

Judges 1:4

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

And Judah went up; and the LORD delivered the Canaanites and the Perizzites into their hand: and they slew of them in Bezek ten thousand men.

Analysis

And Judah went up; and the LORD delivered the Canaanites and the Perizzites into their hand: and they slew of them in Bezek ten thousand men.

This verse confirms God's promise in verse 2—Judah obeyed, and "the LORD delivered" (Yahweh vayyiten, יְהִי תָּמִיד). The verb natan (נָתָן, "delivered/gave") emphasizes God's active agency in Israel's military victories. Unlike pagan conquest accounts that credit military prowess or divine conflict among the pantheon, Scripture consistently attributes Israel's victories to Yahweh's sovereign intervention. This theological framework permeates the conquest and judges narratives—success depends on covenant faithfulness, not military might (Deuteronomy 20:1-4, Joshua 1:5-9).

The Perizzites appear frequently alongside Canaanites in conquest lists (Genesis 15:20, Exodus 3:8, Joshua 3:10). Their precise ethnic identity remains uncertain—the name possibly derives from perazah (פְּرָזָה, "unwalled village"), suggesting they were rural or village-dwelling peoples distinct from urbanized Canaanites. Their inclusion here indicates Judah faced both city-states and dispersed settlements requiring different tactical approaches.

The number "ten thousand" (aseret alafim, עָשֶׂר אֶלָף) may be literal or may use elef (אֶלֶף) in its alternate meaning of "military unit" (roughly 5-14 warriors),

suggesting 10 military contingents rather than precisely 10,000 individuals. Either way, the scale indicates substantial defeat of Canaanite forces. Reformed theology sees such victories as types of Christ's conquest over sin, death, and Satan (Colossians 2:15, Hebrews 2:14-15), accomplished not by human strength but by God's power working through perfect obedience.

Historical Context

Bezek's location is disputed. One tradition places it near Shechem in central Canaan (modern Khirbet Ibziq), while another identifies it with a site in Judah's territory near Gezer. The Shechem location seems more likely given that Adoni-bezek was brought to Jerusalem (v. 7), suggesting a northern campaign before moving south. Archaeological evidence from Late Bronze Age sites in the central hill country shows destruction layers consistent with conquest-period conflicts, though connecting specific destructions to biblical accounts remains challenging.

The battle at Bezek demonstrates the pattern of Israelite warfare: engagement of Canaanite forces in open battle followed by pursuit and capture of their leaders. This differs from the siege warfare (like Jericho or Ai) but appears frequently in the conquest narratives (Joshua 10:10-27, 11:7-8). The Canaanite military relied on chariot forces effective on plains but vulnerable in hill country (Judges 1:19, 4:3), giving Israel tactical advantage in mountainous terrain.

The Perizzites' presence alongside Canaanites reflects the ethnic complexity of pre-Israelite Canaan. Extra-biblical sources (Egyptian, Hittite, and Ugaritic texts) confirm multiple ethnic groups occupied Canaan during this period. The Amarna letters (14th century BCE) describe conflicts among Canaanite city-states and references to 'Apiru (possibly related to "Hebrew"), showing the region's political fragmentation that facilitated Israel's gradual conquest.

Related Passages

Colossians 1:16 — All things created through Christ

Genesis 1:1 — Creation of heavens and earth

Study Questions

1. How does the emphasis on 'the LORD delivered' guard against trusting in human strategies, resources, or abilities in spiritual warfare?
2. What does God's faithfulness to His promise in verse 2 teach about the relationship between divine sovereignty and human obedience?
3. In what ways does Christ's victory over spiritual enemies provide assurance that God will complete His work in sanctifying believers?

Interlinear Text

וַיֵּלֶךְ יְהוָה וְיְהוָה | יְמִינֵי אֶת־
went up And Judah delivered and the LORD the Canaanites
H5927 H3063 H5414 H3068 H853 H3669

וְיְפַרַּח וְיַחֲזִק בְּיַד יְמִינֵי וְיַכְבִּד בְּנֵי־
and the Perizzites into their hand and they slew of them in Bezek ten
H6522 H3027 H5221 H966 H6235

אֶלֶף אֲשֶׁר
thousand men
H505 H376

Additional Cross-References

1 Samuel 11:8 (Parallel theme): And when he numbered them in Bezek, the children of Israel were three hundred thousand, and the men of Judah thirty thousand.