

### JOSHUA

#### Lesson 14 - Chapter 10

Nobody but nobody knows how to make lemonade from being handed a lemon more than the Lord God of Israel. You'll see what I mean by that shortly. In Joshua chapter 10 we'll find that the unholy treaty that Israel had been tricked into making with Gibeon would lead to both conflict and opportunity for God's people.

Chapter 10 is the story of the conquest of the southern part of Canaan, and chapter 11 then takes us to the battle for the northern areas of Canaan. Up to now Israel had really not made any serious headway in occupying the Promised Land. They had two battles up to this point: Jericho and Ai. Both battles served a divine purpose of educating Israel about the nature of Holy War: the necessity of being scrupulously obedient to their Divine Warrior leader Yehoveh (what happened when they were, and more, what happened when they were not), and never counting on their own strength but rather on the power of the Lord if they wanted victory.

Let's pause for a few minutes and review some of the ground rules and principles that make Joshua understandable and full of meaning for us. And the first thing I want you to notice is that if we want to grasp the rationale for the exacting methods and procedures that the Lord ordered Joshua to follow in conquering Canaan, we will find it in the God-patterns set-down and defined in the Torah.

Holy War was being waged and because it was Holy War there were God-ordained procedures to follow. Central to these procedures that Israel would adhere to in their battle for the Land of Canaan was the Law of Herem, the law of the ban. And central to the Law of Herem was the concept of holy property; property that was set apart (banned, devoted) exclusively for the Holy God was HOLY property. The particular property in question was, of course, always the property that had formerly belonged to the enemy; it was the spoils of war. That property (the spoils) could literally be anything; people, cattle, buildings, gold and silver, garments, food, furniture, cooking pots, anything. The Lord decided which of the enemy's property He wanted for Himself and the remainder Israel could distribute among themselves. The property the Lord deemed as exclusively His instantly gained the status of holy property; all other property not devoted to God was therefore left in its common state (it did not attain holiness) and so was suitable for the Hebrew people to use.

Theoretically the Lord could decide on a case-by-case basis, as Joshua conquered city after city, which property the Lord wanted devoted to Him. But before Israel even began the battle for Canaan the Lord established a general rule about the spoils that He wanted set aside for Himself; in every case He wanted at a minimum the enemy cities and the enemy people. The

Lord wanted the Canaanites' fortifications, dwelling places, and temples to their gods; He also wanted the Canaanites themselves. The way He claimed His holy property was that it was destroyed by Israel's army rather than left intact for use by others. If the holy property was buildings, they were leveled and set on fire. If the holy property was people, they were killed and usually left to burn in the smoldering rubble of the city where they died. Therefore the Law of Herem operates within the pattern of sacrificial offerings that the Lord established early in Torah. That is an animal is devoted (designated) as a sacrificial offering to God; it thus instantly becomes holy property. In order for the Lord to claim His holy property the animal must be killed and then burned on the Brazen Altar. If grain was part of the offering it too was killed (so to speak) by being harvested and then prepared by being ground and/or mixed with other specified ingredients, and once offered it was burned up on the altar fire.

But in the first two battles for Canaan, Jericho and Ai, another key God-pattern was followed: the principle of firstfruits. Jericho being the FIRST Canaanite city and group of people that would be conquered in the conquest was the FIRST-fruits. The law of Firstfruits is best explained in the law for new orchards and vineyards whereby none of the fruit can be plucked or used in any way for the first 3 years after they have been planted. In the 4th year the fruit produced is to be harvested but ALL of it is to be devoted to Yehoveh. In the 4th year (the first year that fruit may be harvested) it is ALL God's holy property and the people may have none of it. In the 5th year (the 2nd year that fruit may be harvested) the first part of the fruit (the tithe) is given to God but the remainder goes to the people for food.

Thus Jericho being the 1st of the fruits of Canaan (metaphorically speaking) ALL belongs to God. The people of Israel may have no part of it and thus the order that everything in Jericho must be destroyed and burned up (including what would usually be considered spoils of war that went to the army). Of course we recently read in Joshua how one man, Achan, violated that principle and caused a great deal of trouble for he, his family, and all of Israel.

But at the city of Ai, the 2nd of the fruits of Canaan, God wanted only His part (the people and the structures), with the remainder of the spoils going to Israel. Patterns, always look for the patterns.

