

Joshua

Lesson 10

Chapter 10:1-28

Have you ever noticed how the good fortune of one person can become the complete aggravation for many other people? Are you a person who is aggravated by the good fortune of others, or do you possess a true joy for others when good fortune comes? Such was the case with the good fortune of the Nation of Israel and, in many ways, the shrewdness of the Gibeonites in avoiding forever being destroyed even though they were Canaanites. As chapter 10 opens, the Amorite kings south and southwest of Jericho were aggravated to the point of fear. Their fear would bring their doom.

(3) The Amorite King's Fears (10:1-5)

(a) What the King Heard (10:1-2)

The writer opens with the Amorite king's fear and what the king heard. Chapter 10, verse 1. *"Now it came about when Adoni-zedek king of Jerusalem heard that Joshua had captured Ai, and had utterly destroyed it (just as he had done to Jericho and its king, so he had done to Ai and its king), and that the inhabitants of Gibeon had made peace with Israel and were within their land,² that he feared greatly, because Gibeon was a great city, like one of the royal cities, and because it was greater than Ai, and all its men were mighty."* (10:1-2)

In 1424 BC, Adoni-zedek was the Amorite king of Jerusalem. Adoni means *lord*. Zedek means *justice*. Jerusalem is actually Jeru-salem. Jeru means *the habitation or city of*. Salem means *peace*. Therefore, Adoni-zedek was the *Lord of Justice*, and Jerusalem was the *City of Peace*.

Jerusalem stands thirty-two miles from the Great Sea (Mediterranean), eighteen miles from the Jordan River, twenty miles from Hebron, and twelve miles from Jericho. The city of Jerusalem stands in the Amorite tribal area, just south of the great Citadel of the Jebusites in their territory. The two were next to each other, with the citadel to the north. The dividing line between the Jebusite and Amorite territories ran between from the southwest to the northeast.

Being just twelve miles from Jericho, Adoni-zedek was fearful of the Nation of Israel because of the victory over Jericho, Ai, and the covenant with Gibeon. As we discovered in 8:25, Ai had twelve thousand inhabitants at the time of its defeat. Gibeon was larger than Ai. Evidently, Gibeon was greater than Jerusalem at the time. Adoni-zedek needed help.

(b) What the King Did (10:3-5)

The writer tells of King Adoni-zedek and what the king did. Verse 3. *"Therefore Adoni-zedek king of Jerusalem sent word to Hoham king of Hebron and to Piram king of Jarmuth and to Japhia king of Lachish and to Debir king of Eglon, saying,⁴ 'Come up to me and help me, and let us attack Gibeon, for it has made peace with Joshua and with the sons of Israel.'*⁵ *So the five kings of the Amorites, the king of Jerusalem, the king of Hebron, the king of Jarmuth, the king of Lachish, and the king of Eglon, gathered together and went up, they with all their armies, and camped by Gibeon and fought against it."* (10:3-5)

The cities of Hebron, Jarmuth, Lachish, and Eglon stood in the hill country in the Amorite territory, just west of the Dead Sea. The Gibeonites were the Hittite cousins of the Amorites, yet, that did not matter. Adoni-Zedek, Hoham, Piram, Japhia, and Debir joined their armies together to attack the Gibeonites because they had made a covenant to be the servants of Israel forever.

(4) The Gibeonite People React (10:7-15)

(a) Joshua Called to Help (10:7)

Seeing the armies of the five Amorite kings camped outside the walls, the Gibeonite people react. As servants in a covenant with Israel, what could Gibeon do? The leaders reached out to Joshua for help. Verse 7a. *“Then the men of Gibeon sent word to Joshua to the camp at Gilgal, saying, “Do not abandon your servants; come up to us quickly and save us and help us, for all the kings of the Amorites that live in the hill country have assembled against us.”* (10:7a)

(b) Joshua Leaves to Help (10:7)

Joshua leaves to help the Gibeonites immediately. Verse 7b. *“So Joshua went up from Gilgal, he and all the people of war with him and all the valiant warriors.”* (10:7b)

First, we see that the camp of the Nation of Israel was back at Gilgal, in the Arabah on the west side of the Jordan River, where it settled the first night after crossing the Jordan River on the 10th of Nisan in 1424 BC. However, we do not know the timing of the month or year at this point because the writer gives no indication.

Second, Joshua took his valiant warriors only to fight at Gibeon. The people of the camp remained at Gilgal.

(c) Joshua Hears of Help (10:8)

Approaching Gibeon, Joshua hears of help from the LORD. Verse 8. *“The LORD said to Joshua, “Do not fear them, for I have given them into your hands; not one of them shall stand before you.”* (10:8)

In a strange turn of events, the five Amorite kings have delivered themselves into the hands of the Nation of Israel where the LORD has promised the Amorite’s defeat. After the battle, the five Amorite cities will be severely hurt and under new leadership.

