

Joshua 11 - Alliance of the Northern Kings; Israel's Victory Over the Northern Coalition; Israel's Superiority in Canaan; Summary of Joshua's Victories

I. Israel's conquest of Canaan (Joshua 1:1—12:24)

(3) Israel conquers Canaan (Joshua 5:13—12:24)

(C) Northern campaign (11:1-23)

(a) Canaanite northern coalition gathers to fight Israel at Merom (11:1-5)

(b) Joshua defeats the northern coalition (11:6-15)

(c) Summary of the conquered areas (11:16-23)

Joshua 11

(C) Northern campaign (11:1-23)

(a) Canaanite northern coalition gathers to fight Israel at Merom (11:1-5)

1 Then it came about, when **Jabin** king of **Hazor** heard *about it*, that he sent *word* to Jobab king of Madon, to the king of Shimron, to the king of Achshaph,

1 Then it came about, when Jabin king of Hazor heard *of it*, that he sent to Jobab king of Madon and to the king of Shimron and to the king of Achshaph,

1 When King Jabin of Hazor heard all of this, he sent word to Jobab king of Madon, to the king of Shimron, to the king of Achshaph,

1 And it came to pass, when Jabin king of Hazor had heard [those things], that he sent to Jobab king of Madon, and to the king of Shimron, and to the king of Achshaph,

- "...Jabin" - likely a title rather than a proper name (Cf. Judges 4:2)

— He followed in the footsteps of Adonai-Zedek by putting together a coalition of area kings to confront Israel

— He summoned leaders from south of the Sea of Galilee, and other leaders from the north and central hill country

— They created a massive coalition, armed with the most sophisticated weapons of the time—the horse and chariot

- "...Hazor" - "enclosure"; the leading city in northern Canaan (pop. 30k-40k)

2 and to the kings who were of the north in the hill country, and in the Arabah—south of **Chinneroth** and in the lowland, and on the heights of Dor on the west—

2 and to the kings who were of the north in the hill country, and in the Arabah—south of Chinneroth and in the lowland and on the heights of Dor on the west—

2 and to the kings in the north, in the hill country, in the plain south of Chinnereth, in the Shephelah, and in the hills of Dor toward the west,

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,

- "...Chinneroth" (Kinneret) = "harp"; early name of the Sea of Galilee; also known as the Sea of Tiberias

3 to the Canaanite on the east and on the west, and the Amorite, the Hittite, the Perizzite, and the Jebusite in the hill country, and the Hivite at the foot of Hermon in the land of Mizpeh.

3 to the Canaanite on the east and on the west, and the Amorite and the Hittite and the Perizzite and the Jebusite in the hill country, and the Hivite at the foot of Hermon in the land of Mizpeh.

3 to the eastern and western Canaanites—the Amorites, the Hittites, the Perizzites, the Jebusites in the hill country, and the Hivites below Hermon in the territory of Mizpah.

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.

4 Then they came out, they and all their armies with them, as many people as the **sand that is on the seashore**, with very many **horses and chariots**.

4 They came out, they and all their armies with them, as many people as the sand that is on the seashore, with very many horses and chariots.

4 So they went out, they and all of their armies with them—a multitude as numerous as the sand on the seashore—accompanied by many horses and chariots.

4 And they went out, they and all their hosts with them, much people, even as the sand that [is] upon the sea shore in multitude, with horses and chariots very many.

- "...sand that is on the seashore" - the combined armies of the Canaanite tribes totaled: 300,000 soldiers; 10,000 cavalry; 20,000 chariots [Josephus, 5:1:18]

- "...horses and chariots" - 1st mention in Joshua; prohibited for Israel (Deut 17:16; Ps 20:7)
— In vain for safety (Prov 21:31)

— May have been associated with idol worship (2 Kings 23:11); spiritual issue beyond military use

— Solomon violated (1 Kings 4:26; 10:26; 2 Chr 12:2-9; Is 31:1)

5 So all of these kings gathered together, and came and encamped together at the waters of **Merom**, to fight against Israel.

