

Joshua 11:1-14, The Northern Campaign

02/27/98 7:26 AM

Overview

This section shows several patterns to which we have become accustomed:

- regional opposition to Israel
- direct divine guidance in addition to the general instructions of Scripture
- turning a battle in the open field into a campaign against the cities

Opposition of the Northern Kings

The chart on the last page shows the similarity with earlier accounts of the response of the Amorites.

1, *The Report*

These conflicts all begin with hearing the report. If Joshua had been content to conduct a spy operation and infiltrate the society, he would not have met this opposition. God commanded him to challenge the sinful society of Canaan head-on, and as a result he met opposition.

1-3, *Description of the Opposition*

The opposition is described from three different perspectives: political, topographic, and ethnic.

1, Political.—The cities they occupied:

- Hazor, at the head of the pass opening onto the Huleh valley north of the Sea of Galilee
- Madon, in Galilee, SW of the sea
- Shimron, in plain of Esdraelon due N of Megiddo
- Achshaph, at the NW opening of the Kishon pass

Again, the opposition is a coalition of city-states.

Application: Notice how often coalitions form against God and his people.

- Ps 2:2, “the rulers take counsel together”
- Acts 4:27, “For of a truth against thy holy child Jesus, whom thou hast anointed, both Herod, and Pontius Pilate, with the Gentiles, and the people of Israel, were gathered together”

The whole world lieth in the evil one (1 John 5:19), and we should not be surprised to find popular opinion ranged against us.

2, Topographic.—As in 9:1, highlighting the different geographic features, this time of the northern part of the country. Translate, “and to the kings that were of the north: in the mountains, and ...

- the mountains: of Galilee; especially upper Galilee, where the Waters of Merom are;

- the plains south of Chinnereth; *arabah*, the rift valley through which the Jordan flows;
- the valley: *shephelah*, probably referring to the central region of the Carmel range, topographically similar to the southern Shephelah; would include Megiddo and Jokneam;
- the borders of Dor on the west: the seacoast just south of Carmel.

Thus encompasses the entire northern section of the country. The writer's interest is because this is the land that God has promised to Israel, and in surveying it in this way he is anticipating Israel's possession of it.

3, Ethnic.—Israel's justification in conquering these people is neither political nor territorial, but ethnic; they are of the races whose religious practices are abhorrent to the Lord, and who are called out for destruction in Deut 7:1-2; 20:17; per the verdict of Gen 15:16.

4, The Forces Assembled

Note how the strength of the adversary seems to increase in each account:

- ch. 9, "they"
- ch. 10, "they and their hosts"
- ch. 11, "they and their hosts ... horses and chariots"

The enemy keeps getting stronger, but Joshua keeps winning.

Application: Success in the spiritual life does NOT mean that the battles will get easier. They will get harder! As you advance in the study of math, the problems get harder; as you climb the management ladder, the decisions get more complicated and difficult. Why should it be any different in spiritual things? "Thou has been faithful over a few things; I will make thee ruler over many things," Matt. 25:21,23.

5, Their Location

The "waters of Merom" are in upper Galilee. Why would these kings march here, if Israel had stayed down south? Answer: Israel has been making its way north, and must be somewhere in this vicinity.

6, Divine Assurance

As at Jericho (5:13-6:5), Ai (8:1-2), and the Southern Campaign (10:8), the event begins with the Lord's explicit direction. As we have seen, he guides them both with Scripture and with his Spirit.

- Assurance of victory
- Instructions with regard to the armory: hamstringing the horses, and burn the chariots. Israel is not to amass a conventional army. Her strength is in the Lord, and she must trust only in him. Cf. Deut. 17:16, the law of the king, prohibiting amassing gold, horses, or wives.

NB: Brian makes a good point, that we are not excused from obeying Scripture because we "don't feel that the Lord is leading us." Absence of a divine word in the first attack on Ai did not mean they should not attack Ai; they also did not have a word saying they should NOT attack.

