

18. Rahab’s introductory comments provide a three-point synopsis of the mind-set of the Canaanite population: (1) the Lord has given you Israelites the land of Canaan, (2) about which the people of Canaan, who are in emotional revolt, are terrified, with the result that (3) having no problem-solving devices they have lost their courage to resist.

**Joshua 2:9** and Rahab said to the men, “I am confident that the Lord has certainly given the Israelites the land of Canaan, and that the terror of you has resulted in widespread emotional revolt, and that the peoples’ souls have been converted from confidence to cowardice before you. (EXT)

**Joshua 2:10** “For we have heard how the Lord dried up the water of the Red Sea before you when you came out of Egypt, and what you did to the two kings of the Amorites who were beyond the Jordan, to Sihon and Og, whom you utterly destroyed. (NASB)

1. This verse opens with a testimony about the protective power of Jehovah which delivered the Jews from Pharaoh’s advancing army at the Red Sea. Rahab reports that this deliverance took place when “the Lord dried up the water of the Red Sea.”
2. This is working object #1. The power of the God of Israel to defend and deliver His people by a miracle caught her attention. If this Israelite God could perform such a miracle for them, then the idols of Canaan would be no more powerful than those of Egypt’s.
3. The Red-Sea event is documented in Exodus 14. This was the conclusion of event that began in Exodus 5 when Moses and Aaron approached the Pharaoh and quoted the Lord’s command to him:

**Exodus 5:1** Moses and Aaron came and said to Pharaoh, “Thus says the Lord, the God of Israel, ‘Let My people go that they may celebrate a feast to Me in the wilderness.’”

**v. 2** But Pharaoh said, “Who is the Lord that I should obey His voice to let Israel go? I do not know the Lord, and besides, I will not let Israel go.”

4. The Pharaoh then imposed on the Jews even greater burdens by requiring them to harvest their own straw, but at the same time to produce the same daily quota of bricks. This prevented them from offering the Lord the sacrifice He commanded them to make. This began a series of plagues that ultimately led to the Jews’ exodus from Egypt.



5. Rahab's working object #2 is composed of two parts, specifically the two victories won by Moses as the Jews took the Promised Land. Sihon was the king of the Amorites and Og was king of Bashan.

Sihon is said to have been one of the Amorites, a western Semitic group that was well documented throughout the Near East. He is often associated with Heshbon, a kingdom whose borders extended north of the Jabbok River, west to the Jordan River, and south to the Arnon River (Judges 11:22).

These kingdoms of the Transjordan stood between the Israelites and the Jordan River, which constituted Israel's gateway into the land of Canaan.<sup>8</sup>

*Defeat of Sihon and Og.* [Numbers 21] Verses 21–32 focus on Sihon and vv. 33–35 on Og. These battles happened on the way to “the valley in Moab” (v. 20). They are a foretaste of victories the Lord will give the Israelites in Canaan itself. After the battles are over, the Israelites possess land on the east side of the Jordan that extends from the Arnon River in the south to the area of Mount Hermon in the North.<sup>9</sup>

6. The Israelites two battles with Sihon and Og are documented in Numbers 21:21–36. Both populations were exterminated by Joshua by divine mandate, a scourging that some commentators have questioned because of its totality. The implication contends that a loving God of the New Testament is also a vengeful God in the Old. This excerpt addresses these claims and refutes them:

In answering such a charge we must recognize that God is one, that He does not change, that He is the same both in the Old Testament and the New Testament. He shows love and mercy to the heathen as well as to Israel in the Old Testament; and He shows wrath and takes vengeance on the wicked and idolaters in the New Testament. (pp. 707–707)

But why exterminate the Canaanites? Were they actually more wicked in Joshua's day than other idolatrous peoples on earth? But God selected Canaan, not another region, as the land which He promised to Abraham. He considered it to be at the center of the earth; hence it would exert an influence on the rest of the world throughout history out of all proportion to its size.

Were the Canaanites more responsible? In Joshua's time Canaan benefited from civilizations on either side which were already illustrious and old. Furthermore, the Canaanites were sinning against spiritual light.

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<sup>8</sup> “The Kingdoms of Sihon and Og,” in *NIV Archaeological Study Bible* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2005), 244.

<sup>9</sup> Jay A. Sklar, “Defeat of Sihon and Og,” in *NIV Biblical Theology Study Bible*, 257n21:21–35.



