

JOSHUA - A TEACHER'S GUIDE

THE CENTRAL QUESTION:

What does this book/story say to us about God?

This question may be broken down further as follows:

- a. Why did God do it/allow it?
 - b. Why did He record it for our study?
 - c. How does it affect you today?
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1. What picture of God would you have if you had only the book of Joshua? Who do you think wrote this book which includes events even after Joshua's death? (see Joshua 24:29-33)

The Jews (including Jesus) recognized three divisions in the Old Testament: The Law, the Prophets, and the Psalms (also called the Writings). See Luke 24:44. Joshua is the first book of the second division called "the Prophets" in Hebrew Bibles, because they regarded the author as a prophet. In the Hebrew Bible the "prophets" are divided into the former prophets (Joshua, Judges, Samuel, and Kings) and the latter prophets (most of what we call "the prophets").

Just as the books of Moses were probably written by Moses, Joshua was probably written by Joshua, perhaps with some secretarial help, and the accounts of events after his death added by an assistant or a later Bible writer to round out the story of Joshua. Note how similar the last of Joshua is to the first of Judges. The Jewish Talmud (*Baba Bathra* 14b) says that Joshua wrote the book and that Eleazar added the ending except for Joshua 24:33, which was added by Phinehas (*Baba Bathra* 15a, 15b). This would suggest that the book was written early in the 14th century BC, after the exodus in 1445-1405 BC. There are no extra-Biblical historical or archaeological data that positively confirm any of the events in the book of Joshua. The actual conquest of the land took between five and seven years. Josephus suggests that Joshua's life was divided into three parts: 45 years before the exodus, 40 years with Moses, and 25 years as the sole leader of Israel.

The book should be considered as the conclusion to the exodus and included historically with the books of Moses. It seems to suggest that whenever the people were in obedience to God, they were signally blessed even in war. It also shows the beginning of the problems that arose as the people began to settle in among the pagan peoples of the land and the disastrous results of their adopting the customs and religious practices of these peoples. It shows how even good men like Joshua can get into trouble by moving ahead without consulting God. (See Ai story, and agreement with the Gibeonites). God helped them correct the problems that resulted and continued to work with them in every way He could.

2. Why do you think Moses changed Joshua's name from Hoshea? (Numbers 13:8,16) Do you know anyone else in the Bible named Joshua? (Hebrews 4:8, *KJV*)

The name Joshua is a shortened form of Jehoshua (Yehoshua') which means "salvation of (or by) Jehovah (Yahweh)". Moses changed Joshua's name from the simpler Hoshea' (Deuteronomy 32:44; Numbers 13:8,16) which means only "savior" or "salvation". This was probably to make it clear that the God of Israel was now Yahweh and Yahweh only. Moses also recognized that only Yahweh could save anybody. It is possible that Hoshea' was originally named after one of the Egyptian "gods" but this is unlikely.

In the New Testament, the name Yehoshua' was shortened to Yeshua' or Joshua and when translated into Greek became Yesous or Jesus (in English). This is shown by looking at Acts 7:45 or Hebrews 4:8 in the *King James Version* and then comparing the translation in a more modern version or looking in the margin of the *KJV*. So "Jesus" was really named "Joshua" after this great Old Testament "prophet".

3. With a promise such as the Lord gave him (Joshua 1:5-9; 23:9,10; compare Leviticus 26:6-13; Deuteronomy 7:24; 11:25; 31:6-8; 32:30; Exodus 23:20-33; Deuteronomy 20:16-18; Genesis 12:1-3)

why didn't he continue the conquest of the land until there were no Canaanites left?