5 So all of these kings having agreed to meet, came and encamped together at the waters of Merom, to fight against Israel.

5 After all these kings had gathered together, they went out and camped together at the waters of Merom to fight Israel.

5 And when all these kings were met together, they came and pitched together at the waters of Merom, to fight against Israel.

- "...Merom" - Huleh Valley, Plain of Esdraelon; Megiddo overlooks this plain

- The Book of Joshua records that it was only the battles against Jericho and Ai that the Israelites initiated the action. All the other battles in this book, the enemies attacked the Israelites.

— Here is a biblical lesson which has always been difficult for people to learn: Deut commanded Israel to obey God, destroy the inhabitants, have no mercy, make no covenant, make no marriages (7:1-3). Such a command had a divine purpose. It removed the temptations to follow other gods.

— From the days of the Judges and especially from the period of Solomon onward, the great temptation was to make political alliances through covenants and political marriages between royal families (1 Kings 11:1-8; 16:31; 20:30-43)

— To protect Israel against the major sin of idolatry, God commanded her not to show mercy to the enemy. To enable her to keep his commandment, God caused her enemies to fight her rather than seek mercy and peace.

(b) Joshua defeats the northern coalition (11:6-15)

6 Yet the LORD said to Joshua, "Do not be afraid because of them, for tomorrow at this time I am going to turn all of them over to Israel *as good as* dead; you shall **hamstring** their horses and burn their chariots with fire."

6 Then the LORD said to Joshua, "Do not be afraid because of them, for tomorrow at this time I will deliver all of them slain before Israel; you shall hamstring their horses and burn their chariots with fire."

6 But the LORD told Joshua, "Don't be afraid of them, because tomorrow about this time I am giving them all to you—dead—in the presence of Israel. Hamstring their horses and incinerate their chariots."

6 And the LORD said unto Joshua, Be not afraid because of them: for to morrow about this time will I deliver them up all slain before Israel: thou shalt hough their horses, and burn their chariots with fire.

- "...hamstring" - to disable by cutting the hamstring muscle of the horses' legs

— Hamstringing the horses and burning the chariots (v6,9) had two effects:

- (1) they could no longer be used by the enemy
 - (2) the Israelites could not use them or trust in them
- God had previously warned Israel against gathering horses (Deut 17:16)

Joshua's Generalship

A study of Biblical Battles reveals—even in simply secular terms—Joshua's excellent generalship. He was skilled at the preemptive offense. He established a successful style in exploiting:

- (1) Speed
- (2) Stealth
- (3) Knowledge of the terrain

This seems to have laid the foundation for military doctrine venerated at West Point, the Prussian traditions behind the fabled German General Staff, and, most significantly of all, the Israel Defense Forces today. [It's tragic that they haven't discovered Joshua's most significant military secret: "He wholly followed the Lord God of Israel (Joshua 14:8-9,14; Num 14:24; 32:12; Deut 1:36)]

7 So Joshua and all the people of war with him came upon them suddenly at the waters of Merom, and attacked them.

7 So Joshua and all the people of war with him came upon them suddenly by the waters of Merom, and attacked them.

7 So Joshua and his entire fighting force approached them suddenly by the waters of Merom and attacked them.

7 So Joshua came, and all the people of war with him, against them by the waters of Merom suddenly; and they fell upon them.

- Timing: When horses being watered? Could have been timed to make them a liability rather than an asset.

8 And the LORD handed them over to Israel, so that they defeated them, and pursued them as far as Great Sidon, and Misrephoth-maim, and the Valley of Mizpeh to the east; and they struck them until no survivor was left to them.

8 The LORD delivered them into the hand of Israel, so that they defeated them, and pursued them as far as Great Sidon and Misrephoth-maim and the valley of Mizpeh to the east; and they struck them until no survivor was left to them.

