

Who would have thought a pagan whore from Canaan would be heralded by generations of Jewish Rabbi's; praised for my wisdom and beauty; wife to Joshua; mother to high priests?

My family's tavern was built into the great wall of Jericho; well known for hospitality, especially toward men. We were poor. Food and lodging brought in a handful of shekels, but my talents for feeding men's deeper hunger was our family's mainstay.

I knew many, many men. I knew their bodies and I knew their minds. And I knew the two that came to the tavern that night were different. Israelites. Poor actors at best, pretending to be Canaanite potters peddling their wares. When word spread that the King suspected Israelite spies had descended upon Jericho and his men were searching, house to house to find and execute these spies, my suspicions were confirmed. Fearing the power of the Israelite army and having heard of the miracles their G-d had performed; how He parted the Red Sea and drowned the Egyptians...

I feared for my life and the safety of my family. I told the men, I know your Lord has given you this land, and that your terror will fall upon us, and that all the inhabitants will be smote. So, I will hide you from the Kings soldiers. And in exchange, you must swear to me, by your G-d, that since I have shown you kindness, you will also show kindness to me and my father's house and you will save my life and the lives of my father, and my mother, my sisters and all my brethren and leave us with what little wealth and property we have.

There were several bundles of flax from the harvest drying on our roof. I hid the two men under the largest bundles. Soon the King's soldiers came and searched the tavern, but I had hidden them too well. Once the danger passed, I brought the men down from the roof through my window. They gave me a crimson scarf and told me to hang the scarf outside the window. They said I should gather my family and wait inside the tavern. The scarf would be a signal to the soldiers to pass over our house and spare whoever was inside.

Joshua and the Israelite army destroyed Jericho, and slaughtered every man, woman, child, ox, cow and donkey. Only my family escaped certain doom waiting inside our tavern marked with a red scarf, just as the Israelites who stayed in their houses marked with the blood of the paschal lamb were spared the fate of the Egyptians.

But my connection to the Israelites was not merely utilitarian. In my heart I found a deep love for the people of Israel and their G-d and an even deeper love for their leader. Joshua married me, my entire clan converted to Judaism and we were welcomed into the tribe of Israel. Whether it was my cunning or my faith, harlot or heroine, my Canaanite roots and profession didn't matter to the Israelites. Joshua tumbled the walls of Jericho, but Rahab conquered Israel.

Rahab the Harlot

David Rhodes