

Women and Gender in the Bible and the Biblical World

Ekaterina E. Kozlova*

What is in a Name? Rahab, the Canaanite, and the Rhetoric of Liberation in the Hebrew Bible

<https://doi.org/10.1515/opth-2020-0106>

received April 08, 2020; accepted May 06, 2020

Abstract: As many native women in conquest accounts (historical and fictional), Rahab in Joshua 2 is often “hypersexualised” in biblical scholarship. One narrative detail gratuitously read in sexual terms is her name, Rahab, which is linked to the idea of “broadness.” Traditionally, “Rahab” is read as a harsh nickname highlighting the woman’s occupation, prostitution, or as a reference to her genitals. Against these readings, this discussion considers the language of “broadness” in biblical profiles of the Promised Land and the Torah, key motifs from Joshua 1–2, and demonstrates that the trope of “broadness/spaciousness” constitutes the rhetoric of liberation in the Hebrew Bible. That is, God is often cast as someone who brings afflicted/landless people to a broad locale or “broadens/enlarges” their hearts through his Torah. Since Rahab is linguistically and thematically linked to these acts, it is argued that through her Joshua 2 offers a midrash on Joshua 1. That is, from within Canaan, her name reverberates God’s earlier promises to Israel (“he [God] has created a wide expanse”) and she, herself, models a life informed by the Torah (vv. 9–12). Arguably, through her, Joshua 2 also offers a microcosm of YHWH’s own nature and *modus operandi* in the world.

Keywords: Rahab, Joshua, conquest, promised land, Torah, midrashic derivations of names

1 Introduction: Rahab and Midrashic Derivations of Hebrew Names

Commenting on a few suggestive details in the Rahab story in Joshua 2, F.A. Spina asserts that the rationale for their inclusion in the text goes “beyond efforts to spice up the narrative.” These sexual innuendoes, he argues, are there not “to increase the ratings of the Book of Joshua”¹ but to propel its insider vs outsider discourse. According to him, these narrative elements are used “because one of the most prominent metaphors for idolatry in the Old Testament is sexual promiscuity, sometimes expressed in the phrase ‘whoring after other gods.’”² Given Canaan’s reputation as a proverbially idolatrous region, the book contrasts its inhabitants with the Israelites; and the irony of this comparison is that the former often come out as showing a greater moral aptitude than the latter. Such assessment of Joshua’s insider vs outsider discourse is certainly legitimate.³ A cursory reading of discussions on the Canaanite woman,

1 Spina, *The Faith of the Outsider*, 54.

2 Ibid., 55.

* Corresponding author: Ekaterina E. Kozlova, London School of Theology, Green Lane, United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, e-mail: ekaterina.kozlova@lst.ac.uk

however, gives an impression that both ancient and modern scholars read more sexual innuendoes into the text than is actually warranted, as if in an effort to “spice up” an otherwise bland and unexciting story.⁴ One such narrative detail that is gratuitously read in sexual terms is the name of the Canaanite, *Rahab*. In fact, it has generated a substantial number of discussions on its significance in the book. Falling under the rubrics of sex and violence, these readings will serve as a starting point for the discussion at hand. But first, a few words need to be said on a subfield in biblical scholarship that deals with midrashic derivations of Hebrew names (MDNs).

In his monograph on the role of MDNs in the Hebrew Bible, M. Garsiel observes that Israel’s literature is replete with puns on proper names, some of which are “overt and recognizable within the context” and others are “worked into the context in a clandestine manner.”⁵ He further explains that “the MDN does not supply any reason why a person or a place has gained a particular name. Here we are dealing with a wider scope of potential derivations: sound effects (i.e. alliterations), word play, subtle riddles, concealed meanings, key motifs, etc. – all are derived from names regardless of their reasonable etymology [...]”⁶ This use of names should be understood in light of the ancient Near Eastern (ANE) thought-world in which personal names held a significant multifaceted cultural weight. On the one hand, each name could provide a window into “some aspect concerning the nature of the person who bore that name,” but on the other, in cases of theophoric names, it could attest to the religious affiliation of the name-owner or the people who named them.⁷ Additionally, in antiquity personal names often reflected their bearers’ social standing (e.g. the fifty names of Marduk [EE VI, VII];⁸ Gen. 17:5, 15; 32:28), celebrated their achievements (e.g. Akhenaten), and represented their memory in the afterlife (e.g. 2 Sam. 18:18; cf. Iron Age memorial inscriptions from Levant⁹). Given this and that besides Joshua himself and the two Amorite kings (Sihon and Og), Rahab is the only character with a name in all of the story in Joshua 2, the ensuing discussion intends to revisit the Canaanite’s name and its usage in service of the book’s overall ideology.

2 Rahab’s Name in Biblical Scholarship

With heightened socioreligious weight attached to names across a variety of cultural milieus of ANE, the presence of *Rahab* in Joshua 2 has not gone unnoticed among Joshua’s readership.¹⁰ Occasionally, scholars take a neutral approach to the significance of this name or assign no value to it at all;¹¹ yet sexual

³ For a recent discussion on a “theological understanding of the role of ‘outsiders’ [in the Hebrew Bible] as an integral part of God’s self-communication to the ‘elect’” see, Curtis, “My God Will Be Your God” (the quote is from page 1). The premise of A. Curtis’s thesis is that when God needs to instruct and/or confront Israel, his chosen people, concerning their conduct, he often tasks an outsider woman with it (Zipporah, Jael, Ruth, Rahab, Vashti, Asenath [on Rahab see, *ibid.*, 135–69]).

⁴ Cf. the critique of D. Trump’s impeachment hearings by pro-Trump news anchors in December 2019 – the Ukraine scandal was “boring,” as it entailed no crime, no violence, no sex. On the tendency to “hypersexualise” native women in “land grab”/conquest literature, historical and fictional, see Davidson, “Gazing (at) Native Women,” 69–92 and the bibliography cited there. For a critique of a similar phenomenon in biblical scholarship – i.e. when female figures (human and divine) are read primarily in terms of their biological and/or sexual roles – see, for example, Stavrakopoulou, “The Ancient Goddess, the Biblical Scholar, and the Religious Past,” 495–513. Regarding scholarly approaches to ANE female deities, F. Stavrakopoulou observes that “goddesses tend to be categorized overwhelmingly as either ‘fertility’ deities or ‘mother’ goddesses – flattening their portrayed characteristics and functions into a reductive, ‘biologically’ essentialist frame of reference rarely imposed upon male deities.” *Ibid.*, 498.

⁵ Garsiel, *Biblical Names*, 9.

⁶ *Ibid.*, 20. For a similar function of personal names in ANE literature, see, Hurowitz, “Name Midrashim and Word-Plays on Names,” 87–104.

⁷ Fowler, *Theophoric Personal Names*, 17.

⁸ Seri, “The Fifty Names of Marduk in *Enūma eliš*,” 507–19.

⁹ For this see, among others, Suriano, “Remembering Absalom’s Death,” 172–200.

¹⁰ On the proleptic use of names see, Marcus, “Prolepsis in the Story of Rahab,” 149–62.

¹¹ Pitkänen, *Joshua*, 123.

readings of *Rahab* do predominate. In fact, according to B.T. *Ta'anit* 5b, “anyone who says Rahab, Rahab, immediately gets a seminal emission.” In a similar vein, *Sifre Zuta* 10 states that, the Canaanite

had four names of disrepute. Her name, Rahab the whore, says it all. Another thing, Rahab the whore because she fornicated with the city people from within. And with the bandits from without, since it is said that “her house was in the wall” and “she sits in the wall” (Josh. 2:15). Another thing, Rahab the whore since she was a Canaanite, and there were no more evil and wicked people than the Canaanites. Another thing, Rahab the whore since she was from the people of Jericho, those about whom it is written that they should be demolished and banned (Deut. 20:17).¹²

Likewise, among modern scholars, M. Noth related *Rahab* to בית רח(ו)ב/“the house in the public square,” i.e. a brothel.¹³ Spina in turn observes that those with the knowledge of Hebrew cannot help but

wonder whether Rahab’s name is meant to be risqué: in etymological terms Rahab’s name connotes something “broad” or “wide,” hardly bold in describing a path, say, but having an entirely different sense when applied to a woman engaged in the “world’s oldest profession” [...] In a language related to Hebrew (Ugaritic), the same word refers to the female genitalia. Granted, this is not a proper translation of the Hebrew word; but given the explicit description of Rahab as a prostitute [...] and the general meaning “broad” or “wide,” which is sexually suggestive for a woman of this métier, the name is almost surely to be taken as a not too subtle symbol of both her occupation and reputation.¹⁴

Similarly, R. Bartelmus opines that the choice of Rahab’s name was prompted by her trade. The author

not only drew, indirectly, on the sexual connotations implicit in the semantic field of the root (“broad-minded, generous, gratifying”) but seems also to have made quite explicit use of the “part for the whole” principle; the lower body of this lady or its dimensions reflecting the ideal of female beauty in the ancient Near East (cf. the innumerable “fat-rumped” feminine idols from this period) became her name.¹⁵

Admittedly, there is a well-known ANE harlot whose name echoes either her trade or her looks, i.e. Šamḥat,¹⁶ and similar names were used “for ladies of this type.”¹⁷ However, it should be noted that the form of *Rahab* in Joshua 2 is in fact masculine, making it an unlikely reference to its owner herself (cf. Am., *Ra-ḥi-ba*, whose bearer was a female).¹⁸ From a slightly different angle, yet still focusing on

¹² Cited in Brenner, *I Am*, 82–3.

