

LESSON 9



CORNERSTONE CONNECTIONS

AUGUST 26 2023

oops!

Scripture Story: Joshua 9; 10.

Commentary: *Patriarchs and Prophets* (or *Beginning of the End*), chapter 47.

PREPARING TO TEACH

I. SYNOPSIS

It is often said that experience is the best teacher. The episode found in Joshua 9 and 10 seems to fly in the face of this statement. Whether experience is or is not the best teacher is a debate for another day.

It was perhaps a few days earlier that Israel was forced to fight Ai a second time. Why a second time? Because Joshua and the other leaders of the nation failed to consult God before commencing battle with Ai (Joshua 7:1-4). This error led to the deaths of several Israelites and a humiliating defeat. With this backdrop, they renewed their covenant to God, promising to seek His wisdom and guidance before making any big decisions. They had promised to obey God.

Fast-forward a bit and we see them make the same mistake they made at Ai. The clever inhabitants of Gibeon, whose spies perhaps overheard the pledges the Israelites were making to God at Ebal and Gerizim to destroy all inhabitants of Caanan, came up with a perfect ruse. Dressed as paupers they approached Israel in search of help—and a treaty. Joshua sniffed the deception, but once again he failed to consult God. The Bible says they “asked not counsel at the mouth of the LORD” (Joshua 9:14, KJV).

Israel signed the deceptive treaty, and the fallout was immediate. King Adoni-Zedek, then king of Jerusalem, confederated with five Amorite kings and plotted to move against the people of God. Why? He was incensed at the unconditional surrender of Gibeon without so much as a fight. Israel would have

had to face these kings anyway, but certainly this was not God’s chosen way. When the kings moved against Gibeon to destroy it, Israel was forced to defend a nation whose people it barely knew, to honor a dishonest agreement.

Following this debacle Israel obeys God and utterly destroys Adoni-Zedek and the five Amorite kings. In the signature event of this passage, God pauses time to allow His people to conquer their enemies (Joshua 10:12, 13). What a God! God had every right to let them perish at the hands of their enemies, but He does not respond like you or I would. He promised His people a place to call home, and He delivered—again.

II. TARGET

The students will:

- *Know* that seeking God’s guidance in life is essential equipment for surviving earth.
- *Feel* the joy from knowing that God will move earth and heaven to come to their rescue.
- *Respond* by choosing to faithfully follow God until He takes us to heavenly Canaan.

III. EXPLORE

The Experience of Salvation, Seventh-day Adventist Fundamental Beliefs, No. 10

“In infinite love and mercy God made Christ, who knew no sin, to be sin for us, so that in Him we might be made the righteousness of God. . . . (Gen. 3:15; Isa. 45:22; 53; Jer. 31:31-34; Ezek. 33:11; 36:25-27; Hab. 2:4; Mark 9:23, 24; John 3:3-8, 16; 16:8; Rom. 3:21-26; 5:6-10; 8:1-4, 14-17; 10:17; 12:2; 2 Cor. 5:17-21;

Gal. 1:4; 3:13, 14, 26; 4:4-7; Eph. 2:4-10; Col. 1:13, 14; Titus 3:3-7; Heb. 8:7-12; 1 Peter 1:23; 2:21, 22; 2 Peter 1:3, 4; Rev. 13:8.)”

You will find material to help you explore these and other topics with your students at www.cornerstoneconnections.net.

TEACHING

I. GETTING STARTED

Activity

Refer the students to the What Do You Think? section of their lesson. After they have completed it, discuss their responses.

Illustration

Share this illustration in your own words:

As an armored truck passed by the Los Angeles bus stop where he was sitting alone last Monday night, Ascension Franco Gonzales saw a clear plastic bag tumble onto the street. The vehicle kept going. The guards inside it were totally unaware that part of their load had fallen out.

Mr. Gonzales went over and saw bundles of \$20 bills. The 22-year-old man actually feared for his life—afraid that someone would see him with the clear bag and kill him for its contents! So he began walking with it and looking through trash cans for something opaque enough to cover it.

With the money concealed in a sack, he took a taxi home. He told eight of his friends what had happened, and they tried to help him decide what to do. Gonzales, after all, is not a wealthy man. He makes \$1,300 a month washing dishes—and sends \$800 of that amount to his family in Mexico. He is an undocumented immigrant in the United States. His money has been used by his family to do such things as pay for an indoor toilet and for a cousin’s funeral.

