

Joshua 10, The Southern Campaign

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Overview

The Gibeonites came to Joshua out of fear of the Lord's judgment, but the most immediate danger they now face is from their former countrymen.

1-5, Plot of the Southern Kings

The History

10:1 picks up where 9:1 left off, the natural reaction of the local kings when they heard of Joshua's progress.

- 9:1, general resolve to gather together against Israel.
- 10:1, specific coalition to punish the Gibeonites for breaking ranks, particularly because of Gibeon's strength. Their fear has two sources:
 1. Psychological. The kings don't want to admit their fear to one another. As such a strong city, Gibeon was an encouragement to the other kings that they could stand against Israel. Gibeon's defection fills them with fear.
 2. Military. Now Gibeon's strength is on the other side.

Application: Don't expect the world to let you go easily. When we take a stand for the Lord apart from the world, we must expect opposition.

The five kings in question represent the hill country (Jerusalem, Hebron) and the Shephelah (Jarmuth, Eglon, Lachish).

Geographical note

How do we know where these ancient cities are? The Bible and other ancient texts give us three kinds of information, each of which can guide in locating the present location of a biblical site.

- The *name* of the site is often preserved, at least among the peasants. (But a radical resettlement such as under the Israelis can destroy much of this information.) In an extreme case (Gezer, Lachish), we may find the name of the site preserved *in situ*.
- The *topography* of the land in most cases has not changed significantly since Bible times, so geographical details in the texts can be checked in possible locations today. (E.g., valley to the north of Ai; mountain to the west of Jericho.)
- The *time* at which the site is occupied in the biblical history may be checked with the periods during which a candidate is occupied on the basis of archaeological information, mostly using pottery chronology (which traces how pottery styles change over time).

When all three of these line up, we have a very solid identification. But many sites continue to present questions (e.g., Ai). The critical thing is to remember that the basis is the text. Without the text, the other indications can tell us nothing. The task of archaeology is neither to prove nor

to disprove the text, but to amplify it where possible by showing how the physical site correlates with the sacred history.

Parallels to Genesis 14

The structure of five kings (3) against the four Gibeonite cities (9:17) recalls the war of the four Mesopotamian kings against five kings of the Arabah (Gen 14:1,8-9). In both cases

- The strife is between opposing pagan forces.
- God's people (Joshua; Abraham) are allied with one team against the other,
- and completely rout the enemy.
- The opposition by God's people is a divinely ordained antagonism (Abraham, against the Mesopotamian lands from which God commanded him to depart; Joshua, against the nations whom God commanded him to dispossess).

Differences:

- Abraham does not keep any of the goods (14:21-24); Joshua does take possession of the conquered cities.
- Abraham's allies remain independent of him; Joshua's come under his dominion.
- Abraham was down in the Arabah; Joshua is up in the hill country and down into the Shephelah, entering into the land of promise itself.

Lessons:

- 1) The parallels and differences emphasize that the period of Abraham's pilgrimage in the land has given way to his descendants' permanent residency.
- 2) In both cases we see the blessings that God brings on unbelievers (the kings of the vale; the Gibeonite confederacy) for the sake of his people who dwell among them. Compare:
 - a) Gen 30:27, Laban recognizes that the Lord blesses him for Jacob's sake
 - b) Gen 39:2-5, the Lord blessed Potiphar because of Joseph in his midst.
 - c) Gen 39:21-23, the Lord blessed the prison for Joseph's sake.
 - d) 2 Sam 6:11, the Lord blessed Obed Edom during the time that the Ark was in his house.
 - e) Acts 27:4, the Lord spared the ship for the sake of Paul
 - f) *Moral*: We are the "salt of the earth," Matt 5:13, preserving it from corruption and shedding the overflow of God's blessings on those around us.
 - g) *Corollary*: When God's people sin and break fellowship with him, it impacts not only them, and not only the local assembly (as with Achan or Ananias and Sapphira), but also the broader society within which they are a part.

Overview of 6-43

See handout. The major rhythm of this section is the balancing of the divine and human roles in warfare. The key to this is two repetitions:

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- Both 7 and 9 say that Joshua went up from Gilgal to the Gibeonites.
- Both 15 and 43 say he returned to the camp at Gilgal.

If these alternated, we would think there might be two routes from Gilgal to Gibeon. But

- The kings' flight in 16 is a specific instance of the peoples' flight in 11;
- 19-20 appears to be the same route as 13, before the people get into their cities.

It is better to understand the repetitions as emphasizing the parallelism between divine and human action.

❖ In 6-9, why did Joshua go up to Gibeon?

