

**Military Preparedness: The Fall of Carthage**

**Pritchard, James B. (ed.). The Harper Atlas of the Bible. Philadelphia: Harper & Row, Publishers, 1987, p. 90:**

*In the 12th century BC, both Israel and its Phoenician neighbors developed into important regional city-state kingdoms but divided by culture and religion. Geographical conditions were one reason for the development of the two peoples in different directions. While the Israelite kingdom was mainly agricultural, the narrow coastal plain of Phoenicia forced them to look outwards. The Phoenicians were sailors, traders, and craftsmen, producing and selling luxury goods of the highest quality, especially in bronze, ivory, precious metals, and textiles.*

*They traded in the Levant and sailing all over the Mediterranean and beyond, the Phoenicians developed markets and acquired raw materials from places previously unknown to the Near East. Their ships sailed as far as the Straits of Gibraltar and beyond into the Atlantic. Gold, ivory, and slaves, along with other exotic goods, came from Africa; metal ores, especially silver and tin, came from Spain, and copper from Cyprus.*

*The Phoenician presence in foreign parts gradually grew into trading stations and later colonies, first of Sidon and especially, Tyre, and later, in the west, as part of the Carthaginian empire.*

*The early trading posts would have had a counting house or storage buildings such as were found in Spain and Sicily. Some gradually became permanent settlements. These grew into a network of substantial towns and cities along the shipping routes on the islands and coasts of the Mediterranean.*

*According to classical tradition the greatest of all Phoenician colonies, Carthage, was founded in 814 BC.*

**McEvedy, Colin. World History Factfinder. London: Cresset Press, 1989, p. 31:**

During the 3<sup>rd</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> centuries BC the Romans made themselves masters of the Mediterranean world. The hardest fought wars were the earliest, against Carthage, the so-called Punic Wars (Punic being a contracted form of Phoenician). In the first war, the Romans took Sicily, in the second Spain, and in the third Carthage itself.

We begin our analysis with the Roman move towards the island of Sicily which precipitated the First Punic War.

First of all, I would like to relate excerpts from the **Encyclopaedia Britannica**'s article on the "**History of North Africa: The Carthaginian Period**" [13: 149]:

*In the 3<sup>rd</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> centuries BC, Carthage was weakened and finally destroyed by Rome in the three Punic Wars. By the 3<sup>rd</sup> century Rome dominated all southern Italy and thus approached the Carthaginian sphere in Sicily. For Carthage, a Roman foothold in Sicily would upset the traditional balance of power on the island. The ensuing First Punic War, which lasted until 241, was very costly in human life, with losses of tens of thousands being recorded in some naval engagements. Carthage made peace after a final naval defeat off the Aegates (Ee-GATE-eze) Islands, surrendering its hold on Sicily. Sardinia fell to Rome in 238.*

*In response to the defeat, Carthage ... set about establishing a new empire in Spain. In 219, Hannibal ignored Roman threats designed to prevent the consolidation or extension of the new empire. His invasion of Italy and the crushing defeats he inflicted on the Romans at Lake Trasimene (TRAS-ah-meen) in 217 and Cannae (CAN-ee) in 216 were the gravest danger Rome had ever faced. In 204 Scipio Africanus (SIP-ee-o AF-rah-KAY-nus) the Elder landed [on the North African coast] near Utica with a Roman army, and in*

*203 Hannibal was recalled from Italy; but he was defeated by Scipio at [the Battle of] Zama (ZAY-mah) in 202. Carthage made peace soon afterward.*

What were the details of the Battle of Zama and the peace arrangement that was imposed by the Romans upon Carthage? Insight is provided in another **Britannica** article, this one on the “**Punic War**” [15:280]:

*[At Zama] Scipio's force was smaller in numbers [to Hannibal's] but well trained throughout and greatly superior in cavalry. His infantry, after evading an attack by the Carthaginian elephants, cut through the first two lines of the enemy but was unable to break the reserve corps of Hannibal's veterans. The battle was ultimately decided by the cavalry of the Romans and their new ally King Masinissa which took Hannibal's line in the rear and destroyed it.*

