

Voices Real World Spiritual Warfare

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Exodus 40:34–38

“Then the cloud covered the tent of meeting, and the glory of the LORD filled the tabernacle. And Moses was not able to enter the tent of meeting because the cloud had settled on it, and the glory of the LORD filled the tabernacle. Throughout their journeys, whenever the cloud was taken up from over the tabernacle, the sons of Israel would set out; but if the cloud was not taken up, then they did not set out until the day when it was taken up. For throughout their journeys, the cloud of the LORD was on the tabernacle by day, and there was fire in it by night, in the sight of all the house of Israel.” (NASB 2020)

God was visibly with His people. The people who only exist because of the grace He exhibited to Abraham and Sarah enabling to have a child. The people who only exist because of a miracle.

We have learned that the visible presence of God was the pre-incarnate Christ.

Again, to revisit some plowed ground, why is YAHWEH going to all of this effort with His people to restore Eden.

Three specific rebellions in Genesis

1. Genesis 3 – The fall of man and some divine beings.
2. Genesis 6 – The rebellion of some divine beings brought to earth.

3. Genesis 11 – The rebellion of man against the purposes of God; some divine beings who are then assigned to the nations in turn become corrupted and demand worship.

Result – God divorces mankind and begins His plan through Abram leading to the ultimate solution and restoration, the man-God Jesus Christ.

There is a Divine Council

We see it throughout the scriptures from Genesis 1 and on. At times we see it explicitly such as in Genesis 11 or Psalm 82.

The members of his heavenly council rule other nations, but it is ultimately Yahweh who rules the whole earth through them. (Boyd 1997, Kindle Locations 2566 - 2567)

Our problem though is we live in the 21st century and for us, reason has replaced the supernatural in virtually all our understandings of God and our day-to-day interactions with Him. We forget a basic truth about YAHWEH.

Malachi 3:6

“For I, the LORD, do not change; therefore you, the sons of Jacob, have not come to an end.” (NASB 2020)

This notion that there exists a council, or a society, of divine beings between humans and God who, like us, have free wills and can therefore influence the flow of history for better or for worse is obviously jarring to a number of Western worldview assumptions. Indeed, for many believers it is foreign to their Western Christian assumptions as well. For a variety of reasons, Westerners have trouble taking seriously the “world in between” us and God, what one missiologist appropriately called “the flaw of the excluded middle.” Even when Westerners do theoretically acknowledge the existence of “angels,” we tend to view them as mindless, volitionless, wholly innocuous winged marionettes completely controlled by the will of their Creator. If we take the Old Testament teaching on the gods seriously, however, we must confess that our Western assumptions about “the world in between” are erroneous. For these writers— and it shall prove even more obvious and pervasive for New Testament authors— the “heavenly” world was not much different or distant from our “earthly” world. Indeed, the two worlds largely overlap and can hardly be said to form two worlds at all. The “world in between” is, from a scriptural perspective, simply part of the cosmos. (Boyd 1997, Kindle Locations 2659 - 2668)

As we previously indicated, for the Jew, there is no separating the physical from the spiritual, they are all one. We are at war; the New Testament clearly states that.

Ephesians 6:10–13

Finally, be strong in the Lord, relying on his mighty strength. Put on the whole armor of God so that you may be able to stand firm against the devil’s strategies. For our struggle is not against human opponents, but against rulers, authorities, cosmic powers in the darkness around us, and evil spiritual forces in the heavenly realm. For this reason, take up the whole armor of God so that you may be able to take a stand whenever evil comes. And when you have done everything you could, you will be able to stand firm. (ISV)

Thus evil must be understood as being what God is unequivocally against, and thus what God’s people must also be unequivocally against. Whereas the classical-philosophical theology of sovereignty encourages a theology of resignation, a theology rooted in a warfare worldview inspires, and requires, a theology of revolt: revolt against all that God revolts against. (Boyd 1997, Kindle Locations 410-413)

One task therefore remained. Yahweh would bring Israel to Canaan, where these two covenantal promises would be fulfilled. He would also live among them in that land. To those ends, the covenant for living in the presence of God, remaining in the land, and being a kingdom of priests was enacted in the presence of witnesses, Yahweh’s divine council. (Heiser 2015 , 179-180)

So, one year after leaving Egypt, it is time to move. To do that, YAHWEH has Moses prepare by numbering the people so they can be ready for what lies ahead.

