
Joshua 9

Joshua 9:1–27

The Treaty with the Gibeonites

Outline of Chapter 9:

- v. 1–2 **The people of Canaan ally themselves in opposition to the Israelites**
- v. 3–15 **The Gibeonites obtain a treaty with Israel by deception**
- v. 16–21 **It is discovered who the Gibeonites are; Joshua meets with the congregation of Israel**
- v. 22–27 **Joshua meets with the Gibeonites and renders his final decision**

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- v. 6 **Is the End of Joshua 8 Misplaced, Chronologically?**
- v. 6 **Are there two campsites for the Israelites called Gilgal?**
- v. 22 **The Sequence of Events of the Gibeonite Treaty with Israel**

Introduction: Joshua 9 is an interesting chapter because we see how some of the men of the land of Canaan responded to Israel being there. They were afraid for their lives, they did not want to leave the land, so they pretended to come from a long distance and made a pact with Joshua by the name of God. Because this peace treaty was made in the name of God, it could not be broken. The representatives told Joshua that they would be their servants. This was, in part, just a saying, but it was one which could be taken literally. When Joshua discovered that they lived in a neighboring city, he was pissed off and made them men who cut down trees and made lumber and those who drew water for the Israelites. It was menial labor, but these men were happy to agree to this, as it meant their lives.

These Gibeonites are unsaved or just recently regenerated, and they therefore do not necessarily know the honorable way to approach God. However, it is clear from this chapter that they do believe in the God of the Jews, Jehovah, God of the Universe. We as unbelievers approached God from a variety of situations and in various and sundry ways. When we did, it was not always with the purest of motivation. Keep in mind that we all came to God as fallen, unregenerate men—therefore, our approach to him from a human standpoint could be seen as flawed. However, what is important is that we trusted in Jesus Christ; that we placed our fate in His hands. We may have done so for selfish reasons; we may have been beaten down by life; we may have been thinking, *well why not try this*. We are saved by what Christ did for us on the cross as He hung between heaven and earth; not by being good immediately prior to our salvation. We may have wanted God to get us out of a jam, we may have wanted back that gal or guy who dumped us, we might be in pain and at God's mercy and finally turn to Him in desperation. It really doesn't matter. There is nothing that we can do in this regard which is meritorious. We merely place our faith—faith the size of a mustard seed—in our Lord, and He takes care of the rest. Therefore, don't be so quick to judge the Gibeonites. Certainly, they should have come to Joshua with white flags, placing themselves at his mercy. That is, there are better approaches to God than the one which they took. However, they are unregenerate men or men completely lacking in spiritual growth. They are men who recognize that they are in a life-threatening jam. They see their only way out of being exterminated by the edict of God is to ally themselves with the savior, Joshua. Because of this act of human viewpoint, we have another one of the many illustrations of salvation which has lived on in Scripture for centuries. Their message is: no matter how unsavory your life has been—no matter how much those in the surrounding churches despise you—salvation is open to all by simply placing your trust in Christ.

Several commentators speak disparagingly of the Gibeonites. McGee says that Jericho represents the world, Ai the flesh, and Gibeon the devil.¹ A nice neat package, but I don't know how apropos it really is. Scofield takes strong issue with the Israelites for this treaty and points out how it resulted in many problems for the Israelites,

¹ J. Vernon McGee, *Joshua Judges*, ©1976 by Thru the Bible Books; p. 57.

but that is just not the case. It would be great to make an analogy between the Gibeonites and our old sin nature, the treaty being the fact that in this life we will never be free of our old sin nature, but that would be inaccurate. Even Geisler and Howe, in their excellent book, *When Critics Ask*, write *Although the Gibeonites did become the servants of the people of Israel, they were also a constant source of trouble throughout Israel's history.*² However, the authors do not substantiate this, as such a view is not supported by Scripture. The Gibeonites are simply unbelievers or recently regenerated men who have no idea how to approach God, and so they seek God by deceit. One of the primary reasons given for the Israelites to remain isolated from the heathen is because of their heathen gods and grotesque acts of worship. However, once the Gibeonites entered into a contract with Israel, *they acted rightly in this respect, [which] is evident from the fact that 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, and still more from the fact, that at a future period God himself reckoned the attempt of Saul to destroy the Gibeonites, in his false zeal for the children of Israel, as an act of blood-guiltiness on the part of the nation of Israel for which expiation must be made (2 Sam. 21:1ff), and consequently approved of the observation of the oath which had been sworn to them, though without thereby sanctioning the treaty itself.*³

At the end of this chapter, we have quite the interesting set of meetings. The heads of state and Joshua agree to a treaty with Gibeon, and who the Gibeonites are comes to light prior to what would have probably been a devastating invasion. Because the people discover that there is a treaty with the men of Gibeon, they began to murmur amongst themselves. This evolves into a meeting with the heads of state and the heads of the people. The people would like to attack Gibeon, and very likely just for their personal possessions. The heads of state indicate that this is quite impossible as a treaty has been struck and an oath taken in the name of God. The heads of the people realize that this does put them in a bind and they do not have a choice any more; that they must honor the treaty. Joshua has one final meeting with the Gibeonites, to affirm that the treaty still stands and that they will not invade Gibeon.

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The People of Canaan Ally Themselves in Opposition to the Israelites

Literally:

And so it came to pass in a hearing of all the kings who [were] beyond the Jordan in the hill country and in the lowland and in all of [the] coast of the Sea the Great unto the Lebanon—the Hittites, the Amorites, the Canaanites, the Hivites and the Jebusites—

Joshua
9:1

Smoother English rendering:

And so it came to pass when all the kings who were beyond the Jordan heard—that is, those in the hill country, those in the lowlands, and those who lived along the sea coast of the Mediterranean all of the way to Lebanon—that is, the Hittites, the Amorites, the Canaanites, the Hivites and the Jebusites;

After *it came to pass* we have the bēyth preposition and the Qal infinitive construct of *shâma* (שָׁמָע) [pronounced *shaw-MAH*], which means *to listen intently, to listen and obey, to listen and give heed to, to hearken to, to be attentive to, listen and take heed to*. Strong's #8085 BDB #1033. When followed by an infinitive, the bēyth preposition forms a periphrasis for the gerund and is generally expressed by the conjunctions *while, when*.

Then the groups of heathen who heard about Israel are named first by location, and then by ethnic origins. The first word which describes their location is *ēber* (עֵבֶר) [pronounced *GAY^e-ver*] and it means *region across, beyond, side*. With the bēyth preposition, it means *beyond*. Strong's #5676 BDB #719. This is followed by *the Jordan*. Even though the Israelites are now west of the Jordan, they still refer to this area as being *the region*

² *When Critics Ask*; Geisler and Howe, ©1992, Victor Books, p. 140.

³ Keil & Delitzsch's *Commentary on the Old Testament*; ©1966 Hendrickson Publishers, Inc.; Vol. II, p. 74.

beyond the Jordan. Then we have the (masculine singular of) har (הַר) [pronounced *har*], which means *hill, mountain, hill-country*. Strong's #2042 (and #2022) BDB #249.

The next geographic descriptor is the feminine singular sh^ephêlâh (שְׁפֵלָה) [pronounced *sh^efay-LAW*], which means *lowland, valley*. The Scofield KJV transliterates that word here and in Deut. 1:7, considering it to describe a particular area, whereas the KJV gives it a cacophony of renderings (*low country, low plain, plain, vale, valley*). Strong's #8219 BDB #1050. Scofield: *This section of the Holy Land is bounded on the north by the Valley of Aijalon, on the west by the Maritime Plain, on the east by the central Plateau, and reaches to Beersheba on the south. It is characterized by low, rounded chalk hills, divided by several broad valleys.*⁴ Barnes more simply calls this the *lowland country between the mountains and the sea coast*.⁵ Keil and Delitzsch identify Gibeon with the modern city *Jib*, northwest of Jerusalem, situated on a chalk hill overlooking a basin of broad valleys and plains. There remain to this day *massive buildings of great antiquity...fountains and two large subterraneous reservoirs*.⁶

What follows is, literally, *in all of [the] coast of the sea the great*. Then we have the preposition *el* (אֶל) [pronounced *el*], which means *in, into, toward, unto, to, regarding*. Strong's #413 BDB #39. This is followed by the definite article and the proper noun *Lebanon*.

Then the inhabitants of the Land of Promise are named. You will recall what the spies of Num. 13 said: “*Amalek is living in the land of the Negev and the Hittites and the Jebusites and the Amorites are living in the hill country, and the Canaanites are living by the sea and by the side of the Jordan.*” (Num. 13:29). But God had given them the promise: “*My Angel will go before you and bring you to a land of the Amorites, the Hittites, the Perizzites, the Canaanites, the Hivites and the Jebusites; and I will completely destroy them.*” (Ex. 23:23). The Land of Promise is filled with a half-dozen or so groups of people living in what are essentially *city-states*, or *city-kingdoms* (as the NIV Study Bible calls them). Gen. 15:19–21 identifies 10 groups of people who occupied the land during the time of Abraham; and herein are mentioned six peoples. These peoples had also migrated from elsewhere.

This chapter begins with two very different scenarios. On the one hand, the indigenous peoples of the Land of Promise band together in opposition to Israel. On the other hand, you have a city, the next city on the hit list, which re-thinks this situation. The Gibeonites observed several groups of people falling before Israel east of the Jordan and at least two cities west of the Jordan; therefore, they carefully weigh their options and what appears to be the best choice under these circumstances, they choose not to band in opposition to Israel.

And so they gathered together to fight with Joshua and with Israel one mouth. Joshua 9:2 **And so they gathered together to engage in war against Joshua and against Israel with one accord.**

The first verb is the Hithpael imperfect of qâbats (קָבַץ) [pronounced *kaw-BATS*], which means *to gather, to grasp with the hand, to seize, to collect*. Strong's #6908 BDB #867. The Hithpael is the reflexive of the Piel. They have gathered themselves together. This is further modified by the adverb *yachad* (יַחַד) [pronounced *YAH-khahd*], which means *together, alike, all together*. Strong's #3162 BDB #403. The purpose is stated with the lâmed preposition and the Niphal infinitive construct of lâcham (לָחַם) [pronounced *law-KHAHM*], which means *to fight to do battle, to war*. The Niphal is not always the passive, but it can also refer to an action in a state of progress or development; therefore we add in the word *being*. It can express adjectival ideas and it can, in plural forms, stress the individual effect upon each member of the group. Occasionally, the Niphal acts as a reflexive of the Qal. With this stem, the verb appears to mean *engage in battle, engage in war, to wage war*. Strong's #3898 BDB #535.

We have also the preposition *im* (אִם) [pronounced *g^eem*] used twice; it means *with*. Strong's #5973 BDB #767. They gather to engage in warfare with Joshua and with Israel. At the end of this verse we have the

⁴ *The New Scofield Reference Bible*; Dr. C.I. Scofield; ©1967 New York-Oxford University Press; p. 217.

⁵ *Barnes' Notes*, Baker Books, ©1996; Vol. II, p. 371.

⁶ Quoted and paraphrased from Keil & Delitzsch's *Commentary on the Old Testament*; ©1966 Hendrickson Publishers, Inc.; Vol. II, p. 71.

masculine singular substantive *peh* (פֶּה) [pronounced *peh*], which means *mouth*. Strong's #6310 BDB #804. This is further modified by the number *one*. This means that they all agreed. They were of *one mouth*. This alliance did not form overnight. A conference of the kings was certainly called, or various messages were sent, and then a treaty was drawn up. The Gibeonites were doubtless given the opportunity to ally themselves with the other kings. What we have in the next couple chapters are the stories of who decided to side with whom. In Joshua 10:3–5, we read: **Therefore, Adoni-zedek of Jerusalem sent to Hoham, king of Hebron; and to Piram, king of Jarmuth; and to Japhia' king of Lachish; and to Debir, king of Eglon, saying, "Come up to me and help me and let us attack Gibeon, for it has made peace with Joshua and with the sons of Israel."** So the five kings of the Amorites—the king of Jerusalem, the king of Hebron, the king of Jarmuth, the king of Lachish, the king of Eglon—gathered together and went up—they, with all their armies, and camped by Gibeon and fought against it. Asaph, the Psalmist, comments on such actions: **They make shrewd plans against Your people, and conspire against Your treasured ones. They have said, "Come and let us wipe them out as a nation, that the name of Israel be remembered no more." For they have conspired together with one mind. Against You, they make a covenant** (Psalm 83:3–5). The five kings which act first are from the immediate area of Gibeon, because Gibeon allied herself with Israel.

We don't know just exactly what transpired here because only a small portion of Scripture was written from the standpoint of omniscience. That is, the author does not have the ability to be in two places at once to observe; therefore, details of where he was not are accurate, but sketchy at best. Keil and Delitzsch seem to think that prior to this confederation, Gibeon chose to ally herself with Israel instead. I don't know that was their proper order of things. No doubt several heads of state—that is, leaders from the various surrounding city-states in the Land of Promise—got together to discuss the impending disaster that they all faced. I would not be surprised if the men of Gibeon gave the impression that they were going to be a part of this alliance and then, almost immediately afterward, banded themselves with Israel. It is possible that they only told the men of their country *we'll think about it*; but it is more likely, judging from their actions in obtaining a treaty from Israel, that they were more underhanded than that. It is also possible that the Canaanite alliance and the treaty between the Gibeonites and Israel were almost simultaneous actions, both arising from the destruction of Jericho and Ai. Both of these actions resulted in chapter 10, a showdown between the Canaanite alliance and Israel, who will defend Gibeon. I would think that the finalization of these two pairs of alliances occurred almost simultaneously, setting the stage for Joshua 10.

These first two verses serve as an introduction to the next three chapters. By the end of Joshua 8, everyone in the Land of Canaan is acutely aware of the invasion of Israel and the next few chapters follow many of the related events. Joshua is clearly split into two basic sections (or three). This is the introduction to the remainder of the first section.

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The Gibeonites Obtain a Treaty with Israel by Deception

And [the] inhabitants of Gibeon heard what⁷ Joshua had done to Jericho and to Ai

Joshua
9:3

And the inhabitants of Gibeon heard all that Joshua had done to Jericho and to Ai.

