

Joshua 5:1

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

And it came to pass, when all the kings of the Amorites, which were on the side of Jordan westward, and all the kings of the Canaanites, which were by the sea, heard that the LORD had dried up the waters of Jordan from before the children of Israel, until we were passed over, that their heart melted, neither was there spirit in them any more, because of the children of Israel.

Analysis

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This verse describes the psychological impact of the Jordan miracle on Canaan's inhabitants. The Hebrew phrase wayamas levavam (וַיָּמָס לְבָבָם, "their heart melted") uses vivid imagery of wax melting before fire, indicating complete demoralization. The parallel phrase "neither was there spirit in them" (lo-hayetah bam od ruach, לֹא-הָיָתָה בָּם עוֹד רָעָם) means they lost all courage and will to resist—psychological defeat preceded military engagement.

The distinction between "Amorites" (hill country dwellers) and "Canaanites" (coastal/lowland peoples) represents comprehensive coverage—all inhabitants

regardless of specific ethnicity were terrified. Their fear was "because of the children of Israel" (mipnei benei Yisrael, מִפְנֵי בָנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל), yet more fundamentally because of Yahweh's demonstrated power. This fulfills God's promise to cause dread of Israel to fall upon their enemies (Exodus 23:27; Deuteronomy 2:25, 11:25).

Theologically, this demonstrates that God fights for His people not only through direct intervention but through psychological warfare that breaks enemy morale before battle begins. The Canaanites' terror resulted from their recognition of Yahweh's power—they had heard of the Exodus (Rahab's testimony, Joshua 2:9-11) and now witnessed another miracle. Their response should have been repentance (like Rahab), but instead hardened unbelief led to their destruction. From a Reformed perspective, this illustrates how common grace (knowledge of God's works) becomes saving grace only when accompanied by genuine faith.

Historical Context

This verse echoes Rahab's earlier testimony that Canaanite hearts melted upon hearing of the Red Sea crossing (Joshua 2:9-11). Forty years after the Exodus, the memory remained vivid, now reinforced by the Jordan miracle. The phrase "until we were passed over" uses first-person plural, suggesting the narrative incorporates eyewitness perspective—possibly Joshua's own account.

Archaeological evidence from sites like Jericho, Ai, and Hazor shows destruction layers dated to the Late Bronze Age (approximately 15th-13th centuries BCE), consistent with the conquest narrative. The Amarna Letters (14th century BCE Egyptian diplomatic correspondence) reveal Canaanite city-states appealing to Egypt for help against invaders called 'Habiru' (possibly related to 'Hebrew'), indicating regional instability that facilitated Israelite conquest.

The Canaanite religious worldview attributed power to territorial deities. Yahweh's ability to command nature (drying up waters) demonstrated His supremacy over Canaanite gods who supposedly controlled natural forces. The pagan mindset could acknowledge Yahweh's power without submitting to His moral authority—a

cognitive dissonance that led to their judgment. Only Rahab and the Gibeonites (chapter 9) responded with faith-driven action.

Related Passages

1 John 4:8 — God is love

1 Corinthians 13:4 — Characteristics of love

Study Questions

1. How does God's ability to defeat enemies psychologically before physical confrontation encourage you when facing overwhelming opposition?
2. What is the difference between acknowledging God's power (as the Canaanites did) and submitting to His authority in repentant faith (as Rahab did)?
3. How does this passage illustrate that saving faith requires not merely hearing of God's works but personally trusting and obeying Him?
4. In what ways do you sometimes operate like the Canaanites—aware of God's power yet resistant to His will for your life?
5. How should the certainty of God's ultimate victory over His enemies shape Christian confidence in spiritual warfare today?

Interlinear Text

כִּי	מֶלֶךְ	כִּי	מֶלֶךְ	כִּי	מֶלֶךְ
H1961	heard	H3605	And it came to pass when all the kings	H4428	of the Amorites
		H8085			H567
אֲשֶׁר	בְּעֵבֶר	וְכִי מִפְּרָדֵת	וְכִי מִפְּרָדֵת	וְכִי מִפְּרָדֵת	וְכִי מִפְּרָדֵת
H834	which were on the side	H5676	of Jordan	H3383	westward
				H3220	H3605
וְכִי מִפְּרָדֵת	עַל אָשֶׁר רְקִבְנָתִי	וְכִי מִפְּרָדֵת	וְכִי מִפְּרָדֵת	וְכִי מִפְּרָדֵת	westward
And it came to pass when all the kings	of the Canaanites	H4428	H3669	H834	H5921
				H3220	H3220
אֲשֶׁר אָתָה יְהִי הַהֹּבֶשׁ מִן הַפְּרָדֵת	מִן הַפְּרָדֵת	אֲשֶׁר אָתָה יְהִי הַהֹּבֶשׁ מִן הַפְּרָדֵת	אֲשֶׁר אָתָה יְהִי הַהֹּבֶשׁ מִן הַפְּרָדֵת	אֲשֶׁר אָתָה יְהִי הַהֹּבֶשׁ מִן הַפְּרָדֵת	אֲשֶׁר אָתָה יְהִי הַהֹּבֶשׁ מִן הַפְּרָדֵת
H853	had dried up	H3001	H3068	H853	H4325
H834				H3383	
מִפְּנֵי	בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל	עַד כִּי	עַד כִּי	עַד כִּי	עַד כִּי
from before	of the children	of Israel	until we were passed over	until we were passed over	melted
H6440	H1121	H3478	H5704	H5674	H4549
מִפְּנֵי	בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל	רְאֵית	רְאֵית	רְאֵית	from before
that their heart	H3808	H1961	H0	H5750	H6440
				H7307	
מִפְּנֵי	בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל	רְאֵית	רְאֵית	רְאֵית	
of the children	of Israel	H1121	H3478		

Additional Cross-References

Numbers 13:29 (Parallel theme): The Amalekites dwell in the land of the south: and the Hittites, and the Jebusites, and the Amorites, dwell in the mountains: and the Canaanites dwell by the sea, and by the coast of Jordan.

1 Kings 10:5 (Spirit): And the meat of his table, and the sitting of his servants, and the attendance of his ministers, and their apparel, and his cupbearers, and his

ascent by which he went up unto the house of the LORD; there was no more spirit in her.

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