

Joshua 10:31

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

And Joshua passed from Libnah, and all Israel with him, unto Lachish, and encamped against it, and fought against it:

Analysis

And Joshua passed from Libnah, and all Israel with him, unto Lachish, and encamped against it, and fought against it—the progression "passed...encamped...fought" reveals military methodology: rapid movement, siege establishment, then assault. The verb chanah (חָנַח, "encamped") indicates formal siege operations, not merely overnight camping. Lachish required more extensive siege than previous cities, reflected in the next verse's notation that conquest took "on the second day" rather than immediately.

Lachish represented a major strategic target. Its name (לָכִישׁ) possibly derives from lakash (לְקַשׁ, "to capture" or "invincible"), though etymology remains uncertain. The city controlled the vital route from the coastal plain through the Shephelah to Hebron in the hill country. Controlling Lachish meant controlling southern Judah's western approaches—a military necessity for securing the conquest. The city later became Judah's second most important fortress after Jerusalem (2 Chronicles 11:9).

The phrase "all Israel with him" reappears (cf. v. 29), emphasizing continued national unity. Unlike later periods when tribal jealousies fractured Israel (Judges 8:1-3; 12:1-6; 2 Samuel 19:41-20:2), the conquest generation maintained solidarity under Joshua's leadership. This unity itself testified to the Spirit's work, as fallen human nature tends toward division. Conquest required not just divine power but also human cooperation—God's people working in concert to accomplish His purposes.

Historical Context

Lachish (modern Tell ed-Duweir) ranks among the most extensively excavated sites in Israel, providing remarkable archaeological corroboration of biblical history. The Late Bronze Age city (Stratum VII-VI) was massively fortified with thick walls and a monumental gate complex. Excavations reveal violent destruction circa 1200-1150 BCE, consistent with Israelite conquest chronology under the late-date theory, though early-date proponents place it around 1400 BCE.

The Lachish Letters, discovered in the city gate, provide dramatic evidence of the city's final days before Babylonian conquest in 586 BCE, showing its enduring strategic importance throughout Israelite history. Egyptian records mention Lachish in the Amarna Letters (14th century BCE), where the city's ruler complains about the 'Apiru threatening the region—possibly early references to Israelite or proto-Israelite groups.

Lachish's size (approximately 18 acres) made it one of Canaan's largest cities. The city featured a massive palace-fort complex, extensive residential areas, and sophisticated water systems. Its two-day conquest (v. 32) reflects both its strength and God's power to overcome even well-fortified strongholds. The British Museum houses remarkable Assyrian reliefs from Sennacherib's palace depicting Lachish's siege in 701 BCE (2 Kings 18:13-17), visually documenting the city's formidable defenses.

Related Passages

1 Corinthians 13:4 — Characteristics of love

John 15:13 — Greatest form of love

Psalm 19:1 — Heavens declare God's glory

Colossians 1:16 — All things created through Christ

Study Questions

1. How does the progression 'passed...encamped...fought' model the disciplined approach needed for confronting major spiritual strongholds in your life?
2. What does Lachish's two-day conquest (versus other cities' immediate fall) teach about persevering in faith when victory doesn't come instantly?
3. How does the sustained unity of 'all Israel with him' throughout the campaign challenge you regarding cooperation with other believers in accomplishing God's purposes?

Interlinear Text

רָאָבֶן מִלְבָנָה	וְעַמְּךָ לְיִשְׂרָאֵל	וְעַמְּךָ וְיִשְׂרָאֵל	וְעַמְּךָ וְיִשְׂרָאֵל	וְעַמְּךָ וְיִשְׂרָאֵל	וְעַמְּךָ וְיִשְׂרָאֵל
passed	And Joshua	H3605	and all Israel	H5973	from Libnah
H5674	H3091		H3478		H3841
בָּהּ וְלֹא	בְּלִי כִּי	בְּלִי יְהִי	בְּלִי יְהִי	בְּלִי יְהִי	בְּלִי יְהִי
with him unto Lachish	and encamped	H5921	against it and fought	H0	
H3923	H2583		H3898		

Additional Cross-References

Joshua 10:3 (Parallel theme): 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,

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