Paraphrased from Barnes: Gibeon was the lead of four towns, which were occupied by the Hivites (Joshua 11:19), who were also called Amorites (II Sam. 21:2), which was a general name given to all the indigenous peoples of the land of Canaan. The name *Gibeon* is gib^e ʿôn (גִּבְעוֹן) [pronounced *gibv^e-GŌHN*]. Its root word is gi^bv^e ʿâh (גִּבְעָה) [pronounced *gi^bv^e-GAW*], which means *hill* (Strong's #1389 BDB #148). Strong's #1391 BDB #149. This indicates that Gibeon, like many of the cities of the land, was built upon a hill. In terms of location, Gibeon was just south of Bethel and would have been next on the list of Joshua's sweep through the land. There has been uncovered just five miles north of Jerusalem an archeological site on a rounded hill called el-Jib, which has

⁷ In the Septuagint and the Vulgate, we have *And the inhabitants of Gibeon heard all which Joshua had done to Jericho and to Ai*. Not a major difference, but a difference nonetheless.

remains from the Late Bronze Age of a city with an excellent water supply, which has been identified as Gibeon.⁸ Barnes: *It stands at the head of the pass of Beth-horon, through which lies the main route from Jerusalem and the lower Jordan valley to Joppa and the sea coast.*⁹ Gibeon was one of the largest cities in central Palestine, and with it were three smaller, dependant cities. Also notice that other than that one dubious mention in the previous chapter, Bethel is not alluded to in this verse (or at all in this chapter).

What the inhabitants of Gibeon had heard was: “It was certainly told to your servants [the Gibeonites are speaking] that Jehovah 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.” (Joshua 9:24b). So the people shouted, and the priest blew the trumpets; and it came to pass, when the people heard the sound of the trumpet, that the people shouted with a great shout and the wall fell down flat, so that the people went up into Jericho, every man straight ahead, and they took the city. And they utterly destroyed everything in the city, both man and woman, young and old, and ox and sheep and donkey, with the edge of the sword...And they burned the city with fire and all that was in it. Only the silver and gold and the articles of bronze and iron did they place into the treasury of the tent of Jehovah (Joshua 6:20–21, 24). Now it came about when Israel had finished killing all the inhabitants of Ai in the field in the wilderness where they pursued them, and all of them were fallen by the edge of the sword until they were destroyed, then all Israel returned to Ai and struck it with the edge of the sword. And all who fell that day, both men and women, were 12,000—all the people of Ai. For Joshua did not withdraw his hand with which he stretch out the javelin until he had utterly destroyed all the inhabitants of Ai. Israel took only the cattle and the spoil of that city as plunder for themselves, according to the word of Jehovah which He had commanded Joshua. Then Joshua burned Ai and made it a heap forever, a desolation until this day. And he hanged the king of Ai on a tree until evening (Joshua 8:24–29a). So Jehovah was with Joshua and his fame was in all of the land (Joshua 6:27). Obviously, the inhabitants of Gibeon did not want to suffer the same fate as their immediate neighbors in Ai and Jericho. The people of Gibeon know that God will destroy them through the Israelites if they don't do something.

And so they [even] they furthermore prepared in cunning; and so they went and so they supplied themselves with provisions and so they took worn-out sacks for their asses and wineskins, worn-out and torn and mended.

Joshua
9:4

Furthermore, they acted with cunning, and prepared provisions such as worn out sacks on their mules and worn out and mended wineskins.

You may notice a major difference between what I have done and what your Bible reads in the middle of this verse. Therefore, it might help to see what several translators have done here.

<i>The Emphasized Bible</i>	...they however acted craftily, and went and started,—and took old sacks for their asses, and leathern wine bottles, old and rent, and bound up;
NAB	[the inhabitants of Gibeon] put into effect a device of their own. They chose provisions for a journey, making use of old sacks for their asses, and old wineskins, torn and mended.
NJB	...they had recourse to a ruse. They provided themselves with supplies, and loaded their donkeys with old sacks and with old wineskins which had burst and been sewn up again.
NRSV	...they on their part acted with cunning: they went and prepared provisions, and took worn-out sacks for their donkeys, and wineskins, worn-out and torn and mended,...
Owen's Translation	They on their part acted with cunning and went and made ready provisions and took worn-out sacks upon their asses and wineskins, worn-out and torn and mended.
REB	...they resorted to a ruse; they set out after disguising themselves, with old sacks on their donkeys, old wineskins split and mended,...

⁸ *The NIV Study Bible*; ©1995 by The Zondervan Corporation; p. 300 and *Barnes' Notes*, Baker Books, ©1996; Vol. II, p. 371.

⁹ *Barnes' Notes*, Baker Books, ©1996; Vol. II, p. 371.

The Septuagint

And they also wrought craftily, and the went and made provision and prepared themselves; and having taken old sacks on their shoulders, and old and rent and patched bottles of wine,...

Young's Lit. Translation ...and they work, even they, with subtilty, and go, and feign to be ambassadors and take old sacks for their asses, and win-bottles, old, and rent, and bound up.

This verse begins with the wâw consecutive and then with the verb ʿâsâh (עָשָׂה) [pronounced ʿaw-SAWH] which means *to do, to make, to construct, to fashion, to form, to prepare*. Strong's #6213 BDB #793. This is followed by the adverb gam (גַּם) [pronounced gahm] which means *also, in addition to, moreover, furthermore*. Strong's #1571 BDB #168. Then we have the masculine plural pronoun *they*. This is followed by the bêyth preposition and the feminine singular substantive ʿor^emâh (וְעָרְמָה) [pronounced or^e-MAW or gor-MAW], which means *craftiness, prudence, cunning; with bêyth, craftily*. Strong's #6195 BDB #791. These few words are variously rendered *they on their part acted with cunning* (Owen); *and they work, even they, with subtilty* (Young); *they however acted craftily* (Rotherham); *they also acted craftily* (NASB). The verb gives us an overall scenario—they prepared or acted in cunning. The emphasis is upon the inhabitants of Gibeon acting alone and acting with great cunning.

The next few verbs describe their individual actions. Each verb is tied together with a series of wâw consecutives. The first verb is the Qal imperfect of the very common verb hâlak^e (הָלַךְ) [pronounced haw-LAHK^e], which means *to go, to come, to depart, to walk*. Strong's #1980 (and #3212) BDB #229.

This is followed by another wâw consecutive and the Hithpael imperfect of tsîyd (צִיַד) [pronounced tseed], and it means *to supply oneself with provisions, to take as provisions*. Strong's #6679 BDB #845. Now, that is according to Owen. There is both a reference to this word in BDB and to Strong's #6737 in BDB (p. 851 for the latter). The second word is given in BDB as tsîyr (צִיר) [pronounced tseer], which means *messenger, ambassador*. As you can see, the words differ in the last letter, which could be a dâ'leth (ד) or a rêysh (ר). Both meanings seem to be apropos, although I find the former to be the most logical. However, other translations have translated that word as *pretending to be ambassadors* (*The Amplified Bible*); *set out as envoys or traveled as envoys* (NASB); *made as if they had been ambassadors* (KJV); *feign to be ambassadors* (Young). Owen, the NRSV and *The Emphasized Bible* translate this as I have. It is a tough call as to what the REB, NAB and NJB did, as their translations are even freer than mine.

Again we have a wâw consecutive and the Qal imperfect of lâqach (לָקַח) [pronounced law-KAHKH] which means *to take, to take from, to take in marriage, to seize*. Strong's #3947 BDB #542. They seized their provisions. However these provisions were worn-out things, to give the impression that they had traveled a far distance. They had *seized* sacks (plural of sackcloth), which is described by the adjective bâleh (בָּלֵה) [pronounced baw-LEH], which means *old, worn out*. Strong's #1087 BDB #115. The sacks were *for their asses*.

They also carried *skins of wine* described again as *worn out*. Then these skins are further described with two verbs, the Pual participle of bâqa^ʿ (בָּקַעַ) [pronounced baw-KAHQ], which means *to cleave, to break open, too break through*. Here, as a Pual participle, it means *to be torn through*. Strong's #1234 BDB #131. The second verb used is the Pual participle of tsârar (צָרַר) [pronounced tsaw-RAHR], which means *to bind, to tie up, to be restricted, to be cramped*. In the Pual, it means *to be mended by tying*. Strong's #6887 (and #3334) BDB #864. The mending alluded to here is more of a crude tying together, as opposed to something as neat as a needle and thread. Let's say a wine skin developed a leak in the bottom, then they would turn the wineskin upside down, bind it with strings, and draw it together at the tear like one would draw together a purse. At home or on a more leisurely journey, a burst wineskin would be repaired with a patch.

And sandals, worn out and patched on their feet and clothes worn out upon them and all of [the] bread of their provisions was dry—it was crumbles.

Joshua
9:5

And there were worn out, patched sandals on their feet and they were wearing worn out clothes and all of their bread was dry and crumbled.

The previous verse stopped right in the middle of the thought. V. 5 picks up with the same explanation of how they are dressed and how they appear. We find again the word for *worn out* and another Pual participle. The verb is *tâlâ'* (אָלַף) [pronounced *taw-LAW*], and it has been generally found in the Qal participle to refer to the *patched* or *variegated* markings of a sheep or goat (Gen. 30:32–33). Here, in the Pual participle, it means *patched*. Strong's #2921 BDB #378. The *bêyth* preposition is used to designate *nearness* or *vicinity* or *motion to a place*, so as to be *at* or *near* it. Proximity is the key. It may be rendered *at, by near, on, before, in the presence of, upon*. No Strong's # BDB #88.

Their clothes are called worn out and a different preposition is used to describe the clothes as being *upon* them. We tend to use the same preposition—to put our shoes *on*, to put our clothes *on*, to put our hat *on*. The Israelites used different prepositions. Here we have the preposition *'al* (אָל) [pronounced *ahl*], which means, primarily, *upon, against, above*. Strong's #5920, #5921 BDB #752. With this is the third person, masculine singular suffix.

The last sentence, after describing the bread as *dry*, quickly uses the Qal perfect of the verb *to be* and the masculine plural noun *niqqûddîym* (נִקְוֹדִים) [pronounced *nik-kood-DEEM*], which means *crumbled, in crumbs*. Strong's #5350 BDB #666. The interesting thing about the sentence structure is that the phrase *all fo the bread* is masculine plural; *of their provisions* is masculine plural; and here the verb is masculine singular and the noun is masculine plural.

I like Edersheim's description: *In this camp at Gilgal a strange deputation soon arrived. Professedly, and apparently, the travellers had come a long distance. For their garments were worn, their sandals clouted, their provisions dry and mouldy, and the skins in which their wine had been were rent and "bound up" (like purses), as in the East wine-bottles of goat's skin are temporarily repaired on a long journey. According to their own account, they lived far beyond the boundaries of Palestine, where their fellow-townsmen had heard what the Lord had done in Egypt, and again to Sihon and to Og, wisely omitting from the catalogue the miraculous passage of Jordan and the fall of Jericho, as of too recent date for their [charade]...Attracted by the name of Jehovah, Israel's God, who had done such wonders, they had been sent to make "a league" with Israel.*¹⁰

One thing which is not ever pointed out by fundamentalist commentators is that they came to Israel, believing in God, in deceit and self-preservation. God still took them in all of the deceit and they were still saved alive. The evangelist often tells us that we need to come to God with a clean heart, desiring to do better, turning away from our sins; but, the clear fact of the matter is that we are fallen. Our old sin nature is against God. Without God's Word, and God's grace, I am a completely fallen person. On the one had, I can see a need for morality and order in life; on the other, I don't have a natural, innate desire to uphold or to follow that which is moral and orderly in my life. Apart from God and His Word, my natural instinct is, given the right circumstances, to do whatever is in my own self interest, morality be damned. Did you know that you can come to God with a fallen heart, with no desire to do right, only to turn to Him for your salvation and your life because you know with Him is salvation and life? This is what the inhabitants of Gibeon did. They could be more deceiving. Will God turn them away? Will God order them killed? Will they spend eternity in hell because they come to God in deception and self interest?

And so they went unto Joshua unto the camp the Gilgal and so they said to him and to [the] man of Israel, "From a land far away we have come. And now make with us a covenant."

Joshua
9:6

And so they traveled to Joshua at the camp at Gilgal, and they said to him and to the men of Israel, "We have come from a land far away. Now, make a covenant with us."

The first thing which we naturally notice is that Joshua and the rest of Israel is at Gilgal. This gives us two options—is this the Gilgal which was given that name upon the crossing of the Jordan or is this a different Gilgal where the Israelites are at? Recall that in the previous chapter we saw the Israelites trek up to Mount Ebal and Mount Gerizim, although the trekking park is not actually mentioned. Now we have them either still at Gilgal or at another place also called Gilgal. However, we do not have any mention of them leaving there or going there.

¹⁰ Alfred Edersheim, *Bible History Old Testament*; ©1995 by Hendrickson Publishers, Inc.; p. 320.

In this verse, as throughout most of Scripture, *man* is used in the collective sense, the plural being found only in Proverbs 8:4, Psalm 141:4 and Isaiah 53:3.