God is here repeating a promise He had made many times from Abraham to Moses. It was God's plan that the children of Israel occupy the land and become a "spectacle" or "theater" to the known world who would pass through Palestine on their various travels. (Compare 1 Corinthians 4:9)

God wanted them to follow His plans exactly with ever increasing commitment and faith. God would have taken care of all their enemies in Palestine without any problem just as He dealt with the Egyptians. But God could not and still cannot bless and prosper those who rebel against Him. As was seen in the case of Ai, even the sin of one man caused the removal of God's umbrella of protection from all of Israel. So when many of the Israelites began to wander from God's original plan, He could only back away and let them struggle to conquer the land on their own. At times they were fully on God's side and their victories proved it. Battles were won without the loss of a single Israelite. But most of the time they were too busy "conquering the land" to even notice that God was not fully with them.

If Joshua had been able to keep their focus on Yahweh until the task was done, they could have had the whole land and been a shining light to the land of Palestine and to the world.

4. If you had been Joshua would you have been encouraged by the people's promise, "We will obey you, just as we always obeyed Moses?" (Joshua 1:16,17) Was Joshua being honest when he said, "be faithful to the Lord, as you have been till now?" (Joshua 23:8)

Did Joshua's heart cheer or sink as he heard these words? Clearly the people did not see a great contradiction in this passage. They were excited by the new leadership and not concerning themselves with the details of their past history. In both cases above, the speakers were being as generous in their assessments as God was when referring to his friend David. (See handout on ***David: A Man After God's Own Heart?***)

5. Does the people's statement in Joshua 1:18—"Whoever questions your authority or disobeys any of your orders will be put to death"—give us any idea of their attitude toward the value of human life?

There are many stories in the Old Testament that suggest that human life was regarded as fairly cheap or insignificant. A man was stoned for picking up sticks on the Sabbath. (Numbers 15:32-36) They were told to kill people for almost any open violation of a known commandment. (See Leviticus Teacher's Guide #7; Leviticus 24:10-23; Numbers 15:30-36; Exodus 21:12-17; 22:19; 31:14,15; 35:2; Leviticus 20:2-5,9-16,27; Numbers 1:51; 3:10,38; 18:7; 25:5; 35:16-21; Deuteronomy 13:5-10; 17:2-5,12; 18:20; 21:18-21; 22:20-25)

This either meant that they felt human life was easily expendable or that "sins" were regarded as much more serious than at the present time! The sacrificial system called for the death of an animal for almost any significant sin. They apparently became used to the "shedding of blood". In this sort of a situation God needed to make the punishment for a sin very "serious" in order to make any impression at all!

In our day we are very concerned about these incidents for at least two reasons: 1) In this life, we are constantly surrounded by, and involved in, sin. It is very easy therefore to become so accustomed to it that we do not regard it as very serious. 2) By contrast, this life is the only "life" we know. We have never had the opportunity to experience "real life" in the way that God intended for us to experience it as Adam and Eve did in the garden of Eden. Since our very temporary "life" is all we know we regard it as very precious. We take very seriously anything that even shortens it by a small amount.

But God knows that this human, physical "life" is really nothing in contrast to what God has in store for us if we are faithful to him. So God regards this "life" as ***relatively*** unimportant, since He can "awaken" any of us who has died at any time. In fact, He will awaken every one of us at the end, either at the second coming or at the third coming. (See John 5:28,29) At that time each of us will be judged fairly by Him based on our response to Him in our very brief "lives" here. Jesus Himself

made it clear how He feels about these issues in Matthew 10:28 and Luke 12:4,5. (Look at several different versions on these texts)

So we see that we have gotten these two absolutely crucial issues just backwards in our minds. While we regard sin as **relatively** unimportant and “life” as very important, God regards sin as very important and this “life” that we know as **relatively** unimportant. If we get these issues straightened out in our minds and see things more from God’s perspective, then His responses to some of these situations in the Old Testament may seem more reasonable.