In the meanwhile, the armored truck company had discovered that some money was missing—a total of \$203,000, all in cash. Police began a fruitless search. The possibility of an inside job at the company was being discussed. And nobody had any clues that would have reasonably led to Mr. Gonzales.

“Are you going to keep it?” asked his friends. “Or are you going to return it?” Gonzales wrestled with the question. On Tuesday morning, a TV news show broadcast a story about the missing money. This is

the part of the report that Gonzales remembers most vividly: “The announcer asked whether there was anyone in Los Angeles who was honest enough to hand in so much money.”

Around 11:00 A.M. that day, he called the police. Officers came quickly and counted the cash. It was all still there. “I am surprised and pleased,” said a detective.—from www.sermonillustrator.org/illustrator/sermon/3/astounding_honesty.htm.

II. TEACHING THE STORY

Bridge to the Story

Share the following in your own words:

One thing is certain in an age of deception: those who remain dependable, honest, and trustworthy will be sought after. Now more than ever God is calling His people to be people of honesty and integrity. It must have been quite an example to the Gibeonites as they watched the Israelites come to their rescue in honor of a treaty, which they conceived in a lie.

Ellen White illumines the importance of the decision Israel made to honor the treaty. She writes: “The Gibeonites had pledged themselves to renounce idolatry, and accept the worship of Jehovah; and the preservation of their lives was not a violation of God’s command to destroy the idolatrous Canaanites. Hence the Hebrews had not by their oath pledged themselves to commit sin. And though the oath had been secured by deception, it was not to be disregarded. The obligation to which one’s word is pledged—if it do not bind him to perform a wrong act—should be held sacred. No consideration of gain, of revenge, or of self-interest can in any way affect the inviolability of an oath or pledge” (*Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 506).

Out of the Story for Teachers

After you read the Into the Story section with your students, use the following in your own words to process it with them.

1. Joshua 9:15 states that it was Joshua who entered into the faulty treaty with the Gibeonites. Did God punish Joshua? If not, why not? How was the battle fought against six kings and their armies a form of corporate punishment of Israel?
2. The Gibeonites chose the disguise of poor beggars to try to deceive the Israelites, and it worked. What was their punishment? Make the point that the punishments we bring on

ourselves as a result of our choices are directly proportional to the seriousness of the wrong we have done.

3. Explore the topic of grace with your students. Where in this narrative, specifically Joshua 9, do we see God's grace? At what points in the story do we see grace displayed by Israel? How are we to respond to those who do us wrong?
4. Israel's treaty with Gibeon had a serious spiritual component. The Gibeonites had to give up whatever worship they previously engaged in and follow the dictates of Israel's God. How do you think this worked in practice? Did the Gibeonites engage in the same ceremonies and sacrifices?
5. Do you think there was ever a time when the worship of Israel's God became personal and real to the Gibeonites? Was there ever a time when they became converted?
6. The Gibeonites were relegated to serving as woodcutters and water carriers, furnishing the Jewish temple. How was this punishment a blessing in disguise?
7. In the subsequent battle against Adoni-Zedek and the Amorites, God figures prominently in the mix. At what points in the battle does God give Joshua specific verbal guidance? How was Joshua so sure that it was God who was guiding him and not some other voice?
8. Joshua and the Israelites utterly destroy all the inhabitants of Jerusalem and all the Amorites. What is the difference between this violence

and that which is performed by Christian and Islamic extremists who claim to be doing God's bidding?

Use the following as more teachable passages: Deuteronomy 4:29; Proverbs 28:26; Matthew 17:20; Psalm 2:1, 2.

Sharing Context and Background

Use the following information to shed more light on the story for your students. Share it in your own words.

1. **Huge specimens.** In the Bible the Amorites are described as a powerful people of great stature. In Deuteronomy 3:11 we have a hint as to their towering height: "Og king of Bashan . . . was the last of the Rephaites. His bed was decorated with iron and was more than nine cubits long and four cubits wide" (NIV). Og, the last of the Amorite kings, was no small man, and this can only hint at what the Amorites may have looked like to the Israelites.
In spite of their awesome physical gifts, however, the Israelites utterly destroyed them, with God's help and support.
2. **Gibeon excavated.** According to Bibleplaces.com the ancient city of Gibeon has been found. "Excavated by James Pritchard 1956-62, Gibeon has significant remains especially from the days of the Israelites. Impressive among these finds are 63 wine cellars from the 8th-7th c. B.C. These cellars were bottle-shaped and about 6 feet deep and 6 feet in diameter at the bottom.

