

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 (הָרָם) 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, עָלָה) 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, עד־בָּלְתִּי הַשְׁאִיר־לֹא שְׁרִיד) emphasizes complete annihilation. The Hebrew sarid (שְׁרִיד) 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 Horam'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. Horam'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 Horam'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

וְאֵלֶּה	אֶת	הַרְמָם	מֶלֶךְ	גֶּזֶר	לְעֹזָר	אֶת	לְכִישׁוֹן
H227		H2036	H4428	H1507	H5826	H853	H3923
came up	Then Horam	king	of Gezer	to help		Lachish	smote
H5927						H5221	
וְאֵת	וְאֵת	עִם	עִם	בְּלִת	בְּלִת	לֹא	
and Joshua	H853	him and his people	H5971	H5704	H1115	until he had left	H0
H3091						H7604	
שְׁרִיד:							
him none remaining							
H8300							

Additional Cross-References

Joshua 16:10 (Parallel theme): And they drove 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.