

Joshua Chapter 9

Verses 1-15: God had directed His people to “make no covenant . . . nor show mercy to” the inhabitants of Canaan (Deut. 7:1-2), although they were allowed to make treaties with those in far-off lands (Deut. Chapter 20). Knowing this, the Gibeonites pretended to be from “a far country”. There is often more to be feared from seduction than from combat, Satan can dress up new things and make them look old, as he did with the Gibeonites. He stands every ready to seduce God’s people away from God’s purposes.

Joshua 9:1 "And it came to pass, when all the kings which [were] on this side Jordan, in the hills, and in the valleys, and in all the coasts of the great sea over against Lebanon, the Hittite, and the Amorite, the Canaanite, the Perizzite, the Hivite, and the Jebusite, heard [thereof];"

On the side Israel now were, and was that in which the land of Canaan lay. And was now governed by many kings, and all that were now remaining. Even all but the kings of Jericho and Ai, who were slain. Both those;

"In the hills, and in the valleys": That dwelt in the mountainous part of the country, and in the plains of it.

"And in all the coasts of the great sea, over against Lebanon": Who inhabited and governed in that part of the country which lay on the coast of the Mediterranean Sea. The country of Phoenicia, in which were Tyre, Sidon, and other cities. And were over against Mount Lebanon, which was on the northern part of the country. According to the Latin version, they dwelt near Lebanon; and according to the Septuagint, near Antilibanus. It seems best, with Noldius, to render the words, "even unto Lebanon", for it designs all the sea coasts reaching to it. For all the maritime coasts did not lie over against it.

"The Hittite, and the Amorite, the Canaanite, the Perizzite, the Hivite, and the Jebusite, heard thereof": What they heard is not said, but to be understood. Particularly they heard what had been done by Joshua, and the people of Israel, to Jericho and Ai: and their kings (Joshua 9:3). Some think, as Abarbinel, that they had heard of the altar Joshua had made, and of the stones he had set up. And of his reading the law to the people, by which they were to be governed. All which they understood as taking possession of the country, and looking upon it as conquered, and obliging his people to swear loyalty to him. All the nations of Canaan are mentioned but the Girgashites; which, according to the Jewish writers, are omitted, because they were but few. The Septuagint version has them in some copies.

In the last lesson, we saw Ai destroyed like Jericho had been destroyed. The word quickly spread to the people in this area that Joshua would lead his people against all of them, and destroy them. The names above, are lists of the people that would have to fight Joshua and the Israelites. It seems these people have gathered to discuss their mutual problem.

Joshua 9:2 "That they gathered themselves together, to fight with Joshua and with Israel, with one accord."

Not at this time, but they met together to consult what was proper to be done in order to secure themselves, and their people, and put a stop to the successes of the arms of Israel. And for this purpose, entered into alliances with each other to assist one another. Or at a convenient time and place to join their forces together, and attack Israel, as afterwards they did (Joshua 11:1). And this they did;

"With one accord": Were unanimous in their councils and resolutions. They all confederated together, and agreed as one man to make a common cause of it. And oppose Israel with their united forces.

They have decided that they cannot individually defeat Joshua and the Israelites. They came together and made an alliance, where they would fight Joshua and the Israelites all at once.

Verses 3-4: Although Israel was commanded to destroy the Canaanite cities, she could enter into a peace treaty with more distant people (Deut. 7:1-2; 20:10-17). Hence, "Gibeon", which lay close at hand, hoped to preserve its existence by sending ambassadors of peace who feigned their arrival as being after a long journey. The Gibeonites' wily tactics were successful because the Israelites failed to ask counsel of the Lord (verse 14). Israel's failure to seek divine guidance in the matter led to a formal treaty with the Gibeonites (verse 15). Although they had been tricked, since Joshua and the leaders had sealed the covenant with a solemn oath, the Israelites were obliged to keep its terms (compare 11:19). The ill-advised alliance was to be a source of constant trouble for Israel (compare 10:1-15; 2 Sam. 21:1-14).

