Joshua 9:1-14 | Sunday November 1, 2026

Israel had another spiritual victory as they were reminded of the importance of the Word of God at Mount Ebal and Mount Gerizim. Joshua followed God's instructions and set up large stones plastered with God's law. The Promised Land could be full of rich blessings or filled with curses based on how Israel lived in fellowship with God, according to His Word. God's grace showed through with the altar on mount Ebal, the mount of curses. The law shows our sinfulness and failures. We need redemption from the curses of the law, and Jesus was willing to become the curse for us. Then as we turn to chapter 9, we have another example of a principal that we have already seen. After a spiritual victory we can tend to let our guard down and have a spiritual defeat. Just after Israel was reminded of the importance of God's Word and living based on His truth, they are going to forget how reliant on God they truly need to be.

Joshua 9:1-5 ESV

> (1) As soon as all **the kings who were beyond the Jordan in the hill country** and in the lowland all along the coast of the Great Sea toward Lebanon, the Hittites, the Amorites, the Canaanites, the Perizzites, **the Hivites**, and the Jebusites, **heard of this**,
> (2) they **gathered together as one to fight against Joshua and Israel.**
> (3) But when **the inhabitants of Gibeon** heard what Joshua had done **to Jericho and to Ai,**
> (4) they on their part **acted with cunning** and went and made ready provisions and took **worn-out** sacks for their donkeys, and wineskins, **worn-out and torn and mended,**
> (5) with **worn-out**, patched sandals on their feet, and **worn-out** clothes. **And all their provisions were dry and crumbly.**

Word of Israel's victories and their defeat was spreading among the people of the Promised Land. After Jerico's destruction, Israel seemed invincible. **Then Ai happened**. The people of the land now understood that Israel could be defeated. Cities throughout the Promised Land sought to make alliances with one another to stand against Israel. These battles will be described in chapters 10 and 11. Yet the Gibeonites chose another strategy. They were clever and sought to trick Israel. The Gibeonites intentionally dressed up messengers in worn-out clothing. They were detailed in this deception: old food, worn-out luggage, and worn sandals that were falling apart. Their goal was to appear that they had taken a tremendously long journey through the desert to come meet with the Israelites. **The reality was Gibeon was about 20 miles away from Gilgal.**

Joshua 9:6-8 ESV

> (6) And they went to Joshua in the camp **at Gilgal** and said to him and to the men of Israel, **"We have come from a distant country, so now make a covenant with us."**
> (7) But the men of Israel said **to the Hivites**, "**Perhaps you live among us; then how can we make a covenant with you?"**
> (8) They said to Joshua, "We are your servants." And Joshua said to them, **"Who are you? And where do you come from?"**

The sarcasm in verse 7 is thick. The Israelites are talking to Hivites who live in Gibeon, asking if they live in the Promised Land. Of course the Hivites live in the Promised Land. The only problem is that **Israel doesn't know they are being deceived**. Yet the good news is that **the Israelites and Joshua are asking the right questions**. They are trying to be careful and live based on the Word of God by not making a covenant with people who live in the land. The problem is the

Gibeonites are really good at lying.

Joshua 9:8-13 ESV

> (9) They said to him, "**From a very distant country** your servants have come, **because of the name of the LORD your God. For we have heard a report of Him**, 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 the king of Heshbon, and to Og king of Bashan, who lived in Ashtaroth.
> (11) So our elders and all the inhabitants of our country said to us, 'Take provisions in your hand for the journey and go to meet them and say to them, "We are your servants. Come now, make a covenant with us."'
> (12) Here is our bread. **It was still warm when we took it from our houses as our food for the journey on the day we set out to come to you, but now, behold, it is dry and crumbly.**
> (13) These wineskins were new when we filled them, and behold, they have burst. And these garments and sandals of ours **are worn out from the very long journey."**

The Gibeonites are trying to act like they are the next Rahab. They accurately share that they have heard a report about what the God of Israel has done to Egypt, Sihon, and Og. **They deceptively leave out that they have also heard what happened at Jericho and Ai**. If they were traveling from afar, they would not have this new information. Through lies and deception, they are trying to present themselves as people coming from a distant land to respond to the powerful God that they have heard about. They hold up moldy bread that they claim was freshly baked when they left on their journey to add to their deception. The Gibeonites know more than they are letting on.