(d) Joshua Arrives to Help (10:9-10)

It takes all night, but Joshua arrives to help. Verse 9. *“So Joshua came upon them suddenly by marching all night from Gilgal. ¹⁰ And the LORD confounded them before Israel, and He slew them with a great slaughter at Gibeon, and pursued them by the way of the ascent of Beth-horon and struck them as far as Azekah and Makkedah.”* (10:9-10)

Joshua and his valiant warriors did not rest. They attacked the Amorite kings suddenly at the break of day. Many of the king’s men were slaughtered at Gibeon; the rest retreated toward Beth-horon and Azekah. Beth-horon means *house of caves or house of caverns*. The caves or caverns rest beneath the mountains; therefore, to arrive at Beth-horon the army had to march up the mountain. It lay on the boundary line of the future tribal areas of Ephraim and Benjamin. Azekah means *dug over*. Azekah sits in the rich agricultural plain in what will be the tribal area of Judah. Makkedah means *place of shepherds*. A Canaanite city, it sits twenty-five miles northwest of Jerusalem.

(e) Joshua Sees the Help (10:11)

In the battle, the writer tells us that Joshua sees the help. Verse 11. *“As they fled from before Israel, while they were at the descent of Beth-horon, the LORD threw large stones from heaven on them as far as Azekah, and they died; there were more who died from the hailstones than those whom the sons of Israel killed with the sword.”* (10:11)

Consider that Joshua attacked the Amorites at daybreak at Gibeon. It was then a two-hour march as Israel chased the Amorites through Beth-horon and down the west side of its mountain perch where the LORD sent a hail storm. It was still early in the morning when they passed Beth-horon. The storm killed more Amorites than the Israelites did.

(f) Joshua Pleads for Help (10:12-13a)

At that time, Joshua pleads for help. More daylight was needed to finish the battle in Joshua’s mind, even though the sun had not reached high noon as yet. Verse 12. *“Then Joshua spoke to the*

LORD in the day when the LORD delivered up the Amorites before the sons of Israel, and he said in the sight of Israel,”

“O sun, stand still at Gibeon,
And O moon in the valley of Aijalon.”

¹³ So the sun stood still, and the moon stopped,
Until the nation avenged themselves of their enemies. (10:12-13a)

If the LORD answers this plead of Joshua, it will go against all the laws of physical order put in place on the first day of creation. The sun neither speeds up nor slows down. The moon has its set course and time too. Will the sun stand still, and the moon stop?

(g) Joshua Records the Help (10:13b-14)

The writer uses the book of Jasher to prove that Joshua records the help. Verse 13b. *“Is it not written in the book of Jasher? And the sun stopped in the middle of the sky and did not hasten to go down for about a whole day.”* ¹⁴ *There was no day like that before it or after it, when the LORD listened to the voice of a man; for the LORD fought for Israel.”* (10:13b-14)

Jasher means *upright* in the Hebrew language. The writer alludes to this *book of the upright*. It was an ancient collection of records of honored men and noble deeds within the Israelite community. It will be mentioned again in 2 Samuel 1:18. This book has not survived the years since the fall of the Northern and Southern Kingdoms; nevertheless, it was an actual book where Israel had recorded the deeds of Joshua, and it was widely accepted in the days when the writer completed this book. But we must ask a question. “Why did the writer stop his line of the history of this miraculous day to insert a quote from a poetical book of the day?” He interjected the quote because it was true. The LORD of creation can do as He pleases with a simple command, and the natural order of the sun and moon can shift. Some have said that the earth was the place of the miracle. They say that the tilt of the earth was changed that day to affect the miracle. But why could it not have been the sun that moved? It was one or the other, no less. The miracle occurred for the day like no other before or since.

Speaking of nature and the LORD, Habakkuk will say, *“You cleaved the earth with rivers. The mountains saw You and quaked; The downpour of waters swept by. The deep uttered forth its voice, It lifted high its hands.”* ¹¹ *Sun and moon stood in their places....”* (Hab 3:10–11). The LORD can do as He pleases with His creation any day, any time. One day He will come as a man, fully God and fully man. Why not. He can do it if He pleases. It may defy our finite mind, but it cannot defy His infinite power. He will one day rise from the dead. How can the dead rise? We cannot comprehend it, but it is simple for Him. After all, He spoke everything into being with just a word. With a word, the sun and moon can seem to stop moving.