Numbers 1:1–3

“Now the LORD spoke to Moses in the Wilderness of Sinai, in the tabernacle of meeting, on the first day of the second month, in the second year after they had come out of the land of Egypt, saying: “Take a census of all the congregation of the children of Israel, by their families, by their fathers’ houses, according to the number of names, every male individually, from twenty years old and above—all who are able to go to war in Israel. You and Aaron shall number them by their armies.” (NKJV)

The people had YAHWEH with them. In the coming conflict to take the land, a conflict which is going to involve physical armies, we will learn it is also a war engaged in the divine realm as well. Israel is hopelessly outnumbered. There is no way a nation, that one year ago were slaves, could possibly take on armies and the minefield that the fallen have been creating since learning of the return date from YAHWEH when He talked with Abraham in Genesis 15:16.

Just as we saw giants as a result of the rebellion in Genesis 6, we will see the same type of the fruits of that rebellion in the land. Spiritual warfare, very real and very present in giants. We have seen this before.

From the Septuagint.

Genesis 6:1–4

“And Noah lived five hundred years, and Noah fathered three sons: Shem, Ham, and Japheth. And it happened when humans began to become numerous upon the earth, and they had daughters, the angels of God, having seen the daughters of humans, that they were beautiful, took for themselves women from all whom they picked out. The Lord God said, “My breath will certainly not reside in these humans for very long because they are flesh, but their days will be one hundred and twenty years.” Now giants were upon the earth in those days, and after that, whenever the sons of God entered into the daughters of humans, they fathered children for themselves; those were the giants who were from long ago, the people of renown.” (Lexham Press 2020, Gen 6:1-4)

And we know that the fallen watchers who were behind all of that were imprisoned by YAHWEH in Tartarus per 2 Peter 2:4 & 5. So, we are talking about giants, again?

Remember, YAHWEH supernaturally intervened in the life of Abram and Sarah so they would have a boy. The other side also took a clue and they tried a tactic they had tried once before.

Numbers 13:1–3

“The LORD spoke to Moses: “Send out men to investigate the land of Canaan, which I am giving to the Israelites. You are to send one man from each ancestral tribe, each one a leader among them.” So Moses sent them from the wilderness of Paran at the command of the LORD. All of them were leaders of the Israelites.” (NET)

Moses sends out the spies, the people are at the edge of the land ready to move in. Why the spies? Do you believe YAHWEH?

Numbers 13:25–33

At the end of 40 days they all returned from exploring the land, came in to Moses and Aaron, and delivered their report to the entire congregation of Israel in the Wilderness of Paran at Kadesh. They brought back their report to the entire congregation and showed them the fruit of the land. “We arrived at the place where you’ve sent us,” they reported, “and it certainly does flow with milk and honey. Furthermore, this is its fruit, except that the people who have settled in the land are strong, and their cities are greatly fortified. We also saw the descendants of Anak. Amalek lives throughout the Negev, while the Hittites, Jebusites, and Amorites live in the hill country. The Canaanites live by the sea and on the bank of the Jordan.” Caleb silenced the people on Moses’ behalf and responded, “Let’s go up and take control,

because we can definitely conquer it.” “We can’t attack those people,” the men who were with him said, “because they’re too strong compared to us.” So they put out this false report to the Israelis about the land that they had explored: “The land that we’ve explored is one that devours its inhabitants. All the people whom we observed were giants. We also saw the Nephilim, the descendants of Anak. Compared to the Nephilim, as we see things, we’re like grasshoppers, and that’s their opinion of us!” (ISV)

YAHWEH is with the people; His presence is with them and they can see Him in the center of the camp all of the time. YAHWEH has done great miracles for them including the destruction of the army of the major world power of that day. He has provided for them with food and water. They have seen the fruit of the land, but they are also the subjects of false news.

Many times, the enemy does not have to do a direct frontal assault, all he has to do is make us question, or ask a question, just like with Eve in Genesis 3.