The lack of a divine word resulted from a deeper problem, a more immediate disobedience that needed to be dealt with first. So if we do not hear the Lord's voice urging us on to obey his Word, we ought not to abandon the obligation, but rather seek whether there is something more urgent that we have not given the attention we should.

7-14, Account of the Conquest

As in the southern campaign of ch.10, an initial battle in the field against massed armies turns into a city-by-city conquest.

7-9, Conquest of the Kings in the Field

The attack is northward, pushing the adversary out of the land of promise. Joshua scrupulously obeys the instructions about destroying the weapons of war.

10-14, Conquest of the Cities

Note the distinguished treatment of Hazor with respect to the other cities.

- In all cases he kills the inhabitants, "utterly destroying them," that is, devoting them to the ban.
- However, only Hazor is burned; the other cities are left "in their strength," better, "upon their tells," are left unburned.

While some cities are said to be burned (Hazor, Jericho, Ai), they appear to be the exception. This distinction is important, for two reasons.

1. To fulfill the biblical promise to Israel. Deut. 6:10-11 promises them "great and goodly cities, which thou buildest not, and houses full of all good things, which thou fillest not." If they had burned all or even most of the cities, they could not enjoy these promised spoils.
2. It cautions us against inappropriate interpretations of the archaeological evidence. Most archaeologists feel that the biblical claim for the conquest is overblown, because they do not find destruction levels at the appropriate time period. In a conventional war, such widespread destruction might be the only way that a city could be taken, but this is the Lord's war, and his methods of victory in general leave the spoils intact for his people to enjoy. So don't believe the skepticism of the archaeologists.

Patterns of Opposition to Israel in Joshua 9-11

	9:1-2	10:1-5	11:1-5
<i>The Report</i>	9:1 And it came to pass, <i>when all the kings</i> which [were] on this side Jordan ... <i>heard [thereof]</i> ,	10:1 Now it came to pass, <i>when Adonizedek king of Jerusalem had heard</i> how Joshua had taken Ai, ...	11:1 And it came to pass, <i>when Jabin king of Hazor had heard</i> [those things],
<i>The Fear</i>		2 That they feared greatly, ...	
<i>Political Description</i>		3 Wherefore Adonizedek king of Jerusalem sent unto Hoham king of Hebron, and unto Piram king of Jarmuth, and unto Japhia king of Lachish, and unto Debir king of Eglon, ...	that he sent to Jobab king of Madon, and to the king of Shimron, and to the king of Achshaph,
<i>Topographic Description</i>	in the hills, and in the valleys, and in all the coasts of the great sea over against Lebanon,		2 And to the kings that [were] on the north of the mountains, and of the plains south of Chinneroth, and in the valley, and in the borders of Dor on the west,
<i>Ethnic Description</i>	the Hittite, and the Amorite, the Canaanite, the Perizzite, the Hivite, and the Jebusite, ...;	5 Therefore the five kings of the Amorites,	3 [And to] the Canaanite on the east and on the west, and [to] the Amorite, and the Hittite, and the Perizzite, and the Jebusite in the mountains, and [to] the Hivite under Hermon in the land of Mizpeh.
<i>Political Description</i>		the king of Jerusalem, the king of Hebron, the king of Jarmuth, the king of Lachish, the king of Eglon,	
<i>The Forces Assembled</i>	2 That they gathered <i>themselves</i> together,	gathered <i>themselves</i> together, and went up, they and all their <i>hosts</i> ,	4 And <i>they</i> went out, they and all their <i>hosts</i> with them, much people, even as the sand that [is] upon the sea shore in multitude, with <i>horses and chariots</i> very many.
<i>Purpose: Battle</i>	to fight with Joshua and with Israel, with one accord.	and encamped before Gibeon, and made war against it	5 And when all these kings were met together, they came and pitched together at the waters of Merom, to fight against Israel