6. Why do you think the spies went into Rahab’s house? (Joshua 2:1) What do you think of a God who would save Rahab and all her family because she did such a good job of lying? (Joshua 2:1-16; 6:22,23) What does lying have to do with faith? (Hebrews 11:30,31; James 2:25) Why was this woman chosen as an ancestor of King David and of Christ? (Matthew 1:5) On what basis do you think Rahab decided that these Israelites were the people of God? Do you think Rahab and her family were the only ones in Jericho who believed in the God of Israel and therefore the only ones who could be saved? Do we have any evidence that any of the other members of her family were believers in God? Or were they saved because they came inside her house? (Joshua 6:22-25) Compare Noah and the ark. How could the spies be so confident that they would be able to preserve her and her family? (Joshua 2:14)

See handout #38 on ***Rahab and the Two Spies***.

7. Why did the angel that appeared to Joshua present a very military appearance and seem to suggest an approach of war or battle if he really didn’t want them to fight? (Joshua 5:13-15)

Joshua himself was preparing for battle and it was important for him to realize that the One who was in charge of this conquest was the Lord Himself. It was only as they recognized God’s control and followed His plan for the conquest that they could possibly succeed. Joshua should have asked the angel for guidance in the upcoming battles! Compare the stories of David at the threshing floor (1 Chronicles 21:16) and Balaam (Numbers 22:23,31). This is not the first time an angel had wielded a sword before God’s people.

8. Why do you think the Angel asked Joshua to take off his sandals? Are bare feet more respectful in some way? (Joshua 5:15; compare Exodus 3:5)

A similar command had been given to Moses. (Exodus 3:5) By accepting the worship offered by Joshua this “Angel” showed that He was none other than Jesus Himself. (See Revelation 19:10; compare *Patriarchs and Prophets* 488) The first verse of Joshua 6 that follows this verse is only parenthetical and the passage continues, revealing that it is the Lord who is speaking. Thus Joshua was in the very presence of God Himself.

Joshua was asked to remove his sandals as Moses had been because the practice of taking off one’s sandals or shoes before entering a holy place has been a custom in the Near East since ancient times. Near Eastern peoples feel that wearing shoes or other footwear into a holy place carries dust and other impurities into the “clean” or “holy” place and thus brings impurity into it. Many Middle Eastern groups still follow this tradition.

9. What was the purpose of the elaborate seven day process to conquer Jericho? Why do you think God demanded that everything of value in Jericho be kept for the temple, when He didn’t make the same demand regarding other cities they conquered? (Joshua 6:1-25)

This was a very specific plan designed to remind the Israelites that this was God’s battle and not theirs. The ancient city of Jericho was only about 8 acres in size and only a portion of the men of war, selected from each of the tribes, marched around the city. The seven-day ritual was to give the children of Israel a chance to develop faith in God’s plans and to give them a chance to think about

what God was doing. (*Patriarchs and Prophets* 493; Hebrews 11:30) If they had allowed God to win all their battles in His own way, they would have conquered the entire land without fighting!

There is a great deal of discussion among scholars about the archaeological evidence that should have been left by this conquest of Jericho. It is very clear that Jericho had been inhabited for generations before this battle. It is also quite clear from archaeological evidence that the area remained almost uninhabited for centuries thereafter. The "walls" were apparently made of mud brick and what was left of them may have been totally demolished and eroded away by centuries of weather since then. The walls that have been discovered at the presumed site of old Jericho do not date to the time of this battle. For more details about the times of this battle and the archaeological evidence that has been discovered see any good Bible Commentary. See SDA Bible Commentary, vol. 2, p. 42.

Kathleen Kenyon carefully excavated a portion of what is regarded as ancient Jericho and based on archaeological dating methods determined that all that was left from the times of Joshua were one part of a wall and a portion of a floor. That is not much to go on when trying to decide exactly what happened "when the walls came tumbling down"!

Bryant Wood, a current research archaeologist has reviewed Ms. Kenyon's materials and some additional findings of more recent excavations at the site of Old Jericho. There is some exciting new evidence coming out suggesting that Ms. Kenyon may have mis-dated the "destruction" of Jericho and that a three foot layer of ash may have, in fact, resulted from the destruction we read about in the book of Joshua. There will certainly be more about this in the near future in archaeological journals.

