



Searching for a Winner: Battle of Dan-jaan: Strategy: Separation of Forces at Night, Gen 14:15; Lee & Jackson at Chancellorsville; Axioms of Warfare: Offensive

- 56- What resources Abram made available to his men is not known except through speculation. But we know from archeological discoveries what they most likely were:

Harrison, R. K. *Old Testament Times*. (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1970), 86:

The reality and nature of Patriarchal life has been provided from ... a scene painted on the tomb wall of Khnumhotep II, a powerful noble of the Twelfth Egyptian Dynasty. The tableau depicted thirty-seven Palestinian seminomads of the Patriarchal period visiting Egypt. The nomads were typical bearded Semites, wearing long, gaily striped clothing and sandals on their feet. They carried throw-sticks, javelins, and bows and arrows as weapons.

- 57- We learn in the reports of the Prophets that an idiom for warfare is the drawing of the sword from its sheath and its first use in Scripture is in Genesis 14:14 where the English says that Abram “led out” his trained men.
- 58- The words “led out” translate the one Hebrew word **ראַק** *raq*: “to empty a vessel.” It came to mean the “drawing of the sword.” It later became an idiom for the mustering of troops who have been systematically trained and equipped for combat.
- 59- We know from archaeological discoveries in Mesopotamia that during the time of Abraham armies used chariots and horses. The camel was domesticated and it was used by armies as well.
- 60- We also know that in the Israelis’ common order of battle the force was drawn up, either in line, or in three divisions with a center and two wings. There was a rearguard to give protection on the march or to bring in stragglers (*International Standard Bible Encyclopaedia*, 4:3070).
- 61- We can only guess how much of this may have been employed by Abram but it is safe to assume that his men were trained in the use of weapons and rode on horses, donkeys, or camels. It is conceivable that Abram’s four divisions were employed in the fashion just described.
- 62- All that is speculative. This is not: Abram’s men were well-trained in the art of war, they were armed, and they were capable of rapid response to any incident. They now ride in pursuit of Chedorlaomer.
- 63- We learn from Flavius Josephus some of the details of this pursuit that are not revealed in the biblical record:

Josephus, Flavius. *The Antiquities of the Jews*. In *The Life and Works of Flavius Josephus*. Translated by William Whiston. (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, n.d.), bk. 1, ch. 10, sec. 1:

When Abram heard of their calamity, he ... marched hastily, and the fifth night fell upon the Assyrians, near Dan, for that is the name of the other spring of Jordan; and before they could arm themselves, he slew some as they were in their beds, before they could suspect any harm; and others who were not yet gone to sleep, but were so drunk they could not fight, ran away. Abram pursued after them, till, on the second day, he drove them in a body unto Hoba, a place belonging to Damascus; and thereby demonstrated that victory does not depend on multitude and the number of hands, but the alacrity and courage of soldiers overcome the most numerous bodies of men, while he got the victory over so great an army with no more than three hundred and eighteen of his servants, and three of his friends: but all those that fled returned home ingloriously.



- 64- There is great controversy about the location of Dan. The initial assumption is that it is the Dan located at the northern end of the Jordan Valley. But we will learn that Abram will pursue the Mesopotamian Army toward Damascus up the King's Highway. Dan is on a route that came to be known as the Way to Bashan. Further this City of Dan was not known by that name in the time of Abram but rather as Laish \lā' ish.
- 65- There is great conjecture as to the location of the Mesopotamian bivouac when Abram's forces attacked them. But there is reason to believe that it was an ancient village named Dan-jaan \dan-jā' an\ which is presumed to be in the region of Giliad \gil' e-ad\. This is the territory east of the Jordan that is basically between the Dead Sea and the Sea of Galilee. Based on Josephus's statement that the distance between Hebron and the army's bivouac is a five-day march, I estimate that ancient Dan-jaan's location is near the Yarmuk \yar-muk'\ River in the north of Giliad where the King's Highway veers toward Damascus.
- 66- This is admittedly speculation and is at best a guess but one based on the information accumulated by consulting several Bible atlases and a number of dictionaries and commentaries.
- 67- When Abram's Delta Force arrives at Chedorlaomer's Dan-jaan encampment, he does two every controversial things.

Genesis 14:15 - And Abram divided his forces against them by night, he and his servants, and defeated them, and pursued them as far as Hobah, which is north of Damascus.

