

Joshua 9:19

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

But all the princes said unto all the congregation, We have sworn unto them by the LORD God of Israel: now therefore we may not touch them.

Analysis

All the princes said unto all the congregation, We have sworn unto them by the LORD God of Israel—The verb **sworn** (נִשְׁבַּענוּ, nishba'nu) invokes God's name in oath-making, creating a binding covenant. The phrase **by the LORD God of Israel** (בְּיַהְוָה אֱלֹהֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל) emphasizes that the oath's authority rests on God's character, not the princes' wisdom.

Now therefore we may not touch them (לَا נִכְלַל לְתַגְעַן בָּהֶם)—Despite being deceived, the leaders recognized that breaking an oath made in God's name would profane His holiness. This decision honors Leviticus 19:12: 'Ye shall not swear by my name falsely, neither shalt thou profane the name of thy God.' The Gibeonites' deception didn't nullify Israel's obligation—God's reputation was at stake. Centuries later, Saul's violation of this oath brought divine judgment (2 Samuel 21:1-14).

Historical Context

The princes' public declaration protected the Gibeonites from popular vengeance when the congregation discovered the deception (v. 18). Ancient Near Eastern treaties invoked deity names as guarantors—breaking such oaths invited divine curse. Israel's reputation for keeping oaths (even obtained through deception) would have spread throughout Canaan, demonstrating covenant faithfulness.

Related Passages

Romans 2:1 — Judging others

Matthew 25:31 — Final judgment

Study Questions

1. How do you honor commitments made unwisely or through deception without compromising integrity?
2. What does Israel's oath-keeping teach about God's character and expectations for His people?
3. When has protecting God's reputation required you to keep a costly promise?

Interlinear Text

בְּעֵד הָעֵדָה כָּל אֶל הַנְּשִׂיאִים כָּל
said H3605 But all the princes H413 H3605 unto all the congregation H5712
H559 H5387

וְשָׁבָא לְאֱלֹהִים בְּיַהְוָה אֱלֹהֵי חִנּוֹם
H587 We have sworn H0 unto them by the LORD H3068 God H430 of Israel H3478
H7650

לֹא וְעַתָּה כֹּעֲדַת לֹא לֹבֶג עַתָּה
H6258 H3808 now therefore we may H3201 not touch H5060

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