

JOSHUA

3. How many men did Joshua put in the second ambush?
4. From what city did soldiers come to help the men of Ai?
5. What weapon of war did Joshua hold in his hand as a signal?
6. How many people of Ai fell in the battle?
7. By what means was the king of Ai killed?
8. Where did Joshua lead the people to erect an altar?
9. What did Joshua write on the stones of the altar?
10. Before what other mountain did half the people stand?

A DIGEST OF CHAPTER 9

- Vv. 1-2 *The league of kings against Israel.* Moses had led the people in fighting against the kings east of the Jordan. Joshua had successfully fought against the king of Jericho and the kings of Ai and Bethel. The rest of the kings who were west of the Jordan gathered themselves together to form a league to fight against Joshua and Israel.
- Vv. 3-15 *Deceit of the Gibeonites.* One group of the Hivites, the Gibeonites, knew the only hope they had for survival was to make peace with Joshua. These people and Rahab are the only ones we find throughout the entire length and breadth of the land who made an effort to save themselves from the destruction which was coming upon them. Although these men deceived Joshua and the leaders of Israel, they are commended inasmuch as they realized the futility of opposing the wrath of God. Joshua and the elders acted very ill-advisedly in not asking the Lord's will in the matter. They were impressed with the false evidence which

STUDIES IN JOSHUA-JUDGES-RUTH

the Gibeonites presented as proof of their having come from a great distance and failed to ask about God's will in the matter.

Vv. 16-27 *The servitude of the Gibeonites.* Although the men of Israel might honorably have broken the covenant which they made with the Gibeonites since it was entered into under false pretenses, they chose to honor the agreement. They did not put the Gibeonites to death, but they did make them to serve in a very humble capacity. They were made to be "hewers of wood and drawers of water" (verse 27).

LESSONS FOR LEARNING

1. *Ask God first.* The opening statement of the Bible can mean more than a plain historical statement of fact to those who know God. God was "in the beginning." "In the beginning" was the Word (John 1:1). God should be in the beginning of every person's life. He should accept God's way while a child. God should be at the beginning of every day. He should be taken into confidences whenever we enter into a project. Joshua failed to do this. The Scripture says he, "asked not counsel at the mouth of the Lord" (verse 14). As a result he entered into an ill-advised league.
2. *Things are not always what they seem.* Man is able to concoct many disguises. Satan himself may be transformed into an angel of light (II Corinthians 11:14). Man is utterly fooled when he believes things which appear are framed from what we see. As Paul said, "Things which are seen were not made of things which do appear" (Hebrews 11:3). A Christian is more concerned with what a man is than what he has. He is

more interested in a man's character than in his reputation. We must dig beneath the surface to find the true realities.

3. *Dishonesty never pays.* Although the Gibeonites were spared from execution at the time they made a covenant with Joshua, they were made to do servile work. They brought upon themselves and all their descendants the stigma of being servants around the Tabernacle. They were made to cut the wood and provide the water for the people as they worshipped at the altar of the Lord.

CHAPTER NINE

The League of Kings Against Israel 9:1, 2

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;

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

1. What divisions of Canaan are mentioned? 9:1

Canaan was a land made up of hills which formed the center of the country. The Jordan River formed a valley which ran the entire length of the land. This river was on the east side of the country, and on the west side was the Mediterranean Sea. This land area is described as "all the coasts of the great sea." There were mountainous areas, and the main range was the Lebanon Mountains which were on the north of the country. By mentioning all these areas the author is giving us the impression that the league took in kings from all over the country. These were leaders of the Hittites, Amorites, Perizzites, Hivites, and Jebusites. All of them were Canaanite people.

2. *Were these kings usually in league with one another?*
9:2

When the twelve spies came back from looking over the land they said it was a country which "eateth up the inhabitants thereof" (Numbers 13:32). This may be a reference to the fact that these kings were constantly at war with each other. Certainly they were often attacked from the east and the south as kings from Mesopotamia and the Nile regions vied with each other for control of the land. Probably these kings were not normally united; but when they had a common foe, they forgot their usual differences and entered into a pact against Joshua and the Israelites.

Deceit of the Gibeonites 9:3-15

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

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;

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.

6 And they went to Joshua unto the camp of 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.

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

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

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,

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

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 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 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.

