

Taking the Diaper off the Bible

Joshua 2:1-24

By: Rev. Dennis L. Siebert

It was suggested by a friend, Ellis Felker, that I write a book called, "Taking the Diaper off the Bible." Writing a book is out of the question, but here goes a commentary on one chapter in Joshua.

Interpreting Joshua, I will be using the tools I learned in seminary and incorporating the challenges set forth by the feminist movement.

According to Dr. Brueggemann, "Land is the central theme of biblical faith. The actual earthly turf is a symbol for wholeness of life and well-being. Land is a physical source of fertility and life, a place for gathering and hopes."

Adam and Eve were born in a garden, Abraham and Sarah were promised a new land, Moses takes a small band of slaves out of Egypt to the Wilderness and Joshua takes a people to Canaan.

Following Moses wandering around in the desert for forty years, it is time for them to cross the Jordan River into Canaanite territory. Please remember the book of Joshua like many other books in the Bible is full of drama, suspense, poetry, myth, and vivid storytelling. This does not make the Bible any less truthful, it just means you need to be more careful and imaginative in your reading.

Joshua has been chosen to lead the younger ones into the "promised land." The term Holy War is how this takeover was supposed to take place. This definition of Holy War shows the reader just how Joshua and the Israelites mistrusted Gods power.

HOLY WAR: This was the most primitive type of warfare. A country or tribe was supposed to have no standing army. The men were just called out whenever a crisis occurred. There was to be no stable leadership, no kings, no arms. No strategy was to be included, just follow God. The main power besides God in Holy War was surprise. Do a lot of hollering and walking around a wall and victory will come.

2:1 The Israelites headed by Joshua are still in the desert, camped at Shittim, the eastern edge of the Jordan Valley opposite Jericho, and they are already disobeying the rules of Holy War, they are planning and sending out spies to check the terrain. Layered strategic decision-making is a no no. The two spies sent out have no names but the prostitute they are seeking out has a name, she is Rahab. It is believed by most scholars for many years that this story was written and rewritten many times over the years before it finally made the pages of our Bible.

Some believe this spy story is an old trickster folktale. Others believe this tale coincides with other spy stories found in Numbers 13-14. I see the tale as a story about the “undesirables” being more in tune with God than God’s people themselves.

Because of Joshua’s lack of trust in God. Instead of being trusting in the ways of God, two spies are sent out to check the strength of the fort. The nameless, faceless spies do not scout the land, rather they cowardly seek out a prostitute, who also ran a bed-and-breakfast, hoping she had some secrets from her clientele. I see this plot as a way to shock. Sexual acts between Israelites and Canaanites was prohibited.

In her commentary, Sharp reminds the reader that this is only one of three narratives in the book of Joshua that credit women any initiative. The rest of the book is about political leaders, military soldiers and faithful or faithless actors.

2:8-21

While the two scouts “melt in fear,” Rahab takes the initiative telling them she understands what is going on. The first word she speaks, yadati, “I know.” She fully understands the God they follow. Rahab sounds and acts more obedient to God than all the other characters.

My Interpreters Dictionary written in 1953, states that two walls surrounded the city of Jericho. The walls were spaced 12-15 feet apart and planks were placed on the walls. The interpreter goes on to say that Rahab’s home was erected on those planks.

The crimson cord tied in the window was a signal, reminds me of the Exodus from Egypt when the Israelites were told to place blood on their doorposts to spare their lives. And for us Christians this blood can remind us of the saving blood of Christ. The stalks of flax the spies hid under were 2-3 feet long laid out to dry. These stalks were used in the making of linen.

2:22-24

The scouts and not the Canaanites are in fear. Rahab had handled the king and negotiated with the two spies, with self-confidence and assurance. One omission that concerns me is why the spies did not report back that the king was aware of their presence,

For those of us who believes that God works through all people, the story of Rahab gives us much hope and much to wrestle with.

Some interesting facts:

--Canaanites refer to a class of people who abused the peasants, like Rahab. The book of Joshua is about a clash between the urban elites (“Canaanites”) and resentful peasants.

--Rahab Besides marrying Joshua she is the great, great, great grandmother of King David. She is thus the mother of Boaz, husband of Ruth. You read it right, Jesus is descended from Rahab.

FINAL WRAP

Following the Exodus, 1250-1210, B.C.E., before the Christian era, Joshua begins to lead his people to the "promised land" Canaan. This conquest was NOT some military conquest, no wholesale military onslaught where thousands of people were slaughtered. It took many years before the Israelites peacefully entered the land of Canaan quietly settling in and mixing with and marrying some of the local peasants. In time the peasants and the Israelites banded together toppling the Canaanites over and began a new life. Jesus was a descendent of Bathsheba, Rahab, Tamar and Ruth, as I mentioned earlier, none of them were Israelites and all were so-called "foreigners" involved in some sexual trickery. Matthew 1:3, 5, 6

RUTH seduces a wealthy Judean landowner, Boaz, under cover of night on the threshing floor. Later they marry. Ruth was the great grandmother of King David. Ruth 3 Hosea 9:11

BATHSHEBA is sexually appropriated by King David

TAMAR disguises herself as a sex worker in order to lure her father-in-law into sex. Judah Genesis 38:12-26

IF THAT ISN'T TAKING THE DIAPER OFF WHAT IS?

Sincerely,

From the old and the new school of Biblical theology,

Rev. Dennis L. Siebert

Jericho, where Rahab lived, is to the upper left of the Dead Sea, also known as Salt Sea.

This is a bad picture, I know!

Upper right is the Dead Sea where Joshua took his merry band

