

Journey Through The Cities Of Refuge

Lesson #27

Hivite: Spirit of Deception

July 29, 2026

Joshua 9:1-2 And it came to pass, when ALL the kings who were beyond the Jordan, in the hill country, the lowland, and on all the coast of the Great Sea toward Lebanon, the Hittite and the Amorite, the Canaanite, the Perizzite, the Hivite, and the Jebusite, heard about it, [?] that they met together with one purpose, to fight with Joshua and with Israel.

Background: Joshua and the Israelites have conquered Jericho and Ai. [2nd attempt]

Battle Strategy: Joshua drove a wedge westward from Jericho right into the center of the land, thereby splitting the enemy opposition. From this position, they would have a strategic advantage for conquering the rest of the land.

- Then Joshua built an altar to the Lord at Shechem between Mt. Ebal and Mt. Gerizim.
- They celebrated their victories and offered burnt offerings to the LORD.
- Joshua inscribed God's Law on stones- which would henceforth be the Law of the Land.
- Joshua read aloud and magnified all the words of the Law to entire assembly of Israel.
- The new generation of Israel renewed the Mosaic covenant.
- It appears they were in a good place in their relationship with God.

After an experience of great blessing, God's people must be especially prepared to confront the enemy. Just like Canaan, the Christian life is "a land of hills and valleys" [Deut. 11:11].

Powerful Reminder: Every victory a Christian wins in his own personal life is an invitation for a full-scale attack by the enemy of his soul.

Redpath: If you are being pressed on every front and are in the thick of the fight, praise God! If you are finding the struggle almost too hard to carry on, it is because you are going right through with the will of God in blessing. Blessings and battles go side by side.

Consider: 2 Enemies 2 Different Reactions & Methods Of Attack

A. Enemy #1 Direct Attack Joshua 9:1-2

A roaring lion loves to persecute, to kill, maim and devour.

Act 1. All the kings of Canaan put aside their differences.

With a common hatred for the enemy, the Israelites, they unite with a common purpose to Destroy The People Of God.

- They did not surrender themselves to Israel nor ask for mercy.
- All-out effort to turn the tide against the invading army of Israel

Consider: When righteousness becomes aggressive and bent on an objective, it has a way of uniting the forces of righteousness and the enemies of righteousness. When Jesus launched His earthly ministry, His aggressive ministry of healing, preaching and the confrontation of sin galvanized His own followers, but it welded together 3 groups which had formerly been enemies.

- Pharisees, Sadducees and the Herodians

Scripture predicts His future return will have a similar effect.

Ps. 2:2-3 The kings of the earth set themselves, and the rulers take counsel together, against Jehovah and against His Christ, saying, Let us break their bands asunder and cast away their cords from us." They refuse subjection to the Divine authority.

Rev. 19:19 And I saw the beast, and the kings of the earth, and their armies, gathered together to make war against Him that sat on the horse, and against His army.

Consider: These kings had not shown hostility until now. The enemies now plan an offensive attack after God had shown Himself strong on behalf of His people.

When we have renewed our commitment to Christ and fully surrendered to Him, the ire of Satan breaks out "as a roaring lion" against us. [I Pet. 5:8]

Don't ever conclude the worst of the fight is over. Satan is in "perpetual motion." He doesn't accept defeat, nor does our flesh with its evil lusts.

Truth: Indwelling sin never surrenders to the new nature, nor ceases its attacks upon it. Our own evil lusts are varied and numerous: self-will, pride, unbelief, slothfulness, cowardice, impatience, discontent, and a host of others, must be resisted and mortified [put to death] through surrender to the Holy Spirit.

Pink: "The farther a Christian advances into an experiential entrance into the abundant life, the fiercer the conflict becomes and the more determined and concentrated the efforts of his enemies to thwart him."

Consider: 2 Enemies 2 Different Reactions & Methods Of Attack

Enemy #1 Direct Attack Joshua 9:1-2

Enemy #2 Uses Deceit Joshua 9:3-13

Truth: The roar of the lion is far less dangerous than the hiss of the snake.

