

Psalm 20:7

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

Some trust in chariots, and some in horses: but we will remember the name of the LORD our God.

Analysis

Some trust in chariots, and some in horses: but we will remember the name of the LORD our God. This verse presents one of Scripture's starker contrasts between human strength and divine power. Chariots and horses represented ancient military superiority—they were the tanks and advanced weaponry of the ancient world. Nations with strong cavalry forces and chariot divisions dominated warfare. Egypt, Assyria, and Babylon all boasted massive chariot forces that struck terror into infantry-based armies.

Yet Israel's theology radically subverted this military calculus. The Hebrew word for 'remember' (nazkir, נזקֵר) means more than mental recall—it means to invoke, to call upon, to make present. Remembering God's name brings His presence and power into the current situation. In contrast, 'trust' (hem) in military hardware is presented as misplaced confidence—it's not merely ineffective but represents a fundamental failure to recognize the true source of security.

This verse echoes the law's explicit prohibition against the king multiplying horses (Deuteronomy 17:16), which was designed to prevent Israel from trusting in military might rather than God. Solomon's later accumulation of horses and chariots (1 Kings 10:26) marked the beginning of Israel's spiritual decline. For Christians, this principle extends to every arena—we're called to depend on God rather than wealth, education, connections, or human wisdom. Paul would later write, 'The weapons of our warfare are not carnal' (2 Corinthians 10:4).

Historical Context

In the ancient Near East, horses and chariots were game-changing military technology. The Hyksos dominated Egypt with chariots (1650-1550 BC), and subsequently Egypt built massive chariot forces. Pharaoh's pursuit of Israel with 600 choice chariots (Exodus 14:7) demonstrated Egypt's military prowess. The Canaanite king Jabin had 900 iron chariots that terrorized Israel (Judges 4:3). By the time of Solomon, chariot forces were standard for any significant kingdom.

Israel's prohibition against royal accumulation of horses (Deuteronomy 17:16) was countercultural and strategically disadvantageous from a military standpoint. This law forced Israel into dependence on YHWH—they couldn't compete conventionally with surrounding empires. This military weakness was theological genius: Israel would either trust God and survive or trust horses and perish. When Israel's kings later adopted chariot forces (Solomon's 1,400 chariots, 1 Kings 10:26), it marked spiritual compromise, not military wisdom.

Psalm 20 likely dates to a period when Israel faced militarily superior enemies. The congregation's confession—"we will remember the name of the LORD"—was an act of radical faith. They had seen God's past deliverances (Gideon's 300 defeating the Midianite hordes, David slaying Goliath, Jehoshaphat's victory through worship) and chose covenant faithfulness over pragmatic military calculation. This faith-based approach to national security distinguished Israel from all other ancient nations.

Related Passages

James 2:17 — Faith and works

Hebrews 11:1 — Definition of faith

Study Questions

1. What are the 'chariots and horses' you're tempted to trust in rather than God?

2. How can you practically 'remember the name of the LORD' in decisions where you're tempted to rely on human solutions?
3. What would it look like for you to disarm spiritually—to lay down self-reliance and trust fully in God?
4. How does this verse challenge modern Christianity's frequent embrace of worldly power and influence?
5. In what area of life is God calling you to radical dependence that looks foolish by worldly standards?

Interlinear Text

בָּשָׁם	וְאֵבֶן חַנּוּ	בְּשָׁמָן
בָּשָׁם	וְאֵבֶן חַנּוּ	בְּשָׁמָן
אַלְהָיָה יְנֻנוּ	אַלְהָיָה יְנֻנוּ	בְּזִכְּרֵינוּ:
of the LORD	our God	but we will remember
H3068	H430	H2142

Additional Cross-References

Jeremiah 17:5 (Faith): Thus saith the LORD; Cursed be the man that trusteth in man, and maketh flesh his arm, and whose heart departeth from the LORD.

Isaiah 31:1 (Faith): Woe to them that go down to Egypt for help; and stay on horses, and trust in chariots, because they are many; and in horsemen, because they are very strong; but they look not unto the Holy One of Israel, neither seek the LORD!

Proverbs 21:31 (References Lord): The horse is prepared against the day of battle: but safety is of the LORD.

2 Chronicles 32:8 (References God): With him is an arm of flesh; but with us is the LORD our God to help us, and to fight our battles. And the people rested themselves upon the words of Hezekiah king of Judah.

2 Chronicles 14:11 (References God): And Asa cried unto the LORD his God, and said, LORD, it is nothing with thee to help, whether with many, or with them that

have no power: help us, O LORD our God; for we rest on thee, and in thy name we go against this multitude. O LORD, thou art our God; let not man prevail against thee.

Psalms 45:17 (Parallel theme): I will make thy name to be remembered in all generations: therefore shall the people praise thee for ever and ever.

Isaiah 30:16 (Parallel theme): But ye said, No; for we will flee upon horses; therefore shall ye flee: and, We will ride upon the swift; therefore shall they that pursue you be swift.

2 Chronicles 13:16 (References God): And the children of Israel fled before Judah: and God delivered them into their hand.

1 Samuel 13:5 (Parallel theme): And the Philistines gathered themselves together to fight with Israel, thirty thousand chariots, and six thousand horsemen, and people as the sand which is on the sea shore in multitude: and they came up, and pitched in Michmash, eastward from Beth-aven.

2 Samuel 10:18 (Parallel theme): And the Syrians fled before Israel; and David slew the men of seven hundred chariots of the Syrians, and forty thousand horsemen, and smote Shobach the captain of their host, who died there.