow they would not be like David. Instead, they would have all their focus on their enemies, rather than God's enemies.

In their additions to Scripture, they distort this verse, talking about how they will walk on the dead, and instead of their victory being assured because the Yahweh is with them, they say that He is merely their support.

Targum: And *the house of Israel*¹ shall be like mighty men, trampling *the dead of the nations*² in battle *like*³ the mud of the streets, and they shall wage war, for *the Memra of the Lord is their support*^{4 5}

We need more than support! We need the very presence of God.

1 ²⁴ Tg. adds.

2 ²⁵ A further addition, reflecting a particularly blood-thirsty attitude towards non-Jews.

3 ²⁶ Tg.'s insertion (see previous note) requires that this phrase, originally the object of "trampling", be converted into a simile.

4 ²⁷ MT "the Lord is with them"; see on Hag 1:13 (note 19).

5 Kevin J. Cathcart, Martin McNamara, and Michael Maher, "[Editors' Foreword](#)," in *The Aramaic Bible: The Targum of the Minor Prophets*, ed. Kevin J. Cathcart, Michael Maher, and Martin McNamara, trans. Kevin J. Cathcart and Robert P. Gordon, vol. 14 (Collegeville, MN: The Liturgical Press, 1990), Zec 10:5.

Although Assyria is the well-known site of exile for both the northern kingdom and groups from the southern kingdom (see comment on Is 22:2–3), it is evident that there were also colonies of Israelites that had either fled to Egypt or been taken to Egypt, perhaps as early as the eighth century but certainly by the seventh century (see comment on Jer 43:7).⁶

The Assyrians destroyed Damascus and conquered the northern tribes in 722 BC. These countries are also linked in Isa. 7:18 as threats to Israel's freedom in the eighth century BC.⁷

Yahweh will bring the exiles back to 'the land of Gilead and Lebanon'. The geography here is not arbitrary. 'Gilead' refers to the region of Transjordanian land that was occupied by the tribes of Reuben, Gad and the half-tribe of Manasseh, including Bashan in the north (e.g. Deut. 23:6; 34:1; Judg. 10–12; 20:1; 1 Kgs 4:13; 2 Kgs 15:29). It was the territory through which Israel first approached the Promised Land under Moses (Deut. 1:4; 3:1–11), and probably refers to the route of the exiles returning from Egypt (Zech. 10:10). 'Lebanon' is used to define the northernmost extent of the Promised Land (e.g. Deut. 11:24; Josh. 1:4). While separate from Israel for most of Israel's history, 1 Kgs 9:19 says that Lebanon was part of Solomon's dominion. In a similar way to Gilead, Lebanon was the region through which those from Assyria would return (10:10). The Jordan (11:3) was also very significant in the entry of the Israelites into the Promised Land under Joshua (Josh. 1–4). In addition, Meyers and Meyers (1987: 222) believe that Gilead, along with Lebanon, represented relatively empty ter-

6 Victor Harold Matthews, Mark W. Chavalas, and John H. Walton, [The IVP Bible Background Commentary: Old Testament](#), electronic ed. (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2000), Zec 10:10.

7 Anthony R. Petterson, [Haggai, Zechariah & Malachi](#), ed. David W. Baker and Gordon J. Wenham, vol. 25, *Apollos Old Testament Commentary* (Nottingham, England; Downers Grove, IL: Apollos; InterVarsity Press, 2015), 235.

ritory that belonged to the northern kingdom. It would be filled by Israelites only when they were exceedingly numerous, exactly the condition specified in v. 8, and the end of v. 10, which goes even beyond this in its expression of abundance.⁸

8 Anthony R. Petterson, [Haggai, Zechariah & Malachi](#), ed. David W. Baker and Gordon J. Wenham, vol. 25, *Apollos Old Testament Commentary* (Nottingham, England; Downers Grove, IL: Apollos; InterVarsity Press, 2015), 235–236.