God delayed judging Canaan because in Abraham's time "the iniquity of the Amorites is not yet complete" (Genesis 15:16). Baalism had not yet developed: Baal is never mentioned in the patriarchal narratives, and El was still the high god of the Canaanites according to the Ugaritic epics.<sup>10</sup> By 1400 B.C. the Canaanite civilization and religion had become one of the weakest, most decadent, and most immoral cultures of the civilized world. Many of its repulsive practices were prohibited to Israel in Leviticus 18. In view of the sexual perversions listed, it is more than likely that venereal diseases ravaged a large part of the population. Hence stern measures were required to prevent decimation of the Israelites by the spread of these and other diseases such as malaria and small pox. Contagion would be possible by sudden fraternization before immunity could develop. Yet in His control of History God grants freedom of will and motive to His agents. He is not therefore responsible for their greed and atrocities.

Finally, remember that in the midst of wrath Yahweh remembered mercy. Rahab and her family were spared, delivered from death "by grace through faith."<sup>11</sup> (p. 707)

7. The legends of the Jews' deliverance from Pharaoh's army by God's miraculous avenue over the floor of the Red Sea and the overwhelming victories by Moses's Israelite army over the kings of Sihon and Og convinced Rahab that the God of Israel was superior to those worshiped by the Egyptians and Amorites.
8. These events convinced her that the God of Israel was the one true God and led to her faith in His divine provision of the Messiah. The background we have just noted is what resulted in Rahab's salvation and amplifies the translation of:

**Joshua 2:10** "For we have heard how the Lord dried up the water of the Red Sea before you when you came out of Egypt, and what you did to the two kings of the Amorites who were beyond the Jordan, to Sihon and Og, whom you utterly destroyed. (NASB)

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<sup>10</sup> "Ugarit [yu-gär'-it], ancient city lying in a large artificial mound called Ras Shamra on the Mediterranean coast of northern Syria. Its ruins, about half a mile from shore, were discovered by the plow of a peasant at Al-Bayda Bay [al-bī-dä']. Excavations were begun in 1929 by a French archaeological mission under the direction of Claude F. A. Scheffer. The most prosperous and the best-documented age in Ugarit's history, dated from 1450 to about 1200 BC, produced great royal palaces and temples and shrines, with a high priest's library and other libraries on the acropolis. Many texts discovered at Ugarit reveal an Old Canaanite mythology. A tablet names the Ugaritic pantheon with Babylonian equivalents; El, Asherah of the Sea, and Baal were the main deities. These texts not only constitute a literature of high standing and great originality but also have an important bearing on Old Testament studies" (*The New Encyclopaedia Britannica: Micropaedia*, 15th ed. (2010), 12:106).

<sup>11</sup> John P. U. Lilley, "Joshua, Book of," in *The Zondervan Pictorial Encyclopedia of the Bible*, gen. ed. Merrill C. Tenney (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1976), 3:706-707.



9. Rahab gave a summary of events that occurred when the Jews made their first foray into the Promised Land under the leadership of Moses. She then describes the reaction the peoples of the Jordan-River valley had to those events in:

**Joshua 2:11** “When we heard it, our hearts melted and no courage remained in any man any longer because of you; for the Lord your God, He is God in heaven above and on earth beneath.” (NASB)

1. This is Rahab’s documentation of the working objects to which she applied her faith in the God of Israel. Her faith rest lines up with the Lord’s proclamation to Joshua recorded in:

**Joshua 1:2** “Moses my servant is dead. Get ready! Cross the Jordan River. Lead these people into the land which I am ready to hand over to them.

**v. 3** I am handing over to you [ 2d person masculine plural ] every place you set foot, as I promised Moses.<sup>12</sup>

**v. 4** Your territory will extend from the wilderness in the south to Lebanon in the north. It will extend all the way to the great River Euphrates in the east (including all of Syria) and all the way to the Mediterranean Sea in the west.” (NET)

2. Having stated that her faith’s working objects are the Lord’s deliverances of the Jews from Pharaoh’s army and the kings of Sihon and Og, she then makes her case that as a believer in Yahweh, she appeals for her and her family’s deliverance from the king of Jericho into the hands of Joshua:

**Joshua 2:12** “Now therefore, please swear [ שָׁבַע (*shava‘*) ] to me by the Lord, since I have dealt kindly with you, that you also will deal kindly with my father’s household, and give me a pledge of truth,

1. Her appeal strongly indicates that her entire family has followed her lead by also placing their personal faith in the God of Israel, **יְהוָה צְבָאוֹת (*Yahweh Savaoth*)**: “Lord of the Armies.”
2. The verb “swear” is the Niph‘al imperative of *shava‘*, Rahab is requiring Salmon and his fellow spy to take an oath to spare her and her family.

