

# JUDAH AND THE JEBUSITES

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In Joshua 15:63, we find a very intriguing statement about one of the Canaanite peoples that dwelt within the territory that God had apportioned to the tribe of Judah. The verse says, “*As for the Jebusites the inhabitants of Jerusalem, the children of Judah could not drive them out: but the Jebusites dwell with the children of Judah at Jerusalem unto this day.*” The Jebusites were descendants of Noah’s sons Ham (Gen 10:6-16). God had promised Abraham to give their land to his descendants (Gen 15:18-21). God specifically commanded Israel to drive out and utterly destroy the Jebusites (Exod 34:11-16; Deut 7:1-6; 20:17). God does not command anyone to do what is not possible (1 John 5:3). The question then comes, What was the reason that Judah was unable to drive out the Jebusites from their midst?

## **Blessing and curses**

Joshua 15:63 says that *Judah* could not drive the Jebusites out. It does not say that *God* could not do it. In fact, Joshua 3:10 says that God would “*without fail*” drive the Jebusites out. In the covenant given to Israel by God through Moses, God had promised certain blessings and curses for Israel based upon whether or not they kept His commandments. God had said, “*And it shall come to pass, if thou shalt hearken diligently unto the voice of the Lord thy God, to observe and to do all his commandments which I command thee this day, that the Lord thy God will set thee on high above all nations of the earth: and all these blessings shall come on thee, and overtake thee, if thou shalt hearken unto the voice of the Lord thy God*” (Deut 28:1-2). One of the specific blessings God promised was: “*The Lord shall cause thine enemies that rise up against thee to be smitten before thy face: they shall come out against thee one way, and flee before thee seven ways*” (Deut 28:7). In contrast, God also promised, “*But it shall come to pass, if thou wilt not hearken unto the voice of the Lord thy God, to observe to do all his commandments and his statutes which I command thee this day; that all these curses shall come upon thee, and overtake thee*” (Deut 28:15). One of the specific curses was the exact opposite of the aforementioned blessing: “*The Lord shall cause thee to be smitten before thine enemies: thou shalt go out one way against them, and flee*

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*seven ways before them: and shalt be removed into all the kingdoms of the earth*” (Deut 28:25). As long as the tribes of Israel trusted in God and obeyed Him, then God was with them and they prevailed over their enemies in every situation (Deut 7:16-24).

## **When God fought for Israel**

Throughout the book of Joshua and the conquest of Canaan, God kept His promise and defeated the enemies of Israel.

But this was *because* Israel had believed in and obeyed God (Josh 24:31; Judg 2:7). As long as they did that, no enemy was big enough or strong enough to resist God for any length of time. Jericho’s mighty walls fell without a fight (Josh 6), and Ai was utterly destroyed (Josh 8). God used great hailstones and caused the sun to stand still in order to destroy five Amorite kings (Josh 10), because “*the Lord fought for Israel*” (Josh 10:14,42). What Israel was capable of with God’s help is expressed in Joshua 23:10: “*One man of you shall chase a thousand: for the Lord your God, he it is that fights for you, as he has promised you.*” God fought for Israel because Israel was obeying Him. God destroyed all the other kings of the land (Josh 11:1-20), including all the giants that lived in the land (Josh 11:21-22; 15:13-17). By that same power, God was certainly able to give Judah victory over the Jebusites.

Whenever God is described as being “with” any of the children of Israel in their battles, they always prevailed without exception (see Josh 1:1-9; 6:27; 14:12-14; 24:2-13; Judg 1:19,22-25). Therefore, any failures on the part of the children of Israel were due to God *not* being with them (see Josh 7:1-13; Judg 1:27-2:5). God was always with them when they trusted and obeyed Him. Therefore, any failures on the part of the children of Israel were ultimately due to their lack of faith and obedience (Deut 7:16-24). Therefore, Judah’s inability to overcome the Jebusites was because of their own lack of faith in God, and, consequently, God did not bless them. The weakness was within Judah, not God. To further prove this point, about 500 years after Joshua, Judah finally *did* drive the Jebusites out (2 Sam 5:6-9; 1 Chr 11:4-8). That was because of the faith of King David, a man after God’s own heart (1 Sam 13:14; Acts 13:22), and God was with David (2 Sam 5:10)!