

Joshua 9:11

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

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.

Analysis

The Gibeonites present evidence: 'This our bread we took hot for our provision out of our houses on the day we came forth to go unto you; but now, behold, it is dry, and it is mouldy.' The staged evidence—'hot' bread now moldy—provides timeline suggesting long journey. The Hebrew **חֶלֶק** (qalui—hot, roasted) indicates fresh-baked bread, implying departure timing. The comparison 'then versus now' invites visual inspection of the deterioration. The phrase 'behold' (**הִנֵּה**, hinneh) draws attention to the evidence—'look and see for yourselves.' This appeal to sensory verification (they can see and touch the bread) makes the deception especially effective. The lesson: empirical evidence can be manufactured or staged. Thomas Aquinas noted that deception often succeeds because it mimics truth's form. The passage teaches necessity of divine wisdom beyond empirical observation. Proverbs 3:5-6: 'Trust in the LORD with all thine heart; and lean not unto thine own understanding.'

Historical Context

Bread baking in ancient Near East typically occurred regularly—fresh bread was daily necessity. Bread quickly dried and molded without preservatives, especially in warm climate. Travelers would take fresh bread at journey's start; by journey's end, it showed wear. The Gibeonites deliberately used old bread to create false

timeline. The appeal to visual evidence—'behold, it is dry and mouldy'—invited inspection that would confirm their claim. Ancient Near Eastern hospitality meant arriving travelers would be examined—their provisions, garments, mode of transport all communicated information about journey length and origin. The Gibeonites understood this and staged every detail accordingly. The deception succeeded because it mimicked natural processes everyone understood. This teaches that empirical evidence requires proper interpretation—what causes observed effects? The Israelites saw moldy bread but didn't consider alternative explanations (deliberately using old bread). The failure: relying solely on sensory observation without seeking divine confirmation (verse 14).

Related Passages

John 15:13 — Greatest form of love

1 Corinthians 13:4 — Characteristics of love

Romans 2:1 — Judging others

Matthew 25:31 — Final judgment

Study Questions

1. How can empirical evidence (moldy bread, worn shoes) be staged to mislead?
2. What is the relationship between trusting our senses and trusting divine guidance?
3. When has apparently objective evidence led you to wrong conclusions without prayerful discernment?