8 The LORD handed them over to the control of Israel, who defeated them and chased them as far as Greater Sidon and east as far as the Mizpah Valley. They attacked them until none remained.

8 And the LORD delivered them into the hand of Israel, who smote them, and chased them unto great Zidon, and unto Misrephothmaim, and unto the valley of Mizpeh eastward; and they smote them, until they left them none remaining.

- 300,000 gone!

9 And Joshua did to them just as the LORD had told him; he hamstrung their horses and burned their chariots with fire.

9 Joshua did to them as the LORD had told him; he hamstrung their horses and burned their chariots with fire.

9 Joshua dealt with them just as the LORD had told him: he hamstrung their horses and incinerated their chariots.

9 And Joshua did unto them as the LORD bade him: he houghed their horses, and burnt their chariots with fire.

10 Then Joshua turned back at that time and captured Hazor, and struck its king with the sword; for **Hazor** previously was the head of all these kingdoms.

10 Then Joshua turned back at that time, and captured Hazor and struck its king with the sword; for Hazor formerly was the head of all these kingdoms.

10 Joshua then turned back and captured Hazor, executing its king, because Hazor used to be the head of all of those kingdoms.

10 And Joshua at that time turned back, and took Hazor, and smote the king thereof with the sword: for Hazor beforetime was the head of all those kingdoms.

- "...Hazor" - head, seat

- Only one burned (v11,13)

11 They struck every person who was in it with the edge of the sword, utterly destroying *them*; there was no one left who breathed. And he burned Hazor with fire.

11 They struck every person who was in it with the edge of the sword, utterly destroying *them*; there was no one left who breathed. And he burned Hazor with fire.

11 They executed all of the people who lived in it, completely destroying it and leaving no one alive. Then he burned Hazor in fire.

11 And they smote all the souls that [were] therein with the edge of the sword, utterly destroying [them]: there was not any left to breathe: and he burnt Hazor with fire.

12 Joshua captured all the cities of these kings, and all their kings; and he struck them with the edge of the sword *and* utterly destroyed them, just as Moses the servant of the LORD had commanded.

12 Joshua captured all the cities of these kings, and all their kings, and he struck them with the edge of the sword, *and* utterly destroyed them; just as Moses the servant of the

LORD had commanded.

12 So Joshua captured and annihilated all of these cities, along with their kings, completely destroying them, just as Moses the servant of the LORD had commanded.

12 And all the cities of those kings, and all the kings of them, did Joshua take, and smote them with the edge of the sword, [and] he utterly destroyed them, as Moses the servant of the LORD commanded.

13 However, Israel did not burn any cities that stood on their mounds, except Hazor alone, *which* Joshua burned.

13 However, Israel did not burn any cities that stood on their mounds, except Hazor alone, *which* Joshua burned.

13 However, Israel did not burn any of the cities that had been built on mounds of ruins, except for Hazor only, which Joshua burned.

13 But [as for] the cities that stood still in their strength, Israel burned none of them, save Hazor only; [that] did Joshua burn.

14 And all the spoils of these cities and the cattle, the sons of Israel took as their plunder; but they struck every person with the edge of the sword, until they had destroyed them.

They left no one breathing.

14 All the spoil of these cities and the cattle, the sons of Israel took as their plunder; but they struck every man with the edge of the sword, until they had destroyed them. They left no one who breathed.

14 The Israelis took the spoils of war from these cities, along with their livestock, but they executed every human being until they had completely destroyed them, leaving no one alive.

14 And all the spoil of these cities, and the cattle, the children of Israel took for a prey unto themselves; but every man they smote with the edge of the sword, until they had destroyed them, neither left they any to breathe.

- They took no prisoners! The iniquity of the Amorites was finally full (Gen 15:16).

