

## No Wall Too Tall

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*Then Joshua dismissed the people, each to their own inheritance.  
(Joshua 24:28-NIV)*

The Promised Land is also a Problem Land.

*<sup>3</sup> However, when the people of Gibeon heard what Joshua had done to Jericho and Ai, <sup>4</sup> they resorted to a ruse: They went as a delegation whose donkeys were loaded with worn-out sacks and old wineskins, cracked and mended. <sup>5</sup> They put worn and patched sandals on their feet and wore old clothes. All the bread of their food supply was dry and moldy. <sup>6</sup> Then they went to Joshua in the camp at Gilgal and said to him and the Israelites, "We have come from a distant country; make a treaty with us." (Joshua 9-NIV)*

Father, we know that families, students, employees, kids and moms and dads are under pressure, we know that YOU would like to help them out and get some off dangerous paths and redirect them completely for this generation and for generations to follow so God you be the teacher and we will be good listeners...in Jesus name and everyone said, "AMEN."

**Story of School Annual.** Hey, freshmen, let's see **how handsome** you look in the school Yearbook. And before I could gather my senses, as to what I was doing, I was handing over my \$10, Nesika, to a couple seniors who then: opened the pages, pretended to be interested in me and then began to laugh as they drove away with my High School Yearbook. I had not enjoyed it for more than 15 min. I skulked my way home. Hanging my head in shame that I would fall for such an obvious ruse, scheme, and crafty deception that unfolded on my last day of school.

Like me, Joshua too, was snookered, by some crafty Gibeonites who thought deception could win over a massive military war effort.

**Misdirection** is possible because of the power of suggestion. It is a psychological fact that the first impulse of people is to believe the facts. Doubting is not our normal nature. And it is the power of suggestion that wields incredible influence over our decisions, beliefs, and values.

And we will see this truth in today's study, as a tribe of people, the Gibeonites, pull a fast-one on Joshua, to stay alive!

The purpose of Moses' leadership was to bring the Israelites OUT! The purpose of Joshua's leadership was to bring the young Hebrew nation IN!

**The purpose of Moses leadership** was to bring the Israelites **Out!** Out of Egypt. Out of slavery. Out of bondage.

**The purpose of Joshua's leadership** was to bring the Israelites **In!** To bring them into the Promised Land.

To bring them into their inheritance.

To bring them into a land flowing with milk and honey.

Now, God has an inheritance for you. The word inheritance is to God's people what wheat is to Kansas.

What barbecue is to Texas.

What rain is to Seattle.

What Superbowl's are to the Chiefs.

The word inheritance appears over 60 times in the book of Joshua. Now, the Promised Land doesn't just serve up promises, it serves up problems.

The Promised Land is also a Problem Land.

What are these problems? They are the enemies who stand in the way of God's people achieving their inheritance.

Greed. Selfishness. Deception. Division.

Jericho possessed wealth, and the Israelites possessed God's word. The Gibeonites used deception and God's people grumbled when the Gibeonites, deceived, snookered, and pulled a fast-one on Joshua. Another way to say it is, Joshua faced three problems in the Promised Land. Jericho represents the world. Ai represents the flesh. Gibeon represents the evil.

For many the violence in the book of Joshua hinders them from serving our Great God. The book of Joshua is the only place in the bible where God tells his people to destroy and put to death everything in its path. Don't pretend it is not so. Death is happening to animals, women, children, elderly to everyone and everything.

So, for some this violence become a barrier to hearing God's message of love and grace.

God knew the wickedness the Canaanites had been committing for hundreds of years. And every other people group that lived in the Promised Land. God allowed this wickedness to go unchecked for hundreds of years:

*(16) In the fourth generation your descendants will come back here, for the sin of the Amorites has not yet reached its full measure. (Genesis 15-NIV)*

God knew everything about the wickedness in the Promised Land. He was aware of the unbridled evil that lived there. God gave this people **hundreds of years** to respond and change their ways.

