

JOSHUA TRICKED BY THE GIBEONITES

Joshua 9:1-27

STRUCTURE

Key-persons: Joshua and the Gibeonites

Key-location: Canaan

Key-repetitions:

- Gibeonites' deception: claimed they lived far away (Jos 9:6); showed deceptive evidence (Jos 9:3-5, 12-13); Israel's men accepted the deceptive evidence (Jos 9:14); Israelites learned they had been deceived (Jos 9:16).
- Peace-treaty: Gibeonites requested a peace treaty with Israel (Jos 9:6, 11); Joshua didn't ask God if he wanted them to make a peace-treaty (Jos 9:14); Joshua made a peace treaty with the Gibeonites (Jos 9:15).
- Israel's leaders swore an oath to the Gibeonites (Jos 9:14, 18, 19).

Key-attitudes:

- Canaanite kings' fear of the Israelites.
- Gibeonites' deceitfulness.
- Joshua and Israelites' steadfastness to keep promises they had made.
- Israelites' anger at their leaders for being tricked.

Initial-situation:

The Lord stopped the flow of the waters of the flooding Jordan River and the Israelites walked across the river into Canaan. God gave the Israelites victory over the cities of Jericho and Ai and they killed everyone in those cities.

Initial-problem:

The kings west of the Jordan River heard about Joshua's victories over the cities of Jericho and Ai.

Final-situation:

The Gibeonites tricked the Israelites into making a peace treaty with them. Israel's leaders kept their promise, and did not kill the Gibeonites.

BIBLE STORY

The kings in Canaan heard about Joshua's victories over the cities of Jericho and Ai. The kings got together and decided to attack Joshua and Israel.

Also, the people of Gibeon heard what Joshua had done to Jericho and Ai, and they decided to trick the Israelites. A delegation from Gibeon loaded their donkeys with worn-out

sacks and old, cracked wineskins. The men wore old patched sandals on their feet and old worn-out clothes. They took dry, moldy bread.

The delegation from Gibeon went to Joshua at Gilgal and said to him and the men of Israel, "We've come from a distant country. Please make a peace treaty with us.

The Israelites replied, "We can't make a peace treaty with you if you live nearby."
The Gibeonites answered, "Make a peace treaty with us and we'll be your servants."
Joshua asked, "Who are you? Where do you come from?"

The Gibeonite delegation answered, "We're your servants. We live far away. We came because the Lord your God is so famous. We heard reports of all that the Lord your God did in Egypt, and all that he did to the kings east of the Jordan River. Our leaders and our people told us to meet with you and tell you, 'We're your servants; make a peace treaty with us.' Our bread was warm and fresh when we left home. But now see how dry and moldy it is. Our leather wineskins were new when we filled them with wine, but see how cracked they are. Our clothes and sandals are worn out by the long journey."

The men of Israel looked them over and accepted the evidence, but they didn't ask the Lord if he wanted them to make a peace treaty. Joshua made a peace treaty with the delegation to let them live. The Israelite leaders promised to keep the agreement.

Three days after making the peace treaty with the Gibeonites, the Israelites learned that they lived near them. But the Israelites did not attack the Gibeonites, because Israel's leaders had sworn an oath to them by the Lord, the God of Israel.

The whole assembly complained to the leaders, but the leaders answered, "We gave them our oath by the Lord, the God of Israel. We'll let them live. We'll make them cut wood and carry water for our people, but we'll not be accused of breaking the oath we swore to them." The leaders kept their promise, and did not kill the Gibeonites (Jos 9:1-26).

GENERIC DIALOGUE QUESTIONS

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| 1. What catches your attention in the story? | 5. How did the characters face their problems? |
| 2. Is there anything in the story that is hard to understand? | 6. How have you faced similar problems? |
| 3. Who are the main characters in the story? | 7. Is there someone in the story who is similar to you or who is different from you? |
| 4. What problems did the characters face? | 8. What does the story tell about God? |

SPECIFIC DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. How did the kings in Canaan react when they heard that Joshua had defeated both the cities of Jericho and Ai?
2. How did the citizens of Gibeon react when they heard how Joshua had defeated both the cities of Jericho and Ai?

3. How was Joshua deceived by the Gibeonites?
4. How did the Israelites react to their leaders being tricked?
5. How did Joshua say that the Israelites would treat the Gibeonites?
6. How can Christians avoid being tricked into compromising on God's commands?
7. What should the Christian do when he realizes he made a promise that becomes an impediment to reaching his goals?

LIFE-LESSONS

1. **Opposition to God's servants come in two forms: direct and indirect.** The Israelites experienced direct opposition from the kings who united to attack them, and indirect opposition from the Gibeonites who resorted to deception (Jos 9:1-6).
2. **God's people who experience victory may become negligent, rely on human skills and strength, and make grave mistakes.** Israel followed God's order and experienced victory over Jericho. Joshua did not consult God before sending the army against Ai, but relied on the strength of Israel's army (Jos 7:3). After Israel was defeated, Joshua turned to God and asked him what happened (Jos 7:6-9). After receiving orientation from God and eliminating Achan's sin from the Camp, the Israelites experienced victory over Ai. However, after victory over Ai, Joshua did not consult the Lord before making a peace treaty with the Gibeonites (Jos 9:1-15).
3. **It is easy for God' servant to be deceived when he doesn't consult God before making important decisions.** Joshua and Israel's leaders were deceived; not because of the Gibeonites' trickery, but because they rushed ahead with self-confidence and did not consult the Lord about what to do (Jos 9:14-15).
4. **A leader who makes a wrong decision may still be able to lead his followers to experience great victories.** Joshua failed to consult God before making a peace treaty with the Gibeonites (Jos 9:3-15), but he was still able to lead the people to conquer the land of Canaan.
5. **Righteous people keep their promises, even those they regret making.** The Israelites realized they had been tricked into making an undesirable peace treaty with the Gibeonites; however, they kept their promise because they did not want to be accused of breaking their oath (Jos 9:20).

LEARNING ACTIVITIES

Role-playing Drama:

Pick volunteers to tell the story from the viewpoint of the characters in the story. Retell the story. Then volunteers tell the story from the viewpoint of their designated character:

- A Gibeonite justifying why he tricked Joshua into making a peace treaty.

- Joshua explaining why he failed to consult God before he made the peace treaty with the Gibeonites.
- An Israelite complaining to a leader who was tricked into disobeying God and making a peace treaty with local Canaanite people.
- One of Israel's leaders explaining why the Israelites must keep their promise to the Gibeonites.