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

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

3. *Where was Gibeon?* 9:3

According to Josephus, it was 40-50 stadia from Jerusalem; and judging from its name, it was built upon a hill. It is to be found in the modern *el Jib*, about six miles to the northwest of Jerusalem. A village of moderate size, on a long chalk hill now overlooks a very fertile, well cultivated plain, or rather a basin, consisting of broad valleys and plains. The hill rises like a vineyard in the form of separate terraces. The remains of large massive buildings of great antiquity are still to be seen there. There are also some fountains and two large subterranean reservoirs. The Gibeonites lived in a city which was the head of four towns occupied by the Hivites—Gibeon, Chephirah, Bee-

roth, and Kirjath-jearim (verse 17). It was something of an independent republic (1) with elders (verse 11), (2) with no king—since none is mentioned, (3) and with a name as a royal city (10:2). It was situated at the head of the pass of Beth-horon and commanded the main route from Jerusalem and the lower Jordan Valley to Joppa and the seacoast. The town was inhabited by a numerous and brave population. Gibeon was therefore one of the most important cities of southern Canaan. A team of archaeologists from the University of Pennsylvania Museum made excavations in 1960 which attest the fact of the existence of the city of Gibeon. These citizens made famous in the Bible spent a great portion of their funds to build defenses against attack. Dr. James B. Pritchard, director of the museum in the Biblical Archaeology section, reported these findings after five years of excavations at the Arab village of *El Jib*, Jordan, the site of the ancient Gibeon. The excavations were conducted in cooperation with the American School of Oriental Research in Jerusalem. The director of the museum, Dr. Froelich Rainey said that the team of archaeologists uncovered the existence of an elaborate system of civil defense which was designed to enable Gibeon to withstand indefinite siege. Also near the town was a cemetery dating some two thousand years before Christ. This cemetery contained thirty-six rock-cut tombs which illustrated burial customs and shed light on the details of the Gibeonites' daily life, several hundred years before they made peace with the Israelites. According to the report the civil defense system involved construction of two walls which encircled Gibeon. There was also a camouflaged tunnel leading from inside the inner wall to a nearby spring which insured adequate water supply. The outer wall probably was built prior to the time when the Gibeonites made peace with Joshua. The large inner walls erected in the days of the early Israelite kings were prob-

ably erected after Gibeon was conquered by King Seshonk or Shishak in Egypt around 945 B.C. From all appearances the city of Gibeon was able to resist attacks until about 586 B.C. when the Babylonians under King Nebuchadnezzar laid waste the city while on his victorious march to Jerusalem.

4. *Who were the Gibeonites?* 9:4

They were inhabitants of a republic which included not only Gibeon, the capital, but the towns of Chephirah, Beeroth, and Kirjath-jearim. Gibeon was larger than Ai, being one of the royal cities (see 10:2), and was inhabited by Hivites, who were a brave people (10:7; 11:19). It was afterwards allotted to the tribe of Benjamin and set apart as a Levitical town (18:25; 21:17). After the destruction of Nob by Saul, the Tabernacle was removed thither; and there it remained until the building of Solomon's temple (I Chronicles 16:39; 21:29; I Kings 3:4, 5; II Chronicles 1:3 ff.). They are called Hivites in verse seven, but they were all of Canaanite background and origin.

5. *What means did the Gibeonites use to deceive Israel?*
9:5

They had old sacks upon their asses. These were large bags, usually of hair, in which the Orientals pack their supplies for convenient transport on the backs of animals. In these were all the baggage and commodities required for the journey. Beds, boxes, provisions, pots, packages of goods, all are carried in such bags, slung over the back of the animal, one hanging at each side. Being knocked about and exposed to the weather, these saddlebags, as one might call them but for their size, suffer damage in a long journey; and hence the Gibeonites took old bags to convey the impression that a long journey had been made. They also had wine bottles, i.e., skin bottles, of which classical antiquity has afforded many representations. In

