

Joshua 12:1

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

Now these are the kings of the land, which the children of Israel smote, and possessed their land on the other side Jordan toward the rising of the sun, from the river Arnon unto mount Hermon, and all the plain on the east:

Analysis

This verse introduces a comprehensive catalog of conquered kings, documenting Israel's victories under Moses (east of Jordan) and Joshua (west of Jordan). The phrase 'kings of the land which the children of Israel smote' emphasizes human agency working in concert with divine power—God gave victory, but Israel fought the battles. The geographical description 'on the other side Jordan toward the rising of the sun' (east of Jordan) marks the Transjordan territories conquered under Moses. The boundaries 'from the river Arnon unto mount Hermon' span from modern central Jordan to southern Lebanon, covering approximately 120 miles north-south. The Arnon River (modern Wadi Mujib) formed Moab's northern boundary, while Mount Hermon (9,200 feet elevation) dominated northern Transjordan. The phrase 'all the plain on the east' (kol-haaravah mizrachah,־כל הארץ מזרחה) refers to the Jordan Valley and Dead Sea regions. This detailed record serves multiple purposes: documenting fulfilled prophecy, establishing legal claim to territory, memorializing God's faithfulness, and providing historical testimony to divine intervention in Israel's conquest.

Historical Context

The conquest east of Jordan preceded the main Canaan campaign, occurring during the final year of wilderness wandering under Moses' leadership (Numbers

21-32; Deuteronomy 2-3). King Sihon of Heshbon and King Og of Bashan were defeated, their territories allocated to Reuben, Gad, and half of Manasseh. These Transjordan victories demonstrated God's power and encouraged Israel for the greater conquest ahead. Ancient Near Eastern conquest accounts typically cataloged defeated kings and cities to legitimize territorial claims and glorify victorious rulers. Joshua's list differs by emphasizing divine agency—these victories manifested God's faithfulness rather than merely human prowess. The catalog's precision indicates careful record-keeping, likely based on official archives maintained by tribal leaders and priests. Archaeological evidence confirms many of these cities' existence and destruction in the Late Bronze Age, though dating debates continue. The systematic enumeration of 31 kings (verse 24) demonstrates the fragmented political structure of Canaan—multiple small city-states rather than unified kingdoms, facilitating Israel's conquest.

Related Passages

1 Corinthians 13:4 — Characteristics of love

John 15:13 — Greatest form of love

Study Questions

1. How does Israel's meticulous record-keeping of God's faithfulness challenge you to remember and document God's works in your life?
2. What 'kings' or strongholds in your life has God helped you conquer, and how can remembering these victories encourage present faith?
3. How does the comprehensive nature of this list demonstrate God's thoroughness in fulfilling His promises?

Interlinear Text

בְּנֵי	הַפִּי	אֲשֶׁר	אֶרֶץ	מֶלֶךְ	וְאֶלְהָה
H1121	H5221	H834	H776	H4428	H428
which the children	smote	the	of the land	Now these are the kings	
H3383	H5676	H776	H853	H4428	
Jordan	on the other side	of the land	and possessed	of Israel	ישָׂרָאֵל
H2768	H2022	H769	H8121	H4217	מִזְרָחָה:
Hermon	unto mount	Arnon	from the river	of the sun	מִזְרָחָה:
H3605	H5704	H5158	H8121	H4217	on the east
and all the plain	unto	the river	of the sun	on the east	and all the plain
H6160	H2768	H3605	H3383	H2022	H3605

Additional Cross-References

Joshua 1:15 (Sin): Until the LORD have given your brethren rest, as he hath given you, and they also have possessed the land which the LORD your God giveth them: then ye shall return unto the land of your possession, and enjoy it, which Moses the LORD'S servant gave you on this side Jordan toward the sunrising.

Numbers 21:24 (References Israel): And Israel smote him with the edge of the sword, and possessed his land from Arnon unto Jabbok, even unto the children of Ammon: for the border of the children of Ammon was strong.

Numbers 21:13 (Parallel theme): From thence they removed, and pitched on the other side of Arnon, which is in the wilderness that cometh out of the coasts of the Amorites: for Arnon is the border of Moab, between Moab and the Amorites.

Judges 11:18 (Parallel theme): Then they went along through the wilderness, and compassed the land of Edom, and the land of Moab, and came by the east side of the land of Moab, and pitched on the other side of Arnon, but came not within the border of Moab: for Arnon was the border of Moab.