¹³ Noth, *Das Buch Josua*, 23, 29; Stamm, “Hebräische Frauennamen,” 336; Rösel, *Joshua*, 47.

¹⁴ Spina, *The Faith of the Outsider*, 54–5. Using the Ugaritic *rhbt*, H. Barstad argued that Rahab was a nickname “harshly indicating the woman’s métier.” Barstad, “The Old Testament Feminine Personal Name *rāḥāb*,” 49. Yet, Barstad’s Ugaritic evidence itself is questionable, as it is based on a difficult biblical text, Isa. 57:8 (see discussion in Montgomery, “Notes on the Mythological Epic Texts,” 120–1). T. Frymer-Kensky in turn calls Rahab “this biblical Susie Wong,” “the broad of Jericho.” Frymer-Kensky, “Reading Rahab,” 57, 66; cf. Brenner, *I Am*, 82–3; Nelson, *Joshua*, 43–4; Bodi, “The Encounter with the Courtesan,” 12–4.

¹⁵ R. Bartelmus, *TDOT*, vol. 13, 430. He also links this to the Akk. *rebitu(m)*, i.e. “lower body, abdomen.” Citing Isa. 57:8 as a reference to fornication, he states that it contributed to “the choice of PN Rahab in Josh. 2 and 6.” *Ibid.*, 432. Cf. a trial with a comparable logic in *Nedarim* 66b, where R. Ishmael evaluates a woman’s physique finding fault in every part of her body and concludes the process by commenting on her name. “It is appropriate [...] that they call her *Liklukit*, since she is ugly [חלכלכת] because of her defects.” Cited in Hurowitz, “The Woman of Valor,” 231.

¹⁶ Observing that in the Old Babylonian Pennsylvania tablet the harlot’s name is Šamkatum, A. George understands Šamḥat as “the feminine of the adjective *šamḥu*, itself deriving from the verb *šamāḥu*, which denotes superlative beauty of the flesh combined with lush growth and physical wellbeing. The adjective occurs in both genders as a personal name. However, there is an obvious allusion to the common noun *šamḥatu*, which is a synonym of *ḥarimtu* and so marks Šamḥat out as the prostitute *par excellence*. The etymology of the word suggests that *šamḥatu* carries overtones of vivacity and voluptuousness, both considerable advantages in the profession.” George, *The Babylonian Gilgamesh Epic*, 148; *CAD*, Š/2, 311, 312. Seeing Šamḥat’s name as a stative verb, V. Hurowitz links it to both her looks and her libido. Hurowitz, “Finding New Life in Old Words,” 68–9. He also adds that Šamḥat’s name “can be compared semantically with some biblical names of wanton women such as Rahab, the well-known harlot-cum-innkeeper from Jericho (Jos. 2:1 etc.), or Kozbi, a Midianite princess and seductress (Num. 25:15, 18).” *Ibid.*, 68. Cf. G. Cooke’s reading of the names of Oholah and Oholibah in Ezekiel 23 in connection with “the tents set up on the high places for religious prostitution.” Cooke, *Ezekiel*, 249.

¹⁷ Lambert, “Prostitution,” 137.

¹⁸ Zadok, *The Pre-Hellenistic Israelite Anthroponymy*, 32.

Rahab's body, R.S. Hess argues that the name fits well with West Semitic personal names attested in the second millennium B.C.E. claiming that it was part of a longer name, "the God has opened [the womb]."¹⁹ Granted, this generative nuance might have been in view in Rahab's name originally; in terms of its midrashic value for Joshua 2, however, it is worth noting that the text shows no interest in Rahab's reproductive capacities and personal names of men with the רחב element are not usually read in procreative terms, i.e. increased households.²⁰

Another take on the role of *Rahab* in Joshua is represented by J. Stek who views the Canaanite in light of *Rahab*, a mythical sea-monster, a chaos dragon, which signifies Egypt in some poetic texts in the Hebrew Bible (Ps. 89:10; Isa. 51:9).²¹ Hence, for Stek, the name of the Jericho prostitute forges a link between Israel's Conquest of Canaan and the Exodus event – just as earlier at the Sea of Reeds God crushed Rahab, "the monster that was Egypt," in Joshua 2 the news of his deeds crushed Rahab, the Canaanite.²² As pointed out earlier, in his study of MDNs Garsiel explores a "midrashic (homiletic) nature applied to the names of people or of places on the basis of sound or semantic potential. Such an interpretation infuses a name with meaning in relation to past events, or looks forward to some future incidents."²³ Given *Rahab's* sound potential in the Exodus-Conquest account Stek's reading is certainly plausible. Yet, and as he recognizes himself, the name of the sea-dragon Rahab differs from the name of Rahab in Joshua in one consonant. Accordingly, and considering other motifs accentuated in the book, another reading of the name will be proposed.

Indeed, Joshua 2 calls Rahab a prostitute presenting her as a "triple outsider" – a Canaanite, a woman, a prostitute – which in turn sets the stage for the aforementioned insider vs outsider discourse in the book.²⁴

¹⁹ Hess, "Non-Israelite Personal Names," 206; cf. Noth, *Israelitische Personennamen*, 193.

²⁰ Although 1 Chr. 23:17 supplements the mention of רחביה/Rehabiah with a note that Rehabiah's sons were very numerous, *HALOT* reads the name as a cipher for liberation. *HALOT*, 1214. Cf. J. A. Hackett's observation on the scholarly treatment of ANE gods, "the deity in Canaan who is most obviously concerned with fertility of crops is a male god, Baal, and the one most obviously concerned with human fertility is El, another male god. Yet, when they are given one-word descriptions, they are usually *not* called 'fertility' gods; rather, Baal is a 'storm' god and El is the 'chief' god of the pantheon; the 'fertility' epithet as a one-word explanation is often reserved for the female deities of Canaan." Hackett, "Can a Sexist Model Liberate Us?," 74. In addition to Rahab's name, the following elements are viewed as sexually suggestive in Joshua 2: (1) the mention of Shittim (cf. Numbers 25); (2) the remark on Rahab's occupation; (3) the verb "to lie down" (v. 1); (4) the collocation "to come to/into" (vv. 1–4); and (5) the red cord (vv. 18, 21). Regarding the last two details, it is worth noting that scholars generally read verbs of motion in sexual terms if they represent men's actions in stories featuring women regardless of whether or not it is warranted (e.g., Tamarkin Reis, "Uncovering Jael and Sisera," 24–47). Also, on the red cord, Spina asserts that this phrase occurs in texts on "prostitution, promiscuity and eroticism" (cf. Gen. 38:28, 30, Song 4:3, Jer. 4:30, Isa. 1:18, 21) and calls Rahab's house "the red rope district." Spina, *The Faith of the Outsider*, 61–2 (cf. Noegel, "Scarlet and Harlots," 1–47). However, although the "red cord" does appear in Genesis 38, it is linked not to Tamar who "played the harlot" but to her midwife (v. 28). Granted, this is speculative, but the "scarlet cord" easily available in Rahab's house may indicate that sex work was not the only trade practiced by her – midwifery could have been one of her skills as well. Interestingly, a late rabbinic midrash links Genesis 38 and Joshua 2 by suggesting that the scarlet cord featured in Joshua was the one used by Tamar's midwife and that the Israelite spies who came to Rahab were in fact Perez and Zerah, Tamar's sons (*Midrash HaGadol Bereshit. Chayei Sarah* 23:1). On the use of cords/bands made of red-coloured wool (and other objects) in ANE rituals linked to fertility, childbirth, and protection, see Scurlock, "Baby-Snatching Demons," 138–40. On the cross-cultural use of red cords/strings for protective, palliative, and other purposes, see Teman, "Red String," 29–57. If the red cord in Joshua 2 is indeed linked to midwifery, then Hess's theory on "womb enlarging" gains a slightly different nuance (L. Quick, personal communication). Cf. A Sumerian hymn, in which Enlil gives Ninlil "the name Nintu, the Lady Who Gives Birth and the Lady Spreading the Legs[...]" (line 152). Line 154 then links Ninlil to midwifery. Stol, *Birth in Babylonia*, 79. Note also that Song 4:3, Jer. 4:30, Isa. 1:18, 21 utilise the phrase "red cord" or its elements in a way different to Josh. 2:18, 21.

²¹ Stek, "Rahab of Canaan," 39–40; Knauf, *Joshua*, 47.

²² Stek, "Rahab of Canaan," 39–40.