Chronology and the Campsite(s) Gibeon

Now, it is also important to note that the men of Gibeon are motivated to participate in this deception because of what Joshua did to Ai and Jericho. Therefore, the bulk of Joshua 7 and 8 have already occurred. So we have the following four options:

1. Joshua 1–9 is in chronological order; Joshua destroyed Jericho and Ai, then went up to worship at Mount Ebal and Mount Gerizim, and then they returned to Gilgal on this side of the Jordan. The trip to and from Mount Ebal and Mount Gerizim is not alluded to.
2. Joshua 1–9 is in chronological order, but the Israelites go to a second location more centrally located also called Gilgal. The difference of the Gilgal's is never alluded to and the trek to and from the two mountains is also not covered. Keil and Delitzsch appear to lean toward #1 or #2.
3. A 3rd possibility is that Joshua 1–9 is not exactly in chronological order. The defeat of Jericho occurs first, then the attack upon Ai, then possibly Bethel (although we don't know here); and then we have the treaty with Gibeon. During all of this time period, Israel remains camped at Gilgal. The trek up to Mount Ebal and Mount Gerizim does not occur until much later. We have no explanation as to why it is placed at the end of Joshua 8. This third explanation solves two problems. If the trek to Mount Ebal and Mount Gerizim is not a major undertaking; that is, it is just the appropriate thing to do, then there is no need to mention it. If this portion of God's Word is not in chronological order, then there is no connection needed between the defeat at Ai and the worship at the mountains. The biggest problem solved is the problem of Gilgal. If Joshua 8:30–35 is simply misplaced, then the Israelites are still at the original Gilgal when the Gibeonites come to make peace. They have been there since their attack on Jericho; everyone knows where this is; and it is close by the Gibeonites. This is the position of Barnes. Obviously, I am wavering between #2 and #3.
4. The least likely scenario is for Joshua 1–9 not to be in chronological order and for there to be two different camp sites called Gilgal.

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When I examined the remarks of the various expositors whose opinions I value, Keil and Delitzsch swung my vote to either #1 or #2; however, when I stand back and look at this from a distance, #3 seems to be the most logical. It deals with the problem of a 2nd Gilgal (there doesn't have to be one); and it deals with the problem of the trip from Gilgal to Mount Ebal and Mount Gerizim. There was no special trip in the middle of their military campaign, because there was no special trip. Nor did they have to return to Gilgal if they had finished with their defeat of the land. It introduces the problem *why is this trip suddenly found at the end of Joshua 8?* There is no manuscript evidence for it being anywhere other than the end of Joshua 8.

Barnes sides with the 3rd possibility, as he writes: *[While] Joshua was engaged in more distant enterprises, the women, children and property of the Israelites were left with a sufficient guard at this place, where they had been established immediately after crossing the Jordan.*¹¹ And: *It is difficult to escape the conviction that these verses are here out of their proper and original place.*¹²

Is the End of Joshua 8 Misplaced, Chronologically?

Yes...

No...

¹¹ *Barnes' Notes*, Baker Books, ©1996; Vol. II, p. 372.

¹² *Barnes' Notes*, Baker Books, ©1996; Vol. II, p. 370.

<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. One day we are in Gilgal by Jericho, and suddenly the next, without a single word of explanation, we find ourselves quite a distance away at Mount Gerizim and Mount Ebal. 2. Just because Joshua 8:30–35 is misplaced chronologically doesn't mean that Joshua or someone else accidentally misplaced it. The Old Testament is not written in a perfect chronological order in the original Hebrew or in the Greek Septuagint. 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. If there is a 2nd <i>Gilgal</i> near Mount Gerizim and Mount Ebal, then there is no reason to mention a trip between the two places. 2. There is no manuscript evidence anywhere that I am aware of which places the last half-dozen verses of Joshua 8 anywhere else.
<p>A more complete chart is given in Joshua 8:29; however, the possibility of another Gilgal is also an issue in this.</p>	

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In Joshua 5:9–10, Gilgal was both named and given to be where Israel camped: [Then Jehovah said to Joshua, “Today I have rolled away the reproach of Egypt from you.” So the name of that place is called Gilgal to this day. While the sons of Israel camped at Gilgal, they observed the Passover on the evening of the fourteenth day of the month on the desert plains of Jericho.](#) However, there appears to be another Gilgal near the mountains of Ebal and Gerizim. [“And it will come to pass, when Jehovah your God brings you into the land where you are entering to possess it, that you will place the blessing on Mount Gerizim and the curse on Mount Ebal. Are they not across the Jordan, west of the way toward the sunset, in the land of the Canaanites who live in the Arabah, opposite Gilgal, besides the oaks of Moreh?”](#) (Deut. 11:29–30). I must admit to being rather nonplused by this. Curious as to what I would find in the Septuagint, I found that in Deut. 11:30, we have the city Golgol (Γολγὸλ) [pronounced *gohl-GOHL*]; in Joshua 5:9–10 and 9:6 we have Galgala (Γάλγαλα) [pronounced *GAL-gala*]. In the Hebrew, we have the same word, although, recall, the vowel points were added hundreds of years after the time of our Lord and the Septuagint was translated a couple hundred years before His incarnation. Had the Septuagint named the Gilgal of Deut. 11:30 and Joshua 9:6 as the same Gilgal, it would tilt the scale toward the end of Joshua 8 being correctly placed and the Israelites camped in a new place following their dedication at Mount Ebal and Mount Gerizim. On the other hand, finding the same Gilgal in Joshua 9:6 as in Joshua 5:10 would indicate that the Israelites were encamped in the same place on both occasions, calling into question the chronological placement of Joshua 8:30–35. This is based upon, recall, the Septuagint.

There are things that we should consider which may not be immediately obvious here. When we get to the end of Joshua 8, we will suddenly find ourselves on Mount Ebal and Mount Gerizim, without any explanation as to how we got there. This is quite unusual, as Joshua generally is specific as to his comings and goings (see Joshua 8:3 10:7, 43). If the end of Joshua 8 has been misplaced, then that would make the need for a 2nd Gilgal less likely. Furthermore, the attack of Joshua from Gilgal upon the armies which threatened Gibeon suggests an attack from the east (Gibeon would be due west of Gilgal by Jericho). If there were a 2nd Gilgal where Joshua and Israel camped—one located near Mount Ebal and Gerizim, north of Gibeon—then the direction that the enemy troops will scatter to in Joshua 10 would make little or no sense.

It is difficult to unravel a paragraph here and a paragraph there supporting this position and then that one, so let me summarize the arguments below in a chart.

Are there two campsites for the Israelites called Gilgal?	
Reasons in favor of this position:	Reasons against this position:
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. The march from Gilgal by Jericho to Mount Ebal and Mount Gerizim is quite far to have occurred without a mention of the trip. 2. There is a Gilgal mentioned by Moses which places it near Mount Gerizim and Mount Ebal. “And it will come to pass, when Jehovah your God brings you into the land where you are entering to possess it, that you will place the blessing on Mount Gerizim and the curse on Mount Ebal. Are they not across the Jordan, west of the way toward the sunset, in the land of the Canaanites who live in the Arabah, opposite Gilgal, besides the oaks of Moreh?” (Deut. 11:29–30). In the Hebrew of the Massoretic text, the <i>Gilgal</i> in this verse is spelled exactly the same way as <i>Gilgal</i> throughout the book of Joshua. 3. When Joshua took his troops out to fight, if Gilgal was located only by the Jordan, then his women and children would be unsafe. 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Nowhere in Joshua do we see a distinguishing between two different Gilgal’s. Joshua goes into a lot of detail about a lot of things, yet never mentions or implies that there are two different campsites, both called Gilgal. 2. Although we are not there yet, in Joshua 10:10, we will see an attack which Joshua will make in defense of Gibeon. If the attack comes from Gilgal near Jericho, then the troop movement makes perfect sense. If this is not the case, then either important details and strategy are missing, which is uncharacteristic of Joshua’s writing. 3. Even though there is a <i>Gilgal</i> mentioned in Deut. 11:29–30 which is near Mount Ebal and Mount Gerizim, it is spelled differently in the Greek. Recall that the original Hebrew had no vowel points, only consonants. So, these could have been clearly different places to the Hebrews back in the time of Joshua, but the distinction between them might not be as clear to the Masorite Jews of the 7th century AD who added the vowel points 2000 years later. 4. The least safe place for a centralized camp would be a <i>Gilgal</i> located slightly in the north of Canaan. Joshua conquered the southern portion of Canaan first, and had not conquered any cities in northern Palestine. Therefore, his women and children would have been less safe in the north. However, this is really a non-issue. Nowhere does Joshua indicate that he ever left the women and children without protection. Recall that we are dealing with one of the largest armies in the history of man. Joshua is not going to take every single male on every single mission.
Implications of this position:	Implications of this position:
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. The end of Joshua 8 is correctly placed, chronologically-speaking. 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. The end of Joshua 8 is probably misplaced, chronologically speaking.

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I should point something else out. With all this discussion, there is no contradiction here, there is no real problem with the passage. I happen to be stickler for details in some areas—I have a moderately analytical mind—and so I like to keep a running dialogue as to what is happening here and here. I am curious as to whether there are two different *Gilgal*’s, both serving as an encampment for Israel; I wonder if the end of Joshua 8 was misplaced, and I wonder why no movement from Gilgal to the mountains is ever mentioned.

The men of Gibeon speak to Joshua and to his entourage. Moses appeared to spend most of his time with Joshua. Joshua appears to have a cabinet with him a great deal of the time. Moses spoke to God to make his

decisions, or he made them on his own. Joshua ran a slightly different kind of government, allowing the thoughts and opinions of those under him to play a part in his decision-making process. One of the things which most people don't realize is that the Bible does not depict a particular type of government or even a particular type of church government as ideal. With regards to the latter, people will go to Scripture and argue that there should be a council of sorts which oversees the policies and doctrines of several churches; others argue that there should be but one pastor in each church; others believe in a plurality of elders. It is my opinion that all of those scenarios existed in the Church Age and none is given precedence over another. In the realm of the government of a country, a wide range of government is not presented; however, there is no indication that one government is superior over another. I was raised in a generation which liked to blame *the system*. However, it is not the system which is at fault, it is the men in government, regardless of the type of government. A government which curtails evangelism could be seen as an evil government, but such occurred in the time of Paul, and he did not encourage civil disobedience. He recognized that it was not the form of government which was the problem, it was the men in charge. If you revolt and remove one man or group from power, then another one will spring up in its place, perhaps better and perhaps worse than before. When speaking to government officials, Paul did not denounce their form of government, but he spoke to them as people, as individuals, just as our Lord did. Having been himself once a man who persecuted Christians, Paul fully realized that the problem was in the individual soul, not in some *nebulous system*. **For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the powers, against the world forces of this darkness, against the spiritual forces of wickedness in the heavenlies** (Eph. 6:12).

The people of the land knew that God had given the land to Israel and that Israel was going to destroy all the people in the land. That does not give them a lot of options. They can leave their homeland entirely, which means traveling through a great deal of hostile area and attempting to settle in an area which is strange and foreign to them. They can oppose Israel, and face certain death, as they believed that their God, Jehovah, was the true God of the Universe. Although they do not know for certain, Israel has been ordered to not make peace with any peoples in the land, but to kill them all. They are obviously operating on that true assumption.

Later, in v. 11, they will say, "We are your servants." When I first read that, I took it as an appropriate gesture of respect, rather than literally, e.g., years ago, when a man was introduced to a woman, he would often say, "I am at your service." There was no intent upon placing himself into voluntary servitude for an indefinite period of time, but to offer some sort of vague, general assistance as well as to indicate respect. However, that is not what is occurring here. They do not call themselves Joshua's servants in this verse. They first spoke to Joshua as equals. When Joshua hesitates in v. 7, then they present themselves as, "We are your servants." (V. 8). In the verses which immediately follow, they relate to the Israelites the reports of their victories and indicate that it is the will of their people to offer themselves as servants to Israel (v. 11). Here, they *chose submission rather than certain death*.¹³ Obviously, theologians vary in this matter. Certainly, the men of Gibeon were hoping for a congenial, self-serving alliance; however, when such an alliance was not immediately forthcoming from Israel, they immediately threw in "We are your servants." A related view, which may be even closer to the truth, is that they spoke this as more of a saying rather than meaning it as willing to place themselves in literal slavery to the Israelites—however, Joshua, ever the literalist, chose to take this literally. That is, in thinking back on their conversation, Joshua realized that they had offered this so accepting such an offer was not a breach of oral contract and was, therefore, no betrayal of their oath taken in God's Name.

And so [the] man of Israel said to the Hivites, "Perhaps in a midst of me you live. And how can we make with you a covenant?"

Joshua
9:7

And then the men of Israel said to these Hivites, "Perhaps you actually live in our midst. Under those circumstances, how could be make a covenant with you?"

Again we have the *man* of Israel used in the collective sense. The reason we know this is that it takes a plural verb.

¹³ *The NIV Study Bible*; ©1995 by The Zondervan Corporation; p. 300.

I would have expected the men of Israel to say, “Perhaps you are dwelling in our midst.” However, they use the phrase *a midst of me*. The verb which follows is the Qal active participle of *yâsha*^{bv} (יָשָׁא) [pronounced *yaw-SHAH^bV*], which means *to remain, sit, dwell*. Strong's #3427 BDB #442.

Joshua is with his advisors, which is apparently how he met with a foreign envoy. At this point, the men of Israel make their comments and confirm what the Hivites feared. There was to be no covenant between Israel and anyone who dwelt in the Land of Promise. This goes back to a mandate given by God in the book of Exodus: “**You will make no covenant with them or with their gods.**” (Ex. 23:32). This was reiterated by Moses in Deut. 7:2: “**And when Jehovah your God delivers them before you, and you defeat them, then you will utterly destroy them. You will make no covenant with them and you will show no grace to them.**” And again: “**When Jehovah your God gives it into your hand, you will strike all the men in it with the edge of the sword. Only the women and the children and the animals and all that is in the city, all its spoil, you will take as recompense for yourself; and you will use the spoil of your enemies which Jehovah your God has given you. Thus you will do to all the cities that are very far from you, which are not of the cities of these nations nearby. Only in the cities of these peoples that Jehovah your God is giving you as an inheritance, you will not leave alive anything that breathes, but you will utterly destroy them, the Hittite and the Amorite, and Canaanites and the Perizzite, the Hivite and the Jebusite, as Jehovah your God has commanded you, in order that they may not teach you to do according to all their detestable things which they have done for their gods, so that you would sin against Jehovah your God.**” (Deut. 20:13–18). However, this was the only indigenous group which attempted to make peace with the Israelites. **There was not a city which made peace with the sons of Israel except the Hivites living in Gibeon; they took them all in battle** (Joshua 11:19).

It is obvious from these passages that the Hivites were to be included in all of the peoples who were to be destroyed. It is also pointed out in this chapter that Joshua did not ask of God what he should do when meeting with these men. The problems pursuant to this treaty based upon falsehood will be dealt with in v. 22.