Joshua 9:3 "And when the inhabitants of Gibeon heard what Joshua had done unto Jericho and to Ai,"

"Inhabitants": Gibeon of the Hivites (verse 7), or Horites (compare Gen. 36:2, 20), was northwest of Jerusalem and about 7 miles from the area of Ai. It was a strong city with capable fighting men (10:2). Three other towns were in league with it (9:17).

"Gibeon" was a city in the territory of Benjamin about six miles northwest of Jerusalem. The first reference to Gibeon in the Bible (is Joshua 9:3). The inhabitants established a covenant with the Israelites through deceit and were made slaves. They were protected by Joshua from the alliance of five Amorite kings. In Israel's battle with the kings the sun stood still (10:1-13). Because Saul broke the treaty with the Gibeonites, seven of his sons were impaled there during a famine in David's reign (2 Sam. 21:1-15). In the time of King David young warriors led by Joab and Abner fought on the edge of a pool at Gibeon (2 Sam. 2:2-17). The prophet Jeremiah also mentions "great waters that are in Gibeon" (Jer. 41:12). Confirmation of the biblical data came when archaeologists discovered a large open pit about 36 feet in diameter and 36 feet deep. Cut along its edge is a stairway that spirals down to the bottom of the shaft to an elaborate water system.

This is speaking of a confederation of cities, with Gibeon as their leader. These were Hivites. It seems, they had heard of the destruction of Ai and Jericho and feared for their own lives. We mentioned before, that they feared Israel's God.

Verses 4-15: The Gibeonite plot to trick Israel worked. Israel's sinful failure occurred because they were not vigilant in prayer to assure that they acted by God's counsel (verse 14; compare Prov. 3:5-6).

Joshua 9:4 "They did work wilyly, and went and made as if they had been ambassadors, and took old sacks upon their asses, and wine bottles, old, and rent, and bound up;"

Acted craftily, dealt in much cunning and subtlety. Our version leaves out a very emphatic word, "also"; they also, as well as other nations, acted a cunning part, but in a different way. They did not enter into consultations and alliances with others, how to defend themselves, but made use of a stratagem to make peace, and enter into a league with Israel. Or also as the Israelites had done, either as Simeon and Levi had dealt craftily with the Shechemites, who were Hivites (Gen. 34:2). So now the Gibeonites, who also were Hivites (Joshua 9:7); wrought in a wily and crafty manner with them. So Jarchi; or as the Israelites had lately done in the affair of Ai.

"And went and made as if they had been ambassadors": From some states in a foreign country, sent on an embassy to the people of Israel, to compliment them on their successes, and to enter into alliance with them, which they thought would be pleasing and acceptable to them. The Targum is, "they prepared food," which they took with them for their journey; and so the Septuagint, Vulgate Latin, Syriac, and Arabic versions.

"And took old sacks upon their asses": In which they put, their provisions.

"And wine bottles, old, and rent, and bound up": Not made of glass, as ours usually are, but of the skins of beasts, as the bottles in the eastern countries commonly were. Which in time grew old, and were rent and burst, and they were obliged to mend them, and bind them up, that they might hold together, and retain the liquor put into them (see Matt. 9:17).

This "working wilyly", means they schemed and came up with a plan to save their lives. They were intelligent enough to know they would lose their lives if they went to war against Israel and Israel's God.

Joshua 9:5 "And old shoes and clouted upon their feet, and old garments upon them; and all the bread of their provision was dry [and] mouldy."

Which being worn out, were patched with various pieces of leather.

"And old garments upon them": Full of holes and rents, ragged and patched.