²³ Garsiel, *Biblical Names*, 19; Kozlova, *Maternal Grief*, 87–118.

²⁴ Cf. P. Bird's note that, "The reader does not expect anything from her, or at least not anything of moral strength, courage, or insight." Bird, "The Harlot as Heroine," 108.

Additionally, given the nature of the spies' mission, the mention of her trade indicates why the Hebrew men chose her place to lodge in – in the ancient world, inns and brothels were often used for military espionage.²⁵ Yet, this narrative detail should not be used to “flatten” Rahab's portrayal (and her name within it) into a “reductive, ‘biologically’ [and sexually] essentialist frame of reference,”²⁶ particularly at the expense of other implications key to Joshua's overall message. Given the rules of Semitic name formations and that *Rahab* in its form is in fact masculine, it is most likely a verb with the name of a deity as its implied subject.²⁷ Admittedly, the original theophoric element in Rahab's name could have had a Canaanite deity in mind and, as stated above, the name might have reflected its owner's reproductive concerns. Yet *Rahab*'s present location suggests a whole new set of resonances and inferences. In light of Joshua's territorial interests, the name should instead be viewed as analogous to רחביה/Rehabiah or רחביהו/Rehabiahu (1 Chr. 23:17, 26:25), i.e. YHWH “has made a wide expanse,”²⁸ with the Qal form of the verb serving as the Hiphil.²⁹ The premise of the ensuing discussion, therefore, is that given its present context the name *Rahab* coalesces with the biblical language of *liberation*. As such, it joins the domain of other theophoric names that reflect divine acts of deliverance and restoration. Interestingly (and relatedly), before an earlier reconnaissance mission, Joshua's own name underwent a change – from a generic “he saves”/הושע/Hoshea to “YHWH is salvation”/יהושע/Joshua (Num. 13:16) arguably in anticipation of the salvation YHWH was going to give Israel.³⁰ In a similar vein and in view of Israel's imminent entry into Canaan, Joshua 2 features a woman named Rahab/“he [YHWH] has made a wide expanse,” gesturing towards Israel's upcoming territorial expansion. Since apart from God and Joshua, Rahab's role in the Conquest is second to none,³¹ this Canaanite woman reads as, to use a biblical idiom, a person of renown/אשת השם (lit. of the name [cf. Gen. 6:4]).

3 Rahab: Joshua 2 as a “Midrash” on Joshua 1

Admittedly, the name *Rahab* could have a number of meanings and as such could be a case of multivalent polysemy in Joshua. Discussing the use of personal names by biblical writers, H. Marks asserts that the “contest of pun and etymology, of phonetic coincidence and semantic entailment, reverberates across an emptiness our criticism cannot fill.”³² “Pause long enough, he writes, upon even the simplest word (consider its etymology, for instance) and it ‘changes into enigma, an abyss, a torment to thought.’ The names in the biblical narratives force us, with their disjunctive glosses [i.e. etymological notes], to enter this abyss; they generate [...] ‘perspective by incongruity,’ but raised to a higher power.”³³ Indeed, the name of Rahab in Joshua 2 (vv. 1, 3, cf. Josh. 6:17, 23, 25) is not supplied with any etymological notations. However, embedded in an ideologically, and theologically, loaded narrative, *Rahab*'s semantic potential becomes fraught with possibilities of a greater calibre than what it has been accorded so far. In fact, it will be demonstrated that through a web of רחב-related lexemes, it is linked to the potent rhetoric of *liberation*, forging affinity with none other than YHWH and his Torah.

²⁵ Weinfeld, *The Promise of the Land*, 142–43.

²⁶ Stavarakopoulou, “The Ancient Goddess, the Biblical Scholar, and the Religious Past,” 498.

²⁷ For examples of names with the verb “to make broad” representing actions of deities see, Hess, “Non-Israelite Personal Names,” 206 and the bibliography cited there.

²⁸ HALOT, 1214. Cf. רחב/“El has created a great expanse” (cf. Bab. *ra'-bi-DINGIR* = *rahab'el*). Ibid., 1214.

²⁹ Fowler, *Theophoric Personal Names*, 95. Cf. רחבום, “The (divine) Kinsman has made wide.”

³⁰ Hess, *Joshua*, 21.

³¹ Ibid., 80–1.

³² Marks, “Biblical Naming,” 42.

³³ Ibid., 33.

The prehistory of the book of Joshua is a highly complex and widely debated issue.³⁴ If, however, its text is considered in its final, canonical form, the story of Rahab in Joshua 2 can read as a commentary on Joshua 1, the book's theological prologue. Of pertinence here is that not only Joshua, as a whole, focuses on the Conquest of Canaan, Israel's Promised Land, but its own structure may also reflect West Semitic land grants.³⁵ Accordingly, opening the book and dealing with Joshua's installation as Israel's next leader, chapter 1 highlights the land the Israelites are about to occupy and prescribes Torah piety as a condition for its occupation (Josh. 1:7–8).³⁶ These elements from Joshua 1 are then picked up in Joshua 2: the word “land”/אֶרֶץ appears in it ten times (vv. 1, 2, 3, 9 [x2], 11, 14, 18, 24 [x2])) and “Torah” traditions appear on the lips of the Canaanite heroine. Hence, these motifs should hold the interpretive control for both chapters and the role of Rahab in them. The premise of the following discussion, therefore, is that closely associated with the Land of Canaan and the Torah, Israel's most prized possessions, Rahab, the Jericho sex worker, offers a “midrash” on what is promised to and expected of Joshua, Moses's successor, and by extension all Israel.

Granted, Rahab is a literary product of the author of Joshua, and as pointed out by many post-colonial readers of the text, with Israel's advancement into Canaan, she may have served not only as the “point of entry for the Israelite troops” but also for “the xenophobic ideology that accompanies them.”³⁷ However, given the number of parallels Joshua 2 shares with the story of Sodom in Genesis 19, the city of Jericho may have boasted the same level of corruption as one of the two proverbially wicked cities. This in turn may indicate that by siding with the Israelites, the invaders, Rahab challenged Jericho's own oppressive establishment.³⁸ Regardless of how the Conquest account is read – an immoral Land grab sanctioned by God or a relief programme for *the Land* itself (cf. Gen. 15:6) – the goal of the discussion at hand is to offer a more textured, theological reading of Rahab's place in the book.³⁹

3.1 Rahab and the Promised Land

For Rahab's affinity to the Promised Land it is worth noting that within the Pentateuch a variety of traditions either explicitly or implicitly gender the Land of Canaan feminine. In a similar vein, Rahab in Joshua is often read as a gendered symbol of the Land in general and of Israel's enemy in particular.⁴⁰ Thus, focusing on the individualisation of Canaan as a prostitute, M. Jackson states that such

characterization ridicules the enemy by feminizing “her”, portraying “her” as a woman, but going a step further to portray her even more derisively as a prostitute [...] The name of this “girly” enemy further reveals her nature: she is “wide, broad;” she can be counted upon “to open herself” and allow herself “to be taken” without resistance. As Rahab is, so is Jericho [...] For the men of Israel, their army's military conquest of Jericho is no more difficult than would be the sexual “conquest” of any common prostitute.⁴¹

³⁴ As Joshua 2 disrupts the chronology in the first three chapters of the book, it is viewed as a later interpolation into the text. Butler, *Joshua*, 27–32.

³⁵ Or the structure of some of its portion. Hess, “The Book of Joshua,” 493–506.

³⁶ Josh. 1:3 outlines the land's parameters and the word “land”/אֶרֶץ appears eight times in the chapter (vv. 2, 4, 6, 11, 13, 14, 15 [x2]). Cf. Dozeman, *Joshua 1–12*, 187–8.

³⁷ Sharp, *Irony and Meaning*, 99; Dube, *Postcolonial Feminist Interpretation of the Bible*, 80; Stratton, “Consider, Take Counsel, and Speak,” 84–5.

³⁸ Curtis, “My God Will Be Your God,” 164–8 and the bibliography cited there.

³⁹ Granted, reading Joshua's agenda into Rahab's name may further “colonise” this Canaanite woman, but again, on the “hypersexualisation” of native women, see, Davidson, “Gazing (at) Native Women,” 69–92.

⁴⁰ Matskevich, *Construction of Gender in Genesis*, 104–5, and the bibliography cited there.

⁴¹ Jackson, *Comedy and Feminist Interpretation*, 91. For ridiculing warriors by comparing them to women in ANE warfare, see, Chapman, *The Gendered Language of Warfare*; Bergmann, “We Have Seen the Enemy,” 651–72.

Admittedly, in Joshua 2, Rahab does hold a representative role (vv. 9–13); yet standing metonymically for Canaan, she, however, signifies more than just its accessibility.⁴² To fully appreciate her role in the book of Joshua, the following points need to be taken into account. First, in the Hebrew Bible a desirable piece of land, among other qualities, is almost exclusively described as “broad, spacious”/רחב.⁴³ Second, according to a variety of traditions enlarging people’s territory/domain is YHWH’s prerogative, and within laments or lament-related texts, this prerogative stands for YHWH’s liberating powers. Third, in the Hebrew Bible Canaan, Israel’s Promised Land, absorbs the rhetoric of spaciousness either through רחב-based lexemes or by having its dimensions stretched (propagandistically?) beyond what Israel would ever come to possess. Finally, of interest here is the ANE trend to use the rhetoric of *liberation* – i.e. expansion of one’s territory or restoration of the displaced to their land – in the profiles of human and divine kings.

