

## FAITH AND ETHICS: THE TRANSFORMATIVE LEGACY OF RAHAB IN SCRIPTURE

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### Abstract

*This paper investigates the ethics of Rahab, the Canaanite in Joshua 2:1-7, through which this Gentile Canaanite woman made a significant contribution to the Bible and its implications for contemporary discussion about faith, justice, and morality. Exegetically, the paper draws on Rahab's act of receiving Israelite explorers as a starting point from which to recognize the quandary בֵּינֵינוּ (between us)—the often two-sided nature of living in oppressive and unjust contexts. How do her actions affect one's sense of truthfulness, and what does a higher moral imperative suggest about ethical loyalty? Her place in the genealogy of Jesus, alongside many other unexpected women, and her affirmation in the New Testament as "a great example of faith" demonstrate redemption and forgiveness that challenge notions about criminality or stigma where a person is judged for their former life. This paper focuses on Rahab and, through the study of her story, seeks to expand and deepen the relevance of her story in contemporary ethical discussions—within these, the role that faith plays in ethical consideration will be illuminated for both its pertinence and value-added in ethical reflection.*

**Keywords:** Faith. Ethics. Rahab. Deception. Exegetical Study of Joshua 2:1-7.

## Introduction

The interaction of Rahab the Canaanite with the Israelite spies in Jericho highlights numerous ethical and moral issues surrounding faith and justice. Rahab and her story are found in the Old Testament book of Joshua, presenting readers with morally specific problems faced by inhabitants of regions filled with complex moral quandaries. Her actions—hiding the spies from the king of Jericho and helping them escape—reflect upon truthfulness, deception, and the criteria that should guide decision-making.

On the face of it, Rahab's story tells one story of spying and betrayal; however, there exists so much more than the face value of it all. It provides one of the best examples of the relations between faith and ethics, making the reader contemplate righteousness within the context of an unjust and dangerous world. Rahab's decisions used to question the commitment to the land and the rulers of the nation, and claim that one must sometimes betray the nation to be loyal to a higher power.

This theme is familiar to people of the present society as it grapples with similar ethical dilemmas in situations of oppression, corruption, and moral victory. In addition, Rahab constitutes a rather curious subject in the lineage of Jesus, as the New Testament points to this as well, as her faith is praised. At the same time, her sins are forgiven, and she is turned into a symbol of forgiveness and second chances. This representation alone helps to reconsider the experience and value, proving that people with a criminal record and gender or ethnic stigma are worthy of becoming, through repentance, part of a great divine plan. Thus, Rahab becomes an installed and multifaceted figure – an embodied agential subject and an object of God's grace, 'convertible' through faith. An exegetical study of this pericope is necessary to ascertain the reasons for blessings despite her deceit and grapple with the ethical implications of Rahab's actions in Josh 2:1-7.

This paper, therefore, aims to delve into the ethical implications of Rahab's actions in Joshua 2:1-7, analyzing their implications and treatment of the more general theological issues of justice, mercy, and redemption. As a result, this work attempts to investigate and reveal the historical and literary implications of Rahab's actions and the reason for her inclusion in the Hall of Fame in Hebrews 11. The paper encourages the contemporary discussion of the faith-based ethical considerations of her actions and those of today. By doing so, we highlight and update the audience on Rahab's legacy, which continues to inspire courage and assertions of ethical principles in the face of a myriad of challenges on the individualistic and collective levels.

## Exegetical Study of Joshua 2:1-7

### II.1 Exegesis of Joshua 2:1-7

Rahab was well known to New Testament writers as a woman of exemplary faith (Heb 11:31) whose help to the spies is recorded in Scripture (Josh 2-7). The Gospel of Matthew also referred to her in the genealogy of Jesus (Matt 1:5). Jewish tradition also held Rahab in high esteem.

The puzzling question is, "Why does Scripture have such a high regard for her faith when she deliberately misled the king's officials by concealing the spies and feigning ignorance of their presence. whereabouts?" For John Hamlin, Rahab became part of Israel because she boldly befriended the spies.<sup>1</sup> The contextual, exegetical, and semantic analyses will provide additional insights.

