

Joshua 09 - Gibeonite Deception; Treaty with the Gibeonites

I. Israel's conquest of Canaan (Joshua 1:1—12:24)

(3) Israel conquers Canaan (Joshua 5:13—12:24)

(A) Central campaign (Joshua 5:13—9:27)

(e) Treaty with the Gibeonites (9:1-27)

The following chapters introduce the transition from a victorious people of God whose occupation of the Land could have been the relatively simple matter of defeating those already discouraged to an unending history of battle, bloodshed, and idolatry that would haunt Israel throughout its history. As in the opening chapters of Genesis, so also in the opening chapters of Israel's dwelling in the Promised Land, a single transgression has cosmic ramifications. Background: Destroy utterly; make no covenant (Deut 7:1-11; 20:10-20; Ex 23:32).

Joshua 9

(e) Treaty with the Gibeonites (9:1-27)

1 Now it came about when all the kings who were beyond the Jordan, in the hill country, the lowland, and on all the coast of the Great Sea toward Lebanon, the Hittite and the Amorite, the Canaanite, the Perizzite, the Hivite, and the Jebusite, **heard about it,**

1 Now it came about when all the kings who were beyond the Jordan, in the hill country and in the lowland and on all the coast of the Great Sea toward Lebanon, the Hittite and the Amorite, the Canaanite, the Perizzite, the Hivite and the Jebusite, heard of it,

1 Eventually all the kings who reigned in the hill country across the Jordan River and in the low-lying coastlands of the Mediterranean Sea facing Lebanon heard about this. So the Hittites, the Amorites, the Canaanites, the Perizzites, the Hivites, and the Jebusites

1 And it came to pass, when all the kings which [were] on this side Jordan, in the hills, and in the valleys, and in all the coasts of the great sea over against Lebanon, the Hittite, and the Amorite, the Canaanite, the Perizzite, the Hivite, and the Jebusite, heard [thereof];

- "Now" - connects to the events in Joshua 8: the victory at Ai

- Only six Canaanite tribes listed; the Girgasites are missing

- "...heard about it" - they heard about Israel's defeat of Jericho, Ai and Bethel, not the renewal of the covenant at Shechem

2 that they met together with one purpose, to fight with Joshua and with Israel.

2 that they gathered themselves together with one accord to fight with Joshua and with Israel.

2 united together as one to fight against both Joshua and Israel.

2 That they gathered themselves together, to fight with Joshua and with Israel, with one accord.

- An alliance is formed (Ps 2; 83); the nations of the world taking up arms against God
- The defenders take the initiative

3 The **inhabitants of Gibeon** also heard what Joshua had done to Jericho and to Ai,

3 When the inhabitants of Gibeon heard what Joshua had done to Jericho and to Ai,

3 But when the inhabitants of Gibeon heard what Joshua had done to Jericho and Ai,

3 And when the inhabitants of Gibeon heard what Joshua had done unto Jericho and to Ai,

- "...inhabitants of Gibeon" - while the alliance of other kings was being formed, the Gibeonites took a different tact

— Analogous to Rahab: she heard and took action to separate herself from her people

— This was an independent move on their part to save their lives, and that would later throw their allies into confusion

— Gibeon was 7 miles south of Bethel, one of the largest towns in the central part of Canaan

— It later became a Levitical town (18:25; 21:17)

— The Israelites eventually pitched the tabernacle there, and it remained at that site until Solomon built the temple (1 Kings 3:4-5; 1 Chr 16:39; 21:29)

4 but they on their part acted craftily and went and took provisions for a journey, and took worn-out sacks on their donkeys, and wineskins *that were* worn out, split open, and patched,

4 they also acted craftily and set out as envoys, and took worn-out sacks on their donkeys, and wineskins worn-out and torn and mended,

4 they took the initiative by preparing their provisions shrewdly: they took tattered sacks for their donkeys, worn-out, torn, and mended wineskins,

4 They did work wilily, and went and made as if they had been ambassadors, and took old sacks upon their asses, and wine bottles, old, and rent, and bound up;

- Gibeon was only 25 miles from Gilgal

- These were Hivites (v7), which means "serpent":

— "The wiles of the devil" (Eph 6:11)

— Disguise and deception are his weapons (2 Cor 11:3)

— We need to be aware of "his devices" (2 Cor 2:11)

— Satan is the "father of lies" (John 8:44)

- Retribution: centuries earlier, the sons of Jacob had treacherously deceived Shechem and his father (Hivites) and slew them and spoiled their city (Gen 34) as Shechem had raped Dinah, Jacob's daughter.