10. What kind of God would order the stoning of Achan, his wife, his children, and all his animals (Joshua 7:15)? Was that the Father, the Son, or the Holy Spirit? Why would God ask the Israelites themselves to do it? (Joshua 7:15,25,26) Could this have been "gentle Jesus, meek and mild?"

This story is a real challenge for teachers of children and young people. The young people don't have such a problem with Achan being stoned as he seemed to be clearly guilty. But why did God ask the people to stone his wife, his children, their pets, and everything they owned? Did Achan's children have anything to do with his sin? Some have suggested that the children may have helped dig the hole in the floor of the tent. If so, it was probably because their father demanded it! Aren't children taught to obey their parents? So why are the children being punished with their parents? Children are not always punished with their parents. (See Numbers 16:32, where Korah's children did not participate in their father's punishment; Ezekiel 18:20)

When reading such a story we must remember that there is no verse in Joshua that suggests that Achan or any member of his family will be eternally lost. That issue must be left up to God who has the power to resurrect each one of them and will (John 5:28,29). If Achan's children are savable God will save them. This is rather the story of severe discipline for a grievous sin which, if it had been ignored would have led to widespread disregard of God's commands. At this critical time in the history of Israel they needed the full blessing and guidance of God in each step they took. Unfortunately, even after the death of Achan and his family they did not seem to be ready to ask God what to do at each step of the way as they should have. None of Achan's family came forward to admit what had happened until there was no other option left.

Some have asked why 36 men from other families should have died in the battle at Ai when it was Achan's sin (unknown to any of the 36) that was at fault. (Compare Leviticus 10:6; Deuteronomy 29:19) But did any of them or their leaders inquire of the LORD before they attempted to conquer Ai? Or did they rush up there assuming that they could accomplish this "little job" on their own? In this sense they were each responsible for what happened to them personally.

The New Testament in 1 Corinthians 10:4 suggests that Christ Jesus was the One who led the Israelites in their wanderings. This would suggest that He was the One who gave the command to stone Achan and his family. Christ has always stood in the position among the Godhead of representing the Godhead to their "creatures"! He represented God to the angels before this world

was created and now He represents God to us.

It is important to remember that life was regarded as fairly cheap in those days! The people (probably including Achan and his family) had said that anyone that should disobey any of Joshua's commands or even question his orders should be put to death! (See Joshua 1:18) This is not just a question of whether Achan's family deserved to be stoned. When you are working with a group that makes a statement like Joshua 1:18, how do you discipline those who disobey in a serious enough way to make it meaningful? Achan's motives could only have been selfish. There may have been good reasons for Achan's family to have been included in the punishment. None of them confessed even though they knew what had happened! It is possible that they all had the same greedy, selfish spirit that apparently guided Achan to do what he did. Achan and his entire family were given lots of opportunities to confess. God needed to say something through this experience. It appears that Achan had hardened his heart repeatedly against the appeals of God and was not willing to confess until he had been pointed out by God Himself!

The children of Israel needed to understand that their only hope of success in the conquest of the land was in obedience to God's commands. If God didn't go with them they had no chance of driving out those powerful nations. (Deuteronomy 7:1-6) Why would the same God order the stoning of Achan and his family and after commanding that adulterers be put to death (Leviticus 20:10-12; Deuteronomy 22:22,23-25) just tell the woman taken in adultery (John 8:1-11) to go home and be a better woman from then on? The answer must be in the circumstances surrounding each different case. Why didn't the children of Israel, or at least the disciples in Jesus' day, ask Him to explain why He ordered the burning and stoning of Achan? How should we answer such questions today?

11. What do you think of Joshua's speech after the Ai incident? (Joshua 7:7-9) Was he just as bad as the people? Why do you think Joshua failed to inquire of the Lord before he sent the troops up to Ai?

Joshua was clearly upset by what had happened. Perhaps he realized that he was partially to blame for not having clearly consulted Yahweh before sending the troops to Ai. It is worth noting that Joshua was commendable in turning immediately to Yahweh when the problem developed.