Teaching From . . .

Refer your students to the other sections of their lesson. Invite students to share the key text with the class if they have committed it to memory.

- **Key Text**

Invite the students to share the key text with the class if they have committed it to memory.

- **Flashlight**

Read the Flashlight statement, pointing out that most of the time it is from the commentary on this week's story found in the book Patriarchs and Prophets. Ask what relationship they see between the statement and what they have just discussed from Out of the Story.

- **Punch Lines**

Point out to your students the verses listed in their lesson that relate to this week's story. Have them share the verse that spoke most directly to them and allow them to explain why they chose it.

- **Further Insight**

Ask them how the quotes in Further Insight convey the point of the story in this lesson.



Tips for Top-Notch Teaching

Mapping Territory

To make this region come alive to your students, consider bringing in a map of what was ancient Canaan land. Sources such as Bible places.com and other sites will be helpful here.

There's a good chance that your students have never examined the topography of a biblical area. They might enjoy seeing where the Jordan River is, Jericho, Ai, Gibeon, etc. To go even further, share information on who occupies the region today, and whether or not excavations have ever been done there. For instance, as mentioned previously, the site of ancient Gibeon has been located definitively.

RABBI 101

It is estimated that 19,000 gallons of wine could have been stored in 9 gallon jugs in these cellars" (Source: www.bibleplaces.com/gibeon.htm).

Historical records show that Gibeon was an important city, so important that at the time of Israel's entry its unconditional surrender drew the ire of Adoni-Zedek, then king of Jerusalem (Joshua 10:1-4, NIV).

3. **Democracy in Gibeon?** *The Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary* notes: "The Gibeonite form of government must have been more or less democratic, for the Gibeonites spoke of their elders and all their people as sending them (verse 11). Had their government at this time been headed by a king, his heart might have been too proud to bow to the conquering Israelites. In that event the Gibeonites might have joined with the other Canaanite kings in resisting Israel" (vol. 2, p. 218).

What is for sure is this: "Their determination not to resist showed a degree of faith in the

strength of Israel's God. They were willing to enter into a league, which included their pledge to renounce idolatry and to accept the worship of Jehovah" (vol. 2, p. 218).

III. CLOSING

Activity

Close with an activity and debrief it in your own words.

Bring to class a photo of the most honest, trustworthy, and dependable person you know. Share with the students two reasons why you trust this person. Then give the students two minutes to come up with the person they trust the most. Ask class members to share their choices and the reasons why they trust that person.

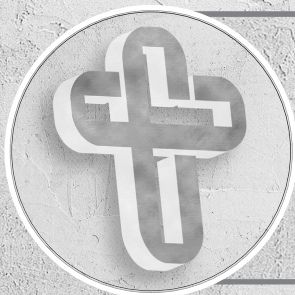
Summary

Share the following thoughts in your own words:

God's plan for His people was that they enter Canaan, clear the land of its heathen inhabitants, serve Him faithfully, and be positive examples of godliness to surrounding nations. But God's people often get sidetracked. The conquest of Canaan was never fully accomplished, even down to the time of Solomon, because the Israelites often depended on their own evaluation of situations on the ground, instead of listening to a clear word from God.

In Joshua 9 and 10 we see the roots of their later penchant for forgetting God. The treaty with Gibeon was a humbling experience, but all was not lost. In their acceptance of responsibility for the well-being of the Gibeonites they demonstrated a deep respect for the God by whom they had sworn their allegiance. God went on to lead them valiantly into and out of a great battle. He rained hailstones from heaven to support their ground attack. He even stopped the sun for a day.

The God who showed up that day is the same God we serve today, and we owe everything we are to Him.



Remind the students about the reading plan, which will take them through the inspired commentary of the Bible, the Conflict of the Ages Series. The reading that goes with this lesson is *Patriarchs and Prophets* (or *Beginning of the End*), chapter 47.



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STUDENT LESSON

Scripture Story: Joshua 9; 10.