As we begin chapter 10, Israel has made a major misstep; it wasn't their first. At Ai the people of Israel determined from their easy success at Jericho that this business of Holy War and conquering Canaan was going to be a piece of cake. So they didn't bother to consult God before entering the battle for Ai and as a result they were handed a resounding defeat. After understanding where the problem lay (Achan's sin plus Israel's sin of arrogance and disobedience in not seeking the Lord), Israel repented, regained favor with Yehoveh, and so the Lord handed over Ai to them. But almost immediately Israel messed up again; they fell victim to a plan by another group of Canaanites from the area of Gibeon.

These Gibeonites feared that they would be annihilated by Israel. They had heard about what happened to Egypt, the kings of the Trans-Jordan, Ai, Jericho and just as interesting they had heard of the order from Israel's God that all people of Canaan were to be driven out or destroyed. Gibeon occupying territory in the Promised Land meant they were marked for termination. So rather than leave the area or fight a losing battle with Israel, they decided on

another tact; they would send ambassadors to Joshua and claim they had come from a land far away (outside of Canaan). They wanted to make a treaty with Israel and be at peace, but also under the protection of Israel's enormous military. This was perfectly allowable under the Torah.

The leaders of Israel, figuring this was just a rather mundane political matter, again did not seek the advise of the Lord. Big mistake. It turned out that the Gibeonites were lying about where they were from, Israel made the treaty with Gibeon (which by definition involved a vow to God), and then 3 days later found out the whole thing was a sham. The leaders of Israel discussed it and decided that they had to decide upon committing the lesser of two evils: do they keep their vow to the Lord and thus remain at peace with Gibeon, or do they obey God's instruction (handed down through Moses) that ALL people of Canaan were to be driven out of the Holy Lands or killed without exception, and this included Gibeon. They decided that the vow was more important and now they were stuck with the results. Of course they also seemed to dismiss the reality that from this moment forward they were operating in rebellion, sin, because they did not obliterate this Canaanite people called Gibeon.

Let's read Joshua 10 and see how this conundrum would begin to play out.

### **READ JOSHUA CHAPTER 10 all**

The matter of Gibeon making a peace treaty with Israel became known throughout the region very rapidly, and it shook the other tribes and nations who lived in the Land of Canaan.

A fellow named Adoni-zedek ruled over the city-state of Jerusalem at this time. This is a good time to remind everyone that Jerusalem was not founded by Israel; rather it was King David who captured it and made it his capital city. The best and earliest records give the credit for the inception of that city to the Jebusites. Just WHO the Jebusites were is a whole other matter. There is much indication that they were a branch or sub-tribe of the Amorites.

The first known name for the city now called Jerusalem was Jebus. Jebus is a Canaanite word. Therefore the residents of Jebus were rightly called Jebus-ites. Jebusites. In Aramaic and Arabic the same city was called Salem. So Jebus and Salem were both recognized early names for what we today called Jerusalem.

In Genesis we read of the mysterious Melchizedek king AND high priest of Salem (Jerusalem). Of course this was a time around 600 years before the era of Joshua and the conquest of Canaan. So Jerusalem was already an old city by the time the Israelites arrived.

Notice the similarity between the two names Melchi-zedek, and Adoni-zedek. The first translates literally to King of righteousness and the 2nd translates to Lord of righteousness. In reality they are synonymous terms. It was the tradition of the residents of Jebus to give all the kings of their city-state essentially the same name; and the name was not really a name, it was a title. By way of example, Yeshua is a formal name; Messiah is a title. Yehoveh is a name; God is a title. Rameses is a name, Pharaoh is a title. Adoni-zedek was a title for the current

king of Jebus (Jerusalem), and we don't know what his formal name was.

Interestingly it has been suspected even in the days of antiquity that Abraham may have been an Amorite, since they were a tribe, or nation, or culture that came from Mesopotamia (which is where Abraham came from). And if the suspicion that the people of Jebus (the Jebusites) were a branch of the Amorites, that would easily explain why Abraham would have been so familiar with Melchi-zedek who was the king of the city of Jebus at that time (they may well have both been Amorites). That is not proved, although it is reasonable speculation based on some evidence.

