

Joshua 9:8

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

And they said unto Joshua, We are thy servants. And Joshua said unto them, Who are ye? and from whence come ye?

Analysis

The Gibeonites' response: 'Thy servants are come because of the name of the LORD thy God: for we have heard the fame of him, and all that he did in Egypt.' This answer brilliantly deflects the question while appearing pious. Notice: they don't directly answer 'where are you from?'—the crucial question. Instead, they testify about Yahweh's reputation and works, establishing theological common ground. The phrase 'because of the name of the LORD thy God' suggests religious motivation for seeking covenant—positioning themselves as believers or at least respecters of Israel's God. Their catalog of God's works (Egypt, Amorite kings) shows knowledge of Yahweh's mighty acts. This knowledge was real (Rahab had similar testimony, 2:10), but they weaponized it for deception. The answer demonstrates sophisticated manipulation: combining truth (they had heard of Yahweh's works) with deceit (implying this motivated long journey). The passage warns that accurate theology can mask deceptive intent. Orthodoxy doesn't guarantee honesty.

Historical Context

The Gibeonites' knowledge of Yahweh's works in Egypt and Transjordan was genuine—these events were regionally famous, creating terror throughout Canaan (2:10-11). Their citation of specific events (Egypt, Sihon, Og) showed detailed knowledge, lending credibility to their claim of having heard reports from afar. Ancient Near Eastern diplomatic protocol often involved acknowledging the other party's deity and military victories—showing respect and establishing basis for

relationship. The Gibeonites' invocation of 'the name of the LORD thy God' used covenant language, suggesting reverence that would appeal to pious Israelites. Their strategy was psychologically sophisticated: appearing as foreign admirers of Yahweh drawn by His reputation, rather than threatened neighbors seeking survival. The answer's effectiveness shows how mixing truth with deception creates powerful lies—the truth content makes the deception harder to detect. Church history shows similar patterns: heretics often begin with orthodox statements before introducing errors. The Gibeonites teach the necessity of testing claims beyond surface theological correctness.

Related Passages

James 2:17 — Faith and works

Romans 1:17 — The righteous shall live by faith

Genesis 1:1 — Creation of heavens and earth

Colossians 1:16 — All things created through Christ

Study Questions

1. How can accurate theological knowledge or orthodox language mask deceptive intentions?
2. What does the Gibeonites' deflection technique (answering related questions instead of the actual question) teach about recognizing evasion?
3. When have you seen truth used as a vehicle for deception rather than as its opposite?

Interlinear Text

וַיֹּאמְרוּ	אֶל	יְהוֹשֻׁעַ	עֲבָדֶיךָ	אֲנִי חֲנוּ	וַיֹּאמְרוּ
And they said	H413	And Joshua	We are thy servants	H587	And they said
H559		H3091	H5650		H559
אֶתְּ	מִי	יְהוֹשֻׁעַ	אֵלַיָּהֶם	וּמֵאֵין	
H413		And Joshua	H4310	H859	unto them Who are ye and from whence
		H3091			H370

תָּבֹאוּ׃
come
H935

Additional Cross-References

Deuteronomy 20:11 (Parallel theme): And it shall be, if it make thee answer of peace, and open unto thee, then it shall be, that all the people that is found therein shall be tributaries unto thee, and they shall serve thee.

2 Kings 10:5 (Parallel theme): And he that was over the house, and he that was over the city, the elders also, and the bringers up of the children, sent to Jehu, saying, We are thy servants, and will do all that thou shalt bid us; we will not make any king: do thou that which is good in thine eyes.

Joshua 9:11 (Parallel theme): Wherefore our elders and all the inhabitants of our country spake to us, saying, Take victuals with you for the journey, and go to meet them, and say unto them, We are your servants: therefore now make ye a league with us.