

CHAPTER 2

INTRODUCTION TO JOSHUA 2

This chapter gives an account of the spies sent by Joshua to Jericho, and of their entrance into the house of Rahab, who hid them from the king's messengers, (^{<#11>}Joshua 2:1-7); of the relation she gave them of the fear and dread of Israel, which were fallen upon the Canaanites, (^{<#12>}Joshua 2:8-11); and of the request she made to them, to save her and her father's house, when the city should be taken, and to have a sure sign of it given her, (^{<#13>}Joshua 2:12,13); which the spies solemnly promised, and gave her a sign of it, with a charge not to discover the matter to any, (^{<#14>}Joshua 2:14-20); and being let down by a cord through the window of her house, they made their escape to a mountain, where they lay three days, and then returned to Joshua, and made their report, (^{<#15>}Joshua 2:21-24).

Ver. 1. *And Joshua the son of Nun sent out of Shittim two men*, etc.] Or “had sent”^{f15}; for this was done before the above order to depart: it is a tradition of the Jews^{f16}, that they were Caleb and Phinehas; but they were not young men, as in (^{<#16>}Joshua 6:23); especially the former; nor is it probable that men of such rank and figure should be sent, but rather meaner persons; yet such as were men of good sense and abilities, and capable of conducting such an affair they were sent about, as well as men of probity and faithfulness; two good men, Kimchi says they were, and not as they that went on the mission of Moses; these were sent from Shittim, the same with Abelshittim, in the plains of Moab, where Israel now lay encamped, (^{<#17>}Numbers 33:49), which Josephus^{f17} calls Abila, and says it was sixty furlongs, or seven miles and better, from Jordan:

to spy secretly; or “silently”^{f18}; not so much with respect to the inhabitants of the land, for it is supposed in all spies, that they do their business in the most private and secret manner, so as not to be discovered by the inhabitants, whose land they are sent to spy; but with respect to the children of Israel, that they might know nothing of it, lest they should be discouraged, thinking that Joshua was in some fear of the Canaanites, and under some distrust of the promise of God to give the land to them: the word for “smiths”, and also for persons deaf and dumb, coming from the

same root, have furnished the Jewish writers with various conceits, as that these spies went in the habit of smiths with the instruments of their business in their hands; or acted as deaf and dumb persons, and so as incapable of giving an account of themselves, or of answering to any questions put to them, should they be taken up and examined; their commentators in general take notice of this:

saying, go view the land, even Jericho; especially Jericho, so Noldius^{f19}; the land in general, and Jericho in particular, because it was a great city, as Kimchi notes; of this city, (see Gill on “~~2904~~ Luke 19:4”). Whether it had its name from the sweetsmelling balsam which grew in plenty about it, or from the form of it, being that of an half moon, is not certain, Strabo^{f20} says of it, that here was a paradise of balsam, an aromatic, and that it was surrounded with hills in a plain, which bent to it like an amphitheatre. They were not sent to spy the land, as the spies in the times of Moses, to see what sort of land it was, and what sort of people dwelt in it; but to reconnoitre it, to know where it was best to lead the people at first, and encamp; and particularly to observe the passes and avenues leading to Jericho, the first city in it, nearest to them, of importance. Ben Gersom thinks it was to spy or pick out the thoughts of the inhabitants of the land, what apprehensions they had of the people of Israel, whether disheartened and dispirited at their near approach, and what were their intentions, resolutions, and preparations to act against them, offensively, or defensively; and which seems not amiss, since this was the chief information they got, and which they reported to Joshua upon their return; though Abarbinel objects to it as a thing impossible:

and they went, and came into a harlot's house, named Rahab; they went from Shittim, and crossed the river Jordan, by swimming or fording, and came to Jericho; which, as Josephus^{f21} says, was fifty furlongs, or seven miles and a half, from Jordan; and they went into a harlot's house, not purposely for that reason, because it was such an one, but so it proved eventually; though the Targum of Jonathan says it was the house of a woman, an innkeeper or victualler; for Jarchi, Kimchi, and Ben Melech, interpret the word it uses of a seller of food^{f22}; and if so, it furnishes out a reason why they turned in thither, where they might expect to have food and lodging; though the Jews commonly take her to be a harlot; and generally speaking, in those times and countries, such as kept public houses were prostitutes; and there are some circumstances which seem to confirm this in the context; and so the Greek version calls her, and is the character