The reason I even went there is to explain that we see the king of Jerusalem put a 5 nation coalition together to go and attack Gibeon, in order to punish Gibeon for willingly becoming a vassal of Israel. And some of the verses in Joshua 10 refer to the people of this coalition as Amorites. Without doubt not all of these 5 nations were Amorites per se. However the Amorites that began as a small and distinct tribe up in Mesopotamia, and because of their aggressive nature eventually became a dominant culture that absorbed many other tribes and cultures, grew to have such influence in the Middle East that by Joshua's day to say "Amorite" is not far off from saying in our modern world "Westerner". Or as another example: the New Testament Bible deals a great deal with Greek culture, and we still speak of Greek culture to this day but only a minority of those who were part of the Greek culture in the NT era were actually Greeks. It was just a situation whereby the people of Greece were credited for developing an integrated system of philosophy, theology, and government whose tenets spread far and wide. Nations that adopted that system didn't come under the rule of Greece, nor did they become Greeks, they just operated in a popular and well-known system called by that name. Therefore we'll find (again in the New Testament) gentiles who lived under that integrated system of philosophy, theology, and government called "Greeks". Even the people of the Roman Empire were at times referred to as "Greeks". But the vast majority certainly did NOT come from Greece, or pledge allegiance to Greece.

So Amorites in the Old Testament are roughly equivalent to Greeks in the New Testament in it's meaning. It came to refer more to a set of common cultural values than to genealogy or nationality.

Now one of the reasons that Adoni-zedek was so upset by Gibeon quickly cow towing to Israel was that Gibeon was a GREAT city. It was not some small helpless group of people; Gibeon was a group of several cities that were as big as what were called the Royal cities. The Royal cities were where the king of a particular region resided. The Royal cities were the largest, richest, most fortified cities. If a king had a standing army, the Royal city was where it was garrisoned. So for a powerful city/state like Gibeon to run to Joshua seeking to make peace terms even before it was attacked angered and terrified not only Adoni-zedek but many of the scores of kings that ruled throughout Canaan. Interestingly they felt that their first order of business was to attack Gibeon.

The coalition that would go against Gibeon consisted of Jerusalem (Jebus), Hebron, Yarmuth, Lachish, and Eglon, were all cities in the south of Canaan. Hebron was about a 7-hour march from Jerusalem, Yarmuth only about 3 hours southwest of Jerusalem. Lachish and Eglon were

quite close to one another, near Gaza, a bit southwest of Hebron. It seems there was a sense of urgency and they gathered and moved towards Gibeon very rapidly.

Gibeon must have been caught wholly unprepared by the approach of Adoni-zedek's forces and so immediately sought Joshua's intervention on their behalf.

Stop and think for a minute about what has happened here. Only days, maybe a few weeks, earlier Gibeon had deceived Israel and made a peace treaty with them. Israel decided to make good on the treaty even though the entire premise for its establishment was a lie and was against the direct instructions of the Lord. I'm sure it was a total shock to Israel when almost immediately they found themselves in this insane situation in which (due to that unauthorized treaty and a rash vow to God) they were obligated to put Israeli lives at stake to fight on Gibeon's behalf! Here were a people that God deemed as His enemy, worthy only of destruction, and Israel would now move against other enemies to save Gibeon. Talk about a lose-lose situation.

Ah, but here is where the great lemonade maker operates best. Even though Israel had made a terrible mistake in allying themselves with Gibeon, the Lord decided to use it all for His purposes.

After Israel was ushered into Canaan over a miraculously plugged up Jordan River, and after Jericho was taken by a series of supernatural acts of Yehoveh, and after the 2nd battle for Ai that went like clockwork, Israel was wondering where to make their next move and just how to initiate it. Yet if the conquest of Canaan was going to be the serial attacking of fortified cities throughout the land, one at a time, Israel's losses were going to mount and the amount of time it would take would be generations. No people can sustain a high-level war effort for decades.

Well, the Lord used Gibeon to take that next step. You see by definition these 5 kings who came together to attack Gibeon were kings over Royal cities. They each lived and ruled in substantial walled cities. The cities had nearly impenetrable barriers for defense, and since the method of attacking a walled city was by siege the effort was time consuming and the casualty rate of the attacking force was always high. Most of the time siege warfare was more or less about blockading a city; no one could come in or go out. The city's residents could not tend fields or orchards so their food supply was limited. Their supply of wood for cooking fires was limited. They could not entertain merchant traders from other lands that even at this point in history were relied upon for critical items like weapons, salt, medicines, and more. It was a waiting game and the force that surrounded the walled city usually had the upper hand. The advantage for the king and residents of the walled city was weather and attrition. If they had planned well enough, stockpiled enough food and weapons, had a substantial water source inside the city walls, and pestilence and disease didn't play too big of a role, it was very difficult for an opposing army to force itself into the city. As often as not impatience would lead to an all out assault on the city and so many soldiers would die that the conquering force simply gave up and went home.

