

Lesson 6: The Conquest



Fig. 1 Conquest of Canaan

After wandering in the wilderness for 40 years, Moses handed over leadership to Joshua, whose responsibility it was to bring the nation of Israel into the promised land of Canaan. After entering Canaan, Joshua had to go to war with the people who occupied the land. Canaan was a land of city-states. There was no central government; each city had its own king. To conquer the land each city would have to be defeated.

At the time of the Conquest of Canaan by Israel Egypt was nominally in control of the region.

- Pharaoh Thutmose III (1504-1450) had added the region to Egypt's domain.
- His son, Amenhotep II (1450-1424), Pharaoh of the Exodus, continued control.
- His son, Thutmose IV (1424-1414), Pharaoh while Israel was in the wilderness, was more interested in foreign alliances than military dominance.
 - o He had married the Asiatic daughter of Artatama, King of Mitanni. Mitanni was in northern Mesopotamia, mostly Hurrian.
- His son, Amenhotep III (1414-1378), who now ruled, was not interested in maintaining an empire. He was more concerned with domestic interests.
 - o The Tell el-Amarna letters depict him as ignoring the Canaanite pleas for help against the Hapiru.
 - o He left the individual cities of Canaan to themselves during the conquest by Israel.

CANAAN

Canaan culture was fairly advanced.

- Cities were well laid out, and houses showed good design and construction.
- Floors of buildings, were often paved, or plastered.
- Drainage systems had been developed.
- Workers were skilled in the use of copper, lead, and gold.

- Pottery was among the finest anywhere in the world.
- Extensive trade was conducted with foreign countries, including Egypt, Northern Mesopotamia, and Cyprus.

God commanded that all Canaanites be destroyed or driven from the land (Num. 33:51-56; Deut. 7:1-5).

- Had Israel done so, all would have been well; but she did not. Many Canaanites were allowed to remain, and Israel suffered the effects of their influence.
- This was the danger that God wanted to avoid.
 - o Many of the people accepted the worship of Canaanite Baal (fig. 2) rather than God.
 - o The attraction was that Baal was held to be god of rainfall and good crops. No doubt the Canaanites advised their new farming neighbors that technical skill was not enough to insure a good harvest, but that worship of Baal was still more important.

Moses' strategy for taking Canaan, no doubt revealed to him by God, clearly had been to attack the land at its approximate midpoint, coming in from the east, and divide it into a south and north section, that each could be conquered separately.

- We may assume that Moses had shared this plan with Joshua, so that the new leader had the plan in mind as the people prepared for crossing the Jordan.



Fig. 2 Canaanite God BAAL

JERICOHO

Reconnaissance

Jericho stood as a first and principal objective in the conquest of Canaan.

- Joshua sent two spies to make reconnaissance.
- The two crossed the Jordan and came to the city where they were protected by a harlot, Rahab, whose house was located on the city wall.
- When the men were detected, Rahab hid them beneath stalks of flax on the roof and then pointed the pursuers in the wrong direction.
- Convinced that Jericho would fall to Israel, Rahab requested safety for her and her family in return for her help. The men gave their promise and with further help escaped back to Joshua.
- Joshua learned from Rahab that the people feared Israel greatly. News of victories over Sihon and Og had reached Jericho.

Crossing the Jordan

The morning after the spies' return, Joshua ordered the people to move to the bank of the Jordan. Shittim (exact location unknown), is where they encamped.

- It was spring and the Jordan was at flood stage. Before crossing three days were spent in final preparations and instructions.

- We may believe that during these three days the people wondered how all Israel could possibly cross the wide expanse of water flowing by them.

When everything was ready, the priests, carrying the ark, moved toward the river. The people, followed at a distance of 3000 feet (Josh. 3:4). This insured that a maximum number would see the ark as the guiding signal.

- When the feet of the priests touched the water, it miraculously separated. As if stopped by a dam, the water from upstream that flowed toward them “stood up in a heap.” The other water continued its course to the Dead Sea, leaving a wide space for the people to cross (fig. 3).
- The priests bearing the ark stopped and remained in the middle of the river as the people moved past. As the



Fig. 3 The Ark Passes Through the Jordan

people crossed, the water backed up approximately 15 miles upriver, as far as the city Adam.

- o This gave testimony to each person that God was restraining the water.
- o Adam is identified with Tell ed-Damieh about 20 miles from the Dead Sea. Israel crossed the Jordan opposite Jericho about five miles from the Dead Sea, so they were 15 miles from Adam. Since rockslides have occurred near Adam temporarily stopping the Jordan (once in AD 1267, 1906 and 1927), some have suggested that God used this means here.
- As soon as everyone had left the riverbed, the water was released and the river flowed again.
- Two memorials of this crossing were created, one in the Jordan and one across at Gilgal, where the people encamped (Josh. 4:1-24).

Gilgal

Gilgal now became a continuing center of Israelite activity. Its exact location is still uncertain, but clearly it was somewhere in the Jordan Valley between Jericho and the Jordan River (Josh. 4:19).

- From here, Jericho and Ai were soon taken.
- Later the Gibeonites came to Gilgal seeking a peace treaty (Josh. 9:6). From Gilgal Joshua led his army by forced march to help the Gibeonites against the southern confederacy (Josh. 10:6-7).
- From here, too, he went north to meet the northern confederacy (Josh. 11:6-14).
- And here the first allotment of tribal territories was made (Josh. 14:6). While the army was in the field fighting, the people remained at Gilgal as home base.

Three important events transpired soon after encampment.

1. The circumcision of all the men ([Josh. 5:2-9](#)).
2. The observance of the Passover ([Josh. 5:10](#)).
3. The cessation of manna. God had supplied this food since the first year of travel ([Exod. 16:14-22](#)).



Fig. 4 Jericho (Tell es-Sultan)

Defeat of Jericho

Frequent biblical reference to Jericho shows that it was of major importance in the land. Jericho is well identified with Tell es-Sultan, five miles west of the Jordan and seven miles north of the Dead Sea. The mound covers about eight acres (fig. 4).

- After Jerusalem, Jericho is the most excavated site in Israel. Charles Warren in 1868 sank several shafts but concluded that nothing was to be found. Germans Sellin and Watzinger excavated 1907-13, Garstang 1930-36 and Kenyon 1952-58. Since 1997 an Italian-Palestinian team has been digging.

