

But I Thought

Taken from Joshua 9

Foundation

Take a moment to pray. Quiet your thoughts and heart before the Lord, and ask Him to teach you what He wants you to learn.



Do you ever act first, and then think later?

Joshua looked suspiciously at the group of men. Their clothes were in need of repair and the sandals on their feet were well worn. A quick glance at the donkeys showed heavy loads of tattered sacks and wineskins that were worn and repaired. "We've traveled from a distant land seeking to make a treaty with you," one of the men spoke up.

Joshua met their gaze, wondering about this odd group of men. "Tell me who you are and where you are from," he demanded.

The band of men quickly looked at each other but answered Joshua without hesitating. "We've come from a far away country," they offered. "We know all that God did for you in Egypt and even how He helped you defeat two kings on the east side of the Jordan." They carefully did not mention what they knew of the recent battles at Jericho and Ai. "We desire to make a treaty with you to live in peace," they finished.

Joshua and his men thought about the words they heard. Clearly, God had commanded them not to make any treaties with the inhabitants of the land of

Canaan. All cities and their people were to be completely destroyed and conquered by the Israelites. However, if these people were truly from a distant land, there would be no problem in making an agreement to live in peace together. The band of men watched Joshua closely, seeing him silently weigh his options.

“How do we know you’re from a distant country and are not one of our neighbors?” Joshua challenged.

“Look,” the leader stated as he walked toward the donkeys, “here’s proof we are speaking the truth.”

Joshua followed and watched the stranger pull out some bread.

“Upon leaving our country, we packed these provisions to bring along. The day we set out, they were fresh from the oven—look at them now!” he said, pointing to the moldy and dry bread. He then directed Joshua’s attention to the wineskins. “When we left our country, these were full and fresh. See how cracked they are now!”

“And our clothes—,” another joined in, “our clothes are all torn and faded from the long trip!”

Joshua looked at the evidence before him—it all seemed to prove the words of the strangers. Just to be sure, however, Joshua and his men asked to sample the provisions. Everything checked out. Joshua then signed a treaty promising to live in peace with these people and not destroy them. The Israelite leaders all agreed and backed it up with an oath. They had no idea they were being deceived....

“But I thought—,” Joshua later stammered in anger, unable to finish his sentence.

The people living in Gibeon were also called “Hivites” and were descendants of Ham’s son, Canaan.

Later, during the reign of King David (2 Samuel 21:1-2) there was a three year famine in the land because Saul broke a standing treaty that had been made before the Lord. That treaty was the very one Joshua had made with the Gibeonites, guaranteeing they would not be killed.

“We even sampled their provisions—what more could we have had as evidence?” one of the leaders offered.

It had been only three days since the signing of the treaty—three days to find out the strangers were really from the city of Gibeon only twenty-five miles away! Joshua felt frustrated. They had been deceived into signing a treaty with the Canaanites—the very ones God said to destroy! When the people in the camp heard the story, they were angered in their hearts. Many soldiers grumbled, expressing a desire to kill off the Gibeonites anyway—treaty or no treaty! Joshua reminded them that an oath before the Lord had been made, and God held them accountable to keep it. The Gibeonites couldn't be touched.

“Why did you trick us?” Joshua demanded of the Gibeonite leaders. The leaders remained silent for a moment and then responded.

“We were told how the Lord your God promised to give you this land, commanding you to destroy all who live in it,” they replied. “We feared for our lives; that is why we tricked you into signing a treaty with us. Now do with us as you see fit.”

Joshua made the Gibeonites become slaves with the duties of cutting wood and carrying water. In associating their work with the tabernacle, Joshua made sure the Gibeonites would be exposed to the worship of the one true God.

Footwork

Look up Joshua 9:14 and read what it says. According to this verse, what wise thing did Joshua and the leaders do? What one vital mistake did they make? (Hint: It's something they did *not* do.)

Fruit

Often we are tempted to rush ahead and make decisions based on our own wisdom. Leaving God on the sidelines, we operate on our own understanding—and suffer. God wants us to use our heads, but He also wants us to rely on His wisdom. That can only be gained by checking in with Him. Whose wisdom are you operating on?