

## **Gibeon Campaign: Invincibility**

The ultimate test of the effectiveness of the wilderness training for the Israelites is the Gibeon battlefield. The major engagement to test these warriors came in the form of a cry for help from the new allies, the Gibeonites. Joshua and his army camped at Gilgal received the plea ““Come up to us quickly, and save us, and help us for all the kings of the Amorites that dwell in the hill country are gathered against us””

The text goes on to say that, Joshua marched all night to get there. The economy of words hardly describes what occurred. Joshua and his troops marched all night, 15 miles, over ground that ascended some 1900 feet. Ten miles during the day is a good day’s march. This is a nighttime nightmare, marching uphill over unknown ground, strung with boulders and deep crevices. Secrecy is all-important if the enemy is to be defeated.

The next morning Joshua finds his army thrust immediately into battle. Approaching from the east with the rising sun to their backs and a downhill gradient before them, they catch the Amorite by surprise.

Joshua probably ordered an initial barrage of arrows. A typical warrior could fire 150 arrows in 15 minutes. A thousand archers could fire 150,000 arrows in 15 minutes blanketing the battlefield. It would take 100 A10 Thunderbolt ground attack aircraft to unload this much firepower.

Joshua routs the enemy with them fleeing west towards the Beth Horan pass. All that day and through the night the enemy is chased another ten miles and slaughtered the next morning. Dawn breaks. Joshua needs the coolness of the morning hour to complete the killing. However, the dawn is too short and the task too great so Joshua ask the Lord to lengthen the dawn to allow time to destroy the enemy.

Listen to how Herzog (former President of the State of Israel) describes this feat. “In ancient times, exploitation was usually achieved not by fresh forces, which were more often than not unavailable, but by sheer surplus of moral stamina and physical force.” Joshua had the opportunity to destroy the enemy. “He wanted to crush his foe before dawn had given way to full day and the enemy had cleared the defiles of the Bethhoron pass. Besides, the physical strain must have been almost beyond endurance by then, since after the former night’s approach march and the day’s battle, another night of an eleven mile pursuit followed.” <sup>1</sup>

Now just how was this kind of endurance acquired? It was the intense training God put them through in the wilderness. Now we understand why the training was so difficult. Special Forces personnel will tell you that only this kind of hardship is able to prepare a man for battle.

Moreover, Joshua’s army had a personal stake in what was going on. This was going to be their homeland. They were not just some army of draftees pressed into service.

We also understand something else about God’s tactics. His people are lightly armed. They are not dressed in heavy armor. They are able to pursue the enemy.

“Altogether the Israelite warriors had traversed about thirty miles in forty-five to forty-eight hours, two-thirds or more of the time under battle conditions.” <sup>2</sup>

This task took incredible stamina. The strength acquired through the training in the wilderness now becomes apparent. Israel has spent forty-eight hours in direct combat

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<sup>1</sup> Battles of the Bible, p.56

<sup>2</sup> Ibid

with the enemy chasing, fighting, maneuvering, communicating; no doubt, so weary they could hardly lift their weapons to destroy the enemy.

Even the Lord got involved and threw a few hailstones at the enemy. Actually, it was more than a few. The text said the Lord killed more with the hailstones than the army killed with the sword did. How was success determined? By complete destruction of the enemy, and NO LOSSES for the Lord's army. If the Lord's army sustains even one loss, there is something wrong.