#### II.1.1 Contextual Analysis

##### II.1.1.i Hebrew Text:

WaboY"w:û Wkøl.YE"w: Ax=yriy>-ta,w> #r,a'Ph'-ta, Wair>  
Wk±l. rmoêale vr,x,ä '~yliG>r;m. ~yviÛn"a]--yln:)v. ~yJiúVih;-  
!ml) !Wnû-!Bi-;vuäAhy> xl;äv.Ylw: 1  
`hM'v'(-WbK.v.Ylw: bx'Pr' Hm'îv.W hn"±Az hV'îai-tyBe  
`#r,a'(h'-ta, rPoðx.l; laePr'f.yl ynEïB.mi hl'y>L:±h; hN"hEô WaB'ä  
~yvin"a]û hNEåhi rmo=ale Axßyrly> %l,m,îl. rm;êa'YEåw: 2  
`WaB'(#r,a'Ph'-IK'-ta, rPoðx.l; yKi² %teêybel. WaB'ä-rv,a]  
'%yll;'ae ~yaiÛB'h; ~yvi'n"a]h' yaiyciAhû rmo=ale bx'Pr'-la,  
Axêyrly> %l,m,ä 'xl;v.Ylw: 3  
`hM'he( !yla:ime yTi[.d;py" al{iw> ~yviên"a]h'¥ 'yl;ae WaB'Û  
!Keª Yrm,aToåw: An=P.c.Tiw:) ~yviPn"a]h' ynEiv.-ta, hV'²aih'¥  
xQ:ôTiw: 4  
`~Wg\*yFit; yKiî ~h,pyrex]a; rhE±m; Wpïd>rl ~yvi\_n"a]h'¥  
Wkßl.h' hn"a"ï yTi[.d;êy" al{å Wac'êy" ~yviän"a]h'w> '%v,xo'B;  
rAG©s.li r[;V;øh; yhi'y>w: 5  
`gG")h;-l[; Hl'P tAkïru[]h' #[eêh' yTeäv.piB. 'nEm.j.Tiw:)  
hg"G"+h; ~t;l'ä/h, ayhiPw> 6  
`~h,(yrex]a; ~ypiPd>roh' Waïc.y" rv<±a]K; yre\$xa; Wrg"ës'  
r[;V;äh;w> tAr+B.[.M;h;( l[;P !Deêr.Y:h; %r,D,ä ~h,yrex]a;¥  
WpÜd>r' ~yvi^n"a]h'w> 7

### **II.1.1.ii Translation of Joshua 2:1-7:**

1. Joshua, the son of Nun, sent men secretly from Shittim, saying, "Go view the land of Jericho." They went and came to the house of a prostitute named Rahab and lodged there.
2. And it was told the king of Jericho, saying, behold, men from the sons of Israel came here by night to search the land.
3. The king of Jericho sent to Rahab, saying, "Bring out the men who came to you and entered your house, who came to search the land.
4. The woman took the two men and hid them and said, "They came to me, but I do not know where they came from."
5. And it came to pass, the gate was shut at dark, the men went out, I do not know where they went; pursue them quickly, for you shall overtake them.
6. But she had brought them up to the roof and hidden them in the stalks of flax which she had laid on the roof.
7. So, the men pursued the spies on the road that led to the fords of Jordan. As soon as they had gone out, the gate was shut.

As a book of boundaries, the book of Joshua opens with an announcement signaling the end of an era (the death of Moses), a description of the borders that define the Promised Land, and a command to cross a geographical boundary (the Jordan) into a new land, and thus a fulfilling life with God.<sup>ii</sup> There is a divergence of opinions regarding the authorship of the book of Joshua. The book does not specify who the author was, nor is the author named anywhere else in the Old Testament. The book gives a few clues as to the identity of its author. Although tradition holds that the book was composed by Joshua himself, a notion supported in a limited way by Josh 8:32 and 24:26,<sup>iii</sup> for David Howard Jr., the author is anonymous.

The Talmud and some rabbis (Rashi, David, and Kimchi) attributed it to Joshua but saw part of the book written by later hands (e.g., the account of Joshua's death or other fragments).<sup>iv</sup> Avravanel attributed it to Samuel due to the phrase "to this day" (4:9; 5:9; 7:26; etc.).<sup>v</sup> B. S. Childs concurs with Avravanel when he notes that the use of the formula "to this day" in Josh 15:63 and 16:10 points to a period not later than the tenth century B.C.E.<sup>vi</sup> One may raise reservations for both proponents of documentary hypothesis and the views that authorship of the book is not assigned to Joshua due to the unified theological outlook that runs through the books of Deuteronomy through Kings. Ancient traditions have always sharply distinguished between the Torah—the first five books—and the rest of the Old Testament. While

the book of Joshua emphasizes the close relationship between the person and work of Moses and Joshua, it clarifies that Joshua was not another Moses. The book of Joshua has always been separated from the rest of the Pentateuch. The similarities in theology and language may indicate no more than that the authors of the historical books were very thoroughly versed in the style and theology of Deuteronomy.<sup>vii</sup> Joshua's author drew from various sources. According to Donald H. Madvig, some of these traditions may admittedly have been etiologies; he argues that this does not deny their historical credibility, nor does it repudiate the possibility that the author had some more important reason for including them.<sup>viii</sup>

After forty years of wilderness wandering and after the children of Israel mourned the death of Moses for thirty days in the desert of Moab (Deut 34:8), then "Joshua the son of Nun was filled with the spirit of wisdom, for Moses had laid his hands on him" (Deut 34:9). The book of Joshua begins as though it were a continuation of something written previously, which of course, it is. A translation of the first portion of the verse would read, "and it happened, after the death of Moses the servant of the Lord, that the Lord said to Joshua." The phrase "death of Moses" ties this material in with an earlier event.