"And the bread of their provision was dry and mouldy": Having been kept a long time, and unfit for use. Or like cakes over baked and burnt, as the Targum and Jarchi. The word for "moldy" signifies pricked, pointed, or spotted. As moldy bread has in it spots of different colors, as white, red, green, and black, as Kimchi and Ben Melech interpret it. Or it signifies bread so dry, as Ben Gersom notes, that it crumbles into pieces easily, with which the Vulgate Latin version agrees. Or rather through being long kept, it was become dry with a hard like crust.

Everything they took with them would make them appear to have been on a very long journey. Their clothes were worn out and their food was stale.

Joshua 9:6 "And they went to Joshua unto the camp at Gilgal, and said unto him, and to the men of Israel, We be come from a far country: now therefore make ye a league with us."

From whence it appears, that after Jericho and Ai were destroyed, the army of Israel returned to their encampment at Gilgal (Joshua 5:10). And here they were when the Gibeonites applied to them.

"And said unto him, and to the men of Israel": Not to the whole body of the people, but either to the seventy elders, the great council, who were with Joshua, or the princes of the congregation, after mentioned, who are said to swear to them. And so some render the words, "to the chief men of Israel". The word "Ish" here used sometimes denotes an eminent person or persons (see Isaiah 2:9).

"We be come from a far country": This lie they told, that they might not be thought to be inhabitants of Canaan, and be destroyed as those of Jericho and Ai were. And as the rest of the inhabitants would be, of which they had intelligence. As the design of the Israelites, and what their orders were. According to Jerom, Gibeon was but four miles from Beth-el. Unless he means Gibeah; however, it could not be at a much greater distance. And as Gilgal was a mile and a quarter from Jericho, where the Gibeonites now were. And Ai but three miles from Jericho, and Beth-el a mile from thence, and Gibeon four miles from Beth-el. They were come but little more than nine miles. Bunting makes it twelve miles from Gilgal to Gibeon.

They knew that Israel would not make an alliance with them if they knew they were from close by. To save their lives, they lied about being from a long distance. We know that Rahab lied to the king's men, to save her life. This is a desperate move on their part to save their lives.

Joshua 9:7 "And the men of Israel said unto the Hivites, Peradventure ye dwell among us; and how shall we make a league with you?"

Though they did not know them to be such, but as they afterwards appeared to be the Hivites, as the Gibeonites were, they are here so called (see Joshua 11:19). The name signifies "serpents"; according to a Derash, or mystical exposition, mentioned by Kimchi. The Gibeonites are so called, because they did the work of the serpent. That is to say, they deceived the Israelites, as the serpent deceived Eve.

"Peradventure ye dwell among us": Of which they had some suspicion.

"And how shall we make a league with you?" Which they were forbid to do with any of the seven nations (Deut. 7:2).

In Deuteronomy 7, it was forbidden to make alliance with those who live among them.

Deuteronomy 7:2 "And when the LORD thy God shall deliver them before thee; thou shalt smite them, [and] utterly destroy them; thou shalt make no covenant with them, nor show mercy unto them:"

Joshua 9:8 "And they said unto Joshua, We [are] thy servants. And Joshua said unto them, Who [are] ye? and from whence come ye?"

Not that they meant to be subjects of his, and tributaries to him; but this they said in great humility and lowliness of mind, being willing to be or do anything he should enjoin them. Abarbinel observes, that this they proposed to Joshua singly, not to be servants to all the people, but to him only, and to have him for their head and governor.

"And Joshua, said, who are ye? And from whence come ye?" By what name are ye called? And from what country do ye come? Suspecting, as it should seem, that they were the inhabitants of Canaan. Or however he was cautious and upon his guard, lest they should be such, and yet was not enough upon his guard to prevent imposition.

These Hivites felt it would be better to be Israel's servants, than to die in battle against them. Joshua asks them again, who they are and from where did they come?

Joshua 9:9 "And they said unto him, From a very far country thy servants are come because of the name of the LORD thy God: for we have heard the fame of him, and all that he did in Egypt,"

Which they magnified and expressed in stronger terms than before, but were careful not to mention any country. Lest such questions should be asked about it, their answers to which would betray them.

