

Joshua 24:12

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

And I sent the hornet before you, which drove them out from before you, even the two kings of the Amorites; but not with thy sword, nor with thy bow.

Analysis

I sent the hornet before you (וַיִּשְׁלַח לְפָנֶיכֶם אֶת-הַצְּרָעָה)—the tsir'ah (hornet/wasp) has generated much discussion. Some interpret literally (swarms of hornets terrorizing Canaanites), others metaphorically (panic, divine terror, or even Egyptian military campaigns as 'hornets' weakening Canaan). The key is divine causation—'I sent.' This fulfills Moses's prediction: 'The LORD thy God will send the hornet among them' (Deuteronomy 7:20, Exodus 23:28). Whatever its precise nature, God's supernatural intervention preceded Israel's battles.

Which drove them out...even the two kings of the Amorites; but not with thy sword, nor with thy bow (וְגַרְשָׁנָה אֹתָם...לֹא בְּמַרְגַּב וְלֹא בְּקַשְׁתָּבָן)—the verb garash (גַּרְשָׁנָה, to drive out/expel) indicates forcible ejection. The explicit denial 'not with thy sword, nor with thy bow' prevents Israel from attributing victory to military prowess. God alone deserves glory. This principle applies spiritually: salvation comes 'not by works of righteousness which we have done' (Titus 3:5).

Historical Context

The 'two kings of the Amorites' refers to Sihon king of Heshbon and Og king of Bashan, defeated before entering Canaan (Numbers 21:21-35). The 'hornet' may reference Egyptian campaigns (Pharaohs Thutmose III, Amenhotep II, Seti I) that weakened Canaanite cities before Israel's arrival. Amarna letters (14th century BC) reveal Canaanite city-states pleading for Egyptian help against invaders,

showing political chaos that facilitated conquest. God orchestrated geopolitical circumstances, supernatural terror, and military victory to accomplish His purposes—Israel merely followed divine preparation.

Related Passages

John 3:16 — God's love and salvation

Romans 10:9 — Confession and belief for salvation

Study Questions

1. What does the 'hornet' (whether literal or metaphorical) teach about God preparing circumstances before human action?
2. How does 'not with thy sword, nor with thy bow' combat human pride after spiritual victories?
3. In what ways does this principle ('I sent...not with thy sword') apply to evangelism and church growth today?

Interlinear Text

וְאֶת	מִפְנִיכֶם	בְּאָרֶץ	הַ	אֲתָּה	יְתַחַגְתָּ	רֶשֶׁת	אֲזַתָּם
And I sent	before		H853	the hornet	you which drove them out		H853
H7971	H6440			H6880		H1644	
בְּפִנְיכֶם	שְׁנַיִם	מֶלֶךְ	אֲמֹרִים	לֹא	מֶלֶךְ	אֲמֹרִים	אֲזַתָּם
before	you even the two	kings	of the Amorites	H3808			
H6440	H8147	H4428	H567				
בְּמַרְבּוֹן	אֲלֹהִים	בְּקַשְׁתָּה					
but not with thy sword	H3808	nor with thy bow					
H2719		H7198					

Additional Cross-References

Exodus 23:28 (Parallel theme): And I will send hornets before thee, which shall drive out the Hivite, the Canaanite, and the Hittite, from before thee.

Deuteronomy 7:20 (Parallel theme): Moreover the LORD thy God will send the hornet among them, until they that are left, and hide themselves from thee, be destroyed.

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