The vav consecutive in *yhi<sup>a</sup>y>w* presupposes preceding material, even though, in this case, that which precedes comes from a different book and author.<sup>ix</sup> Internal biblical evidence seems to attribute the authorship of Joshua to Joshua, the son of Nun (Josh 1:1). The book's opening verse emphasizes two leaders—Moses and Joshua. Like Moses earlier, Joshua certainly supplied the accounts of his communion with God (Josh 1:1; 3:7; 4:2; 5:2, 9, 13; 6:2; 7:10; 8:1). He was also in the best position to describe these events as recorded in the book, just as Moses did earlier.

The author's purpose in writing was twofold: the first was to show that God had been faithful in fulfilling His promise to Abraham to give the land of Canaan to him and his descendants, and the second was to demonstrate that the covenant-keeping God is also righteous.<sup>x</sup>

In the opening chapters of the Book of Joshua, God commands Joshua to arise with the people and cross the Jordan to the Promised Land. Then Joshua sends the spies to Jericho, and during their excursion, they stop at the house of a prostitute, Rahab. While the spies were in the land, the king of Jericho summoned Rahab to report the strangers within her house.

The literary form of the book of Joshua is a series of narratives (descriptions of tribal boundaries and lists of towns) joined together using transitional paragraphs and summary statements that give unity and continuity to the whole.<sup>xi</sup> Although there is no chiasm in this pericope, Hawk on the one hand, argues that Josh 2:1-7 contains three essential subplots: (1) the concealment where Rahab secretly hid the spies who entered Jericho, (2) the interrogation where the king's men interrogate Rahab concerning the spies (2:2-3), and (3) the diversion where Rahab sends the king's officials into the hills after the spies (2:4b-5, 7).<sup>xii</sup>

On the other hand, Wagner posits the etiological character of the narrative; he included the story among his spy narratives whose form he described as having six elements: (1) selection or naming of the spies; (2) dispatching of the spies with specific instructions; (3) report of the execution of the mission, along with confirmation through an oracle or reference to the context of salvation history; (4) notice of return and results; (5) a perfect-tense formula confirming the gift of the land by Yahweh; and (6) conclusions derived from 1-5, namely, the action of entering or conquering the land.<sup>xiii</sup> Davidson remarks on a similar pattern when he argues that the account of Josh 2 contains many allusions to the narrative of the twelve spies in Numbers 13. He notes five parallels to the story:

1. The spies are commissioned (Num 13:1-20); Joshua commissions and sends the spies (Josh 2:1).
2. The spies enter the land (Num 13:21, 22) and the land is selected for reconnaissance (Josh 2:1).
3. The spies return to the people (Num 13:25); the spies return to the people (Josh 2:23, 24).
4. The spies report on their findings (Num 13: 27-29); they report on their findings (Josh 2: 23-24).
5. Someone decides to act based on the report (Num 13:30-33); leadership decides based on the report (Josh 3-6).<sup>xiv</sup>

However, a closer look at Joshua 2:1-7 shows that this narrative revolves around five main characters: Joshua, the spies from Israel, the king of Jericho, the spies from Jericho, and Rahab, the prostitute. Of the five characters, only two are named (Joshua and Rahab), while the three others remain anonymous. Rahab is the main character dominating the plot. She plays a vital role in the success of the mission. In the light of the role Rahab plays in the story, this pericope can be structured as follows:

- A Joshua sends the spies to Jericho (v. 1)
- B The king of Jericho is informed of their presence in Rahab's house (v. 2)
- C The king of Jericho summons Rahab (v. 3)
- D Rahab receives and hides the spies (vv. 4, 6)
- E Rahab denies knowledge of the spies' whereabouts (vv. 5, 7)

The narrative reveals that Rahab misled the king's officials by hiding the spies from Jericho in the stalks of flax she had spread out. Beyond this pericope, the rest of the narrative suggests that Rahab's life and household were spared. She lied as much in what she did as in what she said. Since the Bible never condemns Rahab but admires her faith,<sup>xv</sup> one wonders whether there is any textual evidence of divine approval of her lies.

### II.1.2 Exegetical Considerations

Although Joshua had received a promise from the Lord of his almighty help in the conquest of Canaan, he still thought it necessary to do what was requisite on his part to secure the success of the work committed to him, as the help of God does not preclude human action, but rather presupposes it.<sup>xvi</sup> Joshua sends two spies secretly to Jericho. The verb **xl;äv.Ylw**: "send human subject" is used two times in this pericope, in v. 1 and v. 3. Just as Joshua sends the spies to Jericho, so did the king of Jericho send the state's officials to Rahab. Both **Wair>** and **Wk±l**. are imperative verbs that mean "go, see/look." The spies readily obeyed the command, thus enhancing Joshua's status as a leader. The sending of spies was not an act of unbelief. The promise of divine aid never rules out human responsibility. Throughout the book of Joshua, we find an interweaving of human action and divine intervention.<sup>xvii</sup> Joshua instructed them to find out all about the land of Jericho.