— They were among the most evil people to ever live (Lev 18:1-2,21)

- "...They left no one breathing" - complete annihilation of people and animals. Reasons:

— Gross sins of the Canaanites—incest, adultery, child sacrifice, homosexuality, bestiality—devastated their culture and society

— Protection of the Israelites from their enemies' sins

— God promised to bless nations that blessed Israel (Gen 12:3), however the Canaanites sought to destroy Israel on at least two occasions already (9:1-2; 11:1-5), and God would not permit that

— God’s command was limited—only to the Canaanites—the Israelites never had a mandate to kill everyone living in all of Canaan. It was only the Canaanites who were the objects of God’s special judgment.

— See [Canaanite Genocide](#) for the reasons given in Scripture for complete annihilation of the Canaanites.

15 Just as the LORD had commanded His servant Moses, so Moses commanded Joshua, and so Joshua did; he left nothing undone of all that the LORD had commanded Moses.

15 Just as the LORD had commanded Moses his servant, so Moses commanded Joshua, and so Joshua did; he left nothing undone of all that the LORD had commanded Moses.

15 Joshua did just what the LORD had commanded his servant Moses and just what Moses had commanded him, leaving nothing unfinished.

15 As the LORD commanded Moses his servant, so did Moses command Joshua, and so did Joshua; he left nothing undone of all that the LORD commanded Moses.

- Northern Galilee (Summary): Is 9:1-2: “Galilee of the nations”: walk in darkness

- Capernaum: Matt 4:13-15 (exalted to heaven? Matt 11:23).

- Why? — John 3:19

Summary of Conquests

While the prior summary (10:40-43) was specific to the Southern Campaign, this summary covers the entire conquest.

Verse 16 lists the seven territories within Canaan that describe the extent of “this land”: the hill country, the Negev, Goshen, the western foothills, the Arabah, the hill country of Israel and its lowland. As in Joshua 10:40, this list has been taken as evidence of the conquest of the whole land of Canaan.

The seven territories listed include both the south and the north. The first five (hill country, Negev, Goshen, the lowlands, and the Arabah) are in the south. The last two are in the north: the hill country of Israel and the lowlands). As in Joshua 10:40-41, the seacoast is not mentioned.

At this point, while Israel had taken all the lands listed in both passages (here; 10:40-43), neither passage implies a complete conquest. Rather, it clearly indicates that Israel had not taken the Promised Land or the smaller, but included, parcel of Canaan.

(c) Summary of the conquered areas (11:16-23)

16 So Joshua took all that land: the hill country and all the Negev, all the land of Goshen, the lowland, the Arabah, the hill country of Israel and its lowland

16 Thus Joshua took all that land: the hill country and all the Negev, all that land of Goshen, the lowland, the Arabah, the hill country of Israel and its lowland

16 So Joshua conquered all of these territories: the hill country, all of the Negev, the entire land of Goshen with its foothills, the plains of Jordan, and the mountains of Israel with its foothills

16 So Joshua took all that land, the hills, and all the south country, and all the land of Goshen, and the valley, and the plain, and the mountain of Israel, and the valley of the same;

17 from **Mount Halak**, that rises toward **Seir**, even as far as **Baal-gad** in the Valley of Lebanon at the foot of Mount Hermon. And he captured all their kings, and struck them and put them to death.

17 from Mount Halak, that rises toward Seir, even as far as Baal-gad in the valley of Lebanon at the foot of Mount Hermon. And he captured all their kings and struck them down and put them to death.

17 from Mount Halak and the ascent toward Seir, including as far as Baal-gad in the Lebanon Valley that lies at the foot of Mount Hermon. Joshua captured all of their kings, struck them down, and put them to death.

17 [Even] from the mount Halak, that goeth up to Seir, even unto Baalgad in the valley of Lebanon under mount Hermon: and all their kings he took, and smote them, and slew them.

- "...Mount Halak" - near Kadesh Barnea in the south

- "...Seir" - the hill country of Edom, southeast of the Dead Sea

- "...Baal-gad" - at the northwest base of Mt. Hermon, at the northernmost point of the conquest

— These two locations (Seir & Baal-gad) indicate the lower and upper limits of Israel's conquest up to this point.

