

New Beginnings

Saved by Trickery
Joshua 9

- » The story of trickery and ruse is part of the history of Israel
- » Examples: Jacob & Esau; Joseph & his brothers; Tamar & her father-in-law
- » The story of the Gibeonites fits into this genre

- » This is a story of the underdog winning the day
- » A story we can all relate to at some point in our faith journey

1. Setting the Stage (Joshua 9:1-2)

- » The kings of Palestine resist the path of the Israelites
- » Commit to go to war against Israel

2. The Gibeonite Perspective (Joshua 9:3-15)

- » Within this context the Gibeonites take a different approach and attempt to make a peace treaty with Israel

- » Gibeon understands that they are under the ban of Israel so they come up with a ruse
- » They act with cunning (v4) – prudence, cleverness, wit (see Proverbs 15:5) – and pretend to send ambassadors from afar to Israel seeking peace (v4-6)

- » As moderns we need to remember the contractual nature of ancient near eastern society
- » A focus on the making of a covenant/treaty between two parties

- » The ruse carries the day and a treaty is established (v14-15)
- » Made peace (shalom = friendship) with them

- » The treaty is based on a charade – a test of wits
- » The Gibeonites are more shrewd than Israel – so their lives are spared

3. The Israelite Perspective (Joshua 9:16-27)

- » Responding to Gibeonite trickery: Israel learns that the Gibeonites are their neighbours and they have been tricked (v16-17)
- » Israel confronts the Gibeonites but do not harm them because of the treaty with them (v18-21)

- » As a punishment for the deceit the Gibeonites are given the task of cutting wood and drawing water for the Temple needs (v21,23)
- » Not really a great punishment; serving in God's house (v23) – indeed over time the Gibeonites seem to be received under Israel's protection (1 Chronicles 16:39, Nehemiah 3:7)

- » The Gibeonites survive because they recognize the God of Israel and desire to revere him – “the name of the Lord” (v9-10, 24-26)
- » They play the same role as Rahab did earlier
- » Canaanites coming under God's protection

Responding to the Story Today

1. The outsider is brought into God's Covenant

- » As Rahab so are the Gibeonites brought under protection - those who are in marginal positions are saved
- » It speaks of our own faith story - we are outsiders brought under God's care (Ephesians 2:12-14)

2. To whom is Joshua 9 Good News?

- » To all who are "far off"
- » To all who are "brought near"
- » It speaks of our own need
- » It reminds us not to judge others we deem to be far off

3. The Story elevates the position of the underdog

- » A position of acceptance
- » We are all in need of mercy and forgiveness

- » Jesus' story of the workers in the field illustrates the point of the story (Matthew 20:1-16)
- » Those who come late to work are paid the same as those who worked all day.