They stopped at the house of a prostitute named Rahab and spent the night there. The typical term for cult prostitute is not used here **tAvßdeQ.h**;, "temple prostitute," as in Hos 4:14. Instead, the word **hn"±Az**, used in v. 1, is a more general term that refers to the one who commits fornication (Judg 19:2).<sup>xviii</sup> Rahab is called a zonah, a harlot, not **pandocei/**, "an innkeeper," as in Luke 10:35. Hawk reports that commentators throughout the ages have sought to deny the plain sense of the text. They do so, he argues, by following the lead of the Jewish historian Josephus, who claims that Rahab was an innkeeper and that the spies went to her for an evening meal after surveying the city's defences.<sup>xix</sup> Does both **WaboY"w**;, "come in" and **hM'v'** (**-WbK.v.Ylw**;, "lie down" give a sexual overtone? The spies went in and lay down there. Hawk contends that both expressions are used



elsewhere for sexual activities.<sup>xx</sup> However, there is no evidence in the text that the term is used in a sexual sense. There is a common expression for going into buildings of all sorts. For example, "Abimelech went to his father's house at Ophrah" (Judg 9:5); "Elkanah and his wife went to their own home" (1 Sam 2:20); "And when King Hezekiah heard it, he tore his clothes, covered himself with sackcloth and entered the house of the Lord" (2 Kgs 19:1).

Consequently, the spies' entrance into Rahab's house is expected in the Old Testament and, therefore, does not imply sexual relations with a prostitute. If the intention were to imply sexual relations, there would be no intermediate term, such as the house of, used when Samson visited a prostitute and 'went in to spend the night with her' (Judg 16:1).<sup>xxi</sup> The word **bk;v'** can mean "lie down to sleep" or "lie down for sexual intercourse." The text gives little help in clarifying this ambiguity. Given the spies' precarious circumstances, it seems highly unlikely that they engaged Rahab's professional services.<sup>xxii</sup>

Keil argues that their entering the house of such a person would not excite so much suspicion.<sup>xxiii</sup> The two spies are unnamed and handpicked, while the prostitute has a name, Rahab. The author thus highlights the identity of the **hn"Az**, "prostitute" to underscore her critical role in the mission's success.

As suggested above, the second section of this pericope shows that upon their arrival at the prostitute's house, a report was given to the king of Jericho. Who gave this report to the king of Jericho? The king certainly had his spies scrutinizing all who entered the land. The spies from Israel did not enter the city unnoticed. The king was given specific information about their whereabouts and the purpose of their mission. The verb **rPoðx.l;** qal infinitive construct means "to dig," "to search," or "to search out or explore." The spies from the Sons of Israel came to Jericho to search and explore the land, as did the king's officials.

Upon reception of the report, the unnamed king of Jericho sent for Rahab and summoned her to **yaiyciAh**, the men who came to her. **yaiyciAh** in the hiphil imperative suggests that the king's request was a command or an order that could not be challenged. The force of the hiphil is that Rahab was the agent to deliver the spies, to literally "bring forth" (JPS), "bring out" (NAS). She was to turn them over to the authorities. **yaiyciAh** comes from the root **ac'y** which means "to come or to go out." The spies will not bring themselves out or turn themselves in. Hence, the significance of the hiphil usage in this verse. They have come to **rPoðx.l;**, "search" the land. In other words, they have come with a hostile purpose to explore



the land. Hence, we have the king's command to turn them over. The king expected Rahab to do her patriotic duty and turn the spies in. The ancient law code of Hammurabi contains the following provision: "If felons are banded together in an ale-wife's [prostitute's or innkeeper's] house and she has not haled [them] to the palace, that ale-wife shall be put to death."<sup>xxiv</sup>

The narrative takes a new twist with Rahab at the center; she becomes the subject while the spies are the object. There is an abrupt change in the flow of the story. The narrator informs the reader in v. 4a that Rahab has hidden the spies. The four remaining verses of the pericope under consideration focus on Rahab's hiding the spies and misleading the king's officials seeking after them. Rahab overtly ignored or defied the king's order. She **xQ:ôTiw:**, "take by hand" the men and hid them. **xQ:ôTiw:** is a qal vav consecutive imperfect third-person feminine singular. It means "to take by the hand"; in the LXX **labou/sa**, an aorist active participle nominative feminine singular, means "to receive." Thus, Rahab received the spies and hid or concealed them against the king's command to turn them over.

Then Rahab replied to the king that she did not know where the men went. The verb **yTi[d;py**, "know" is used twice in this pericope in vv. 4 and 5, respectively. While the first usage denies the spies' origin, the second denies their whereabouts. Consequently, she intentionally misled them by contending that the king's officials still had time to catch them. Her statement implies that she did not concern herself with their business in the city, only with their business with her. The reader knows that Rahab has hidden the men and that her report of the men leaving is a lie (v. 5a).<sup>xxv</sup>

Furthermore, her suggestion to "pursue them quickly, for you can overtake them," is disingenuous (v. 5b). She responds to the king's men with quick-thinking cleverness. She immediately confirms the men's assertion that the spies have come to her house, a tactic meant to allay suspicions that she might be collaborating with the spies.<sup>xxvi</sup> Having disarmed the king's officials, that she was on their side, she feigns ignorance by claiming she did not know who they were or where they had gone. She uses her role as a prostitute to cover the fact that she is harbouring the spies. The Hebrew verb **~Wg\*y** Fit, from **gfn** in the hiphil imperfect, literally means "to overtake." Rahab misled the king's officials, giving them the impression that they could still overtake the spies. However, v. 6 discloses Rahab's mischievous activity; she had hidden the spies from Israel in the stalks of flax. After the king's officials went after the spies (who were on Rahab's rooftop), the city gate was shut as soon as they had gone through. Rahab told the king's officials, "Go after

them quickly." She did not want to take a chance on having her house searched because she knew that anyone suspected of collaboration with the spies would be put to death.

