

Joshua 10:33

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

Then Horam king of Gezer came up to help Lachish; and Joshua smote him and his people, until he had left him none remaining.

Analysis

Then Horam king of Gezer came up to help Lachish—this verse introduces a secondary conflict within the Lachish campaign. Horam's name (הֲרָם) possibly means "exalted" or "consecrated," though etymology remains uncertain. His decision to aid Lachish reveals the regional panic Joshua's campaign generated—Canaanite kings recognized that if Lachish fell, no city was safe. The verb "came up" (alah, אָלָה) indicates movement from lower to higher elevation, as Gezer (in the coastal plain) sat lower than Lachish (in the Shephelah foothills).

Gezer held immense strategic importance, controlling the coastal route (Via Maris) and the Ayalon Valley leading to Jerusalem. Yet the text devotes only one verse to its king's defeat—a striking brevity suggesting swift, decisive victory. Horam's military intervention, rather than saving Lachish, merely added another defeated army to Joshua's tally. His attempt at coalition warfare failed because God fought for Israel.

And Joshua smote him and his people, until he had left him none remaining—the phrase "none remaining" (ad bilti hishir lo sarid, אֲדַבְּלִיתִי הַשְּׂאִיר־לוֹ שְׂרִיד) emphasizes complete annihilation. The Hebrew sarid (שְׂרִיד) means "survivor" or "remnant"—none escaped. This total defeat of Gezer's field army left the city itself vulnerable, though its actual conquest came later under different circumstances (Joshua 16:10; Judges 1:29; 1 Kings 9:16).

Historical Context

Gezer (Tell Gezer) ranks among Canaan's most important archaeological sites, with continuous occupation from Chalcolithic to Byzantine periods. Late Bronze Age Gezer featured massive fortifications including a six-chambered gate and casemate walls. The famous Gezer Calendar (10th century BCE), one of the oldest known Hebrew inscriptions, demonstrates the city's continued significance into the Israelite monarchy period.

Archaeological excavations reveal no Late Bronze Age destruction layer corresponding to Joshua's era, but the text only describes defeating Horem's army, not conquering the city itself. Gezer remained Canaanite territory (Joshua 16:10) until Pharaoh conquered it and gave it as dowry to Solomon (1 Kings 9:16)—an event confirmed by archaeological evidence showing Egyptian destruction followed by Solomonic rebuilding with characteristic Israelite gate architecture.

The Amarna Letters mention Gezer's Late Bronze Age rulers, confirming the city-state's importance and involvement in regional Canaanite politics. Horem's intervention at Lachish exemplifies the instability of Canaanite coalition politics—kings made temporary alliances but often acted independently. This political fragmentation facilitated Israelite conquest; had Canaanites maintained unified resistance, the conquest would have been far more difficult. God's providence arranged even geopolitical circumstances to accomplish His purposes.

Related Passages

Romans 2:1 — Judging others

Matthew 25:31 — Final judgment

Study Questions

1. How does Horem's failed intervention demonstrate that human alliances cannot thwart God's sovereign purposes?

2. What does the swift defeat of Gezer's army teach about the futility of opposing God's people when God fights for them?
3. How does Gezer's later persistence as a Canaanite enclave (despite military defeat) illustrate the danger of incomplete obedience in spiritual warfare?

Interlinear Text

וַיִּהְיוּ לְכֹיֹשֶׁת אֶת לַעְזֹר מֶלֶךְ הָחֵם עָלָה אֵל
H227 **came up** **Then Horam** **king** **of Gezer** **to help** H853 **Lachish** **smote**
H5927 H2036 H4428 H1507 H5826 H3923 H5221

לֹא הָשָׁאִיר בְּלֶתִי יַעַד עַמּוֹ וְאֶת יְהוֹשֻׁעַ
and Joshua H853 **him and his people** H5704 H1115 **until he had left** H0
H3091 H5971 H7604

שָׂרִיד:

him none remaining
H8300

Additional Cross-References

Joshua 16:10 (Parallel theme): And they drave not out the Canaanites that dwelt in Gezer: but the Canaanites dwell among the Ephraimites unto this day, and serve under tribute.

Judges 1:29 (Parallel theme): Neither did Ephraim drive out the Canaanites that dwelt in Gezer; but the Canaanites dwelt in Gezer among them.

Joshua 16:3 (Parallel theme): And goeth down westward to the coast of Japhleti, unto the coast of Beth-horon the nether, and to Gezer: and the goings out thereof are at the sea.