

## DON'T BE DECEIVED

Joshua 8. 9

The Lord said unto Joshua, "Don't be afraid, or worried. Take all the soldiers with you, and go up to Ai. I have given the king of Ai, all his people, the city, and its land to you. Destroy it completely, but keep the spoils for yourselves. Use an ambush to take the city."

Joshua had some of his fighting men set an ambush before the city of Ai during the night. Then more soldiers of Israel came before the city as they had the first time. Thinking that the Israelites would run away again as they had the last time, the citizens of Ai came out of the city. When all the people of Ai were had left the safety of the city, the men of the ambush, ran into the city and set it on fire. The city of Ai and its soldiers were then quickly defeated.

After their great victory at Ai, Joshua built an altar to the Lord in mount Ebal. He built the altar of whole stones just as the Lord had commanded. The Lord wanted the people to worship him in a completely different way than the pagans around them worshipped their false gods. On the altar, Joshua wrote a copy of the law of Moses in the presence of the people, then Joshua read all the blessings and the cursings to the congregation once again to remind them of the God that they served.

Now it happened that when all the kings which were on this side of the Jordan, heard that Israel was come into the land, that they gathered themselves together to fight against Joshua and Israel. But when the inhabitants of Gibeon heard that Israel was come they devised a different plan. They worked craftily, and pretended to be ambassadors from a far off land. For the Lord had said, "Destroy completely all the inhabitants of the land and do not make any treaties with them."

The Gibeonites knew that they would surely be destroyed by Israel, for they understood the power of God. They knew that their only hope for escape would be treaty, but since the Lord had commanded no treaties, they decided that they would have to get the agreement in a deceptive way.

This is what the people of Gibeon did. They took old sacks upon their donkeys, wine bottles old and torn, old shoes with holes worn through them, old clothes, and bread that was dry and moldy. Then they came to Joshua looking tired and worn, as if they had come on a very long journey.

The Gibeonites lied, "We have come from a far away country. We would like you to make a treaty with us."

The Israelites answered, "Maybe you live in this land, so then we can not make a treaty with you."

The men answered Joshua, "We are your servants."

Joshua said, "Who are you, and where do you come from?"

The Gibeonites replied, "We are come from a very far away country because of the name of the Lord your God. For we heard what he did in Egypt and how he delivered you. We heard what he did to Og and Sihon beyond the Jordan River. Because of this our elders have sent us, saying, 'Take food with you for the journey, and go meet Israel, and ask them to make a treaty with us.' This is our bread which we took fresh out of the oven the day that we left, and look, now it is dry and moldy. These bottles of wine, which were filled were new, and now they are torn. Look at our clothes and shoes, how they are worn because of the long trip."

The wily Gibeonites were very careful to mention any of Israel's recent battles, for then Joshua would have realized that they lived nearby.

Joshua and the leaders of Israel looked at the evidence which the Gibeonites showed them, and they did not ask the Lord's counsel. Joshua made a treaty with the Gibeonites, promising never be their enemies. He promised to let them live and not to destroy their cities. Joshua and all the princes made a oath before God to keep this treaty.

Joshua and the elders did a very foolish thing, they trusted their own wisdom. We should never trust our own feelings to be our guide in important matters, but we must seek God's wisdom in his word. We can be so easily deceived. Many people say that they can not get an answer from the Bible for their problems, but this is not really true. If we study God's Word carefully, and ask his help, he promises that he will surely guide us and show us what to do in any circumstance. Joshua forget to consult the Lord, and he made another foolish choice.

Each of us needs to be sure to seek God's wisdom and not rely on our own understanding. For we can all be deceived, and then make very wrong choices if we trust to our own thinking. That is why the Lord has given us his Word to guide us and direct our thinking, so that we can be spared the consequences of our own foolish thinking.

Even though Joshua and the elders did foolishly, the Lord was still in control. He had called the people of Gibeon to come and follow him. In spite of their deceptive ways, and Joshua's lack of wisdom, God worked everything out for his good pleasure.

About three days after the treaty was made, Israel found out who the men that they had made a treaty with really were, and where they came from. Then the whole congregation of Israel was very upset, and complained against their leaders.

But the princes of Israel told them, "We have made an oath to them and we can not break it. This is what we will do. We will let them live, but they will be servants in the Lord's work all their days and for every generation. They will cut wood and carry water. We can not break an oath for it will bring God's judgment on us."

Then Joshua called the men of Gibeon and said to them, "Why have you deceived us, saying you live far from here, when in truth you are from this land?"

The Gibeonites replied, "Because we were told of all the Lord your God has done, and that he commanded Moses to give you this land, so we were afraid for our lives. We devised this plan to save ourselves. We are in your hand, whatever you think is right to do with us and we accept."

Then Joshua protected the people of Gibeon from the children of Israel and he made them servants for the congregation and the service of the Lord.

All the people of the land of Canaan had heard of the Lord God and his power. They all knew that God would give their land to Israel, but of all those people only the Gibeonites sought to become part of God's people. And, even though they went about it in a tricky and deceptive way, the Lord allowed them to become part of Israel. I am sure that through the years and their service in God's work the people of Gibeon came to know all of God's character and goodness, and were often thankful for the opportunity and privilege of being part of Israel.

