

Joshua 9:1 ¶ 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*;

Joshua 9:2 That they gathered themselves together, to fight with Joshua and with Israel, with one accord.

All the kings on the east side of the Jordan River in the land of promise—Hittites, Amorites, Canaanites, Perizzites, Hivites and Jebusites—decided to join forces and fight against the Israelites as one army.

Joshua 9:3 ¶ And when the inhabitants of Gibeon heard what Joshua had done unto Jericho and to Ai,

Joshua 9:4 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;

Joshua 9:5 And old shoes and clouted upon their feet, and old garments upon them; and all the bread of their provision was dry *and* mouldy.

Joshua 9:6 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.

Note: Gibeon was a city about six miles northwest of Jerusalem and was actually the capital city of the Hivites according to JFB.

The people living in Gibeon, however, had a different plan. When they heard what Joshua and the Israelites had done to Jericho and Ai, they decided to try and make a league with them through the use of deception. They sent ambassadors to Joshua that appeared to have traveled a long way. They put old sacks on their donkeys, carried old wine bottles, wore obviously old and worn shoes and garments, and carried bread that was dry and moldy. When they approached Joshua and the men of Israel, they declared that they had come from a far country to make a peace treaty with them..

Joshua 9:7 And the men of Israel said unto the Hivites, Peradventure ye dwell among us; and how shall we make a league with you?

Joshua 9:8 And they said unto Joshua, We *are* thy servants. And Joshua said unto them, Who *are* ye? and from whence come ye?

Joshua 9:9 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,

Joshua 9:10 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.

Joshua 9:11 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.

Joshua 9:12 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:

Joshua 9:13 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.

The men of Israel basically told the men (identified now as Hivites) that since they couldn't be sure that they weren't near neighbors, they could not make a treaty with them. They immediately addressed Joshua and declared to be his servants. So Joshua asked them directly where they were from.

The men from Gibeon lied and told Joshua that they were from a very far country and had only come because of their fear of Israel's God. They knew what he had done for them in Egypt and how he had destroyed Sihon and Og, kings of Heshbon and Bashan respectively. In light of these facts, the people of their country told them to take what they needed for their journey and go and ask to establish a peace treaty with Israel. Then they took out the dry and moldy bread they carried and lied again, saying that it had been hot and fresh from the oven when they left. They also showed them the bottles of wine and pointed out their old clothes and shoes—obvious testimony to having made a very long journey.

The NIV Commentary makes a good observation: "In rehearsing the mighty acts of the Lord, the Gibeonites carefully omitted recent events that they would not have known about had they really come from a far country."

Joshua 9:14 And the men took of their victuals, and asked not *counsel* at the mouth of the LORD.

Joshua 9:15 ¶ 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.

Joshua 9:16 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.

Joshua 9:17 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 men of Israel examined the evidence and, to their regret, did not ask for the LORD's direction. Joshua made the peace treaty with them to let their people live, and the leaders of Israel affirmed it with an oath. Commentators note that this treaty was more than just a peace treaty; it placed the people they represented under their protection.

John Wesley made a good application: "In every business of importance, we should take God along with us, and by the word and prayer consult him. Many a time our affairs miscarry, because we asked not counsel at the mouth of the Lord. Did we acknowledge him in all our ways, they would be more safe, easy and successful."

Three days later they found out that the men were their neighbors. Taking the

three day journey to confront them, they found that the cities in which they lived were Gibeon, Chephirah, Beeroth and Kirjathjearim.

Joshua 9:18 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.

Joshua 9:19 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.

Joshua 9:20 This we will do to them; we will even let them live, lest wrath be upon us, because of the oath which we sware unto them.

Joshua 9:21 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.

The Israelites did not kill the people of these cities because of the peace treaty that had been ratified by swearing an oath by the LORD God of Israel to affirm it. The people were not happy with their leaders. (Boy do I identify!)

The leaders of Israel knew that they had done wrong, but declared that they had to let the deceivers live because they had affirmed the treaty with an oath sworn by the name of the LORD. If they broke such an oath, they feared God's wrath because of the dishonor it would bring to His name. They decided that they would let the people live, but make them their servants. They would be required to cut wood and draw water for the whole congregation.

Joshua 9:22 ¶ 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?

Joshua 9:23 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.

Joshua called for the men of Gibeon to inform them of their decision. First, however, he asked them why they had deceived them and claimed to live far away. Because of their deceit, they would serve Israel as slaves and be required to cut wood and draw water to provide for the needs of the people at the tabernacle.

Joshua 9:24 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.

Joshua 9:25 And now, behold, we *are* in thine hand: as it seemeth good and right unto thee to do unto us, do.

Joshua 9:26 And so did he unto them, and delivered them out of the hand of the children of Israel, that they slew them not.

Joshua 9:27 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.

The men of Gibeon explained that they had heard that the LORD their God had commanded His servant Moses to give them the land and destroy all of its inhabitants. They used deception because they were afraid for their lives. They basically told Joshua that they knew they were at his mercy.

Joshua spared their lives and made them slaves as they had decided. The Gibeonites cut wood and drew water for the use of the people at the tabernacle and were still doing so at the time this book was written.

Guzik provides some interesting facts about the Gibeonites.

- The Gibeonites became servants at the tabernacle, just as Joshua had commanded.
- Gibeon becomes a priestly city; the Ark of the Covenant stayed at Gibeon often in the days of David and Solomon (1 Chronicles 16:39-40 and 21:29).
- At least one of David's *mighty men* was a Gibeonite (1 Chronicles 12:4).
- God spoke to Solomon at Gibeon (1 Kings 3:4).
- Gibeonites were among those who rebuilt the walls of Jerusalem with Nehemiah (Nehemiah 3:7 and 7:25).