

CHAPTER 9

INTRODUCTION TO JOSHUA 9

This chapter gives an account of the combination of the several kings of Canaan against Israel, (^(100E)Joshua 9:1,2); and of the craftiness of the Gibeonites, pretending they were ambassadors from a far country, and desired to enter into a league with Israel, which they obtained, (^(100B)Joshua 9:3-15); but when it was discovered who they were, it occasioned a murmuring among the people, (^(100G)Joshua 9:16-18); which the princes quelled by proposing to make them hewers of wood, and drawers of water, (^(100D)Joshua 9:19-21); in order to which Joshua summoned them before him, and chided them for beguiling them; and after they had made their excuse, he ordered them to the service the princes proposed, and so peace in the congregation of Israel was preserved, (^(100I)Joshua 9:21-27).

Ver. 1. *And it came to pass, when all the kings which [were] on this side Jordan*, etc.] 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^{f141}, 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, (^{<000B>}Joshua 9:3). Some think, as Abarbanel, 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 fealty to him. All the nations of Canaan are mentioned but the Gergasites; which, according to the Jewish writers, are omitted, because they were but few; the Septuagint version has them in some copies.

Ver. 2. *That they gathered themselves together to fight with Joshua, and with Israel,* etc.] 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, (^{<000B>}Joshua 11:1-5); 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.

Ver. 3. *And when the inhabitants of Gibeon,* etc.] A large and royal city, a metropolitan one, which had three others belonging to it, and under it, mentioned (^{<000B>}Joshua 9:17); (see ^{<000B>}Joshua 10:2); no mention is made of any king over them, perhaps they were governed by elders, (^{<000B>}Joshua 9:11). Though an Arabic writer^{f142} says, the king of Gibeon wrote to Joshua, and desired security, and sent him large gifts, whom having preserved in safety, Joshua placed on his throne: when these

heard what Joshua had done to Jericho and Ai; had taken the one in a miraculous way, and the other by a stratagem, and had burnt them both, destroyed the inhabitants, plundered their substance, and slew both their kings, all which struck them with terror.

Ver. 4. *And they did work wily,* etc.] 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, (^{<0134>}Genesis 34:2,13); so now the Gibeonites, who also were Hivites, (^{<0135>}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 ^{<4097>}Matthew 9:17).

Ver. 5. *And old shoes and clouted upon their feet*, etc.] 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 “mouldy” signifies pricked, pointed, spotted, as mouldy bread has in it spots of different colours, 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 and hard like crusts, so Noldius ^{f143}; or very hard, like bread twice baked, as Castell ^{f144}.

Ver. 6. *And they went to Joshua, unto the camp at Gilgal*, etc.] From whence it appears, that after Jericho and Ai were destroyed, the army of Israel returned to their encampment at Gilgal, (^{<0136>}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”^{f145}; the word “Ish” here used sometimes denotes an eminent person or persons, (see ^{<311>}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^{f146}, Gibeon was but four miles from Bethel, 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 Bethel a mile from thence, and Gibeon four miles from Bethel, they were come but little more than nine miles. Bunting^{f147} makes it twelve miles from Gilgal to Gibeon:

now therefore make yea league with us; offensive and defensive, to help and assist each other against a common enemy.

Ver. 7. *And the men of Israel said unto the Hivites*, etc.] 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 ^{<611>}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, (^{<811>}Deuteronomy 7:2).

Ver. 8. *And they said unto Joshua, we [are] thy servants*, etc.] 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.

Ver. 9. *And they said unto him, from a very far country thy servants are come,* etc.] 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, but put it off by saying they were come,

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”^{f148}; 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 favour; and so the Samaritan Chronicle^{f149} 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, unless it be considered as an explanation of the preceding clause:

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.

Ver. 10. *And all that he did to the two kings of the Amorites, that [were] beyond Jordan,* etc.] 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 (⁰⁰²¹Numbers 21:21-35); 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.

Ver. 11. *Wherefore our elders, and all the inhabitants of our country, spake unto us,* etc.] 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 an 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.