the East the wine was preserved not in casks but in earthen jars and leather bottles made of the skins of goats, oxen, buffaloes. These were turned inside out, washed, and rubbed over with warm mineral tar or naphtha. The wine would be drawn out at one of the feet by opening and closing the cord with which it was tied. This explains how the bottles could be "old," "rent," and "bound up." It also explains the caution of our Lord against pouring new wine into old bottles, lest they should be burst by the wine (Mark 2:22). The Gibeonites wore old shoes—"sandals" made of hide or palm-leaves and papyrus stalks (cf. Mark 6:9). They were "clouted," sewed with patches. The men also wore "old garments." Ambassadors usually appear in clean and decent, if not in splendid, raiment. These men broke custom to put forward their deceit. Their bread was "dry and mouldy." The Hebrew word translated "mouldy" is the same which is rendered by "cracknels" in I Kings 14:3. It denotes a kind of crisp cake. The ordinary bread, baked in thin cakes, was not made to keep more than a day or two, a fresh supply being baked daily. If kept longer it dried up and became excessively hard. It was this kind of bread which the Gibeonites produced and they indicated its hardness—hard as biscuits—in evidence of the length of the journey.

6. *Did the people of Israel go back to Gilgal by Jericho?*
9:6

We assume that after the setting up of the Law on Gerizim and Ebal, Joshua did not conduct the people with their wives and children back again to the camp which they had left in the Jordan valley on the east side of Jericho. He must have chosen the Gilgal which was situated upon the mountains and only seven hours' journey to the south of Shechem as the future place of encampment. He probably made this the central point of all his further military operations (see II Kings 4:38; Hosea 4:15; 9:15;

12:11; Amos 4:4; 5:5; cf. I Samuel 7:16; 10:8; 11:14, 15; 13:7-9). This is a spot alluded to in Deuteronomy 11:30, "beside the plains of Moreh," and near the site of Abraham's first altar (Genesis 12:6, 7). There is a spot called Jilgillah, a few miles from Bethel.

7. *Why did the Israelites question the Gibeonites?* 9:7

God had told the Israelites to destroy completely all the people of the land of Canaan. They were given permission to make peace with nations which lived far off from the Promised Land, but they were not to make any leagues with those who lived within the borders of the country. Nothing about the costume of the Gibeonites would have caused the Israelites to suspect that they lived among them, but they were being careful as they interrogated the ambassadors. When the Gibeonites stoutly affirmed they were from a land which was quite distant, the Israelites were fooled and entered into the league with them.

8. *What was the motive of the Gibeonites?* 9:9, 10

The Gibeonites were afraid they would be destroyed. They openly affirmed this in verse twenty-four. They also vowed that they were impressed because of what God had done in destroying the kings east of the Jordan. They had heard "the fame of him and all that he did in Egypt" (v. 9b). Some commentaries feel the Gibeonites very wisely made no mention of the crossing of the Jordan River or the destruction of Jericho. If they had been from a very far country, they might not have heard of these most recent events.

9. *What was the Ashtaroth?* 9:10

Ashtaroth was an ancient city of Asia and lay east of the Jordan (Deuteronomy 1:4; Joshua 12:4; 13:12, 31). The location was in the land given to the half-tribe of Manasseh when they settled in Gilead. The town was the center of crude worship offered in adoration of Astarte

and was the capital city of Og, king of Bashan. The site of the ancient city has been identified with Tell Ashtarrah and lies twenty-one miles east of the Sea of Galilee on a hill which is surrounded by a well watered plain. By calling attention to this place in particular, the Gibeonites may have been suggesting their country was in a locale beyond this point and an area which would be outside the border of the Promised Land.

10. *What is the meaning of "took of their victuals"?* 9:14

A marginal reading in the King James Version is as follows: "They received the men by reason of their victuals." There is no evidence that the men of Israel tasted of the wine or partook of the mouldy bread. The author is simply saying Joshua and his leaders were impressed by the evidence which was presented to them. They did not take time then to ask counsel of God in the matter. This was a grave mistake and led them into an unholy alliance which caused grief both to the Gibeonites and to the Israelites in later times.

The Servitude of the Gibeonites 9:16-27

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 neighbors, and that they dwelt among them.

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.

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

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.

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 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 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.

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

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 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.

