

# Joshua 9:23

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

Now therefore ye are cursed, and there shall none of you be freed from being bondmen, and hewers of wood and drawers of water for the house of my God.

## Analysis

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**Now therefore ye are cursed** (וְעַתָּה אֲרוּרִים אַתֶּם, ve'atah arurim atem)—Joshua pronounced a perpetual curse making the Gibeonites temple servants. The specific tasks—**hewers of wood and drawers of water** (חֹטְבֵי עֵצִים וְשֹׁאֲבֵי מַיִם, chotevei etzim vesho'avei mayim)—were menial labors supporting tabernacle worship. This curse paradoxically became blessing: service in God's house rather than annihilation.

The phrase echoes Deuteronomy 29:11, where such servants were included in covenant assembly. God transformed judicial penalty into gracious incorporation—Canaanites destined for destruction became perpetual temple servants. This prefigures Christ's reversal of Adam's curse, where those condemned become sons who serve joyfully in the Father's house. The Gibeonites' descendants, the Nethinim, faithfully served through Israel's history (Ezra 2:43-58, Nehemiah 3:26).

## Historical Context

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The Gibeonites' temple service continued for centuries. During Saul's reign, his massacre of Gibeonites violated Joshua's oath, bringing divine judgment requiring atonement (2 Samuel 21:1-14). The Nethinim (temple servants) who returned from Babylonian exile included Gibeonite descendants. Their service demonstrated that proximity to God's presence—even in servitude—surpassed autonomy in pagan darkness.

## Related Passages

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**Colossians 1:16** — All things created through Christ

**Genesis 1:1** — Creation of heavens and earth

## Study Questions

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1. How does the Gibeonites' curse-turned-blessing illustrate God's ability to transform judgment into mercy for those who fear Him?
2. What does their perpetual service in God's house teach about the privilege of worship over worldly freedom?
3. How does this narrative foreshadow the inclusion of Gentiles into God's covenant community through Christ?

## Interlinear Text

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וְעַתָּה ה	אֲרוּרִים	אֶתְּ	וְלֹא	
H6258	Now therefore ye are cursed	H859	H3808	
	H779			
	וְכֹל אֶתְּ	מִכֶּם	עַבְדֵי	וְחֹטְבֵי י
	and there shall none of you be freed	H4480	from being bondmen	and hewers
	H3772		H5650	H2404
עֵצֵי	וְשֹׁאֲבֵי	מֵי	לְבֵית	אֱלֹהֵי:
of wood	and drawers	of water	for the house	of my God
H6086	H7579	H4325	H1004	H430

## Additional Cross-References

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**Joshua 9:21** (Parallel theme): And the princes said unto them, Let them live; but let them be hewers of wood and drawers of water unto all the congregation; as the princes had promised them.

**Joshua 9:27** (Parallel theme): And Joshua made them that day hewers of wood and drawers of water for the congregation, and for the altar of the LORD, even unto this day, in the place which he should choose.

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