5 and worn-out and patched sandals on their feet, and worn-out clothes on themselves; and all the bread of their provision was dry *and* had become crumbled.

5 and worn-out and patched sandals on their feet, and worn-out clothes on themselves; and all the bread of their provision was dry *and* had become crumbled.

5 worn-out, patched sandals for their feet, and worn-out clothes. All of their food was dried out and covered in mold.

5 And old shoes and clouted upon their feet, and old garments upon them; and all the bread of their provision was dry [and] mouldy.

- When the leaders of Gibeon learned of the crafty methods the Israelites used at Jericho and Ai, they decided to use deception as well...on the Israelites

6 And they went to Joshua at the camp at Gilgal and said to him and to the men of Israel, "We have come from a far country; now then, make a covenant with us."

6 They went to Joshua to the camp at Gilgal and said to him and to the men of Israel, "We have come from a far country; now therefore, make a covenant with us."

6 Then they approached Joshua in the camp at Gilgal and addressed him and the Israelites, "We've arrived from a distant country, so please make a treaty with us right now."

6 And they went to Joshua unto the camp at Gilgal, and said unto him, and to the men of Israel, We be come from a far country: now therefore make ye a league with us.

- Only by convincing the Israelites that they were from a far country—just passing through—could they expect to make a deal

- God did not forbid the Israelites from making peace treaties with non-Canaanite peoples (Deut 20:11), but He had expressly commanded them not to make treaties with the native Canaanite tribes (Ex 23:32; 34:12; Num 33:55; Deut 7:2)

7 But the men of Israel said to the Hivites, "Perhaps you are living within our land; how then are we to make a covenant with you?"

7 The men of Israel said to the Hivites, "Perhaps you are living within our land; how then shall we make a covenant with you?"

7 But the Israelites responded to the Hivites, "Perhaps you live in our midst. If this is so, how can we make a treaty with you?"

7 And the men of Israel said unto the Hivites, Peradventure ye dwell among us; and how shall we make a league with you?

- Hivites: ("serpent") - a descendant of Canaan (Gen 10:15,17); object of a curse (Gen 9:25)

— They apparently appeared suspicious

8 So they said to Joshua, "We are your servants." Then Joshua said to them, "Who are you and where do you come from?"

8 But they said to Joshua, "We are your servants." Then Joshua said to them, "Who are you and where do you come from?"

8 So they responded to Joshua, "We are your servants."

Joshua asked them, "Who are you? And where did you come from?"

8 And they said unto Joshua, We [are] thy servants. And Joshua said unto them, Who [are] ye? and from whence come ye?

9 They said to him, "Your servants have come from a very distant country because of the fame of the LORD your God; for we have heard the report about Him and all that He did in Egypt,

9 They said to him, "Your servants have come from a very far country because of the fame of the LORD your God; for we have heard the report of Him and all that He did in Egypt,

9 They answered, "Your servants have arrived from a very distant land, because of the reputation of the LORD your God, because we've heard a report about all that he did in Egypt,

9 And they said unto him, From a very far country thy servants are come because of the name of the LORD thy God: for we have heard the fame of him, and all that he did in Egypt,

- They seem to be aware of the Deut 20:10ff (v15)

10 and all that He did to the two kings of the Amorites who were beyond the Jordan, to Sihon king of Heshbon and to Og king of Bashan who was in Ashtaroth.

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10 along with all of what he did to the two Amorite kings who were beyond the Jordan River—that is, to King Sihon of Heshbon and to King Og of Bashan, who lived in Ashtaroth.

10 And all that he did to the two kings of the Amorites, that [were] beyond Jordan, to Sihon king of Heshbon, and to Og king of Bashan, which [was] at Ashtaroth.

- They pretended to fear Yahweh, their highest motive for allying with Israel; but their objective was to save their own lives

11 So our elders and all the inhabitants of our country spoke to us, saying, 'Take provisions in your hand for the journey, and go to meet them, and say to them, "We are your servants;

now then, make a covenant with us.”

11 So our elders and all the inhabitants of our country spoke to us, saying, ‘Take provisions in your hand for the journey, and go to meet them and say to them, “We are your servants; now then, make a covenant with us.”’

11 So our leaders and all of the inhabitants of our country told us, ‘Take provisions along with you for your journey, go to meet them, and tell them, “We are your servants. Come now and make a treaty with us.”’

11 Wherefore our elders and all the inhabitants of our country spake to us, saying, Take victuals with you for the journey, and go to meet them, and say unto them, We [are] your servants: therefore now make ye a league with us.

12 This bread of ours *was* hot *when* we took it for our provisions from our houses on the day that we left to come to you; but now behold, it is dry and has become crumbled.