### II.1.3 Semantic Analysis

Rahab's story finds a parallel in the Gibeonites. For example, the concealment in v. 4 finds a parallel where the Gibeonites disguise themselves by hiding their identity to find favour in Joshua's sight (9:3-6). The king's officials interrogate Rahab (2:2-3); the Israelites' leaders interrogate the Gibeonites (9:7-8). Rahab purposely misled the king's officials (2:4b-5, 7); the Gibeonites purposely misled the leaders of Israel with a sample of their dry provisions (9:12-13).<sup>xxvii</sup> Rahab corresponds to Joshua as the faithful one of her people who is chosen to lead them to salvation, or at least to offer it to those who are interested. In the broader context of the Pentateuch, there are apparent ties with Num 13:2 and Deut 1:22. In Num 13:2, God told Moses to send spies—one from each tribe—to survey "the land which the Lord swore to give to your fathers, to Abraham, to Isaac, and Jacob, to them and their descendants after them." רִפוֹחַ is usually used to describe the digging of the wells. It is one occurrence with the sense of spying in Deut 1:22, which relates to the earlier sending of scouts to search the land of Canaan. Repetition of this text indicates the critical points of the narrative.<sup>xxviii</sup> Joshua 2: 1-7 justifies the character of Joshua as a leader concerned for his people; he gathers intelligence before leading them into hostile territories. It also describes how Joshua allows Rahab and her family to deliver themselves from the coming destruction.<sup>xxix</sup>

Deception is an essential strategy in warfare. Espionage would be impossible without it. When Rahab hid the spies, she sided with Israel against her people. It was an act of treason. Rahab's assertion of her ignorance of the spies' whereabouts reinforced her commitment to Israel and its agent, a commitment for which she risked her own life by attempting to deceive the representatives of the king of Jericho.

The inhabitants of Jericho stood under God's judgment. Furthermore, the Bible never condemns Rahab but admires her faith. However, this does not imply that the Bible excuses lies because the person lied to is morally reprehensible. In the light of this exegetical study, it cannot be said that the narrator condones Rahab's actions. This is contrary to Horn Prouser's view, who argues that deception is an acceptable and generally praiseworthy means for a weaker party to succeed against a more substantial power.<sup>xxx</sup> Some may argue that Rahab, a Canaanite and a prostitute, would not be expected to have higher standards than she displays here, but there is

no indication of this view in the text.<sup>xxx</sup> For example, the SDA Bible Commentary notes, "To a Christian, a lie can never be justified . . . but to a person like Rahab, light comes gradually. . . . God accepts us where we are, but we must 'grow in grace.'<sup>xxxii</sup> Subscribing to this view would be akin to "the end justifying the means," which the Bible vehemently rejects.

## **I. Ethical Implications**

The account of Rahab in Joshua 2:1-7 presents many ethical issues that make the readers analyze morality in the light of divine command, culture, and free will. This paper focuses on one of the most apparent ploys that Rahab employed on the side of the Israelites in hiding the spies. At first, she may make you question the morality of lying, even though truthfulness is sometimes included among religious principles. Nonetheless, her decisions and the consequent moral dilemmas are not finished, pointing to global ethical aspects of her actions.

First, the story of Rahab strengthens the dichotomy of good and evil. In the past, lying has always fallen under the umbrella of unethical action. Rahab is an example of when lying never appears as a virtuous act, as she harbours spies to protect them, adding to God's deeds for Israel. This could only lead to the introduction of situational ethics, which means that the context and the likely consequences of a considered ethical decision are greatly graduated.

Also, Rahab is depicted as engaging in highly ambiguous moral grounds. Her social status positions her as a Canaanite prostitute, which is in stark contrast to the Israelite spies who are being sneaked into Sihon's kingdom.

This tension raises the question of which set of moral norms should be followed in society, what is ethical, and what is not. The biblical story of Rahab and her actions reveals every man and woman's struggle, namely, whether to remain loyal to one's nation or obey the word of God. The Apostle Peter responds that, "We ought to obey God rather than men."<sup>xxxiii</sup> Rahab speaks and acts, therefore, of conscience—of the individual's capacity to stand up against a society that is 'more sinned against than sinning.' Thus, having chosen the side of what is considered an enemy, the people and the culture, Rahab demonstrates a personal ethical dynamic of change and biblically grounded redemption through her faith in God in defiance of her culture.