(h) Joshua Rests from Help (10:15)

When the battle was over, Joshua rests from help with Israel’s servants, Gibeon. He does so back in the camp of the Israelites. Verse 15. *“Then Joshua and all Israel with him returned to the camp to Gilgal.”* (10:15)

(5) The Amorite Kings Caught (10:16-28)

(a) Secured in the Cave at Makkedah (10:16-21)

(i) The Order to Seal the Entry (10:16-18)

The time of rest was not long for Joshua and his men because the Amorite kings had escaped Joshua’s attack. In our outline, we come to the Amorite Kings caught and secured in the cave at Makkedah with an order from Joshua to seal the entry. Verse 16. *“Now these five kings had fled and hidden themselves in the cave at Makkedah.”* ¹⁷ *It was told Joshua, saying, “The five kings have been found hidden in the cave at Makkedah.”* ¹⁸ *Joshua said, “Roll large stones against the mouth of the cave, and assign men by it to guard them....”* (10:16-18)

The cowering kings had hidden in the cave at Makkedah and not come out. As the report reached the ear of Joshua, his order to seal the cave with large stones came about. With the sealing of the cave, we notice that Joshua ordered the assigning of men to guard the cave too.

(ii) The Order to Slay the Enemy

(a) The Ones Israel Killed (10:19-20a)

The rest of the men were ordered to pursue the enemies that had gotten away. We have the order to slay the enemy and the report of the ones Israel killed. Verse 19. *“... but do not stay there yourselves; pursue your enemies and attack them in the rear. Do not allow them to enter their cities, for the LORD your God has delivered them into your hand.”*²⁰ *It came about when Joshua and the sons of Israel had finished slaying them with a very great slaughter, until they were destroyed”* (10:19-20a)

Joshua had evidently heard that the stragglers from the army of the five Amorite kings were on their way home to the cities of Jerusalem, Hebron, Jarmuth, Lachish, and Debir. Joshua’s mighty warriors caught up with Amorite men as they ran toward home. Not all of them made it home. They were killed as they ran from behind. While the mighty warriors were in pursuit, Joshua made camp at Makkedah with the rest of his army.

(b) The Ones Who Got Away (10:20b-21)

But some did make it home. They are the ones who got away. Verse 20b. *“...and the survivors who remained of them had entered the fortified cities,²¹ that all the people returned to the camp to Joshua at Makkedah in peace. No one uttered a word against any of the sons of Israel.”* (10:20b-21)

Jerusalem, Hebron, Jarmuth, Lachish, and Debir were fortified cities. Some stragglers made it into their cities. The mighty warriors then returned to Makkedah, where Joshua was waiting. All revered Joshua as their leader in his camp and no ill word was said.

(b) Executed at the Cave at Makkedah (10:22-28)

(i) The Kings Retrieved (10:22-24a)

The Amorite kings must be executed at the cave at Makkedah. With the kings retrieved, Joshua speaks. Verse 22. *“Then Joshua said, “Open the mouth of the cave and bring these five kings out to me from the cave.”*²³ *They did so, and brought these five kings out to him from the cave: the king of Jerusalem, the king of Hebron, the king of Jarmuth, the king of Lachish, and the king of Eglon.*²⁴ *When they brought these kings out to Joshua, Joshua called for all the men of Israel, and said to the chiefs of the men of war who had gone with him, “Come near, put your feet on the necks of these kings.”* (10:22-24a)

Let us set the scene. The five kings were placed on the ground. Five of the army chiefs put their feet on the necks of the kings.

(ii) The Kings Disposed (10:24b-27)

The story continues with the king's disposed. Verse 24b. *“So they came near and put their feet on their necks.”*²⁵ *Joshua then said to them, “Do not fear or be dismayed! Be strong and courageous, for thus the LORD will do to all your enemies with whom you fight.”*²⁶ *So afterward Joshua struck them and put them to death, and he hanged them on five trees; and they hung on the trees until evening.*²⁷ *It came about at sunset that Joshua gave a command, and they took them down from the trees and threw them into the cave where they had hidden themselves, and put large stones over the mouth of the cave, to this very day.”* (10:24b-27)

The kings were killed. Their bodies hung on trees as a display to the Canaanite nations. Before the end of the day, at the end of the evening, the bodies were removed, placed back in the cave, and the entry was permanently sealed. At the time of the writing of Joshua, the cave had not been disturbed.

(iii) The King Hanged (10:28)

One king and one city remained for that day that needed attention. We have the king hanged, the king of Makkedah. Verse 28. *“Now Joshua captured Makkedah on that day and struck it and its king with*

the edge of the sword; he utterly destroyed it and every person who was in it. He left no survivor. Thus he did to the king of Makedah just as he had done to the king of Jericho.” (10:28)

The same was done to the king as was done to the king of Jericho. It just so happens that it was done the same as to the kings of Ai and the five kings of the Amorites. They were killed with the sword, hung on a tree, and buried before night. The fear of the covenant struck between the Gibeonites, and the Israelites caused the Amorite kings to act in a way that hastened their deaths.