The men from Gibeon are twice identified as Hivites, here and in Joshua 11:19. The NIV Study Bible suggests that they are Horites, who are related to the Hurrians from northern Mesopotamia. ZPEB indicates that the Septuagint is consistent with the Hebrew text in distinguishing between the Horites, Hivites and Hittites. This is a topic which we took up back in Gen. 14:6.

And so they said unto Joshua, “Your servants we [are].” And so Joshua said to them, “Who [are] you? And from where do you come?”

Joshua
9:8

And so they said to Joshua, “We are your servants.” Then Joshua asked them, “Who are you and from where did you come?”

It is obvious that whoever decided to divide these verses was messed up. Vv. 4–5 should have been kept together. If the idea was to separate sentences, or at least different speakers, then this should have been separated into two verses. Let's deal with what the Hivites said first. They had already posed a treaty and did not get an immediate positive response. Now they come back stronger with the phrase “We are your servants.” As I mentioned, when I first read this, I thought nothing of it. I thought it was just like first meeting someone and saying, “I am Gary Kukis, at your service.” However, this was plan B; if a treaty was not immediately agreed to, then the envoy from Gibeon would offer themselves to the Israelites literally as slaves. This is what they would give in return for a treaty with Joshua and the Israelites. This is in keeping with what Moses told the Israelites to do in dealing with peoples outside of the land of Canaan who submitted to them immediately. “**When you approach a city to fight against it, you will offer it terms of peace. And it will come to pass, if it agrees to make peace with you and opens to you, then it shall come to pass that all the people who are found in it will become your forced labor and they will serve you.**” (Deut. 20:10–11).

Joshua has determined, as of this verse, that he is quite capable of determining who these men are on his own.

Keil and Delitzsch rightly observe: *[The Gibeonites] wisely say nothing about the miracles connected with the crossing of the Jordan and the taking of Jericho, since, “as the inhabitants of a very far distant region, they could not have heard anything about things that had occurred so lately, even by report” (Masius).*¹⁴

¹⁴ Keil & Delitzsch's *Commentary on the Old Testament*; ©1966 Hendrickson Publishers, Inc.; Vol. II, p. 72.

And so they said to him, “From a land very far have come your servants for a name of Y^howah your God for we have heard a report of Him and all which He did in Egypt.

Joshua
9:9

And then they said to him, “Your servants have come from a land very far away because we have heard of the fame of Jehovah your God and all that He did in Egypt.

It was interesting that the men of Gibeon knew that Israel would be open to a peace treaty with countries outside the Land of Promise. “When you approach a city to fight against it, you will offer it terms of peace. And it will come to pass, if it agrees to make peace with you and opens to you, then it will be that all the people found in it will become your forced labor and will serve you...so you will do to all the cities that are very far from you, which are not of the cities of these nations nearby.” (Deut. 20:10–11, 15).

The word for report is *shōma* (שׁוֹמָה) [pronounced *SHOW-mahg*], which means *fame, reputation, report, tidings, notoriety*. This is a very unusual word for Joshua to use for two reasons: (1) it is not found in the writings of Moses; and, (2) it is only found in three other places in Scripture (Joshua 9:9 Esther 9:4 Jer. 6:24*). It is very unusual for Joshua to use words which are not found all over. However, there is a very similar feminine noun and this has a very common verbal cognate, making it more likely that Joshua used this word. Since these men used this word, and since Joshua wrote the book of Joshua after it all took place, and since we find this word in Esther, my guess would be that it is a loan word. In any case, Joshua first heard the word here, liked it, and used it later in Joshua 6:24 (which he wrote later). Strong’s #8089 BDB #1035. It was true that these people did hear of the fame or notoriety of Israel from afar. Recall the testimony of Rahab: “For we have heard how Jehovah dried up the water of the Red Sea before you when you came out of Egypt and what you did to the two kings of the Amorites who were beyond the Jordan, to Sihon and Og, whom you utterly destroyed. And when we heard it, our hearts melted and no courage remained in any man any longer because of you; for Jehovah your God, He is God in heaven above and on the earth beneath.” (Joshua 2:9–10). God is in charge of evangelism and He saw to it that His fame was spread throughout the land in all directions. Those who heard determined whether to believe in Him or not. “In Your grace, You have led the people whom You have redeemed. In Your strength, You have guided them to Your holy habitation. The peoples have heard and they tremble.” (Ex. 15:13–14a). The Gibeonites will give their own testimony at the end of this chapter: “Because it was certainly made clear to your servants that Jehovah 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.” (Joshua 9:24).

“And all which He did to two of [the] kings of the Amorites who [were] beyond the Jordan; to Sihon, king of Heshbon and Og, king of Bashan who [lived] in Ashtaroth.

Joshua
9:10

“And all that He did to the two kings of the Amorites who live beyond the Jordan; both to Sihon, the king of Heshbon, and to Og, the king of Bashan, who lived in Ashtaroth.

You will recall that this takes us all the way back to Numbers 21. Moses was leading the Israelites through the land east of the Dead Sea. He had send messengers to Sihon, king of the Amorites, asking for safe passage through his country, guaranteeing that they would not strip his land bare. But Sihon would not permit Israel to pass through his border. So Sihon gathered all his people and went out against Israel in the wilderness, and came to Jahaz and fought against Israel. Then Israel struck him with the edge of the sword, and took possession of his land from the Arnon to the Jabbok, as far as the sons of Ammon; for the border of the sons of Ammon was Jazer. And Israel took all these cities and Israel lived in all the cities of the Amorites, in Heshbon, and in all her villages (Num 21:23–25). Once Moses had taken the land of the Amorites, he sent spies into Jazer (the border city), and then captured and its villages and dispossessed the Amorites which lived there. Then they turned and went up by the way of Bashan, and Og the king of Bashan went out with all his people, for battle at Edrei. But Jehovah said to Moses, “Do not fear him, for I have given him into your hand, and all his people and his land; and you will do to him as you did to Sihon, king of the Amorites, who lived in Heshbon.” So they killed him and his sons and all his people, until there was no remnant left him; and they possessed his land (Num. 21:33–35).

This tells us a great deal about the fame of Jehovah God of Israel. These men of Gibeon knew that they were next on His hit list. They knew for a fact that He was God and He would do what He would do. The psychology

behind their plan it quite interesting. They wanted to make a covenant with Joshua and the people of Israel. They knew that they were making this covenant under false pretenses and that Joshua and all Israel would know this fairly soon. However, obtaining their word was good enough. That was all they needed. They felt that they could trust the word of Joshua, even though it was obtained under false pretenses.

“And so our elders and all those inhabiting our land spoke to us, saying, ‘Take in your hand provisions for the way and go to meet them and you will say to them, “‘We are your servants. And now make with us a covenant.”’

Joshua
9:11

“And therefore our elders and all those inhabiting the land spoke to us, saying, ‘Take in your hand provisions for the journey and go to meet the Israelites and say to them, “‘We are your servants. Now, make a covenant with us.”’

Again, this story is a complete fabrication. We do not know how the people of Gibeon felt about this. Obviously, there was a majority of them who wanted to deal with this problem with some other method than confrontation. What this reminds me of is a movie, where a person in one scene says something, and then it pertains directly to the next scene or it segues unusually smoothly into the next scene. When they repeat what their people told them to say—**“We are your servants; now make a covenant with us.”**—this is at once a quote from what they were told to say and they say this with the force of an actual statement to Joshua and his men. I.e., the last phrase is both what their elders told them to say and it is exactly what they are saying to Joshua and his men at this time.

“This our bread, warm—we supplied ourselves [with] it from our houses in a day of our going forth to come to you. But now, behold, he is dry and he is crumbled.

Joshua
9:12

“This is our bread. It was warm when we took it from our homes the day that we departed to come to you. Now, observe, how it has become dry and crumbling.

The adjective describing bread is *châm* (חַמ) [pronounced *khawm*], which means *hot, freshly baked, warm*. It is only found here and in Job 37:17. Strong’s #2525 BDB #328. The first verb is the Hithpael perfect of *tsîyd* (צִיַד) [pronounced *tseed*] again, which means *to supply oneself with provisions, to take as provisions*. Strong’s #6679 BDB #845.

We then have the Qal infinitive construct of the verb *yâtsâ* (יָצָא) [pronounced *yaw-TZAWH*], which means *to go out, to come out, to come forth*. Strong’s #3318 BDB #422. This is followed by the very common verb, the Qal infinitive construct of *hâlak* (הָלַךְ) [pronounced *haw-LAHK*], which means *to go, to come, to depart, to walk*. Strong’s #1980 (and #3212) BDB #229.

They hold out their bread as proof of their long journey. The Hebrew obviously does not have a neuter gender. They hold out their bread as additional evidence that they have come from far away. It was freshly baked when they left and now it is crumbly.

“And these skins of the wine which we filled [were] new; and, behold, they have broken themselves through. And these garments of ours and our shoes are worn out from a greatness of the way exceedingly.”

Joshua
9:13

“And these wine skins which we originally filled were new, and now look, they have been torn. Our clothing and our shoes are worn out from the extreme length of this journey.”

The verb describing the wine skins is the Hithpael perfect of *bâqa* (בָּקַע) [pronounced *baw-KAHG*], which means *to cleave, to break open, too break through*. Here, as a Pual participle, it means *to be torn through*. Strong’s #1234 BDB #131.

The distance traveled is given by the masculine singular construct of *rôḇ* (רֹב) [pronounced *roh^bv*], which means *multitude, abundance, greatness*. Strong’s #7230 BDB #913. What follows is the Hebrew word *derek* (דֶּרֶךְ) [pronounced *DEH-rek*], which means *way, distance, road, journey. manner, course*. It could even mean *toward*,

to (we must get our word *direction* from this). Strong's #1870 BDB #202. This is further emphasized by the adverb מְּוֹד (מֵוֹד) [pronounced *m^e-ODE*] means *exceedingly, extremely, greatly, very*. Strong's #3966 BDB #547.

in addition to the bread, they present their shoes and wineskins as more evidence of their long journey. If anything, they overdid this. However, we would expect them to leave their camp with new bread, but with wine skins and shoes which were already partially worn.

And so took the men from their provisions and from a mouth of Y^ehowah they did not ask.

Joshua
9:14

And then Joshua's men examined the provisions, but they neglected to inquire God [about this story].

The first verb is the Qal imperfect of *lâqach* (לָקַח) [pronounced *law-KAHKH*] which means *to take, to take from, to take in marriage, to seize*. Strong's #3947 BDB #542. You will notice that in every set of circumstances, Joshua takes certain verbs and uses them over and over again. The second verb is the Qal perfect of *shâ'al* (שָׁאַל) [pronounced *shaw-AHL*], which means *to ask, to petition, to inquire*. Strong's #7592 BDB #981. The *they* in this verse, the *men*, are Joshua's men (in the Septuagint, this reads *leaders*). Prior to the proper name for God, we have the direct object and the masculine singular construct of the word *peh* (פֶּה) [pronounced *peh*], which means *mouth*. Strong's #6310 BDB #804. They examined the provisions of the strangers, but they did not inquire from God whether these men were telling the truth or not.

The chief weakness is not that of the Gibeonites, but Joshua's. **"Woe to the rebellious children," declares Jehovah, "Who execute a plan, but not Mine; and they make alliances, but not from My Spirit, in order to add sin to sin."** (Isa. 30:1). Joshua has already been given clear guidance as to what he should have done. **So Jehovah said to Moses, "Take Joshua ben Nun, a man in whom is the Spirit, and lay your hand upon him and have him stand before Eleazar the priest and before all the congregation; and commission him in their sight. And you will place some of your authority upon him, in order that all the congregation of the sons of Israel may obey him. Furthermore, he will stand before Eleazar the priest, who will inquire for him by the judgment of the Urim before Jehovah. At his command, they will go out and at his command they will come in, both he and the sons of Israel with him—even all the congregation."** (Num. 27:18–21). For guidance, Joshua was to go to Eleazar the priest and Eleazar would inquire by the Urim and Thummim as to how they should proceed. King David continually went to God to determine his course of action (see I Sam. 22:10 30:8 II Sam. 21:2).

There are major differences between the Church Age and the Age of Israel and what we find in this verse is an extremely important one. People read this verse in their personal trek through the Bible and decide that every single hour, they are going to pray to God whether they should make a right turn, or a left turn at the next signal; whether they should wear their green or red socks; etc. Or, perhaps they are not that goofy, but they still pray continually to God for direction. In prayer, we are talking to God. Prayer is one way when it comes to communication. It is highly unreliable when it comes to determining God's will. Most of the time people pray until they have enough nerve to do what they wanted to do anyway; or they figure which is the most painful, miserable thing to do, and they do that. Prayer just gives them enough fervor to do the most miserable thing, which they assume must be God's will. We do not determine God's will through prayer. Joshua only determined God's will through prayer if God directly spoke back to him or spoke to him through the breast plate of the priest. They do not have the complete guide book of Scripture. For almost each and everything they do, because only a handful of Israel is filled by the Holy Spirit and because nobody has the entire Word of God, they must ask God's guidance. We are not in that position anymore. We have God's complete Word to us. We can all be filled with the Holy Spirit. In this regard, it is a whole new ball game in comparison to Israel. Most of the time if we do what we know to be right and continually are filled with the Spirit, divine guidance is a piece of cake.

And so made to them Joshua peace and so he cut to them a covenant to their living [or, to their preservation of life] and so they swore to them the leaders of the congregation.

Joshua
9:15

And so Joshua made peace to them and he made a covenant which insured the preservation of their lives and the leaders of the congregation swore an oath to them.

