

The Pool Of Gibeon

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For over 25 centuries the debris of history hid from human view one of the most remarkable landmarks ever to be unearthed by archaeologists in the Holy Land.

Few people have seen it to this day, except neighboring Arabs in the village of El Jib. Although it was uncovered by excavation almost two decades ago, Gibeon remains definitely off the beaten track of tourism. Hundreds of thousands annually travel to Israel to see the Bible sites, but only a handful venture the few miles north of Jerusalem to visit the pool of Gibeon.

Here is one of the very few places in the Holy Land where you wouldn't have to take with a grain of salt a guide's announcement, "This is exactly where it happened." But few guides would know how to take a client to the place where the famous duel between David's and Saul's forces resulted in a standoff in about 1000 B.C.

How much before 1000 B.C. this pool was engineered no one knows for sure. Did it come into being as a consequence of the decree of Joshua that the Gibeonites be condemned for their deceit to servitude as hewers of wood and drawers of water for the congregation of Israel? (See Joshua 9:27.)

You know how fear prompted the Gibeonites to stage their great masquerade. The conquests of Jericho and Ai convinced these Canaanites that total destruction awaited them unless they could contrive some shenanigan to trick the Israelites into an alliance. "They did work wilily," reports Joshua 9:4-6, "and went and made as if they had been ambassadors, and took old sacks upon their asses, and wine bottles, old and rent, and bound up; and old shoes clouted upon their feet, and old garments upon them; and all the bread of their provision was dry and mouldy. And they went to Joshua unto the camp at Gilgal, and said unto him, and to the men of Israel, We be come from a far country; now therefore make ye a league with us."

The Israelites greeted the envoys with suspicion, but not enough. "Peradventure ye dwell among us," they guessed correctly (Joshua 9:7).

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But the Gibeonites brazenly flimflammed the Israelites. "From a very far country thy servants are come," they lied. "This our bread we took hot for our ...

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