Scene 1: Fear Gives Birth To Deception Joshua 9:3-6

Israel's greatest danger wasn't the confederation of the armies of Canaan. It was a group of men from Gibeon who entered the camp to deceive Joshua and the princes of Israel.

➤ Josh. 10:2 Gibeon was a great city...greater than Ai, and all the men were mighty.

Joshua 9:3-4 But when the inhabitants of Gibeon heard what Joshua had done to Jericho and Ai, ⁴they worked craftily and went and pretended to be ambassadors.

➤ Heard: The Israelites slaughtered every last man, woman & child.

➤ Utterly without mercy! Opposition to Israel is sure defeat!

⁴And they took old sacks on their donkeys, [Very thorough in their deceit-even conforming to Israel's peculiar ways by using "donkeys" rather than horses] 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.

Joshua 9:6b and said to him and to the men of Israel,

"We have come from a far country; now Therefore, Make A Covenant With Us."

Deut. 20:10-18 God lists differing rules for cities near and far from Israel.

Deut. 20:10-11, 15 "When you approach a city to fight against it, you shall offer it terms of peace. ¹¹ And if it agrees to make peace with you and opens to you, then all the people who are found in it shall become your forced labor and serve you. ¹⁵ Thus shalt thou do unto all the cities which are very far off from thee, which are not of the cities of these nations.

- God allowed for peace with nations OUTSIDE the land He is giving Israel as an inheritance. Those far from Israel who seek peace with God's people should be spared from the sword. Become your forced labor and serve you. [Important]

Deut. 20:16 But of the cities of these peoples which the Lord your God gives you as an inheritance, you shall let nothing that breathes remain alive,

¹⁷ but you shall utterly destroy them: the Hittite and the Amorite and the Canaanite and the Perizzite and the Hivite and the Jebusite, just as the Lord your God has commanded you, ¹⁸ lest they teach you to do according to all their abominations which they have done for their gods, and you sin against the Lord your God.

The Gibeonites' words and actions reveal they knew of this law.

- As a result, they used it to their advantage to achieve protection from destruction.
- Use DECEIT to achieve their goal. Hypocrisy; flattery; lying, etc.
- The Gibeonites deceive Israel because of the judgment threatened by Yahweh: a credible threat confirmed by the Word of God.
- Their only hope was to convince the Israelites they were from outside of the land of inheritance and were therefore eligible for peace.

Joshua 9:6b And they went to Joshua, to the CAMP AT GILGAL,

- Place of Remembrance: where all God's people together went down unto death
If I forget what God has done, I will doubt what He can do.
- Place of Resurrection: where together they came up with their leader into life
- Place of Renunciation: where they cast off the carnal existence of the wilderness
- Place of Restoration: where they came into fellowship with the Lord
- Place of Realization: where they began to taste of the strong food of the land
- Place of Revelation: where they met their Captain with a drawn sword

The Christian life has its roots firmly imbedded in Calvary, the place where we died with Jesus and rose with Him, where we have deliberately renounced carnality and have entered into a living fellowship with our Lord, where we have begun to take the strong food of His Word and to realize every moment of our lives that the Captain of the Lord's hosts is with us. At Gilgal, they circumcised the males as an outward mark they were separated unto Jehovah. OT figure of mortifying the lusts of the flesh [Jer. 4:4; Deut. 10:16]

- Satan hates and opposes our separation unto God and mortification of our flesh.
- These 2 things distinguish us from the world and promote God's glory.

Satan's goal is to destroy the testimony of believers as a people devoted to God and walking with Him in separation from the ungodly. [Rom. 12:1-2]

Satan moved the Gibeonites to disguise themselves before Joshua so Israel would be deceived and make a covenant with them.

- Satan's craftiness: Purpose > to introduce his "leaven into the meal."
- Satan uses human instruments [his "ministers;" II Cor. 11:14-15]

Key: Through the Gibeonites, the enemy was making an attack upon Israel's consecration, inducing them to ignore God's command of separation by a union with the heathen

Lesson: A vital aspect of my spiritual warfare: maintain my consecration to God and persevere with the work of mortification, always on the alert against the wiles of the Devil to hinder me.