11. *How far away was Gibeon?* 9:16

Depending upon the exact location of the camp of Israel, the city of Gibeon could not have been more than a few hours' journey away from the spot where they met Joshua. If Joshua and the Israelites were encamped at the Gilgal which was in the country of Ephraim, they were indeed very close to Gibeon. Even if Joshua led the people

back to the Gilgal which was near Jericho, the Gibeonites did not have to travel more than a few hours to reach the camp of Israel. They were indeed neighbors to Israel. The Israelites came to the cities of Gibeon, Chephirah, Beeroth, and Kirjath-jearim on the third day after they broke camp. When the Israelites got there, they honored their covenant and let the Gibeonites live.

12. *Could the Israelites have broken their oath with justice?* 9:18

No doubt from the standpoint of strict justice the Israelite rulers would be under no obligation to observe the treaty which they had made with the Gibeonites in full faith in the truth of their word. But the princes of Israel shrank back from breaking the oath, which, as is emphatically stated in verse nineteen, they had sworn by Jehovah the God of Israel. They were afraid of bringing the name of the God of Israel into contempt among the Canaanites, which they would have done if they had broken the oath which they had sworn by their God. Some of the Israelites must have wanted to break the covenant, for we read later that Joshua restrained the people and delivered the Gibeonites out of the hand of the children of Israel so that they did not slay them.

13. *What disposition was made of the Gibeonites?* 9:21

Although the rulers of Israel let the Gibeonites live, they did not let them go unpunished. They made them to be "hewers of wood and drawers of water" for all the congregation of Israel. Such a phrase indicates that they were forced to do the most servile kind of labor. Their service was evidently largely connected with the offering of sacrifices at the Tabernacle. These sacrifices would demand a great deal of wood for the fire on the altar. They also called for a large quantity of water for the sanitation necessary to the offering of animal sacrifices.

14. *Did the Gibeonites cause them any trouble?* 9:22

As soon as they discovered their error, the princes were bound to do all in their power to ward off from the congregation the danger which might arise from their being drawn away to idolatry. This was the very thing which the Lord had intended to avert by commanding all the Canaanites to be destroyed. They warded off trouble by making the Gibeonites slaves of the sanctuary. Their conduct is never blamed either by the historian or by the history, inasmuch as it is not stated anywhere that the Gibeonites, after being made into temple slaves, held out any inducement to the Israelites to join in idolatrous worship. At a future time God Himself reckoned the attempt of Saul to destroy the Gibeonites as an act of bloodguiltiness (II Samuel 21:1 ff.). This latter incident is the only record we have of their bringing any grief to Israel.

15. *What prophecy was thus fulfilled?* 9:23

The Gibeonites were to perform for the congregation the slave's labor of hewing wood and drawing water for the worship of the sanctuary. This was a duty which was performed, according to Deuteronomy 29:11, by the lowest classes of the people. In this way the curse of Noah upon Canaan (Genesis 9:25) was literally fulfilled upon the Hivites of the Gibeonite republic. Their servitude was only a token of the punishment meted out to all the heirs of Canaan. God was indeed fulfilling the promise made through Noah. No word of God is void of power.

16. *How did the Gibeonites know of God's promise to Moses?* 9:24

God had made the promise to give Canaan to Abraham's seed when Abraham first left Ur of Chaldees. The promise was repeated to Jacob as he fled from Esau. The

promise must have been common knowledge not only among the Israelites, but also among the Canaanites themselves. Moses had led the people to the southern border of Canaan forty years earlier. People living in Canaan may have learned of God's promise to give the land to the Israelites at that time. More recently, Moses had led Israel in the conquest of the kingdoms of Sihon, king of the Amorites, and Og, king of Bashan. The Canaanites would certainly see God was giving the land to Israel. Even if the Canaanites did not know of the exact wording of the promise, they would be able to interpret events of history and come to the conclusion that the Israelites were destined to possess the land. Their reference to the fact that it was told to them leads us to believe that they must have heard of the covenant itself.

TEN QUESTIONS ON CHAPTER 9

1. Name the six groups of Canaanites who came together against Joshua and Israel.
2. List five exhibits presented by the Gibeonites to prove their story.
3. Where was the camp of Israel when the Gibeonites came to them?
4. By what other name were the Gibeonites called?
5. What city in Bashan did the Gibeonites mention?
6. What other cities were associated with Gibeon?
7. What positions of servitude were the Gibeonites made to occupy?
8. Where was this service performed?
9. Were the Gibeonites performing this service when the book of Joshua was written?
10. What king of Israel broke this covenant?