It is particularly important to note Joshua's statement about God's involvement and the results that might follow for God's reputation! It was God's great name that would be blasphemed or even despised if such events continued. Joshua like Moses before him recognized that this was an even more important issue than the fate of Israel! (Compare Genesis 18:25; Exodus 32:7-14; Deuteronomy 9:6-13,26-29; 32:26,27; Numbers 14:11-16; Job 42:7,8; Ezekiel 36:22,23; Daniel 9:14-19; John 15:15; Romans 1:18; 2:17-24; contrast Jonah) God's friends are jealous for His reputation. Real friends are always like that!

12. Why did God apparently use the casting of lots in the case of Achan and other Bible stories? (For example, choosing Judas' replacement: Acts 1:23-26) Why don't we choose church leaders this way now? Wouldn't we feel more confident that we had gotten the right person? Why not use it to identify sinners? (Joshua 7:13-26; 14:2; Judges 20:9; 1 Samuel 10:20; 1 Chronicles 6:54,61; Jonah 1:7; Matthew 27:35; Acts 1:26)

We do not know exactly how the casting of lots was done in ancient times. Some have suggested that it was like the drawing of the shortest straw. In any case it was an apparently chance method of determining something which in this case was considered to be directed and guided by God. It was clearly used many times in Scripture. The problem with the use of such methods was that Satan could also have controlled their use unless God prevented him from doing so. Is it God's plan for us to use such methods today? No! (See quotes below) Even though it might at first appear to be a more certain method for determining what is God's will, it also gets us "off the hook". If God does the "choosing" then we don't have to take any responsibility for the results. If God used such a method in our day and chose the best person available for the job, but later we came to feel that that person was not doing everything just right, it would be very human for us to begin blaming God for the way things were going!

God clearly did at times direct the use of lots. It was probably the most expeditious way to accomplish what needed to be done at the time. But why not ask the high priest to inquire from the Urim and Thummim? Why not ask God in prayer? God had directly communicated with Joshua in the past, why not just tell Joshua now? In this case it was probably better to use the “lots” so that everyone could see that the process was not being manipulated in any way by Joshua or any of the leaders.

13. What do think of the fact that Joshua made the treaty with the Gibeonites based on lies? Should he have been bound by it? (Joshua 9) Again the Canaanites were blessed for lying! Why didn't Joshua inquire of the Lord first? What would have happened if the Gibeonites had come and told the truth and said they wanted to worship the true God?

It is clear that Joshua could have done better by inquiring of the Lord before entering into such an important agreement. Exactly how God would have handled things if Joshua had inquired from Him first we do not know. Once again, we find God making the best of a bad situation! Gibeon was the capital city of the Hivites (Joshua 11:19), one of the nations that was to be destroyed by the Israelites (See Exodus 23:20-31; Deuteronomy 20:16-18) As God had predicted, their land did become a part of the inheritance of Israel. They become water carriers and woodcutters. Unfortunately, not a single nation actually was attracted by their understanding of God and His religion as portrayed in the lives of the Israelites and so we do not know how such a situation might have been handled. We do however have individual examples: Rahab and her descendants were greatly blessed by her decision to cast her lot with the people of Yahweh. (See *Patriarchs and Prophets* p. 505-507)

14. What do you think of the victory at the battle of Gibeah? (Joshua 10:1-15) Was God helping them fight? Who sent the hailstones (vs. 11) and held back the sun? (vs. 12-14) Is this an example of the “hornets” mentioned in Exodus 23:28 and Deuteronomy 7:20? (1 Samuel 5:9; 14:15) What do you think Joshua was referring to when he said, “I sent the hornets before you”? (Joshua 24:12) Why did he say, “your swords and bows had nothing to do with it” [the conquest of the land]?

It is quite clear in the context that God was the One who was the victor in this battle. Even Joshua seemed to recognize that. It is too bad that their swords and bows were involved in any way! This was no doubt another of the many demonstrations given by God that He was superior in every way to the “gods” of these other nations. Why didn't all of the other nations recognize that? If we think of the “hornets” as a reference to the forces of nature, this would clearly fit into that category.