The first verb is the Qal imperfect of the very common *ʿāsâh* (אָסָה) [pronounced *gaw-SAWH*] which means *to do, to make, to construct, to fashion, to form, to prepare*. Strong's #6213 BDB #793. The second verb is the Qal imperfect of *kârath* (כָּרַת) [pronounced *kaw-RAHTH*] and it means *cut off, cut down*. (Gen. 17:14 Lev. 17:10 Deut. 19:5 Judges 6:28, 30). I have included texts for every verb stem where the word is found in the Hebrew. However, the same word is used *to make* a covenant (Gen. 15:18 21:27 Ex.24:8 Deut. 4:23 9:9) and it is only found in that sense in the Qal stem. Strong's #3772 BDB #503. After the phrase *to them a covenant*, we have the lamed prefixed preposition and the Piel infinitive construct (with a 3rd person masculine plural of *châyâh* (חָיָה) [pronounced *khaw-YAW*], which means, in general, ❶ *to live, to have life*. It also means: ❷ *to continue safe and sound* (Joshua 6:17 Num. 14:38); ❸ *to live again, to revive* (I King 17:22 Ezek. 37:5); ❹ *to recover health, to be healed* (Gen. 20:7 Joshua 5:8); ❺ *to be refreshed* when one is weary or sad (Gen. 45:27 Judges 15:19). Notice how close it is to the verb *hâyâh* (הָיָה) [pronounced *haw-YAW*]? It means *to live, to have life*; in context, it means *to remain, to survive, to exist*. In the Piel stem, it does not mean to give life to a newly-born child (Job 33:4) nearly as often as it means *to sustain life, to deliver out of danger so that one remains alive, to preserve life* (Gen. 12:12 Ex. 1:17 I Sam. 27:11 Job 36:6). Strong's #2421 & 2425 BDB #310.

The next verb is the Niphal imperfect of *shâ'va'* (שָׁוַע) [pronounced *shaw-VAH*] means *to swear, to take a solemn oath, and often to extract an oath (from someone else)*. It is usually found in the Niphal, although its meaning is active. It is very close to the word *seven* and could be translated *to seven oneself, to take an oath seven times, to bind oneself seven times (or, by seven things)*. Strong's #7650 BDB #989. The first two verbs were in the masculine singular and the third was in the masculine plural. Joshua both made the covenant himself to them and the leaders did the same, ratifying his covenant with their oath. This oath was no doubt sworn to in the name of Jehovah God, and these oaths were binding. *"You will not use the name of Jehovah God casually, without respect."* (Ex. 20:7a). *"You will not swear falsely by My name, so as to profane the name of your God. I am Jehovah."* (Lev. 19:12).

An interesting question arises from the discussion that Keil and Delitzsch have on this verse. They point out that since Israel did not realize that the Gibeonites were from the land of Canaan, that the Israelite heads of state did not sin in entering into a covenant with them.. I don't know if I want to ponder the theological implications of that, except to say that only a few men of Israel were indwelt by the Holy Spirit; and that God had not been consulted in this matter. And, no matter how we want to interpret this, whether we sin in ignorance or in full understanding of the fact that we are sinning; in either case, it is a sin, a sin which must be cleansed by confession of sin (obviously, if we do not know it is a sin, we will not confess it; it will be forgiven when we confess another known sin). In any case, God deals with what happened, not with what should have happened. You might get married, divorced, married divorced, and then married again. On this third marriage, you may realize that the two divorces and these two remarriages were wrong and essentially sins. However, at that point in time you must pick up with your life as it is. You can't unscramble eggs. You don't divorce the third wife and go crawling back to the first. And that is the application which we take up here. We will speculate later as to what God would have said and what might have occurred had the Israelites done this correctly the first time; however, God takes things as they are and works His perfect plan through those circumstances.

So let's take a tangent from there. You might think that this is your light at the end of the tunnel—that you can go off and do whatever it is you want to do and, once you get tired of it, you come back to God and He will fix it. We have to be careful in that regard. God's plan is perfect and what He defines as sin is sin and when we opt for a life of sin and depravity (or a life of self-righteousness and snootiness), we are opting for second best. The mistakes that we make along the way will be there to haunt us for all of our lives. The believer who is a drug addict before or after salvation; the young girl who is pregnant and unmarried at age 16; the man who divorces his wife and loses contact with the children in order to pursue the latest model—these are not God's first choices for us and these will not result in our lasting happiness. In fact, there will probably be connected with these mistakes problems and pain which endure most of a life time. When we come back to God, we will be damn glad that He is a forgiving and loving God; but we will look back and wish we hadn't done what we did. Personally, I made some grievous mistakes, both as an unbeliever; and many, many more as a believer. Did God work all things together for good, despite my stupidity? He certainly did. Would I like to go back into time and undo those mistakes—damn right I would. I touched the hot stove and now I know not to touch a hot stove; furthermore, God kissed my hand and made it all better—but I sure wished I hadn't touched that stove in the first place. I look back

to many incidents in my life with great embarrassment, wishing that I hadn't been such a lousy witness for Jesus Christ and there is a lot that I wish I could undo.

Most of us, if approached by a young person inquiring whether or not he should try drugs, know that this is not only wrong but can cause great personal havoc. Most of us know that no one has ever been helped by the illicit use of recreational drugs. That is a no-brainer. You thinking about committing some sin—that is also a no-brainer. No one has ever committed a sin that suddenly made everything better than it was. The very nature of any sort of sin is that it does make things worse. Many of these sins will follow us for years and years to come. Let's say that you are a young person or a new believer and you aren't certain what sin is and what it is not. You have a very rudimentary knowledge of sin, mostly dependent upon your recollection of the Ten Commandments, three of which you can't really recall. That is when you listen to Paul. You don't make any major decisions. You don't choose to get an abortion, you don't choose to engage in pre-marital sex, you don't choose to get married, you don't choose to divorce, you don't choose to pick up and move (unless it is to get doctrine). You place all your momentous decisions on the back burner for a few months to a few years until you get enough doctrine to make some informed choices. **Was any man called circumcised? Let him not become uncircumcised. Has anyone been called in uncircumcision? Let him not be circumcised...Let each man remain in the condition in which he was called. Were you called while a slave? Do not worry about it; but if you are able also to become free, rather do that. For he who was called in the Lord while a slave, is the Lord's freedman; likewise he who was called while free, is Christ's slave. You were bought with a price; do not become slaves of men. Brothers, let each man remain with God in that condition in which he was called...Are you bound to a wife? Do not seek to be released. Are you released from a wife? Do not seek a wife** (I Cor. 7:18, 20–27). You have the information and it is up to you to act on it. I'm not going to follow you around and point out your shortcomings and sins. You certainly have a great cacophony of people in your periphery who will handle that for you. And if you're married, then you are lucky enough to have someone who will tally these for you, carefully record them for future reference, and periodically remind you of them.

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It Is Discovered Who the Gibeonites Are Joshua Meets with the Congregation of Israel

And it came to pass at [the] end of three of days after that they made to them a covenant and so they heard that neighbors they were unto them and in a midst of him, they [even] they were dwelling.

Joshua
9:16

And three days after they made a covenant with them, the Israelites discovered that these men were neighbors and that they also dwelt in the Land of Promise.

After *it came to pass*, we have the *min* preposition and the masculine singular construct of the noun *qâtseh* (קֵץ) [pronounced *kaw-TSEH*], which means *end, extremity*. With the *min* preposition, it means *at the end of, after*. Strong's #7097 BDB #892.

You will recall that Joshua did not just attack various places, but that he first sent out spies. These men from Gibeon were also aware of this, so they made certain that Joshua would find out that they were neighbors—the ones who were next on his hit parade. If their plan was to work, Joshua had to find this out. The precise mechanics of this are not revealed to us. It appears from the remainder of the passage that this envoy remained with Joshua until they were found out. This allowed their city-nation to determine what they would have to do. If the envoy returned, the nation knew they had peace with Israel. If the envoy did not return, they would be facing war and extinction.

This envoy was essentially offered as a living sacrifice for their peace. If they returned to their own, they knew they had peace. If they perished, they knew that there was no peace. They had entered into an environment which was hostile to them, risking their lives for their own. You will notice that we have somewhat of an analogy here. **He was in the world...and the world did not know Him** (John 1:10a, c). **For He Himself is our peace, who**

made both one, and broke down the barrier of the dividing wall (Eph. 2:14). If this envoy returned to their people, then their people knew that they had peace. “And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again.” (John 14:3a). We certainly are not talking an analogy is great as the one presented by Abraham and his son when Abraham went to sacrifice him to God, but it is a reasonable analogy. It is obviously one which we cannot pursue too far, as it will break down after a point. In the next verse, we will find out that in three days, the Israelites discovered who the Gibeonites were, just as some of the disciples discovered after the three days our Lord was in the center of the earth, Who He really was (see the testimony of Thomas after our Lord was raised again and presented Thomas with His nail-imprinted hands and feet in John 20:24–29).

And so set out sons of Israel and so they came unto their cities in the day the third and their cities: Gibeon, and the Chephirah and Beeroth and Kiriath-jearim. Joshua 9:17

And so the sons of Israel set out and they came to their cities on the third day; the cities of Gibeon, and Chephirah and Beeroth and Kiriath-jearim.

V. 17 gives us a bit better idea as to what happened. The sons of Israel—and my guess here, is the men of war—were sent out. This is because in the next verse, it will say that *the sons of Israel did not strike them down*, indicating that they had the power to do so. Obviously, this is not a three day march, either from Mount Ebal and Mount Gerizim; nor from their original campsite at Gilgal. We don't know if there was a battle during this three day period of time, or whether the sons of Israel moved in a circuitous route, fanning out in an ever-widening circle. The most likely event is that they arrived at Gibeon on the third day. We don't know if they were following this envoy back or were scouting the area to determine where to strike next. Although it is not specifically stated, the envoy from Gibeon must have returned to Gibeon. Otherwise, I cannot come up with some scenario in which Israel suddenly discovered that they were at treaty with the Gibeonites. If the Israelites march to this area and find out that this is where the Gibeonites actually live, then the men of Gibeon either had to lead them there or arrive there first to inform their people that they had a bond with Israel. In any case, when the sons of Israel came to these cities, they somehow knew that these were the people with whom they had made a covenant of peace. What seems most likely to me, is that the representatives of Gibeon returned to their cities, and, when the leaders of Israel moved closer to Gibeon and the other three cities, the original envoy came out to meet them. The other possibility is that men from Gibeon came out to meet them carrying a document stating the terms of their peace with Israel and that these documents would no doubt be recognized by the sons of Israel.

What we have here is a different kind of alliance. It appeared at first that we were just dealing with the men of Gibeon. This either indicates that Gibeon branched out into several cities or that Gibeon was the ring-leader of this alliance of cities which made a peace treaty with Israel. When Joshua discovers this deception, he declares these men as the slaves of Israel, to draw water and to cut wood. Most of us have little or no idea how much water we actually consume or use in a day, but it is an incredible amount. Keeping water supplied to a city would be a great and arduous task.

The Gibeonites are called Hivites Joshua 9:7, and remnants of the Amorites in II Sam. 21:2. I believe that remark takes the Amorites as a general name for the various peoples who occupied the Land of Promise and that the Hivites were a particular tribe. These two tribes are seen as separate in Gen. 10:15–17, identifying them both as descendants of Canaan. This treaty of peace also contained within it a provision of protection, that, in case of war being waged against Gibeon, the Israelites were obligated to participate in that war. Such a battle will ensue in Joshua 10. This is the very famous battle of the sun standing still at Joshua's command. The Benjamites later took over the land of the Gibeonites, placing the servitude of the Gibeonites under the tribe of Benjamin (Joshua 18:25–21:17). David honored this treaty hundreds of years later in II Sam. 21, making atonement for Saul's attempt to commit an act of genocide against them. The Gibeonites, still somewhat of a separate entity hundreds of years later, participated in the rebuilding of the walls of Jerusalem.

Chephirah was a city slightly southwest of Gibeon (Barnes positions it 8 or 9 miles west of Gibeon; Keil and Delitzsch position it a three hour walk west of Gibeon in the mountains), and they are listed by Ezra as people who returned from the exile in Ezra 1:25 and Neh. 7:25 (along with Kiriath-arim, Beeroth and Gibeon—called Gibbar in Ezra 1:25). Its ruins may be examined in the site of Kefir today. We do not know the exact location of Beeroth today, although Barnes places it 8 miles north of Jerusalem and Eusebius places it seven miles from Jerusalem

on the road to Neapolis.¹⁵ Keil and Delitzsch claim that it still exists in the large village of Bireh, *north of Jerusalem in a stone a barren district, and has still several springs and a good well, besides the remains of a fine old church at the time of the Crusades.*¹⁶ Hundreds of years later, two sons of Rimmon, a Beerothite, while serving under Ishbosheth, one of Saul's sons, as captains, murdered Ishbosheth while he was sleeping (II Sam. 4). One man of this city was a member of David's elite force (II Sam. 23:37).

Kiriath-jearim (also known as Kiriath-arim and several other derogatory names), was on the border between Judah and Benjamin (Joshua 15:9 18:14–15). It is south-southwest of Bethel, and due west of Jerusalem, roughly 9 miles away along the road to Jaffa. Kiriath-arim possibly means *city of groves*, and likely received that name because of its olive and fig groves. Today, its modern equivalent, Kurit-el-Enab, is known for its vineyards.¹⁷ Prior to the conquest of the land by Israel, Kiriath-jearim was probably known both as Baalah (Joshua 15:9) and as Kiriath-baal (Joshua 15:60). These names obviously set this city aside as one time being a city of heathenism with an emphasis upon Baal worship. The ark of the covenant, after having been captured by the Philistines, was returned first to Beth-shemesh and then transferred over to Kiriath-jearim (I Sam. 6:19–7:2). Soon thereafter, it was returned to Jerusalem (I Sam. 6:1–15 I Chron. 13:5–14 15:2–28 II Chron. 1:4). As to the exact relationship between the cities—a common ancestor, an extension of Gibeon, or a treaty—is never made clear in Scripture. These cities would be given over the tribe of Benjamin in Joshua 18:25–26, with Kiriath-jearim going to Judah.