12 This our bread *was* warm *when* we took it for our provisions out of our houses on the day that we left to come to you; but now behold, it is dry and has become crumbled.

12 Look at our bread: it was still warm when we took it from our houses as our food for our journey on the very day we set out to come to you. But now, look how it’s dry and moldy.

12 This our bread we took hot [for] our provision out of our houses on the day we came forth to go unto you; but now, behold, it is dry, and it is mouldy:

13 And these wineskins which we filled were new, and behold, they are split open; and these clothes of ours and our sandals are worn out from the very long journey.”

13 These wineskins which we filled were new, and behold, they are torn; and these our clothes and our sandals are worn out because of the very long journey.”

13 And these wineskins were new when we filled them, but look—now they’re cracked. And our clothes and sandals are worn out from our very long journey.”

13 And these bottles of wine, which we filled, [were] new; and, behold, they be rent: and these our garments and our shoes are become old by reason of the very long journey.

- A story, but without credentials. Notice that they were clever enough not to mention Jericho or Ai, which were local and might have spoiled their ruse.

14 So the men *of Israel* **took some of their provisions**, and **did not ask for the counsel of the LORD**.

14 So the men *of Israel* took some of their provisions, and did not ask for the counsel of the LORD.

14 So the leaders of Israel sampled their provisions, but did not ask the LORD about it.

14 And the men took of their victuals, and asked not [counsel] at the mouth of the LORD.

- “...took some of their provisions” - sampled their provisions, likely for inspection purposes

- "...did not ask for the counsel of the LORD" - the reason the Gibeonites were successful in deceiving Israel (Num 27:21; Cf. James 4:2)
- This was a big mistake; we make it all the time, too (James 1:5)
- They had learned the lesson that obedience was necessary for victory from their experience in Jericho and Ai, but they had not yet learned that they needed divine guidance *at every step* (Cf. John 15:5)
- They relied on the "scientific method" and examined the "facts"; very logical and convincing, but it was all wrong (Prov 3:5-6)
- Moses had warned them (Ex 34:12; Deut 7:2)

Ironically, of all people, Joshua failed to inquire of the Lord. Joshua had gone up the mountain of revelation with Moses (Ex 24:13-14); and in his preparation for leadership, he had been trained in the use of the Urim and Thummim for determining the will of God (Num 27:18-21). How easy it is even in the service of the Lord to take God's guidance and blessing for granted!

Similarly, many Christians have found themselves in difficult or disastrous circumstances because they rushed to a decision without properly consulting the Lord, His Scriptures, and His people for guidance.

Before entering into any alliance—taking a partner in life, going into a business with another, yielding assent to any proposition which involves confederation with others—be sure to ask counsel at the mouth of the Lord. He will assuredly answer by an irresistible impulse—by the voice of a friend; by a circumstance strange and unexpected; by a passage of Scripture. He will choose his own messenger, but he will send a message.

No proposed course of action can be so clear to a Christian to excuse him from the duty of seeking direction from above.

15 And Joshua made peace with them and made a covenant with them, to let them live; and the leaders of the congregation swore *an oath* to them.

15 Joshua made peace with them and made a covenant with them, to let them live; and the leaders of the congregation swore *an oath* to them.

15 They made a treaty with them, guaranteeing their lives with a covenant, and the leaders of the congregation confirmed it with an oath to them.

15 And Joshua made peace with them, and made a league with them, to let them live: and the princes of the congregation swore unto them.

- You have to give the Gibeonites credit for escaping with their lives (Cf. Luke 16:8)

— God's law permitted Israel to make peace with other nations, but only those from distant countries (Deut 20:10-16)

- Better to know your strength before the battle (Luke 14:31-32)

- Joshua and the princes had sworn in the name of the Lord (v18); it could not be broken. They had sworn to their own hurt (Ps 15:4; Eccl 5:1-7).
- Oaths, once made, are binding (Lev 19:12; Num 30:2; the real issue is the sanctity of God's name)

16 However, it came about at the end of three days after they had made a covenant with them, that they heard that they were neighbors and that they were living within their land.

16 It came about at the end of three days after they had made a covenant with them, that they heard that they were neighbors and that they were living within their land.

16 But three days after they had made the treaty with them, they learned that they were their neighbors and were living in their midst.

16 And it came to pass at the end of three days after they had made a league with them, that they heard that they [were] their neighbours, and [that] they dwelt among them.

- Some lies are found out quickly (others are taught in schools as "truth")

17 Then the sons of Israel set out and came to their cities on the third day. Now their cities were Gibeon, Chephirah, Beeroth, and Kiriath-jearim.