- Kenyon's description of the walls of Jericho is significant.
 - o The walls were of a type, which made direct assault practically impossible. An approaching enemy first encountered a stone abutment 11 feet high, back and up from which sloped a 35° plastered scarp reaching to the main wall some 35 vertical feet above (fig. 5).
 - o The steep, smooth slope prohibited battering the wall by any effective device or building fires to break it.
 - o An army trying to storm the wall found difficulty in climbing the slope, and ladders to scale it could find no satisfactory footing.

God had plans for taking Jericho, which were revealed to Joshua in an unusual manner ([Josh. 5:13-6:5](#)).

- Joshua was met by one called the "commander of the army of the LORD."
- "Commander of the army of the Lord," could be the appearance of Christ as the Angel of God. This "Commander" called the ground "holy" ([Josh. 5:15](#)), as with Moses at the burning bush ([Exod. 3:5](#)), and used the personal pronoun "I" as giving Jericho into Joshua's hand.
- The plans were to have "armed men," led by seven priests carrying the ark, walk around the city once each day for six days and seven times on the seventh. At the close of the thirteenth circuit, the priests would blow trumpets and the people shout with a loud voice. When they did, the walls of the city would collapse and the army could enter.

The plan was executed as instructed.

- Thirteen times the city was circled and then the walls fell as the trumpets sounded and the people shouted. The army took the city with ease.

All the people of the city were killed, with the exception of Rahab and her family, whose lives were spared in keeping with the spies' promise, and the city was leveled by fire. No Israelite was permitted to enrich himself by looting. God placed a ban on the city, declaring that it was "devoted" to Himself (Josh. 6:17-18).

- Spared, Rahab came to be included in the ancestral line of David and so of Christ (Matt. 1:5).

Archaeologists have found that the walls of Jericho did indeed fall down, they date the destruction of the wall to the time of Joshua (c. 1400 BC).

- The first major excavation of Jericho was carried out by a German team between 1907 and 1909. They found piles of mud bricks at the base of the mound the city was built on.
- It was not until a British archaeologist named Kathleen Kenyon excavated the site with modern methods in the 1950s that it was understood what these piles of bricks were. She determined that they were from the city wall, which had collapsed when the city was destroyed.

- The Bible says that when the walls collapsed, the Israelites stormed the city and set it on fire.

Archaeologists have found evidence of a massive destruction by fire just as the Bible states. Kenyon wrote in her excavation report:

"The destruction was complete. Walls and floors were blackened or reddened by fire, and every room was filled with fallen bricks, timbers, and household utensils; in most rooms the fallen debris was heavily burnt."



Fig. 5 Cross-Section of Jericho Wall

What caused the walls of Jericho to collapse?

- The common secular explanation is an earthquake must have caused the collapse.
 - o It must have been a very unusual earthquake because it struck in such a way as to allow a portion of the city wall on the north side of the site to remain standing, while everywhere else the wall fell.
- Rahab's house was evidently located on the north side of the city.
 - o The Bible states that her house was built against the city wall. Before returning to the Israelite camp, the spies told Rahab to bring her family into her house and they would be spared. Rahab's house was miraculously spared while the rest of the city wall fell.
 - o This is exactly what archaeologists have found. The preserved city wall on the north side of the city had houses built against it.
- The timing of the earthquake and the manner in which it selectively took down the city wall suggests something other than a natural calamity...It was God at work.

Both Garstang and Kenyon found dozens of store jars full of grain from the Canaanite city of Jericho.

- The obvious conclusion is that these were from the city when it was burned, not looted, by Joshua.
- The archaeological record fits the biblical account precisely.

AI & BETHEL

The city of Ai was the next objective before Israel.

- A reconnaissance party sent by Joshua was not impressed by Ai's strength and, overconfident, advised that merely "two or three thousand" would be sufficient to take the city.
- Joshua sent 3,000 soldiers, who ended up being defeated by Ai.
- The main reason for the defeat, however, was not the number of Israelite soldiers; it was the existence of sin in Israel's camp. Achan of the tribe of Judah had ignored God's ban on the "devoted" items from Jericho and took a Babylonian garment, 200 shekels of silver, and a 50-shekel bar of gold.

Following the defeat, God revealed to Joshua that such a sin had been committed and told him to inquire as to the identity of the guilty party. This was done, and Achan was identified.

- Identification was found probably by using the Urim and Thummim ([Exod. 28:30; Num. 27:21](#)).
- Achan confessed to having taken the items and hidden them in his tent. These were recovered from their hiding place, and then Achan and his family were stoned and then burned with all of his possessions. This punishment was necessary, both in view of the serious offense and as a warning to other Israelites.

With the sin punished, Israel was now able to conquer Ai ([Josh. 8](#)).

- By night, Joshua sent a large force to hide in ambush in a valley between Ai and Bethel.
- The next day Joshua led another force in a frontal attack on the city.
- When the men of Ai came out from the city, Joshua's force retreated. The hidden force arose and attacked the army of Ai from behind. Joshua's force then turned, and the enemy was trapped.
- The result was that all 12,000 of the male inhabitants of Ai were killed, the king hanged, and the city reduced to rubble.



Fig. 6 Ai (et-Tell), Aerial View

The location of Ai is still uncertain but could be either et-Tell (fig. 6), or Khirbet Nisya.

- David Livingstone theorized that ancient Bethel should be located at modern Bireh. Working from that hypothesis he identified Nisya as the place the biblical description for Ai would demand.
- Nisya is only two to three acres, which correlates well with the biblical description of Ai as a small, but walled city, and is located correctly to be the biblical Ai.

No indication is given of a conquest of Bethel by Joshua.

- Bethel's king is listed as killed by Joshua's forces ([Josh. 12:16](#)), but no record is given of a direct attack on the city.
- The reason may be that her power was broken at the time of Ai's defeat. It was only logical for her to join in assisting Ai against an enemy which she could expect would confront her next, and [Joshua 8:17](#) states directly that she did.
- Bethel's king may have been killed at this time, though the record mentions only Ai's ruler ([Josh. 8:23, 29](#)). Joshua's employment of so many more troops the second time may have been in part due to his expectation that Bethel would join with Ai.

SHECHEM

With Jericho, Ai, and Bethel controlled, Joshua took the people, according to God's instruction ([Deut. 27:1-26](#)), north to Shechem to renew God's covenant.