Most commentators identify these cities as a confederation or as a republic under Gibeon. I'm not certain that we have enough information to conclude that this had been a long-standing relationship. What I see is a emergency meeting called of all the kings of the Land of Canaan in which information is exchanged and finally a bond between the city-states is formed. The representative from Gibeon may have expressed a plan which did not involve banding together to withstand Israel, but throwing themselves at their mercy. After a confederation had been formed between all the peoples of Palestine, no doubt that the representatives from Gibeon, Chephirah, Beeroth and Kiriath-jearim met later and discussed an alternate plan. Whether they had been a republic of some sort before or not is not really given.

But [the] sons of Israel did not kill them because the leaders of the congregation had sworn to them in Y^ehowah, the God of Israel. And so all of the congregation murmured against the leaders.

Joshua
9:18

But the sons of Israel did not kill them because the leaders of the congregation had sworn to them by Jehovah, the God of Israel. However, all of the congregation murmured against its leaders.

The honoring of the treaty is something again mentioned in Psalm 15:4: **In whose eyes a reprobate is despised, but he honors those who fear Jehovah. He honors an oath even to a despicable person.** Our word should be our bond. Most Christians have no concept of this right here. If they buy a house and the property values go down, they walk away from it. When you bought that house, you made a pledge to a mortgage company or other lender that you would honor the terms of your debt. You did not make a pledge to that lender to pay as long as the house held its value or as long as you happened to be in a strong real estate market. As believers, we don't get to pick and choose which contracts we will honor and which ones we will break. When we give our word to someone, it should be just as binding as any legal contract. When we place ourselves under contract for whatever reason, then we are bound by that contract, to both its intent and verbiage. Here, Israel entered into a contract where they were defrauded. Do they break this peace agreement because they were deceived? No, they don't. They swore by Jehovah their God and therefore, this peace agreement stood up. **So do not be hasty in word or impulsive in thought to bring up a matter in the presence of God. For God is in heaven and you are on the earth; therefore, let your words be few** (Eccles. 5:2).

¹⁵ In the Greek, this is written Nicopolis, which Keil and Delitzsch correct as *Neapolis* in Keil & Delitzsch's *Commentary on the Old Testament*; ©1966 Hendrickson Publishers, Inc.; Vol. II, p. 73. Eusebius, by the way, as an ecclesiastical historian from circa 300 A.D.

¹⁶ Keil & Delitzsch's *Commentary on the Old Testament*; ©1966 Hendrickson Publishers, Inc.; Vol. II, p. 73.

¹⁷ Alfred Edersheim, *Bible History Old Testament*; ©1995 by Hendrickson Publishers, Inc.; p. 321.

In v. 15 and in this verse we have the masculine plural noun *nâsîy'* (נָשִׂיךְ) [pronounced *naw-SEE*], which means *one lifted up, leaders, chiefs, princes*. Strong's #5387 BDB #672. We have three sets of people mentioned here: *the sons of Israel*, which refers primarily to the military force; *the leaders of the congregation*, those who formed the cabinet of Joshua and participated in the political and military decisions; and *all of the congregation*, which refers to all of the people of Israel, women included. The people, falling back into their old patterns, began to mumble and complain to one another. They spoke disparagingly of Joshua's leadership and felt that he and his cabinet had completely mishandled the situation. The NIV Study Bible's comment is outstanding: *Perhaps the people feared the consequences of not following through on the earlier divine order to destroy all the Canaanites, but more likely they grumbled because they could not take over the Gibeonite cities and possessions.*¹⁸

This murmuring sets off a meeting between the heads of state and those leaders who represent the people of Israel. It is akin, in theory at least, to a meeting between the House of Commons and the House of Lords. There are two sets of leaders—those who are under Joshua and those who represent the people. Joshua is likely presiding over this impromptu meeting. It is doubtful that we have the entire meeting recorded here. It boils down to the leaders of the people are saying that they should go ahead and wipe out the Gibeonites and the leaders under Joshua explain to them that a treaty has been made in the name of Jehovah God, and therefore that treaty, regardless of the surrounding circumstances, cannot be broken.

And so spoke all of the leaders unto all the congregation, "We [even] we have sworn to them by Y^howah God of Israel; and now we are unable to touch them.

Joshua
9:19

And all of the leaders spoke to all of the congregation, "We have sworn to them by Jehovah, God of Israel, and now we are unable to touch them.

Need to look over the last phrase, which follows *and now*.

The Emphasized Bible ...now therefore, we may not touch them.
NASB ...and now we cannot touch them.
Young's Lit. Translation ...and now, we are not able to come against them;

It begins with the negative and then the Qal imperfect of *yâkôl* (יָכֹל) [pronounced *yaw-COAL*], which means *to be able, to have the ability, to have the power to*. Strong's #3201 BDB #407. This is followed by the lamed prefixed preposition and the Qal infinitive construct of *nâgâ* (נָגַח) [pronounced *naw-GAHÇ*], which means *to touch, to reach out and touch*. This verb is very similar to another verb which means *to strike down, to kill*; this verb is not quite as strong, but there is a potential for harm indicated. Strong's #5060 BDB #619. I would expect the direct object and the 3rdperson masculine suffix, but the end of this sentence has the *beyth* preposition with the 3rdperson masculine suffix. You will notice that you must change the last verb to get a word-for-word translating to allow for the *beyth* preposition, or just treat it as the sign of a direct object. In BDB, we read: [*beyth is*] occasionally [used]...with verbs of speaking, thinking, mentioning, knowing, to denote the object of the action.¹⁹ Although that does not exactly apply here, it is close.

Keil and Delitzsch: *But how could the elders of Israel consider themselves bound by their oath to grant to the Gibeonites the preservation of life which had been secured to them by the treaty they had made, when the very supposition upon which the treaty was made, viz., that the Gibeonites had studiously deceived them by pretending that they had come from a very distant land? As they had been absolutely forbidden to make any treaties with the Canaanites, it might be supposed that, after the discovery of the deception which had been practised upon them, the Israelitish 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. And no doubt from the stand-point of strict justice this view appears to be a right one. But the princes of Israel shrank back from breaking the oath which...they had sworn by Jehovah the God of Israel. There were several reasons for this. (1) They had given their oath to these men by Jehovah their God, the God Who created the universe, the God Who is omniscient. It is foolish to give such an oath and then to cancel it because they were deceived. An omniscient God is not deceived. (2) An oath in*

¹⁸ *The NIV Study Bible*; ©1995 by The Zondervan Corporation; p. 301.

¹⁹ *The Brown-Driver-Briggs Hebrew-English Lexicon*; Hendrickson, ©1996, p. 90.

general is a binding transaction. (3) An oath made in the name of God is even stronger than an oath made by one's own character. Even though the oath was made apart from a consultation with God, it must stand as it was made in His name. (4) Had the men of Israel broken this oath, they would have, in essence, defiled the name and character of God. (5) You don't fix one mistake by making another. You may have gotten divorced and remarried, and both of these acts were mistakes. This does not mean that you can solve things by getting divorced again. (6) We also know that this was the correct thing to do because God ratifies this treaty in the next chapter by assuring Joshua that he would be victorious against the coalition of Amorites who threatened the Gibeonites. Had God wanted these men destroyed, He would have told Joshua to cool his heels and allow the Amorites to destroy Gibeon. (7) Since the Gibeonites were now in league with the Israelites and the Israelites were in league with God, that places the Gibeonites in league with God. It is just like when we are in Christ, we are in the family of God. (8) Finally, it would be expected that those who represent the God of truth would be men of truth themselves. If Joshua was to exemplify the truthfulness of God, then he must stand by his oath taken in the name of God.

I have personally been in situations where I have given my word to someone, and it has not been to my benefit, and I've wanted to retract it—however, I cannot, as I have given my word. They gave their word and confirmed it with an oath by Jehovah their God. They cannot retract that. There is no stronger oath that they can take. It would not matter how terrible these people are—they must honor their oath and God honors this oath as well. As late as the time of King Saul, hundreds of years later, King Saul is disciplined for killing some Gibeonites (II Sam. 21). As a Christian, do not make any promises to anyone else—whether God or some individual—that you do not have every intention of keeping. And if you cannot be taken at your word, then do not, under any circumstances, reveal to those around you that you are a Christian. You are an embarrassment to Jesus Christ if you give your word flippantly with no intention of keeping it unless it is in your best interest. **But above all, member of the family of God, do not swear, either by heaven or by earth or with any other oath; but let your yes be yes, and your no, no; so that you may not fall under judgment** (James 5:12). Here the person making the oath thinks that it is more meaningful because they swear by heaven, or on a stack of Bibles. Your word is your reputation. Whatever you say, you stick by it. It is as simple as that. Malachi, speaking for God, places those who swear falsely along side of adulterers, those who are involved with demons, and those who take advantage of others in paying them low wages (Mal. 3:5).

Second question: why didn't God interfere? Why did He contact Joshua and tell him that these were Gibeonites and not men from far outside the land? This is the same question as the woman why bitches and moans, "Why did God allow me to marry that so-and-so?" God gives us freewill. If the crux of God's plan was to avoid mistakes and sin, then He would make us wear blinders and beat us half to death until we agree to His will. However, that is not the key to God's plan. Our volition is the key to His plan. The choices that we make day in and day out are the key to His plan. We do receive discipline when we do wrong, but God still allows us to choose afterwards. God allows our freewill to function and both the good choices that we make while indwelt and controlled by the Holy Spirit, as well as the bad when we accede to our old sin nature. God is glorified when we choose His salvation and take hold of His Son as our only Way of salvation. God allows Joshua to use his own freewill; He allows Joshua and his men to make mistakes. Once we believe in Jesus Christ, it doesn't mean that our life will be without mistake or difficulty. And if you have been telling that to potential converts, make certain that you confess that lie. Often, when we believe in Jesus Christ, our life becomes more intense and more difficult. It is because **we struggle not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the powers, against the world forces of this darkness, against the spiritual forces of wickedness in the heavenlies** (Eph. 6:12).

"This we will do to them and cause to keep them alive. And not be upon us wrath because the oath which we swore to them."

Joshua
9:20

"This we will do to them and we will cause to keep them alive. Do not vent your wrath against us because we are honoring our oath to them".

These are the heads of state under Joshua speaking to representatives of the people. The people are upset with them and their position on the people from Gibeon and the heads of state explain that they are simply honoring their oath to these people. What we have is a people who have been in the desert in temporary homes for forty years. They have had only possessions which they can carry with them. They are about to settle into the Land

of Promise and they would like to settle in with some wealth. Given that Jericho was burned to the ground and that Ai was a very small city, the goods which had thus far been taken in spoil were very small compared to the number of Israelites. So far, we have the goods and spoil of 12,000 spread out to 2,000,000. Most people cannot deal with numbers like that, so to better explain, for every 167 Israelites, there was one man (or woman) of Ai whose goods and spoil they could share. Given that there was very little by way of wealth in the ancient world, that means there were damn few things to spread around. The Israelites knew that God would allow them to destroy these people and they were more than willing to do so in order to gain some of their wealth. So to find out that they were going to pass up four cities and all the wealth therein was pretty disappointing to the people as a whole.

What I translated *and cause to keep them alive* is the Hiphil infinitive absolute of *châyâh* (חַיָּה) [pronounced *khaw-YAW*], which means *to live, to have life, to continue safe and sound*. Strong's #2421 & 2425 BDB #310. With this we have the direct object with the 3rd person masculine plural. This is translated variously as: *and have kept them alive* (Young); *and let them live* (Owen); *even let them live* (Rotherham).

In the last sentence, the leaders under Joshua make clear to the representatives of the leader concerning the situation that they are in. If they break this oath, then the wrath of God will be upon them. As the leaders of their country under Joshua, they do not have a choice at this point. They must honor their oath. They are making this clear to the representatives of the people.

And so said to them the leaders, “Let them live.” And so they were hewers of wood and drawers of water for all the congregation as which the leaders had said concerning them.

Joshua
9:21

And so the leaders of the people said, “Let them live.” And so the people of Gibeon became those who cut wood and drew water for all the congregation of Israel, as Joshua’s cabinet had ratified.

The first quote is a bit difficult. It is hard to determine if these are the leaders speaking to the people or the people speaking to the leaders. My thinking is that it is those who represent the people to the government, somewhat like an informal house of commons, are speaking to Joshua and his cabinet. The word for *leaders* is *nâsîy'* (נָשִׂי') [pronounced *naw-SEE*], which means *one lifted up, leaders, chiefs, princes*. Strong's #5387 BDB #672. In v. 18 it is used both for the leaders of the congregation and for the leaders under Joshua. They are ratifying the treaty, essentially. They understand that a treaty has been made in the name of Jehovah God, and that is then end of the matter. Everything else with respect to the Gibeonites is extraneous. However, there remains one more meeting, and that between Joshua and the men of Gibeon, now that all the cards are on the table. In this verse, the representatives of the people agree to honor the treaty which Joshua made with the Gibeonites.

What is held out as the carrot to the people is that these Gibeonites would function as their slaves and do a great many of the tiresome and menial tasks, such as drawing water and cutting down trees and cutting wood for their housing. Whereas, the Israelites will not get their personal property to spread amongst themselves, they will get their menial labor and their services as slaves.

Possibly a thousand years previous, Canaan saw the nakedness of his father, Ham, and came out and told his two brothers.²⁰ Noah then cursed Canaan, saying, “**Cursed by Canaan; a servant of servants will he be to his brothers. Blessed be Jehovah, the God of Shem, and let Canaan be their servant. May God enlarge Japheth and let him dwell in the tents of Shem and let Canaan be his servant.**” (Gen. 9:25–27). One of the descendants of Canaan were the Hivites, who here have become servants to the sons of Shem. We have in our own history, we of the family of Japheth had for centuries those from the family of Canaan—some of the Blacks from Africa—as our slaves. We have Blacks enslaving other Blacks in Africa and some of the greatest suppliers of slaves from Africa in our own history were their own brothers, fulfilling the first part of the curse where they were enslaved to their own brothers.

²⁰ Thieme teaches that his son caught him masturbating from Gen. 9:21.

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Joshua Meets with the Gibeonites and Renders His Final Decision

And so Joshua summoned them and so he spoke to them, to say, “Why did you deceive us to say, ‘We [are] far from you, very;’ and you [are] in our midst dwelling?” Joshua 9:22

And then Joshua summoned them, and said to them, “Why did you deceive us, saying, ‘We live very far away from you;’” when it turns out that you are living in our midst?

