

STATE OF THE UNION ADDRESS

HOLY PALADIN



Introduction

The goal of this post is to provide an overview of Holy Paladin gameplay in its current state, as well as a look at what is to come in patch 8.1. We will also discuss what we currently like, what we do not like, and what changes we would like to see.

This post was prepared by the following Holy Staff members of the Hammer of Wrath Paladin Class Discord: Hulahoops, Taff, Thaderyl, Pelinal, Scoffs, Dreamguard, and Lilaith. If you have any questions or comments beyond this discussion, please feel free to pop into the #holy channels in HoW.

Raiding - HPS vs. DRPS (Damage Reduced Per Second)



<--DRPS

This is an area that generates a lot of frustration for us as a community, and as healers generally. As Paladins, the HPS vs. DRPS issues are centred mainly around our Aura talents.

Devotion Aura is absolutely the go-to Aura choice, for both raiding and Mythic + content. The math has shown that it will almost always reduce more damage than Aura of Mercy will heal, and Aura of Sacrifice requires you to divert resources such as externals, Divine Shield, Leech, and/or Azerite Traits to maintain its trigger threshold of 75% HP, making it an unrealistic and poor choice especially when compared to Devotion Aura which requires none of the aforementioned resources to yield similar results.

For a very detailed and well-written breakdown of our Auras and their functionalities, check out this post by Dreamguard:

<https://sacredshielding.wordpress.com/2018/07/23/reading-the-color-of-your-aura-in-battle-for-a-zeroth/>

However, while Devotion Aura is the best choice, its DRPS *does not show up on metres or logs*. As such, many uninformed or, unfortunately selfish, Holy Paladins have been opting for Aura of Mercy, despite it being the far inferior talent, because it makes their HPS look better.

This problem is threefold. One on hand, you have Paladins who use Aura of Mercy because they simply do not know any better. On another hand, you have Paladins who use it because they want to parse or look better on metres/logs, and on the third hand (yes, three hands, don't judge), you have Paladins using it because they have been told they must by their Raid or Healing Leads who mistakenly believe it is the better talent "because all of the top Paladins on

logs are using it.” The lack of understanding surrounding our Auras is dumbfounding. This was mentioned in a recent Q&A as an issue, and if Blizzard was able to have the DRPS calculated in-game so it could easily be added as an HPS metric on metres and logs, it would really improve quality of life for a lot of us.

We have seen a shocking number of Paladins come into the Discord and state that **they know** that Devotion Aura will reduce more damage than Aura of Mercy will heal, but they still use Aura of Mercy because they are concerned about their raid spot. This speaks to what is a fairly common lack of understanding about using HPS as a metric of healer performance, but it is exacerbated by poor healer balance and tuning, and an overall uninformed playerbase.

Raiding - Utility

Our utility has not changed much since Legion. We lost Aura of Sacrifice, but Devotion Aura is just as potent in most scenarios. We still provide excellent spot healing and tank healing, and we have a solid kit of cooldowns between Avenging Wrath/Crusader, Aura Mastery, and Blessing of Sacrifice. Having an immunity (and to a lesser extent Blessing of Protection) has and will always be a very strong utility. In Legion, we saw Blizzard begin to shy away from mechanics that can be cheesed by immunities, but there are still always a couple in each raid.

Raiding - Azerite Traits

Beyond what is probably a very resounding and collective “this system sucks” from every class and spec, there are really only a couple of traits worth mentioning in a raiding situation.

The raid-specific traits (Archive/Lazer) have essentially become default due to their strength and their synergy with the raid itself. The buffs are strong, but they are entirely passive and do not change our gameplay one iota. This is just *boring*.

The only other two traits worth mentioning when it comes to raiding are Breaking Dawn and Grace of the Justicar. We had really high hopes for GotJ, and saw some really strong results from it on the first few bosses of Uldir when the raid first opened. However, as the raid progressed and we got to those massive bosses at the end - by this we literally mean massive in size - we started noticing an issue. For some reason, GotJ functions as a radius from the **centre** of the boss, not its entire hitbox. We went from seeing upwards of 5 and 6% overall healing done by GotJ on Vectis and Zek'voz, to less than 0.5% on big boy bosses such as Mythrax and G'huun. This is problematic.

