

"AL HAPEREK"

A Renewed Meeting with Tanach

Yehoshua Perakim 11-12

The people of Israel continue northward in their quest to conquer the Land. The descriptions of battles and the list of victories teach us the extent of the challenge facing the Jewish people in their attempt to settle the Land.

General Overview < "וַיִּקְרְאוּ בַסֶּפֶר בְּתוֹרַת הָאֱלֹהִים"

Perek 11

- ❶ Keep track of the different stages of conquest. How do the Land's inhabitants react in each of the stages? Consider the following pesukim: Yehoshua 5:1; 9:1-2; 10:1-5; 11:1-5.
- ❷ Yehoshua 11:6-9 describes how the Land's inhabitants fight back against the people of Israel. What weapons are mentioned in this perek? In what ways is this battle different from the battles of Yericho and Ai? How might we account for this difference?
- ❸ Yehoshua 11:18 says, "Yehoshua made war many days with all those kings." Yehoshua 10:42 says, "And all these kings and their land Yehoshua took at one time." Was the conquest of the Land a long, gradual process or was it carried out in one concentrated effort?

To help answer this question read Radak's commentary on perek 11:18: "*many days*": "But previously, before returning to the Land, the text says, 'Yehoshua took at one time' (10:42). This means that all the kings mentioned were captured in one continuous period before they returned to the camp at Gilgal, and afterward he made war a long time with the other kings of the Land until he had taken everything."



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המרכז ללימודי תנ"ך

Perek 12

- 4 This perek reviews the conquest of the Land thus far. What is the need for this review and why is special attention paid to inheritance of land east of the Jordan river?
- 5 To understand the order of the list of the kings mentioned in the perek, look at the narration of the conquest of the Land in previous perakim and in the "Daat Mikra" commentary on this perek.

In-depth Study < "מִפְּנֵי שְׁוֹם שְׁכָל" >

- 6 The list of kings is written in poetic form. Compare it to "Shirat HaYam" (Song of the Red Sea) in Shmot 15. (See also Esther 9:6-10.) What is the significance of poetic form and how does it impact the information it gives over?

Read the following passage from the Talmud to help you answer this question: "*Rabbi Hanina bar Papa quoted R. Shilo, a man from the village of Tamarta, saying 'All the songs are written in the form of a tile upon a white brick, and a white brick upon a tile, except for the song of the kings of Canaan [in Yeboshua 12], which is written in the form of a tile over a tile and a white brick over a white brick. What is the reason for this? So that they should not rise up from their downfall'*" (Tractate Megillah 16b).

Appendix < "וַיְבִינוּ בְּמִקְרָא"

"...for Hazor beforetime was the head of all those kingdoms" (11:10)

The term "head of all those kingdoms" testifies to the great importance of the ancient city of Hazor. The city controlled the main road between Egypt and Syria, and to Mesopotamia (Tigris-Euphrates region) as well. The remains



of a unique water system, ruins of temples, palaces, and fortifications, and jewelry and various tools were all found at Tel Hazor.

Hazor is first mentioned in the writings of Egyptian "Execration Books" (books of magical curses), which date from the 19th century

BCE. After that, Hazor appears in letters about trade from the archives of Mari (today's Syria) from the 18th century BCE, and in lists of kings of Egypt from the 14th century BCE. Hazor was a key city in Canaan, large and strong, and its defeat at the hands of Yehoshua was an important military and political achievement as we learn from the emphasis it receives in pasuk 13: "Hazor alone did Yehoshua burn." After the destruction of Canaanite Hazor, the people of Israel dwelt in it, and it is mentioned again in Tanach in the description of the battle between Yavin, king of Hazor, and his commander-in-chief Sisera against Barak and the people of Israel (Shoftim 4:1-3), and as one of the walled cities of Solomon (1 Melachim 9:15).

In the year 732 BCE, Hazor was conquered by Tiglat-Pileasar, the king of Assyria, after which it never returned to its former grandeur.

More about ancient Hazor can be found at <http://www.hazor.org.il> (in Hebrew) .