

Judges 1:35

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

But the Amorites would dwell in mount Heres in Aijalon, and in Shaalbim: yet the hand of the house of Joseph prevailed, so that they became tributaries.

Analysis

But the Amorites would dwell in mount Heres in Aijalon, and in Shaalbim: yet the hand of the house of Joseph prevailed, so that they became tributaries.

This verse describes Amorite persistence in three locations: mount Heres, Aijalon, and Shaalbim, all in Dan's territory. These cities controlled strategic passes from coastal plain into highlands—Aijalon Valley being major route (where Joshua commanded sun and moon to stand still, Joshua 10:12-13). The phrase 'Amorites would dwell' (vayo'el ha'Emori lashevet, וַיֹּאמְרוּ הָעַמֹּרִי לִשְׁבֹּת, 'determine, persist, be willing'), indicating stubborn resistance. They refused displacement despite Israelite pressure.

However, 'the hand of the house of Joseph prevailed' (vattikbad yad-beit Yosef, וַתִּכְבֹּד יַד־בֵּית יוֹסֵף) shows eventual Ephraimite-Manassite dominance assisting Dan. The verb kaved (כָּבַד, 'be heavy, weighty, honored') suggests increasing power and influence. Joseph's house gained strength sufficient to impose tribute on Amorites Dan couldn't expel. Yet again, tribute rather than elimination represents incomplete obedience—economic exploitation replacing covenantal faithfulness.

This pattern repeats throughout chapter 1: initial failure followed by eventual military-economic dominance, yet stopping short of complete conquest. The progression suggests growing Israelite power over generations, yet consistent

failure to complete God's commands. In Christian life, this parallels gaining external victories (behavioral modification, visible righteousness) while maintaining internal compromises (pride, self-sufficiency, worldly values). External success without comprehensive heart transformation leaves ongoing vulnerabilities. Paul's teaching about putting off the old man and putting on the new (Ephesians 4:22-24) requires complete transformation, not merely superficial behavioral adjustment.

Historical Context

Mount Heres' location remains uncertain, possibly identical to or near Ir-shemesh or Beth-shemesh in the Shephelah. Aijalon (Tel Aijalon) controlled the Aijalon Valley, one of four major routes from coast to highlands. Archaeological excavations show Late Bronze-Iron Age occupation with evidence of destruction and rebuilding consistent with period conflicts. Shaalbim (possibly Selbit, south of Aijalon) controlled another strategic pass. These sites' locations made them military-economically valuable, explaining Amorite determination to retain them.

The house of Joseph's intervention reflects the tribal confederation's mutual support structure. While Dan couldn't conquer alone, Ephraim-Manasseh's greater power subdued Amorites. This confederation (amphictyonic league) united tribes for common defense and mutual aid, though it lacked centralized authority creating coordination problems evident throughout Judges. The repeated refrain 'In those days there was no king in Israel; every man did that which was right in his own eyes' (Judges 17:6, 21:25) highlights leadership vacuum.

The tribute system imposed on subjugated Canaanites prefigured Solomon's labor practices (1 Kings 5:13-14, 9:15-22). However, Solomon's exploitation included Israelites (though ostensibly only foreigners, 1 Kings 9:22), contributing to northern revolt under Rehoboam (1 Kings 12:1-20). The pattern established during incomplete conquest—economic exploitation of subjected peoples—became institutional practice with long-term political consequences.

Related Passages

Romans 10:9 — Confession and belief for salvation

Ephesians 2:8 — Salvation by grace through faith

John 15:13 — Greatest form of love

1 John 4:8 — God is love

Study Questions

1. What external spiritual victories have you achieved while maintaining internal compromises similar to Israel's military dominance without complete conquest?
2. How does the house of Joseph's intervention assisting Dan illustrate the body of Christ's mutual support in spiritual warfare?
3. In what areas does economic pragmatism tempt you to exploit rather than eliminate besetting sins or worldly patterns?

Interlinear Text

וַיֹּאֲלֵ	הָאֲמֹרִי	לָשׁ בֵּית	בְּהָר	הֶרֶס	בְּאֵילֹן
would	But the Amorites	dwelt	in mount	Heres	in Aijalon
H2974	H567	H3427	H2022	H2776	H357
וּבְשַׁעְלִבִּים	וַתִּכְבֹּד	יָד	בֵּית	יוֹסֵף	וְהָיָה
and in Shaalbim	prevailed	yet the hand	of the house	of Joseph	H1961
H8169	H3513	H3027	H1004	H3130	
לָמָּס:					
so that they became tributaries					
H4522					

Additional Cross-References

Joshua 19:42 (Parallel theme): And Shaalabbin, and Ajalon, and Jethlah,

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