*The Carthaginians having thus lost their last army applied for peace and accepted the terms which Scipio offered.*

*They were compelled to cede Spain and the Mediterranean islands still in their hands, to surrender their warships, to pay an indemnity of 10,000 talents, and to forfeit their independence in affairs of war and foreign policy.*

*The 2nd Punic War had thus ended in the complete triumph of Rome. This triumph is not to be explained in the main by any faultiness in the Carthaginians' method of attack. The history of the First Punic War and that of the Second outside of Italy prove that the Romans were irresistible on neutral or Carthaginian ground. Carthage could only hope to win by invading Italy and using the enemy's home resources against him. The failure of Hannibal's brilliant endeavor to realize these conditions was not due to any strategic mistakes on his part. It was caused by the indomitable strength of will of the Romans, whose character during this period appears at its best, and to the compactness of their Italian confederacy, which no shock of defeat or strain of war could entirely disintegrate.*

For the account of the 3<sup>rd</sup> Punic War I supplement the **Britannica** with information drawn from **chapter 15, “The Fall of Carthage,”** in the **Cambridge Ancient History, volume 8:**

*At the close of the 2<sup>nd</sup> Punic War, Carthage had surrendered to Rome and made a treaty which promised she would never again engage in any war without Roman permission. Carthage could not protect herself unless the Roman Senate gave its permission.*

*Rome immediately went to Numidia's King Masinissa, Carthage's neighbor to the West, and paid him to attack Carthage repeatedly. Carthage, in turn, would send pleas to the Roman Senate for permission to defend herself. The Senate would send commissioners to Carthage who were told before they left to make sure they favored Masinissa. Consequently, Carthage never received permission to defend herself. In fact, Cato the Censor took up the practice of closing his every speech in the Senate with the phrase, Delenda est Carthago: Carthage must be destroyed!*

*Masinissa and the Numidians kept up their attacks right up to the gates of Carthage. When they did, the Carthaginians opened their arsenals and defended themselves. Rome reacted immediately. Carthage's citizens were so afraid of Rome that the leaders who had sanctioned the use of weapons were disciplined and they appealed to the Senate for forgiveness. Instead, Rome sent its fleet to Carthage.*

*The Carthaginians were ordered to do the following in order to restore peace:*

*Send to Rome 300 noble hostages, ages 12-30, and obey such commands as the consuls should impose upon them. Future mistakes would cause these young men to be executed. After having received the hostages at Utica and transferring them to the island of Sicily, the consuls delivered their next commands.*

*Carthage was to surrender all her arms and war engines. Two thousand catapults (artillery) were taken off the walls and 200,000 pieces of weaponry were handed over.*

*Appoint a deputation of 30 citizens to be sent to Utica to hear the final commands for peace. Once there, the counsels informed them of the will of the Roman people which had till then been kept secret.*

*The inhabitants of the city of Carthage must leave their city which would be destroyed and could settle where they liked so long as it was at least ten Roman miles from the sea.*

*At last, the Roman intentions were seen in all their nakedness. Carthage had been disarmed, now came her death sentence. The inhabitants of a vast city were ordered to live or die without trade and without protection.*

*The envoys were then told to return to announce the news to Carthage. They entered the city through vast multitudes assembled to hear the tidings. Refusing to speak they persisted until they came before the senate and there revealed Rome's decree. The people crowded outside guessed their report from the cries of dismay which greeted it in the senate, and bursting into the building stoned to death the envoys and killed many others who had counseled submission to Rome.*

*The scene in the city was one of utter confusion as men were swayed by despair, hatred, fear or anger. The gates were closed, the walls manned and slaves were given their freedom. The whole city became a workshop and the population toiled feverishly day and night to forge new weapons of war, while the hair which made the best strings for catapults was freely offered by the noblest and the poorest of women. The Roman counsels, however, made no haste to commence hostilities, believing that this opposition would soon collapse and that there could be no difficulty in entering a city which they thought had been disarmed.*

