

JOSHUA 11

Joshua 11:1–15. The United Kings of Northern Canaan Defeated

Having pacified the southern Canaanite coalition, the Israelites switched their focus to northern Canaan to deal with the lingering threat in that part of the land of promise. The northern campaign spans Joshua 11:1–15 and mirrors in broad structure the previous chapter (which described the southern campaign).

The northern Canaanite coalition was led by King Jabin of Hazor (verses 1–5). Another Canaanite king by the same name appears in Judges 4¹ and is mentioned again in Psalm 83:9. Whether this is the same Jabin as the one mentioned here in Joshua 11 is unclear, but it seems probable the author of Joshua perhaps reworked some of the material from Judges into his own account (or vice versa).

The defeat of the northern Canaanite federation is described quickly (verses 10–15). The Israelites' victory is depicted as being decisive and total, with the cities being subjected to the same *herem* applied to the southern sites.

Joshua 11:16–23. Summary of Joshua's Conquests

After depicting the conquest of both the north and south of the land of Canaan, the eleventh chapter of Joshua concludes with a summary of Joshua's campaigns (verses 16–23). The totality of the conquest is emphasized heavily in this summary, which goes to pains to map out the specific range of the Israelites' victories.

Among the peoples and places conquered were the Anakims, who, according to the summary at the end of this chapter, had been destroyed (verses 21–22). The identity of these mysterious people is not clear,

¹ See, for example, Judges 4:2, 17, 23–24.

but they appear to have been something like a quasi-legendary race of brutes (or giants, based on how their identity was interpreted in the ancient Greek translation of the Bible) living in Canaan before the Israelite conquest.²

The comment in verse 20 that the Lord hardened the hearts of the inhabitants of Canaan serves as both a narrative nod to Moses and Pharaoh³ and thereby casts the Canaanites in a similar role as the Egyptians in the Exodus tradition. It also adds a sort of extra layer of justification for the conquest.

Note as well that according to verse 19, some of the inhabitants of Canaan (specifically the Hivites of Gibeon, encountered earlier in Joshua 9:1–27) were spared destruction despite the injunction given at Deuteronomy 20:16–18, suggesting the conditional nature of who was deemed worthy of the *herem*.

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² Compare Deuteronomy 1:28; 2:10–11, 21; 9:2.

³ See, for example, Exodus 4:21; 7:3, 13; 8:15.