The other trait applicable in a raiding scenario is Breaking Dawn. As a Holy Paladin, you absolutely want at least one piece of gear with Breaking Dawn on it. This trait increases the range and healing of Light of Dawn, bringing it from a 15 yard cone to a 40 yard cone, and is further increased by Rule of Law. This is a HUGE quality of life/HPS gain trait on spread fights like Fetid Devourer, Mythrax and G'huun. Unless you are facing a wall for some reason, you are

essentially guaranteed to hit 5 people per LoD with this trait, increasing your healing done to those people, but also to your beacons (an important consideration on a fight like Fetid). However, on fights where your raid is essentially stacked such as M.O.T.H.E.R and Vecits, etc., you are not going to get much benefit from Breaking Dawn. The fact that this trait is either amazing or weak based on the encounter means we either have to farm out additional pieces of Azerite (annoying) OR constantly reforge our traits during the raid (even more annoying).

With the announcement of planned changes to Azerite Traits for 8.1 which will effectively double the amount of class-specific traits available, Holy Paladins are at risk of falling further behind other healers, as the pool of available traits for us is extremely low quality. Many of our traits are very “niche”, or can even constitute an HPS loss in order to trigger the effect, without an adequate payoff. With the influx of new traits, it may be very difficult to get pieces of gear that have the traits you want. Without significant buffs to our remaining traits, or the introduction of new ones that synergize and balance better, we may end up in a situation of having to choose between the best of bad options.

Currently, we only want one piece with Breaking Dawn, and with GotJ being unuseable on bosses with large hitboxes, the only trait remaining that is even “passable” is Radiant Incandescence. The rest of our traits are all extraordinarily weak, or altogether too “niche” by design to be usable (requiring you to hard-cast FoL on a tank, spend IoL procs on Holy Light, or forcing you to cast LoTM).

Raiding - Healer Balance/Throughput

Holy Paladin throughput appears to be lower than it has in the past, especially coming from Legion. This is due to a few factors, primarily amongst them being that the current healer balance has really missed the mark. Legion saw what is arguably the best healer balance in the history of WoW, and this “imbalance” we are seeing now is frustrating in comparison. The “top end” of healers, being Disc Priests, Holy Priests and to an extent Mistweavers, are too far ahead of the pack. Paladin throughput in its current iteration is in line with Shamans and Druids; however, it appears even lower because Devotion Aura does not accurately factor into HPS, as mentioned above.

Additionally, with the nerfs to our Beacons, we are finding ourselves having to dedicate significantly more of our direct heals onto the tanks, which is a substantial decrease in our HPS.

Overall, our throughput is not necessarily bad, but we would like to see some better attempts made at balance. We could benefit from a small HPS buff, but it would depend on how much the “top end” is brought down.

General

We have noticed something that appears to be a trend that occurred to an extent in Legion, but seems to be increasing in BfA. This trend is that more of our spells and abilities are seeming to require outside resources or information in order to learn how to use them properly. The most prevalent examples of this are Devotion Aura vs. Aura of Mercy, Light of the Martyr (STOP SPAMMING THIS FOR THE LOVE OF Uther), strengths and weaknesses of various Azerite Traits (think the GotJ issue), etc.

Maybe it could all come down to better tooltips, but it seems almost like Blizzard has an expectation that players will research outside resources such as Class Discords, Guides, Addons or Warcraft Logs, to learn how to play their class effectively.

This is something we chose to mention because the talents and abilities listed above seem to fall prey to this fairly often for both new and experienced Holy Paladins, and can result in a significant drop in HPS or optimal gameplay, not just a small decrease.

Mythic Plus

There is not much to say here other than we are strong, we are mighty, we are Mythic Plus heroes of the Light. We still contribute a ton of damage in 5 man content, and with Virtue and our CD based healing, most affixes are easily dealt with by a Holy Paladin.