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Photo by Bill Wolf

flashlight

"It was no light humiliation to those citizens of a 'royal city,' 'all the men whereof were mighty,' to be made hewers of wood and drawers of water throughout their generations. But they had adopted the garb of poverty for the purpose of deception, and it was fastened upon them as a badge of perpetual servitude. Thus through all their generations their servile condition would testify to God's hatred of falsehood" (*Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 507).

keytext

"The Israelites sampled their provisions but did not inquire of the LORD. Then Joshua made a treaty of peace with them to let them live, and the leaders of the assembly ratified it by oath."

(Joshua 9:14, 15, NIV)

what do you think?

How can you tell when someone is lying to you? What signs do you usually look for?

did you know?

Did you know that God is a military strategist? As the five Amorite kings fled from Joshua and the Israelite army, God gave Joshua some “air support.” Read about it in Joshua 10:11. God showered the Canaanite armies with large hailstones and He kept it up on the “long day” when time stood still.

“This entire passage provides a striking illustration of the interplay between the human and divine factors in achieving victory. Verses 7-11 alternate between Joshua (and Israel) and the LORD. They all played important parts in the conflict. The soldiers had to fight but God gave the victory.”—*Bible Knowledge Commentary*.

INTO THE STORY

“Now when all the kings west of the Jordan heard about these things—the kings in the hill country, in the western foothills, and along the entire coast of the Mediterranean Sea as far as Lebanon (the kings of the Hittites, Amorites, Canaanites, Perizzites, Hivites and Jebusites)—they came together to wage war against Joshua and Israel.

“However, when the people of Gibeon heard what Joshua had done to Jericho and Ai, they resorted to a ruse: They went as a delegation whose donkeys were loaded with worn-out sacks and old wineskins, cracked and mended.”

“The Israelites sampled their provisions but did not inquire of the LORD. Then Joshua made a treaty of peace with them to let them live, and the leaders of the assembly ratified it by oath.

“Three days after they made the treaty with the Gibeonites, the Israelites heard that they were neighbors, living near them. So the Israelites set out and on the third day came to their cities: Gibeon, Kephirah, Beeroth and Kiriath Jearim. But the Israelites did not attack them, because the leaders of the assembly had sworn an oath to them by the LORD, the God of Israel.

“The whole assembly grumbled against the leaders, but all the leaders answered, ‘We have given them our oath by the LORD, the God of Israel, and we cannot touch them now. This is what we will do to them: We will let them live, so that God’s wrath will not fall on us for breaking the oath we swore to them.’ They continued, ‘Let them live, but let them be woodcutters and water carriers in the service of the whole assembly.’ So the leaders’ promise to them was kept.”

“The Gibeonites then sent word to Joshua in the camp at Gilgal: ‘Do not abandon your servants. Come up to us quickly and save us! Help us, because all the Amorite kings from the hill country have joined forces against us.’

“So Joshua marched up from Gilgal with his entire army, including all the best fighting men. The LORD said to Joshua, ‘Do not be afraid of them; I have given them into your hand. Not one of them will be able to withstand you.’

“After an all-night march from Gilgal, Joshua took them by surprise. The LORD threw them into confusion before Israel, so Joshua and the Israelites defeated them completely at Gibeon. Israel pursued them along the road going up to Beth Horon and cut them down all the way to Azekah and Makkedah. As they fled

punch lines

before Israel on the road down from Beth Horon to Azekah, the LORD hurled large hailstones down on them, and more of them died from the hail than were killed by the swords of the Israelites.”

(Joshua 9:1-4, 14-21; 10:6-11, NIV)

OUT OF THE STORY

Who is seeking to deceive whom in this story? Why?

Place a *check mark* by the points in the story where Israel should have consulted with God. Place an *X* where they did consult with God.

Underline the deceptive words spoken by the Gibeonites.

Which parts of this story grab your attention?

Who are the main characters making important decisions for Israel?

Why did the Israelites decide to honor a treaty that was signed through deceptive means?

In the last paragraph, place an *up arrow* at the places where Joshua or Israel are doing something. Place a *down arrow* where God is doing something.

Notice the participation on both sides in winning the victory.

“**Truthful lips endure forever**, but a lying tongue lasts only a moment” (Proverbs 12:19, NIV).

“**The heart is deceitful** above all things and beyond cure. Who can understand it?” (Jeremiah 17:9, NIV).

“**You have heard that** it was said, ‘Love your neighbor and hate your enemy.’ But I tell you, love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you” (Matthew 5:43, 44, NIV).

