

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 Ashtaroth.

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

בְּאָמֵר יְהוָה מֶלֶךְ אֲמֹרִים וְאֶת כָּל אֲשֶׁר כָּל עַשְׂתָּה לְשָׁנִי מֶלֶךְ
H853 H3605 H834 And all that he did to the two king of the Amorites
H6213 H8147 H4428 H567

אֲשֶׁר בְּעֵבֶר הַי֙רְדֵּן לְסִיחוֹן מֶלֶךְ חֶשְׁבּוֹן וְאֶת כָּל
H834 that were beyond Jordan to Sihon king of Heshbon and to Og
H5676 H3383 H5511 H4428 H2809 H5747

מֶלֶךְ אֲשֶׁר בְּבָשָׁן בְּעֵשֶׂתֶרֶת: מֶלֶךְ אֲשֶׁר בְּבָשָׁן
king of Bashan which was at Ashtaroth
H4428 H1316 H834 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,