Think back to the battle strategy for Israel against Ai. Because Israel at first came against Ai with too few troops, and then turned tail and ran when Ai fought back fiercely, the leaders of Ai

fully expected the same sort of thing to happen when Israel tried again. So Joshua turned this to his advantage.

You see the trick is to get the army to come OUT from the city into the open. To leave their tall defensive walls, their high-ground positions, and become vulnerable. The military leaders at Ai wanted to strike a serious and demoralizing blow to Israel so when they felt that Israel was too weak to cause them any real trouble they burst out from inside their thick stone fortress and chased after the Israeli army. Little did they know that another and hidden group of Hebrew soldiers was waiting for them to leave so that the Israelite army could go in. When the army of Ai left, and the ambush was sprung, it was over in a matter of hours.

So here we have 5 kings representing 5 substantial kingdoms in Canaan that were on God's to-do list. Sooner or later Israel was going to have to do battle with each of these kingdoms and destroy them in order to occupy the Promised Land. The Lord simply expedited the process using Gibeon as bait. These 5 kings made the fatal mistake of taking their armies away from their strong defensive positions, away from their walled fortresses, out into the open, for no other reason than to display their anger against some fellow Canaanites (the Gibeonites) who felt it wiser to switch sides than fight.

In verse 8 the Lord begins his instructions to Joshua using the much-used phrase, "fear not". Why would Joshua fear? He was going to be battling the allied armies of 5 nations simultaneously. Wow. And He tells Joshua that the battle to save Gibeon that will pit Israel against the most formidable foes they have yet faced has already been decided. God has turned those 5 kings along with their kingdoms over to Israel. Joshua believed God, and that was the key to victory.

As surprised as the Gibeonites were at their Canaanite brothers from the south coming to punish them, so were these 5 kings at the sudden attack of Joshua and his Hebrew army. Using the nighttime to their advantage (something that Israel would employ as a strategy often in its history) they traveled from their permanent encampment at Gilgal during the dark hours and launched a surprise attack on the coalition forces of Adoni-zedek; it threw the enemy into a panic. A fleeing army is both racked with fear and unorganized. And this army was far away from the safety of 30 foot high, 10-foot thick walls back home. The chase was on; the goal of the 5 armies was to get back to their home base and regroup behind those city walls. But Joshua's job was to prevent that; while those 5 armies were out in the open they could be much more easily dealt with than if Joshua allowed those enemy troops to make it home. Then he'd have to use siege warfare, one city at a time, to take them. The time was now.

The coalition army fled toward Beth-horon. There was a path through the mountains that might provide an escape path. Beth-horon means, "the house of caves". The area was littered with caves and soon the 5 kings would use one of them to try and hide from Joshua's forces.

Beth-horon was more a region than a town. These passages speak of an upper and lower Beth-horon (or ascent and descent). This place is northwest of Gibeon. Upper Beth-horon is high up in the hills and is about 5 miles from Gibeon, lower Beth-horon about 1 ½ miles further. As they were in the pass descending out of Beth-horon the Lord Himself smote the army of the 5 kings

with hailstones. The stones were large enough and came upon them so suddenly that more of them died from the hailstorm than was killed by the sword.

It is here in verse 12 that we get one of the more famous and puzzling stories in the entire Bible. It is the story of the day that the sun stood still in the sky and night refused to fall, on account of Joshua asking the Lord to make it happen.

Let's look at this story for a few minutes. First of all there was a very practical reason that Joshua wanted for the daylight to go on longer than normal. Battles ended at sunset in that era. It was a simple matter of not being able to discern enemy versus friend. Plus they were exhausted and needed food and rest.

In this particular incident the troops of the 5-nation coalition were anxious for the darkness to come so that they could hide and then escape from Joshua's clutches. They stood a very good chance of most of them making a stealthy return during the night to their home cities. Joshua perfectly understood this and realized that by all that was natural there simply was not going to be enough daylight hours to finish the job.