Key: The enemy came to deceive & make a covenant at Gilgal.

Redpath: There stood this day on holy ground in the camp at Gilgal a company of people who were Israel's enemies. The Israelites, set apart for God, dedicated to Him, were mingled with those whom God had commanded them to destroy.

Men of Israel: Refers specifically to adult male members of the Israelite community.

<u>The men of Israel:</u>	Question the Gibeonites	9:7
	Examine the Bread	9:14a
	Fail to consult God	9:14b

Sons or children of Israel: Used in religious texts to denote the entire nation or people.

<u>The sons of Israel:</u>	Find the hidden cities	9:17
	Refuse to attack them	9:18

Leaders of the Congregation: Include Joshua, high priest & elders

<u>Leaders of the Congregation</u>	Swear an oath to the Gibeonites	9:15
	Explain their non-violence to the congregation	9:19-20
	Pronounce a sentence of life on the Gibeonites	9:21

<u>The congregation</u>	Murmurs against the leaders	9:18
-------------------------	-----------------------------	------

Act 2: Deception Of The Gibeonites To Secure Their Place In Israelite Society

- Scene 1: Fear Gives Birth To Deception Joshua 9:3-6
- Scene 2: Putting Deception Into Action Joshua 9:7-13

Joshua 9:7-13 Then the men of Israel said to the Hivites, [signifies serpents"]

Question: Why tell us now [v.7] the Gibeonites are Hivites?

⁷Perhaps you dwell among us; so how can we make a covenant with you?
But they said to Joshua, "We are your servants."

And Joshua said to them, "Who are you, and where do you come from?" So they said to him:
⁹"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, 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.

¹¹Therefore, 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.'" 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. 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." Remember: They are Canaanites in disguise.

Deceptive Lies designed specifically to flatter them and puff up their pride.
This lessened their ability to have true discernment.

➤ We are "from a very far country." - Lived only 18.6 miles away
They were careful to make no mention, of the supernatural crossing of the Jordan, nor of Israel's recent victories at Jericho and Ai.
That news would not yet have reached "a very far country"!
How far hypocrites will go to gain the friendship of God's people.

○ Scene 3: Why The Enemy Succeeded Joshua 9:14

Then the men of Israel took some of their provisions;

but they did not ask counsel of the LORD." [relied on own judgment > Hivite spirit]
Adult male members sample the travelers' provisions but do not seek the LORD's counsel.
Consider: They were initially skeptical of the Gibeonites. It was carelessness!
They did not follow up on the "red flags" that were going off in their minds.

- They walked by sight and not by faith.

Problem: They lowered their defenses and considered the outward appearance as evidence.

- Because the Israelites judged by appearances, everything appeared legitimate.

It was doubly inexcusable that Israel was deceived in "the camp at Gilgal." [Joshua 9:6]

- The Ark of the Covenant was here.
- Tabernacle of the priesthood > therefore the place where the mind of the LORD could be obtained if they sought Him in the way He directed.

Scene 4: Success Of Deception Joshua 9:15

Joshua 9:15 So Joshua made peace with them, and made a covenant with them

to let them live [showed them mercy]; and the rulers of the congregation swore to them.

Mission Accomplished: God's people entered into a covenant which will keep them from
"God's best for them."

They will live with the consequences of a decision they made outside of God's will for them.

Joshua 9:16-21 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.

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 Kirjathjearim. [Hivite Cities]

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. 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.

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

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.

Joshua 9:22-23 And Joshua called for them, and he spoke unto them, saying,

Why have you deceived us, saying, 'We *are* very far from you,' when you dwell near us?

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.

Deut. 29:10-12: Instructions for foreigners brought in as servants to Israel.

