

Joshua 10:29

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

Then Joshua passed from Makkedah, and all Israel with him, unto Libnah, and fought against Libnah:

Analysis

Then Joshua passed from Makkedah, and all Israel with him, unto Libnah, and fought against Libnah—this transitional verse reveals the lightning-fast pace of Joshua's southern campaign. The Hebrew verb *avar* (עָבַר, "passed") suggests rapid movement, not leisurely progress. The phrase "and all Israel with him" emphasizes unified national action under single leadership, contrasting sharply with the later period of judges when "every man did that which was right in his own eyes" (Judges 21:25).

The name Libnah (לִבְנָה) derives from *laban* (לָבָן), meaning "white," possibly referring to white limestone cliffs or chalky soil in the region. This city would later achieve prophetic significance by rebelling against King Jehoram of Judah (2 Kings 8:22; 2 Chronicles 21:10) during his wicked reign—a rebellion the Chronicler explicitly attributes to Jehoram's apostasy. Even in conquest, seeds were planted for future covenant dynamics.

The simple phrase "fought against Libnah" (*vayilachem bi-Livnah*, וַיִּלָּחֶם בְּלִבְנָה) uses the Niphal stem of *lachim*, indicating intense, engaged warfare. Joshua didn't besiege from distance but actively engaged in battle. The brevity of the statement, coupled with the immediate victory described in verse 30, suggests minimal resistance—the city fell quickly, possibly because news of Makkedah's fate and the five kings' execution had already spread, breaking Canaanite morale.

Historical Context

Libnah is generally identified with Tell es-Safi or Tell Bornat, cities in the Shephelah approximately 10-15 miles from Makkedah. The Shephelah functioned as a strategic buffer zone between the Philistine coastal plain and the Judean highlands, making control of cities like Libnah essential for securing Israel's western flank. These cities controlled critical east-west valleys providing access between coast and mountains.

Libnah later became a Levitical city assigned to the Kohathite clan (Joshua 21:13; 1 Chronicles 6:57), indicating its importance in Israel's tribal allotment. The city also appears as the hometown of Hamutal, mother of kings Jehoahaz and Zedekiah (2 Kings 23:31; 24:18), suggesting it remained a significant Judahite city throughout the monarchy period.

The phrase "all Israel with him" reflects the amphictyonic unity of the twelve tribes during the conquest period. Unlike later civil wars and tribal divisions, this generation maintained covenant solidarity under Joshua's leadership. Archaeological evidence shows numerous Shephelah sites experienced destructions during the Late Bronze to Iron Age transition (13th-12th centuries BCE), consistent with the biblical conquest narrative, though precise identification and dating remain debated.

Related Passages

Romans 1:17 — The righteous shall live by faith

James 2:17 — Faith and works

Study Questions

1. How does Joshua's rapid movement from city to city illustrate the principle of pressing forward in spiritual victory rather than lingering over past successes?

2. What does the phrase 'all Israel with him' teach about the importance of unified action under godly leadership in accomplishing God's purposes?
3. How does Libnah's later rebellion against wicked King Jehoram demonstrate that cities conquered for God can still fall into apostasy without ongoing faithfulness?

Interlinear Text

וַעֲבָרָה	וְהוֹשֵׁעַ	וְכָל	יִשְׂרָאֵל	עִמּוֹ	מִמֶּקֶדָּה
passed	Then Joshua	H3605	and all Israel	H5973	from Makkedah
H5674	H3091		H3478		H4719
לִבְנָה:	וְלָחָם	עִמּוֹ	לִבְנָה:		
against Libnah	and fought	H5973	against Libnah		
H3841	H3898		H3841		

Additional Cross-References

Joshua 21:13 (Parallel theme): Thus they gave to the children of Aaron the priest Hebron with her suburbs, to be a city of refuge for the slayer; and Libnah with her suburbs,

Joshua 15:42 (Parallel theme): Libnah, and Ether, and Ashan,