As stated above, within the Hebrew Bible the notion of a “broad space, wide expanse” is a thoroughly positive concept, and the attainment of and subsequent residence in a locale imaged as “broad” is almost exclusively the result of God’s intervention following some sort of a crisis. Thus, in Genesis 26 after a quarrel over the wells with the herdsmen of Gerar, Isaac moves away and digs a well which he calls Rehoboth/“wide [uncontested?] expanses/wide streets,” stating that, “for now the Lord has made room for us, and we will be fruitful in the land”/וּפְרִינוּ בְּאֶרֶץ (v. 22). Equally, in the Psalter God’s acts of deliverance are frequently cast as moving people to a spacious locale or pastures. In Psalm 18, for instance, the distraught speaker says that the Lord brought him forth into a broad place (וַיּוֹצִיאֵנִי לְמַרְחָב), rescued him, as he delighted in the psalmist (v. 20 [19], 37 [36]; cf. 2 Sam. 22:20, 37; cf. Pss 4:1, 31:9 [8]; 118:5; 119:45; Job 36:16).⁴⁴ Given this usage of the root רחב, Bartelmus calls this language formulaic indicating “Yahweh’s deliverance from affliction.”⁴⁵

Additionally, biblical and post-biblical liberation texts consistently feature YHWH as the subject of the Hiphil forms of רחב (e.g. Exod. 34:24, Deut. 12:20, 19:8).⁴⁶ In fact, bringing motifs of land provision and liberation together, the Song of Moses in Deuteronomy 33 identifies YHWH as גד, מרחיב, i.e. the one who enlarges space or domain for the tribe of Gad (v. 20).⁴⁷ Coming across as a proper name, this formulation accentuates YHWH’s nature echoing the aforesaid trend to cast ANE deities and kings as liberators of displaced and landless persons and to enshrine such acts of benevolence in their titles and

⁴² Relatedly, Frymer-Kensky suggests that due to Joshua’s allusive writing, the Rahab account needs to be read alongside other spy stories. Frymer-Kensky, “Reading Rahab,” 59. Interestingly, Jdg 1:23–6 speaks of a man who trades security for a piece of intelligence against Bethel, his own town and its citizens. More specifically, the Israelites (1) ask the man to show them “the entrance to the city”/מְבוֹא הָעִיר (note the root בוא/“enter, come into”) and (2) promise a reward to him for his services. What is intriguing, however, is that he is never read in terms of his “accessibility,” “penetrability,” and willingness “to be taken” without resistance. For the sexual implications of בוא see, Gen. 16:2; 29:21, 23; 30:4; 38:2; Jdg 16:1; 2 Sam. 11:4; 12:24; 16:21, 22, etc.; see, also, Warren-Rothlin, “Euphemism and Bible Translations,” 865–9. Admittedly, the biblical texts cited above feature women as the object of the verb בוא/“enter, come into.” However, given that xenophobic homosexual violence was practiced in Canaan (Genesis 19, Judges 19), a sexual reading of the conquest of Bethel is possible; yet no one ventures such a reading.

⁴³ E.g. Jdg 18:10; cf. *CAD, R*, 155–6, 163.

⁴⁴ Incidentally, this psalm has a number of allusions to the Exodus story.

⁴⁵ *TDOT*, 435; cf. *TDOTTE*, vol. 3, 1090–1. Cf. Jabez’s cry which reflects a similar sentiment, albeit with the verb רבה, when he pleads with God to enlarge his border (1 Chr. 4:10).

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, 1090.

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, 1090. “Gad’s ‘enlarger’ is God who frees him from the foes who hem in and broadens his territory (Gen. 26:22; cf. with גבול *border* Am. 1¹³ Ex. 34²⁴ Dt. 12²⁰ 19⁸),” Driver, *Deuteronomy*, 410. But note F. M. Cross Jr.’s and D. N. Freedman’s reservations regarding the MT: “Masoretic *marhīb* is suspicious, as the only instance in which the blessing is applied to Yahweh instead of the tribe. Read rather, in all probability, *merhāb* or *merhā^abē gād*, ‘the broad land(s) of Gad.’” Cross and Freedman, “The Blessing of Moses,” 208. Given the texts cited here (i.e. where God expands tribal and national territories, as well as portions of individual persons), the MT of Deut. 33:20 should be retained. Of further interest here is that ANE deities and kings habitually boasted about similar powers (e.g. “Hammurapi, the lord who enlarges the land” [*CAD, R*, 154, 157]; cf. the names of two cities, Aššur-Extended-His-Dominion and Aššur-Extend-Your-Dominion [*CAD, R*, 158]).

names.⁴⁸ Furthermore and as seen from the contours of Judah's resurgence post-exile and its feature in some Qumranic texts, this spatial trope will prove tenacious in Israel's restoration literature. Hence, addressing the post-exilic community personified as an abandoned woman the Isaianic poet urges her to enlarge (הרחיבי) the site of her tent and to stretch out the cords of her habitation (Isa. 54:2). Echoing biblical psalms of lament, the supplicant in 1QH^{XVII}, 27 prays for "the everlasting expanse," i.e. for being released from all afflictions (רחוב עולם בצרת נפשי).⁴⁹

Of greater pertinence for the discussion at hand is that in a variety of texts, the Promised Land itself is profiled as "spacious." Thus, Exod. 3:8 speaks of it as "good and spacious"/טובה ורחבה and Neh. 9:35 asserts that it is "broad and fertile"/הרחבה והשמתה.⁵⁰ The Apocryphon of Moses from Qumran (4Q377i9) appears to go even further by claiming that it is "better and *more spacious* than the lands of other nations"/מא[רצות עת]י[ם] א[חרים] (cf. 4Q378XI, 4). Admittedly, such presentation of the Land has not gone unnoticed in relation to Rahab's story in scholarship and has been linked to her name; albeit in a rather unexpected manner. Thus, connecting the two, Hawk reads this Canaanite woman as an "avatar of the land's darker side – the land as seductress, promising fulfilment apart from Yahweh and Yahweh's commandments, sheltering Israel yet luring it into forbidden intrigues." Accordingly, for Hawk, Rahab's name in Joshua is fraught with "ominous connotations."⁵¹ A closer analysis of the Land marked as "broad" and Rahab herself, however, yields a qualitatively different reading of the latter.

Of interest here is that Rahab's story, according to T. Frymer-Kensky, is "a masterpiece of allusive writing," that is "set in the first five chapters of the book of Joshua, which contain numerous Pentateuchal allusions designed to have readers keep in mind the activities of Moses as they read Joshua."⁵² Additionally, through a web of intertextual resonances, "the beginning of the conquest echoes the beginning of the Exodus."⁵³ Given biblical profiles of the Promised Land cited above and given the "Land" motif in Joshua 1–2, Rahab's "broadness" should be read in terms of Canaan's territorial features. That is, following Joshua 1 with its discourse on the *spacious* Land promised to Moses and about to be given to Israel (vv. 2–4, cf. Exod. 3:8), the Israelite spies in Joshua 2 encounter a native whose very name encapsulates and recaps their national move from bondage to redemption – "he [God] has made a wide expanse." This in turn is backed up by the native's confession, "the Lord has given you the land" (v. 9), a confession which is later passed on to Joshua, "the Lord has given the whole land into our hands" (v. 24). Therefore, if Joshua 2 is freed from unnecessary sexualised readings of the Jericho woman, the latter emerges as an integral part in YHWH's resettlement programme, whereby his people are gifted with a spacious land, a highly desirable commodity in ANE. Standing for the Promised Land itself and cast as an agent facilitating Israel's freedom, Rahab, the Canaanite, reads as the one who enlarges Israel's domain/מרחיבת ישראל (cf. Deut. 33:20).⁵⁴

48 Stol, "Old Babylonian Personal Names," 192. For YHWH gathering the displaced see, Widengren, "Yahweh's Gathering of the Dispersed," 227–45. Cf. שׂאֵר יִשׁוּב/"the Remnant Will Return" (Isa. 7:3).

49 TDOT, 437. Here the psalmist longs for eternal healing, well-being, strength, and deliverance. Cf. 11Q5XXII, 14, which envisages Zion as a "broad space," i.e. a place of freedom (רומי ורחבי ציון) (cf. 4Q88VIII, 14).

50 Incidentally, every time this adjective appears in Genesis through Kings, it describes land (e.g. Gen. 34:21, Exod. 3:8, Jdg 18:10). Hawk, *Every Promise Fulfilled*, 62. For the land cast as broad via rhetorically enhanced dimensions see, for instance, Gen. 15:18–21; 28:14; Josh. 1:3.

