

Numbers 21:24

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

And Israel smote him with the edge of the sword, and possessed his land from Arnon unto Jabbok, even unto the children of Ammon: for the border of the children of Ammon was strong.

Analysis

Israel smote him with the edge of the sword (לְפִי־חֶרֶב, le-fi-charev, literally "by the mouth of the sword")—Israel's first major conquest fulfilled God's promise to give them victory. **And possessed his land from Arnon unto Jabbok**—This territory, roughly 60 miles north-south, became the inheritance of Reuben, Gad, and half of Manasseh (Numbers 32). **Even unto the children of Ammon** marks Israel's restraint—they took only what God designated, respecting Ammon's boundary (Deuteronomy 2:19).

Conquest with limits demonstrates that Israel's warfare wasn't ethnic cleansing but covenantal obedience. They fought where God commanded, stopped where He restricted. This sets biblical holy war apart from human imperialism—God's boundaries, not human ambition, defined the campaign.

Historical Context

The Arnon-to-Jabbok territory encompassed the Moabite plateau and Gilead's southern portion. Archaeological evidence shows late Bronze Age destruction layers at several sites in this region, consistent with conquest dating. This land remained Israelite until the Assyrian invasions (8th century BC).

Related Passages

Colossians 1:16 — All things created through Christ

Psalms 19:1 — Heavens declare God's glory

Study Questions

1. How does combining full obedience in conquest with restraint at boundaries shape your understanding of spiritual warfare?
2. What areas of your life require aggressive faith, and what boundaries require respectful restraint?
3. How does God's specific direction prevent spiritual conquest from becoming mere human ambition?

Interlinear Text

וַיִּכּוּ הוּ	וְיִשְׂרָאֵל ל	לְפִי	חַרְבַּ	וַיִּבֶשׁ שׁ	אֶת	אֶרְצוֹ
smote	And Israel	him with the edge	of the sword	and possessed	H853	his land
H5221	H3478	H6310	H2719	H3423		H776
מֵאֲרֹנַיִן	עַד	יַבְבֹּק	עַד	בְּנֵי י	עַמּוֹן:	כִּי
from Arnon	H5704	unto Jabbok	H5704	even unto the children	of Ammon	H3588
H769		H2999		H1121	H5983	
עַז	גִּבּוֹל	בְּנֵי י	עַמּוֹן:			
was strong	for the border	even unto the children	of Ammon			
H5794	H1366	H1121	H5983			

Additional Cross-References

Amos 2:9 (Parallel theme): Yet destroyed I the Amorite before them, whose height was like the height of the cedars, and he was strong as the oaks; yet I destroyed his fruit from above, and his roots from beneath.

Psalms 136:19 (Parallel theme): Sihon king of the Amorites: for his mercy endureth for ever:

Nehemiah 9:22 (Parallel theme): Moreover thou gavest them kingdoms and nations, and didst divide them into corners: so they possessed the land of Sihon, and the land of the king of Heshbon, and the land of Og king of Bashan.

Genesis 32:22 (Parallel theme): And he rose up that night, and took his two wives, and his two womenservants, and his eleven sons, and passed over the ford Jabbok.

Joshua 24:8 (Parallel theme): And I brought you into the land of the Amorites, which dwelt on the other side Jordan; and they fought with you: and I gave them into your hand, that ye might possess their land; and I destroyed them from before you.