- 6-7, because the Gibeonites called for him.
- 8-9, because the Lord sent him.

❖ In 10-43, what happened during the battle?

- 10-15 focuses on the *means* of victory, three miracles that God wrought. God is the subject of the three main events, and in particular of the verb "smote" *nkh* v.10.
- 16-43 focuses on the two-fold *scope* of victory as summarized in 40-42, not only the kings and their people during the Long Day (16-27), but also all the country (28-39). Joshua is the subject throughout, in particular of "smote" at (20), 26, 28, 30, 32, 33, 35, 37, 39, 40, 41.
- Both sections remind us at the end (14, 42) that "the Lord fought for Israel."

6-9, Deploying the Israelites

Note the two statements that Joshua goes up from Gilgal (vv.7, 9). Two accounts of the deployment, the first from the human perspective (the request of the Gibeonites), the second from a divine perspective (the Lord's counsel). This parallelism shows that this battle, like those of Jericho and the second attack on Ai, is approved by the Lord.

10-15, The Battle as Divine Victory

This account of the war records three specific things that God did. Where he guides (as in v.9), he also provides.

10, Routed the enemy from Gibeon

Note that "the Lord" is the subject throughout. V.11 shows that in fact Israel pursued them, but the writer wants to emphasize that the battle is the Lord's, and he is giving the victory. In particular, v.10 says that he "smote" them, the verb that characterizes Joshua's activity in 16-43.

11-13, Cast Hailstones on them as they fled

More detail on how the Lord "chased them ... and smote them." The Beth Horon ascent is a long finger of land that leads from the Shephelah up to the hill country. There are two villages along it, both called Beth Horon, one the Upper and one the Lower.

12-14, Extended the day

Now for the first time we see Israel's involvement, and their first recorded action is prayer. The rout is going so well that Joshua wants the day extended to maximize the damage; with sunset the people will be able to retreat within their cities and secure themselves. Cf. v.19, which happens within this long day.

The prayer.—Note that Joshua performs this wonder “in the sight of Israel.” This further enhances his stature, but also shows his faith, for if the Lord had not responded, his credibility would have been damaged. Are we willing to step out for the Lord in this way?

The miracle.—We don't know how it was performed, and it doesn't really matter.

The meaning.—What does matter is that the Lord hearkened to Joshua in an unprecedented way.

14b-15, Summary

Much more happened before the return to Gilgal, but from the perspective of the power behind the victory, the point has been made. The Lord fought for Israel, and so they were able to finish the job and return home.

16-43, The Battle as Human Conquest

40-42 summarizes that the victory includes all the country (28-39) and their kings (throughout, but highlighted in 16-27).

16-27, Destruction of the Kings

Now the focus returns to the five kings who initiated the battle against Gideon.

16, “these five kings fled,” among others who “fled from before Israel,” 11. The repetition of this verb (*nws*) is our clue that we are flashing back in time to the rout.

17-19, Joshua keeps them “on ice” while the people complete the rout described previously in 12-13.

21, “the camp at Maqqedah.” This is a temporary field camp for the army; the Ark and the families remain in Gilgal. Shows that the detailed conquest in 28-39 took longer than a single day.

22-26, he then holds a public execution to celebrate the Lord's victory over them. The open display of triumph does not suit our western sense of propriety, but it is entirely appropriate to the Lord's purpose to glorify himself over his enemies. *Application:* How important for us to be on the Lord's side, not among those who set themselves against him and will be terribly shamed one day.

27, as in 8:29, obedience to the instructions of Deut. 21:22,23.

28-39, Conquest of the Country

Now we have a city by city summary of the conquest of the southern part of the country. See map in the handout.

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In Hebrew, v.28 explicitly calls attention to Maqqedah, where the kings were executed, and where the rout of the long day focused (v.10): “As for Maqqedah, ...”

Seven cities mentioned in all.

- No reference to Yarmuth or Jerusalem, though their kings were destroyed at Maqqedah. Judg 1:8 shows that Judah later conquered Jerusalem, but 15:63 and Judg 1:21 show that its people were not destroyed and remained in control of the city until the time of David.
- Conversely, includes Maqqedah, Libnah, and Debir, which were not part of the original coalition, but got in the way.
- The central city is Gezer, which was not part of the original coalition and also does not lie on the road along which Joshua moved, but came to assist Lachish. Contrast their disastrous defeat with Joshua’s victory as he comes to the aid of Gibeon.

40-42, Summary

Geographical summary of the regions conquered in the southern campaign. The final point is the same as in 14: “The Lord fought for Israel.”