At the same time, the sharp-focus narrative created an exposition for a discussion about women, the Bible, and ethics. This paper questions why and how the readers become invested in Rahab's actions and identity as a woman, a figure more likely

to be suppressed in her culture. Hers was also an essential part of the Israelite narrative; they provided discourse for gender equality within religious spheres for debunking patriarchal cultures. Rahab knew the king's instructions were wrong and protected the spies—such women can be change-makers in structurally violent systems.

These ethical reflections offer an excellent starting point for examining faith, ethics, morality, and culture in contemporary believers and their life experiences. The following primary ethical concern pointed to by the story of Rahab can be drawn from the previous session: the issue of faith and work. These sins and other actions are seen when Rahab decides to protect the spies, and their God's actions reflect the disconnect between her personal beliefs, as a Canaanite, and her faith in the God of Israel. She, therefore, puts her faith in God to perform dangerous stunts that are inapplicable to civil laws and thus develops a moral theory that states that loyalty to the revealed word of God trumps loyalty to the laws of man. This raises moral particularism questions of the rights and wrongs of competing obligations and of knowing where to draw the line. In light of these traditions, it is significant that Rahab deserts the side of the king of Jericho for the God of Israel and does so with a remarkably nuanced understanding of loyalty that transcends tribal affiliation or faith in the power of human kings. She owed it to the king to be truthful, but decided to challenge the odds and trust the God of Israel.

This position calls believers today to contemplate the character of their own loyalty and moral values. Are they ready to oppose the culture they live in or government decisions if they are contrary to what they believe to be the will of God or fair play? Through this message, Rahab encourages individuals in their ethical course of values and standards to use preferences despite the formation of critics or the option of a subsequent consequence.

Furthermore, some argue that such features of justice and ethicality as the main character's actions are evident if one examines the socio-political background of her actions. Although the Canaanite city was already doomed and, together with its people, was to be annihilated according to the will of God, it was still Rahab's duty to be loyal to her king, but she chose the God of Israel. They can then be seen as an attempt at gaining justice for the spies as well as, or instead of, themselves and their families. Thus, by helping the Israelites, she puts herself on the side of righteousness against the sexual immorality of the Canaanites. This has much to say about the right thing done, seeking justice in places of injustice, corruption, and wickedness.

Furthermore, the story of Rahab casts a comprehensive view of how the merciful and redeeming God also looks at sinners. Consequently, the acts of Rahab's faith and not her deception contribute to her central status and place her in an honourable and vital place, even though she is a prostitute. The New Testament identifies her faith and God's ability to use folks the community may consider unclean. This aspect focuses on the effect that maintains the universality of divine grace and changes the prospect despite the past that is unworthy of the Lord's mercy and, indeed, a call to a worthy destiny.

Lastly, it is essential to consider the implications of Rahab's legacy, particularly her insertion into the genealogy of Jesus (Matthew 1:5). This inclusion is seamanship, implying that ethical decision-making anchored on faith in the God of Israel yields drastic results beyond individual and historical blunders. The story of Rahab, a powerful narrative, invites the twenty-first-century people to consider how faith in God defines their moral choices and how pursuing integrity can lead to significant value in the grand scheme of salvation history. Rahab's story provides a rich tapestry for people to reflect on the essence of ethical conflict situations of the present age, with an analysis of the relationship between faith and moral decision-making. Rahab was out and determined to save the spies; the king's sole motive was to destroy them. The discrepancy between her beliefs and faith in the living God is noteworthy.

In assessing the ethical implications of Rahab's actions within Joshua 2: 1-7, it is clear that her story does more than document a tale of a brave woman: it insists on God's providence and human action in the world. In this paper, the decision-making of Rahab, who deceived the leaders of Jericho, and her willingness to disobey the king helped to raise vital questions about ethics and human life with the help of several essential questions that seem to be crucial to comprehend the overall analysis of the given biblical story.

There is one significant angle: the theory of "just war," in which espionage and betrayal, for instance, are acceptable within warfare to safeguard the innocent or conduct the divine mission. Rahab's choice to conceal the spies does not align with this paradigm. Her actions, while deceptive, cannot be justified by their intended purpose because she was not at war, nor was she the king who declared war. Her loyalty was to her king, but she chose to help lead the Israelites to conquer the land God gave them.

Moreover, the story of Rahab raises questions about the extra-biblical considerations of the principle of complicity. Although she hides the spies, she assumes an active role in a plot promoting what she believes is right, trusting the God of Israel, while sabotaging her homeland in the process. This opens up a whole

question of individual accountability and decision-making in matters of church and state.

Residents will experience collective pressure within settings of structural vulnerability and injustice related to spirituality. Rahab's story indicates that ethicality cannot be achieved; sometimes, it may require rebellion and endangering oneself to present the truth from a divine perspective. This account compels people to think about what they are becoming in a society that ignores the divine principles of conduct.

However, Rahab's ethical position as a woman of ill virtues is used to explain how societies tend to judge individuals based on past mistakes or roles assigned by society. However, let us not forget Mary's role in the lineage of Jesus, faith, and redemption—an illustration of Mary the sinner being redeemed. This mindset helps believers who belong to a particular church open their eyes toward a change for the better, from within themselves and among people closest to them, even when they have sinned.