51 Hawk, *Every Promise Fulfilled*, 62.

52 Frymer-Kensky, "Reading Rahab," 58.

53 Ibid., 59.

54 Interestingly, discussing a land grant from Alalakh (AT 456) in connection with Joshua's structure, Hess points out that the section regarding the central allotment in AT 456 is framed by two similar sounding elements, i.e. a name of a destroyed city and the promise of yet another town to be added to Yarimlim's share. Given this, Hess notes an *inclusio* for Joshua 13–23 created by means of a notation regarding Joshua's age. Hess, "The Book of Joshua," 502–3. On the significance of personal names for geographical locales, see, also, Hess, "Achan and Achor Names," 89–98. As argued here, following the Pentateuchal narrative, the Rahab story echoes earlier promises regarding the Land through a proper name. Equally, however, in Joshua 2, *Rahab* ("he [God] has made a wide expanse") creates an *inclusio* with v. 24 ("the Lord has given the whole land into our hands"), with v. 9 ("the Lord has given you the land") standing in the middle of the chapter.

As such, she represents prerogatives and acts elsewhere associated only with YHWH, Israel's divine patron.⁵⁵

3.2 Rahab and the Torah

Of further interest for the present discussion is that *Rahab's* linguistic affiliation with the Promised Land and the adjacent trope of YHWH's deliverance is not the only nuance in her name worthy of note. Incidentally, regarding the Canaanite's role in the Conquest, L. Eslinger comments that she is "characterised as a whore precisely because she is the door, left open by the divine whoremonger, through which the Israelites are led to stray, 'a-whoring after other gods.'"⁵⁶ Against this and similar readings, however, it can be argued that Rahab is also brought into a close association with the Torah, which in its essence, like YHWH who authored it, is tasked with the work of *liberation*. Of interest here is that in Joshua's theological prologue, Joshua is solemnly urged to meditate on the Torah day and night to be prosperous and successful in the land (Josh. 1:7–8; cf. Deut. 6:1–3). In light of Joshua's (and Israel's) present context – delivered from bondage (Exodus), yet never fully liberated (the wilderness wanderings) – the focus of these directives is not accidental. In fact, the rationale for their inclusion becomes clear when Rahab is given further thought.

As argued by many, the speech Rahab delivers to the spies in Josh. 2:9–11 is not only structured in a Deuteronomistic style and contains quotes from the book of Deuteronomy, but it is also marked by allusions to the Pentateuch and more specifically Exodus.⁵⁷ Furthermore, her words from v. 11, "YHWH, your God, is God in heaven above and on the earth below," appear in the Hebrew Bible only on the lips of Moses and Solomon (Deut. 4:39; 1 Kgs 8:23). Hence, according to Spina, it is "nothing short of astonishing that Rahab utters this formula and in so doing puts herself in the same company with those two biblical heavyweights, managing to become a member of one of the most unusual threesomes in the whole Bible."⁵⁸ As argued here, this, however, is not the only "unusual threesome" that Rahab is part of. Intricately linked to YHWH himself by way of the $\alpha\eta$ -based language of restoration, she is also connected to Israel's Law, YHWH's decisive act in history.

Of relevance for the discussion at hand is that Psalm 119, a Torah Psalm *par excellence*, shares a number of key motifs with Joshua 1, and in some of its crucial claims regarding the Torah echoes the name of the Canaanite woman. Additionally, it is worth noting that the psalm casts its speaker in a variety of circumstances, most of which are adversarial in nature; so much so that the psalm or some of its stanzas read as an individual lament. In fact, W. Soll opines that not only is this psalm a lament, but it is also a lament that reflects the situation of the Babylonian exile.⁵⁹ Commenting on the lack of references to Israel's main theological tenets in this text – e.g. covenants, the Exodus, Davidic dynasty, the Temple – D.N. Freedman in turn claims that stripped of everything the afflicted psalmist envisages the

⁵⁵ For the "territorial" reading of Rahab's name proposed here it is noteworthy that this Canaanite heroine resided in the city wall and, hence, on the periphery of the city and the border of Canaan (Josh. 2:15). Cf. Dozeman's observation that "the details of the window as a threshold to Rahab's home and its liminal location in the wall of Jericho are crucial to the narrative." Dozeman, *Joshua 1–12*, 248. Although he reads this narrative detail as a signifier of Rahab's trade (cf. Enkidu's curse of the prostitute Šamḫat, i.e. she will spend the rest of her life in the "shadow of the rampart"). On the multifaceted role of liminal spaces in ANE (borders, city gates, inns/taverns, etc.), see, Bodi, "The Encounter with the Courtesan," 14–6; May, "Gates and Their Functions in Mesopotamia and Ancient Israel," 77–123. For the significance of such spaces for gathering military intelligence, again, see, Weinfeld, *The Promise of the Land*, 142–3. See, also note 76 below.

⁵⁶ Eslinger, *Into the Hands of the Living God*, 41–2.

⁵⁷ Cf. Butler's observation that "the Deuteronomist has introduced his own theological conception into the mouth of Rahab in vv. 9–11." Butler, *Joshua*, 31.

⁵⁸ Spina, *The Faith of the Outsider*, 60.

⁵⁹ Soll, *Psalm 119*, 152–4.

Torah as a reflection of “Yahweh’s nature and character, divorced from Israel’s history [...]”⁶⁰ Whatever his circumstances are, within his world, Torah is “left as the [only] theological category of Yahweh’s revelation and activity in the world.”⁶¹

The context(s) and nature of the psalmist’s constraints may now be irretrievable, yet it is against some hostile backdrop that he discusses the benefits of Torah study utilising the root רחב.⁶² Hence, celebrating God’s law, he claims that he has seen “a limit to all perfection,” yet YHWH’s commandment is “exceedingly broad” (רחבה מצותך חמד, v. 96). To this individual in distress, God’s law is wide in its scope, it is relevant, it has “an unlimited range of efficacy.”⁶³ Additionally, reflecting on the value of Torah piety, the psalmist states that God through his word enlarges his heart (כי תרחיב לבי, v. 32) and increases its capacity;⁶⁴ this in turn has a liberating effect on the sufferer.⁶⁵ In another vignette of the Psalm, the distressed speaker asserts, “I will walk about in freedom/ברחבה (lit. in a broad space), for I have sought out your precepts” (v. 45; cf. Ps. 18:37, Job 36:16). H.J. Kraus explains that “[f]rom the confinement and oppression of the hostile attitude the persecuted person is brought to the wide-open realm of freedom by the obedience to Yahweh’s word and instruction. [‘In a broad space’/]ברחבה (v. 45) in its origin is a characteristic term for ‘the nomadic feeling for life.’”⁶⁶

The inner, combined logic of these vignettes in the Psalm indicates that when one’s heart is made “broad,” its capacities are enlarged by the Torah, whose precepts are “broad” or all-encompassing, then their existence is marked by freedom and security, literally “spaciousness.” Thus, the trajectory of release from adversarial forces in Psalm 119 is closely aligned with Torah observance. As such, this trajectory coalesces with the general course of Israel’s liberation in the Exodus–Sinai (Law-Giving)–Conquest programme.⁶⁷ Relatedly and more specifically, on the eve of the Conquest, a major confrontation with indigenous Canaanite groups, Joshua is commanded “to obey all the law” and not to “turn from it to the right or to the left” (Josh. 1:7). Aimed at Joshua and his people, this imperative, or rather the logic behind it, is first tested out by Rahab. Facing Israel’s advancement into Canaan and the possibility of destruction with other inhabitants of the land, she clings to Israel’s Torah and survives. Accordingly, through a convergence of narrative details, Pentateuchal echoes in her speech, and the semantics of her name, Rahab finds herself aligned with YHWH and his Law and thus joins the ultimate “threesome” in the Hebrew Bible. Yet, more needs to be said about her speech and actions.

3.3 Rahab’s Hearing in Joshua 2

Of further relevance for Rahab’s link to the Torah is that her speech in Josh. 2:9–13 not only indicates her familiarity with Israel’s beliefs but also accentuates the sense of *hearing* (vv. 10, 11). Recent studies on the

⁶⁰ Freedman et al., *Psalms 119*, 91.

⁶¹ *Ibid.*, 91.

⁶² In the Psalter, “[w]idth, or open space, stands for health and freedom//narrowness, or confinement, means suffering and oppression.” Eidevall, “Spatial Metaphors,” 134.

⁶³ Kraus, *Psalms 60–150*, 418. Note the *Lamed* strophe in Psalm 119 is identified as “the Saving Power of the ‘Eternal’ Torah.” Hossfeld et al., *Psalms 101–150*, 264.

⁶⁴ Kraus, *Psalms*, 403. Cf. the *Dalet* section is identified as “Between Death and Life.” Hossfeld et al., *Psalms*, 264.