- Near Shechem, at the foot of Mount Ebal, Joshua built an altar, and the priests made burnt offerings and peace offerings. On prepared stones, Joshua wrote a "copy of the law of Moses" ([Josh. 8:32](#)).
- Half the tribes moved toward Mount Gerizim, with half remaining near Mount Ebal. Near Joshua as he read was the Ark of the Covenant.
- Mount Ebal and Mount Gerizim lie north and south from each other with Shechem between their eastern ends (fig. 7).

Israel's conquest of this northern, central region where Shechem was a principal city ([Gen. 12:6; 33:18-20](#)) is not described in Scripture.

- The biblical account speaks of the Israelites being able to move north to it, apparently without difficulty, but does not explain how this was possible.
- Shechem was more than 30 miles north of Ai, and her people would not have considered themselves under Israelite domination simply because the more southern city had fallen.
- The most likely explanation is that Israelite forces had moved north to subjugate the area ahead of time, though after Ai's fall. Certain matters suggest this.
 - o One is that [Joshua 11:19](#) states that no city other than Gibeon ([Josh. 9](#)) capitulated to Israel peacefully, which means that Shechem must have been taken forcibly.
 - o Another is that [Joshua 12:17, 18, 24](#) lists kings of the Shechem area who were killed by Joshua's troops at some point in time, and so



Fig. 7 Mount Ebal-Gerizim and Shechem

probably here at this logical juncture.

One of the Amarna letters indicate that the prince of Gezer and the prince of Shechem surrendered to Joshua during the conquest of the land:

“See the actions taken by Milkilu, the prince of Gezer, and the sons of Labayu, the princes of Shechem, who have handed over the land to the Hapiru.”

This letter also confirms the Bible, in that these two cities were also spared, not destroyed, in Joshua’s conquest. They are both mentioned together in [Joshua 21:21](#).

Hivites

Returning to Gilgal, the Israelites received homage from another group of people of central Canaan, the Hivites, representing four major cities northwest of Jerusalem a few miles - Gibeon, Chephirah, Beeroth, and Kirjath-jearim -sometimes called the Gibeonite tetrapolis.

- The Hivites were one of the seven listed national groups of Canaan at the time of the conquest: Amorites, Perizzites, Canaanites, Hittites, Girgashites, Hivites, and Jebusites ([Josh. 3:10; 24:11](#)).
- Doubting that Israel would accept their treaty offer if they were identified with nearby Gibeon, they contrived a trick, wearing worn-out clothing and bearing moldy bread, to make themselves appear to have traveled from a distant country.
- They asked that Israel make a treaty of peace with them, and it was granted. This was contrary to God’s instruction ([Exod. 23:32; 34:12; Deut. 7:2](#)), however, and the Israelites were held responsible because they had not asked counsel “of the LORD.”
- When the ruse was known three days later, Joshua and the elders honored the treaty because it had been made in the name of God.

SOUTHERN CAMPAIGNS

At this point Israel had separated the northern and southern regions of Canaan. Jericho, Ai, Bethel, Beeroth, Gibeon, Chephirah, and Kirjath-jearim formed a continuous line across southern central Canaan; and the fact that Israel had been able to assemble peaceably at Shechem indicates control had been gained in the northern central area as well. The South and North were now separated and remained to be taken each by itself.

Defeat of Southern Canaan

Contact with the South came soon after the treaty with the Hivite tetrapolis. Among the four cities, Gibeon was the largest and most powerful ([Josh. 10:2](#)); and when news of her action reached the king of Jerusalem, he formed a coalition of major southern cities. Four leading cities joined with him: Hebron, Jarmuth, Lachish, and Eglon (all five cities have been located). Gibeon is found at el-Jib, seven miles northwest of Jerusalem. Excavations took place from 1957-1962.

- These confederates began their general resistance to Israel by first attacking



<http://www.truthnet.org/biblicalarcheology/>

Fig. 8 Five Canaanite Kings Killed

Gibeon, apparently to force her out of the new alliance with Israel. Gibeon quickly appealed to Joshua in Gilgal, and Joshua brought his troops by forced march the 24-mile distance to Gibeon in one night. He took the attackers by surprise, routed them, and pursued them toward the heights near Beth-horon to the west.

- Near Beth-horon the fleeing troops turned south in an apparent attempt to reach home cities, but on the way God sent a hailstorm that killed more of the enemy than did Israel's swords.
- The five kings, staying close together, succeeded in getting to the vicinity of Azekah and Makkedah, but then sought shelter in a cave.
 - o The pursuing Israelites found the kings in a cave, but merely sealed the opening with stones and continued after the fleeing soldiers.
 - o Joshua wanted the troops themselves caught and killed before they could get to the safety of their walled cities. This was accomplished in major part (Josh. 10:18-20), and then attention was again given to the trapped kings.
 - o Joshua commanded his military leaders to place their feet on the necks of these rulers while he slew them. Then Joshua had the lifeless bodies of all five hung on trees for his men to see during the remainder of the day (Josh. 10:21-27).

There is an amazing piece of evidence to support this. A letter has been found, written by a man named Abdi-Hiba, Governor of Jerusalem, to Pharaoh Amenhotep IV (1378-1367), requesting aid from Egypt in fighting the approaching Hebrews. The letter states the following:

"Why do you not hear my plea? All the governors are lost; the king, my lord, does not have a single governor left! Let my lord, the king, send troops of archers, or the king will have no lands left. All the lands of the king are being plundered by the Habiru. If archers are here by the end of the year, then the lands of my lord, the king, will continue to exist; but if the archers are not sent, then the lands of the king, my lord, will be surrendered."

Compare this with the following statement found in Joshua 10:1-5:

"Now it came to pass when Adoni-Zedek king of Jerusalem heard how Joshua had taken Ai and had utterly destroyed it;...,Therefore Adoni-Zedek king of Jerusalem sent to Hoham king of Hebron, Piram king of Jarmuth, Japhia king of Lachish, and Debir king of Eglon, saying, 'Come up to me and help me, that we may attack Gibeon, for it has made peace with Joshua and with the children of Israel.' Therefore the five kings of the Amorites, the king of Jerusalem,gathered together and went up, they and all their armies, and camped before Gibeon and made war against it."

