



Flower Girl Greetings™

magnifying the beauty of God's Word

Rahab's Story

A Story of Redemption

by Beth Ann Phifer

1

She was barren and abandoned. Her husband no longer had use for her. Her family's homes were crowded; she would be in the way. The city of Jericho was big and dark and cold. Where would she go? With little hope or skill, she searched and found work at an inn built into the outside wall of the fortified city. She could live there if she welcomed the guests and satisfied their needs. As each day passed, her inner sense of worthlessness and filthiness increased. She no longer heard *Rahab* when her name was spoken, but *Harlot*. But why was that so bad? Hadn't she been made to be used?

She found solace on the roof of the inn where she would escape in the early morning stillness before dawn...still night...still time...still. There she would lose herself in the wonder of countless stars and the Creator who placed each one so carefully. She worshipped His character displayed in the order, light and beauty in the expanse above her. Night after night, she cried out to Him. Surely One so ordered, so beautiful, could release her from this pit...there must be another way, a way out of this steady stream of demeaning, slimy abuse that pounded her closer and closer to insanity, that threatened to suffocate her breaking heart. Deep called to deep. Surely the One who made heaven and earth cared about *her*. Jericho was swarming with the news of this Great God Who had miraculously delivered a tribe He called His own. Perhaps this God was the One drawing her, commanding her adoration. Rahab heard nothing particularly unique or good about the people of this tribe; it's just that conquering wonders lay in their path, and they seemed protected and strong, always singing, a devoted family. Jericho had been weak with panic since they heard this tribe was coming nearer to their region.

2

Harvest-time had settled on the land and, from her window, Rahab could see the flax farmers transporting their tied bundles on carts; the stalks would be dried and used for cords and clothing. Could she earn her living differently? At daybreak each day, she began walking to the field of a rich landowner to gather the stalks of flax that had been left behind after the gathering. She had to work quickly for, if the stalks were left too long on the ground, the stems would become too brittle to use. She carried the stalks in the folds of her

apron to her roof where she carefully and methodically ordered them for drying on racks she had constructed from branches and cloth. Her consistent upward gaze to the order and beauty of the night sky had left its impression in her hidden emotions, and she was eager to make beautiful fabric, string, and cord. Sometimes at night when she prayed, she would hide under the stalks and pretend they were protecting her from the big, dark, cold world.

A few hours each day, Rahab cleaned and sorted the flax. She separated the fibers and created fine thread, thicker cords, and strong rope. She used the dried eggs of the kermes insect to dye the strands brilliant scarlet, crimson, and other varying shades of red. No other dye had been found to be more permanent and vivid; it could not be removed from whatever it touched.

3

At just the time her strands were dried and prepared for the market, two men arrived at the door of the inn. They were weary, dirty and hungry, but kind and respectful; they didn't make the usual requests, but sought a resting place. When she realized they were spies from the Beautiful One's tribe that had come to investigate the land, she took them to her hiding place under the stalks of flax on the roof. A messenger from the city's king saw the men enter the inn and came ordering the men to be brought outside. But Rahab redirected the king's men and they left pursuing the spies through the open gate and on to the road toward the Jordan to the fords.

The kind men settled down to sleep under the flax stalks, but Rahab hurriedly climbed the ladder to warn them, "I know that the Creator of the stars is on your side," she said, "We have heard how He dried up the Red Sea before you when you came out of Egypt many years ago and how miracles continue to surround you. All courage has melted from our hearts, because your God, He is the God of heaven and earth, and His beauty and love must reign! Oh, how He must grieve when He looks on our city! Please, I beg you to be kind to me and my family and spare us from destruction." The men were grateful and agreed and asked her to tie one of her scarlet cords in her window on the outside wall of the city so they could recognize her room when they returned. She secured two flax ropes to a large beam on the side wall and let the men down through the window urging them to go to the hills away from the pursuers and to hide there for three days until the pursuers returned. Then she hung a scarlet cord in her window and waited for their return.

4

News on the streets of Jericho spread of more miracles surrounding the special tribe and the intrusion of their spies. The kings of the region had thought they would be safe from an invasion, since they were west of the Jordan River and the tribe was east. The overflowing river of harvest-time would ensure the separation. But the news quickly

reached them that, just as the Red Sea had been parted and the ground made dry for them to walk through, the Jordan, too, had been prepared as a walkway; it was reported that the water flowing downstream stood still and rose in a huge mass like a heap completely cutting off the flow of water to the Dead Sea. The tribe was crossing from the east side of the river opposite Jericho. Fear rose to delirium. Each person in the tribe had arrived safely to the west side of the river, and the water resumed its full course; they would not be returning.

After an agonizing week of waiting within the walls of Jericho, rumors pierced the air...the tribe was nearer, camping just east of Jericho in a place the tribe named Gilgal. The kings of the region knew this word; it boasted of victory and favor with God, the rolling away in a heap of the rivers of past disgrace, a new beginning, the arrival at a determined, hoped-for destination.¹ Just the name *Gilgal* pressed terror further into their bones. So, Jericho was tightly shut in dread – no one left or entered.

5

Rahab kept watch longingly, fearfully out her window as the red cord on the outside wall waved a cry for salvation. She pondered the enormity, the *coincidence* of the path she had chosen in recent months. The skill she had gained in order to be freed from her prison had become the means, the tool of her deliverance in a far greater magnitude than she could have imagined. Not only had the twine-making been a joyful diversion from the ugliness around her, but the stalks had hidden the kind men, and the ropes had helped them escape. And now the brightly colored cord, an intense splash against the bleak stone exterior, would soon be her banner of rescue. Its brilliance left no question of her location in the melancholy atmosphere. The flax stalks had represented the money she had needed; but now, no money could deliver her...only this...One.

