



"Humility is often only feigned submission which people use to render others submissive. It is a subterfuge of pride which lowers itself in order to rise."

—Francois de La Rochefoucauld

**12-Mar-21**

## **Joshua and the Gibeonites (Part One)**

In [Ecclesiastes 7:29](#), Solomon observes, "[God](#) made human beings straightforward, but they have devised many schemes" (*New Revised Standard Version*). One such scheme, recorded in Scripture for our admonition, reverberated for many generations and contributed significantly to Israel's downfall. [Joshua 9:3-15](#) tells the tale:

But when the inhabitants of Gibeon heard what Joshua had done to Jericho and Ai, 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. 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." Then the men of Israel said to the Hivites, "Perhaps 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:

"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. 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."' 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." Then the men of Israel took some of their provisions; but they did not ask counsel of the LORD. 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.

Gibeon was a sizeable city located in the area later allotted to Benjamin, a short distance from Jebus (Jerusalem; see [Judges 19:10](#)). The people of Gibeon were Hivites, descendants of Canaan, the grandson of Noah whom God cursed on account of his sexual perversion. God promised Abraham the land that the descendants of Canaan had settled in, of which the Hivites owned a significant part.

God's will concerning the land's inhabitants is unambiguous. He states that He would drive them out multiple times, and He would require the Israelites to participate ([Exodus 23:22-24](#), 27-32; 34:11-12; [Deuteronomy 7:1-2](#); [9:1-5](#); [12:2-4](#); [20:16-18](#); [25:17-19](#)). In [Deuteronomy 7:1](#), God lists the Hivites among the seven great nations that He judged should be utterly destroyed. He explicitly forbids making a covenant with them or even showing mercy to them. This latter command is a significant point by itself—that the God of mercy would say, "Show them no mercy." God knew that these nations' influence would result in idolatry among the Israelites, and subsequently, their destruction.

For their part, the Gibeonites were simply trying to save their skins. They wanted to live and pursued this end more pragmatically than the other

Canaanites, who chose to go down fighting. The Gibeonites fashioned masterful disguises and played their parts exactly right to achieve their goal. Because the Israelites judged by appearances, everything appeared legitimate. The Gibeonites deftly answered the Israelites' minor inquiries, producing false evidence to support the story. The subterfuge worked, and the Gibeonites got what they were after.

God warns us so frequently about deception in its various forms because it works. The serpent twisted God's words, making them seem reasonable to Eve—it worked. Bribery also works—it causes one to turn a blind eye instead of dealing righteously. Proverbs 31 concludes that "charm is deceitful" ([Proverbs 31:30](#))—yet charm also works. Solomon failed to heed this truth, and his charming wives led him astray. Evoking pity works, as the Gibeonites proved, as does playing to other emotions. Flattery likewise succeeds. Even when someone knows he or she is being flattered, it still works because it is pleasing to the ego, and those satisfying feelings dull the mind to the deception taking place.

Careers and fortunes are frequently supported by, if not forged in, dishonesty because deceit is a pragmatic way to achieve desired ends without putting in patient and honest work. Today, euphemisms like "put your best foot forward" and "fake it 'til you make it" describe how people misrepresent themselves to get what they want. Yet God does not operate this way. Neither is He glorified when His people misrepresent themselves using such methods.

Deception can be quite effective for achieving aims, but it is a polluted spring. What may start as a shortcut or easier way to accomplish a goal cannot end with peace or fulfillment because [sin](#) cannot deliver on its promises—sin itself is deceitful ([Hebrews 3:13](#))! God not only says do not deceive, but He also strongly cautions about *being* deceived because, in doing so, we will join the deceivers in drinking of that poisoned spring. [Jesus](#) advises us to judge with righteous judgment ([John 7:24](#)), which begins with seeking the all-knowing God and acknowledging our limitations. Only God sees all that is happening, and often, far more is at stake than we realize.

Part Two will continue the story of the Gibeonites and the destruction they wrought.

## **From the Archives: Featured Sermon**

### **[David and the Gibeonites](#)**

by Richard T. Ritenbaugh

Most people living in modern, Western culture better identify with flawed heroes, rather than perfect heroes. King David, for example, made huge errors in judgment and committed colossal sins. Ezekiel 18:19-20 indicates that guilt for sin is not transferable, but the consequences can often touch several generations. Saul, after having disqualified himself from being king, sought to ingratiate himself with God by killing Canaanites, including an unrecorded massacre of Gibeonites. Later, during a wasting famine, David, attempting a political rather than a righteous solution, yielded to the Gibeonites' request that descendants of Saul be hanged to avenge the slaughter. That the famine continued indicates God displeasure with David's decision and inner motives. As Christians living amidst spiritual famine, we dare not compromise with the culture around us.

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## **From the Archives: Featured Article**

### **[Let No One Deceive You](#)**

by Richard T. Ritenbaugh

We live in a day of increasing knowledge—to the point that we are increasingly overloaded with information. Richard Ritenbaugh argues that these and other modern factors lend themselves to deception, yet this is one of the primary end-time trends that Jesus warns us against!

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