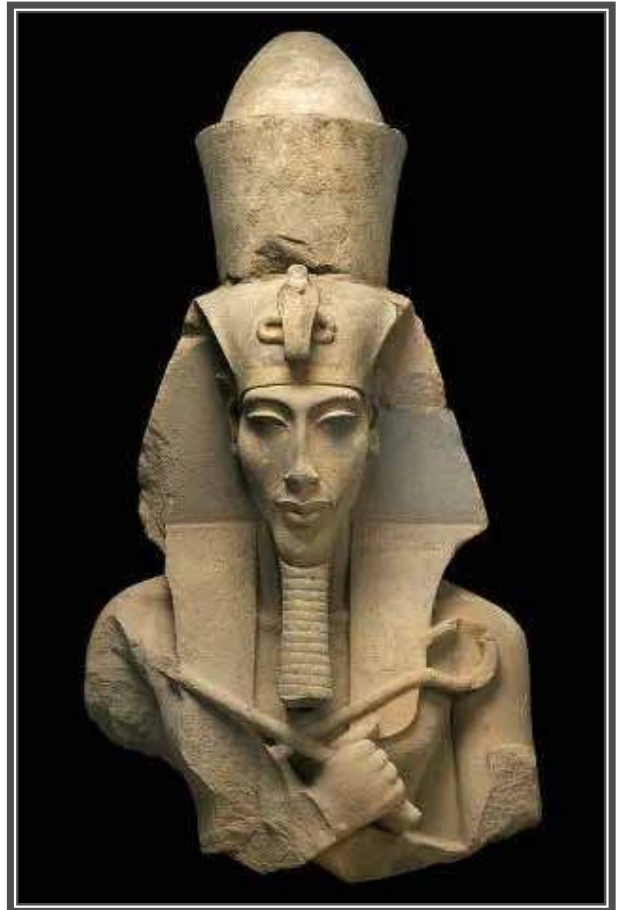


Fig. 9 Pharaoh Amenhotep IV

The Bible states in [Joshua 10:26](#) that Joshua defeated these kings, captured them and killed them, including the king of Jerusalem, Adoni-Zedek.

- The letter written by Abdi-Hiba was probably written after the Biblical event by the successor of Adoni-Zedek, Abdi-Hiba, as a last ditch effort to stop the advancing Hebrews.
- The time frame of this letter also corresponds to the dating found in the Bible. According to [1 Kings 6:1](#), the Exodus was 480 years before King Solomon built the temple, which occurred in 966 BC, that would date the Exodus at 1446 BC. Right after the Golden calf incident recorded in Exodus chapter 32, chapter 33 verse 11 states that Joshua was a young man at this time. The Hebrew word used here for young man refers to a boy of an age somewhere between infancy and adolescence.
- Putting Joshua's age at around 15 years old at the time that God gave the Ten Commandments to Moses. Add another 40 years wandering in the wilderness, would put Joshua's age at approximately 55 years old when he first entered into the land of Canaan in 1406 BC.
- [Joshua 24:29](#) states that he lived to be 110 years old, which means he would have died around 1352 BC. According to historians, the Abdi-Hiba letter was written between 1387 and 1366 BC, right in the middle of Joshua's conquest of Canaan.

Joshua's Long Day ([Joshua 10:12-14](#))

It was earlier that same day, as Joshua stood on a hill near Gibeon watching the enemy flee from his troops, that he called to God, "O sun stand still over Gibeon, O moon, over the Valley of Aijalon" ([Josh. 10:12](#)).

- These words have traditionally been taken to mean that this day was miraculously prolonged.
- The verb *amadh* is used (twice in v. 13), and it definitely indicates a change in pattern of movement. Further, verse 13 closes with the expression, "and delayed going down," where the word "delayed" (*uz*) again speaks of motion, and the phrase "going down" (*labho*) is normal in reference to the sun setting. Still further, verse 14 states that this day was unique in history, which suggests a major miracle such as the prolonging of a natural day occurred.
- The extent of this prolongation can also be estimated. Since the hour was at noon when Joshua voiced the call, and it is stated that the sun did not go down for "about a full day," it is likely that the afternoon hours until sunset were prolonged twice their normal length. In other words, the total daylight hours of the day were one and one-half times normal.
- There was good reason for Joshua wanting this day prolonged. The five strong kings had brought their armies out from their fortified cities to do battle with Israel in the open. Their thinking likely had been that, since the walls of Jericho and Ai had not helped those cities, it would be better to try a

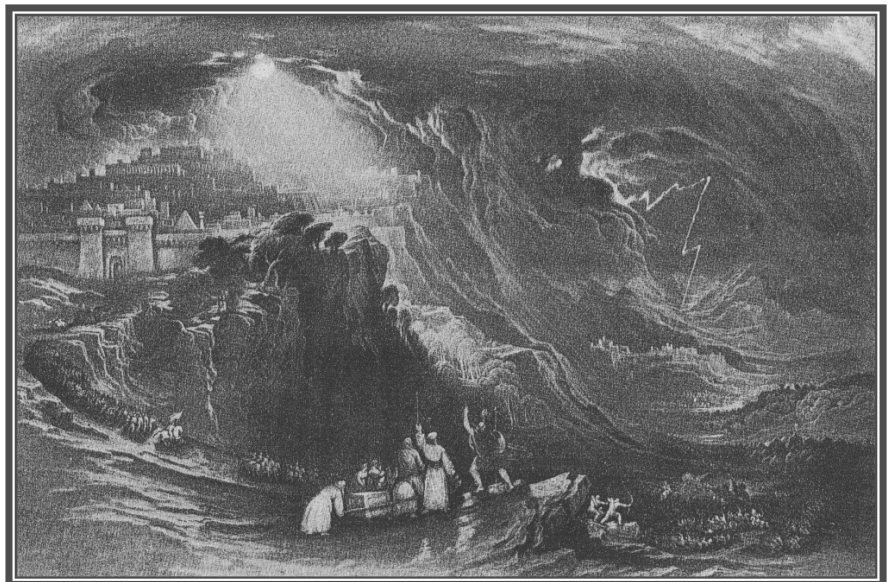


Fig. 10 Joshua's Long Day

new method. But this left them without their best means of defense, and Joshua knew it. Now he did not want them to get back behind their walls if he could help it, all that would be needed was enough daylight to make the route complete. Accordingly, Joshua asked God to supply added hours.

Although we believe the biblical account of Joshua's Long Day is true, the claim that NASA has proven it is an urban myth.