The fact that Rahab did is proof that others could have also. The fact that Rahab entered the Promised Land with Joshua, and the young Hebrew nation is fact that others could have also.

They did not. And their evil ways increased. At the height of their evil ways *Deuteronomy 12:31b (NIV)* tells us that, *"they do all kinds of detestable things the Lord hates. They even burn their sons and daughters in the fire as sacrifices to their gods."*

God not only knew what they had done. He knew what they would do. Because of God's omniscience God saw the path of destruction the Canaanites would cause in the future. So, God's grace was poured out for a season. Then God's justice was poured out through Joshua taking possession of the land that had been desecrated to evil.

We love the aspect of God's grace where sinners are saved and the undeserving are brought into his kingdom.

God is God. We may not understand his way, but he is still God. And God offers mankind three expressions of his love:

Grace-we get what we don't deserve.

Mercy-we get less than we deserve.

Justice-we get what we deserve.

Those who accuse God of an overreach in Canaan or today might take time to remember: We were not there. We did not know the Canaanites. We did not see the evil that ran unchecked. An evil that was enjoyed by evil people with evil practices.

God is full of grace. What he commanded the young Hebrew nation to do to the Canaanites is unique to the bible.

At no other time in the bible has God ever instructed such an aggressive military plan of scorched earth. The vast majority of the bible is filled with grace and mercy.

Where God rescues. God Redeems. And displays his patience and love. Because of this God has earned my TRUST. MY RESPECT. Most of all my ALLEGIENCE, OBEDIENCE and SURRENDER.

How about you? I know where I stand. Where do you stand? On the side of God. Or on the side of evil with the Canaanites?

By the way God will do this again. Once more at the end of the age he will judge evil once-and-for all. On that day, the devil and his evil empire will taste God's final act of justice. And on that day no one will question his right to do so.

A father had a daughter who had a toxic and sexually destructive boyfriend. The boyfriend darkened the girl's life with all kinds of evil thoughts and practices contrary to dad's values and beliefs.

The boy cast a spell and put the girl in a trance of loyalty that put her on the path of self-destruction. Dad called for the break-up of the relationship. A NO contact order was declared by dad.

The girl a young high schooler would not. Refused. Fought it. She clearly rebelled. In no-uncertain terms, she declared a holy war-Jihad against her dad.

Dad's heart broke. He waited patiently to see if change would come. He was clearly aware of all that was going on. Like many of our parents, they would still find out what was really happening, even if we tried to hide it. Then dad had enough. His patience and grace had limits.

Dad did the only thing that could save his beautiful daughter from certain destruction. He quit his job and took a job across the country. Sold

his house. Moved immediately. And settled in a new neighborhood. A new School district. And started attending a new church.

Drastic measures? The girl went ballistic. Cried out that dad was overreacting. Overreaching. Over the top. It was dad's right. It was dad's choice. It was dad's responsibility.

You have to decide whether you will choose God's ways or the ways of the Canaanites. The paths could not be clearer.

**To not choose, is to choose.** Now that you understand God's ways...don't let violence in the book of Joshua confuse you.

Joshua's next military campaign after Jericho and Ai, is now unfolding in Joshua 9. Let's read right from the bible what is about to happening.

*<sup>1</sup> Now when all the kings west of the Jordan heard about these things — the kings in the hill country, in the western foothills, and along the entire coast of the Mediterranean Sea as far as Lebanon (the kings of the Hittites, Amorites, Canaanites, Perizzites, Hivites and Jebusites) — ... (Joshua 9-NIV)*

A massive military army made up of several of the nations which inhabited the Promise Land is scrambling to put together an offensive which can defeat the Hebrews. <sup>2</sup>... *they came together to wage war against Joshua and Israel. (Joshua 9-NIV)*

These kings will never stand a chance. It will be complete slaughter. So, the kings send their troops to battle. They had no idea they were about to unleash on themselves the supernatural power of Joshua's secret weapon. **God's might in the heavens.** The armies turned and ran with the Hebrews hot on their trail.

