

Joshua 9:10

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

And all that he did to the two kings of the Amorites, that were beyond Jordan, to Sihon king of Heshbon, and to Og king of Bashan, which was at Ashtaroath.

Analysis

The Gibeonites continue: 'Wherefore our elders and all the inhabitants of our country spake to us, saying, Take victuals with you for the journey, and go to meet them, and say unto them, We are your servants: therefore now make ye a league with us.' The fabricated narrative includes elders' counsel and communal decision—adding layers of fictitious detail that sound authentic. The instruction to 'take victuals for the journey' explains their provisions' presence, while 'for the journey' reinforces the distance claim. The coached speech 'We are your servants: therefore make ye a league' positions them as humble petitioners seeking protective covenant. The phrase 'we are your servants' uses ancient Near Eastern diplomatic language indicating vassalage—not equality but subordinate treaty relationship. The detail and coherence of the story show sophisticated planning. They didn't just dress the part; they created comprehensive false narrative including motivations, decision processes, and instructions. The passage warns against accepting plausible narratives without verification.

Historical Context

Ancient Near Eastern treaty-making typically involved hierarchical relationships—suzerain (overlord) and vassal (subordinate). The Gibeonites' offer of servanthood invoked this framework, proposing vassal status under Israel's protection. Such relationships involved obligations: vassals paid tribute and provided military support; suzerains provided protection and aid. The mention of 'elders and all the

inhabitants' deciding together reflects ancient community decision-making processes where leadership and populace both participated in major decisions affecting the city. This detail added authenticity—it's how such decisions actually were made. The instruction to take provisions for the journey was practical advice travelers would receive. Every element of the story reflected real practices, making it believable. The sophistication suggests careful preparation, possibly including coaching envoys on their script. Ancient diplomatic missions prepared thoroughly, but Gibeon's preparation served deception. The lesson: plausible details don't guarantee truth; verification requires independent investigation or divine guidance.

Related Passages

Ephesians 2:8 — Salvation by grace through faith

John 3:16 — God's love and salvation

James 2:17 — Faith and works

Romans 1:17 — The righteous shall live by faith

Study Questions

1. How do detailed, coherent narratives create illusion of truthfulness even when fabricated?
2. What role does checking claims against independent sources play in discerning truth?
3. When have you been deceived by a story that 'sounded right' but wasn't verified?

Interlinear Text

וְאֵל תַּן	כָּל	אֲשֶׁר	עָשָׂה	לְשְׁנֵי	מֶלֶךְ	הָאֱמֹרִי
H853	H3605	H834	And all that he did	to the two	king	of the Amorites
			H6213	H8147	H4428	H567
אֲשֶׁר	בְּעֵבֶר	הַיַּרְדֵּי	לְסִיחֹן	מֶלֶךְ	חֶשְׁבֹן	וְלֹעֹג
H834	that were beyond	Jordan	to Sihon	king	of Heshbon	and to Og
	H5676	H3383	H5511	H4428	H2809	H5747
מֶלֶךְ	הַבָּשָׁן	אֲשֶׁר	בְּעִשְׁתָּרוֹת:			
king	of Bashan	H834	which was at Ashtaroth			
H4428	H1316		H6252			

Additional Cross-References

Deuteronomy 1:4 (Kingdom): After he had slain Sihon the king of the Amorites, which dwelt in Heshbon, and Og the king of Bashan, which dwelt at Astaroth in Edrei:

Joshua 12:4 (Kingdom): And the coast of Og king of Bashan, which was of the remnant of the giants, that dwelt at Ashtaroth and at Edrei,