

# “But How Do You Know?”

## Joshua 9

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Read Joshua 9 in its entirety

There are three things to consider here, I think.

- I. What is the nature of an oath, and are they binding?
- II. Was Israel bound by the treaty that they made with the Gibeonites?
- III. What is the lesson to be learned by Israel not asking counsel at the mouth of the Lord?

### I. What is the nature of an oath, and are oaths binding?

A. This is a question that relates to the Third Commandment. “If a man vow a vow unto the LORD, or swear an oath to bind his soul with a bond; he shall not break his word, he shall do according to all that proceedeth out of his mouth.” (Numbers 30:2 AV)

B. If any man trespass against his neighbor, and an oath be laid upon him to cause him to swear, and the oath come before thine altar in this house: 32 Then hear thou in heaven, and do, and judge thy servants, condemning the wicked, to bring his way upon his head; and justifying the righteous, to give him according to his righteousness.” (1 Kings 8:31-32 AV)

C. Keep thy foot when thou goest to the house of God, and be more ready to hear, than to give the sacrifice of fools: for they consider not that they do evil. 2 Be not rash with thy mouth, and let not thine heart be hasty to utter any thing before God: for God is in heaven, and thou upon earth: therefore let thy words be few. 3 For a dream cometh through the multitude of business; and a fool’s voice is known by multitude of words. 4 When thou vow a vow unto God, defer not to pay it; for he hath no pleasure in fools: pay that which thou hast vowed. 5 Better is it that thou should not vow, than that thou should vow and not pay.” (Ecclesiastes 5:1-5 AV)

D. Jesus said that any idle word that you utter is a sin, that you should never say what you don’t mean and that you should mean what you say. The oath was taken very seriously in ancient times, and in every age where Christianity is taken seriously, the vow has been

taken seriously.

E. Oaths were binding, even foolish and rash oaths were binding. The exception was the oath that usurped the right of another. If a woman made an oath, and her husband was aware of it, then he could countermand it if it impinged on his rights. The same was true of an oath made by a slave or a daughter [Numbers 30]

## II. Was Israel bound by the treaty that they made with the Gibeonites?

A. I would think that the above would make the covenant that Israel made with the Gibeonites valid. It is true that they sinned by not asking at the mouth of the Lord, using the Urim and the Thummim that the priest wore in the breastplate of his priestly garments. What God would have told them, we will never know, because they didn't ask. But God never told them that the covenant was void, and He was their master. Many years later wrath came upon the house of Saul after his death because of his mistreatment of the Gibeonites, who still served as slaves in Israel and served God as hewers of wood and carriers of water for the house of the Lord. So it seemed that God by his silence confirmed the covenant.

B. There is still another matter. God had said to Israel as follows in Deut. 20: "When thou comest nigh unto a city to fight against it, then proclaim peace unto it. 11 And it shall be, if it make thee answer of peace, and open unto thee, then it shall be, that all the people that is found therein shall be tributaries unto thee, and they shall serve thee. 12 And if it will make no peace with thee, but will make war against thee, then thou shalt besiege it: 13 And when the LORD thy God hath delivered it into thine hands, thou shalt smite every male thereof with the edge of the sword: 14 But the women, and the little ones, and the cattle, and all that is in the city, even all the spoil thereof, shalt thou take unto thyself; and thou shalt eat the spoil of thine enemies, which the LORD thy God hath given thee. 15 Thus shalt thou do unto all the cities which are very far off from thee, which are not of the cities of these nations. 16 But of the cities of these people, which the LORD thy God doth give thee for an inheritance, thou shalt save alive nothing that breatheth: 17 But thou shalt utterly destroy them; namely, the Hittites, and the Amorites, the Canaanites, and the Perizzites, the Hivites, and the Jebusites; as the LORD thy God hath commanded thee: 18 That they teach you not to do after all their abominations, which they have done unto their gods; so should ye sin against the LORD your God." (Deuteronomy 20:10-18 AV)

C. But the cities connected to Gibeon were not "far off" cities, but cities very close to them, who deceived them and pretended to be cities at a distance. But again, Israel sinned in not seeking counsel at the mouth of the Lord, using the Urim and the Thummim. A very great price was paid by the Gibeonites, who lost their freedom and became slaves in Israel. They were not permitted to practice their abominable religions nor live where they chose, but served the Lord's temple. D. As I said, we still find the Gibeonites in the time of David. Solomon had a great feast to the Lord at the tabernacle that was in Gibeon, where he asked wisdom from the Lord. We even

find Gibeonites serving to aid in the rebuilding of the wall of Jerusalem after the captivity in Babylon.

### III. How does this apply to us?

A. The Bible certainly commands us not to walk in our own wisdom and not to seek our own ways and not to trust in our own ideas.

1. "Trust in the LORD, and do good; so shalt thou dwell in the land, and verily thou shalt be fed." (Psalms 37:3 AV)
2. "It is better to trust in the LORD than to put confidence in princes." (Psalms 118:9 AV)
3. "Trust in the LORD with all thine heart; and lean not unto thine own understanding. In all thy ways acknowledge him, and he shall direct thy paths." (Proverbs 3:5-6 AV)

B. But how do I do that?

1. Make it my life's work to know the Scriptures: "For the LORD giveth wisdom: out of his mouth cometh knowledge and understanding." (Proverbs 2:6 AV)  
These are called the oracles of God. To us the Scriptures are the Urim and the Thummim. The men of God are wise, not dead stones.

2. In all my ways acknowledge Him. I have no private corners in my life, where I tell the Lord to keep out.

a) "And whatsoever ye do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God and the Father by him." (Colossians 3:17 AV)

b) "And whatsoever ye do, do it heartily, as to the Lord, and not unto men;" (Colossians 3:23 AV)

c) "Whether therefore ye eat, or drink, or whatsoever ye do, do all to the glory of God." (1 Corinthians 10:31 AV)

3. All things come to me in Jesus Christ, therefore my life must not be separated from faith in Christ. "But of him are ye in Christ Jesus, who of God is made unto us wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption: 31 That, according as it is written, He that glorieth, let him glory in the Lord." (1 Corinthians 1:30-31 AV) This means to pray for the Holy Spirit to lead and guide your thoughts, for He is the gift of Christ to us.

4. Seek the counsel of wise men.

a) “Thy testimonies also are my delight and my counselors.” (Psalms 119:24 AV)

b) “Where no counsel is, the people fall: but in the multitude of counselors there is safety.” (Proverbs 11:14 AV)

c) “And I will restore thy judges as at the first, and thy counselors as at the beginning: afterward thou shalt be called, The city of righteousness, the faithful city.” (Isaiah 1:26 AV)

5. Earnestly seek the Lord with your whole heart: The counsel of James is critical:

a) “5 If any of you lack wisdom, let him ask of God, that giveth to all men liberally, and upbraideth not; and it shall be given him. 6 But let him ask in faith, nothing wavering. For he that wavereth is like a wave of the sea driven with the wind and tossed. 7 For let not that man think that he shall receive any thing of the Lord. 8 A double minded man is unstable in all his ways.” (James 1:5-8 AV)

b) “1 From whence come wars and fightings among you? come they not hence, even of your lusts that war in your members? 2 Ye lust, and have not: ye kill, and desire to have, and cannot obtain: ye fight and war, yet ye have not, because ye ask not. 3 Ye ask, and receive not, because ye ask amiss, that ye may consume it upon your lusts.” (James 4:1-3 AV)

c) “Then said Jesus to those Jews which believed on him, If ye continue in my word, then are ye my disciples indeed; 32 And ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free.” (John 8:31-32 AV)

Amen and Amen. May God bless you.