

Hazor Campaign: Carrying on

The next big battle falls on the heels of this tremendous victory. News travels swiftly and Jabin the king of Hazor hearing of the defeat at the hand of the Israelites calls together kings from the North, South, East, and West, a huge force to do battle with the Israeli threat. The Bible puts the number as the sand of seashore. Now they are faced with an additional threat. One Israel had not yet faced on the battlefield; horses, and chariots, many horses and chariots.

The Lord warns Joshua the night before that he will be facing this army (Joshua 11:6). At the same time, the Lord tells Joshua something that is unbelievable. Joshua when the battle is over and I the Lord deliver them up to you dead then burn their chariots and hamstring their horses.

This is amazing because this was the foremost weapon on the battlefield. Strength and wealth was determined by the possession of the chariot. It would be like telling a commander today, who had no battle tanks that after winning a major engagement with an enemy who possessed many tanks, after the battle to destroy them instead of keeping them.

These directions are the key to the future success of Israel. Maintaining a chariot force is expensive. It calls for equipment and tools beyond the wealth of Israel. Moreover, tactically the Lord wanted Israel fighting in the mountains and the chariot was useless in this environment.

Now Joshua faces a campaign against an enemy who used methods he had not been prepared to counter. What was he do?

The first thing the Lord says to Joshua is “do not be afraid.” The central focus of God’s army is not to fear. Then He tells him why. “Tomorrow at this time”, means this is going to be a shorter battle than the last one. The other by now, cardinal rule attack the enemy when and where he least expects it.

I wonder if we have ever attacked our enemy in our spiritual wars when he was unprepared. Have we ever destroyed the weapons he fashions against us?

Jabin has chosen the Waters of Merom as a gathering place for his allies. It was an excellent choice. It provided a good resting place for the armies while they are gathering.

Merom is a central point of Israel. All the roads to Israel’s heartland meet at Merom. Jabin’s plans are almost complete. All the allies have gathered. The horses are grazing and the army is making final plans for the attack.

Waters of Merom are located in a deep ravine with mountains rising on every side. The perfect battleground for which Joshua has been trained. Sure enough Joshua comes pouring down on the enemy from the south driving the enemy North and East their chariots of no use in this mountainous boulder filled battlefield by the end of the day the enemy forces have been destroyed. Then following another cardinal rule Joshua does not stop. They invade the defenseless Hazor and destroy it along with all of the cities inhabited by the kings just defeated.

For five long years, the major armies and cities were decimated and lay waste. None offered to surrender or make peace save the Hivites at Gibeon. Scripture says as a concluding remark about Joshua, “he left nothing undone of all that the Lord had commanded Moses.” (Joshua 11:15)

A lesson for us is in that remark. One does not stop when the enemy is defeated, you take all that belongs to him. Destroy all the strongholds of Satan and he has nothing to return to. Our great temptation is to leave our houses of addiction, immorality, greed, and idolatry standing. Doing so dooms us to fight another day, and another.

The only criticism for this valiant leader was Joshua's failure at Ai. Joshua's failure makes him even more dedicated to fulfilling the obligations and responsibilities placed on him by Moses and the Lord. Joshua closes his life having fulfilled God's purposes.

The Lord's introduction to warfare, specialized training, and initial invasion of the Promised Land serves to prepare the foundation for the new nation of Israel.

New rules are introduced. How war is to be conducted, and the protection of certain people is set forth. The people are not to subject the land itself to war. Above all the character of the individual and the nation must be in accordance with God's standards.

By the time of the death of Joshua, the nation knows what God requires of them. They have been given the land promised and the tools necessary to keep it. God's only expectation is obedience. The next lessons involve the integrity of the people in keeping the Lord's laws, and consequences for disobedience.