

## Feminist Interpretation

PLEASE READ JOSHUA CHAPTER 2

During the years between 1965 to 1968 two assassinations took place that shocked the country; Martin Luther King Jr and Robert F. Kennedy. The war in Vietnam continued and the United States attacked Cambodia. Apollo 8 orbited the moon. North Korea captured the USS Pueblo. The first 747 Jumbo Jet hit the skies. President Johnson began War on Poverty, Medicare amendment was attached to the Social Security Act. The Watts riots took place in Los Angeles and many African American athletes were raising their fists in the air, Black Power.

During the years between 1965 to 1968 I attended Eden Theological Seminary in Webster Groves, Missouri. The seminary was started by a group of German pastors in 1850, they belonged to the German Evangelical Synod of North America. When I attended the seminary all but one of the teachers were white males and most of them had a German background. Over the years the seminary eventually became The United Church of Christ. While attending classes I learned about rhetorical criticism, Form Criticism, Heilsgeschichte and sitz im leben. Today the president of the seminary is a woman and on her staff, she has six other full time women as professors.

The book of Joshua is the most violent book in the Bible. I would like to share with you how a Biblical feminist scholar interprets the book of Joshua and in particular Joshua chapter 2. I am reading from a rather new commentary, Smyth and Helwy, published in 2019. In her writings Sharp challenged some of the scholars I read like von Rad and Martin Noth. Do not fear, she still loves and quotes my favorite teacher, Walter Brueggemann.

Like Brueggemann, Carolyn J. Sharp believes the book of Joshua is not historically accurate and the Israelites taking over the land of the Canaanites took many decades. The takeover was not done through massive killings but marrying some of the Canaanites, settling peaceably in certain areas and just by worming themselves into the environment. They call it, settled by assimilation.

Now comes the feminist shift. Since only men have interpreted the book of Joshua, Carolyn believes they sided with the idea of bloody wars and they missed the real message.

Being a male, taught by white, male, Germans I fully appreciate and love how feminists like Carolyn have discovered a more neighborly, lovingly Bible. Carolyn sees scripture as a symphony of voices and counter voices filled with poetry, hymns, urban poetry, jazz improvisations and more.

Carolyn Sharp vividly pointed out that too many Christians have used the male version of the bloody book of Joshua to enslave indigenous people, to see God as a “warrior”, to proudly sing, “Onward Christian soldiers...”.

Carolyn invites us to have more dialogue about the book of Joshua.

God uses Canaanites, Palestinians and other minorities

Archelogy has shown many of these towns were not even occupied when the Israelites arrived

Over the years these bloody stories were changed to look even uglier

She challenged every passage about enslaving indigenous people as false

The Israelites took generations to move to Israel, it was a gradual, non-violent migration

Much of the land the Israelites moved to were barren.

She employs us to keep re-reading the text

It was not a battle field but a nomad wandering

It was not a unified group invading the land, but the land was taken by assimilation.

Here is where Sharp shines and where the white, male, German scholars got it wrong. Her views about the harlot, Rahab, blew my mind. Rahab handled the king of Jericho, negotiates with two Israelite scouts and expresses more love and devotion to God than the two spies. Sharp sees Rahab the prostitute, the welcomer, the “outsider” as the new Israel.

Sharp reminds me that in the New Testament, Joshua is mentioned only twice but Rahab is featured three times. The genealogy of Jesus laid out in Matthew 1 mentions four women before the book gets to the mother of Jesus Mary. The women listed are Tamar, Rahab, Ruth and Bathsheba. Rahab was the mother-in-law to Ruth. None of the women listed were Israelites, they were foreigners, and all of them were involved in devious sex, seducers, or as a sex worker.

IT IS NO WONDER THEN THAT JESUS MINISTRY WAS GROUNDED IN COMPASSION FOR THE OUTSIDERS. Rahab is a model of faith, period.

HOSPITALITY

PROTECTOR

WELCOME THE STRANGERS

It has also been suggested that Joshua ended up marrying Rahab.

Please re-read Joshua 2 in a new light. The Israelites were running around lost and bewildered while Rahab was the only one who truly believed in the power of God.

THIS IS A KICKER: Following my research I came across a paper I had written forty years ago concerning something I had learned in seminary. Most everything the feminists are talking about concerning Rehab I had already learned and forgotten from seminary. I truly attended a seminary that was ahead of its times. How blessed can a person be?

Dennis Siebert

I will soon be sending you a commentary of Joshua 2:1-24 written through the eyes of Eden Seminary and the feminists who refer to their movement as “reception history.”



I have a bored cat sleeping by the door.