

Asher lived among the Canaanite inhabitants of the land. ³³Neither did Naphtali drive out those living in Beth Shemesh or Beth Anath; but the Naphtalites too lived among the Canaanite inhabitants of the land, and those living in Beth Shemesh and Beth Anath became forced laborers for them. ³⁴The Amorites confined the Danites to the hill country, not allowing them to come down into the plain. ³⁵And the Amorites were determined also to hold out in Mount Heres, Aijalon and Shaalbim, but when the power of the house of Joseph increased, they too were pressed into forced labor. ³⁶The boundary of the Amorites was from Scorpion^a Pass to Sela and beyond.

^a36 Hebrew *Akrabbim*

1:27-36 The remainder of the chapter is a litany of Israelite failure during the conquest. The Canaanites were understandably unwilling to relinquish their homes and livelihood, and were too large in number for military conquest. The majority of cities listed in verses 27-36 lay in the fertile growing areas of the coastal plain. When push came to shove, it was the fertile growing region that was the most difficult to surrender. In the arid climate, productive land was the lifeblood of a people, and the Canaanites did not relinquish it easily.

The Israelite interaction with the Canaanites progressed through four levels. The first level was to achieve military victory. During the earliest part of the Conquest, the united Israelite army created dread in the Canaanite peoples. Theologically, the God of the Hebrews had defeated the Egyptians and was now proving his might over Canaanite deities. The Canaanites had every reason to be afraid.

The second level of Israelite interaction with the Canaanites relied on the fear created by Hebrew military capacity. Terrorizing Canaan's inhabitants, the Hebrews used their prowess to drive various people groups from the land. While military conquest was certainly easier for larger tribes like Judah, it was not always feasible for smaller tribes. Once the tribes split up to possess their allotted inheritance, it was up to the individual tribe to remove any remaining Canaanite occupants. Smaller tribes did not possess the clout necessary to defeat the inhabitants militarily, so the next best solution was to drive the inhabitants out of the area. This forced reloca-

tion minimized Israelite deaths due to hostilities, and was more merciful toward the Canaanites.

The third level of interaction was to subject the Canaanites to forced labor. After a few generations, the Israelite population expansion would produce enough of a demographic shift that the Hebrews could force slavery on the surrounding inhabitants. That the Israelites would impose involuntary servitude on another people group is especially ironic in light of their own experiences in Egypt.

Of the six tribes mentioned at the end of Judges 1, three are not described as subjecting Canaanites to forced labor. **Ephraim**, however, does force **Gezer** to servitude in the parallel passage in Joshua 16:10. **Asher** and Dan likely had insufficient numbers to dominate the local Canaanite groups enough to elicit forced labor from them.

The final aspect of Hebrew-Canaanite interaction is cohabitation. When tribes did not have the population and power to militarily defeat, evict, or enslave the inhabitants, living with them was the only alternative short of abandoning their inheritance altogether. Dan nearly does lose its allotted inheritance, as Amorite pressure confines them to the rougher mountain terrain along the central ridge. Dan was the second largest tribe behind Judah, and its failure against the inhabitants of its territory reveals both the larger Canaanite population in the area and the tenacity of the inhabitants to hold onto their land. Dan's inability to capture its inheritance will figure prominently in the apostasy in chapters 17 and 18.

Israel's interaction with the Canaanites reflects a progressive decrease in the use of power against the people groups of Canaan:

- Kill the inhabitants
- Drive out the inhabitants
- Subject the inhabitants to forced labor
- Cohabit with the inhabitants

Each level of this progression increases the tolerance for inhabitants whose way of life was diametrically opposed to Israel's identity as the people of Yahweh. As Christians, we also balance on the tightrope of intimacy with the world. Much of the Christian life involves learning not just to exist, but to thrive living among a world that opposes the Kingdom. Living too close to the world has the potential to blur faith and undermine a believer's identity as a follower of Christ (Jas 4:4). Isolation from the world, on the other

hand, permanently dooms women and men made in God's image to life and eternity without him (1 Cor 5:9-10).

Hamlin lists three models for Christians in society. The first is a society where Christianity controls culture. The history of the West after the decline of the Roman Empire reflects this kind of culture. As civil authority disintegrated, the organizational structure of the church easily replaced it, controlling culture for more than a millennium. The second kind of society is pluralistic, but has a "dominant Christian tradition" that heavily affects culture. The West is currently this kind of culture. Pluralism is the predominant nature of culture, but Christianity still maintains deep roots in language, art, and history. In the third kind of society, Christianity is a minority in a culture that is structured on a paradigm not derived from the Christian tradition.²¹ The issue for followers of Christ is not to create a particular system of government or culture. Because the culture of the Kingdom is transcultural, believers have a responsibility to represent Christ well in whatever culture they find themselves, whether that culture is post-, non-, or anti-Christian.

Christians often assume the Israelite posture of holy war against the kingdom of the Enemy. Christians have no business persecuting unbelievers. In fact, a Christian's inheritance is the Kingdom of God (Col 1:12), and the Kingdom is comprised of people. Cultural battles certainly need to be fought over morality, genocide, abortion, and poverty; but believers must never lose sight of the fact that every opponent embodies the divine motivation for the cross of Christ.

²¹Hamlin, *At Risk in the Promised Land*, p. 20.