15. Was the fact that Joshua hamstringed the horses and destroyed the chariots evidence that he at least was trying to follow God's directions in avoiding fighting? (Joshua 11:9)

At least Joshua seemed to be trying to prevent the Israelites from building up some kind of formidable force that they might come to depend on for the future conquest of other nations. Please also note that this was at God's command. God never intended for them to “fight their way into Canaan”.

16. Why did they sometimes totally destroy everybody as in Joshua 6:21; 8:25; 10:7-15,28-41; 11:8,11-14,18,20? (Compare Deuteronomy 20:16-18; Numbers 31:13-18,49)

In Deuteronomy 20 clear instructions were given on the conquest of future cities. If these were cities located in the territory to be occupied completely by the Israelites they were to destroy their enemies completely leaving alive nothing that breathed. In later battles in more distant places the peoples were to be given an opportunity to surrender first and then if they refused, only the military were to be destroyed. The remainder of the population were to be taken as slaves. These instructions were presumably given because the nations that occupied the land of Canaan had been

given their time of probation and had not in any way turned to Yahweh but had become very debased by their fertility cult religions. (See SDA Bible Commentary, vol. 2, p. 38-41) They had been given an opportunity to learn about God from the times of Abraham.

17. In what way did the Lord harden the hearts of the people who were fighting against Israel? (Deuteronomy 20:10-18; Joshua 11:20)

God does not actively harden the heart of anyone. See handout #23: **“Hardening Pharaoh’s Heart”**. People’s hearts are hardened when they repeatedly vote against God and thus harden themselves against His appeals. By fighting against God’s people these enemies of Israel “hardened their own hearts”. They demonstrated that they had reached a stage where it was essentially impossible for the God of truth to reach them.

18. Why didn’t Joshua go down and conquer the land of Philistia? (Joshua 13:2,3) Think how much trouble it would have saved later.

This is a thought question. If God had given them the power to totally eliminate their enemies, (or better yet, if He had done it for them) or at least drive their enemies out of the land, why did they allow them to remain? For one, some of the Israelites chose to use their conquered enemies as slaves. This made their own life more “comfortable” but also subjected them to a much greater risk of being drawn down by their culture and religious practices. We must assume that since God promised that He would go with them and fight their battles, it would have been possible for them to conquer or drive out all of these other nations. The fact that so many were left behind and so much trouble resulted later can only be attributed to their lack of faith, resolve, or willingness to follow God’s guidance.

19. What kind of relationship do you think existed between the Israelites and all the cities of Canaan that were not conquered but continued to exist among them? (Joshua 13:13; 15:63; 16:10; 17:13,18; Compare 23:13) How do you explain the statements that Jerusalem was conquered several times, but it was still ruled by the Jebusites? (Joshua 10:1-5,23; 12:10; 15:63; 18:28)

It is quite clear from subsequent history, that all of the evils that God predicted would take place if they allowed these other nations to remain, actually happened. They intermarried with them. They adopted their religious practices. Much later, some of them so thoroughly adopted their customs and languages that they could no longer speak Hebrew or even Aramaic!! (Nehemiah 13:24)

The Jebusite city of Jerusalem consisted of two parts. The stronghold situated on Mt. Zion was much better fortified than the area to the north and east. It was this area that apparently was conquered by the Israelites. It later became known as the city of David.