The writer of Joshua (who is often referred to as the Compiler by Bible academics) says forthrightly that verses 12 and 13 are, "written in the book of Jasher". In Hebrew it is the "sefer of Yashar". In English it is literally the "book of the upright" or "book of the righteous". So despite what one might think, Jasher is not someone's name. The book of Yashar has never been found, but it obviously existed at some point in history. It is thought to be a compilation of poems and war songs about some of Israel's greatest heroes.

I've told you on a number of occasions that the Torah, and the Old Testament in general, was not written like a daily journal or a diary. Most of the books had a primary author, but probably not even one of them was completed start to finish by the same person. The time frame was simply too long, and usually it was written in retrospect. So whoever contributed this section of Joshua had a document at his disposal that was called the Book of Yashar, and it must have been popularly known.

Therefore the form of the quote about the sun standing still is poetry and thus we must take it in that vein. Exactly how literally we should take it is the issue that has created a multitude of opinions about these 2 small verses.

Let me start by saying that to some extent or another a miracle was involved. There is really no other way to read it or account for it unless we want to simply see it as a Hebrew fairytale. And, by the way, many do exactly that.

The scene has Joshua asking God to keep the sun AND moon from setting and thus preventing nightfall. How is it that both the sun AND the moon are mentioned since it is a daytime event? Well we've all seen the faint glow of the moon during the day, haven't we? In our current narrative we have the sun hovering over Gibeon and to the west, over Ajalon, was the outline of the moon. The sun was on its decline and the moon on its ascent.

Joshua cried out to God to help him by giving him more daylight hours, and God complied. It is interesting to me that in verse 14 that it says that there was no day like that day before it or after it, and part of the reason for the momentous nature of that day was that “the Lord hearkened unto the voice of a man”. What makes this interesting is the word “hearken”. We’ve discussed this before. The Hebrew word that is usually translated as hearken or listen is *shema*. And *shema* does NOT mean listen. And hearken ALSO is not an outdated English word that means listen. Rather it means to hear and obey! It is not a passive word of simply hearing something. Like listening to the sound of the wind, or listening to some music. Rather it carries with it a sense of action; the hearing brings the doing. To *shema* is to hear something and then do it.

Now it would be a tad too far, probably, to say that God obeyed Joshua. Yet, poetically speaking, that’s sort of the idea that is being brought across here. It is portraying Joshua as having such great standing with the Lord, and displaying such perfect obedience, that Joshua speaking it causes the Lord to act without deciding the rightness or wrongness of it. I think the best way for us to think of it is as in Exodus when the Lord explained that as His Mediator, when Moses spoke something it was as if God Himself spoke it. When Moses ordered the Nile to turn blood red he didn’t have to go to God, consult with Him, and then God turn around and order the river to change color. God put authority into the mouth of Moses such that Moses could order these things using God’s power. I believe that is the same sense that is happening here. It is but another way of explaining that when Joshua ordered the sun not to set, it was as if God ordered it.

Now, is that actually what happened? Did the earth actually stop rotating for a time, or did its rotation slow WAY down for a few hours? Taken at its most literal this is not saying that the sun arrived at its zenith and stayed there, perfectly still. Rather it is saying that the sun stood in the midst of the sky, meaning that it did NOT set. As it says it did not HASTEN (it did not hurry) towards the horizon so as day would become night.

There are some scholars who think that since this is poetry (and without doubt it is) so that we can rightfully view it a little differently. For instance, there are those days when the hours fly by so fast, and we have something so critical that we must accomplish, that it SEEMS as if time has sped up. And there are other times when we look at a task that MUST be accomplished today, and see no way that it can possibly happen. But we begin and lo and behold somehow we did 12 hours of work in 8. And using poetic license that could indeed have been the case here in Joshua.

The long and the short of it is that while it is possible for the Lord to stop the earth from rotating, the sun from setting, the moon from rising, I find that both because of the TYPE of literature used, that it is virtually acknowledged in the passages themselves that this is a story from the Book of Jasher (a book of war songs and poetry), and that the effects worldwide of the earth suddenly stopping its rotation should be mentioned in history and legend as universally as is an ancient worldwide flood. But none exists. And indeed practically every society uncovered has record of a great flood in primitive times.

But I’m not at all dogmatic about how this event came about. A miracle wrought by the God of



## Lesson 14 - Joshua 10

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Israel of some kind or another occurred, and I'm satisfied to leave it there.

Let's take up the remainder of Joshua 10 next week.