

Gibeonite Promises

Joshua Riggins

In **Joshua 9**, we're introduced to an interesting group of individuals, the Gibeonites. Having heard of the great successes of Israel (verse 3), they put together a scheme designed to save their lives. Verses 4-5 detail the great lengths they took to make it look as though they came from a far country:

...they worked craftily, and went and pretended to be ambassadors. And they took old sacks on their donkeys, old wineskins torn and mended, old and patched sandals on their feet, and old garments on themselves; and all the bread of their provision was dry and moldy.

Their goal was to hide truth from the Israelites. God reminds us in **Jeremiah 23:24** that he fills heaven and earth; there is no hiding from him. However, with men, hiding is possible (see **Psalms 55:12**). The Gibeonite scheme succeeded because the leaders of Israel did not inquire from God (verse 14), so the one who fills heaven and earth had no input. When we fail to involve God in our decisions, we run the risk of missing the mark. God encourages us in **James 1:5** to ask him for wisdom, knowing He will give it with liberality.

In verse 15, Joshua made a covenant with them, and from that point on, the children of Israel were to be at peace with the Gibeonites. Three days later, they learned the truth of the matter (verse 16), so they kept their word when entering their country (verse 18). The Gibeonites did not escape their consequences, as deception is not the right problem-solving tool. Israel made the Gibeonites woodcutters and water carriers for the house of God (verse 23). Not only did Israel preserve their lives, but they also protected them with great effort. In **Joshua 10:6**, the men of Gibeon request Israel's assistance in defeating the five Amorite kings who attacked them (verses 3-5). The Israelites, in a battle where the sun stood still for a whole day and was like nothing the world has ever seen (verse 14), routed and thoroughly defeated the Amorites. God promised Joshua in **10:8** that *"not a man of them shall stand before you."* Even the five kings who tried to flee

were killed (**10:26**), leaving no man of the Amorite battle standing before them.

Psalm 15:4 states the following criteria for those who may dwell in the holy hill of the LORD, *"...he who swears to his own hurt and does not change."*

The scriptures make plain that Joshua and the leaders of Israel acted quite irresponsibly in failing to inquire of God. Had they done so, no covenant of peace would ever have been transacted between the two nations. It was God's will that all the nations of Canaan be removed from the land. (see **Judges 2:2**) And yet, we see in **chapter 10, verse 8**, God told Joshua that none of the enemies of Gibeon would be able to stand before him.

From time to time, I say yes too quickly, adding a commitment to our calendar that shouldn't be there. Perhaps there are "yesses" you have committed to for which you later regretted the cost. Even more damaging can be the covenants we make without consulting the Lord. Marriages entered too hastily. Employments taken before considering the nature of the work and its impact on our families and

schedules. Business agreements are done without reading the fine print. Housing arrangements were made without a full assessment. The examples are too numerous to list here.

The question to consider is how we respond when we've entered that covenant without first consulting God. God's expectation is that we do the next right thing. In other words, we keep that covenant. Our word is important, and God expects us to be a people who keep our word. *"But let your 'Yes' be 'Yes,' and your 'No,' 'No'"* (**Matthew 5:37**).

A business owner I deal with frequently had a choice to make in the supply shortages of the early pandemic days. He had committed to selling his product to certain individuals at a set fee. As his costs increased, that set fee wasn't enough to cover his expenses. Many of his competitors decided to solve the problem by tacking on additional upcharges that would cover their costs. He chose to take the loss because it was important that he be a man of his word. Solomon remarks in **Proverbs 10:9**, *"He who walks with integrity walks securely."*

Since Joshua upheld that covenant, consider the impact it had on the Gibeonites. Listed among the individuals repairing the wall of Jerusalem in **Nehemiah 3**, we find Melatiah the Gibeonite (**verse 7**). The time between **Joshua 9** and **Nehemiah 3** would be about 900 years. Gibeon, a hopeful people, observed Joshua lead his people with integrity and faith. He shined God's light for them to see. Nine hundred years later, they stayed true to that light in their service to the LORD, repairing the wall alongside their brethren. If you want to let God's light shine through you, keep your commitments and promises in this world. This is the God-like way. Paul says,

For the Son of God, Jesus Christ, who was preached among you by us...was not Yes and No, but in Him was Yes. For all the promises of God in Him are Yes, and in Him Amen, to the glory of God through us (**2 Corinthians 1:19-20**).

Be known for your integrity, even when it hurts.