¹⁰ "You are standing today, all of you, before the Lord your God: the heads of your tribes, your elders, and your officers, all the men of Israel, ¹¹ your little ones, your wives, and the sojourner who is in your camp, from the one who chops your wood to the one who draws your water, ¹² so that you may enter into the sworn covenant of the Lord your God, which the Lord your God is making with you today . . .

In the context of Moses's covenant renewal with Israel,

Moses assigns a place for sojourners to chop wood and haul water.

When Joshua assigns the Gibeonites to chopping wood and hauling water, he is fulfilling this word from Moses and explaining the covenant relationship between Israel and the Gibeonites.

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.

The Gibeonites acted because of what they knew. God had commanded Israel to destroy all the inhabitants of the land. What they knew generated fear in them.

Knowledge and fear are powerful motivators. Their knowledge was power in that it motivated them to action, to do something to prevent or avoid the inevitable destruction they knew was coming. But that knowledge also generated fear.

Joshua 9:25 And now, behold, we are in thine hand:

as it seems good and right unto thee to do unto us, do.

- Throw themselves on Israel's mercy.
- Acknowledge: Israel is the superior power with the authority to grant justice and mercy.
- This is unconditional surrender, complete dependence on Joshua's grace and truthfulness.

Joshua 9:26-27 And so did he unto them and delivered them out of the hand of the children of Israel, that they slew them not. [Joshua, *God is salvation*, saves Gibeon from the people.]

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.

- Joshua makes the Gibeonites living sacrifices.

Note: After Israel's settlement, Gibeon became a Levitical city fulfilling Joshua's assignment of tabernacle service. [Joshua 21:17]

Note: There is no question of breaking the alliance with Gibeon. Future history reveals the Israelites got into serious trouble when they tried to break the alliance.

King Saul broke the treaty Joshua had signed. He attacked and killed some Gibeonites.

II Sam. 21:1 Then there was a famine in the days of David three years, year after year; and David enquired of the LORD. And the LORD answered,

It is for Saul, and for his bloody house, because he slew the Gibeonites.

- To appease the Gibeonites and put an end to the famine, 7 descendants of Saul were given to them to be put to death. [II Sam. 21:6] [They had become respected in Israel.]

God Turns A Curse To A Blessing

Joshua 9:23 Now therefore you are cursed, and some of you shall never be anything but servants, cutters of wood and drawers of water for the house of my God."

This is a most peculiar curse, as it brings the Gibeonites NEAR to the place of God's dwelling, the location of greatest blessing in Israel.

Instead of seeing how the lies of Gibeon are met with swift punishment, we find that God's mercy overshadows their wrongdoing.

Key: The people of Gibeon are not destroyed but given a place of service in God's tabernacle. Strong indication of God's mercy for people marked out for destruction.

Most scholars believe the Gibeonites were later called the Nethinim [given ones; set apart] when they were formally given by King David to the Levites to be their servants.

Question: Why were the Nethinim chosen by David and the officials in Ezra 8:20?

Servants for the Temple: Ezra 8:20 Also of the Nethinims, whom David and the princes had appointed for the service of the Levites, 220 Nethinims. All were designated by name.

- Nethinim = person given, dedicated to the service of the sanctuary & to the Levites
- Name given to the hereditary temple servants who were appointed to the menial work of the sanctuary for the Levites. Hewers of wood; carriers of water; altar of Lord

Fulfillment of Covenant Justice: The Gibeonite oath could not be revoked.

By integrating them into temple service, David honored that covenant while transforming a punitive servitude into sacred participation.

Protection of Priestly Purity Numbers 3 and 18 limit altar contact to Aaronic priests.

Menial yet essential tasks, slaughter preparation, fuel procurement, sanitation, had to be done by non-priests to prevent ritual defilement of sacred personnel.

- The temple servants, often referred to as Nethinim, handled menial labor.

Temple Servants' Role and Duties

- Wood-cutting & Water-carrying Joshua 9:21,27
- Cleaning, maintenance, and guard assistance I Chron. 9:17-24; Neh. 11:19-21
- Possible slaughter-floor labor under Levite oversight II Chronicles 29:34

Continuity after the Return To Jerusalem: Building the walls & gates of Jerusalem

In Ezra and Nehemiah, the Nethinim are listed among those who returned to Jerusalem to help rebuild the temple and restore worship. Ezra 2:43-54 and Neh. 7:46-56 provide detailed lists of the Nethinims who returned with Zerubbabel.