The other people in the land, also knew of God's power, but instead of seeking to know him, they fought against him and so they were destroyed.

**LEARN:** The law of the Lord is PERFECT, converting the soul: the testimony of the Lord is SURE, making wise the simple.

The statutes of the Lord are RIGHT, rejoicing the heart: the commandment of the Lord is PURE, enlightening the eyes.

Psalm 19: 7, 8

1. Color the remains of straw - cut them out.

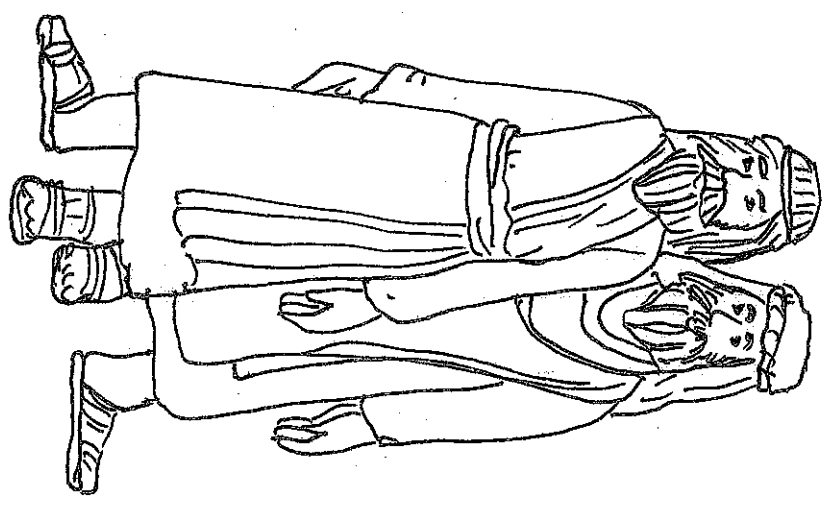
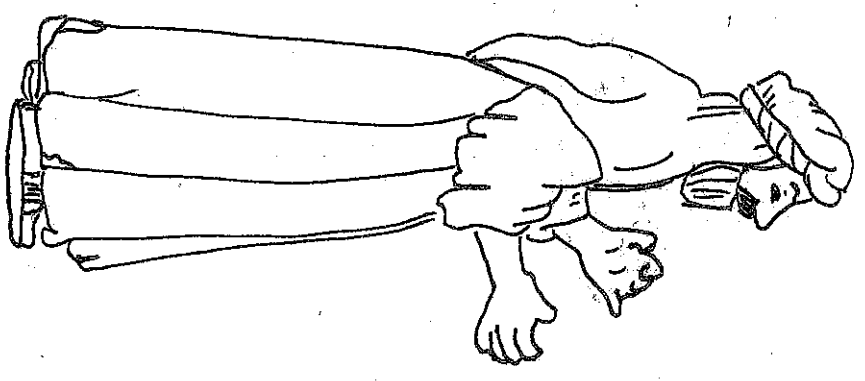
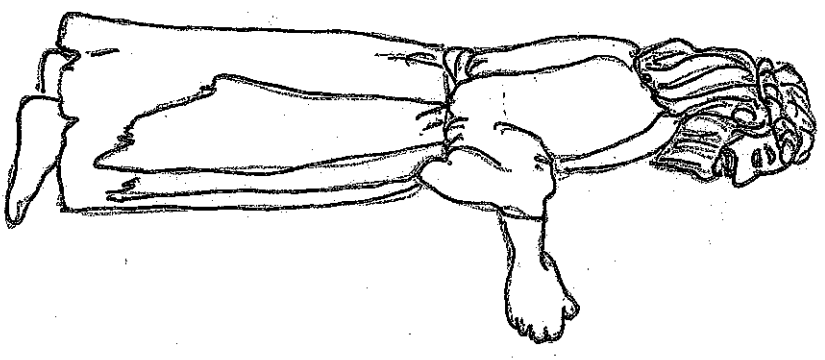
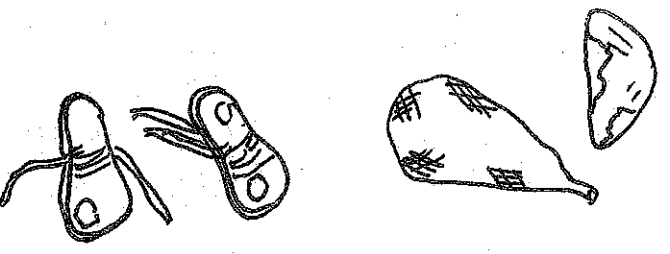
2. Color the Gibeonites, their moldy bread, their worn out shoes their torn wine skin.

- Cut all out.

3. Paste on colored paper with shoe, bread, wine skin in Gibeonite hands. One shoe on ground next to banquet Gibeonite. Draw background scene onto paper.

4. Tell story.

Cut hands to hold objects. Poke holes in shoes.



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the festival ...  
the sketches of the ...  
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the ...