given of her in the New Testament: her name was Rahab, of whom the Jews have this tradition ^{f23}, that she was ten years of age when Israel came out of Egypt; that she played the harlot the forty years they were in the wilderness, became the wife of Joshua, who had daughters by her, from whom came eight prophets, Jeremiah, Hilkiyah, Maasia, Hanameel, Shallum, Baruch, the son of Neriah, Ezekiel, the son of Buzi, and some say Huldah the prophetess; but the truth is, she married Salmon, a prince of the tribe of Judah, (see Gill on “~~4065~~ Matthew 1:5”):

and lodged there; that is, they went thither in order to lodge.

Ver. 2. *And it was told the king of Jericho, saying*, etc.] Who being alarmed at the near approach of the Israelites, and knowing their claim to the land of Canaan, and their design upon it, employed men to watch and observe what passed in the city, and parts adjacent, and inform him of it; or some persons of themselves, and for their own safety, and the good of their fellow citizens, gave notice to the king of it:

behold, there came men hither tonight of the children of Israel; who were known by their habit and language; or at least, being strangers, were suspected to be of that people, the terror of whom had fallen on all the inhabitants, so that every strange man they took for an Israelite; from hence it appears, that the spies came to Jericho at night, that they might not be observed: but with all their precaution they were taken notice of, and their design suspected, namely,

to search out the country; which were the proper places to attack first, and where there was the greatest probability of succeeding, as well as to find out the disposition of the inhabitants, whether fearful or fearless of them.

Ver. 3. *And the king of Jericho sent unto Rahab*, etc.] Not merely because she kept a public house, or being a prostitute had often strangers in it, and so conjectured that the men he had notice of might be there; but he sent upon certain information that they were seen to go in there, as it follows:

saying, bring forth the men that are come to thee; not to commit lewdness with her, though this is the sense some Jewish commentators give; but this neither agrees with the character of the men Joshua had chosen for this purpose, nor answers any end of the king to suggest; nor can it be thought that Rahab would so openly and freely own this, as in (~~4066~~ Joshua 2:4): but what is meant by the phrase is explained in the following clause,

which are entered into thine house: in order to lodge there that night:

for they be come to search out all the country; so it was suspected, nor was the suspicion groundless.

Ver. 4. *And the woman took the two men*, etc.] Or “she had taken” them ^{f24} before the messengers came, upon a rumour she understood was gone abroad, that she had got Israelitish spies in her house, and so might expect to be visited and searched by the king’s officers, and therefore took this precaution:

and hid them; the Hebrew word is singular, “him” ^{f25}: hence the Jews, who take these two spies to be Caleb and Phinehas, say, that only Caleb was hid, and Phinehas, though he was before them, was not seen, being an angel, (~~3111~~ Malachi 2:7); but the sense is, that she hid each of them, and very probably singly and apart, that if one was found, the other might escape, as Ben Gersom observes; and Abarbinel is of opinion that she hid them twice, now in the middle of her house, one in one place, and the other in another, for the reason before given, and after this hid them in the roof of her house, as afterwards related:

and said thus, there came men unto me; that is, into her house, this she owned:

but I wist not whence they [were]; of what country they were, whether Israelites or not; which whether she knew or not is not certain; it is probable she did, and told an untruth, as she also did in (~~4115~~ Joshua 2:5).

Ver. 5. *And it came to pass, [about the time] of the shutting of the gate*, etc.] Of the city, which was done every night, and at a certain time:

when it was dark; the sun set, and night come on:

that the men went out; out of her house, and out of the city too, as she said, though it was a downright lie, as well as what follows:

whither the men went I wot not; though she knew they were not gone, but were now in her house; she might not scruple telling a lie, being brought up a Heathen, and being done with a design to save the lives of persons that belonged to a people she was persuaded were the people of God, and to whom he had given the land; though her lies are not to be justified; evil is not to be done that good may come; nor are men to tell lies one to another upon any account; but these sins, with others, the Lord forgave her:

pursue after them quickly, and ye shall overtake them; this she encouraged them to do, to get rid of them the sooner, and to remove all suspicion of her having any respect for them, and of being concerned in concealing them.