These passages highlight their importance in the post-exilic community, as they were essential for the functioning of the temple services.

Ezra 8:20 Also of the Nethinims, whom David and the princes

had appointed for the service of the Levites, 220 Nethinims. All were designated by name.

- Long-standing service in the temple.

Their dedication to service exemplified a life of humility and devotion to God.

The inclusion of the Nethinims in the lists of returnees from exile underscores their valued role in the restoration of Israel's religious life.

The Nethinims' example encourages believers to embrace service, regardless of the perceived significance of the task, as an act of worship and obedience to God.

Neh. 10:28 records the Nethinim sealing the covenant renewal. Their presence in civic oaths demonstrates elevated spiritual standing compared with pre-exilic days.

Gibeonites, Nethinim, Serving At The Altar Of Yahweh

Key: To keep the Gibeonites' idolatry from defiling the true faith of Israel, their work would be carried out in the tabernacle, where they would be exposed to the worship of the one true God.

Granted their position was at the lowest level of servanthood – woodcutters and water carriers.

- Wood and water are essentials for the daily operations of the sacrifices [Lev. 1:7, 9]
- They participated in the sacrificial worship of the God of Israel by serving at His altar.
- They would naturally acquire the knowledge of the true God.
- They were made to dwell in the courts of the Lord's house with near access to Him in the service of the sanctuary.

Neh. 11:21a But the Nethinims dwelt in Ophel...

- Ophel = high, built-up area; ascend to the southeast side of Temple Mt.
- Nethinim's quarters were close proximity to the Temple, Watergate & Gihon Spring
- Residence in Ophel and Nethinim Quarter ensures rapid, round-the-clock availability.

Ps. 84:10-11 For a day in thy courts is better than a thousand. I had rather be a doorkeeper in the house of my God, than to dwell in the tents of wickedness.

¹¹ For the LORD God is a sun and shield: the LORD will give grace and glory:

no good thing will He withhold from them that walk uprightly.

- Surely, they esteemed their lot a blessing, hard and toilsome and humble as it was.

The Reflection of Our Heart

Psalm 58:3: *"The wicked are estranged from the womb;*

they go astray as soon as they are born, speaking lies."

We are the Gibeonites. Born with deceit in our DNA.

- Trained in the art of self-preservation. Masters of the cover-up.

God sees through the disguise. He knows the truth before we ever speak a word.

He sees every hidden motive, every impure thought, every lie we've ever told.

- He has every right to send us away. But instead, He makes a covenant.

God has made a greater covenant with us through Truth—not sealed with words,

- but with the blood of His Son, Jesus Christ.

God saw the deceit, the rebellion, the filth. He saw the pride that keeps us from admitting how broken we are. yet, through Jesus, He still welcomes us in.

Eph. 2:19 *Now therefore ye are no more strangers and foreigners,*

but fellow citizens with the saints, and of the household of God.

- We don't deserve it. We didn't earn it. We didn't achieve it. But grace found us anyway. Through Jesus, the deceivers become disciples.

A New Name: Gibeonites, hill people,

became Nethinim, a people dedicated, set apart, and holy unto the Lord.
What they once were no longer defined them. Deceivers became servants,
outsiders became insiders, and those who once lived by trickery now lived by truth.

We are No longer defined by our past, no longer marked by our failures, but called holy,
chosen, and beloved because of the covenant made in His blood.

A Life of Devotion

The Nethinim embraced their place in God's house. They labored. They served. They never
held high positions, never wore royal robes, never stood in the spotlight. But they stayed.

We who were once deceivers, once far from God, have been brought near by Jesus.
Let's not waste this grace. Let's live lives of devotion, giving ourselves fully to the One who
made a covenant of love with us.

Grace has a way of rewriting stories.