Luke 12:16–34

And he told them a parable, saying, “The land of a rich man produced plentifully, and he thought to himself, ‘What shall I do, for I have nowhere to store my crops?’ And he said, ‘I will do this: I will tear down my barns and build larger ones, and there I will store all my grain and my goods. And I will say to my soul, ‘Soul, you have ample goods laid up for many years; relax, eat, drink, be merry.’” But God said to him, ‘Fool! This night your soul is required of you, and the things you have prepared, whose will they be?’ So is the one who lays up treasure for himself and is not rich toward God.” And he said to his disciples, “Therefore I tell you, do not be anxious about your life, what you will eat, nor about your body, what you will put on. For life is more than food, and the body more than clothing. Consider the ravens: they neither sow nor reap, they have neither storehouse nor barn, and yet God feeds them. Of how much more value are you than the birds! And which of you by being anxious can add a single hour to his span of life? If then you are not able to do as small a thing as that, why are you anxious about the rest? Consider the lilies, how they grow: they neither toil nor spin, yet I tell you, even Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these. But if God so clothes the grass, which is alive in the field today, and tomorrow is thrown into the oven, how much more will he clothe you, O you of little faith! And do not seek what you are to eat and what you are to drink, nor be worried. For all the nations of the world seek after these things, and your Father knows that you need them. Instead, seek his kingdom, and these things will be added to you. “Fear not, little flock, for it is your Father’s good pleasure to give you the kingdom. Sell your possessions, and give to the needy. Provide yourselves with moneybags that do not grow old, with a treasure in the heavens that does not fail, where no thief approaches and no moth destroys. For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also.” (ESV)

Psalms 37:1–6

“Do not fret because of the wicked; do not be envious of wrongdoers, for they will soon fade like the grass, and wither like the green herb. Trust in the LORD, and do good; so you will live in the land, and enjoy security. Take delight in the LORD, and he will give you the desires of your heart. Commit your way to the LORD; trust in him, and he will act. He will make your vindication shine like the light, and the justice of your cause like the noonday.” (NRSV)

Proverbs 3:5–8

Trust in the LORD with all your heart, and do not lean on your own understanding. In all your ways acknowledge him, and he will make straight your paths. Be not wise in your own eyes; fear the LORD, and turn away from evil. It will be healing to your flesh and refreshment to your bones. (ESV)

The people are presented with a simple test, do you trust YAHWEH? Or do you go along with the majority of the spies who have listened to the enemy. For the past 40 days they had nothing else better to do than to listen to who has been whispering in their ears. Note, the number 40 – they will fail the test. A future member of the tribe of Judah, Jesus Christ, will also be tested for 40 days and pass the test.

The Nephilim are found once more in the Hebrew Bible in Num 13:33 when Moses' spies exaggerate the strength of the pre-settlement occupants of Canaan by reporting the sight of the gigantic Nephilim before whom they felt like grasshoppers... (Coxon 1999, 618)

Genesis 6:4

"Now giants were upon the earth in those days, and after that, whenever the sons of God entered into the daughters of humans, they fathered children for themselves; those were the giants who were from long ago, the people of renown." (Lexham Press 2020, Gen 6:4)

That, for the spies, is not an exaggeration. Caleb and Joshua did not listen to the enemy, they are ready to move now.

Fear of the giant clans results in a spiritual failure that means wandering in the desert outside the land of promise for forty years. The generation who came out of Egypt is sentenced to die off outside of holy ground. The new generation under Joshua will wind up facing the same threat. (Heiser 2015, 191)

Was this exaggeration by the spies? Were they doing this because of some other fear? No, what they are saying is completely true, there are indeed giants in the land. At a later point, YAHWEH will make reference to them as He is reminding the nation of things He did.

Amos 2:9–10

"Yet it was I who destroyed the Amorite before them, whose height was like the height of the cedars and who was as strong as the oaks; I destroyed his fruit above and his roots beneath. Also it was I who brought you up out of the land of Egypt and led you forty years in the wilderness, to possess the land of the Amorite." (ESV)

They renounced God's promise to accompany them with his awesome presence, to grant them decisive victory in what seemed, humanly speaking, to be overwhelming odds, and henceforth to confer upon them their rightful inheritance as the people of God—a homeland of abundant prosperity. (Cole 2000, 224)

They failed the test. That night you could probably hear the wailing and moaning throughout the camp. The sounds of unbelief. The enemy suggested and now the infection was throughout the camp. The goal, reject the proposal of YAHWEH and return to Egypt, and most of the people bought the lie.

Numbers 14:5–10

Moses and Aaron fell on their faces in front of the entire assembly of the congregation of Israel. Nun's son Joshua and Jephunneh's son Caleb, who had accompanied the others who also had explored the land, tore their clothes and attempted to reason with the entire congregation of Israel. They told them, "The land that we went through and explored is very, very good. If the LORD is pleased with us, he'll bring us into this land and give it to us. It flows with milk and honey. However, don't rebel against the LORD or be afraid of the people who live in the land, because we'll gobble them right up. Their defenses will collapse, because the LORD is with us. You are not to be afraid of them." But the entire congregation was talking about stoning them to death. Suddenly, the glory of the LORD appeared at the Tent of Meeting to all of the Israelis." (ISV)

Moses intervenes, and YAHWEH says only two will go in from those over 20, Joshua and Caleb, no one else. And for forty years, the people wandered around in the desert dying.

