

Life Lesson 43  
*The Trick of the Gibeonites*  
Text: Joshua 9 & 10

Introduction

With God on their side, the Israelites couldn't be defeated. Joshua found out, though, that they could be tricked. He learned the hard way that he should ask God's direction about everything.

The Story

Were the Gibeonites ever worried! For years they had heard about the Israelites and their adventures in the wilderness. They had heard about all the miracles God had done for them. Now the Israelites were nearby and had already conquered Jericho and Ai.

"We have to do something. We'll probably be next," they must have thought.

They decided to trick the Israelites into making a league, or a treaty with them. They put on their oldest, dirtiest clothes. They wore shoes that were just about to fall to pieces and put old empty sacks on their backs.

"Not bad," they probably said to each other. "We look like we've been traveling for months. They'll never guess that we live right next door to them."

Warily they approached the Israelite camp at Gilgal.

"We've come from a far country to make a league with you. If you agree to be on our side if our enemies attack, we'll be on your side if your enemies attack you."

"Who are you and where do you come from?" Joshua asked.

"We are from a country very far away," they told him. "See these old clothes? They were

brand new when we started out. See this old moldy bread? We took it from the oven right before we left. These shoes were new when we started out. We heard about all the things that happened to you in Egypt and all the things your God has done for you. We've come to make a pact with you."

That must have seemed flattering to Joshua. To think that people living so far away had heard about them! They must be really famous. He thought that surely it wouldn't make any difference if he made a pact with them. After all, they didn't live in the land of Canaan. God had forbidden him to make a pact with the people of the land, but these folks were from a land far away.

Joshua forgot one very important thing. He forgot to ask God about it. That was a serious mistake. If he had asked, God would have told him not to make the agreement. Joshua would have been spared a lot of trouble. But Joshua still thought there were things he could do without God's help. As a result he got himself and his people into a big mess.

Just three days later the Israelites found out that the Gibeonites were their next-door neighbors. Four big cities were close by. God had commanded them to

"You tricked us!" Joshua said. "Why did you say you were from a far country? Since you live right here with us, you'll have to pay for your trickery by being our servants."

"That's okay with us," the Gibeonites said. "Just don't kill us."

Joshua had to live up to his bargain, but it was a costly bargain. The other kings of the people in nearby cities heard about the pact the Israelites made with the Gibeonites.

"We know the Israelites are going to attack us soon," the kings said. "With their God

helping them we don't stand a chance. They promised to defend the Gibeonites. If we attack the Gibeonites, we'll force them to come to fight in their defense. There will be more of us than there are of them, so maybe we'll have a chance. It will be easier to fight there and be on the offensive than to have our cities attacked. Anyway, this way the fighting will be away from our city and maybe our wives and children will be safe."

This was a good plan for the Canaanite kings. It made things a lot harder for the Israelites.

When the Gibeonites attacked, Joshua had to go help them. He led his army toward the city of Gibeon.

"Don't be afraid," the Lord said to Joshua. "I've already given you the victory."

Did you notice what God said? He didn't say, "I WILL give you the victory." He said, "I HAVE GIVEN you the victory." When God decides to do something it's as good as already done. God always does what He says, and there is nothing too hard for God. If we are doing what God wants us to do, we don't have anything to worry about, do we?

God did give the Israelites the victory. They chased the enemies all over the countryside. Then God sent a great hailstorm. Huge chunks of ice fell from Heaven. More people died from being struck with hailstones than those who died in battle.

There were more miracles still on that day of miracles. God made the sun and the moon stand still. The enemies were waiting for night to come so that the Israelites would quit fighting. Then they could sneak off in the dark. But the dark didn't come. Hour after hour the sun stayed in the same spot in the sky. The battle raged on and the Israelites won a great victory.

## The Life Lesson

God granted His people a great victory, but Joshua could have saved a lot of trouble for the Israelites if he had remembered one thing. If only he had remembered to ask God's direction in *everything*.

Sometimes we are like Joshua. We think that some things are too little to bother God about. "I can take care of that, myself," we think. But God says in Proverbs 3:6, **A**In all thy ways acknowledge Him and He shall direct thy paths."

If we ask God about everything He will direct us the right way in everything. It will please God, and save us a lot of trouble!

## Review Questions

What group of people decided to trick the Israelites?

*The Gibeonites*

How did the Gibeonites trick Joshua?

*They dressed in old clothes and pretended they came from a far country. They asked Joshua to make a pact with them.*

What did Joshua promise the Gibeonites?

*He promised to defend them if they were attacked.*

Where did the Gibeonites really live?

*In four big cities close by in Canaan.*

What did the nearby kings decide to do?

*They attacked Gibeon so the Israelites would have to come out and fight them.*

What did God promise Joshua?

*He said, AI have given you the victory.”*

What miracle did God do to defeat the Canaanites?

*He sent a big hailstorm and many died from being hit with chunks of ice.*

What did God do to give the Israelites time to conquer the enemy before dark?

*He made the sun and moon stand still.*