Deuteronomy 20:10-12; 15-18 ESV

> (10) "When you draw near to a city to fight against it, **offer terms of peace to it**.
> (11) And if **it responds to you peaceably** and it opens to you, then all the people who are found in it shall do forced labor for you and shall serve you.
> (12) But **if it makes no peace with you**, but makes war against you, then you shall besiege it.
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> (**15**) **Thus you shall do to all the cities that are very far from you**, **which are not cities of the nations here.**
> (16) **But in the cities of these peoples that the LORD your God is giving you for an inheritance, you shall save alive nothing that breathes,**
> (17) **but you shall devote them to complete destruction**, the Hittites and the Amorites, the Canaanites and the Perizzites, **the Hivites** and the Jebusites, as the LORD your God has commanded,
> (18) that they may not teach you to do according to all their abominable practices that they have done for their gods, and so you sin against the LORD your God.

Cities that were far away, Israel was to offer peace treaties to. They were not to attack them if the people were willing to surrender and become their slaves. This offer was not to be given to cities within the Promised Land. These cities were to be devoted to complete destruction. Being Hivites, the Gibeonites were to be destroyed just as Jericho was. **Yet Rahab shows that anyone could respond to God and be saved**. The Gibeonites believed that the God of Israel was powerful enough to destroy them, but instead of wanting to worship Him, they wanted to trick Israel as an

attempt to save their lives.

Joshua and Israel know God's Word and are trying to be careful to follow it. They asked the right questions and were suspicious of these messengers. **They were not ignoring God's truth.** The Gibeonites said the right things, and common sense could easily see that these messengers had taken a very long hard journey. **Yet, this chapter shows the problem with common sense**. Joshua and Israel could not rely on common sense but needed spiritual insight.

Joshua 9:14 ESV

> (14) **So the men took some of their provisions, but did not ask counsel from the LORD.**

God lets us in on Israel's failure; they did not stop to ask counsel from the Lord. **They did not stop and take time to pray**. They made a decision with human reasoning and logic instead of seeking God's wisdom. Joshua had access to seek God's will.

Numbers 27:21 ESV

> (21) And **he** shall stand before **Eleazar the priest, who shall inquire for him by the judgment of the Urim before the LORD.** At his word they shall go out, and at his word they shall come in, both he and all the people of Israel with him, the whole congregation."

At any time Joshua and Israel could have consulted what God wanted, but they didn't. **God's direction and will were readily available, but they were never sought**. We are not told why Joshua did not seek God's direction, yet we know all of our own reasoning all too well. Sometimes we feel like the situation is beneath God. Sometimes we feel like we cannot ask for help because we should know what to do. Sometimes we don't ask for God's direction because we already think we know what to do. Yet scripture is filled with promises of how important prayer is and how God promises to answer us.

James 1:5 ESV

> (5) **If any of you lacks wisdom, let him ask God,** who gives generously to all without reproach, **and it will be given him.**

James 4:2 ESV

> (2) You desire and do not have, so you murder. You covet and cannot obtain, so you fight and quarrel. **You do not have, because you do not ask.**

We are promised that God will give us wisdom when we ask for it. **Wisdom is the ability and discernment to apply God's truth to a specific situation**. If we lack wisdom, it is because we are not asking for it or doubting that God can really give it to us. We are to rest in God's promises and **trust in His ability to give wisdom**. How tragic that Israel and we so often lack wisdom simply because we never asked for it. There is no better time to pray than when something seems obvious to us. We should not only pray when we don't know what to do, but we should be especially careful to pray when we think we know what we should do. **Praying should be like spiritual breathing.** It should be a regular consistent part of everyday life. A continuing dialogue with God. Nehemiah practiced prayer this way. He spent 4 months in prayer after learning about the condition of Jerusalem and still stopped in the middle of his conversation with the king to seek God in prayer.