Although it is possible that the envoy has remained within the camp of Israel during these past few days, my educated guess is that they went back to their cities with the signed peace treaty in hand with the official seal of Joshua on it. Joshua has just finished this meeting with representatives of the people and with his own advisors, which was brought to a conclusion. However, the problem of the deception had to be dealt with. So Joshua summoned his new allies to discuss their peace agreement. In fact, I think the series of events went as follows:

The Sequence of Events of the Gibeonite Treaty with Israel

1. The Gibeonites came to Joshua disguised as though they had come from a country far away on a long journey.
2. They obtained the documents of peace from Joshua, his assurances and his oath by Jehovah, ratified by his royal cabinet.
3. They returned to their cities.
4. Israel goes to scout out the territory to determine where to strike next and some officials from Gibeon come out to meet them, probably with a Xerox copy of their treaty agreement.
5. The men of Israel are aghast, firstly because they did not know that they had a covenant with anyone in the land; and secondly because they did not know that Xerox could copy in color now.
6. The leaders of these soldiers return to the camp at Gilgal and begin to complain to their wives and friends.
7. They then confront Joshua and his cabinet and discuss the treaty and inform Joshua that the Gibeonites dwell in the Land of Promise.
8. Joshua’s cabinet and the representatives of the people (both called leaders in v. 21) come to agree that there is nothing that they can do without violating the oath that they made before Jehovah.
9. Joshua now calls the Gibeonite representatives back, now that he knows exactly where to find them, and from thence we continue and conclude the remainder of this chapter.²¹

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Joshua’s question is rhetorical. He is not eliciting information. He begins with the *lâmed* preposition and the interrogative, which together mean *why*. This is followed by the 2ndperson masculine plural, Piel perfect of the verb *râmâh* (רָמַחַ) [pronounced *raw-MAW*], which means *to beguile, to deceive, to mislead, to deal treacherously with, to betray*. It is found only in the Piel. This is a homonym with the same verb which means *to shoot, to cast*. Strong’s #7411 BDB #741.

Joshua does what is common with most people who have made a mistake—he blames it on someone else. His mistake was clearly for not consulting God. He inappropriately blames the Gibeonites. What the Gibeonites did was very reasonable under the circumstances. What Joshua did—carelessly entering into a binding treaty without consulting God—that was the real problem and the real mistake. What has been done is easily fixed by God. Joshua’s decision in his dealings with these men is still one made apart from consulting God. I’m beginning to

²¹ This series of events as so described is my best understanding of exactly what took place, and who’s on first. It is not etched in stone, nor is it a part of the infallible Word of God.

think of Joshua as being more headstrong, like Peter in the New Testament, and one who needs his reigns pulled in a bit more often.

“And now, you are [bitterly] cursed and it will not be cut off from you slaves and hewers of wood and drawers of water for a house of my God.”

Joshua
9:23

“And now you stand bitterly cursed and you will continue to be slaves—men who chop wood and draw water—for the house of my God.”

The general English meaning seems pretty straightforward, but the Hebrew is a little confusing, so let's look at some other translations:

The Emphasized Bible

Now therefore accursed ye are,—and ye shall not cease to be in bond-service as hewers of wood and drawers of water for the house of my God.

NASB

“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.”

Owen's Translation

Now therefore, you are cursed and shall always be some of you slaved; hewers of wood and drawers of water for the house of my God.

Young's Lit. Translation

'...and now, cursed are ye, and none of you is cut off from being a servant, even hewers of wood and drawers of water, for the house of my God.'

The first verb is the masculine plural, Qal passive participle of *ʿârar* (אָרַר) [pronounced *aw-RAHR*], which means *to bitterly curse*. Strong's #779 BDB #76. Then we have the *wâw* conjunction, the negative, and the 3rd person masculine singular, Niphal imperfect of *kâath* (כָּתַת) [pronounced *kaw-RAHTH*] and it means *cut off, cut down*. In the Niphal (passive) stem, it means *to be cut off*. Strong's #3772 BDB #503. Literally, this should read: **“And now, you are bitterly cursed and it will not be cut off...** This is followed by the *min* preposition (*from, off, away from*) and the 3rd person masculine plural suffix.

One thing that we need to keep in mind here. Joshua has never spoken to God concerning this matter. So, does this mean that Joshua should have killed them from the beginning? Does this mean that God would have required this of Joshua? We don't know. My thinking is that, despite the sentence of death placed over most of the inhabitants of the land, that God would have allowed them to live and possibly would have required their displacement. Joshua's sentence of perpetual servitude was made still without checking with God, so his thinking from the beginning was flawed. At best, we can speculate what would have happened had Joshua inquired of God in this matter from the beginning, but it is clear throughout Scripture that God causes all things to work together for good. We have a situation here where these men have deceived Joshua and the Israelites and where Joshua has not inquired God as to what he should do. Even given all of this, God caused this relationship between Israel and the people of Gibeon to result in good. And with respect to the Gibeonites, the result was: **Joshua waged war a long time with all these kings. There was not a city which made peace with the sons of Israel except the Hivites living in Gibeon; they took them all in battle. For it was of Jehovah to harden their hearts, to meet Israel in battle in order that he might utterly destroy them, that they might receive no mercy, but that he might destroy them, just as Jehovah had commanded Moses** (Joshua 11:18–20).

There are two viewpoints here. The first is that Joshua, ideally speaking, should have killed the Gibeonites to begin with. God had ordered the deaths of all the peoples in the land, including the Hivites (which the Gibeonites were), and that is how this should have played out. Scofield mentions that the Gibeonites brought only trouble to Israel, citing Joshua 10:4–15 and II Sam. 21:1–14, but neither passage clearly indicates that the presence of the men of Gibeon is the actual cause of the problem. Scofield also suggests that the Gibeonites located directly in the center of Israel was in part the cause of the division of Israel into a northern and southern kingdom. Although an interesting point of view, the Gibeonites only occupied a couple of cities, which did not really extend across the center of Israel; nor is there any Scriptural evidence that the Gibeonites, by their presence or by any overt act, had anything to do with the split between Judah and Israel.

We have looked at the continued existence of these people among the Jews and it seems as though their association throughout history has been one of mutual benefit.²² In fact, much later, we will read: *Now there was a famine in the days of David for three years, years after year; and David sought the presence of Jehovah. And Jehovah said, "It is for Saul and his bloody house, because he has put the Gibeonites to death." So the king called the Gibeonites and spoke to them (now the Gibeonites were not the sons of Israel but of the remnant of the Amorites, and the sons of Israel made a covenant with them, but Saul had sought to kill them in his zeal²³ for the sons of Israel and Judah) (II Sam. 21:1–2).* Therefore, if God disciplined the Israelites for committing acts of violence and murder against the Gibeonites hundreds of years later, then it is obvious that God valued the Gibeonites. As for the city of Gibeon, we read: *And the king went to Gibeon to sacrifice there, for that was the great high place; Solomon offered a thousand burnt offerings on that altar. In Gibeon, Jehovah appeared to Solomon in a dream at night (I Kings 3:4–5a).* Obviously if the altar and the tabernacle were at Gibeon at the beginning of Solomon's reign, this would indicate that the Israelites had high regard for the Gibeonites at that time.

Joshua's decisions are flawed because he never consulted with God. What would God have suggested? Obviously we don't know, so we can, at best, speculate. I am thinking that God would have allowed them to live with the Israelites in peace. How closely they would be allowed to assimilate requires even more speculation; however, we do not have any instances named in Scripture where the Gibeonites specifically were involved in idolatry or other pagan behavior, which was, in general, God's greatest objection to the heathen who lived in the land. *"I will deliver the inhabitants of the land into your hand, and you will drive them out before you. You will make no covenant with them or with their gods. They will not live in your land, so that they do not make you sin against Me, for if you serve their gods, that would be a snare to you."* (Ex. 23:32b–33). Now only did the Gibeonites believe in the God of Israel and agree to Joshua's demands, but they seemed to accept as their own the Jewish religious ceremonies (I am saying this because we have no evidence to the contrary). For this reason and for the justification continually given in Scripture for the destruction of the indigenous peoples, I would see this as evidence that God would have spared the Gibeonites. It is possible that they would have played a greater part in Israel's history and they might have been a shining light during the time of the judges, had they not been relegated to the station of slavery. Again, the best we can do in this regard is speculate.

Some people only see in black and white. That is, they see that God has specifically demanded the deaths of the Hivites in Deut. 20:16–18: *Only in the cities of these peoples that Jehovah your God is giving you as an inheritance, you will not leave alive anything that breathes, but you will utterly destroy them, the Hittite and the Amorite, and Canaanites and the Perizzite, the Hivite and the Jebusite, as Jehovah your God has commanded you, in order that they may not teach you to do according to all their detestable things which they have done for their gods, so that you would sin against Jehovah your God."* As far as they are concerned, it says here to destroy the Hivites and that is what Joshua must do no matter what. Or, had he first discovered the guile of the Gibeonites, then that would have been his only recourse. There are exceptions and there are distinctions, and the Gibeonites fall into this. You might object that there are no exceptions stated in Deut. 20; and you are correct. However, the most notable exception is Rahab and her family. From the beginning, they were excepted from this general order of destruction, and few people object to that. They certainly fall into one of those categories of people. However, they are an exception to genocide prescribed by God, and now, so are the Gibeonites.

Let's look at this from another angle: Psalm 106:34–38: *They [the Israelites] did not destroy the peoples, as Jehovah commanded them, but they mingled with the nations and learned their practices and served their idols, which became a snare to them. They even sacrificed their sons and their daughters to the demons, and shed innocent blood, the blood of their sons and their daughters, whom they sacrificed to the idols of Canaan. And the land was polluted with blood. The Gibeonites were not the only people of Canaan who remained in the land. There were a great many idolatrous unbelievers whom Israel allowed to stay in the land. But Manasseh did not take possession of Beth-shean and its villages, or of Taanach and its villages, or the inhabitants of Dor and its villages, or the inhabitants of Ibleam and its villages, or the inhabitants of Megiddo and its villages; so the Canaanites persisted in living in that land...Neither did Ephraim drive out the Canaanites who were living in Gezer; so the Canaanites lived in Gezer among them. Zebulun did not drive out the inhabitants of Kitron, or the*

²² About the only exception to this is found in Jer. 28, where a prophet from Gibeon makes a false prophecy concerning the exiles who had been carried away to Babylon. Whether he was a Gibeonite, an Israelite, or a half-breed is not specified.

²³ I believe Thieme's remark was something along the lines of "Zealous stupid Christians are like bulls in a china shop."

inhabitants of Hahalol; so the Canaanites lived among them and became subject to forced labor (Judges 1:27–30). In fact, the last half of Judges 1 is a list of all the peoples who were not conquered by Israel and Psalm 106:34–38 refers to these people, not to the Gibeonites.

Now, many want to fault the Gibeonites for the way that they obtained this treaty by guile. What the Gibeonites did was understandable because they were formerly unbelievers coming forward to make a statement of faith. When we approach God as unbelievers, we do not necessarily do this in the most honorable way. How many a salvation was predicated with “If You get me out of this jam, God, then I will go to church every Sunday!” Or they will make some other stupid promise that they think will tempt God. And after we are saved, we do some pretty stupid things as well as our stand for our faith. Some of us immediately become self righteous and judgmental. Some of us fall in with holy rollers and accept their goofy doctrines. The Gibeonites’ public statement of faith was one which was wrapped in deception. This is certainly not the most ideal way to make a statement of faith, but it is, nonetheless, their statement of faith of Jehovah, the God of Israel. In terms of faulting them, I cannot, knowing how stupid I was during the time of salvation and immediately afterward; and during the time after that; and during the period of time I am in now. I have the additional benefit of being filled with the Spirit and being guided by Scripture, so don’t look to me when it comes to criticism of the Gibeonites for their actions here.

Finally, I don’t want you to miss just exactly what Joshua did to the Gibeonites—he told them, “**Now, therefore, you are cursed, and you will never cease being slaves, both hewers of wood and drawers of water for the house of my God!**” (Joshua 9:23). Even though he required them to do menial labor, their menial labor was tied directly to the house of God. What will happen is the Tent of God will be located in Shiloh for a long time and then it will be moved to Gibeon (it is unclear as to when it is moved, although we can reasonably speculate that the Tent of God was moved from Shiloh because the Philistines razed Shiloh). The fact that these men were assigned to the Tent of God, that their city became a city of Levites, and that their city also became the home for many years to the Tent of God speaks volumes as to their spiritual ties to Israel’s God.

Now, for some application. You will, in your life, have the chance to socialize with many new believers and believers who have come out of a very unsavory lifestyle. You cannot judge these people because of where they came from; you cannot give them a list of things to do (e.g., tell the males to go out and immediately cut their hair, even though short hair on a male is proper); and you cannot relegate these people to inferior positions in the spiritual life because of their past. **Therefore if any man is in Christ, he is a new creation; the old things have come to an end; observe, they have become new.**” (II Cor. 5:17).

And so they answered Joshua, to say, “Because in a declaration, it was declared to your servants that which Y^ehowah your God had commanded Moses his servant to give to you [all] all of the land and to destroy all of those inhabiting the land from before your faces; and so we feared greatly for our souls from before your faces and so we did the word the this.

Joshua
9:24

And then they answered Joshua, saying, “It was made very clear to your servants that Jehovah your God had commanded Moses, His servant, to give all of you this land and to furthermore destroy all of us who inhabit the land before you. Therefore, we greatly feared for our lives and subsequently we did this thing.

At the beginning of this verse, we have a verb used twice. We first have the Hophal infinitive absolute of *nâgad* (נָגַד) [pronounced *naw-GAHD*], which means *to make conspicuous, to make known, to expound, to declare, to inform, to make it pitifully obvious that*. Strong’s #5046 BDB #616. This is followed by the 3rd person masculine singular, Hophal perfect of the same verb.