How often do we listen to the lie rather than the truth and spend time out in the desert when we could have been enjoying all that God has for us, if we had just believed?

At the end of forty years, those who had not been faithful were dead and it was time to go back to what YAHWEH had intended, now with a new generation that had watched their parents die in the wilderness.

The biblical writers deliberately connect the giant clan enemies Israel would face in the conquest back to the ancient apostasies that had Babylon at their root: the sons of God and the Nephilim, and the disinheritance of the nations at the Tower of Babel. These incidents inform the Israelite supernatural worldview. They are at the heart of what's at stake in the war for the promised land. Israel will encounter two deadly forces: the descendants of the Nephilim and the people of nations under the dominion of hostile gods. The two are at times conflated in the narrative. Both must be defeated, but one in particular must be annihilated. (Heiser 2015 , 192-193)

Israel believed that the physical and the supernatural were intertwined. This is reflected in some of the Dead Sea Scrolls such as the Qumran War Scroll (1 QM).

On this (day), the assembly of the gods and the congregation of men shall confront each other for great destruction. The sons of light and the lot of darkness shall battle together for God's might, between the roar of a huge multitude and the shout of gods and of men, on the day of the calamity. (Martinez and Tigchelaar 1997-1998, 115)

You, God, are awe[some] in the splendour of your majesty, and the congregation of your holy ones is amongst us for everlasting assistance. We will [treat] kings with contempt, with jeers and mockery the heroes, for the Lord is holy and the King of glory is with us the nation of his holy ones are [our] he[roes, and] the army of his angels is enlisted with us; the war hero is in our congregation; the army of his spirits is with our steps. (Martinez and Tigchelaar 1997-1998, 133)

...this passage clearly assumes that physical and spiritual realities interpenetrate. It assumes that battles on earth can reflect battles in the heavenlies, and that armies align themselves with one side or the other in these earthly/ cosmic battles. Passages such as these assume that humans are part of a much more vast, invisible, cosmic society, and that this society, on both a spiritual and a physical plane, is in a state of war. (Boyd 1997, Kindle Locations 2532-2535)

Daniel 10:12–13

“And he said to me, “Do not be afraid, Daniel, for from the first day that you set your face to examine and to understand and to make yourself low before your Lord God, your petition was heard, and I have come because of your petition. Now the commander of the king of Persia opposed me for twenty-one days, and look, Michael, one of the commanders of the first order, came to help me. And I left him there with the commander of the king of Persia.”” (Lexham Press 2020, Dan 10:12-13)

Daniel 10:20–21

“And he said to me, “Do you know why I have come to you? And now I will return to content with the commander of the king of Persia, and I will go forth, and look, the commander of the Greeks will come in. However, I will show you the first things listed in the register of truth, and there was no one who was helping me against those beings, except Michael, the angel.”” (Lexham Press 2020, Dan 10:20-21)

So as Israel prepares to enter the land and engage in battle with the peoples who are there, they have a different view from what we would have in the “enlightened” 21st century.

What is at stake in such wars is not simply earthly territories or the dominion of earthly governments: from the perspective of the Old Testament, what is at stake is the kingly rule of the one true God. The struggle of nations to dominate, or at least to resist, Israel is also, and even more fundamentally, a struggle of other gods, with whom these nations are in league, to resist Yahweh. (Boyd 1997, Kindle Locations 2538-2541)

If we really stop and take a look at what is Ezekiel 38 & 39 regarding the Gog / Magog War, or the wars referenced in Revelation, or those in Psalm 83; they are all still in the future for planet earth, but they all have a spiritual dimension to them. Yes, these are actual conflicts here in earth, but something is going on in the unseen realm as well.

We clearly saw the connection in the Exodus. So, what truly is the source of the geopolitical problems we see today?

Recall the world view of Israel as we saw in Deuteronomy 32:7 – 9. This is unique and something we need to recall whenever we study the scriptures. In addition, it is true, and we see that if indeed divine beings have free will just as we do, and those who are in rebellion and not in alignment with YAHWEH's will, just as non-believing humans are not in alignment, then no wonder we see competing religions to distract away from truth.