Joshua's army chasing the evil kings' armies sounded like thunder in the heavens. And suddenly God unleashed thunder from the heavens.

In a divine carpet bombing, large hailstones rained down from the sky in a divine act of justice against the wickedness.

*<sup>11</sup> As they fled before Israel on the road down from Beth Horon to Azekah, the Lord hurled large hailstones down on them, and more of them died from the hail than were killed by the swords of the Israelites. (Joshua 10-NIV)*

Perhaps, you did not realize you were on the wrong side of justice. God's justice. I recommend you answer the question I asked earlier.

How about you? I know where I stand. Where do you stand? On the side of God. Or on the side of evil with the Canaanites?

A small contingency of Canaanites (Gibeonites), choose another path. An all-out military assault, they see is a total impossibility. Sheer suicide. Bad plan.

And the Gibeonites would be right. They saw the handwriting on the wall. Like the other tribes they were next in line to be conquered.

So, they set up an elaborate deception to trick Joshua into entering a treaty with him. Hoping this treaty would save their skin. Save their hide. Save their children. Save their elderly and animals.

As we saw while the other tribes were holding summit meetings to form a coalition which could march against Joshua, the Gibeonites knew from past Hebrews victories at Jericho and Ai, **that would be a big fail.**

While all the kings joined together to form a massive military alliance and fight against Joshua, the elders of the Gibeonites chose a different approach.

*<sup>3</sup> However, when the people of Gibeon heard what Joshua had done to Jericho and Ai, <sup>4a</sup> they resorted to a ruse: (Joshua 9-NIV)*

Might against might will not work the Gibeonites elders agreed.

But, perhaps deception against might, might have a chance.

Maybe a ruse against might, might have a chance.

Is it possible craftiness and cunning, and all-out lying might have a chance against might?

The Gibeonites ruse, craftiness, and trickery unfolds in the next verses. Wake up Christian. Stop sleeping through the alarm. It is ringing and telling us deception is all around us.

Let me give you some low hanging fruit or let me allow you to peak at the answer in the back of the book.

Joshua stood eyeball to eyeball with evil and didn't even recognize it. Joshua's flaw and ours is exposed in *Joshua 9:14-NIV, <sup>14</sup> The Israelites sampled their provisions but did not inquire of the Lord.*

The bait was dropped. An invitation to sample the merchandise was offered. They looked closely at the old clothes and stinky bread. They listened to the Gibeonites story. Each invitation to take a closer look placed the Hebrew nation right into the enemy's strategy of deception based on overconfidence.

Let's read what happened. <sup>4b</sup> *They went as a delegation whose donkeys were loaded with worn-out sacks and old wineskins, cracked and mended. <sup>5</sup> They put worn and patched sandals on their feet and wore old clothes. All the bread of their food supply was dry and moldy. <sup>6</sup> Then they went to Joshua in the camp at Gilgal and said to him and the Israelites, "We have come from a distant country; make a treaty with us."*

<sup>7</sup> *The Israelites said to the Hivites, "But perhaps you live near us, so how can we make a treaty with you?" <sup>8</sup> "We are your servants," they said to Joshua. But Joshua asked, "Who are you and where do you come from?" <sup>9a</sup> They answered: "Your servants have come from a very distant country because of the fame of the Lord your God." (Joshua 9-NIV)*

From a far country some servants and ambassadors enter Joshua's camp. The Gibeonites present themselves as vagabonds from a far-off land. Hapless pilgrims from a far-off country. Hopeless Bedouins from a far-off homestead.

Quickly they go to work, presenting their sinister story empty grain sacks, wore out sandals and moldy bread. Who doesn't feel bad for the helpless? Disheveled. And needy travelers.

The Gibeonites claimed to be on the side of the Hebrews. We are your servants. We traveled a great distance to celebrate your victories.