Nehemiah 2:3-4 ESV

(3) I said to the king, “Let the king live forever! Why should not my face be sad, when the city, the place of my fathers' graves, lies in ruins, and its gates have been destroyed by fire?”
(4) Then the king said to me, **“What are you requesting?” So I prayed to the God of heaven**.

Nehemiah relied on prayer. In one of the most important conversations of his life, why would he not pray? I guarantee this was not a long, elaborate, or eloquent prayer. He spoke with God, who knew his heart and knew what he needed.

Matthew 6:7-8 ESV

(7) “And when you pray, **do not heap up empty phrases as the Gentiles do, for they think that they will be heard for their many words.**
(8) Do not be like them, for your Father knows what you need before you ask Him.

We are not to pray empty phrases; this literally means **stammering the same phrase over and over again**. Prayer is a conversation with our loving, caring God who already knows what we need before we ever come to Him. Yet, we still come to Him to be in relationship with Him and to help our hearts align with His.

John 15:7 ESV

(7) **If you abide in Me**, and My words abide in you, **ask whatever you wish, and it will be done for you.**

Prayer is a great barometer of where our abiding relationship with Jesus is. When we are abiding with Him, then our prayers and our desires will match His. Our prayers will be answered because they are according to His will. When we are not abiding, we tend not to pray much. If we do prayer, our prayers tend not to be based on truth. **Prayer reminds us of our consistent need for a close relationship with God**. At no point can we think that we can live this life on our own strength or wisdom.

The Gibeonite deception shows how vulnerable we are. Israel knew God’s truth and sought to apply it. They were careful and asked good questions. Yet, they never sought God for His help, so they made a treaty with the wrong people. Prayer is an important part of helping us fight the spiritual battles that we are in.

Ephesians 6:10-12; 18-20 NAS95

(10) Finally, be strong in the Lord and in the strength of His might.
(11) Put on the full armor of God, so that you will be able to stand firm against **the schemes of the devil.**
(12) **For our struggle is not against flesh and blood**, but against the rulers, against the powers, **against the world forces of this darkness**, against the spiritual forces of wickedness in the heavenly places.

(**18**) With all prayer and petition **pray at all times in the Spirit,** and with this in view, **be on the alert with all perseverance and petition for all the saints,**
(19) and pray on my behalf, that utterance may be given to me in the opening of my mouth, **to make known with boldness the mystery of the gospel,**
(20) for which I am an ambassador in chains; **that in proclaiming it I may speak boldly, as I ought to speak.**

The Gibeonites were a crafty, cunning enemy who were extremely deceptive in what they did. We have a similar enemy. Satan disguises himself as an angel of light (2 Cor 11:14). He is the father of lies (John 8:44). Our struggle is not against flesh and blood but against sin and the evil forces that are out in this world. **If our struggle is not with flesh and blood, then the solution will not be found with flesh and blood**. We need a spiritual, eternal answer. This is why we are called to pray at all times. We are to be alert in our prayers. **This means to be vigilant and have an awareness of the threatening peril all around us.** Paul was aware of this battle raging all around Him. He needed the Ephesians and Colossians to pray for Him to have a boldness to share the gospel. **Paul knew that he was weak, and true strength came from the Spirit.**

Colossians 4:2-4 LSB

> (2) **Devote yourselves to prayer**, **being watchful in it with thanksgiving**;
> (3) praying at the same time for us as well, that God will open up to us a door for the word,
> so that we may speak the mystery of Christ, for which I have also been bound,
> (4) that I may make it manifest in the way I ought to speak.

We are called to devote ourselves to prayer. "Devote" means to attach oneself to or to be faithful to. **Are we attached to prayer? Consistent prayer is one of the most important things we can do as believers**. Our prayer life will change when we realize that the God of the universe is not only hearing our prayers but listening to them and moving in response to them. We can pray for God to act, and even when we do not know His will, call on Him to reveal it to us and trust He is already beginning to work.
