

Joshua 24:12

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

And I sent the hornet before you, which drave 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 (וְאֶשְׁלַח לְפָנֶיכֶם אֶת־הַצִּרְעָה)—the tsir'ah (צִרְעָה, 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 drave them out...even the two kings of the Amorites; but not with thy sword, nor with thy bow (וְהַתְּגִישׁ אוֹתָם...לֹא בַחֶרֶב וְלֹא בַקֶּשֶׁת)—the verb garash (גָּרַשׁ, 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

וְאֶשְׁלַח	מִפְּנֵיךְ	אֶת	הַצִּרְעָה	וְתִגְרֹשׁ	אוֹתָם
And I sent	before	H853	the hornet	you which drove them out	H853
H7971	H6440		H6880	H1644	
מִפְּנֵיךְ	שְׁנֵי	מְלָכֵי	הָאֱמֹרִי	לֹא	
before	you even the two	kings	of the Amorites	H3808	
H6440	H8147	H4428	H567		
בְּחֶרֶב	וְלֹא	בְּקִשְׁתְּךָ			
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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