

Joshua 9:7

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

And the men of Israel said unto the Hivites, Peradventure ye dwell among us; and how shall we make a league with you?

Analysis

Israel's initial skepticism: 'Peradventure ye dwell among us; and how shall we make a league with you?' The men of Israel demonstrate caution, questioning whether the Gibeonites are actually near neighbors—which would disqualify them from treaties (Deuteronomy 20:16-17). The Hebrew 'ולא (ulai—perhaps, peradventure) expresses uncertainty requiring clarification. This initial suspicion shows Israel wasn't entirely gullible; they recognized the deception's possibility. Their question 'how shall we make a league' invokes legal reasoning: if you're near neighbors, covenant law forbids treaty. This shows Israel understood their own legal obligations regarding Canaanite cities. Yet tragically, they didn't pursue this legitimate suspicion adequately. Instead of investigating thoroughly or consulting God, they relied on visual evidence and Gibeonites' testimony. The passage teaches that initial discernment, even when accurate, proves worthless without follow-through. Suspecting deception isn't enough; one must act on suspicion through investigation and prayer.

Historical Context

The specific concern about dwelling 'among us' reflects Deuteronomy 20:16-18's command regarding near Canaanite cities: 'thou shalt save alive nothing that breatheth...that they teach you not to do after all their abominations.' The rationale was theological, not merely political or military—preventing idolatrous influence on Israel. The Israelites' question shows awareness of this law and its implications. Ancient Near Eastern treaties distinguished between near and far

relationships, often with different terms based on proximity. Israel's legal framework made this distinction absolute: near Canaanites must be destroyed; distant peoples could be offered peace. The Gibeonites' deception specifically targeted this legal loophole. The phrase 'how shall we make a league' indicates awareness that covenant oaths were binding—once sworn, they couldn't be violated without serious consequences. This theological seriousness about oath-keeping would later protect Gibeonites even after the deception was exposed. The passage thus teaches both the dangers of inadequate discernment and the importance of covenant faithfulness even when inconvenient.

Related Passages

Matthew 25:31 — Final judgment

Romans 2:1 — Judging others

Study Questions

1. When have you had legitimate suspicions but failed to investigate adequately?
2. What is the relationship between discernment (recognizing potential deception) and wisdom (acting on discernment)?
3. How do you balance suspicion that could become uncharitable cynicism with wisdom that protects against deception?

Interlinear Text

וַיֹּאמְרוּ	אִישׁ	יִשְׂרָאֵל	אֶל	הַחִוִּי	אוֹלַי
said	And the men	of Israel	H413	unto the Hivites	Peradventure
H559	H376	H3478		H2340	H194
בְּקִרְבִּי	אֶתְּ	יֹשֵׁב	וְאֵי יֶרֶךְ	לָב	
among	H859	ye dwell	H349	us and how shall we make	
H7130		H3427		H3772	
לָב	בְּרִית:				
us and how shall we make	a league				
H3772	H1285				

Additional Cross-References

Joshua 11:19 (References Israel): There was not a city that made peace with the children of Israel, save the Hivites the inhabitants of Gibeon: all other they took in battle.

Judges 2:2 (Parallel theme): And ye shall make no league with the inhabitants of this land; ye shall throw down their altars: but ye have not obeyed my voice: why have ye done this?