- The claim that astronomical calculations proved that a day was "missing" began over a century ago. In the last few decades, the myth has been embellished with NASA computers performing those calculations.
- No one who repeats this story has ever provided details of these calculations on how exactly the missing day was discovered? How could you detect a missing day unless you had a fixed reference point before this day?
- In fact we would need to cross check between both astronomical and historical records to detect any missing day. And to detect a missing 40 minutes requires that these reference points are known to within an accuracy of a few minutes.
- It is certainly true that the timing of solar eclipses observable from a certain location can be known precisely. But the ancient records did not record time that precisely, so the required crosscheck is not possible. The earliest historically recorded eclipse was 1217 BC, nearly two centuries after Joshua.

Conquering of the Southern Cities

With this crucial battle won, Joshua pressed on to conquer cities in all the southern area. The first assaults were against Makkedah and then Libnah, both close to the cave where the kings had been killed.

- Each city was taken with the respective kings killed. However, little physical harm was done to the cities, a pattern Joshua followed for all this southern campaign.
- The location of each city is uncertain, Makkedah is best identified with Khirbet el-Kheishum, two miles northeast of Azekah at the head of the Elah Valley, and Libnah with Tell es-Safi four miles west.

Joshua then moved south to three of the cities of the confederacy: Lachish, Eglon, and Hebron.

- Lachish, about ten miles southwest of Azekah, was the strongest of the three and was attacked first. The city fell on the second day of fighting, and the people were killed as at Makkedah and Libnah, though this time the king had already been killed at the cave near Makkedah.
 - o Lachish is identified with Tell-Lachish (fig. 11), discovered in 1929 and excavated in 1932-1938 and 1973-1987.
- The king of Gezer (identified with



Fig. 11 Tell-Lachish

Tell Jezer) came with his army to aid Lachish, but he and his men all perished before Joshua.

- Joshua then moved on to Eglon (identified with Tell el-Hesi) the farthest west of the southern three confederate cities, and then to Hebron, the farthest east, both fell.

After these earlier conquests, Joshua continued south to subdue the lower part of Canaan.

- His army reached Kadesh-barnea, where Israel had spent time during the wilderness journey.
- Debir was probably the most important prize in this lower southern area.
 - o Debir is identified with Tell Beit Mirsim, 13 miles southwest of Hebron.

Finally, Joshua returned to Gibeon where the whole campaign had started.

One main city, however, was not taken. That was Jerusalem, one of the five confederates.

- Jerusalem had been out of the way as Joshua had pursued the fleeing enemy on the way south.
- It remained a tiny island, not incorporated into Israelite territory, until King David seized it later.

NORTHERN CAMPAIGNS

News of Joshua's conquest of the South reached Jabin the king of Hazor.

- Jabin, fearing similar attack on his region formed a confederacy.
- The kings he assembled are listed as representing all parts of northern Canaan:
 - o The mountain region above Hazor.
 - o The plain "south of Kinnereth (Sea of Galilee)."
 - o The Valley of Esdraelon.
 - o The western region as far as Dor.
 - o Three cities mentioned in particular, Madon, Shimron, and Achshaph.
- The assembly included Canaanites, Amorites, Hittites, Perizzites, Jebusites, and Hivites. The gathering point was the waters of Merom (Lake Huleh), and the host numbered like "the sand on the seashore" (Josh. 11:4).

Joshua brought his battle-trying troops north to meet this confederacy.

- Jabin's confederacy was routed and chased far to the west.
- Joshua followed up this triumph by putting "all these royal cities and their kings to the sword" (Josh. 11:12). Then he returned to the city of Hazor itself and burned it.
- Similar to the Southern Campaign most cities were spared, but Hazor was apparently seen by Joshua as a prize of psychological value for burning. People would be forced to recognize that any city could have been burned had Israel chosen, if great Hazor could not escape.

Evidence from the Amarna Tablets.

- Other letters requesting aid from Egypt have also been discovered that were written during this same time frame. The following letter is from a man named Shuwardata, governor of Gath:
"May the king, my lord, know that the chief of the Hapiru has besieged the lands which your god has given me; but I have attacked him. Also let the king, my lord, know that none of my allies have come to my aid, it is only I and Abdu-Heba who fight against the Hapiru chief. I plead with the king my lord, if you agree, send Yanhamu, and let us quickly go to war, so that the lands of the king, my lord, might be restored to their original boundaries!"

- Shuwardata governor of Gath is also mentioned in the following letter from a man named Milkilu, a prince of Gezer, with whom he was allied:
“Let it be known to the king that there is great hostility against me and against Shuwardata. I ask the king, my lord, protect his land from the approaching Hapiru.”
- These two men later seem to have offered allegiance to Joshua, as evidence from a second letter from Abdi-Heba, governor of Jerusalem:
“Let it be known what Milkilu and Shuwardata did to the land of the king, my lord! They sent troops of Gezer, troops of Gath, they took the land of Rubutu; the land of the king went over to the Hapiru. But now even a town near Jerusalem, Bit-Lahmi (Bethlehem) by name, a village which once belonged to the king, has fallen to the enemy. Let the king hear the words of your servant Abdi-Heba, and send archers to restore the imperial lands of the king! But if no archers are sent, the lands of the king will be taken by the Hapiru people. This act was done by the hand of Milkilu and Shuwardata.”
- This is interesting, because even though Joshua destroyed most of the inhabitants of the cities he came across, the city of Gath was spared. [Joshua 11:22](#) states: “No Anakites were left in Israelite territory; only in Gaza, Gath and Ashdod did any survive.”

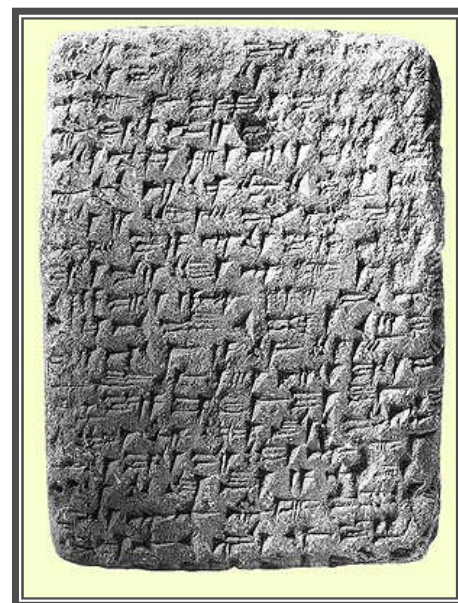


Fig. 12 Amarna Tablet

TRIBAL ALLOTMENTS

Before the respective tribes could begin occupation, it was necessary to assign territory to the remaining nine and a half tribes. This was the task to which Joshua set himself on returning to the people still encamped at Gilgal. The procedure had already been indicated when the people were still east of the Jordan; namely, by lot, which placed the decision with God rather than men ([Num. 26:55-56; 33:54](#)).