*Carthage began to resist and held out for almost 4 years against one of Rome's finest armies under Scipio Africanus the Younger.*

*Scipio ordered a stringent blockade that walled off the isthmus on which the town lay, cutting off its sources of supplies from overseas. His main attack was delivered on the harbor side, where he effected an entrance in the face of a determined and ingenious resistance. The struggle did not cease until he had captured house by house the streets that led up to the citadel.*

*Finally, when the Carthaginian commander decided to surrender, his wife, who didn't agree, stood at the top of a burning temple with her two children and, in front of his eyes, cursed him, took a knife and cut their sons' throats, and then threw herself into the flames.*

*Of a city population which had exceeded a quarter of a million, only 50,000 remained at the final surrender. The survivors were sold into slavery; the city was razed to the ground, its site condemned by solemn imprecations to lie desolate forever, and its soil sown with salt.*

*The territory of Carthage was converted into a Roman province under the name of "Africa."*

It is fitting to quote Polybius here. He was a Greek national who became a famous Roman historian and who wrote an eyewitness account of the final Battle of Carthage. In his Histories he made the following observation:

*All historians have insisted that the soundest education and training for political activity is the study of history, and that the surest and indeed the only way to learn how to bear bravely the vicissitudes of fortune is to recall the disasters of others.*

The concept of collective defense is a principle which is apparent throughout Scripture:

1. Abram formed an alliance with his neighbors in:

**Genesis 14:13** - Abram was living by the oaks of Mamre the Amonite, brother of Eschol and brother of Aner, and these were allies with Abram.

2. The entire book of Numbers is the Mobilization Plan for the Israeli army under Moses. The Lord gives Moses instructions on the original conscription of the army in chapter 1 and results in the mustering of an army of over 600,000 men.
3. The Lord Himself ordered Joshua to mobilize the army before entering Canaan in Joshua 1:1–Joshua 1:9. He then ordered him to take the land beginning with the city of Jericho. The battle plan is issued in Joshua 6:1, Joshua 6:2, Joshua 6:3, Joshua 6:4, Joshua 6:5.
4. When the Jews entered into apostasy, the Lord allowed them to fall under the power of the Midianites for seven years. Then he appointed Gideon to organize a strike force of 300 men to win back Israel's independence. Judges 6–8 documents this mobilization which results in the Battle of Moreh Hill in Judges 7.
5. We have noted the conscription and mobilization of the Judah's army under Jehoshaphat in 2 Chronicles 17–20.
6. David's exploits as general of the Israeli armies is documented throughout 2 Samuel and the Psalms.
7. The Lord Himself will return to the earth at the Second Advent as Commanding General of the Heavenly Armies.

**Revelation 19:11** - And I saw heaven opened, and behold, a white horse, and He who sat upon it is called Faithful and True; and in righteousness He judges and wages war.

**Revelation 19:14** - And the armies which are in heaven, clothed in fine linen, white and clean, were following Him on white horses.

Finally, Nehemiah 4 gives the outline of a free people's proper motivation to collectively arm and to defend their country by means of war if necessary. This is the central passage in the just-released revision of the book Freedom through Military Victory, by R. B. Thieme, Jr. I quote:

**Nehemiah 4:14** - Do not be afraid of the enemy; remember the Lord who is great and awesome, and fight for your brothers, your sons, your daughters, your wives, and your homes.

This is a brief account of the biblical view of military preparedness. There are many aspects of the subject which we could examine but these suffice for now in view of previous studies from this pulpit on the subject. We have devoted time to the subject of military preparedness, warfare, and the honoring of those who served our country in past Memorial Day Specials:

1986: Now Praise We Great and Famous Men 1987: Conquering Rejection

1988: John's Toi Nikonti Corps of Winners 1991: The Speech of Freedom

1992: The Battle of Midway

1994: Overlord: Normandy Revisited 1996: Shenandoah's Children

We now turn our attention to the highly controversial subject of personal defense and the individual's right to bear arms.