Ver. 6. *But she had brought them up to the roof of the house*, etc.] Before the messengers came; though Abarbinel thinks it was after they were gone, when she took them from the place of their concealment, and had them to the roof of the house, where she thought they would be safe and secure, should the messengers return, or others come in search of them, who would not, as she imagined, look for them there:

and hid them with the stalks of flax; that is, under them, or “in flax of wood”, or “a tree”^{f26}; which may with as much propriety, or more, be called a tree than hyssop, (^{<1063>}1 Kings 4:33); as it is in the Misnah^{f27}. Moreover, there was a sort of flax which grew in the upper part of Egypt towards Arabia, as Pliny says^{f28}, which they called “xylon”, or wood, of which were made “lina xyliana”: though the words may be rightly transposed, as by as, “stalks of flax”, which are large and strong before the flax is stripped or beaten off of them; the Targum renders it bundles of flax, or handfuls and sheaves of them, as they were when cut down and gathered:

which she had laid in order upon the roof; to be dried, as Kimchi observes; and Pliny^{f29} speaks of flax being bound up in bundles, and hung up and dried in the sun; which was done that it might be more easily stripped and beaten off; and the roofs of houses in those countries being flat, were very fit for such a purpose; (see Gill on “^{<6218>}Deuteronomy 22:8”); and these being now laid there were very suitable and convenient to conceal the men under them. This seems to be in favour of Rahab, as being a virtuous and industrious woman; (see ^{<6113>}Proverbs 31:13,19,24).

Ver. 7. *And the men pursued after them*, etc.] As they thought:

the way to Jordan; on the other side of which the people of Israel lay encamped, to which they supposed, according to Rahab’s account, these two men directed their course:

unto the fords; the fords of Jordan, the passages through it; for in some places, and at some times, it was fordable; which accounts for the way in which these spies could get over Jordan, (see ^{<1320>}Genesis 32:10); it was most reasonable to conclude they would return the same way; and so far

the king's messengers went, but further they did not choose to go, because it would be to no purpose, and they might expose themselves to the camp of Israel, which lay on the other side:

and as soon as they which pursued after them were gone out, they shut the gate; that is, either as soon as the king's messengers were gone out of Rahab's house, either the spies, or rather the men of the house, Rahab's servants, shut the door of it to prevent their return, or others coming in; or rather, when they were got out of the city, the watchmen of the city, the porters of the city gates, shut them, that if they were not got out of the city, to prevent their escape, or however to keep out others from entering, that might be on some such design, or worse.

Ver. 8. *And before they were laid down,* etc.] Under the stalks of the flax; or rather, since they are said to be hid in them, before they were fallen asleep, so Kimchi and Abarbanel:

she came up unto them upon the roof; to acquaint them how things were, and to converse with them on the following subjects.

Ver. 9. *And she said unto the men,* etc.] The two spies:

I know that the Lord hath given you the land; the land of Canaan, of which she was an inhabitant, and in which they now were; this she knew either by some tradition that was among them; or by divine revelation, a supernatural impulse upon her mind: or by observing what the Lord had done already, in putting the land of the Amorites into their hands, which were one of the seven nations of Canaan; and by this it also appears, and more clearly by what follows, that she had knowledge of the Lord God, the God of Israel:

and that your terror is fallen upon us; which was another token or sign by which she knew the land would be delivered to them; that they who were a formidable people, and struck terror into others, now were terrified themselves, at the rumour of Israel being come to invade them; this was what the Lord said should be the case, (⁽⁴⁸¹²⁵⁾Deuteronomy 11:25);

and that all the inhabitants of the land faint because of you; or "melt"^{f30}, like wax before the fire, as Moses had predicted, (⁽⁴⁸¹²⁵⁾Exodus 15:15).

Ver. 10. *For we have heard how the Lord dried up the waters of the Red sea for you, when ye came out of Egypt,* etc.] To make a passage for them

through it, to walk in as on dry land; this they had heard of and remembered, though it was forty years ago:

and what you did unto the kings of the Amorites that [were] on the other side Jordan: which were things more recent, done but a few months ago:

Sihon and Og, whom ye utterly destroyed; the history of which see in (^{402b}Numbers 21:21-35); who were destroyed by them under Moses and Joshua their commanders; and Hercules, who is thought to be the same with Joshua, is by Lucian ^{f31} called Ogmios, from slaying Og, as is supposed ^{f32}.