17 Then the sons of Israel set out and came to their cities on the third day. Now their cities were Gibeon and Chephirah and Beeroth and Kiriath-jearim.

17 So the Israelis set out for their cities and three days later they reached their cities of Gibeon, Chephirah, Beeroth, and Kiriath-jearim.

17 And the children of Israel journeyed, and came unto their cities on the third day. Now their cities [were] Gibeon, and Chephirah, and Beeroth, and Kirjathjearim.

- The leaders of Gibeon controlled four towns; these towns acted jointly in their dealings, including the treaty with Israel

— The possession of these cities gave Israel a more secure foothold in central Canaan

— Israel suffered no injury from the treaty. When the land was divided, they were not short (Joshua 18:25-28; 15:2).

18 But the sons of Israel did not attack them because the leaders of the congregation had sworn to them by the LORD, the God of Israel. And the whole congregation grumbled against the leaders.

18 The sons of Israel did not strike them because the leaders of the congregation had sworn to them by the LORD the God of Israel. And the whole congregation grumbled against the leaders.

18 The Israelis did not attack them, because the leaders of the congregation had made an oath with them in the name of the LORD, the God of Israel. Nevertheless, the entire congregation grumbled against their leaders.

18 And the children of Israel smote them not, because the princes of the congregation had sworn unto them by the LORD God of Israel. And all the congregation murmured against the princes.

19 But all the leaders said to the whole congregation, "We have sworn to them by the LORD, the God of Israel, and now we cannot touch them.

19 But all the leaders said to the whole congregation, "We have sworn to them by the LORD, the God of Israel, and now we cannot touch them.

19 Then all of the leaders spoke to the entire congregation, "We have sworn to them in the name of the LORD, the God of Israel, and we cannot touch them.

19 But all the princes said unto all the congregation, We have sworn unto them by the LORD God of Israel: now therefore we may not touch them.

- Issue is not the premise of the deal, it's the person upon whom it is sworn, the Lord God of Israel!

- The leaders of Israel considered their oath as binding, especially because it was given in the name of Yahweh

— Since the oath was made in the name of the Lord, fidelity was owed, not to the Gibeonites, but to the Lord

— The form of the oath called on the Lord to punish the Israelites if they failed to keep their agreement

— This is why Israel felt bound to the treaty, even though it was made under false pretenses (Cf. Gen 27:35; Ps 15:4)

20 This we will do to them, even let them live, so that wrath will not be on us because of the oath which we swore to them."

20 This we will do to them, even let them live, so that wrath will not be upon us for the oath which we swore to them."

20 So this is what we'll do to them: we'll let them live, so that wrath won't come upon us because of the oath that we swore to them."

20 This we will do to them; we will even let them live, lest wrath be upon us, because of the oath which we swore unto them.

- Once the oath was made, God expected them to keep it

— Because God keeps His promises, Joshua and the leaders dared not break their promise to the Gibeonites

— In today's world, we have lost the sanctity of a commitment

— God expects us to keep our word (1 Sam 21:1; Matt 5:33-37)

21 So the leaders said to them, "Let them live." And they became gatherers of firewood and labor to draw water for the whole congregation, just as the leaders had spoken to them.

21 The leaders said to them, "Let them live." So they became hewers of wood and drawers of water for the whole congregation, just as the leaders had spoken to them.

21 The leaders told them, "Let them live." So they became wood cutters and water carriers for the entire congregation, which is what the leaders had decided concerning them.

21 And the princes said unto them, Let them live; but let them be hewers of wood and drawers of water unto all the congregation; as the princes had promised them.

- This action partially fulfilled Noah's prophecy concerning the Canaanites (Gen 9:25)

— The Gibeonites received tasks in service of the tabernacle, where hopefully they would be exposed to the best spiritual influences

— They never led Israel into idolatry, as far as Scripture states, but their presence in the tabernacle displeased the Lord (Ezek 44:7)

The reason God forbade His people from allowing the Canaanites to live, and subsequently become incorporated into Israel, was that they might lead the Israelites into idolatry. The leaders of Israel therefore *punished* the Gibeonites for their deception, in a way designed to minimize the possibility of their ever doing this: they made them servants ("slaves") in the tabernacle, "hewers of wood and drawers of water."

This plan undoubtedly reinstated the leaders in the good favor of the Israelites.

Nevertheless this was not a wise move, because the LORD wanted only *authorized Israelites* (Levites) to assist in tabernacle worship. By bringing these foreigners into tabernacle service, the leaders of Israel violated the holiness of God (Cf. Num 3:10; Ezek 44:7).

