

Joshua 10:3

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

Wherefore Adoni-zedek 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, saying,

Analysis

Adoni-zedek assembles a coalition: sending to four other kings (Hebron, Jarmuth, Lachish, Eglon) with the message 'Come up unto me, and help me, that we may smite Gibeon: for it hath made peace with Joshua and with the children of Israel.' The number five (Jerusalem plus four allies) creates a significant alliance. The invitation 'come up unto me' suggests Jerusalem's primacy or elevation (geographically and politically). The verb 'help' (אָזַר, azar) requests military assistance, forming coalition warfare. The stated target—Gibeon—reveals the strategy: punish the defector to deter others. The phrase 'it hath made peace' uses the verb שָׁלֹם (shalom—peace), the same root as the desired outcome (peace), now treated as treachery. Perspective matters: what Gibeon saw as survival, Canaanites saw as betrayal. The dual identification 'Joshua and the children of Israel' recognizes both leadership and nation as covenant partners with Gibeon.

Historical Context

The five-city coalition formed the core of southern Canaan's resistance. Jerusalem's central location and strength made Adoni-zedek natural leader. Hebron (twenty miles south), Jarmuth (sixteen miles southwest), Lachish (thirty miles southwest), and Eglon (location debated, likely nearby) created a geographic bloc in the southern highlands and Shephelah (foothills). These cities represented significant military power—Lachish especially was a major fortified city (archaeological excavations reveal massive walls and gates). The coalition's

formation shows sophisticated political coordination among normally independent city-states. Ancient Near Eastern alliances typically involved mutual defense pacts with lead cities calling on allies during crisis. The decision to attack Gibeon rather than Israel directly reveals strategic thinking: directly attacking Israel had failed (Jericho, Ai); punishing Gibeon might restore Canaanite unity and deter further defections. The strategy almost worked—except it triggered Israel's treaty obligation to defend Gibeon, bringing the decisive confrontation Canaanites hoped to avoid.

Related Passages

Genesis 1:1 — Creation of heavens and earth

Psalm 19:1 — Heavens declare God's glory

Study Questions

1. How do coalitions form against perceived threats, and what does this teach about spiritual opposition's organized nature?
2. What does attacking the defector (Gibeon) rather than the main enemy (Israel) teach about strategic priorities?
3. When has God used enemies' strategies against defectors to actually advance His purposes?

Interlinear Text

הָזֶה	מִן	אֵל	יְרוּשָׁלָם	מֶלֶךְ	מֶלֶךְ	הַזֶּה
sent	H0	Wherefore Adonizedek	king	of Jerusalem	H413	unto Hoham
H7971		H139	H4428	H3389		H1944
king	of Hebron	H413	and unto Piram	king	of Jarmuth	H413
H4428	H2275		H6502	H4428	H3412	
and unto Japhia	king	of Lachish	אֵל	לְכִיּוֹת	דְּבִיר	מֶלֶךְ
H3309	H4428	H3923	H413	H1688	H4428	H5700
say	king	of Eglon	עַגְלָה	מֶלֶךְ		

לְאָמַר:

saying

H559

Additional Cross-References

2 Chronicles 11:9 (Parallel theme): And Adoraim, and Lachish, and Azekah,

Micah 1:13 (Parallel theme): O thou inhabitant of Lachish, bind the chariot to the swift beast: she is the beginning of the sin to the daughter of Zion: for the transgressions of Israel were found in thee.