

Joshua

October 25, 2009

Joshua 11

I. Battle for the North: Josh 11



As the battle for the south winds down (apparently), the kings in the north under the leadership of the King of Hazor decide that they must band together to have any chance of defeating the newcomers. The exact timing cannot be determined for the northern and southern campaigns, but each probably took years and might have overlapped.

NOTE: The locations for all the cities mentioned in this chapter are unknown, except for Hazor. In other cases, the map shows the general location for the cities, generally an academic guess.

II. Northern Coalition: Josh 11:1-5

Josh 11:1-5

11:1 When Jabin king of Hazor heard of this, he sent word to Jobab king of Madon, to the kings of Shimron and Acshaph, **2** and to the northern kings who were in the mountains, in the Arabah south of Kinnereth, in the western foothills and in Naphoth Dor on the west; **3** to the Canaanites in the east and west; to the Amorites, Hittites, Perizzites and Jebusites in the hill country; and to the Hivites below Hermon in the region of Mizpah. **4** They came out with all their troops and a large number of horses and chariots — a huge army, as numerous as the sand on the seashore. **5** All these kings joined forces and made camp together at the Waters of Merom, to fight against Israel.

NIV

Verse 1 The first words in 11:1 and 10:1 are the same, just the name of the king and his city is different. In general, chapters 11 (verses 1-9) and 10 (verse 1-27) have a lot in common.

Verse 1 Jabin appears to be a dynastic name, like Pharaoh, and perhaps another one is mentioned here:

Judg 4:1-2

1 After Ehud died, the Israelites once again did evil in the eyes of the LORD. 2 So the LORD sold them into the hands of Jabin, a king of Canaan, who reigned in Hazor. The commander of his army was Sisera, who lived in Harosheth Haggoyim.

NIV

Verse 2 Barak and Deborah defeat this “Jabin” in Judges 4.
The area appears to be exceedingly large, including six different peoples. It takes three verses to describe it. It appears that the northern campaign will be more difficult than the other ones.

Verse 3 Several cities were called Mizpah in Israel’s history, but these were generally in the central and southern parts of the country. This one is known only from this passage.

Verse 3 Some survivors of the southern campaign might have joined with those in the north to continue fighting against Israel. The Jebusites are generally associated with central and southern Israel, not with the north...so, they might have been some who came north to continue fighting.

Verse 4 As recorded, the strongest test for the Israelites has been Ai, the smallest of the battles indicated even with Bethel included. Now, the Israelites will face the largest force aligned against them. How will they react?

Verse 4 Horses and chariots were the airplanes and tanks of ancient times. All the earlier battles had occurred where chariots and horses were less valuable. Israel had none of them (or at least very few). This force would be a formidable one to the Israelites.

III. Do Not Be Afraid: Josh 11:6

Josh 11:6

6 The LORD said to Joshua, "Do not be afraid of them, because by this time tomorrow I will hand all of them over to Israel, slain. You are to hamstring their horses and burn their chariots."

NIV

The Lord is with Joshua and the Israelites. Therefore, the outcome of the battle is not in question.

The practical battle plan would be to take the chariots and horses acquired in the war and keep them for their own. However, the LORD said to destroy their value in war. The point is that the victory has to rest with the Israelites...at this battle and with any future ones that the Israelites will wage.

IV. The Battle: Josh 11:7-9

Josh 11:7-9

7 So Joshua and his whole army came against them suddenly at the Waters of Merom and attacked them, 8 and the LORD gave them into the hand of Israel. They defeated them and pursued them all the way to Greater Sidon, to Misrephoth Maim, and to the Valley of Mizpah on the east, until no survivors were left. 9 Joshua did to them as the LORD had directed: He hamstrung their horses and burned their chariots.

NIV

Verse 7 The battle is told without a lot of detail. Basically, the Israelites ambush the combined forces of the north.

- Verse 7 How do you think that a large force was able to travel that far north and not be detected? As with the other victories, the LORD's hand is all over this victory as well.
- Verse 9 Notice how Joshua does exactly what the LORD says.

V. Wrapping Up the Victory: Josh. 11:10-15

Josh 11:10-15

10 At that time Joshua turned back and captured Hazor and put its king to the sword. (Hazor had been the head of all these kingdoms.) **11** Everyone in it they put to the sword. They totally destroyed them, not sparing anything that breathed, and he burned up Hazor itself. **12** Joshua took all these royal cities and their kings and put them to the sword. He totally destroyed them, as Moses the servant of the LORD had commanded. **13** Yet Israel did not burn any of the cities built on their mounds — except Hazor, which Joshua burned. **14** The Israelites carried off for themselves all the plunder and livestock of these cities, but all the people they put to the sword until they completely destroyed them, not sparing anyone that breathed. **15** As the LORD commanded his servant Moses, so Moses commanded Joshua, and Joshua did it; he left nothing undone of all that the LORD commanded Moses.