Allotments East of the Jordan

Reuben, Gad, and half of the tribe of Manasseh had already received their allotted portions.

- Moses had supervised this prior to the Jordan crossing ([Num. 32:1-42; Deut. 3:13-17; Josh. 13:8-33](#)).
- The land then assigned stretched from the Arnon River north to Mount Hermon.

Allotments of Judah, Ephraim, and Manasseh

While preparations were being made for allotting portions on the west of the Jordan, Caleb interrupted proceedings with a request ([Josh. 14:6-15](#)).

- He asked that he might personally be granted the Hebron area, where the giant Anakim had been found, when he, Joshua, and the other spies had surveyed the land before. He reminded Joshua that Moses had promised him the region ([see Deut. 1:36](#)). Joshua granted the request.

The tribe of Judah, Caleb's tribe received the first regular allotment of land, which included the area already

granted to Caleb.

- The territory was very large (Josh. 15:1-12).
- Its eastern border was the Dead Sea, and its western the Mediterranean. Its southern border angled south from the Dead Sea so that Kadesh-barnea was included and its northern border ran irregularly from the northern tip of the Dead Sea west to the Mediterranean. Its main cities in Joshua 15:20-63, make a long list.

Another amazing find that confirms the Book of Joshua was found on the walls of an Egyptian temple at Medinet Habu (fig. 13).

- The walls contain a list of cities that Rameses II (1304-1238) recorded as enemy towns.
- The cities are represented on the wall by men bearing shields. Within the shields are the names of the cities.
- Among the list of cities are Janum, Aphekah and Hebron.



Fig. 13 Egyptian List of Israelite Cities

Joshua 15:53-54 states that among the cities on the border of the children of Judah were “Janum,...Aphekah,...Kirjath Arba (Hebron).”

The next lot was for Ephraim, Joshua’s tribe (Josh. 16:1-10).

- Ephraim was given a smaller section than Judah, north of Judah and with room left between for Benjamin.

The third lot was for the remaining half tribe of Manasseh (Josh. 17:1-11).

- This portion bordered Ephraim on the north, stretching again, like Judah and Ephraim, from the Jordan to the Mediterranean.
- The northern boundary of Manasseh was the southern edge of the Esdraelon Valley.

Allotting Interrupted

Before allotting the remaining seven tribes, the people, for some reason, gave themselves to the task of moving camp from Gilgal to Shiloh, where they then erected the tabernacle in the place it was to occupy for many years (Josh. 18:1).

- They had been at Gilgal between six and seven years during the time of Joshua’s campaigns. Now they moved farther into the land to occupy a city, which had just been allotted to Ephraim.
- One reason for the interruption was the people’s desire to locate the tabernacle in a permanent place.
- Another reason the Bible suggests is the remaining tribes suddenly displayed a surprising lack of interest in receiving their portions. This change of attitude seems to have resulted when both Ephraim and Manasseh objected to their allotments.
 - o These two tribes complained that their portions were too small, especially since they contained large wooded areas.

- o Their objections evidently were enough to influence the other tribes, which now hesitated to occupy their allotments at all.
- With the people gathered at Shiloh, however, Joshua began allotting again (Josh. 18:2-9).
- The decision on which section was to be received by a particular tribe was still to be revealed by lot.

The Seven Remaining Allotments

The first tribe now to receive territory was Benjamin (Josh. 18:10-28).

- Benjamin's allotment was small, squeezed between large Judah to the south and the Joseph tribes to the north.
- It extended only about halfway to the Mediterranean from the Jordan. It did include the cities Jericho and Jerusalem.

The next allotment was for Simeon.

- This time no land area as such was assigned but only cities within the large territory of Judah.
- Seventeen cities are named (Josh. 19:1-9).
- Simeon was the smallest of the tribes, numbering only 22,200 men at the second census (Num. 26:14) and so could fit into smaller quarters than others.

Zebulun received allotment next (Josh. 19:10-16), followed by Issachar (Josh. 19:17-23).

- Both of these territories were small, about the size of Benjamin, but constituted mainly of fine level land in the fertile Esdraelon Valley.
- Zebulun bordered on Issachar's northwest.

Asher received the fifth allotment, a larger section again (Josh. 19:24-31).

- It lay along the Mediterranean, from Manasseh on the south to Israel's border on the north.

The sixth allotment was for Naphtali, the last of the northern tribes (Josh. 19:32-39).

- Her area was also large, extending from north to south beside Asher.
- She bordered both Zebulun and Issachar on the south.

The last tribe to receive allotment was Dan, whose land was in the south (Josh. 19:40-48).

- This territory was small, between Judah and Ephraim, like Benjamin, which bordered it

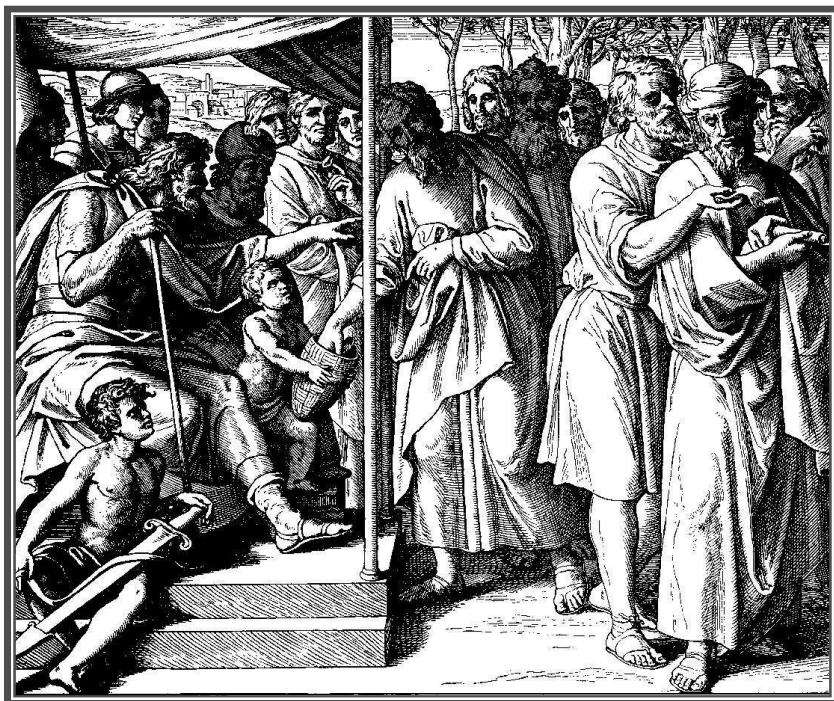


Fig. 14 Tribal Allotments

on the east.