In a more general sense, there does seem to be an overall increase in dispellable debuffs in the BfA dungeons, making us really feel that CD on dispel, but if you are pushing high keys we recommend keeping that in mind for your comp - bring DPS/tank classes that can dispel poisons/diseases/curses and that will help you tremendously.

PvP

PvP as a whole is of course a topic we could write a dissertation about, but instead we are going to focus on some Holy Paladin specific spells and talents and how they function (or not) in a PvP scenario. **The following is in relation to rated and instanced PvP, not world PvP**

Lay on Hands

We feel that there is suitable reason behind allowing Lay on Hands to be used in rated PvP. This is a baseline ability for the entire Paladin class, and when it was initially blocked from rated PvP, the game functioned a lot differently. We believe it should be returned back to being usable in PvP, at a default CD of 10 minutes, decreasing to 7 minutes if Unbreakable Spirit is talented. LoH applying forbearance allows for it to be a balanced and well-paced in terms of a defensive/heal. In the current meta, a player can be swapped to by the other team, and if CDs and procs line up, that player can go from 100% HP to dead in the span of 2 GCDs. The huge

advantage that LoH used to give was that it took time and effort and coordination to whittle someone down to low HP and in kill range. Being able to heal oneself up to full was obviously not balanced. The incoming damage of the current meta no longer fits that scenario, and LoH would be much more balanced now.

Ultimate Sacrifice

Our opinion is that this talent should give a benefit beyond just a damage redirection. The current gameplay does not punish opponents for tunneling into ultimate sacrifice because they are still dealing the same amount of damage during its duration, just to the casting Paladin instead. In Legion, we had an artifact trait that provided valuable damage reduction to the casting Paladin when sacrifice was used, but in BfA there is no such protection. The best course of action for the opposing team in this situation is simply to tunnel or sit on the target through ultimate sacrifice, forcing the Holy Paladin to also use their personal defensive in conjunction with their externals. We strongly feel that our best defensive external cooldown should not have to be “protected” by use of a personal defensive cooldown.

Better (non-magic) Kick or “Dispel Protection”

More classes have been given the ability to offensively dispel as the game has progressed, and BfA has even included the introduction of an entire race (Blood Elf) which can do so in an AoE around themselves. These dispels are also on relatively short, or non-existent, cooldowns.

We would like to see Holy Paladin get some form of dispel protection baked into a talent (such as an improved version of the currently unpopular/lackluster honour talent “Spreading the Word”) or a lower CD on beneficial magic spells that can be dispelled or purged. The fact that our major team defensive ability, Blessing of Protection, can be dispelled or purged off decreases our strengths significantly.

In regards to kick protection, it is asinine that the honour talent that provides “kick protection” - Divine Favor - can actually be dispelled or purged in and of itself. We would like to see the return of the old blanket kick protection from Aura Mastery added back into the game, AM is not a magical buff so it cannot be purged or dispelled, and the gameplay decisions on whether to use this kick protection for your entire team as a defensive or an offensive measure were always exciting.

Hallowed Ground

The idea behind this talent is a good one, but tying it to a cast of consecration, which costs a GCD and is a ground effect, detracts from its benefits significantly. We would like to see this turned into an aura effect whereby snares are suppressed when friendly players are within 10 yards of the Paladin. This increases the importance of proper positioning, and further emphasizes the “melee” healer aspect of Holy Paladin.

Sacred Shield

We would like to see this talent added back into the game as either a baseline or strictly honour talent. This would be a great addition to the Holy Paladin toolkit. Other healers still have access to shield based heals, and the Azerite trait system has introduced further shield based heals into the game. When Sacred Shield was initially removed from the Paladin's arsenal we were provided with the reasoning that all shield based healing was to be removed from the game over time, but clearly this is not the case.

8.1 Changes

Obviously more information is forthcoming as we get closer to 8.1, but so far we are really excited about all of the cool new changes we are getting that they have announced. We think they are really going to have a big impact on our gameplay and quality of life. Here is a detailed list of all of our changes so far:

- 1) New Animations
- 2) oh that's it.

