

Joshua 9:16

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

And it came to pass at the end of three days after they had made a league with them, that they heard that they were their neighbours, and that they dwelt among them.

Analysis

Discovery: 'at the end of three days after they had made a league with them, they heard that they were their neighbours, and that they dwelt among them.' The timing 'three days' suggests the deception lasted only briefly before discovery. The verb 'heard' (shama, *υηψ*) indicates report or intelligence reaching Joshua—perhaps from scouts or Israelites who recognized the Gibeonites. The revelation 'they were their neighbours' and 'dwelt among them' exposed the core deception—these weren't distant peoples but near Canaanites who should have been destroyed. The irony: the elaborate deception's exposure came quickly, but too late—the oath was sworn. This teaches that deception rarely succeeds permanently. 'Be sure your sin will find you out' (Numbers 32:23). Yet the exposure's timing also shows God's sovereignty—the oath was sworn before discovery, binding Israel to mercy despite Gibeon being among the nations marked for destruction. God's purposes accomplished through imperfect human decisions.

Historical Context

Three days was barely enough time for treaty news to spread and for someone to recognize Gibeonites or report their actual location. The discovery likely came from Israelites familiar with regional geography who realized the Gibeonites' cities were nearby, not distant. The phrase 'dwelt among them' indicates proximity—Gibeon was about twenty-five miles from Gilgal, well within the territory Israel was conquering. The exposure created crisis: Israel had sworn oath to protect people

they were commanded to destroy. Yet the oath's sanctity meant it couldn't be broken. This necessitated the compromise solution (verse 21): Gibeonites would live but serve as woodcutters and water-carriers. The rapid discovery shows deception's fragility—elaborate as the scheme was, it couldn't withstand basic fact-checking. Had Israel consulted God initially (verse 14), the deception would have failed immediately. The lesson: prayerful discernment prevents entanglements that require awkward accommodations later.

Related Passages

1 John 4:8 — God is love

1 Corinthians 13:4 — Characteristics of love

Study Questions

1. What does the quick exposure of deception teach about truth's resilience versus lies' fragility?
2. How does God's sovereignty work through flawed human decisions (like this imprudent oath) to accomplish His purposes?
3. When have you discovered too late that commitments were based on false information, and how did you navigate that?

Interlinear Text

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|---------------------------------|--------------------------------|-----------|---------------------------|----------|---------|----------|--------------|-------------|---------|
| וַיְהִי | וְיֻכָּל | שְׁלֹשָׁת | אַחֲרֵי | וְיָמִים | מִקְצָה | וְיָמִים | אַחֲרֵי | וְיָמִים | אַחֲרֵי |
| H1961 | And it came to pass at the end | H7097 | H7969 | H3117 | H7969 | of three | days | after | H834 |
| | | | | | | | | | H310 |
| they had made | H0 | a league | with them that they heard | H8085 | H1285 | בְּרִית | לִפְנֵי | פִּישְׁמָעַ | H3588 |
| H3772 | | | | | | | | | |
| that they were their neighbours | H1992 | H413 | among | H1992 | H7138 | קָרְבָּם | וּבְקָרְבָּן | בְּمִן | H7130 |
| | | | | | | | | | |
| and that they dwelt | H3427 | | | | | | | | |

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