<sup>12</sup> “The second person pronouns in vv. 3-4 are plural, indicating that all the people are addressed here. The verbal form of נָתַן [*nathan*], (“I have given it”) is [the Qal] perfect of certitude, emphasizing the certainty of the action” (*The NET Bible* [Dallas: Biblical Studies Press, 1996-2005], 421tn4).

3. The Niph'al stem is important to note because it is from Rahab's confidence that she and her family's faith in Messiah, which motivated her to assist the spies, gives her the authority to ask for refuge when Joshua attacks Jericho:

The context of Joshua 2:12 makes clear that the person accepting the oath viewed such assurances as trustworthy, the background being the notion that through that oath a power superior to the person making the oath would guarantee the interests of the weaker party, i.e., of the person accepting the sworn assurance. Hence the person making the oath generally wanted to formulate the oath in as open a form as possible so as not to be committed to unforeseen developments. Joshua 2:17–20 shows that in the formulation of oaths restrictive conditions were both possible and occasionally even necessary in order to avoid unintended consequences.<sup>13</sup>

4. The completion of the oath is recorded in:

**Joshua 2:13** and spare my father and my mother and my brothers and my sisters, with all who belong to them, and deliver our lives from death.” (NASB)

1. In Joshua 2:14, the two spies agree to the oath, but amend it with their conditions. Yes, they will protect Rahab and her family but require of her absolute secrecy of their presence and the subsequent attack by Joshua and the Israelite army:

**Joshua 2:14** So the men said to her, “Our life for yours if you [ plural including Rahab and her entire family ] do not tell this business of ours; and it shall come about when the Lord gives us the land that we will deal kindly and faithfully with you.” (NASB)

2. Rahab gave a command to her visitors to spare her household since they were believers in Messiah and had promised to protect them from the king's investigators, sequester them in her home, and provide a safe way of escape.
3. They promised to grant her desires under the condition of absolute secrecy. Therefore, both parties were under oath to protect each other. Both express confidence in the veracity of the agreement under scrutiny by God.
4. In verse 12, Rahab commands the two to “swear to me by the Lord.” The spies express absolute confidence in the successful outcome of the endeavor with their closing argument, “when the Lord gives us the land.”

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<sup>13</sup> I. Kottsieper, “שָׁבַע,” in *Theological Dictionary of the Old Testament*, eds. G. Johannes Botterweck, Helmer Ringgren, and Heinz-Josef Fabry, trans. Douglas W. Stott (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 2004), 14:320.

5. Beginning in verse 15, Rahab fulfills part of her agreement by following through on the misinformation she gave the king's soldiers in Joshua, 2:4–5, “Yes, the men came to me, but I did not know where they were from. It came about when it was time to shut the gate at dark, that the men went out; I do not know where the men went. Pursue them quickly, for you will overtake them.” (NASB)
6. We took up the issue of the trio of lies she committed in this passage. Her lies were strategic expressions of misinformation that resulted in the preservation of the two men's lives with the added consequence of protecting the chart pedigree of the Messiah.
7. Now that the search party is riding off toward the Jordan in pursuit of nobody, the subterfuge permits Rahab to give the two men instructions on how to safely rejoin Joshua at his Trans-Jordan encampment at Shittim:

**Joshua 2:15** Then she let them down by a rope through the window, for her house was on the city wall, so that she was living on the wall. (NASB)

1. The word “rope” is the noun **חֶבֶל** (*chevel*) and does refer to a rope in contrast to the “scarlet cord” mentioned in Joshua 2:18. This rope was part of Rahab's inventory of ropes stored on the roof of her house.

Ropes and cords were also frequently employed in military contexts. By means of a rope, Joshua 2:15, for example, Rahab let Joshua's spies down through a window in the city wall, enabling them to escape.<sup>14</sup>

2. Positioned on the outside wall, her window allowed the Jewish spies to exit the city under the cover of darkness. As they were preparing to leave, Rahab gave them the strategy they were to use to avoid capture in:

**Joshua 2:16** She said to them, “Go to the hill country, so that the pursuers will not happen upon you, and hide yourselves there for three days until the pursuers return. Then afterward you may go on your way.” (NASB)

1. Jericho is located in the lowlands that occupy each side of the Jordan River. The walled city is at the base of what is referred to as the “hill country.” The two men are instructed to hide in these hills for three days. Once the search party returns to Jericho, they are then free to head west, ford the Jordan, proceed to Shittim, and report in to Joshua.

**(End JAS2-51. See JAS2-52 for continuation of study at p. 541.)**

<sup>14</sup> Ibid., H.-J. Fabry, “חֶבֶל,” eds. Botterweck and Ringgren, trans., David E. Green, 4:175.