- 1- Abram's forces are outnumbered 100,000 to about 1,200. He finds the enemy encamped without sentries and in general disorder. Distracted by the spoils of victory the Mesopotamian army is quite literally caught napping.
- 2- Regardless, Abram faces an overwhelming challenge: he must attack a numerically superior army, locate the hostages, and get out. He developed a strategy that employed two extremely dangerous tactical maneuvers especially against such overwhelming odds: (1) separation of forces and (2) night assault.
- 3- It is conceivable that the Battle of Dan-jaan, as recorded in Genesis 14:15, is the first historical account of a military operation that utilized these two tactics simultaneously.
- 4- One of the major battles that military academies teach their cadets is the Battle of Chancellorsville, fought primarily during May 1-5, 1863. Maj. Gen. Joseph Hooker led 133,000 Union troops to the confluence of the Rapidan and Rappahannock Rivers just west of Fredericksburg, Virginia, to engage Confederate Gen. Robert E. Lee's Army of Northern Virginia of just over 60,000 men.
- 5- Time does not permit us to go into the details of that battle but the part that is noteworthy was strategy conceived in a conference between Gen. Lee and Lt. Gen. Thomas J. Jackson in the early-morning hours of May 2. A description of that conversation and the action that followed is provided by:



Rogan, George. "Opportunities Lost at Chancellorsville." *Military History*, Aug. 2000, 45:

Once he had a fair appraisal of the enemy's disposition, Lee met with Stonewall Jackson near the intersection of the Orange Plank and Furnace roads. Sitting on discarded hardtack boxes, they discussed the situation and its possibilities. The Union left was too strong, but the Federal right ... was not fortified or anchored to any natural landmark. Most of it was deployed facing south, with only two regiments facing west. A Confederate attack from the west could offer the opportunity Lee was looking for—a blow that could break up Hooker's lines around Chancellorsville. But he needed a road that would take his flanking column safely and secretly west of the Federal right. Finding if such a road existed was a task he left to Jackson.

Lee and Jackson met again before dawn on May 2. Jackson's staff had found the means of passage—the Catherine Furnace Road, a track surrounded by heavy woods that led south past an old iron works, then turned west to intersect with the Brock Road.

With tracings on a map, Jackson showed Lee the movements he wanted to make.

"What do you propose to make the movement with?" asked Lee.

"With my whole corps," Jackson replied.

"And what will you leave me?" Lee asked, somewhat surprised.

"The divisions of McLaws and Anderson," came Jackson's matter-of-fact reply. There was a slight pause. An army already divided—and outnumbered—was to divide again, in a plan that called for some 30,000 men and 112 guns embarking on a 12-mile trek through the Wilderness to approach Hooker's flank, leaving some 13,000 men and 24 guns to face the more than 70,000 men and 182 guns in their immediate front around Chancellorsville.

"Well, go on," came Lee's response.

At 7:30 a.m., Jackson's column was on the move. After conferring briefly, Lee pointed and Jackson gestured acknowledgement. They never saw each other again.

In an effort to conceal this weakness at Hooker's front, Lee opened up several batteries on the Union line, and McLaws and Anderson began heavy musket fire from their skirmish lines that would continue all morning and into the afternoon. The Federals did not come out of their strong position to attack. But by 8 a.m., Brig. Gen. David Birney's troops, who had been moved earlier to an elevated position at Hazel Grove by III Corps commander Maj. Gen. Daniel Sickles, observed Jackson's column moving southwest. This sighting was reported to Hooker, but the information convinced him that Lee's army was in retreat.

At 2 p.m., Jackson faced a setback when he discovered that the route he had counted on to bring him on the right flank of the Federal line—the Orange Plank Road—would in fact land him at a point where the Union troops were positioned to meet an attack. To hide his troops as much as possible and hit the Union army in the flank, Jackson ordered his men to turn south, then quickly to the right and on a more hidden farm road that paralleled the Brock Road. The Southerners then stayed on it until it joined with the Orange Turnpike. By attacking down the turnpike, Jackson's men would be coming in on the vulnerable Federal flank. In what turned out to be his last written order, Jackson informed Lee of the change. By 2:30 p.m., he reached his objective and began deployment.

At 5 p.m., Jackson's column finished its planned deployment, with three divisions forming three successive lines almost two miles wide astride the turnpike and extending to either side of it in the dense underbrush. At 5:15 p.m., Jackson rode up to Brig. Gen. Robert Rhodes, who commanded the lead attack division, and addressed him:



"Are you ready, General Rhodes?"

