

Judges 1:34

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

And the Amorites forced the children of Dan into the mountain: for they would not suffer them to come down to the valley:

Analysis

And the Amorites forced the children of Dan into the mountain: for they would not suffer them to come down to the valley:

Dan's situation represents complete reversal—instead of Israel driving out Canaanites, Amorites drove Dan from their allotted territory. The Amorites 'forced' (vayilchazu, וַיַּצְאֵנִי from lachatz, לִחְזָה, 'to press, oppress, afflict') Dan into mountains, preventing valley settlement. This verb appears elsewhere describing Egyptian oppression (Exodus 3:9) and various enemies' oppression during Judges (Judges 2:18, 4:3, 6:9, 10:12), indicating severe pressure and constraint. Dan couldn't possess their inheritance, reduced to highland refugees.

Dan's allotted territory (Joshua 19:40-48) included fertile Shephelah and coastal plain, prime agricultural land. However, Philistine expansion from the coast and Amorite resistance from entrenched positions made this territory unconquerable for Dan. Eventually, most of Dan migrated north to Laish/Leshem (Joshua 19:47, Judges 18), conquering a distant city and renaming it Dan. This migration represented both failure (abandoning promised inheritance) and pragmatic adaptation (securing alternative territory).

Theologically, Dan's displacement illustrates consequences of faithlessness. While other tribes tolerated Canaanites as tributaries, Dan couldn't even maintain possession, becoming oppressed minority in their own territory. Yet Dan's

migration also shows how God works through human failure—northern Dan became important border city (the phrase 'from Dan to Beersheba' describing Israel's extent, Judges 20:1). However, Dan later led apostasy with Micah's idolatrous shrine (Judges 17-18) and Jeroboam's golden calf (1 Kings 12:28-30), showing how compromise compounds.

Historical Context

Dan's original territory in the Shephelah put them in direct conflict with expanding Philistines. The Philistines (Sea Peoples) settled Canaan's coast c. 1175 BCE, establishing the Pentapolis (Gaza, Ashkelon, Ashdod, Gath, Ekron) and expanding into adjacent territories. Their superior iron technology, professional military, and organized city-state structure made them formidable opponents. Dan's small tribal size and inferior technology proved inadequate against Philistine pressure.

The Amorites mentioned here possibly represent Canaanite groups (the terms 'Amorite' and 'Canaanite' sometimes used interchangeably) or specific peoples in Dan's territory. The Amorites' ability to force Dan into mountains indicates well-organized resistance with effective military control of valleys and plains. Chariot forces effective in flat terrain couldn't be matched by Dan's infantry, explaining their highland refugee status.

Dan's migration north (Judges 18) solved immediate problems but created long-term spiritual disaster. The migrating Danites stole Micah's idols and established idolatrous worship at northern Dan (Judges 18:30-31), which continued until Assyrian captivity. Later, Jeroboam chose Dan as one of two sites for golden calves (1 Kings 12:28-30), making it center of national apostasy. Dan's failure to possess original inheritance through faith led to seeking alternative territory through military prowess, establishing idolatry that plagued Israel for centuries. Incomplete obedience creates cascading consequences across generations.

Related Passages

Romans 10:9 — Confession and belief for salvation

Ephesians 2:8 — Salvation by grace through faith

Romans 1:17 — The righteous shall live by faith

Hebrews 11:1 – Definition of faith

Study Questions

1. What promised 'inheritances' in your spiritual life have you abandoned due to opposition rather than persevering in faith?
2. How does Dan's migration (pragmatic success but spiritual failure) illustrate the danger of redefining goals when God's original call seems too difficult?
3. In what ways does God work redemptively even through human failure and disobedience, while still calling us to complete faithfulness?

Interlinear Text

כִּי	בְּהָרֶה	וַיַּלְּבַצֵּן	אָתָה	בְּאָמָר	וְיִלְּבַצֵּן
forced	And the Amorites	H853	the children	of Dan	into the mountain
H3905	H567		H1121	H1835	H2022
לְא	נִתְּנֻן	וְיִלְּבַצֵּן	לְקַדְתָּה	לְעַמְלָקָה	
H3808	for they would not suffer		them to come down	to the valley	
	H5414		H3381	H6010	

Additional Cross-References

Joshua 19:47 (Parallel theme): And the coast of the children of Dan went out too little for them: therefore the children of Dan went up to fight against Leshem, and took it, and smote it with the edge of the sword, and possessed it, and dwelt therein, and called Leshem, Dan, after the name of Dan their father.

Judges 18:1 (Parallel theme): In those days there was no king in Israel: and in those days the tribe of the Danites sought them an inheritance to dwell in; for unto that day all their inheritance had not fallen unto them among the tribes of Israel.