Therefore, this paper has argued that Rahab's story in Joshua 2 raises profound ethical questions that force readers then and now to question how faith and morality interact within context. The ethics of the story's depiction do not fit into the narrative of a hope and cunning female spy, which develops into a focus for a more general examination of how characters might grapple with moral questions and fight for what is right. It asserts that faith in God leads people to engage in forceful actions that might be dangerous; for that, all the right reasons align with divine intentions. The paper presents Rahab as the epitome of an ethical woman living in a morally challenging area. This resolution is still vivid today as a way of provoking an engagement on how faith in God shapes the conduct and ethics in one's own life.

## **II. Conclusions**

A review of the story of Rahab in Joshua 2:1-7 shows that the king of Jericho's attempt to thwart God's plan for His people did not prevail. One Bible character is at the forefront of the mission's success, based on her attitude towards the spies from Israel. The ethical issue of lying is not the concern of the narrative. It stresses deception, not to condemn Rahab but to magnify her risk in hiding the spies. The book of Hebrews confirms, "By faith Rahab, the harlot, did not perish along with those who were disobedient after she had welcomed the spies in peace."<sup>xxxiv</sup> Without endorsing Rahab's lie, Davidson notes seven crucial lessons from this narrative:

1. God wants to save and use mightily even the least-promising individuals;
2. Rahab's experience shows that all have the opportunity to learn the truth about Yahweh and give a brilliant testimony of his character;
3. Rahab is valued for her courage to stand against her people and follow the God of Israel;
4. Rahab is valued for her faith and is one of the pivotal examples of righteousness by faith;
5. Rahab is valued as an agent of salvation;
6. Rahab is valued as an integral part of Israel's community, and
7. Rahab is valued as an ancestor of Christ.<sup>xxxv</sup>

The brief exegetical study above yielded no textual evidence that Rahab was blessed for the lies she told. Rahab was blessed for her faith in the God of Israel. The narrative of Rahab in Joshua 2:1-7 is profoundly filled with ethics, faith, and personal identity, all in a program of study that does not fit the regular moral paradigm. The war between the Israelites and the Canaanites provides the backdrop for the ethical dilemma of the narrative, where life and loyalty to her people conflicted with the society's moral norms as embodied by the Jordanian king. Her decision to conceal the Hebrew men from the Israelites lies far beyond her identity as a Canaanite prostitute. It allows us to see her as the embodiment of faith in the God of Israel at the expense of her king.

This paper analyzes how Rahab navigates the complexity of loyalty to her earthly king and faithfulness to the divine God of Israel, leaving one inspired by the results of her actions. The decision of the woman to hide spies, although it can also be seen as manipulative, was based on her understanding of the divine mission and long-term justice of the God of Israel. This recognition urges the contemporary person to consider what context can be a call to violate the norms of behaviour to act justly and show mercy, and not get carried away by indifference towards the oppressors or other villains of society.

God also gave Rahab a place in the lineage of Jesus to exemplify that a named prostitute who repented could change for the better through believing in the Lord. It articulates a broader theological theme: no person is a lost cause, no matter how much they have sinned or how much they have been classified as irredeemable. Rahab set an excellent example by acting on her faith. For this reason, this message is even more significant today when people are judged according to their history rather than personal abilities to be transformed.

The ethical implications espoused by this biblical story are also firm as a challenge or impetus to action for the contemporary Christian, ethical theorist, or



ethicist. Rahab, through her choices, points to the need to consider our options and their ramifications for us and the community. It forces one to look at their list of obligations and wonder where they might dare to set boundaries on issues of allegiance and ethics. Rahab's actions compel us to be courageous in our morality and to think not about what we are scared of but what the promised divine justice may force us to do.

Finally, a critical examination of Rahab's story encourages one to pay much attention to actual problems of the OT theology, namely, the faith/morality and divine/human agency. It insists that ethical decisions are not always clear-cut and that, in some cases, courage requires leaning on the promises of God, who promises eternal life to those who lose their lives in obedience to Him. Rereading Rahab's story, we can be encouraged to follow her example of faith and bravery and refer to the rehabilitation experience, which shows that everyone can change for the better, including others. From the story of a prostitute called Rahab, we are helpfully reminded that antithetical characters—the very cardinal sinners and traitors—may turn into masters of faith and trust in divine promises at any moment.

## Endnotes

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<sup>i</sup>John E. Hamlin, *Joshua: Inheriting the Land* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1983), 16.

<sup>ii</sup>Daniel L. Hawk, *Joshua*, Berith Olam Studies in Hebrew Narrative and Poetry, ed. David W. Cotter (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 2000), xi.

<sup>iii</sup>Jerome F. D. Creach, *Joshua*, Interpretation: A Bible Commentary for Teaching and Preaching (Louisville, KY: John Knox Press, 1989), 9-10.

<sup>iv</sup>See also Archer, *Survey*, 270.

<sup>v</sup>See Howard, *Joshua*, 29. See also Marten H. Woudstra, *The Book of Joshua*, NICOT (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1981), 5.

