

Joshua 9:5

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

And old shoes and clouted upon their feet, and old garments upon them; and all the bread of their provision was dry and mouldy.

Analysis

The Gibeonites' props: 'old shoes and clouted upon their feet, and old garments upon them; and all the bread of their provision was dry and mouldy.' Every detail designed to suggest long travel from distant lands. The Hebrew נָקָד (naqud—moldy, crumbled) describes bread's deteriorated state. The comprehensive nature (shoes, garments, bread) shows thoroughness in deception—no detail overlooked. The specific mention of bread is significant: it would naturally age and become moldy over extended travel, providing 'evidence' of journey length. Their attention to detail in the deception contrasts with Israel's lack of diligence in verification. The text implicitly criticizes Israel's gullibility—the evidence was staged, not genuine. This teaches that appearances, however convincing, require verification through prayer and divine guidance. Paul warns: 'Satan himself is transformed into an angel of light' (2 Corinthians 11:14). Elaborate, convincing appearances don't guarantee truth.

Historical Context

The items mentioned—shoes, garments, bread—were standard traveler necessities in ancient times. Shoes wore out with travel (Deuteronomy 29:5 records miraculously that Israel's shoes didn't wear out during forty wilderness years). Garments frayed and faded. Bread, baked before journey, dried and molded over time. Gibeon's proximity to Israel (about twenty-five miles from Gilgal) meant fresh supplies were available—but they deliberately used old items to create false

impression. Ancient Near Eastern hospitality customs meant arriving ambassadors would be evaluated partially by their appearance and possessions. Worn items suggested long, difficult journey, evoking sympathy and lending credibility to claims of distant origin. The deception's success shows Israel's failure in due diligence. Deuteronomy 20:10-15 distinguished treatment of near versus far cities; Gibeon exploited this by falsely claiming distance. The passage warns that spiritual discernment requires more than surface evaluation.

Related Passages

Romans 1:17 — The righteous shall live by faith

Hebrews 11:1 – Definition of faith

Study Questions

1. What 'old shoes and moldy bread' (convincing surface evidence) have you seen in false teaching or deceptive appearances?
2. How can believers develop discernment that goes beyond appearances to test genuineness?
3. When has paying attention to details revealed deception or confirmed authenticity?

Interlinear Text

בְּלֵל	וְתַת	וְגַעַל	וְתַת	בְּרַגְלִים	וְתַת	וְשְׁלָמָם	וְתַת	בְּלֵל
shoes	And old	and clouted	upon their feet	garments	And old			
H5275	H1087	H2921	H7272	H8008	H1087			
בְּלֵל	וְתַת	וְגַעַל	וְתַת	בְּרַגְלִים	וְתַת	וְשְׁלָמָם	וְתַת	בְּלֵל
עַלְיָה	מִכְלָה	לְכַמְּלֵד	לְכַמְּלֵד	מִצְדָּקָה	מִצְדָּקָה	בְּיַבְשָׁה	בְּיַבְשָׁה	בְּיַבְשָׁה
H5921	H3605	upon them and all the bread		of their provision		was dry		H1961
		H3899		H6718		H3001		

Additional Cross-References

Luke 15:22 (Parallel theme): But the father said to his servants, Bring forth the best robe, and put it on him; and put a ring on his hand, and shoes on his feet:

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