22 Then Joshua called for them and spoke to them, saying, "Why have you deceived us, saying, 'We are very far from you,' when you are living within our land?"

22 Then Joshua called for them and spoke to them, saying, "Why have you deceived us, saying, 'We are very far from you,' when you are living within our land?"

22 Joshua summoned the Gibeonites and asked them, "Why did you deceive us by saying 'We live far away from you,' even though you were, in fact, living in our midst?"

22 And Joshua called for them, and he spake unto them, saying, Wherefore have ye beguiled us, saying, We [are] very far from you; when ye dwell among us?

23 Now therefore, you are cursed, and you will never cease to be slaves, both gatherers of firewood and labor to draw water for the house of my God."

23 Now therefore, you are cursed, and you shall never cease being slaves, both hewers of wood and drawers of water for the house of my God."

23 Now therefore you are under a curse. Some of you will always be slaves, wood cutters, and water carriers for the house of my God."

23 Now therefore ye [are] cursed, and there shall none of you be freed from being bondmen, and hewers of wood and drawers of water for the house of my God.

24 So they answered Joshua and said, "Since your servants were fully informed that the LORD your God had commanded His servant Moses to give you all the land, and to destroy all the inhabitants of the land before you, we feared greatly for our lives because of you, and did this thing.

24 So they answered Joshua and said, "Because it was certainly told your servants that the LORD your God had commanded His servant Moses to give you all the land, and to destroy all the inhabitants of the land before you; therefore we feared greatly for our lives because of you, and have done this thing.

24 They replied to Joshua, "Because your servants had been informed that the LORD your God had certainly commanded his servant Moses to give you the entire land and to destroy all of the inhabitants of the land before you. So we were terrified for our lives because of you. That's why we did this.

24 And they answered Joshua, and said, Because it was certainly told thy servants, how that the LORD thy God commanded his servant Moses to give you all the land, and to destroy all the inhabitants of the land from before you, therefore we were sore afraid of our lives because of you, and have done this thing.

- It's amazing how word on God's plan and wonders got around to so many people, in a time of manual communication

25 And now behold, we are in your hands; do to us as it seems good and right in your sight to do."

25 Now behold, we are in your hands; do as it seems good and right in your sight to do to us."

25 Now we're under your control: do to us as it seems good and right in your opinion."

25 And now, behold, we [are] in thine hand: as it seemeth good and right unto thee to do unto us, do.

26 This he did to them, and saved them from the hands of the sons of Israel, and they did not kill them.

26 Thus he did to them, and delivered them from the hands of the sons of Israel, and they did not kill them.

26 So this is what Joshua did for them: he saved them from the Israelis, and they did not kill them.

26 And so did he unto them, and delivered them out of the hand of the children of Israel, that they slew them not.

27 But on that day Joshua made them gatherers of firewood and labor to draw water for the congregation and for the altar of the LORD, to this day, in the place which He would choose.

27 But Joshua made them that day hewers of wood and drawers of water for the congregation and for the altar of the LORD, to this day, in the place which He would choose.

27 However, on that very day Joshua made them become wood cutters and water carriers for the congregation and for the LORD's altar in the place that he should choose, and this tradition continues to this day.

27 And Joshua made them that day hewers of wood and drawers of water for the congregation, and for the altar of the LORD, even unto this day, in the place which he should choose.

- Deut 20:10-11 - God was pleased with this result: He gives them a dramatic victory in Josh 10

— Also, Saul's violation of this league is avenged (2 Sam 21). Notice how David honored his oath to Jonathan in this connection, exempting Mephibosheth, Saul's grandson, from just avengement (v7).

- No evidence in Scripture that their descendants caused problems. On the contrary, their faithfulness is testified to: the Nethinim ("devoted persons") were their descendants and had a place of honor in the service of the temple centuries later (1 Chr 9:2; Ezra 2:43-58; 8:20; Neh 7:60)

Gibeonite's service led to a place of religious privilege. Gibeon was one of the cities given to the line of Aaron. 400 years later, the Tabernacle would be there. One of David's mighty men, those who were closest to him in battle, was a Gibeonite. When Solomon ascended the throne, he made burnt offerings at Gibeon. Later still, about 500 years before Christ in the time of Zerubbabel, the returnees from Babylon included a list of the Gibeonites. In the days of Nehemiah, Gibeonites were among those who helped build the walls of Jerusalem. Even though their oath was made under deception, God expected them to keep it. If God will not tolerate the breaking of an oath made in His name, how much more will He never break His own oath and covenant made to us on the basis of the shed blood and infinite value of Jesus Christ (Heb 6:13-20).