Ver. 11. *And as soon as we had heard [these things], our hearts did melt,* etc.] Particularly what were done to the two kings of the Amorites, who, and their people, were utterly destroyed, their goods made a prey of, and their countries seized upon and possessed:

neither did there remain any more courage in any man, because of you; they looked dejected in their countenances, had no heart to go about any business, trembled at the shaking of a leaf, or at the least rumour and report made that the Israelites were coming on and were at hand; they had no spirit to prepare to go out and meet them, or to defend themselves:

for the Lord your God, he [is] God in heaven above, and in earth beneath; the Maker and Possessor of both; is the Governor of the whole universe, and does what he pleases in it; and disposes of all countries, persons, and things, as he thinks fit: this is a proof of her knowledge of the true God, and faith in him, and shows her to be a believer, and hence she is reckoned in the catalogue of believers, (^{5113b}Hebrews 11:31); and her faith is proved to be of the right kind by the works she did, (⁵⁰²⁵James 2:25).

Ver. 12. *Now therefore, I pray you, swear unto me by the Lord,* etc.] Which being a religious action, and done by men that feared the Lord, she knew it would be binding upon them: the Targum is,

“swear to me by the Word of the Lord:”

since I have showed you kindness; by receiving them with peace into her house, and hiding them when inquired for and demanded of her; in doing which she risked her own, life, had this treachery to her country, as it would have been deemed, been discovered;

that you will also show kindness unto my father's house; she mentions not herself and household, for if this was granted that would be implied and included; and this she presses for by the law of retaliation and friendship, for since she had shown kindness to them, it was but reasonable it should be returned:

and give me a true token; that she and her father's house would be saved by them when the city should be taken and the inhabitants destroyed; a token that would not deceive her, on which she might depend, and would be firm and sure.

Ver. 13. *And [that] ye will save alive my father, and my mother, and my brethren, and my sisters*, etc.] She makes no mention of any husband or children she had, as harlots seldom have, and which seems to confirm her character as such; and so Abarbinel observes, that her father's house is only mentioned to tell us that she had no husband, for she was an harlot and had no children, and puts her father and mother in the room of an husband, and her brethren and sisters in the room of children:

and all that they have; not their substance only, but their children more especially, the children of her brethren and sisters:

and deliver our lives from death; here she manifestly includes herself, and requests the saving of her life, and the lives of all her relations, when she knew the inhabitants of the city would be all put to death upon the taking of it: thus she provided for the safety of her family, as Noah in another case and manner did, (^{<S107>}Hebrews 11:7); and indeed seemed more concerned for them than for herself; and thus souls sensible of their own estate and condition, by nature and grace, are very solicitous for the salvation of their relations and friends, (^{<S108>}Romans 9:3).

Ver. 14. *And the men answered her*, etc.] The two spies:

our life for yours; or "our souls in your stead to die"^{f33}; that is, we engage for the security of your lives, should they be in danger; we promise to die in your room and stead rather than you should: this they said not as though their lives would be required of them for them, but to assure her of the safety of her and her father's house, on the following condition:

if ye utter not this our business; not their business in searching the land, for the discovery of that would be of little avail after they were gone; for it was known already that there were persons come to search the land; but

“this our word”^{f34}, what they were going to say to her and bid her do, as a sign of safety to her and hers; which, if she discovered, others would give out the same sign, and then they could not promise her safety; or if she did not take care to bring in her father, mother, brethren, and sisters, and theirs into her house, they could not engage to protect them:

and it shall be, when the Lord hath given us the land; not the whole land, but Jericho and the laud about it, that when that part of it should be delivered into their hands:

that we will deal kindly and truly with thee; “kindly”, by sparing her and her father’s house; “truly”, by faithfully performing the promise and oath they made to her.

Ver. 15. *Then she let them down by a cord through the window*, etc.]

