

# Joshua 10:16

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

But these five kings fled, and hid themselves in a cave at Makkedah.

## Analysis

### **But these five kings fled, and hid themselves in a cave at Makkedah.**

The phrase "five kings fled" (וַיַּעֲנוּ שָׁמֵשֶׁת הַמֶּלֶכִים בְּאֶלְהָה, vayanusu chameshet hamelachim ha'eleh) starkly contrasts their earlier coalition. They had united to attack Gibeon (v. 5); now they flee separately for their lives. The verb "fled" (נִסְעָה, nus) appears repeatedly in this chapter (vv. 11, 16, 20), emphasizing the rout's completeness. Kings who led armies into battle now abandon their troops—a failure of leadership that sealed their forces' destruction.

The detail that they "hid themselves" (וַיָּכְבֹּדוּ, vayechave'u) recalls Adam and Eve hiding from God after sin (Genesis 3:8, same Hebrew root כְּבֹד). The kings sought refuge in "a cave at Makkedah" (בָּמַקְדֵּה, bame'arah beMaqqedah). Caves dotted the Shephelah limestone hills, providing natural shelters. Ironically, what seemed like refuge became their prison—a self-chosen tomb. This foreshadows how human attempts to escape divine judgment only entrench people more deeply in their doom (Amos 5:19; Revelation 6:15-17).

Makkedah's location (probably Khirbet el-Qom, southwest of Jerusalem) placed it in the path of the Amorite retreat toward their cities. The five kings—Jerusalem, Hebron, Jarmuth, Lachish, and Eglon—represented the major city-states of southern Canaan. Their capture and execution would decapitate the southern coalition, enabling rapid conquest of the entire region (vv. 28-43). One day's battle would break centuries of Canaanite dominance.

## Historical Context

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Caves in the Shephelah region were numerous, formed by water erosion in the soft limestone bedrock. Archaeological surveys have documented hundreds of caves in this area, ranging from small natural shelters to large cavern systems. Many served as burial caves, storage facilities, or emergency refuges during warfare. The Cave of Adullam (1 Samuel 22:1) and Machpelah (Genesis 23) illustrate their importance in biblical history.

Makkedah was a Canaanite royal city later assigned to Judah (Joshua 15:41), located in the Shephelah lowlands that formed a buffer zone between the coastal plain (controlled by Philistines) and the Judean hill country. The region's strategic importance stemmed from controlling access routes between the coast and the interior. Modern identification with Khirbet el-Qom remains tentative but probable based on geographical and archaeological evidence.

Ancient warfare conventions regarding defeated kings varied. Some cultures showed mercy to royal captives for political advantage (creating vassal relationships); others executed them to eliminate future resistance. Joshua's treatment of these kings (vv. 26-27) followed the herem (הֶרֶם, devotion to destruction) principle, where Canaanite leadership faced total elimination to prevent covenant compromise (Deuteronomy 7:1-5; 20:16-18). This wasn't personal vengeance but covenantal obedience to divine command.

## Related Passages

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**James 2:17** — Faith and works

**Romans 1:17** — The righteous shall live by faith

**Colossians 1:16** — All things created through Christ

**Genesis 1:1** — Creation of heavens and earth

## Study Questions

1. How does the image of kings hiding in a cave illustrate the futility of attempting to escape God's judgment through human strategies?
2. What 'caves' do people today flee to—false refuges of money, pleasure, achievement, or religion—hoping to avoid facing God?
3. How does this account challenge the modern tendency to view God as exclusively loving, ignoring His role as judge of the wicked?

## Interlinear Text

במקרה:

## at Makkedah

H4719

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