

Joshua 11:6

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

And the LORD said unto Joshua, Be not afraid because of them: for to morrow about this time will I deliver them up all slain before Israel: thou shalt hough their horses, and burn their chariots with fire.

Analysis

God's command 'Be not afraid' (al-tira, אַל-תִּירָא) directly addresses Joshua's natural human fear facing superior forces. The basis for courage is divine promise—'I will deliver them up all slain before Israel.' The time specification 'tomorrow about this time' demonstrates God's precise control over events; He knows exactly when victory will occur. The Hebrew construction machar ka'et hazot (מָחָר כְּעֵת הַזֹּאת) indicates approximately 24 hours hence. The phrase 'all slain' (chalal, חָלַל) means pierced through or fatally wounded—complete military defeat. The commands to hamstring horses and burn chariots seem strategically foolish, destroying valuable military assets. Yet this reveals God's method: Israel must not trust in horses and chariots (Psalm 20:7) but in Yahweh alone. Keeping these would tempt Israel toward military self-sufficiency rather than dependence on God. The destruction of advanced weaponry demonstrates that God's power, not military technology, wins victories for His people. This principle finds New Testament expression in 2 Corinthians 10:4—spiritual warfare requires spiritual weapons, not worldly might.

Historical Context

Ancient Near Eastern warfare increasingly centered on chariotry by the Late Bronze Age. Iron-reinforced wooden chariots provided mobile platforms for archers and spear-throwers, offering decisive tactical advantages over infantry.

Each chariot required breeding programs for horses, skilled craftsmen, and trained crews—representing enormous resource investment. Capturing enemy chariots meant acquiring cutting-edge military technology that could shift regional power balances. God's command to destroy these chariots rather than incorporate them into Israel's forces prevented Israel from adopting Canaanite military methods and the centralized royal administration required to maintain chariot forces. Hamstringing horses (cutting the tendon making them lame) rendered them useless for military purposes while keeping them alive for agricultural work. This fulfilled Deuteronomy 17:16's prohibition against multiplying horses, which anticipated Israel's future desire for monarchy and military power like surrounding nations. The principle reappears when David later hamstring captured horses (2 Samuel 8:4), maintaining dependence on God rather than military might.

Related Passages

Matthew 25:31 — Final judgment

Romans 2:1 — Judging others

Study Questions

1. What 'horses and chariots'—superior resources or advantages—tempt you to trust in them rather than God?
2. How does God's promise of specific timing ('tomorrow about this time') encourage faith in His precise control over your circumstances?
3. What valuable but potentially distracting assets might God be calling you to 'hamstring and burn' to maintain dependence on Him?

Interlinear Text

כִּי	לִפְנֵי	יְהוָה	אֵל	יְהוֹשֻׁעַ	אֵל	תִּירָא	אֵל	וַיֹּאמֶר
	because	And the LORD	H413	unto Joshua	H408	Be not afraid		said
	H3588	H3068		H3091		H3372		H559
נָתַן	אֲנֹכִי	הֵזאת	כֵּעֵת	מָחָר				
will I deliver them up		H2063	about this time	of them for to morrow				
H5414	H595		H6256	H4279				
סוּסֵיהֶם	אֶת	יִשְׂרָאֵל	לִפְנֵי	הִלָּל	יָם	כָּל	אֶת	
their horses	H853	Israel	because	all slain		H3605	H853	
H5483		H3478	H6440	H2491				
בָּאֵשׁ:	תִּשְׂרֹף	מִרְכָּבֹתֵיהֶם	וְאֶת	תַּעֲקֹר				
and burn	with fire	their chariots	H853	thou shalt hough				
H8313	H784	H4818		H6131				

Additional Cross-References

Joshua 10:8 (References Lord): And the LORD said unto Joshua, Fear them not: for I have delivered them into thine hand; there shall not a man of them stand before thee.

2 Samuel 8:4 (Parallel theme): And David took from him a thousand chariots, and seven hundred horsemen, and twenty thousand footmen: and David houghed all the chariot horses, but reserved of them for an hundred chariots.

Joshua 11:9 (References Lord): And Joshua did unto them as the LORD bade him: he houghed their horses, and burnt their chariots with fire.

1 Samuel 11:9 (Parallel theme): And they said unto the messengers that came, Thus shall ye say unto the men of Jabesh-gilead, To morrow, by that time the sun be hot, ye shall have help. And the messengers came and shewed it to the men of Jabesh; and they were glad.

Judges 20:28 (References Lord): And Phinehas, the son of Eleazar, the son of Aaron, stood before it in those days,) saying, Shall I yet again go out to battle

against the children of Benjamin my brother, or shall I cease? And the LORD said,
Go up; for to morrow I will deliver them into thine hand.

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