

Commander Joshua in the Promised Land • Part 2 - Joshua's Story

Lesson #54 - "The Gibeonite Deception"

• HANDOUT •

► In this new study lesson: Israel is facing two enemies with two different diverse strategies.

► The first is a Confederation of Canaanites whose greatest desire is to drive Israel from the land. Based on Israel's loss at the battle at Ai, they now believe Israel is compromised and has a key military weaknesses which can be exploited. This Confederation was made up the Hittites, Amorites, Canaanites, Perizzites, Hivites and Jebusites who lived in the mountainous regions of Canaan.

The strategy of the Confederation was to prevent Israel from fighting just one city at a time, which was how they believed Israel defeated Jericho, and Ai, the second time around. With the Confederation Israel would now be facing a massive army that controlled the entire region and could attack them from different directions at the same time, thus stressing Israel's strength and resources. Of course, the one flaw in their strategy is that the Confederation didn't understand that when they were fighting Israel, they were also fighting Israel's God. They didn't know that "if God is for you, who can be against you?"

► The second threat is from the Gibeonite League who have plans to defeat Israel by infiltrating Israel's camp through systematic lies and deceit. Since the Gibeonites were using a strategy Israel did not expect, nor with which they familiar, Israel found themselves unknowingly vulnerable to this strategy.

Our first focus will be on the "second threat" – "The Gibeonite Deception"

► The Gibeonites were a Canaanite people. Their city was located 8 miles northwest of what is now Jerusalem. They did not want to join the Confederation's open warfare to get rid of Israel. Instead, they set out to deceive Israel into making a peace treaty with them. This would allow them to infiltrate their camp and ultimately provide the Gibeonites a safety net from God's edict that all inhabitants were to be driven from the Land. They began by forming a Gibeonite League who approached Joshua at Israel's camp at Gilgal, and pretended to be poor ambassadors from a far country. They wore old, patched garments, sandals that were falling apart. Their donkeys had old sacks covering them instead of blankets and their wineskins were torn and mended. The bread they carried was moldy. They spun a sad tale of needing a "treaty alliance" for their protection.

Q: If the Gibeonites wanted Joshua to think they were ambassadors from a distant non-Canaanite country, why was it necessary for them to dress so pathetically?

The Gibeonites, dressed in their disguise, approached Joshua and the Israelites

► Joshua 9:6, 7b-8 • Then they went to Joshua in the camp at Gilgal and said to him and the men of Israel, "We have come from a distant country; make a treaty with us."

The men of Israel said.. "But perhaps you live near us. How then can we make a treaty with you?"

"We are your servants," they said to Joshua.

But Joshua asked, "Who are you and where do you come from?"

Q: Why do the Gibeonites link together the concept that they had come from a distant country and their request: make a treaty with us?

Q: Why does Joshua seem suspicious?

► **Joshua 9:9-13** • They answered: "Your servants have come from a very distant country because of the fame of the LORD your God. For we have heard reports of him: all that he did in Egypt, and all that he did to the two kings of the Amorites east of the Jordan--Sihon king of Heshbon, and Og king of Bashan, who reigned in Ashtaroth. And our elders and all those living in our country said to us, "Take provisions for your journey; go and meet them and say to them, "We are your servants; make a treaty with us." ' This bread of ours was warm when we packed it at home on the day we left to come to you. But now see how dry and moldy it is. And these wineskins that we filled were new, but see how cracked they are. And our clothes and sandals are worn out by the very long journey."

Q: When the Gibeonites referred to themselves as "your servants" what are the implications of that statement?

Q: What motivation did they offer for them making their long journey to seek out the Israelites?

Q: What two types of proof did they offer as proof they were speaking the truth to Joshua?

- 1.
- 2.

► **Joshua 9:14-15** • The men of Israel sampled their provisions but did not inquire of the LORD. Then Joshua made a treaty of peace with them to let them live, and the leaders of the assembly ratified it by oath.

Q: What convinced Israel to go ahead and make a treaty with these people?

Q: What was the one terrible mistake that they made in this matter?

Q: What was the treaty that Joshua made with the Gibeonites?

Q: What is involved with the Leaders of the Assembly ratifying the treaty by oath?

Three Days Later the Gibeonite Deception is Revealed ...

► **Joshua 9:16-18** • Three days after they made the treaty with the Gibeonites, the Israelites heard that they were neighbors, living near them. So the Israelites set out and on the third day came to their cities: Gibeon, Kephirah, Beeroth and Kiriath Jearim.

But the Israelites did not attack them, because the leaders of the assembly had sworn an oath to them by the LORD, the God of Israel.

The whole assembly grumbled against the leaders, but all the leaders answered, "We have given them our oath by the LORD, the God of Israel, and we cannot touch them now.

Q: What is the irony in the statement that only three days later Israel discovered that they had really made a treaty with one of their neighbors?

Joshua finds a solution to satisfy their oath and to punish the Gibeonites ...

► **Joshua 9:20-21** • This is what we will do to them: We will let them live, so that wrath will not fall on us for breaking the oath we swore to them."

They continued, "Let them live, but let them be woodcutters and water carriers for the entire community."

So the leaders' promise to them was kept.

Q: What was the "wrath" Israel wanted to avoid at all costs?

Q: What was involved for the Gibeonites to be reduced to the menial service of "woodcutter and water carriers."

► The remainder of Chapter 9 deals with the Gibeonites explaining themselves. They told Joshua that they were forced to do what they did because the LORD, Israel's God had told them He was giving Israel the land and that all of the inhabitants were to be killed. They were very afraid and this was the only way they figured they could live and not die.

In essence, the Gibeonites chose to humble themselves and fight for a way to create peace between them and Israel. Therefore, the degrading sentence imposed on them was welcomed because it allowed them to live. They viewed their posture of helplessness as a means of gaining security.

► There was also a measure of faith involved in their stated reasoning. They knew the Israelites were duty-bound to treat them kindly because of the Covenant they had with the LORD God. This is confirmed by the Gibeonites' statement to Joshua: "And now, here we are, in your hands; do with us as it seems good and right to do to us."

The story ends with the statement in verse 27: *"That day Joshua made the Gibeonites woodcutters and water carriers for the community and for the altar of the LORD at the place the LORD would choose. And that is what they are to this day."*

Q: Did this treaty end up being a positive or negative event in Israel's history?

Q: What special understanding can we take away from the outcome of the Gibeonites?

**► Israel begins, in earnest, to settle the Promised Land
as the Lord has commanded.
Not only is the Lord's Presence with them, but the Lord fights for Israel.**



Next Time • Lesson #55
"The Lord Fights For Israel"