Ver. 12. *This our bread we took hot [for] our provision out of our houses*, etc.] 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 Gill on “⁴⁰⁹⁵Joshua 9:5”); which they gave as a demonstration and proof that they were come from a far country, as they had asserted.

Ver. 13. *And these bottles of wine, which we filled, [were] new*, etc.] 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. Isidore of Pelusium^{f150} thinks these Gibeonites were Cappadocians, of whom he gives a shocking character, and particularly that they were prone to lying and deceit; but his reason for it, that they were of the Philistines, will not hold good.

Ver. 14. *And the men took of their victuals*, etc.] That is, the princes of Israel took thereof; not to eat of them, for it cannot be thought that such personages would eat of such dry and mouldy bread, and especially as they

were now in a plentiful country, and possessed of the fruits of it; but to see whether it was in such a plight and condition as they said, whereby they might judge of the truth of what they said; and they learned and knew, as R. Jonah observes, from the dryness of their food, that it was truth they said; and so the Targum, the men hearkened to their words; and so Jarchi, they believed what they said on sight of their provisions; but, according to Kimchi and Ben Melech, they ate with them, to confirm the covenant they made with them; but had this been the case, as it sometimes was a custom to eat together at making covenants, (see ⁽¹²³⁾Genesis 26:30); the princes would doubtless have provided a better entertainment for such a purpose: the “margin” of our Bibles leads to the other sense,

“they received the men by reason of their victuals:”

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.

Ver. 15. *And Joshua made peace with them,* etc.] Upon the report the princes made of having examined what they had said, and which they found to be true, particularly concerning their victuals:

and made a league with them, to let them live; and not destroy them as he did the Canaanites, and was ordered to do; they being supposed not to belong to them by the representation of things they had made:

and the princes of the congregation sware unto them; that they would keep the league and covenant they had made with them inviolable; they ratified it by an oath, which was a sacred solemn thing.

Ver. 16. *And it came to pass at the end of three days, after they had made a league with them,* etc.] 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 neighbours, and [that] they dwelt among them; that is, in their neighbourhood, as the Arabic version; and so Noldius ^{f151} 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 reconnoitre several parts of the country, especially such as lay nearest, or for the sake of getting provisions for their camp.

Ver. 17. *And the children of Israel journeyed*, etc.] 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 neighbours 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, (⁽⁴⁶⁰⁰⁾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 neighbours, upon which a party was sent out at once to know the truth of it, who arrived thither the same day:

now their cities [were] Gibeon and Chephirah, and Beeroth and Kirjathjearim; 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 (⁽⁴⁶⁵⁰⁾Joshua 15:60 18:25,26).

Ver. 18. *And the children of Israel smote them not*, etc.] 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 neighbours, 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.

Ver. 19. *But all the princes said to all the congregation*, etc.] 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.

Ver. 20. *This we will do to them*, etc.] Either this favour 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; which though not mentioned directly, was what was upon their minds, and in their design to propose, only they were extremely desirous of sparing their lives, which they repeat:

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, (^{<2017>}Exodus 20:7), a sin highly displeasing to God; since an oath is made not only in his presence, and before him as a witness, who is appealed unto, but in his name, and is often severely threatened, and sorely punished; and as even the breach of this oath was several hundreds of years after, in the times of David, (^{<2007>}2 Samuel 21:1,2). The Vulgate Latin version therefore reads the words, “lest the wrath of the Lord come upon us”: but Abarbinel observes, that it may be understood of the wrath of Israel; for the words may be rendered, “and there shall not be wrath upon us, because of the oath”: there need be none, there is no occasion for it, since this was agreed upon on all hands, that the Gibeonites should be let 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.