NIV

- Verse 11 Even though Hazor is destroyed, it is apparently rebuilt as we will see it later in Israel's history. Archeology suggests that Hazor was destroyed several times around 1400 BC when Joshua was likely attacking it. Only Jericho, Ai, and Hazor are indicated as being burned within the book of Joshua. The rest of the cities were left in tact apparently for the Israelites to settle in them at a later time.
- Verse 13 Again this appears to be part of a prophecy:

Deut 6:10-12

10 When the LORD your God brings you into the land he swore to your fathers, to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, to give you — a land with large, flourishing cities you did not build, **11** houses filled with all kinds of good things you did not provide, wells you did not dig, and vineyards and olive groves you did not plant — then when you eat and are satisfied, **12** be careful that you do not forget the LORD, who brought you out of Egypt, out of the land of slavery.

NIV

Under Joshua, the Israelites have followed God's commands, and they have prospered. While the book of Joshua highlights the victories that come from God, we know that the process of taking the Promise Land took centuries. Many battles were undoubtedly fought that are not recorded. While the Israelite death toll was small in these early battles, it was likely much greater as each of the tribes, their faith in God being strained, continued to fight against foes who have no choice but to fight to the death.

VI. Summary of the Victories Josh 11:16-20

Josh 11:16-20

16 So Joshua took this entire land: the hill country, all the Negev, the whole region of Goshen, the western foothills, the Arabah and the mountains of Israel with their foothills, **17** from Mount Halak, which rises toward Seir, to Baal Gad in the Valley of Lebanon below Mount Hermon. He captured all their kings and struck them down, putting them to death. **18** Joshua waged war against all these kings for a long time. **19** Except for the Hivites living in Gibeon, not one city made a treaty of peace with the Israelites, who took them all in battle. **20** For it was the LORD himself who hardened their hearts to wage war against Israel, so that he might destroy them totally, exterminating them without mercy, as the LORD had commanded Moses. NIV

The victories are now summarized, including those in the south (Negev or southern desert, Goshen or southwest coast) or central (Gibeon).

Notice verses 19-20. Here is another point that shows again that the LORD wanted the Gibeonites to come to Him. If He had not wanted them, He would have hardened their hearts as well. Of course, this calls to mind, the hardening of Pharaoh's heart:

Ex 4:21

21 The LORD said to Moses, "When you return to Egypt, see that you perform before Pharaoh all the wonders I have given you the power to do. But I will harden his heart so that he will not let the people go.

NIV

Ex 8:32

32 But this time also Pharaoh hardened his heart and would not let the people go.

NIV

Is it fair for God to harden hearts this way? The Canaanites had reached a point of sin where they were not going to turn back to the LORD:

Gen 15:16

16 In the fourth generation your descendants will come back here, for the sin of the Amorites has not yet reached its full measure."

NIV

VII. Rest: Josh 11:21-23

Josh 11:21-23

21 At that time Joshua went and destroyed the Anakites from the hill country: from Hebron, Debir and Anab, from all the hill country of Judah, and from all the hill country of Israel. Joshua totally destroyed them and their towns. 22 No Anakites were left in Israelite territory; only in Gaza, Gath and Ashdod did any survive. 23 So Joshua took the entire land, just as the LORD had directed Moses, and he gave it as an inheritance to Israel according to their tribal divisions. Then the land had rest from war.

NIV

The victory over the Anakites, the giants of the land, is an important one since it was because of the fear of them, in part, was why the Israelites rebelled against God in Numbers 13-14.

How does the land rest from war? Israel is now situated throughout the land. The primary wars are done. However, there are still a lot of Canaanites in the land. The tribes will have to wipe these out if they are fully to follow God. Only with their help will they be able to do what He has ordered. The next part of the book will now parcel out territory for the tribes. The tribes are asked to complete the conquest of the land. As a nation, the war is over.

VIII. Complete Victory!

Oftentimes, collectively, Israel is shown to be a type of future Christians, especially indicating the struggles that Christians will have in their lives. The author of Hebrews points out that the Israelites were not given eternal rest (Hebrews 4:8).

In your lives, have you ever achieved what seems to be perfect victory? If you did, what happened next? Was your life perfect that point forward?

Likewise with the Israelites, God has given them victory, but the struggles continue. What must we do to make our victories to be truly complete?