<sup>9</sup> *"Your servants have come from a very distant country because of the fame of the Lord your God. For we have heard reports of him: all that he did in Egypt, <sup>10</sup> and all that he did to the two kings of the Amorites east of the Jordan — Sihon king of Heshbon, and Og king of Bashan, who reigned in Ashtaroth.*

<sup>11</sup> *And our elders and all those living in our country said to us, 'Take provisions for your journey; go and meet them and say to them, "We are your servants; make a treaty with us.'" <sup>12</sup> This bread of ours was warm when we packed it at home on the day we left to come to you. But now see how dry and moldy it is. <sup>13</sup> And these wineskins that we filled were new, but see how cracked they are. And our clothes and sandals are worn out by the very long journey." (Joshua 9-NIV)*

The success of Joshua was praised, and Joshua's head swelled. And the ink was not dry long on the contract long before everyone was toasting and celebrating God's people and their success.

Joshua heard the Gibeonite story and agreed to the covenant terms.

Three days later, as Joshua is moving toward the kings who have massed their army, Joshua runs smack into a community of Bedouins who call themselves the Gibeonites.

The tricksters, hucksters and sham and scam artists, were not from a distant land; they were a couple days' journey from Joshua's current encampment.

The old clothes were a disguise. The molding bread was a big scam.

Somehow the Gibeonites had insider trading, that their heads were on the chopping block like everyone else's, so they told Joshua a big fat lie to save their lives. Somehow, they had learned that God has a special provision for cities outside of Canaan.

***10** When you march up to attack a city, make its people an offer of peace. **11** If they accept and open their gates, all the people in it shall be subject to forced labor and shall work for you. **12** If they refuse to make peace and they engage you in battle, lay siege to that city. (Deuteronomy 20-NIV)*

Any city outside the Promised Land could be spared if they sued for peace. Why didn't Joshua and the elders see the deception? We do well to learn from Joshua's mistake.

***14** The Israelites sampled their provisions but did not inquire of the Lord. (Joshua 9-NIV)*

I have often taken a pass, not a path, on all kinds of opportunities because I needed more time to consult with God. (Isaiah 30:21, Psalm 32)

Key: When I was younger, it was easier to deceive me, now I put time between the deception and decision.

Never make decisions in a hurry and don't rely on your own insights.

*Trust in the LORD with all your heart  
and lean not on your own understanding. (Proverbs 3:5-NIV)*



Consult God in everything. Always. Immediately. Quickly. Live with one ear toward heaven and one eye of suspicion on the opportunity. Keep your communication with God going all the time.

This is called a relationship with God. It is personal. He speaks to us. He knows our frailties. He wants to talk to you.

Is this opportunity from you, God?  
Is this venture capital from you, God?  
Should I take this road, God.

Again, look for deception from the world we live in. Every conceivable person or program has an angle. So, in summary, what is a ruse?

Ruse: action or device meant to confuse or mislead. (Joshua 9:3-4)  
How did the Gibeonites deceive Joshua?

*<sup>14</sup> The Israelites sampled their provisions but **did not inquire of the Lord.** <sup>15</sup> Then Joshua made a treaty of peace with them to let them live, and the leaders of the assembly ratified it by oath. (Joshua 9-NIV)*

- At every decision, at every intersection, and at every crossroads,
- (1) Acknowledge God's control over your life.
  - (2) Declare your acceptance of his purpose and plan.
  - (3) Then ask, "do I go right or left?"

Consult God in everything.

God's invitation is clear and simple, to come and talk with me. Our relationship with God is just that – a speaking and hearing relationship.

*"Come and talk with me, O my people." And my heart responds, "Lord, I am coming." (Psalm 27:8b-TLB)*

*<sup>8</sup> My heart has heard you say, "Come and talk with me, O my people." And my heart responds, "Lord, I am coming."*

Dear God,

I believe Jesus Christ died an atoning death to forgive my pile of sins. I confess that I have sinned, and I am asking for Your forgiveness. I believe that Jesus rose from the dead and gives eternal life to all who believe in Him. I ~~am~~ surrendering my life to Jesus Christ as my Savior and follow Him as my Lord from this day forward. Guide and guard my life as I choose to do Your will.

In Jesus' Name, Amen.