Ver. 21. *And the princes said to them, let them live*, etc.] They were very pressing upon them, and importunate with them, to save their lives, because of the oath they had taken:

(but let them be hewers of wood, and drawers of water, unto all the congregation): which was a very low and mean employment, (^{<0911>}Deuteronomy 29:11); as well as wearisome; and this being a yoke of servitude on the Gibeonites, and a punishment of them for their fraud, and of service, profit, and advantage to the people of Israel, the princess proposed it in hopes of pacifying them, and that they would yield to spare the lives of the Gibeonites; what they proposed was, not that they should hew wood and draw water for all the Israelites for their private use, but what was necessary for the service of the sanctuary, which the congregation was obliged to furnish them with; and now these men should do that work for them, which before was incumbent on them; for Joshua afterwards imposed this upon them, to be hewers of wood and drawers of water for the house of God, (^{<0923>}Joshua 9:23); though Kimchi thinks that while the people of Israel were in camp, and before the land was divided, they were hewers of wood and drawers of water to the congregation; but after the land was divided, and they were settled in their cities and inheritances, then they only hewed wood and drew water for the sanctuary at Gilgal, Shiloh, Nob, Gibeon, and the temple; the Jewish writers say ^{f152}, the Nethinim and the Gibeonites were the same, who became proselytes in the times of Joshua, (see ^{<300>}1 Chronicles 9:2);

as the princes promised them; which is to be connected, not with their being hewers of wood and drawers of water, this the princes had said nothing of before, and which is rightly included in a parenthesis, but with their being let to live; this they had promised and sworn to, even all the princes, not only all that were now at Gibeon, and were persuading the people to let the Gibeonites live, but all the princes, even those that were not present, but in the camp at Gilgal.

Ver. 22. *And Joshua called for them*, etc.] 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 neighbours, 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.

Ver. 23. *Now therefore ye [are] cursed,* etc.] Appear to be the posterity of cursed Canaan, and, notwithstanding the artifice used, should not be exempted from the curse denounced on Canaan: “a servant of servants shall he be unto his brethren”, (^{<0025>}Genesis 9:25); as these Gibeonites were; they became the servants of the Levites, who were servants to the priests; and they seemed to be spared in Providence, that that part of the curse on Canaan might be fulfilled: “and Canaan shall be his servant”; the servant of Shem, from whom the Israelites sprang, (^{<0025>}Genesis 9:25,26); though the curse was turned into a blessing to the Gibeonites, since though their post and office was mean, yet they had a place in the sanctuary of the Lord, and opportunity of learning the law of God, and understanding the true religion, worship, and knowledge of God, and were an emblem and pledge of the reception of the Gentiles into the church of God:

and there shall none of you be freed from being bondmen; which the oath taken did not oblige Joshua, and the princes, to exempt them from, only to let them live, (^{<0015>}Joshua 9:15);

and hewers of wood and drawers of water for the house of my God; which explains what is meant by the “congregation”, and who might purposely choose that phrase, to make the people more easy; but their work, as assigned them by Joshua, was not to hew wood and draw water for every one’s private use, only for the service of the sanctuary, which in some sense was the service of the congregation; and a great deal of work there was to be done of this kind, much wood to hew for keeping the fire of the altar continually burning, and for boiling the flesh of the peace offerings, and the like, and much water to draw for various uses, for the washing of the priests and the sacrifices, and various other things.

Ver. 24. *And they answered Joshua, and said, because it was certainly told thy servants,* etc.] Or “it was told”, told ^{f153}; not only certainly, 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 threatenings, 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 he delivered to Israel, utterly to destroy the inhabitants of Canaan, so, that these people had accurate intelligence and information of this matter; (see ~~(R10)~~ Deuteronomy 7:1,2):

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?” (~~(R10)~~ Joshua 9:22), that it was fear of losing their lives, than which nothing is dearer to a man, and the principle of self-preservation that put them upon framing and using this device.

Ver. 25. *And now, behold, we [are] in thine hand,* etc.] 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.

Ver. 26. *And so did he unto them,* etc.] What was good and right, he showed them favour, 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.

Ver. 27. *And Joshua made them that day*, etc.] Constituted and appointed them, ordered and settled them, in the post and office after mentioned; or “gave” them ^{f154}; hence some think they had the name Nethinim, 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 Gill on “~~(182)~~ 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 ~~(1215)~~ Deuteronomy 12:5,11,14,18,21 16:2,6,7,11,15,16).