⁶⁵ *TDOT*, 431; cf. “he [God] makes my heart wide, i.e., he gives it liberation, joy, confidence and insight.” *HALOT*, 1211. Cf. Isa. 60:5, which has the “expansive heart,” representing “deliverance from an oppressive situation.” *TDOT*, 431. In Ps. 25:17 another petitioner implores YHWH “to give his heart room, i.e., to give him ‘breathing space’ [רחיבו] in both the physiological and the psychological sense.” *Ibid.*, 431. Note that *BHS* proposes to emend תרחיבו הרחיבו, “to make wide (meaning to lighten the needs of) my heart Ps. 25:17.” *HALOT*, 1211. Noting that the phrase “because you expand my heart” is rare, K. A. Reynolds links it to 1 Kgs 4:29 (רחב לב) and reads it as a cipher for enhanced intellectual powers. Reynolds, *Torah As Teacher*, 195–6.

⁶⁶ Kraus, *Psalms*, 416.

⁶⁷ Incidentally, Psalm 119 does not mention the Promised Land, yet it hints at the idea that the Torah itself is the Promised Land (cf. Ps. 119:55–7, 98). Botha, “Interpreting ‘Torah’,” 1–7; Deißler, *Psalms 119*, 209.

sensorium as part of epistemological processes in the body demonstrate that in the Hebrew Bible the faculties of sight and hearing often hold a place of prominence.⁶⁸ Moreover, in his article on the hermeneutics of hearing, K. Snodgrass shows that central to God's expectations of his people in both testaments is the ability to *hear* him and act in accordance with what is *heard*.⁶⁹ "Of all the commands, expectations, and desires that God has for humans, the most frequent and important is hearing, the recognition of God as the Other to whom we should give attention and listen."⁷⁰ What is envisaged in Scripture as proper hearing is in fact obedient hearing, which in turn constitutes the essence of faith, a much-sought-after ideal in human–divine relationship.

As pointed out earlier, through her confession of YHWH's sovereignty (Josh. 2:11) Rahab is linked to Solomon, Israel's proverbially wise king (1 Kgs 8:23). Incidentally, in his iconic prayer for wisdom in 1 Kings 3, Solomon in fact prays for a hearing heart/שמע לב (v. 9), so that he can discern (lit. "hear") judgment (לשמע משפט [v. 11]; cf. 2 Sam. 14:17). Of further interest here is that God responds to Solomon by giving him wisdom, very great insight, and a breadth of understanding [lit. "broadness of heart"/רחב לב] (1 Kgs 4:29 [ET]).⁷¹ The "broadness of heart," i.e. understanding, gifted to the king echoes not only Rahab's cognitive and judicial prowess in Joshua 2, but, etymologically, her name as well. The cumulative effect of links between Solomon, Israel's sage-king, and Rahab, a Canaanite, casts her as an insightful, "wide-hearted" hermeneut of law and life. Incidentally, the collocation "broadness of heart" (רחב לב) from 1 Kings 4 or the notion of an enlarged heart (כי תרחיב לבי) from Psalm 119 resonates with ANE formulations such as *šurru šad-lu karaš šitūlti* "[of] broad/far-reaching heart, wise in counsel" or *šadlu šur-ru karaš ritpāšu* "[of] wide mind/heart, wide-hearted" representing wisdom and/or extraordinary intellect.⁷² Thus, a Babylonian proverb asserts that long life can produce the "broadening/widening of the heart" (BWL 252 iii 20).⁷³ In *Enuma Elish*, when Marduk's fifty names are proclaimed he is described as someone who has a heart that is deep and a mind that is wide (EE VII 155; cf. VI 138).⁷⁴ Identical or analogous formulations likewise appear in the profiles of other gods, heroes, kings, and sages who are said to be endowed with great intellectual powers.⁷⁵ If these ANE texts associate the attainment of a "wide heart/intelligence" with the gods, life experience, and, in the case of Enkidu, with sex (SB GE 1 202–208), the Hebrew Bible categorically credits YHWH and his Torah with this prerogative.⁷⁶

⁶⁸ Avrahami, *The Senses of Scripture*, 69.

⁶⁹ Snodgrass, "Reading to Hear," 1–32. For the pairing of the verbs "to hear"/שמע and "to take, accept"/קבל see, Prov. 4:10; Jer. 7:28; 9:19 (20); 17:23; 32:33; 35:13; Ezek. 3:10; Zeph. 3:2; Ps. 6:10. For the same word pair in Akkadian and Aramaic texts, see, Quick, "To Hear and to Accept," 413–29.

⁷⁰ Snodgrass, "Reading to Hear," 11, 24–7.

⁷¹ Cf. רחב אולת as a play on רחבעם in B. Sira 47:23.

⁷² CAD, §, 260; CAD, Š/1, 49.

⁷³ CAD, R, 156, CAD, §, 260.

⁷⁴ CAD, R, 155. Cf. an incantation addressed to Marduk which speaks of him as an "able one, with wide understanding, sage of the gods." Abusch and Schwemer, *Corpus of Mesopotamian Anti-witchcraft Rituals*, 240.

⁷⁵ In fact, E. Frahm notes that "Many Mesopotamian rulers present themselves, in their own inscriptions, as 'wise' kings. They use Sumerian epithets such as (lú-)geštug-dagal-la 'man of wide understanding' (literally, '(man) with a wide ear'), lú-igi-gál-tuku 'knowledgeable man' (literally, 'man who has what requires eyes'), or gal-zu-níg-nam-ma 'who is wise in everything', and Akkadian ones such as *āhiz nēmeqi* 'who has acquired deep wisdom', *eršu* 'crafty', *hāsis kal šipri* 'clever in every type of work', and *mūdū* 'knowledgeable', among others." Frahm, "Keeping Company," 509. On the negative use of the collocation "wide heart," i.e. arrogant (רחב לב) in the Hebrew Bible, see, Ps. 101:5, Prov. 21:4.

⁷⁶ On the initiating/civilising/pedagogical role of Rahab in Joshua 2 and Šamḥat in the *Epic of Gilgamesh* see, Bodi, "The Encounter with the Courtesan," 3–18. Given Rahab's location in the "city wall" and considering the discussion above, it might also be possible to connect her to Lady Wisdom and the Woman of Valour in the book of Proverbs as both of these figures are habitually placed in public or semi-public spaces ("the public square," "street corners," and "the city gates" [Prov. 1:20, 21]; "the gate" and "entrance to the city" [Prov. 8:2, 3]; the "doorway" [Prov. 8:34]; cf. the Woman of Valour who operates in both domestic and public spheres [Prov. 31:11–31] and is praised "at the city gate" [Prov. 31:31]). Interestingly, Rahab and the Woman of Valour are already linked in rabbinic exegesis via the colour "red" featured in Josh. 2:18, 21, and Prov. 31:21 – "[r]abbinic commentators explain the woman of valour's lack of fear by associating her with Rahab, who does not fear the death of her family because of the scarlet thread bound to her window." Teman, "Red String," 39. Regarding Rahab's pedagogical/prophetic function in Joshua 2 see, Curtis, "My God Will Be Your God," 135–69.

Incidentally, taking Rahab's words, "YHWH, your God, is God in heaven above and on the earth below," as a sign of conversion, a later, Jewish source will say that "she was called Rahab[...] because her merit in repentance was so substantial (*reḥôva*)" (*T.d.Eliyy*).⁷⁷ Acknowledging her great (super-natural?) insight, Frymer-Kensky asserts that, the Jericho woman is

the first of the prophets who appear in the historical books to announce to Israel the paths of their history and the first of the women who declare and pronounce the will of God. The lines of women and prophets begin with Rahab and converge again at the end of 2 Kings and 2 Chronicles in the figure of Huldah the prophetess, who announces the destruction of Judah.⁷⁸

Interestingly enough, in the book's prologue, Joshua is promised that no one (lit. "no man") will be able to stand against him all the days of his life, and presumably in the Conquest itself (לאִי־יִצַב אִישׁ לַפְּנִיךָ [v. 5], cf. 21:44). Rahab is not a man and in Joshua 2 she exhibits some significant "standing" in relation to powerful men – she stands *over and against* the king of Jericho and his envoys and she stands *in cooperation with* Joshua's spies, and by extension with Joshua.⁷⁹ As argued here, through her liberating role, the Jericho woman also stands in cooperation with, and as a proxy for, YHWH himself.⁸⁰

4 Conclusion

Discussing the use of proper names in the Hebrew Bible, Marks asserts that their etymology coheres well with "the whole ethos of biblical iconoclasm: what the name buries or empedestals, the etymology animates or exhumes."⁸¹ As argued above, in a story with mostly nameless men, Rahab, a woman with a name and of the name/הַשֵּׁם, stands larger than life – a theology of liberation enshrined in one name, empedestaled in one person. With Joshua's own name signalling YHWH's deliverance and Rahab's name pointing at his provision of land, the opening chapters of Joshua form a theological diptych – Joshua 1 speaks of conditions for land occupation and Joshua 2 offers a lived commentary on it. Reflecting key tenets of a Pentateuchal vision of Torah piety, Rahab illustrates strategies by which the incoming Israelites could make a claim to the Land and secure their residence in it. Gesturing towards Rahab's representative role for both Canaan and Israel, Frymer-Kensky asserts that, "[h]er name, Rahab the broad, is emblematic of God's inclusion of the many and of permeable boundaries of the people of Israel."⁸² In fact, she states, Rahab emerges as a new Israel.⁸³ Sadly, this aspiration appears to be short-lived. As argued by some, Rahab and her household may have been pushed to the periphery, along with the vision she embodied. After the destruction of Jericho, according to one textual strand in Joshua 6, Rahab is placed outside Israel's camp (v. 23), which may indicate "the permanent distancing of the Rahabites from the Israelite

⁷⁷ Braude and Kapstein, *Tanna debe Eliyyahu*, 509.