"Because of the name of the Lord thy God": Because of what they had heard of his name, his power and goodness; or "unto the name of the Lord thy God". That is, they were come to profess it, and to embrace the religion of the Israelites, and be proselytes to it. Which they knew would be very agreeable to them, and engage them to show them favor. And so the Samaritan Chronicle represents them as promising to do this, saying, "we will believe in thy Lord, nor will we contradict him in what ye shall mark out for us, be it small or great". Which seems to be, confirmed by what follows.

"For we have heard the fame of him, and all that he did in Egypt": The miracles wrought there, the plagues he inflicted on the Egyptians, and the wonderful deliverance of the children of Israel from their slavery.

They speak of Egypt instead of Ai and Jericho, to prove they are from a far country. They proclaim belief in Israel's God here. The miracles God has done along the way, have convinced them that He is truly God.

Joshua 9:10 "And all that he did to the two kings of the Amorites, that [were] beyond Jordan, to Sihon king of Heshbon, and to Og king of Bashan, which [was] at Ashtaroth."

On the other side of Jordan from Gilgal.

"To Sihon king of Heshbon, and to Og king of Bashan in Ashtaroth": The history of which see in (Num. 21:21). They wisely took no notice of the miracle of dividing the waters of Jordan, to make a passage for the Israelites. Nor of the destruction of Jericho and Ai, which were recent things, and could not be thought as yet to have reached a far country they pretended to come from. And which, if they mentioned, might have created a stronger suspicion still of their being Canaanites.

These two kings of the Amorites were on the eastern side of the Jordan River. They had been thought of as very powerful in battle.

Joshua 9:11 "Wherefore our elders and all the inhabitants of our country spake to us, saying, Take victuals with you for the journey, and go to meet them, and say unto them, We [are] your servants: therefore now make ye a league with us."

They suggest, that their senate, or the states of their country, their principal men were convened. And that it was the unanimous voice of them, and of the people, that they should go on this embassy.

"Saying, take victuals with you for the journey": Sufficient for so long a journey. For, in those times and countries, inns on the road were not frequent as now.

"And go to meet them": To prevent their coming in a hostile manner unto them, and make peace, and enter into an alliance with them.

"And say unto them, we are your servants": Ready to come into any terms with them, just and reasonable.

"Therefore now make ye a league with us": That we may live in friendship, and mutually assist each other, as occasion should require.

Gibeon and the other cities in league here, did not have a normal government with a king as did the other countries around them. They governed themselves. Part of this is true. The people were more willing to be their servants, than to be dead.

Joshua 9:12 "This our bread we took hot [for] our provision out of our houses on the day we came forth to go unto you; but now, behold, it is dry, and it is mouldy:"

These are not the words of the elders to the messengers they sent, continued, but of the ambassadors to the Israelites, pointing to the bread they brought with them. Which they pretended was newly baked and took hot out of the oven.

"On the day we came forth to go unto you": But now, behold, it is dry.

"And it is mouldy": (see note on Joshua 9:5); which they gave as a demonstration and proof that they were come from a far country, as they had asserted.

Joshua 9:13 "And these bottles of wine, which we filled, [were] new; and, behold, they be rent: and these our garments and our shoes are become old by reason of the very long journey."

That is, on the day they came out on their journey.

"And, behold, they be rent": Which were owing to the long use that had been made of them, as they pretended.

"And these our garments, and our shoes, are become old by reason of the very long journey": Quite worn out through length of time and tedious travels.

This part is total deception and lies. They are trying to convince the leaders of Israel that they came from a long way off.

Verses 14-15: The people of Israel had just stood between Mount Gerizim and Mount Ebal and had heard about the "blessing" of living God's way and the "curses" for disobeying Him. Complacent in their strong position, confident of their own judgment, and sure that they saw the whole truth (even after God had proven that they could not even defeat tiny Ai without Him), they failed to "ask counsel of the Lord" before making this treaty. God's people set themselves up for failure when they fail to consult Him. It is not enough to pray for God's provision; His direction must be sought as well.