Which must be large, and the cord strong, as well as she herself a masculine woman, to let down two men by it, unless she employed any of her servants in the affair; though this being so great a secrecy, it is probable she trusted none of her domestics with it as little as possible: in like manner the Apostle Paul was let down by the wall of Damascus in a basket, (⁽⁴¹⁹²⁾Acts 9:25); Jarchi supposes it was the same cord and window, by means of and in at which her gallants used to come and go:

for her house [was] upon the town wall; in a suitable and convenient place to receive her guests and gallants: and it is observed, that harlots have had their houses on or under walls: Martial speaks of harlots whom he calls^{f35} *Summoenianae*, whores that plied under the walls and in the suburbs of cities:

and she dwelt upon the wall; that part of the house in which she particularly dwelt was built on or over the wall, and the rest towards the city was for the entertainment of persons that resorted to her house.

Ver. 16. *And she said unto them, get ye unto the mountain*, etc.] Which was near to the city, and is supposed to be the same which is now called Quarantania: Dr. Shaw, a late traveller in those parts, says^{f36}, from the mountain Quarantania, the very same perhaps where the two spies concealed themselves, (⁽⁴¹²⁶⁾Joshua 2:16), we have a distinct view of the land of the Amorites, of Gilead, and of Bashan, the inheritance of the tribes of Reuben and Gad, and of the half tribe of Manasseh--to it joins the mountain of Adummim, and through it the road is cut that leads from Jerusalem to Jericho, where probably it was from the very nature of the

situation that the man fell among thieves, (^(Q10)Luke 10:30); which very probably is the same mountain which Josephus^{f37} says hung over the city, and was a very barren one; though the singular may be put for the plural, since, as Strabo says^{f38}, it was surrounded with mountains:

lest the pursuers meet you; on their return from the fords of Jordan, being disappointed:

and hide yourselves there three days: some of the Jewish Rabbins, as Jarchi and Kimchi, observe that she had this by the revelation of the Holy Ghost, that the pursuers would return at the end of three days; but the latter more truly remarks, that this was said by conjecture; that Jericho being, as he says, one day from Jordan, and a little more, by going, returning, and searching for the spies, they would be three days in doing it:

until the pursuers be returned; into the city; for until they were they could not be in safety, but must be in danger of being met by them and taken up:

and afterward may ye go your way: to Jordan, and so to the camp of Israel, and that without fear.

Ver. 17. *And the men said unto her*, etc.] Some think that this discourse, which passed between the spies and her, was while in the house before she let them down, or otherwise they would have been in danger of being overheard, and so the whole affair discovered; but as it was on the other side of the house, and under the wall of the city, and without it, they might with the greater safety converse together:

we [will be] blameless of this thine oath which thou hast made us swear; that is, they would most faithfully and punctually keep it, it should be sacred to them, and she should have no occasion to lay any blame upon them in the least.

Ver. 18. *Behold, [when] we come into the land*, etc.] The land of Canaan, and into this city, into that part of it, as the Septuagint, where her house was, meaning not themselves only, but the people of Israel they belonged to:

thou shall bind this line of scarlet thread in the window which thou didst let us down by; the word by refers either to the scarlet thread they were let down by, said to be a cord, (^(Q15)Joshua 2:15); and therefore must be a line twisted with various scarlet threads, as Kimchi; who observes, that

according to the Targum, it was the border of a red garment; or to the window through which they were let down, as the Septuagint version; it may refer to both, and the sense be, that the same twisted cord of scarlet thread they were let down by should be bound to the same window they were let down through; only this objection there is to the same window, that it was not towards the city, and so not to be seen when they came into it, but looked over the wall without the city: now as Rahab was an instance of the salvation of sinners by the grace of God, for she was a sinner by birth, by practice, and a notorious one; she was an instance of distinguishing grace, of free and efficacious grace, a singular instance of it; and became a true penitent, a real believer, was a justified person, and saved: so the scarlet thread was an emblem of the blood of Christ, by which salvation is; redemption and all the blessings of grace are through it; justification, remission of sin, reconciliation, and atonement, and safety, and protection from avenging justice, and wrath to come, are only by it: likewise the spies, who are also called “messengers”, (^(S125)James 2:25); may represent the ministers of the Gospel, who are the messengers of Christ, and the churches, are sent out by him the antitypical Joshua, men of wisdom, courage, and valour, and are sent as spies to bring to light men and things, who direct to the way of salvation and give the same token of it, (^(A116)Mark 16:16);

and thou shall bring thy father, and thy mother, and thy brethren, and all thy father’s household home unto thee; into her house, where the scarlet thread was bound, and where only they would be safe, as the Israelites were in the houses where the blood of the paschal lamb was sprinkled, (^(D123)Exodus 12:23); and so they are safe, and they only, who are under the blood of sprinkling, and partake of the virtue of it.