⁷⁸ Frymer-Kensky, "Reading Rahab," 62.

⁷⁹ On Joshua's own bravery and resolve, see, Num. 13:30, 14:6–9. See also, the Law of Hammurabi (§109), which prescribes capital punishment to an innkeeper who knew about evil schemes made in her inn but did not reported them to the palace. Roth, *Law Collections*, 101.

⁸⁰ Again, for Rahab and other outsiders as an "integral part of God's *self-communication* to the 'elect'" in the Hebrew Bible, see, Curtis, "My God Will Be Your God" (the quote is from page 1, emphasis is mine).

⁸¹ Marks, "Biblical Naming," 34.

⁸² Frymer-Kensky, "Reading Rahab," 67. Note J. Bejon's suggestion that since רחב means "to be wide, spacious, commodious, etc.," *Rahab* could also be read as "DN is generous" (cf. Aphiah [1 Sam. 9:1], which could be seen in a similar way; cf. Arab. *afyah*/"spacious"). J. Bejon, personal communication. Cf. *Ra-pa-aš-libbi*-DINGIR/"Large (broad)-is-the-heart-of the God." *CAD*, R, 163 (cf. *libbu rapšu*, magnanimity [*CAD*, R, 165]). Cf. the name of Atrahasis which means "The Broad-of-Wisdom-Man." Foster, *Before the Muses*, 271.

⁸³ *Ibid.*, 61.

community constituted around the holy-war camp.”⁸⁴ Incidentally, on the other end of the Babylonian exile, the book of Nehemiah recounts Israel’s history and castigates its leaders – kings, priests, ancestors – for not upholding God’s law in the Promised Land, a land broad and fertile (Neh. 9:34–35). Set alongside Nehemiah 9, the Rahab narrative reads as an indictment for Israel as a whole. *Pes. K.* 13:4 will concur by stating that all the words of Scripture “used in tribute to Rahab [stand as] a reproach to Israel.”⁸⁵ Hence, against the suggestive readings of the Canaanite heroine cited above, the foregoing discussion has argued that through the figure of Rahab, Joshua 2 offers a “midrash” on Joshua 1 – from within the Land it reverberates God’s earlier promises, “he [God] has made a wide expanse,” and models a life informed by the Torah. Arguably, through her, it also offers a microcosm of YHWH’s own nature and *modus operandi* in the world.

References

- Abusch, Tzvi, and Schwemer, Daniel. *Corpus of Mesopotamian Anti-witchcraft Rituals*. Leiden: Brill, 2016.
- Avrahami, Yael. *The Senses of Scripture: Sensory Perception in the Hebrew Bible*. London, New York: T&T Clark, 2012.
- Barstad, Hans M. “The Old Testament Feminine Personal Name *rāḥāb*: An Onomastic Note.” *Svensk Exegetisk Årsbok* 54 (1989), 43–9.
- Baskin, Judith. “The Rabbinic Transformations of Rahab the Harlot.” *Notre Dame English Journal* 11 (1979), 141–57.
- Bergmann, Claudia. “We Have Seen the Enemy, and He Is Only a ‘She’: The Portrayal of Warriors as Women.” *The Catholic Biblical Quarterly* 69 (2007), 651–72.
- Bird, Phyllis. “The Harlot as Heroine: Narrative Art and Social Presupposition in Three Old Testament Texts.” In *Women in the Hebrew Bible*, edited by Alice Bach, 99–117. New York, NY: Routledge, 1999.
- Bodi, Daniel. “The Encounter with the Courtesan in the Gilgameš Epic and with Rahab in Joshua 2.” In *Interested Readers. Essays on the Hebrew Bible in Honor of David J. A. Clines*, edited by James K. Aitken, Jeremy M. S. Clines, Christl M. Maier, 3–18. Atlanta, GA: Society of Biblical Literature, 2013.
- Botha, Philippus J. “Interpreting ‘Torah’ in Psalm 1 in the Light of Psalm 119.” *HTS Theological Studies* 68 (2012), 1–7.
- Braude, William G., and Kapstein, Israel J. (tr.). *Pesikta de-Rob Kahana: R. Kahana’s Compilation of Discourses for Sabbaths and Festal Days*. Philadelphia, PA: Jewish Publication Society of America, 1975.
- Braude, William G., and Kapstein, Israel J. (tr.). *Tanna debe Eliyyahu: The Lore of the School of Elijah*. Philadelphia, PA: Jewish Publication Society of America, 1981.
- Brenner, Athalya. *I Am: Biblical Women Tell Their Own Stories*. Minneapolis, MN: Fortress, 2005.
- Butler, Trent C. *Joshua*. Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson, 1983.
- Chapman, Cynthia R. *The Gendered Language of Warfare in the Israelite-Assyrian Encounter*. Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 2004.
- Cooke, George A. *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on The Book of Ezekiel*. Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1957.
- Cross, Frank M. Jr., and Freedman, David N. “The Blessing of Moses.” *Journal Biblical Literature* 67 (1948), 191–210.
- Curtis, Anthony. “‘My God Will Be Your God’: Divine Agency and the Role of the Outsider in the Hebrew Bible.” PhD Diss. University of Durham, 2019.
- Davidson, Steed V. “Gazing (at) Native Women: Rahab and Jael in Imperializing and Postcolonial Discourses.” In *Postcolonialism and the Hebrew Bible: The Next Step*, edited by Roland Boer, 69–92. Atlanta, GA: Society of Biblical Literature, 2013.
- Deißler, Alfons. *Psalm 119 (118) und seine Theologie, ein Beitrag zur Erforschung der anthologischen Stilgattung im Alten Testament*. München: Karl Zink, 1955.
- Dozeman, Thomas B. *Joshua 1–12*. New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2015.
- Driver, Samuel R. *Deuteronomy*. Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1895.
- Dube, Musa W. *Postcolonial Feminist Interpretation of the Bible*. St Louis, MO: Chalice Press, 2000.

⁸⁴ C. Sharp explains that Joshua 6 preserves two divergent traditions regarding Rahab’s status in Israel and according to v. 23, Rahab was never fully integrated into Israel. Sharp, *Irony and Meaning*, 99. For positive readings of Rahab in Jewish sources, including her marriage to Joshua, see, Baskin, “The Rabbinic Transformations,” 141–57; Robinson, “Rahab of Canaan,” 257–73. For her positive reception in the New Testament, see, Matt. 1:5; Heb. 11:31; Jam. 2:25. On Rahab in patristic exegesis, see, among others, Felber, “Rahab und ihr Haus,” 31–48.

⁸⁵ Braude and Kapstein, *Pesikta de-Rob Kahana*, 255.