— These areas are not all inclusive of all the land promised in Gen 15:18-21 and Deut 1:6-8. According to both passages, Israel's promised territory extended beyond the Valley of Lebanon up to the Euphrates, 300km northeast of Mt Hermon.

18 Joshua waged war a long time with all these kings.

18 Joshua waged war a long time with all these kings.

18 Joshua fought an extended campaign against all those kings.

18 Joshua made war a long time with all those kings.

- The campaign lasted seven years (determined from the aging of Caleb)

19 There was not a city which made peace with the sons of Israel except the Hivites living in Gibeon; they took them all in battle.

19 There was not a city which made peace with the sons of Israel except the Hivites living in Gibeon; they took them all in battle.

19 There wasn't a single city that made a peace accord with the Israelis, except the Hivites who lived in Gibeon. The Israelis captured all the rest in battle,

19 There was not a city that made peace with the children of Israel, save the Hivites the inhabitants of Gibeon: all [other] they took in battle.

20 For it was of the LORD to harden their hearts, to meet Israel in battle in order that he might utterly destroy them, that they might receive no mercy, but that he might destroy them, just as the LORD had commanded Moses.

20 For it was of the LORD to harden their hearts, to meet Israel in battle in order that he might utterly destroy them, that they might receive no mercy, but that he might destroy them, just as the LORD had commanded Moses.

20 because the LORD had hardened their hearts so they would fight Israel in war, be completely destroyed without mercy, and be completely wiped out, as the LORD had commanded Moses.

20 For it was of the LORD to harden their hearts, that they should come against Israel in battle, that he might destroy them utterly, [and] that they might have no favour, but that he might destroy them, as the LORD commanded Moses.

- The Lord had commanded the Israelites to annihilate the Canaanites; the coalition of kings and tribes attacking Israel provided Israel with a means to do this

- See note: **The Hardening of Sihon and the Canannite Kings** in [Divine Hardening of the Heart](#); Cf. Deut 2:30

It is helpful to remember this was a unique time in Israel's history. God desired that Israel destroy the Canaanites so Israel would never adopt the "detestable things they do in worshipping their gods" (Deut 20:16-18). God's desire and plan was for the Israelites (God's people) to flourish as a culture representing God's character and the coming Messiah.

21 Then Joshua came at that time and eliminated the **Anakim** from the hill country, from Hebron, Debir, Anab, and from all the hill country of Judah and all the hill country of Israel. Joshua utterly destroyed them with their cities.

21 Then Joshua came at that time and cut off the Anakim from the hill country, from Hebron, from Debir, from Anab and from all the hill country of Judah and from all the hill country of Israel. Joshua utterly destroyed them with their cities.

21 At that time Joshua came and annihilated the Anakim from the hill country, that is, from Hebron, Debir, and Anab, as well as from all the hill country of Judah and Israel. Joshua completely destroyed them along with their cities.

21 And at that time came Joshua, and cut off the Anakim from the mountains, from Hebron, from Debir, from Anab, and from all the mountains of Judah, and from all the mountains of Israel: Joshua destroyed them utterly with their cities.

- "...Anakim" - giant-sized, mighty warriors whom the 10 spies feared (Num 13:28)

— Moses prophesied their destruction (Deut 9:1-5)

— Israel destroyed most of them

22 There were no Anakim left in the **land of the sons of Israel**; only in Gaza, Gath, and Ashdod *some* remained.

22 There were no Anakim left in the land of the sons of Israel; only in Gaza, in Gath, and in Ashdod some remained.

22 None of the Anakim remained in the land belonging to the Israelis—they remained only in Gaza, in Gath, and in Ashdod.

22 There was none of the Anakim left in the land of the children of Israel: only in Gaza, in Gath, and in Ashdod, there remained.