The Hophal is the passive of the Hiphil (causative stem). It is the rarest of the seven stems. There is never a hint of reflexive in this stem and the agent of the verb is often not given in the immediate context. Zodhiates writes: *The Hophal stem conveys at once both an active and passive sense, active with respect to the action being done,*

*passive with respect to the object being made to do so.*²⁴ I do not follow that exactly. Most grammar books call it simply the causative passive stem. In this case, the Gibeonites were caused to hear the declaration of God concerning the fate of the indigenous peoples of the land. When a verb is doubled like this, it gives great emphasis to the verb, and we find it variously translated *it was told for a certainty* (Owen), *it was certainly declared* (Young), *it was plainly told* (Rotherham). This portion is fascinating. I don't know exactly what went on in the ancient world, or how information was broadcast, but the heathen knew certain parts of God's Word better than most believers today know these same portions. God spoke to Moses and said, "You will make no covenant with them or with their gods. They will not live in your land, so that they do not make you sins against Me. If you serve their gods, it will certainly be a snare to you." (Ex. 23:32–33). Moses later spoke to the people of Israel and said, "When Jehovah your God brings you into the land where you are about to enter, He will then clear away many nations before you—the Hittites, and the Girgashites and the Amorites and the Canaanites and the Perizzites and the Hivites and the Jebusites, seven nations greater and stronger than you. And when Jehovah your God delivers them before you, and you completely defeat them, then you will completely destroy them. You will make no covenant with them and you will show no favor to them." (Deut. 7:1–2). In an era where most believers have no clue as to the difference between the church and Israel and have no understanding or even simple knowledge about anything which happened in the Old Testament, we have heathen, prior to the age of the printing press, prior to even copies of the Scripture being made and distributed to the people, prior to the completion of Scripture—heathen knew the score. This is because God sees to it that all who need to know the gospel will know the gospel in any generation, despite linguistic, cultural or geographical barrier. Our God can make the gospel clear, real and perspicuous to all of the positive unbelievers and even to quite a number of negatives ones. He could do that then and He can do it today.

This is all fairly straightforward in the Hebrew, but let me give you some other translations which might help to give greater meaning to this verse:

<i>The Amplified Bible</i>	They answered Joshua, because it was surely told your servants that the Lord your God commanded His servant Moses to give you all the land, and to destroy all the land's inhabitants from before you. So we feared greatly for our lives because of you, and have done this thing.
<i>The Emphasized Bible</i>	And they responded to Joshua, and said— Because it was plainly told they servants how that Yahweh they God had commanded Moses his servant to give unto you all the land, and to destroy all the inhabitants of the land from before you,—therefore feared we greatly for your lives, because of you, and did this thing.
NASB	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.
<i>Young's Lit. Translation</i>	And they answer Joshua and say, 'Because it was certainly declared to thy servants, that Jehovah thy God commanded Moses His servant to give to you all the land, from before you; and we fear greatly for ourselves because of you, and we do this thing;

You will notice that the phrase *from before you* and *because of you* are the exact same phrase in the Hebrew, although you would not know that to look at any translation. What we have here is a clear declaration of faith brought about by the information which God made known throughout the lands. Quite obviously, this is the way that they should have approached Joshua. However, recall that we are dealing with fallen man. The thief on the cross, although he had spent his entire life in crime as a gangster, the thief who confessed his faith in Jesus Christ, could have been acting in pure and simple self-interest when he said to Jesus, "Remember me when You come into Your kingdom." However, all that counts in salvation is our faith in Jesus Christ. Regardless of what the evangelist might say about confessing your sins, turning away from your sins, dedicating your life to God, etc. etc.; these things do not save you and if your salvation is based upon any of these things and your faith, then you are not saved. We are saved by faith and faith alone in Jesus Christ. He did all of the work on our behalf. You might be concerned that fallen man might believe in Jesus and be saved, but that is how it is done. Don't be so foolish as to think that there is something that we can do in the flesh, some promise that we can make from our

²⁴ *The Complete Word Study Old Testament*; Dr. S. Zodhiates; p 2276.

fallen natures, some motivation from our bodies of sin which saves us. Our motivation, our declarations, our promises when made from our bodies of sin are meaningless. All we have at salvation is faith, and that is completely non meritorious. We have no part in the earning of our salvation—none whatsoever. After salvation, it is a different thing. Then we have been created with a new heart and we can get into fellowship with God; we can be filled with the Spirit. Then our promises, our declarations, our vows, our determinations all become meaningful. Some of you will stand against this for all you are worth, but your promise to God as an unbeliever to turn your life around, to turn from sin—that means nothing. It is unimportant. That is good, old-fashioned guilt coming into play. Not that there is anything wrong with guilt—but it is just not efficacious. It is unimportant that we realize that our lives are screwed up and that we need to do something. A recovering alcoholic knows that and some of them are saved and some of them are not. A recovering drug addict knows that, and some of them are saved and some of them will burn for eternity in hell. The only thing that is efficacious in your relationship with God is faith. It does not cost you anything, but it caused our Lord suffering beyond description. Even God’s Word does not make an attempt to describe the suffering which He endured on our behalf, except in the most general of terms. The pain that we feel in this life comes nowhere close to approximating the pain which our Lord felt and took upon Himself on our behalf. He took the just punishment for all of our sins; the ones which we have already committed and the ones which we will commit in the future. We can appropriate the forgiveness inherent in His just and holy act only by faith—never by our promises or good intentions.

“And now, behold we [are] in your hand; as the good and the right [thing] in your sight to do to us, [that] do.”

Joshua
9:25

“And now it is clear that we are at your mercy. Whatever is correct and whatever is the right thing to do according to your norms and standards, do that to us.”

When the Gibeonites tell Joshua that they are in his hand, they are completely submitting to his judgment on this matter. Then they say *as the good*. The latter word is the masculine singular adjective of טוֹב (טוֹב) [pronounced *toe^bv*], which means *pleasant, pleasing, agreeable, good*. It has several applications, but here it refers to that which is *pleasing, agreeable, or good*. Strong’s #2896 BDB #373. The second adjective is the masculine singular of יָשָׁר (יָשָׁר) [pronounced *yaw-SHAWR*] and it means *right, correct, upright, straight, uniform, even*. When describing man, this word refers to *moral stability and stable, correct behavior and thinking*. Strong’s #3477 BDB #449.

When they add the phrase *in your sight*, they are laying it on pretty thick. Of course, they are looking to preserve their lives and the lives of their families, so they are holding Joshua to his standards of integrity. They believe in God, and here they are throwing themselves upon the mercy and the integrity of Joshua’s God. They ask for Joshua to treat them according to whatever is correct and right in his sight—according to his norms and standards. This, they command Joshua to do to them.²⁵ What is fascinating is how much faith the people of Gibeon place in the treaty made with Joshua. One might say that they were risking everything hoping that Joshua would keep his word. However, when you examine the situation—if the God of Joshua is the God of the Universe—and all which had occurred indicates that clearly—then they are doomed if they ally themselves with the other Canaanitish peoples and they are doomed if they choose to stand and fight Israel directly. They trust the God of Joshua and the word of Joshua precisely because there is no other real alternative. Sometimes when my own faith is weak, I ask myself is there any other alternative? In all of the studying which I have done and all the roads I have traveled, I don’t see that there is any other possible answer. To some it was a long shot, but the Gibeonites chose to depend upon the word of a savior, Joshua. The analogy to salvation today should be perfectly clear.

In *Hard Sayings of the Bible*, the author’s ask *Why [did] the Gibeonites...risk so much on the Israelites’ commitment to honoring their promise is difficult to explain. Had they gotten an initial indication that the God of*

²⁵ We have this phrase back in Gen. 16:6 where Abram, after siring a child by his wife’s handmaid, tells Sarai that her maid is under her own control and that she can do what she wants with her. Sarai treats Hagar poorly as only a jealous woman can. Also see Jer. 26:14.

*this people required truthfulness and integrity from his own?*²⁶ Unbelievers do have some concept of God's Perfection. **For when Gentiles, who do not have the Law, do instinctively the things from the Law, these, not having the Law, are a law to themselves, in that they show the work of the Law written in their hearts, their conscience bearing witness, and their thoughts alternately accusing or else defending them** (Rom. 2:14–15). No one has a complete and thorough understanding of Who and What God is; however, all men have some idea of Who God is, and some more than others. Even these heathen Gentiles understood that if anything, God would honor His Word and that, Joshua, as God's representative, would honor his.

Barnes footnotes are appropriate here: *It was mere fear which drove the Gibeonites to act as they did. They sought for union with God's people, nor for its own sake, but to save their lives. Rahab's motives were higher (ii. 9 seq.). Hence she was adopted into Israel; the Gibeonites remained for ever bondsmen of Israel.*

And so he did to them so and so he delivered them from a hand of sons of Israel and they did not kill them;

Joshua
9:26

And Joshua did what was right and just in his own sight and rescued the Gibeonites from the sons of Israel, sparing their lives.

The second verb is the Hiphil imperfect of *nâtsal* (נָצַל) [pronounced *naw-TSAHL*], which is a verb not found in the Qal. In the Piel, it means *to strip, to plunder*; in the Niphal, it means *to deliver oneself, to be delivered*; and, in the Hiphil, it means *to snatch away, to deliver, to rescue, to snatch out of danger, to preserve*. Strong's #5337 BDB #664. The soldiers of Israel, after several easy victories and a great deal of plundering, were up and ready for another city to plunder. It was as if someone gave them 10 minutes to shop for free at Macy's. Joshua obviously was a strong and respected leader to be able to dissuade them.

The mistake ultimately was the responsibility of Joshua and his men for not consulting with God on this matter. What they had made an oath to do, to maintain peace with the Gibeonites, this, in and of itself, was not unlawful. The making of the treaty itself was a matter of carelessness. However, since Joshua and his cabinet made this covenant, it was incumbent upon them to observe it. Similarly, no matter who comes to God at His offer of peace, God will in no way cast them out. Some people hate this. Everyone can think of some person or category of people whom they despise. Pedophiles, serial killers, someone who has committed murder for fun—any of these people can come to God and received complete and absolute forgiveness. They can do so even while on death row and even on their walk to the chair or to the needle. Even though they have no chance of ever doing good in their lives, they can silently believe in Jesus Christ and they will spend eternity in heaven. I've known of at least one murderer who came to God through Jesus Christ and there are probably hundreds, if not thousands of them, incarcerated right now. These are people who have done nothing but cause heartache and pain for others and they will spend eternity in God's perfect presence. God honors His peace agreement with us.

We do not know exactly what the scene was here. We don't know if Joshua is facing a few hundred leaders of the people of Israel (not his cabinet), who have brought in a few dozen Gibeonites; or whether Joshua is examining these people separately. My thinking is that these are separate meetings held outdoors. That is, the house of commons had come to Joshua with a complaint; then he calls for representatives of the men of Gibeon. And now he delivers his mandate.

And so Joshua made them in the day the that hewers of wood and drawers of water for the congregation and for an altar of Y^ehowah until the day the this in the place which he chooses.

Joshua
9:27

And os from that day forward, Joshua made them slaves to chop wood and to draw and carry of water for the congregation and for the altar of Jehovah to this day in whatever place he chooses.

²⁶ *Hard Sayings of the Bible*; Walter Kaiser Jr., Peter Davids, F.F. Bruce, Manfred Brauch; InterVarsity Press; ©1996; p. 186. The authors also mention one of the goofier theories (not their own) that the word which one speaks has some kind of magical and mystical power which cannot be broken. The Bible nowhere teaches that there is some inherent power in a word which has gone out, and such thinking is absurd at best, delusional at worst.

When some teachers sign a contract for their district, it sometimes does not name the school at which they will be working, but contains a clause which says that they will work wherever the school district tells them to. Joshua reserves the rights to assign and reassign the place where the Gibeonites will perform their services. One of the remarkable things is that some of them will be placed in service to God. When referring to where the ark would be set up and where services would be held, it used to bother me when it would read *in whichever place he chose*; thinking that Jerusalem was the only place where the tent and the altar were to be found once the Israelites settled into the land (see Deut. 12:5, 11). However, as we have seen in this chapter, these would be moved several times throughout the land, and placed in Shiloh (I Sam. 4:3–4), in Gibeon (I Kings 3:4–5 II Chron. 1:3) and finally Jerusalem (I Kings 9:3). However, what is important is that they will always be found in one place. God did not appear to two or three different nations and give them all different places to worship. In the Old Testament there was only one place where correct worship could take place and that was at the tent and at the altar, wherever the ark of the covenant was. **There is only one God and one Mediator between God and man; the man Christ Jesus.** (I Tim. 2:5). **“And there is salvation in no one else; for there is no other name under heaven, given among men, by which we must be saved.”** (Acts 4:12). From the very beginning, the exclusivity of a relationship with Jehovah was clearly taught. One could only seek the presence of God where His Presence was, and this was at the brazen altar outside the tent of Jehovah.

My own prejudice here in this matter is that Joshua wrote this book. Where you would expect details because Joshua was there, you get details. Where you would expect information to be sketchy because he was not there, the information is sketchy. For instance, when it comes to the actual invasion and destruction of the city of Ai, there are precious few details (Joshua 8:19–20). The same is true for the confederation of city states against Israel (Joshua 9:1–2) and the confederation in favor of allying with Israel (Joshua 9:17). Now, what Joshua would have observed—what the appearance of the Gibeonites were and just what was said between them, along with the conversations with the representatives of the people; these things are dealt with in greater detail in Joshua 9.

To sum up: the Gibeonites were in a helpless, hopeless situation. They were condemned to a death without mercy, without exception. They were outside the covenant of God. They stood condemned before God. Only because they came to Joshua (Jesus), were they saved. Joshua looked at them and saw them as people from far away; God looks at us and sees His Son. It is because of what someone else has done that we are saved; it is because of no innate goodness within ourselves. God honored His peace treaty with the Gibeonites and He will honor His peace treaty with us. When we as freeman enter into a covenant with God, we become His slaves, just as the Gibeonites became the slaves of the Israelites. From this choice, we have fellowship with God for the rest of our life and eternity.

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