- Eighteen cities are listed in the division.
- Because Dan was one of the larger tribes numerically, many Danites migrated. They went far north to Laish, which city they conquered and then renamed Dan ([Josh. 19:47](#); [Judg. 18](#)).

Levites (The Priests)

Religious personnel were important to the manner of worship that God had instituted in Israel. One entire tribe was devoted by God to provide this personnel, the tribe of Levi.

- This tribe was considered by God as a substitution for the male firstborn, spared on the night of the initial Passover, and so otherwise claimed by God ([Exod. 13:1-15](#); [Num. 3:40-51](#)).
- Levites numbered 23,000 males one month and older at the time of the conquest.
- Among them, descendants of Aaron were declared to be priests, and the eldest son of the continuing family was designated high priest.
- Priests and Levites administered the tabernacle ceremonies. Priests did the sacrificing and Levites assisted.
- Some persons had to act as teachers, and those persons were the priests and Levites. God had commanded them to fill this need ([Lev. 10:11](#); [Deut. 33:10](#)).

Central Tabernacle

In keeping with the idea of theocracy, with God as chief ruler, the main unifying instrument among the tribes was the central sanctuary at Shiloh, the tabernacle.

- As in the wilderness, the tabernacle represented God's presence among His people. This religious center was for all the people of every tribe, with no tribe favored over another.
- All could come to the tabernacle and on occasion were commanded to come for their religious expression.



Fig. 15 Breastplate with Urim & Thummim

URIM & THUMMIM

In addition to the revealed, recorded Law, God supplied the priests and Levites with a special device for receiving further information from Himself. This was the Urim and Thummim, apparently consisting of objects, which could be contained in the pocket-type "breastplate" of the high priest, worn on the front of his

ephod ([Exod. 28:30](#); [Lev. 8:8](#); [Num. 27:21](#); [Deut. 33:8](#); [1 Sam. 28:6](#); [Ezra 2:63](#)).

- The exact method by which God intended these objects to give the revelation is not stated. Whatever it was, when so used, the Urim and Thummim did provide a way whereby God's will might be known, though perhaps limited to a yes or no type of communication. The question could be voiced and God would use this means to give answer. Only the high priest could use the objects, a limitation which safeguarded against improper use.

The Urim and Thummim are rather mysterious objects. The Bible does not specifically describe them. Even their names, Urim, "light" and Thummim, "perfection," give scholars scarcely a clue to their form and function.

- [Exodus 28:30](#) says that the Urim and Thummim were placed in a breastplate that Aaron, the high priest, wore. One of the functions of this breastplate was to reveal God's judgment, an account of which Moses records in [Numbers 27:21](#). In this case, the Urim revealed what God wanted Israel to do. Saul and David probably consulted the Urim and Thummim through the high priest ([1 Samuel 14:36-37](#); [23:2-4](#)). Biblical use of the Urim and Thummim is not specifically mentioned after the reign of David.

Josephus, first century Jewish historian, wrote about the Urim and Thummim in his *Antiquities of the Jews*.

- The Thummim, he writes, were twelve stones, which were set in three rows of four stones in the breastplate (3.7.5).
- He describes the Urim as being two sardonyx stones that were placed on the shoulders of the high priest (3.8.9).
- When God wished to guide the Israelites, He often did so by means of these stones. Josephus states:
"God declared beforehand, by those twelve stones which the high priest bare on his breast, and which were inserted into his breastplate, when they should be victorious in battle; for so great a splendor shone forth from them before the army began to march, that all the people were sensible of God's being present for their assistance."



Fig. 16 Urim & Thummim

SUMMARY

Joshua was victorious from the extreme south, near "Mount Halak, which rises toward Seir," to the extreme north "in the Valley of Lebanon below Mount Hermon."

- The only people who made peace without being attacked were the Hivites of the Gibeonite tetrapolis.
- It is expressly stated that among those slain were the giants, the Anakim, of whom the spies had particularly spoken years before ([Num. 13:33](#)).
- The total number of kings killed was 31, the names of their cities being given in [Joshua 12:10-24](#).

This means that, when Joshua returned to Gilgal from the northern campaign, the military strength of the major part of the land had been broken.

- Included was the area on the east of the Jordan from the Arnon River in the south to Mount Hermon in the north, and on the west from below the Dead Sea in the south to Mount Hermon again in the