20. Was it true that “the Lord gave to Israel all the land that he had solemnly promised their ancestors?” (Joshua 21:43; 23:14,15) Did they then have peace? (Joshua 21:44; 22:4) Was it true that “not one of all their enemies had been able to stand against them, because the Lord gave the Israelites the victory over all their enemies?” (Joshua 21:44,45; 23:9) Did Israel actually have “security from their enemies around them?” (Joshua 23:1) Do you think it was actually possible for them to carry out the command “Do not neglect any part of [the law of Moses], and then you will not associate with these peoples left among you or speak the names of their gods or use those names in taking vows or worship those gods or bow down to them?” (Joshua 23:6,7)

Joshua was apparently a great military leader. He was victorious in virtually every battle that he fought. After he had apparently eliminated the larger armies associated with many of the major cities, it appears that he encouraged the individual tribes to clean out the remaining enemies from their separate territories. This the tribes did not succeed in doing. Perhaps Joshua felt that he had done his part in making the land secure against their enemies and thus he was able to make the

statements he did in his farewell speech. If they had followed through with their side of the bargain, God would certainly have fulfilled His part. Once again Joshua makes statements that are terrible in their accuracy as to what would happen if they failed to follow God!

21. Why were some of the Israelite tribes so reluctant to move in and conquer their enemies if “any one of you can make a thousand men run away?” (Joshua 23:10)

This is really hard to understand. It must have been in their lack of trust in God’s commands that the task seemed insurmountable. There is certainly no evidence that God failed to carry out His promises. But once again, they did not trust God and wanted to take credit more for the accomplishments themselves and thus allowed the Divine opportunity to slip by them.

22. What do you think is implied by the warning against intermarrying with the Canaanites? (Joshua 23:12,13) Joshua obviously warned them very strongly against worshiping other “gods.” (Joshua 23:15,16) Does this seem to have had a very long-lasting effect? Do you think that some of the Israelites were still worshiping the gods of Mesopotamia and Egypt as Joshua seemed to imply? (Joshua 24:14,23)

Joshua certainly must have understood their natural tendency to follow these debasing practices. The advertising industry even in our day seems to have understood this point! It is quite a testimony to Joshua’s influence that the whole nation seemed to be influenced by his righteousness even during the times of the old men who outlived him. But the force of character of a single leader would not be able to stem the tide of sin that seemed so attractive to the Israelites. These idols were probably small cult figurines of the fertility goddesses of the Canaanites. These same “gods” had been worshiped long ago by the peoples that their ancestors Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob had faced. They probably collected some of these “idols” in their conquests of Canaan. Joshua is telling them to avoid the attraction of these deceitful cults.

23. After the people had promised to serve the Lord, why do you think Joshua said they couldn’t? (Joshua 24:18,19)

This is no doubt a statement made out of his many years of personal experience with them. He knew what their pitfalls were and suspected what the final result would be.

24. What does Joshua 24:31 imply about the leadership of Joshua? Were they really serving the Lord all those years? How does this fit with Joshua 24:14,23?

Joshua was no doubt a great leader. He made his share of mistakes, but his life was a great moral influence for good on the people. But they were already beginning to pick up the evil practices that were to be their downfall.

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Ellen White Comments

Selected Messages, vol. 2, p. 328)

“I have no faith in casting lots. We have in the Bible a plain “Thus saith the Lord” in regard to all church duties.”

SDA Bible Commentary, vol. 6, p. 1054

“Let none be led from the sound, sensible principles that God has laid down for the guidance of His people, to depend for direction on any such device as the tossing up of a coin. Such a course

is well pleasing to the enemy of souls; for he works to control the coin, and through its agency works out his plans. Let none be so easily deceived as to place confidence in any such tests. Let none belittle their experience by resorting to cheap devices for direction in important matters connected with the work of God.”

“Why Achan's Family Perished.--Have you considered why it was that all who were connected with Achan were also subjects of the punishment of God? It was because they had not been trained and educated according to the directions given them in the great standard of the law of God. Achan's parents had educated their son in such a way that he felt free to disobey the word of the Lord. The principles inculcated in his life led him to deal with his children in such a way that they also were corrupted. Mind acts and reacts upon mind, and the punishment, which included the relations of Achan with himself, reveals the fact that all were involved in the transgression.” Manuscript 67, 1894; *Child Guidance* 234; 2BC 998

“From Shechem the Israelites returned to their encampment at Gilgal. Here they were soon after visited by a strange deputation, who desired to enter into treaty with them. The ambassadors represented that they had come from a distant country, and this seemed to be confirmed by their appearance. Their clothing was old and worn, their sandals were patched, their provisions moldy, and the skins that served them for wine bottles were rent and bound up, as if hastily repaired on the journey.