“**Who may ascend the** mountain of the LORD? Who may stand in his holy place? The one who has clean hands and a pure heart, who does not trust in an idol or swear by a false god” (Psalm 24:3, 4, NIV).

“**But the king will** rejoice in God; all who swear by God will glory in him, while the mouths of liars will be silenced” (Psalm 63:11, NIV).

further insight

“**The men of prayer are the men of power.**”—Ellen G. White,

Patriarchs and Prophets, p. 509.

“**The humble worker who obediently responds to the call of God may be sure of receiving divine assistance.**”—Ellen G. White, *Christ’s Object Lessons*, p. 354.

connectingtolife

Sabbath

Read Joshua 9:19.

The *What Do You Think?* exercise focused on the physical cues people give off when attempting to mislead or tell an untruth. Obviously, Joshua and the Israelite princes missed the cues that the Gibeonites were exhibiting.

From today's reading we notice that the Israelites got very upset with their leaders for making a treaty with a deceptive nation. Share a time in your life when you did something good for someone who had done you wrong.

Has someone ever extended kindness to you after you had done wrong?

Sunday

Read Joshua 9:3-6.

Ellen White's comments on Israel's decision to honor its treaty with the Gibeonites is worth a closer look: "The Gibeonites had pledged themselves to renounce idolatry, and accept the worship of Jehovah; and the preservation of their lives was not a violation of God's command to destroy the idolatrous Canaanites" (*Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 506).

It's obvious that the Gibeonites converted to serving God out of fear for their lives. Does God desire forced worship, worship from folks who are scared of Him or His people?

Monday

Read Joshua 9:21; 10:1-4.

The *Key Text* this week states clearly that Israel's leaders failed to consult God before entering into their treaty with the Gibeonites. Israel honored its word, but a fearful punishment was pronounced on the Gibeonites.

The Israelite failure to seek God's guidance started a chain reaction throughout the region. What did the king of Jerusalem decide to do following the humiliation of the Gibeonites?

What was the response of Joshua and the Israelites?

Tuesday

Read Proverbs 12:19.

Ellen White shines her *Flashlight* on the punishment meted out to the Gibeonites because of their deception. They came to Israel dressed like poor slaves. Because of their sin, they would remain poor servants forever. What a high price to pay for deception!

Do you think this was a fair punishment? Prepare an answer to share with the class.

In spite of the punishment for deception, how did God honor the relationship between the Israelites and the Gibeonites? Read the last three paragraphs of *Into the Story*.

Wednesday

The final selection in the list of *Punch Lines* reads: "Who may ascend the mountain of the LORD? Who may stand in his holy place? The one who has clean hands and a pure heart, who does not trust in an idol or swear by a false god" (Psalm 24:3, 4, NIV).

What do you think is meant by "clean hands"? What do you think it means to have "a pure heart"?

Thursday

Read Joshua 10.

This is perhaps one of the most violent chapters in the Bible. God had given His people a clear directive to destroy all the heathen nations of Canaan because of their sin and disobedience. But God's sixth commandment says, "You shall not murder" (Exodus 20:13, NIV).

We do not now, and may never, fully understand the reason for everything God chooses to do or not do in regard to sin and evil on this earth. We are, however, assured that "the Spirit of God inspired Joshua's prayer, that evidence might again be given of the power of Israel's God. . . . Joshua had received the promise that God would surely overthrow these enemies of Israel, yet he put forth as earnest effort as though success depended upon the armies of Israel alone. He did all that human energy could do, and then he cried in faith for divine aid. The secret of success is the union of divine power with human effort" (*Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 509).

Friday

Read Matthew 7:7, 8.

This week's study challenges us to be people of truth, honesty, and integrity; to honor the oaths we make even when others are less than honest with us. But, on a deeper level, this week's lesson asks a far more challenging question: What are some of the consequences of failing to seek God's guidance in every area of life?

Reflect on this question as you thank God for His grace, His willingness to still work with us though we sometimes forget about Him.

this week's reading*

Patriarchs and Prophets (or *Beginning of the End*), chapter 47.

**Beginning of the End* is a special adaptation of *Patriarchs and Prophets*, created for you by the Ellen G. White Estate and Pacific Press®. Get more information about it at www.cornerstoneconnections.net/article/191/about-us/conflict-of-the-ages-companion-books#.URlhF1rBO9s. By following the weekly reading plan, you will read at least one book of the Conflict of the Ages Series each year.