Joshua 9:14 "And the men took of their victuals, and asked not [counsel] at the mouth of the LORD."

I.e. the princes, as before (Joshua 9:6).

"Took of their victuals": Not from their want or any desire they could have to such unpleasant and unwholesome food. Nor in a ceremony usual in making leagues, for that was not now done. But in the next verse; but that they might examine the truth of what they said.

"And asked not counsel at the mouth of the Lord": As they might and should have done. By desiring the high priest to inquire of the Lord by Urim and Thummim. But this they neglected, which, had they attended to, the fraud would have been discovered. Or however, they would

have had the mind of God about making peace with the Gibeonites. Which in all likelihood he would not have disapproved of, they becoming proselytes, and giving up their possessions to Israel. But this did not excuse their neglect.

It is not wise to make such a decision, without asking counsel of the LORD. They made the same mistake many of us do, they went ahead without praying about their decision.

Joshua 9:15 "And Joshua made peace with them, and made a league with them, to let them live: and the princes of the congregation swore unto them."

Israel precipitously made peace with the Gibeonites (11:19), who lived nearby, even though God had instructed them to eliminate the people of cities in the Land (Deut. 7:1-2). God permitted peace with cities outside (Deut. 20:11-15).

Their story has convinced Joshua and the leaders of their honesty. Joshua agrees to an alliance with them, and the princes swear to it.

Verses 16-27: Although Joshua had to abide by the treaty, his wise solution was that the Gibeonites must become bondservants. Knowing that influence tends to trickle down, there was little risk of intermarriage with the people of Israel if the Gibeonites were in a subservient role. He also involved them in the worship of the Lord – preparing the wood for Israel's sacrifices and carrying the water used in the cleansing rituals – hoping this would influence them toward the one true God.

Joshua 9:16 "And it came to pass at the end of three days after they had made a league with them, that they heard that they [were] their neighbors, and [that] they dwelt among them."

The league seems to have been made the same day they came. The Gibeonites were no doubt in haste to have it concluded, lest they should be discovered. And Joshua, and the princes of Israel, took no pains, and gave themselves no great trouble to inquire about them, but made peace with them at once. And it was but three days after, or within three days of its being made.

"That they heard that they were their neighbors, and that they dwelt among them": That is, in their neighborhood, as the Arabic version. And so Noldius renders the words, "and that they dwelt near them". For the Gibeonites did not dwell among the Israelites, or in the midst of them, but near the place where they were. And this they understood either by some deserters that came to the camp of Israel, or by some of the Israelites who were sent to check out several parts of the country. Especially such as lay nearest, or for the sake of getting provisions for their camp.

It did not take long for Joshua to find out they had been tricked. Three days later, they are aware of their foolish mistake.

Joshua 9:17 "And the children of Israel journeyed, and came unto their cities on the third day. Now their cities [were] Gibeon, and Chephirah, and Beeroth, and Kirjath-jearim."

Not the whole camp, for that still remained at Gilgal, and continued there until the Gibeonites in distress sent to them for assistance in virtue of the league, as appears from the following chapter. But a party of them, who were sent along with some of the princes, to know the truth whether the Gibeonites were their neighbors or not, as had been reported to them.

"And came unto their cities on the third day": Not on the third day from their setting out on their journey, for it was but one night's march from Gilgal to them (Joshua 10:9). But on the third day from the making of the league. It is very probable it was early on the third day they heard of their being their neighbors. Upon which a party was sent out at once to know the truth of it, who arrived there the same day.

"Now their cities were Gibeon and Chephirah, and Beeroth and Kirjath-jearim": Gibeon was the metropolis, and the other three were subject to it. The three first fell to the lot of Benjamin, and the last to the tribe of Judah. We shall meet with them again in the lots of the several tribes, in (Joshua 15:60).