Deuteronomy 32:7–9

“Remember days of old; consider years of generations upon generations; ask your father, and he will say it to you, your elders, and they will tell you. When the Most High distributed nations as he scattered the sons of Adam, he set up boundaries for the nations according to the number of the angels of God. And his people Jacob became the portion of the Lord, Israel an allotment of his inheritance.” (Lexham Press 2020, Deut 32:7-9)

Their role was to oversee the welfare of the nation assigned to them, not to become surrogate objects of devotion for the Lord himself. When they fail in this duty, they become evil and are judged. (Boyd 1997, Kindle Locations 2574-2575)

This is why we see what we see in Psalm 82 where their impending judgement is outlined.

As the people begin to move into the land, they are told a little tidbit by YAHWEH. Remember, they were unfaithful and judged for that for forty years. Their relatives had to deal with the same giants, and had already prevailed. The Holy Spirit is basically saying, see...told you.

Deuteronomy 2:18–23

“Today you are to cross the border of Moab at Ar. And when you approach the territory of the people of Ammon, do not harass them or contend with them, for I will not give you any of the land of the people of Ammon as a possession, because I have given it to the sons of Lot for a possession.” (It is also counted as a land of Rephaim. Rephaim formerly lived there—but the Ammonites call them Zamzummim— a people great and many, and tall as the Anakim; but the LORD destroyed them before the Ammonites, and they dispossessed them and settled in their place, as he did for the people of Esau, who live in Seir, when he destroyed the Horites before them and they dispossessed them and settled in their place even to this day. As for the Avvim, who lived in villages as far as Gaza, the Caphtorim, who came from Caphtor, destroyed them and settled in their place.) (ESV)

Ouch!

The first king to go down would be Sihon, an Amorite.

For an Israelite, all this meant that the native population of Canaan had a supernaturally sinister point of origin. This wouldn't be just a battle for land. It was a battle between Yahweh and the other gods—gods who had raised up competing human bloodlines that were opposed to Yahweh's plan and people. (Heiser 2015 , 197)

Before moving to far from this, I want to take a look at some other scriptures which talk about YAHWEH leading His people and notice something in them. Again, remember how brazen the fallen were at God's mountain and the cow problem.

Habakkuk 3:3–5

“God comes from Teman, And the Holy One from Mount Paran. Selah His splendor covers the heavens, And the earth is full of His praise. His radiance is like the sunlight; He has rays flashing from His hand, And the hiding of His might is there. Before Him goes plague, And plague comes forth after Him.” (NASB 2020)

Notice what goes before God and what follows after Him.

Pestilence = Deber

Plague = Reseph

These just happen to also be the names of two Canaanite “gods.”

A bit about Deber

More cogent is the parallelism with Resheph in Hab 3:14, given the presence of this deity in the Ugaritic texts as a god of destruction (KTU 1.14 I 18–19; 1.82:3; DE MOOR & SPRONK 1984:239). The eschatological hymn in Hab 3 presents Deber and Resheph marching at Yahweh’s side as His helpers. This follows the ancient Mesopotamian tradition according to which ‘plague’ and ‘pestilence’ are present in the entourage of the great god Marduk (DE MOOR 1990:134). (Lete 1999, 232)

Resheph

It is the name of one of the most popular West-Semitic gods, venerated in Syria, Palestine and Egypt. (Xella 1999, 701)

From Deuteronomy 32, one of the curses if the people do not remain faithful.

Deuteronomy 32:24

“...they shall be wasted with hunger, and devoured by plague (Resheph) and poisonous pestilence (Qeteb); I will send the teeth of beasts against them, with the venom of things that crawl in the dust.” (ESV)

Both are names of Canaanite “gods.” What?

Resheph and his pals were subordinate to Yahweh, inferior entities tasked with carrying out His orders whether they wanted to or not. They were not freelancing on their own authority. (Gilbert 2017, Kindle Locations 2055-2056)

By the way, by the time of the Greeks, Resheph has a new name, Apollo. Is Apollo in the Bible?

Revelation 9:11

“They have as king over them, the angel of the abyss; his name in Hebrew is Abaddon, and in the Greek he has the name Apollyon.” (NASB 2020)

Apollyon is just another name for Apollo, and the historical evidence that Apollo is Resheph is solid. Archaeologists have found two inscriptions on the island of Cyprus that specifically identify Apollo as Resheph. (Gilbert 2017, Kindle Locations 2080-2081)

Yet the textual occurrences of this god are chiefly concentrated in Cyprus. Here we find traces of the ancient Ugaritic tradition of the Archer-God, which merged with the figure of an archaic local Apollo. (Xella 1999, 702)

God has led His people to this point and not only is He judging the gods being followed by the Amorites, who have also decided to engage the services of giants, but He is also using these “gods,” former members of His divine council, to achieve His purpose. Remember, YAHWEH is omniscient – His council is not.

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