Ver. 19. *And it shall be, [that] whosoever shall go out of the door of thy house into the street,* etc.] After they have been taken in, and when the Israelites were come into the city:

his blood [shall be] upon his head, and we [will be] guiltless; if he is killed by any person, his death will be owing to himself, and no blame to be laid on us; nor shall we reckon ourselves guilty of the breach of the oath taken:

and whosoever [shall be] with thee in the house, his blood shall be on our head, if [any] hand be upon him: if anyone within doors is killed by an Israelite entering in, the guilt of the blood shall lie upon us, and we will be

answerable, according to the tenor of the oath, “our life for yours”, (~~HEB4~~Joshua 2:14).

Ver. 20. *And if thou utter this our business*, etc.] So that others would either hang out scarlet threads or get into her house for shelter, (see Gill on “~~HEB4~~Joshua 2:14”);

then we will be quit of thine oath which thou hast made us to swear; be under no obligation to make it good, by saving her and her father’s house.

Ver. 21. *And she said, according to your words, so [be] it*, etc.] She agreed, that if the conditions required were not performed, they would be quit of their oath, but if they were, she expected it would be fulfilled:

and she sent them away, and they departed; took their leave of each other:

and she bound the scarlet line in the window; immediately, as Abarbinel thinks, and in the sight of the spies, that they might see that she conformed to their direction, and that they might take notice where she fastened it; and that she herself might, at the sight of it, be put in mind of the design of it, and be an encouragement to her faith as to the safety of her and her father’s house; and it being a thing so trifling and insignificant in itself, would not be taken notice of by the inhabitants, or be thought to be done with any design; though, according to the instruction of the spies, it seems as if it was to be done when they came into the land, and into the city, and which seems most likely that it was then done.

Ver. 22. *And they went, and came unto the mountain*, etc.] Rahab had directed them to, the mountain Quarantania, (see Gill on “~~HEB6~~Joshua 2:16”);

and abode there three days; being, no doubt, supplied with food by Rahab; and it might not be three wholly, but one whole day and part of the other two:

until the pursuers were returned; to the city of Jericho, as might reasonably be supposed:

and the pursuers sought [them] throughout all the way; from Jericho to the fords of Jordan, searching every hedge, field, and village as they went and returned:

but found [them] not; Rahab having hid them in her house, and then sent them to the mountain, there to remain till the return of the pursuers.

Ver. 23. *So the two men returned, and descended from the mountain*, etc.] Or came down from it again, by which, it seems, they went to the top of it, and hid themselves in some cave there: this descent, Kimchi says, was,

“on the third day of their being sent, which was the second day of the three days Joshua made mention of when he said, “within three days”;

(see Gill on “^{<ref>Joshua 1:11}”);

and passed over; that is, the river Jordan, at the fords of it:

and came to Joshua the son of Nun; at Shittim, where he still continued, and from whence he sent them, (^{<ref>Joshua 2:1});

and told him all [things] that befell them; what house they went into when come to Jericho, what reception they met with, the report of them to the king of Jericho, how messengers were sent by him to demand them, and by what means they were preserved and made their escape.

Ver. 24. *And they said unto Joshua*, etc.] Made a report of what they had got knowledge of, which answered the end of their mission:

truly the Lord hath delivered into our hands all the land: which they concluded by the terror the inhabitants of it were in, and so in no condition to make resistance and defend themselves; and they not only judged of the whole land by the case of the inhabitants of Jericho, but were assured by Rahab that all the inhabitants of the land were in the same plight and condition, (^{<ref>Joshua 2:9});

for even the inhabitants of the country do faint because of us; this was the temper and disposition they appeared in, and seems to be what Joshua was chiefly desirous of knowing; since nothing else is told by the spies nor inquired of by him, but immediately upon this report began his march towards Canaan, as in the next chapter is related.