It is possible that these would have been the next cities to have been destroyed, and that prompted the men to come and make an alliance. These cities are all close together. They are located close to Jerusalem. "Kirjath-jearim" means the city of forests. It is better known for the fact that the ark remained there for approximately 20 years.

Joshua 9:18 "And the children of Israel smote them not, because the princes of the congregation had sworn unto them by the LORD God of Israel. And all the congregation murmured against the princes."

The inhabitants of the four cities, when they came to them, though they found it to be a true report that was brought them of their being neighbors. And that they were imposed upon by them.

"Because the princes of the congregation had sworn unto them by the Lord God of Israel": By the Word of the Lord God of Israel, as the Targum, and therefore they restrained the people from smiting and plundering them. For it was not the oath of the princes the people so much regarded, or had such an influence on them as to abstain from seizing on them. But the princes, by reason of their oath, would not suffer them to touch them.

"And all the congregation murmured against the princes": Not only for taking such an oath, but chiefly because they restrained them from smiting the Gibeonites, and taking their substance for a prey. Their eager desire of revenge, and of seizing their goods, and inhabiting their cities, raised a murmur in them against the princes. This is to be understood not of the whole body of the people at Gilgal, but of all that party that was sent to Gibeon, and of the princes that went with them.

These princes had sworn to God that they could live. They could not go back on that. The congregation is disappointed in their princes, and make it known by murmuring. Their only real mistake was not praying, before they made such an important decision.

Joshua 9:19 "But all the princes said unto all the congregation, We have sworn unto them by the LORD God of Israel: now therefore we may not touch them."

That is, all the princes that went to Gibeon addressed all the Israelites that were there.

"We have sworn unto them by the Lord God of Israel": By the Word of the Lord God, as the Targum. An oath is a solemn sacred thing, and not to be broken. And a good man will make conscience of it, and keep it, though he has sworn to his own hurt: and;

"Now therefore we may not touch them": Neither take away their lives nor their substance.

When Israelites took an oath, they could not and would not break it. They feared God if they did.

Joshua 9:20 "This we will do to them; we will even let them live, lest wrath be upon us, because of the oath which we sware unto them."

Either this favor we will show them, preserving their lives, next mentioned, or this punishment we will inflict on them, making them hewers of wood, and drawers of water.

"We will even let them live": This by all means must be done, their lives must not be taken away as the rest of the Canaanites.

"Lest wrath come upon us, because of the oath which we sware unto them": That is, lest the wrath of God come upon us princes, and upon the whole community, for perjury. A breach of the third command (Exodus 20:7). Since this was agreed upon on all hands, that the Gibeonites be allowed to live; and since it was an act of kindness and goodness. And especially they would have no reason to be angry and wrathful with them, when they heard them out, what they had further to propose to them. To make them their servants, though they spared their lives.

They have no choice, because of the oath. They will have to let them live.

Verses 21-23: While honoring the pledge of peace with the Gibeonites (verse 19), Joshua made them woodcutters and water carriers because of the deception. This curse extended the perpetual (verse 23), part of "there shall none of you be freed from being bondmen" (Gen. 9:26). Gibeon became a part of Benjamin's land area (Joshua 18:25). Later, Joshua consigned Gibeon as one of the Levite towns (21:17). Nehemiah had help from some Gibeonites in rebuilding the walls of Jerusalem (Neh. 3:7).

Joshua 9:21 "And the princes said unto them, Let them live; but let them be hewers of wood and drawers of water unto all the congregation; as the princes had promised them."

Although the Gibeonites' lives are spared, they are reduced to the status of virtual servitude (compare Deut. 29:11).

They had offered to be Israel's servants and that is exactly what they will be. They had deceived Israel into sparing their lives. Israel will have to punish them for their deception. They make them servants of physically hard jobs, in way of punishing them for their lies.