“In their far-off home--professedly beyond the limits of Palestine--their fellow countrymen, they said, had heard of the wonders which God had wrought for His people, and had sent them to make a league with Israel. The Hebrews had been specially warned against entering into any league with the idolaters of Canaan, and a doubt as to the truth of the strangers' words arose in the minds of the leaders. ‘Peradventure ye dwell among us,’ they said. To this the ambassadors only replied, ‘We are thy servants.’ But when Joshua directly demanded of them, ‘Who are ye? and from whence come ye?’ they reiterated their former statement, and added, in proof of their sincerity, ‘This our bread we took hot for our provision out of our houses on the day we came forth to go unto you; but now, behold, it is dry, and it is moldy: and these bottles of wine, which we filled, were new; and, behold, they be rent: and these our garments and our shoes are become old by reason of the very long journey.’

“These representations prevailed. The Hebrews ‘asked not counsel at the mouth of the Lord. And Joshua made peace with them, and made a league with them, to let them live: and the princes of the congregation sware unto them.’ Thus the treaty was entered into. Three days afterward the truth was discovered. ‘They heard that they were their neighbors, and that they dwelt among them.’ Knowing that it was impossible to resist the Hebrews, the Gibeonites had resorted to stratagem to preserve their lives.

“Great was the indignation of the Israelites as they learned the deception that had been practiced upon them. And this was heightened when, after three days' journey, they reached the cities of the Gibeonites, near the center of the land. ‘All the congregation murmured against the princes;’ but the latter refused to break the treaty, though secured by fraud, because they had ‘sworn unto them by the Lord God of Israel.’ ‘And the children of Israel smote them not.’ 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. ‘Lying lips are abomination to the Lord.’ Proverbs 12:22. He that ‘shall ascend into the hill of the Lord,’ and ‘stand in His holy place,’ is ‘he that sweareth to his own hurt, and changeth not.’ Psalms 24:3; 15:4.

“The Gibeonites were permitted to live, but were attached as bondmen to the sanctuary, to

perform all menial services. 'Joshua made them that day hewers of wood and drawers of water for the congregation, and for the altar of the Lord.' These conditions they gratefully accepted, conscious that they had been at fault, and glad to purchase life on any terms. 'Behold, we are in thine hand, they said to Joshua; 'as it seemeth good and right unto thee to do unto us, do.' For centuries their descendants were connected with the service of the sanctuary.

"The territory of the Gibeonites comprised four cities. The people were not under the rule of a king, but were governed by elders, or senators. Gibeon, the most important of their towns, 'was a great city, as one of the royal cities,' 'and all the men thereof were mighty.' It is a striking evidence of the terror with which the Israelites had inspired the inhabitants of Canaan, that the people of such a city should have resorted to so humiliating an expedient to save their lives.

"But it would have fared better with the Gibeonites had they dealt honestly with Israel. While their submission to Jehovah secured the preservation of their lives, their deception brought them only disgrace and servitude. God had made provision that all who would renounce heathenism, and connect themselves with Israel, should share the blessings of the covenant. They were included under the term, 'the stranger that sojourneth among you,' and with few exceptions this class were to enjoy equal favors and privileges with Israel. The Lord's direction was— 'If a stranger sojourn with thee in your land, ye shall not vex him. But the stranger that dwelleth with you shall be unto you as one born among you, and thou shalt love him as thyself.' Leviticus 19:33, 34. Concerning the Passover and the offering of sacrifices it was commanded, 'One ordinance shall be both for you of the congregation, and also for the stranger that sojourneth with you: . . . as ye are, so shall the stranger be before the Lord.' Numbers 15:15.

"Such was the footing on which the Gibeonites might have been received, but for the deception to which they had resorted. 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. 505-507