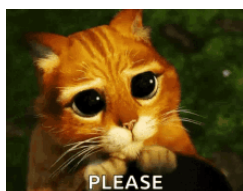
Evident sarcasm aside, we are anticipating/hoping for changes to be announced to healer balance beyond what has already been revealed. A lot of what we would like to see revamped or improved in the spec is likely too substantial a change to be done in a patch, so we are not asking for miracles, but balance tuning is pretty badly needed at this point.

Wish List

Now that we have gone over (in detail) the current state of Holy Pally from many different viewpoints, we have a small list of what we believe would be the best changes and improvements for the spec.

Rebuke

PLEASE. FOR THE LOVE OF ALL THINGS GOOD IN THE WORLD, GIVE US REBUKE BACK. YOU MADE US MELEE HEALERS, PUT US CLOSE ENOUGH TO THE MOB WE CAN SMELL THE GARLIC ON ITS BREATH, BUT WE CAN'T INTERRUPT A THING. WE JUST HAVE TO WATCH IT CAST WHILE IT LAUGHS IN OUR FACE ALL GARLICKY-LIKE. PLEASE END OUR SUFFERING.



Auras

Our Aura talent row is rife with problems. Whether it be removed entirely or completely revamped, something needs to be done. We would be perfectly content if Devotion Aura was made baseline, and then the Aura row would either be modifiers on Devotion Aura (such as raid-wide movement speed buff, raid-wide immunity to CC, etc), or just completely scrapped. We appreciate what Blizzard was trying to do in Legion by giving us more options in regards to our Auras, but Sacrifice ended up just being overkill, and the attempts to fix it in BfA have led to a really weakly designed and poorly balanced set of talents. We like the idea of Auras thematically, but balancing them seems to be a consistent issue.

On a related note, and as mentioned above, we would really like to see the DRPS of Devotion Aura somehow be able to be calculated via the combat log as an HPS metric so that it could be easily added to metres or logs. This would solve a lot of frustration issues and would help fix the problems we are seeing regularly in the Discord with Paladins being perceived as bad due to being lower on metres than our counterparts, mostly due to our “missing HPS”.

Core Abilities Lack Depth

One of the complaints we see a fair amount in the Discord is that playing a Holy Paladin right now is frankly just *boring*. At its core, the spec has not changed much since Legion, but Legion did provide us with a few things such as Legendaries and set bonuses that really spiced up the gameplay in a meaningful way.

Many of these additions were really fun and rewarding to play with throughout Legion, and yet none of them were implemented into BfA Holy Paladin. Maraad's Dying Breath was a Legendary that although was not entirely powerful, it was incredibly fun to play with and for some players, would make an excellent talent. From the beginning we wanted to see Maraad's added to the talent tree instead of Awakening, and we still stand by that.

Another thing we had in Legion that seemed to be universally enjoyed was the double Infusion of Light procs from the 4 piece set bonus in Nighthold. This added a lot of depth and complexity and required decision making on the part of the player, but was still very simple to understand. Adding double Infusion of Light back into the game as a baseline ability would go a long way to adding depth to an otherwise shallow spec, without overcomplicating things. It would also somewhat compensate for the critical chance nerf to Holy Shock that BfA brought with it.

Rule of Law

We would like to see Rule of Law made baseline. While the other talents on the row have very select niche uses, Rule of Law has become almost default for raiding. This makes it boring and removes any kind of complexity to the talent choice. Perhaps a compromise of making Rule of Law baseline, and then adding Rebuke as a talent choice to that row. We believe that when and

where to pick Rebuke is more along the lines of the number of situations and scenarios that Cavalier and Unbreakable Spirit would also be the more beneficial choice.

GCD Changes

This has been a common topic throughout BfA criticism, and while it has affected us, it has not had too substantial an effect on how Holy Paladin is played. There could be an argument for taking AW, and moreso HA, back off the GCD. While it would be nice, it is not a game-breaking issue.

Thanks for reading! Come on over to the Hammer of Wrath Discord and say Hi!

<https://discord.gg/BNc84N>