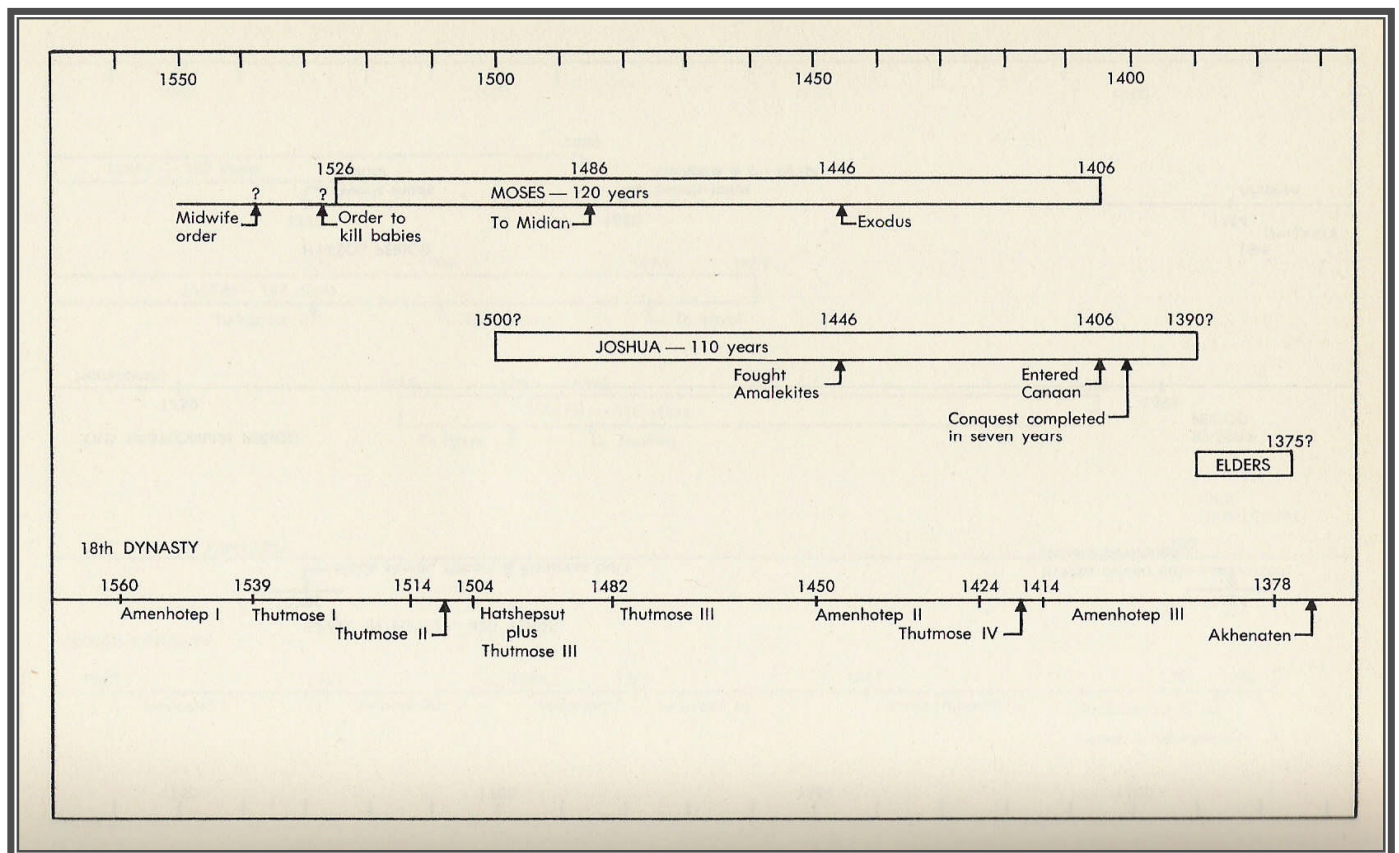
north.

One region had escaped, with Canaanites scattered throughout the land. The plain of Philistia, on the Mediterranean coastline, was unconquered ([Josh. 13:1-6](#)).

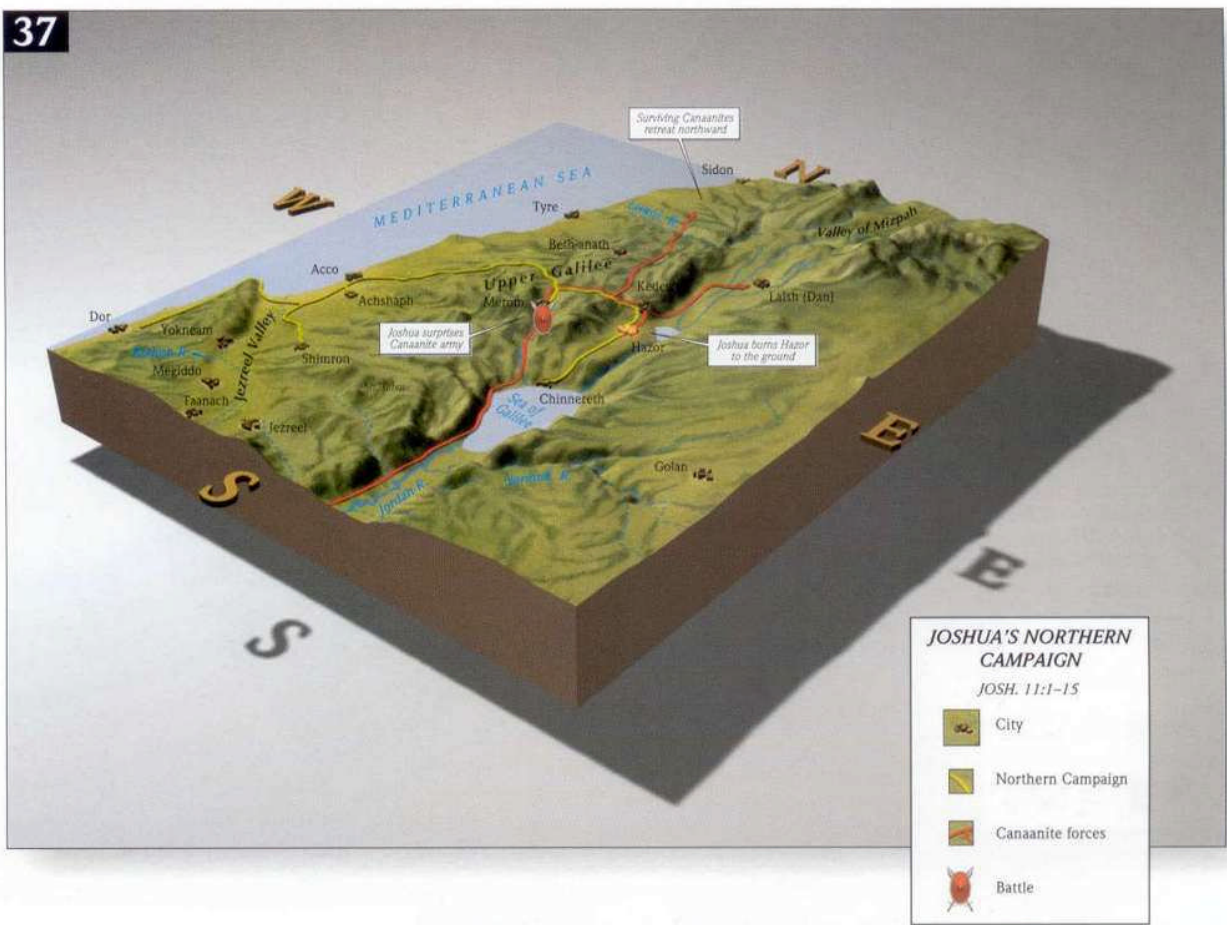
- Most of this territory remained in Canaanite hands until the time of David.

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