- Eidevall, Göran. "Spatial Metaphors in Lamentations 3, 1–9." In *Metaphor in the Hebrew Bible*, edited by Pierre van Hecke, 133–37. Leuven: Peeters, 2005.
- Eslinger, Lyle M. *Into the Hands of the Living God*. Sheffield: Almond Press, 1989.
- Felber, Anneliese. "Rahab und ihr Haus: Zur Heilrelevanz der Kirche bei Origenes und Cyprian." In *Biblical Women in Patristic Reception/Biblische Frauen in patristischer Rezeption*, edited by Agnethe Siquans, 31–48. Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2017.
- Foster, Benjamin R. *Before the Muses: An Anthology of Akkadian Literature*. Bethesda, MD: CDL Press, 2005.
- Fowler, Jeaneane D. *Theophoric Personal Names in Ancient Hebrew: A Comparative Study*. Sheffield: Journal for the Study of the Old Testament Press, 1988.
- Frahm, Eckart. "Keeping Company With Men of Learning: The King As Scholar." In *The Oxford Handbook of Cuneiform Culture*, edited by Karen Radner, Eleanor Robson, 508–32. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011.
- Freedman, David N., Geoghegan, Jeffrey C., and Welch, Andrew. *Psalms 119: The Exaltation of Torah*. Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 1999.
- Frymer-Kensky, Tikva. "Reading Rahab." In *Tehillah le-Moshe: Biblical and Judaic Studies in Honor of Moshe Greenberg*, edited by Mordechai Cogan, Barry L. Eichler, Jeffrey H. Tigay, 57–67. Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 1997.
- Garsiel, Moshe. *Biblical Names: A Literary Study of Midrashic Derivations and Puns*. Ramat Gan: Bar-Ilan University, 1991.
- George, Andrew. *The Babylonian Gilgamesh Epic: Introduction, Critical Edition and Cuneiform Texts*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003.
- Hackett, JoAnn. "Can a Sexist Model Liberate Us? Ancient Near Eastern 'Fertility' Goddesses." *Journal of Feminist Studies in Religion* 5 (1989), 65–76.
- Hawk, L. Daniel. *Every Promise Fulfilled: Contesting Plots in Joshua*. Louisville, KY: Westminster/John Knox Press, 1991.
- Hess, Richard S. "Achan and Achor Names and Wordplay in Joshua 7." *Hebrew Annual Review* 14 (1994), 89–98.
- Hess, Richard S. "Non-Israelite Personal Names in the Book of Joshua." *Catholic Biblical Quarterly* 58 (1996), 205–14.
- Hess, Richard S. *Joshua*. Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 1996.
- Hess, Richard S. "The Book of Joshua as a Land Grant." *Biblica* 83 (2002), 493–506.
- Hossfeld, Frank-Lothar, Zenger, Erich, and Baltzer, Klaus. *A Commentary on Psalms 101–150*. Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 2011.
- Hurowitz, Victor. "The Woman of Valor and a Woman Large of Head: Matchmaking in the Ancient Near East." In *Seeking Out the Wisdom of the Ancients: Essays Offered to Honor Michael V. Fox on the Occasion of His Sixty-fifth Birthday*, edited by Ronald L. Troxel, Kelvin G. Friebel, Dennis R. Magary, 221–34. Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 2005.
- Hurowitz, Victor. "Finding New Life in Old Words: Word Play in the Gilgamesh Epic." In *Gilgamesh and the World of Assyria*, edited by Joseph Azize, Noel K. Weeks, 67–78. Leuven; Paris; Dudley: Peeters, 2007.
- Hurowitz, Victor. "Name Midrashim and Word-Plays on Names in Akkadian Historical Writings." In *A Woman of Valor: Jerusalem Ancient Near Eastern Studies in Honor of Joan Goodnick*, edited by Wayne Horowitz, Uri Gabbay, Filip Vukosavovic, 87–104. Madrid: Consejo Superior de Investigaciones Científicas, 2010.
- Jackson, Melissa. *Comedy and Feminist Interpretation of the Hebrew Bible: A Subversive Collaboration*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012.
- Knauf, Ernst Axel. *Joshua*. Zurich: Theologischer Verlag, 2008.
- Kozlova, Ekaterina E. *Maternal Grief in the Hebrew Bible*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017.
- Kraus, Hans-Joachim. *Psalms 60–150*. Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchener Verlag, 1978.
- Lambert, Wilfred G. "Prostitution." In *Außenseiter und Randgruppen: Beiträge zu einer Sozialgeschichte des Alten Orients*, edited by Volkert Haas, 127–59. Konstanz: Universitätsverlag Konstanz, 1992.
- Marcus, David. "Prolepsis in the Story of Rahab and the Spies (Joshua 2)." In *Bringing Hidden to Light: The Process of Interpretation: Studies in Honor of Stephen A. Geller*, edited by Kathryn F. Kravitz, Diane M. Sharon, 149–62. Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 2007.
- Marks, Herbert. "Biblical Naming and Poetic Etymology." *Journal of Biblical Literature* 114 (1995), 21–42.
- Matskevich, Karalina. *Construction of Gender in Genesis: The Subject and the Other*. New York, NY: T&T Clark, 2018.
- May, Natalie N. "Gates and Their Functions in Mesopotamia and Ancient Israel." In *The Fabric of Cities: Aspects of Urbanism, Urban Topography and Society in Mesopotamia, Greece and Rome*, edited by Natalie N. May, Ulrike Steinert, 77–123. Leiden: Brill, 2014.
- Montgomery, James A. "Notes on the Mythological Epic Texts from Ras Shamra." *Journal of the American Oriental Society* 53 (1933), 97–123.
- Nelson, Richard D. *Joshua*. Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 1997.
- Noegel, Scott B. "Scarlet and Harlots: Seeing Red in the Hebrew Bible." *Hebrew Union College Annual* 87 (2016), 1–47.
- Noth, Martin. *Israelitische Personennamen im Rahmen der gemeinsemitischen Namengebung*. Stuttgart: Kohlhammer, 1928.
- Noth, Martin. *Das Buch Josua*. Tübingen: J.C.B. Mohr, 1971.
- Pitkänen, Pekka M. A. *Joshua*. Nottingham: InterVarsity Press, 2010.
- Quick, Laura. "'To Hear and to Accept': A Word Pair in the Tell Fakhariyah Bilingual Inscription." *Journal of Semitic Studies* 61 (2016), 413–29.
- Reynolds, Kent A. *Torah As Teacher: The Exemplary Torah Student in Psalm 119*. Leiden: Brill, 2010.

- Robinson, Bernard. "Rahab of Canaan and Israel." *Scandinavian Journal of the Old Testament* 23 (2009), 257–73.
- Rösel, Hartmut N. *Joshua*. Leuven: Peeters, 2011.
- Roth, Martha. *Law Collections from Mesopotamia and Asia Minor*. Atlanta, GA: Society of Biblical Literature, 1995.
- Scurlock, JoAnn. "Baby-Snatching Demons, Restless Souls and the Dangers of Childbirth: Medico-Magical Means of Dealing with Some of the Perils of Motherhood in Ancient Mesopotamia." *Incognita* 2 (1991), 137–85.
- Seri, Andrea. "The Fifty Names of Marduk in *Enūma eliš*." *Journal of the American Oriental Society* 26 (2006), 507–19.
- Sharp, Carolyn S. *Irony and Meaning in the Hebrew Bible*. Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 2009.
- Snodgrass, Klyne. "Reading to Hear: A Hermeneutics of Hearing." *Horizons in Biblical Theology* 24 (2002), 1–32.
- Soll, Will. *Psalm 119: Matrix, Form and Setting*. Washington, DC: Catholic Biblical Association of America, 1991.
- Spina, Frank A. *The Faith of the Outsider: Exclusion and Inclusion in the Biblical Story*. Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2005.
- Stamm, Johann Jakob. "Hebräische Frauennamen." In *Hebräische Wortforschung: Festschrift zum 80 Geburtstag von Walter Baumgartner*, edited by Benedikt Hartmann, Ernst Jenni, E. Y. Kutscher, Victor Maag, I. L. Seeligmann, Rudolf Smend, 301–39. Leiden: Brill, 1967.
- Stavrakopoulou, Francesca. "The Ancient Goddess, the Biblical Scholar, and the Religious Past: Re-imagining Divine Women." In *The Bible and Feminism: Remapping the Field*, edited by Yvonne Sherwood, Anna Fisk, 495–513. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017.
- Stek, John. "Rahab of Canaan and Israel: The Meaning of Joshua 2." *Calvin Theological Journal* 37 (2002), 28–48.
- Stol, Marten. "Old Babylonian Personal Names." *Studi Epigraphici e Linguistici* 8 (1991), 191–212.
- Stol, Marten (with a chapter by Frans A.M. Wiggermann). *Birth in Babylonia and the Bible: Its Mediterranean Setting*. Groningen: Styx; Leiden: Brill, 2000.
- Stratton, Beverly J. "Consider, Take Counsel, and Speak: Re(Membering) Women in the Books of Joshua and Judges." In *Feminist Interpretation of the Hebrew Bible in Retrospect: I. Biblical Books*, edited by Susanne Scholz, 80–109. Sheffield: Sheffield Phoenix Press, 2013.
- Suriano, Matthew. "Remembering Absalom's Death in 2 Samuel 18–19: History, Memory, and Inscription." *Hebrew Bible and Ancient Israel* 7 (2018), 172–200.
- Tamarkin Reis, Pamela. "Uncovering Jael and Sisera: A New Reading." *Scandinavian Journal of the Old Testament* 19 (2005), 24–47.
- Teman, Elly. "Red String: The Cultural History of a Jewish Folk Symbol." In *Jewishness: Expression, Identity, and Representation*, edited by Simon J. Bronner, 29–57. Oxford, Portland: The Littman Library of Jewish Civilization, 2008.
- Warren-Rothlin, Andy. "Euphemism and Bible Translations." In *Encyclopedia of Hebrew Language and Linguistics*, vol. 1, edited by Geoffrey Khan, 865–69. Leiden: Brill, 2013.
- Weinfeld, Moshe. *The Promise of the Land: The Inheritance of the Land of Canaan by the Israelites*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1993.
- Widengren, Geo. "Yahweh's Gathering of the Dispersed." In *In the Shelter of Elyon. Essays on Ancient Palestinian Life and Literature in Honor of G.W. Ahlström*, edited by W. Boyd Barrick, John R. Spencer, 227–45. Sheffield: Journal of the Study of the Old Testament Press, 1984.
- Zadok, Ran. *The Pre-Hellenistic Israelite Anthroponymy and Prosopography*. Leuven: Peeters, 1988.