

Joshua 18:1

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

And the whole congregation of the children of Israel assembled together at Shiloh, and set up the tabernacle of the congregation there. And the land was subdued before them.

Analysis

This verse marks a significant transition—establishing Shiloh as Israel's religious center. The phrase 'whole congregation' (kol-adat bnei-Yisrael, כָּל־עֵדַת בְּנֵי־יִשְׂרָאֵל) emphasizes corporate gathering for sacred purpose. The verb 'assembled' (vayiqahalu, וַיִּקְהָלוּ) indicates formal, organized gathering. Shiloh, in Ephraim's territory, served as Israel's capital and worship center for over 300 years until the ark's capture (1 Samuel 4). The phrase 'set up the tabernacle' (vayashkinu sham et-ohel moed, וַיַּשְׁכִּינוּ שָׁם אֶת־אֹהֶל מוֹעֵד) uses shakan (שָׁכַן), meaning to dwell or settle—this was permanent establishment, not temporary camping. The tabernacle's presence made Shiloh holy ground where God dwelt among His people. The final phrase 'the land was subdued before them' (vehaarets nichbesah lifneihem, וְהָאָרֶץ נִכְבְּשָׁה לִפְנֵיהֶם) indicates military control sufficient for establishing worship center. From a Reformed perspective, this demonstrates that worship centrality follows, not precedes, victory—God must subdue enemies before His people can worship freely.

Historical Context

Shiloh (modern Khirbet Seilun) sits in Ephraim's hill country about 20 miles north of Jerusalem. Archaeological excavations reveal significant Iron Age I occupation consistent with tabernacle period. The site's central location made it accessible to all tribes. Establishing the tabernacle at Shiloh created religious unity for the tribal confederation. The tabernacle remained at Shiloh through the judges period

until destroyed (apparently by Philistines around 1050 BCE, Jeremiah 7:12-14, 26:6-9). Psalm 78:60 laments God abandoning Shiloh due to Israel's sin. The tabernacle later moved to Nob (1 Samuel 21:1), then Gibeon (1 Chronicles 16:39), until Solomon built the Jerusalem temple.

Related Passages

Romans 1:17 — The righteous shall live by faith

Hebrews 11:1 — Definition of faith

Study Questions

1. What 'Shiloh' worship center in your life establishes God's presence as foundation for everything else?
2. How does the sequence (subdue enemies, then establish worship) inform your spiritual priorities?
3. What does gathering the 'whole congregation' teach about corporate worship's importance versus individualistic spirituality?

Interlinear Text

וַיִּקְרָא הָלַו	כָּל	עַד ת	בְּנֵי	יִשְׂרָאֵל
assembled together	H3605	And the whole congregation	of the children	of Israel
H6950		H5712	H1121	H3478
הַשִּׁלֹּחַ וַיִּשְׁכְּנוּ	אֶת שֶׁם	אֶת הָאֵל	מוֹעֵד	
at Shiloh	and set up	H8033	H853	the tabernacle
H7887	H7931		H168	of the congregation
				H4150
וְהָאֶרֶץ	נִכְבְּשָׁה	לִפְנֵיהֶם:		
there And the land	was subdued	before		
H776	H3533	H6440		

Additional Cross-References

Joshua 19:51 (Temple): These are the inheritances, which Eleazar the priest, and Joshua the son of Nun, and the heads of the fathers of the tribes of the children of Israel, divided for an inheritance by lot in Shiloh before the LORD, at the door of the tabernacle of the congregation. So they made an end of dividing the country.

Joshua 21:2 (Parallel theme): And they spake unto them at Shiloh in the land of Canaan, saying, The LORD commanded by the hand of Moses to give us cities to dwell in, with the suburbs thereof for our cattle.

1 Samuel 1:3 (Parallel theme): And this man went up out of his city yearly to worship and to sacrifice unto the LORD of hosts in Shiloh. And the two sons of Eli, Hophni and Phinehas, the priests of the LORD, were there.

Jeremiah 26:6 (Parallel theme): Then will I make this house like Shiloh, and will make this city a curse to all the nations of the earth.

Joshua 22:9 (References Israel): And the children of Reuben and the children of Gad and the half tribe of Manasseh returned, and departed from the children of Israel out of Shiloh, which is in the land of Canaan, to go unto the country of Gilead, to the land of their possession, whereof they were possessed, according to the word of the LORD by the hand of Moses.

Psalms 78:66 (Parallel theme): And he smote his enemies in the hinder parts: he put them to a perpetual reproach.

1 Kings 2:27 (Parallel theme): So Solomon thrust out Abiathar from being priest unto the LORD; that he might fulfil the word of the LORD, which he spake concerning the house of Eli in Shiloh.

1 Kings 14:2 (Parallel theme): And Jeroboam said to his wife, Arise, I pray thee, and disguise thyself, that thou be not known to be the wife of Jeroboam; and get thee to Shiloh: behold, there is Ahijah the prophet, which told me that I should be king over this people.

1 Samuel 1:24 (Parallel theme): And when she had weaned him, she took him up with her, with three bullocks, and one ephah of flour, and a bottle of wine, and brought him unto the house of the LORD in Shiloh: and the child was young.

Judges 18:31 (Parallel theme): And they set them up Micah's graven image, which he made, all the time that the house of God was in Shiloh.

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