- "...the land of the sons of Israel" - Canaan is now, for the first time, referred to as the land of the children of Israel

23 So Joshua **took the whole land**, in accordance with everything that the LORD had spoken to Moses; and Joshua gave it as an inheritance to Israel according to their divisions by their tribes. So the land was at **rest** from war.

23 So Joshua took the whole land, according to all that the LORD had spoken to Moses, and Joshua gave it for an inheritance to Israel according to their divisions by their tribes. Thus the land had rest from war.

23 Joshua conquered the entire land, in accordance with everything that the LORD had told Moses. Joshua presented it as an inheritance to Israel, dividing it according to tribal allotments. Then the land enjoyed rest from war.

23 So Joshua took the whole land, according to all that the LORD said unto Moses; and Joshua gave it for an inheritance unto Israel according to their divisions by their tribes. And the land rested from war.

- "...took the whole land" - in the sense that, after Joshua's conquests, there were no more large battles by the combined Israelite tribal forces

— Here, the Lord reminds us of the promises made by Him to Moses regarding the conquest

— See note: **Complete vs Incomplete Conquest** in 10:40-43 and **Complete vs Incomplete Conquest: Did God Fulfill Every Good Promise to Israel?** in 21:43-45.

— Ex 23:20-23 (Cf. Deut 7:22) states, after Moses arrived at the foot of Mt Sinai and received the Law, the Lord told him that he would send an angel ahead of the Israelites and

bring them into the land of the Amorites, the Hittites, the Perizzites, the Canaanites, the Hivites and the Jebusites, which is the land promised to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob.

— In light of the Exodus passage, we should not be surprised to see evidence of a substantially but not exhaustively complete conquest. Cities remained that Israel had not taken in the first phase of the conquest, and other cities needed to be settled or even retaken before they could be settled.

— The control over the whole land was gained by destroying the key cities and their people. They didn't take every city or village. Each tribe had to gain mastery after the land was allocated. Even after the death of Joshua and his officers, there was additional land to be taken (Judges 1-3).

— In v28, God tells Moses that he would send hornets ahead of Israel to drive out the Hivites, the Canaanites and the Hittites. Significantly, the second list in v28 is only a subset of the list in v23.

— In v29-30, the Lord stated that He would drive out the inhabitants of the land in stages rather than all at once

— This was how the conquest of the land had advanced thus far, and how it should have continued to its completion

- "...rest" - a season of rest turned into a cycle of compromise and complacency

— The Bible goes on to say that the tribes settled into their lands but did not obediently conquer all their enemies (Cf. Judges 1; 2:10). Israel forsook the Lord, practiced Canaanite worship and suffered God's punishment (2 Kings 17:7-23; Jer 52:4-30).

The Promise of Rest

The Promised Land is a picture of God's loving plan of rest for all of His people. Rest is not inactivity but righteous activity. Rest includes the absence of anxiety, fear, stress, confusion and conflict, which provoke futile and exhausting attempts to fix our own problems through self-effort and sin. Rest is the exciting fulfillment of God's promises for each individual and His people worked out in His way and in His timing through Jesus Christ (1 Cor 1:20).

God started His Sabbath rest at the end of creation and made it Law for His people at Sinai. It was celebrated every seventh day to honor God's perfect completion of all His intentions and promises (Gen 2:1-3; Ex 20:8-11; 31:12-17). Genuine rest requires God's presence. When Moses prayed that the Lord go with Israel rather than send an angel, the Lord answered Moses' prayer and promised, "My Presence will go with you, and I will give you rest" (Ex 33:14).

God's promise of rest is available now for all who repent and trust Jesus as the Savior from sin and judgment (Is 30:15). We enter God's rest when we believe in Him and His promises completed in His Son Jesus. We will not find it by relying on ourselves (Heb 4:1-3,9-10).

Jesus said, "Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give your rest. Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls" (Matt 11:28-29). One day, our rest will be perfect in the new heaven and new earth, where God's people will completely flourish, living joyfully in His presence, separated from sin forever (Is 11:10; Rev 22:1-5).