Joshua 9:22 "And Joshua called for them, and he spake unto them, saying, Wherefore have ye beguiled us, saying, We [are] very far from you; when ye dwell among us?"

The Gibeonites, who came as ambassadors for their people, who were detained at Gilgal until the children of Israel returned from Gibeon. And upon their return, and having made their report to Joshua that they found it to be true that they were near neighbors. Joshua ordered them to be brought before him.

"And he spake unto them, saying, wherefore have ye beguiled us?" What is your reason and motive for so doing? what has induced you to act such a deceitful part, to tell such lies and falsehoods, and impose upon us after this manner?

"Saying, we are very far from you, when ye dwell among us": Pretending to come from a very far country, when they were inhabitants of the land Israel were come to possess.

We must remember, that these people were trying to live. They were not familiar with the law of God, and did not know it was a sin to lie. They were doing whatever was necessary to live. Joshua questions them, because of their dishonesty. We remember in the previous lesson, how Joshua and Israel had tricked Ai, and got them to follow Joshua long enough for the men in hiding to burn Ai. A person will take drastic measures when he is about to lose his life.

Joshua 9:23 "Now therefore ye [are] cursed, and there shall none of you be freed from being bondmen, and hewers of wood and drawers of water for the house of my God."

You shall not escape the curse of God, which by Divine sentence belongs to all the Canaanites, who are a people devoted by God to ruin. You shall feel that curse of bondage and servitude, which is proper to your race by virtue of that ancient decree (Gen. 9:25). You shall live indeed, but in a poor, vile, and miserable condition.

"There shall none of you be freed from being bond-men": The slavery which is upon you shall be entailed to your posterity.

"Hewers of wood and drawers of water for the house of my God": This only service they mention here, because it was their principal and most durable servitude. Being first in the tabernacle, and then in the temple, where they were called temple assistants (1 Chron. 9:2; Ezra 2:43). Whereas their servitude to the whole congregation would in a great measure cease when the Israelites were dispersed to their several habitations.

This means they will not be freed of servitude at Jubilee. They will remain servants, as long as they live. Their destiny was servitude.

Joshua 9:24 "And they answered Joshua, and said, Because it was certainly told thy servants, how that the LORD thy God commanded his servant Moses to give you all the land, and to destroy all the inhabitants of the land from before you, therefore we were sore afraid of our lives because of you, and have done this thing."

Or "it was told". Not only told, but frequently told them, they had often heard of it by one means or another.

"How that the Lord thy God commanded his servant Moses to give you all the land": All the land of Canaan, no part excepted": They had heard much of the Lord God of Israel, and of Moses, what character he bore, and of the commands of the Lord to him. They seem to have knowledge of God, and faith in him as to his promises and threatening, believing they would be fulfilled.

"And to destroy all the inhabitants of the land from before you": As the gift of the land of Canaan to Israel was often spoken of by the Lord to Moses. And frequently mentioned by him. So there were instructions given him from the Lord, and which lie delivered to Israel, utterly to destroy the inhabitants of Canaan. So, that these people had accurate intelligence and information of this matter (see Deut. 7:1).

"Therefore we were sore afraid of our lives because of you, and have done this thing": They answer to Joshua's question, "wherefore have ye beguiled us" (Joshua 9:22). That it was fear of losing their lives, which nothing is dearer to a man, and the principle of self-preservation that put them upon framing and using this device.

This is actually the truth. Their fear of Israel's God caused them to do this. They believed Israel's God would keep His Word and give them all of the land. They knew the inhabitants of Ai and Jericho had been destroyed. They were afraid for their lives. They felt it better to serve Israel, than to die.

Joshua 9:25 "And now, behold, we [are] in thine hand: as it seemeth good and right unto thee to do unto us, do."

In thy power, and at thy disposal, and are ready to submit to whatsoever may be enjoined us.

