

Women of Tanach 1: Rachav

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To read

1. Joshua 2:1-24
2. Joshua 6:17 and 6:25

The basic story

3. Rabbi Levi ben Gershon to Joshua 4:20, Lessons 7 and 8

One who wishes to save someone from an aggressor should pretend to desire that this person should fall into the hands of the aggressor... The aggressor will depend upon him, and so he may be able to save the victim...

One who wishes to save someone in this way should be careful not to lie...

4. Rabbi Levi ben Gershon to Joshua 2:1

One sends spies for one of two reasons: To investigate whether a war fought against that nation might be successful... or to encourage the warriors.... Joshua only sent them to encourage Joshua and the nation, via the news that the fear of Israel had fallen upon the inhabitants.

5. Rabbi Levi ben Gershon to Joshua 8:29, Lesson 10

One should not cheat anyone of their reward; reward must be paid for every good deed. Thus Joshua instructed that Rachav and her household be kept alive, and he explained that this was because she had hid the spies sent by Joshua. He did not say it was because of the oath of the spies...

How Jewish tradition has viewed Rachav

6. Midrash, Devarim Rabbah 2:28

Jethro gave some substance to idolatry in Exodus 18:11; Naaman admitted part of Divine authority in Kings II 5:15; Rachav declared Gd to be king of the heavens and the earth in Joshua 2:11.

7. Jerusalem Talmud, Berachot 2:8

When Israel fulfills Gd's will, Gd scours the world, finds righteous people and brings them to Israel, like Jethro and Rachav.

8. Talmud, Megilah 15a

There were four beautiful women: Sarah, Rachav, Abigail and Esther.

9. Talmud, Zevachim 116b

There was not a single officer or leader who had not lived with Rachav. Rachav was ten years old when the Jews left Egypt, and she was involved in *znut* for the entire forty years in which the Jews travelled through the desert. She converted at the age of fifty, saying, "May it all be forgiven in exchange for the rope, the window and the flax [she used to hide the spies]."

10. Jerusalem Talmud, Berachot 4:4

R' Shimon bar Yochai declared: Even had her family included two hundred people, who had joined two hundred families, all of them would have been saved in her merit.

What Rachav did for us

11. Numbers 13:33

We were in our own eyes as grasshoppers, and so we were in their eyes.