

CONFLICTING VALUES

Joshua 9:1-20 (NKJV) “And it came to pass when all the kings who were on this side of the Jordan, in the hills and in the lowland and in all the coasts of the Great Sea toward Lebanon—the Hittite, the Amorite, the Canaanite, the Perizzite, the Hivite, and the Jebusite—heard about it, (2) that they gathered together to fight with Joshua and Israel with one accord. (3) But when the inhabitants of Gibeon heard what Joshua had done to Jericho and Ai, (4) they worked craftily, and went and pretended to be ambassadors. And they took old sacks on their donkeys, old wineskins torn and mended, (5) old and patched sandals on their feet, and old garments on themselves; and all the bread of their provision was dry and moldy. (6) And they went to Joshua, to the camp at Gilgal, and said to him and to the men of Israel, “We have come from a far country; now therefore, make a covenant with us.” (7) Then the men of Israel said to the Hivites, “Perhaps you dwell among us; so how can we make a covenant with you?” (8) But they said to Joshua, “We are your servants.” And Joshua said to them, “Who are you, and where do you come from?” (9) So they said to him: “From a very far country your servants have come, because of the name of the LORD your God; for we have heard of His fame, and all that He did in Egypt, (10) and all that He did to the two kings of the Amorites who were beyond the Jordan—to Sihon king of Heshbon, and Og king of Bashan, who was at Ashtaroth. (11) Therefore our elders and all the inhabitants of our country spoke to us, saying, “Take provisions with you for the journey, and go to meet them, and say to them, ‘We are your servants; now therefore, make a covenant with us.’” (12) This bread of ours we took hot for our provision from our houses on the day we departed to come to you. But now look, it is dry and moldy. (13) And these wineskins which we filled were new, and see, they are torn; and these our garments and our sandals have become old because of the very long journey.” (14) Then the men of Israel took some of their provisions; but they did not ask counsel of the LORD. (15) So Joshua made peace with them, and made a covenant with them to let them live; and the rulers of the congregation swore to them. (16) And it happened at the end of three days, after they had made a covenant with them, that they heard that they were their neighbors who dwelt near them. (17) Then the children of Israel journeyed and came to their cities on the third day. Now their cities were Gibeon, Chephirah, Beeroth, and Kirjath Jearim. (18) But the children of Israel did not attack them, because the rulers of the congregation had sworn to them by the LORD God of Israel. And all the congregation complained against the rulers. (19) Then all the rulers said to all the congregation, “We have sworn to them by the LORD God of Israel; now

They hid their identity

therefore, we may not touch them. (20) This we will do to them: We will let them live, lest wrath be upon us because of the oath which we swore to them.””

What are the similarities and differences between the story of Rahab and that of the Gibeonites? Why are they meaningful?

This chapter of Joshua starts by informing us that five Canaanite kings who usually ruled over small city-states decided to create a coalition against the Israelites. By contrast, the inhabitants of Gibeon decided to establish a covenant with Israel.

In order to trick the Israelites into making a covenant with them, the Gibeonites resort to the scheme of being ambassadors from a foreign country. According to Deuteronomy 20:10–18, God made a distinction between the Canaanites and people who lived outside the Promised Land.

The word translated as “craftily” or “cunningly” can be used with a positive meaning, denoting prudence and wisdom (*Prov. 1:4; Prov. 8:5, 12*), or negatively, implying criminal intent (*Exod. 21:14, 1 Sam. 23:22, Ps. 83:3*). In the case of the Gibeonites, behind their treacherous action lies a less-destructive intent of self-preservation.

Means whereby we are protected from craftiness and deception:

1. God enlightens:

Proverbs 1:4 (NKJV) “To give prudence to the simple, To the young man knowledge and discretion—”

2. God gives understanding:

Proverbs 8:5, 12 (NKJV) “O you simple ones, understand prudence, And you fools, be of an understanding heart. (12) “I, wisdom, dwell with prudence, And find out knowledge and discretion.”

3. God administers appropriate judgments:

Exodus 21:14 (NKJV) “But if a man acts with premeditation against his neighbor, to kill him by treachery, you shall take him from My altar, that he may die.”

4. God Uncovers the plans of the crafty:

1 Samuel 23:22 (NKJV) “Please go and find out for sure, and see the place where his hideout is, and who has seen him there. For I am told he is very crafty.”

5. God reveals the crafty mind:

Psalm 83:3 (NKJV) “They have taken crafty counsel against Your people, Aand consulted together against Your sheltered ones.”

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The speech of the Gibeonites is strikingly similar to that of Rahab.

- Both acknowledge the power of Israel’s God, and
- Both acknowledge that Israel’s success is not simply a human feat.

In contrast to other Canaanites,

- They do not rebel against Yahweh’s plan to grant the land to the Israelites, and
- They admit that the Lord Himself is driving these nations out before Israel.

The news of the deliverance from Egypt, and the victories over Sihon and Og, prompt both Rahab and the Gibeonites to seek an alliance with the Israelites.

However, instead of fully acknowledging their willingness to surrender to the God of Israel, as Rahab does, the Gibeonites resort to a subterfuge.

The law of Moses made provisions for learning the will of God in cases such as this (Num. 27:16–21). Joshua should have inquired for the will of the Lord and avoided the deception of the Gibeonites.

Numbers 27:16-21 (NKJV) “Let the LORD, the God of the spirits of all flesh, set a man over the congregation, (17) who may go out before them and go in before them, who may lead them out and bring them in, that the congregation of the LORD may not be like sheep which have no shepherd.” (18) And the LORD said to Moses: “Take Joshua the son of Nun with you, a man in whom is the Spirit, and lay your hand on him; (19) set him before Eleazar the priest and before all the congregation, and inaugurate him in their sight. (20) And you shall give some of your authority to him, that all the congregation of the children of Israel may be obedient. (21) He shall stand before Eleazar the priest, who shall inquire before the LORD for him by the judgment of the Urim. At his word they shall go out, and at his word they shall come in, he and all the children of Israel with him—all the congregation.””

The fundamental duty of a theocratic leader, and of any Christian leader, is to seek God’s will.

The Condition of the heart, will determine the willingness to seek God:

1 Chronicles 28:9 (NKJV) “As for you, my son Solomon, know the God of your father, and serve Him with a loyal heart and with a willing mind; for the LORD searches all hearts and understands all the intent of the thoughts. If you seek Him, He will be found by you; but if you forsake Him, He will cast you off forever.”

Following God is a bi-directional relationship:

2 Chronicles 15:2 (NKJV) “And he went out to meet Asa, and said to him: “Hear me, Asa, and all Judah and Benjamin. The LORD is with you while you are with Him. If you seek Him, He will be found by you; but if you forsake Him, He will forsake you.”

Seeking God should be a daily activity:

2 Chronicles 18:4 (NKJV) “Also Jehoshaphat said to the king of Israel, “Please inquire for the word of the LORD today.”

For God to respond to us, we must respond to Him:

2 Chronicles 20:4 (NKJV) “So Judah gathered together to ask help from the LORD; and from all the cities of Judah they came to seek the LORD.”

By neglecting it (seeking God), the Israelites were compelled either to violate the fundamental conditions of conquering the land or to break an oath made in the name of the Lord, which was equally binding.

How often have you found yourself struggling between what appears to be two conflicting biblical values?

*Sometimes what may seem like
punishment may be steps to
your salvation*