"As it seemeth good and right unto thee to do unto us, do": Do what is consistent with the laws of kindness, and with the rules of justice. And particularly with the league made, and oath taken. All which they left with him to consider of, and to do as in his wisdom and goodness he should see fit.

They are willing to take whatever punishment Joshua places upon them. They feel it is better than death.

Joshua 9:26 "And so did he unto them, and delivered them out of the hand of the children of Israel, that they slew them not."

What was good and right, he showed them favor, and did them justice.

"And delivered them out of the hand of the children of Israel, that they slew them not": Who were so incensed against them for imposing on them in the manner they did, that they were ready many of them to draw their swords and slay them. And would have done it, had it not been for the interposition of Joshua, and the orders he gave to the contrary.

At least their lives were saved. Joshua would not let the children of Israel destroy them, because of the oath that had been made in front of God. A very good lesson for the Israelites here, and for us as well, is that hasty judgements should not be made. Every major decision should be made after prayerful consideration. We should ask God to keep us from making the wrong agreements with people. One of the most important decisions that any of us make aside from salvation, is the mate we choose for life. God says, in:

2 Corinthians 6:14 "Be ye not unequally yoked together with unbelievers: for what fellowship hath righteousness with unrighteousness? and what communion hath light with darkness?"

That is about what they have done here. They are yoked with those who know not God.

Joshua 9:27 "And Joshua made them that day hewers of wood and drawers of water for the congregation, and for the altar of the LORD, even unto this day, in the place which he should choose."

Constituted and appointed them, ordered and settled them, in the post and office after mentioned. Or "gave" them; hence some think they had the name Nethinim (temple assistants). Persons given to the Levites for the service of the sanctuary. Namely, to be;

"Hewers of wood and drawers of water for the congregation, and for the altar of the Lord": Some think they were employed both for the service of the congregation, when they wanted wood and water, and for the altar, and what belonged to it, that needed both. Abarbinel supposes that they served the congregation while they were engaged in war, and subduing the land. But after the division of the land they only served the sanctuary (see note on Joshua 9:21).

"Even unto this day in the place which he should choose": To have the tabernacle pitched, and the altar set up therein. As it was in various places, before the temple built by Solomon at Jerusalem, which was the place the Lord chose. And this shows that the writer of this book lived before the building of the temple, or otherwise it, is highly probable he would have expressly mentioned it. whereas he uses only the phrase that Moses frequently expressed it by in his time (see Deut. 12:5).

They were to serve Israel. It appears, that much of their physical labor was to cut wood for the altar of sacrifice and draw water for the temple washings as well.

Joshua Chapter 9 Questions

1. What were the names of some of the nations in this land?
2. What had frightened them?
3. What do all of these people do, when they decide that individually they cannot defeat Israel?
4. What did the inhabitants of Gibeon do?
5. Gibeon is actually speaking of a _____ of cities.
6. These people from Gibeon were _____.
7. Who did these people of Gibeon fear?
8. What does "working wily" mean?
9. What did they believe would happen to them, if they had war with Israel?
10. What things did they do, to make it appear they had been on a very long journey?
11. Who did they go to see at Gilgal?
12. What did they want Israel to do?
13. This was a desperate move on their part to save their _____.
14. In verse 8, they offer to do what?
15. Why did they mention the miracles from Egypt, instead of the recent destruction of Jericho and Ai?
16. What two Amorite kings did they mention next?
17. What was unusual about their government?
18. What is deceptive about verse 12 and 13?
19. What mistake did Joshua and the men make?
20. The princes _____ to the agreement.
21. When did Joshua find out who they were?
22. "Kirjath-jearim" means what?
23. What is it better known for?

24. How did the congregation feel about the decision the princes had made?
25. Why must Israel not break the oath?
26. What punishment was spoken on these Hivites?
27. When will they be free not to serve?
28. What true statement did they make in verse 24?
29. God says, "Be ye not _____ together with unbelievers."
30. What was much of the physical labor they were to do?