"Yes sir," replied Rhodes.

"You can go forward then," said Jackson.

Most of the ... soldiers who made up Howard's XI Corps ... had stacked arms and were preparing supper when the early evening silence was suddenly shattered as deer and rabbits came bounding out of the woods and flocks of birds took to flight. Bugles blared out and 30,000 voices filled the air with the blood-chilling Rebel yell. Jackson's attack columns struck with such power and depth that the two regiments facing them were quickly engulfed. Brigade after brigade was overrun by the Southern juggernaut. Howard galloped up to see his whole line crumbling in panicky disarray. Equipment and guns were thrown everywhere. By 6 p.m., less than an hour after the start of Jackson's attack, the Confederates had broken the last line of resistance by the XI Corps.

At 6:30 p.m., Hooker was calmly sitting on the porch of the Chancellor House, totally unaware of the peril to his right, when the first wave of fleeing men, wagons, and horses burst into view. The sight jolted him, and he quickly gave a series of orders with the aim of stabilizing the situation.

As the Confederates reached the vicinity of Chancellorsville, they began to encounter the newly deployed Union troops. Exhaustion, combined with the difficulty of maintaining cohesive units in the dense foliage and in the face of stiffening Union resistance, halted the Southern advance by 7:15 p.m.

- 6- This was a bittersweet victory for the Confederacy. Only an hour later Jackson was mistakenly shot by one of his own men as he returned from reconnoitering the Union lines. He was hit three times, the most critical in the arm. On learning of Jackson's injury, General Lee responded, "Any victory is dearly bought which deprives us of the services of General Jackson, even for a short time."
- 7- The injury was not mortal even though it required the amputation of his left arm. However, pneumonia set in and Jackson died on May 10, 1863. Chancellorsville was a stunning victory for the South with regard to prestige but not with regard to casualties. Lee's casualties were 13,000 to 17,000 for Hooker. However, Hooker's army was 133,000 to Lee's 60,000. And now Lee and the Confederacy were without the services of Stonewall Jackson, who had "passed over the river to rest under the shade of the trees."
- 8- Nevertheless, these two generals had conducted one of the most daring exercises in military history and had done it successfully.
- 9- Abram reconnoitered Chedorlaomer's bivouac at Dan-jaan and began to employ most of what military science has come to refer to as the basic principles of warfare. There are eleven and we can see Abram's application of these at Dan-jaan and also discover how these might apply in the development of the mental attitude of a winner.



10- We will call this subparagraph of our study:

Axioms of Warfare

Thieme, R. B., Jr. *War: Moral or Immoral.* (Houston: Berachah Tapes and Publications, 1974), 54-60.

1. The Objective:

- 1) No great military organization ever succeeded without a thorough knowledge of its objective. This includes a guide for the interpretation of orders, the formulation of decisions, and the employment of all strategy and tactics available to accomplish the end victoriously.
- 2) First, the opposing military force must be neutralized and destroyed. Each component of the operation must understand this objective and become ascetic about his contribution toward that objective.
- 3) Abram's objective becomes clear as the passage develops: to attack the Mesopotamian army by separating his forces at night, locate and extract the hostages, and flush the enemy out of the Jordan Valley.
- 4) In the Invisible War, Jesus Christ's objective was to win a strategic victory over Lucifer. He accomplished this on the cross.
- 5) The Church Age believer's objective in the Invisible War is to achieve the tactical victory of attaining spiritual maturity and receiving rewards and blessings conveyed from his escrow account.
- 6) Paul addresses the issue of advancing toward the objective in the spiritual life of the Church Age in:

Philippians 3:13 - Fellow believers, I do not evaluate myself to have laid hold of it yet [**the objective of spiritual maturity**], but one thing I concentrate on: forgetting those things which are behind [**previously confessed sins, punishment, and failures**] and reaching out toward those things which are ahead [**escrow conveyance**],

v. 14 - I keep advancing toward the objective for the decoration [**Nike Awards**] of the upward call of God [**efficacious grace**] which is in Christ Jesus.

v. 15 - Therefore, let those in spiritual adulthood keep on thinking this [**the ascetic mental attitude of the winner during the advance**], and if you think differently on some point, even this God will reveal to you [**some thought they were in spiritual maturity but were not**];

v. 16 - However, as a result of what we have attained, keep advancing in ranks by means of the same [**the four spiritual mechanics**].