<sup>vi</sup>Brevard S. Childs, "A Study of the Formula, 'Until This Day,'" *Journal of the Biblical Literature* 82 (1963): 279-292. This is suggested because Josh 15:63 mentions people from the tribe of Judah living in Jerusalem alongside the Jebusites, whom they could not drive out. Since David captured Jerusalem from the Jebusites ca. 1003 B.C. (2 Sam 5:6-10), presumably the Jebusites did not live there in any significant numbers much later than that time. Furthermore, 16:10 mentions Canaanite inhabitants of Gezer among the Ephraimites. Since an Egyptian pharaoh—probably Siamun (ca. 978-959 B.C. E.) see Kenneth A. Kitchen, *The Bible in Its World: The Bible and Archaeology Today* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1977), 100-101, 105-106—destroyed the Canaanites at Gezer and gave the town to Solomon as a dowry (1 Kgs 3:1; 9:16), the references to Canaanites in Gezer would have come from a period prior to that. Other references to "until this day" would seem to make more sense if a relatively long period had elapsed between the events and the time of writing. See Howard, *Joshua*, 30.

<sup>vii</sup>Donald H. Madvig, "Joshua," *Deuteronomy-2 Samuel*, The Expositor's Bible Commentary, ed. Frank E. Gabelein et al. (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1992), 3:241-242.

<sup>viii</sup>Madvig, "Joshua," 3:242.

<sup>ix</sup>Howard, *Joshua*, 71.

<sup>x</sup>Madvig, "Joshua," 3:244.

<sup>xi</sup>Ibid., 3:242.

<sup>xii</sup>Hawk, *Joshua*, 25.

- <sup>xiii</sup>S. Wagner, "Die Kundsschatergeschichten im Alten Testament," *Zeitschrift für die Alttestamentliche Wissenschaft* 76 (1964): 261-262, quoted in Trent C. Butler, *Joshua*, WBC 7 (Waco, TX: Word, 1983), 28.
- <sup>xiv</sup>Richard M. Davidson, *In the Footsteps of Joshua* (Hagerstown, MD: Review and Herald, 1995), 48.
- <sup>xv</sup>Heb 11:31.
- <sup>xvi</sup>Keil and Delitzsch, *Joshua*, 6:33.
- <sup>xvii</sup>Madvig, "Joshua," 3:259.
- <sup>xviii</sup>Although the term is paired with the word for sacred prostitute in Hos 4:14 and Gen 38:21-22, 24, it appears alone in Josh 2:1, and there is no indication that her activity has religious overtones. See Creach, *Joshua*, 33.
- <sup>xix</sup>Daniel L. Hawk, *Joshua in 3-D: A Commentary on Biblical Conquest and Manifest Destiny* (Eugene, OR: Cascade, 2010), 25-26. For a full discussion and comments on the word, see Richard S. Hess, *Joshua: An Introduction and Commentary*, Tyndale Old Testament Commentaries, ed. Donald J. Wisemann (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1996), 83-84; Donald Wisemann, "Rahab of Jericho," *Tyndale Bulletin* 14 (1964): 8-11.
- <sup>xx</sup>"Come to," e.g., Gen 6:4; 16:2; 38:8-9; 1 Sam 12:24; 16:21; Ezek 23:44; Prov 6:29; and "lie with," e.g., Gen 34:7; Exod 22:16; Num 5:13; Deut 22:23; 2 Sam 12:11. See Hawk, *Joshua in 3-D*, 26.
- <sup>xxi</sup>Hess, *Joshua*, 83.
- <sup>xxii</sup>Madvig, "Joshua," 3:260.
- <sup>xxiii</sup>Keil and Delitzsch, *Joshua*, 6:34.
- <sup>xxiv</sup>William W. Hallo, ed., *The Context of Scripture*, vol. 2, *Monumental Inscriptions from the Biblical World* (Leiden: Brill, 2003), 16. See also Godfrey R. Driver and J. C. Miles, *The Babylonian Laws, Ancient Codes and Laws of the Near East* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1952-1956), 2:45, quoted in Donald H. Madvig, "Joshua," *Deuteronomy-2 Samuel*, ed. Frank E. Gaebelstein et al., *The Expositor's Bible Commentary: With the New International Version of the Holy Bible* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1992), 3:260.
- <sup>xxv</sup>Creach, *Joshua*, 33.
- <sup>xxvi</sup>Hawk, *Joshua in 3-D*, 27.
- <sup>xxvii</sup>Hawk, *Joshua in 3 D*, 25.
- <sup>xxviii</sup>Hess, *Joshua*, 84-85; Deut 1:8.
- <sup>xxix</sup>Hess, *Joshua*, 80.
- <sup>xxx</sup>Ora Horn Prouser, "The Truth about Women and Lying," *JSOT* 61 (1994): 15-28.
- <sup>xxxi</sup>Hess, *Joshua*, 86.
- <sup>xxxii</sup>*SDABC*, 2:183.
- <sup>xxxiii</sup>Acts 5:29.
- <sup>xxxiv</sup>Heb 11:31.
- <sup>xxxv</sup>Davidson, *Footsteps*, 49-53.