With her waiting eyes on the horizon each day, her fear gradually diffused into swelling trust. The Creator was *her* Creator. She had wound the fibers into exquisite threads, but He was the One who had woven the minutes of her hours, had supplied the flax and sent His people to her. He *was* mindful of her! He *did* hear her cry! She belonged to Him no matter what her past had been! This profound inner knowing was joined with a mysterious wind she couldn't see but she could feel – brand new! She had been redeemed! Born again! Praise filled her tiny room and peace soaked the sunlit walls.

¹ The actual meaning of *Gilgal* is *circle* for it was at Gilgal that the memorial stones from the center of the dried-up Jordan were placed in a circle to remind the Israelites and their children that the Lord had brought forth their deliverance, had brought them full circle out of bondage. It was the Lord who caused the Red Sea and the Jordan River to part to enable them to walk on dry ground. The land of Gilgal was the first conquered land for the new generation of Israelites. It was a land flowing with milk and honey. The name of the city also means *wheel* or *rolling away as a heap*. Joshua 5:9 records, "This day have I rolled away the reproach of Egypt from off you. Wherefore the name of the place is called Gilgal unto this day." This day, God declared a new name.

6

As she continued to scrutinize the landscape, she finally noticed a line of movement growing into an army of marching warriors. She secretly called for her family to remain with her, urging them to believe they would be delivered. For the next six days, the warriors passed her window, once each day. Voluminous ram's-horn trumpets blew incessantly pushing intimidation deeper into the city. However, no sound of voices could be heard, creating an eerie somberness. The procession surrounded a large box of importance that seemed to guide them.

At night, it was quiet; Rahab waited and wondered. The stars remained steady as the town became paralyzed. Her family was pressed in the small space of her room. Her brother paced nervously. The others sat quietly and stiffly downcast anticipating the worst. Finally, her brother helped her secure more thick ropes to a beam on her floor near the window in hopes they could use them to escape their felt doom.

7

On the seventh day, they heard the march again, but this time it penetrated the dawn. The procession had only passed her window once each day, streaming closer and closer; but, this day, the movement passed her window seven times. The sound of the horns became almost unbearable in its steady, droning pursuit. Suddenly, an unusually prolonged blast of a horn was followed by a man's shout followed by a greater shout of all the warriors, breaking the ominous silence! She heard loud crashes around her with cries of horror. The floor and walls rumbled and roared around her as the marching tribe began to run toward the city. Rahab could see rubble flying and crumbling around her. The walls of the city quaked furiously. Then, she recognized the two men who had made the promise to her running in her direction. Next to the red cord, she threw out the two ropes that had been secured to the floor. The two men pulled the ropes away from the wall creating two railings that precariously guided Rahab and her family over the steps of the dangerous fallen stones. How were they protected from the flying debris? They were thrust from the collapsing walls and ushered away from the city as if enveloped in a protective cloak of unseen angels. After they entered the security of Gilgal, Jericho was destroyed with fire.

Epilogue

An Extension of Redemption

And so, Rahab was folded into the people God called His own. She learned His freeing, life-giving laws. Salmon, a man of great integrity, was attracted to her kind heart, her love of God, and her creative skillful hands. They married and gave birth to a son, Boaz.

Boaz, like his mother Rahab, was ordered, compassionate, and devoted to God. He grew strong and zealous and, like his father, was drawn to a foreign woman of noble character named Ruth who also humbled herself to gather the remainder of a harvest in his field, just as her mother-in-law Rahab had done. Ruth was from the land of Moab. Her mother-in-law, Naomi, sojourned there during a famine in her homeland of Bethlehem during the time when judges ruled the land. After Naomi's husband and two sons died and the famine ended, she returned to her land insisting that her two daughters-in-law stay in Moab to find husbands. But just like Rahab, Ruth loved Naomi's God and insisted that she go with her to the land of Judah.

Boaz and Ruth gave birth to Obed, the grandchild of Rahab and Naomi.

Obed fathered Jesse who fathered David, the singing shepherd king, in the line of Joseph who fathered Jesus, the Holy Son of God and the Redeemer of all who respond to God's light.



God heard Rahab's cry on the roof in Jericho...under the flax stalks under the stars...and was delighted that she found hope in Him; her trust was His delight – nothing more, nothing less. Her protection of His people proved her trust, since she had been drawn to the kindness of the spies. She spoke everywhere of God her Redeemer, Who looked past her broken sinfulness to her love for Him.

The Lord spoke through Isaiah the prophet about 700 B.C., "Come now, and let us reason together, though your sins are as scarlet, they will be as white as snow; though they are red like crimson, they will be like wool." The Hebrew words for *crimson* and *scarlet* come from the same Hebrew root word *tôlā* meaning *worm*. This word refers to the female kermes insect whose eggs provide a brilliant red pigment known for its high value, rich hue and permanency. So, what we read in Isaiah 1:18 is: Though your sins have left a permanent stain just like the dye made from the kermes' eggs, I will remove every trace of the stain of your sin. I can purify your life in the inward, secret places of your heart if you receive my purifying life.

Rahab could never remove the *kermes* stain from her cords of flax once it had been applied, but God had removed all trace of her disgrace because she loved and trusted Him. Generations before her descendent, David, sang his psalms of praise out in the nighttime pasture underneath the stars, her voice rose to God under the stars on top of that roof in Jericho, "He reached down from on high and took hold of me; He pulled me out of deep waters. He rescued me from my powerful enemy because He delighted in me!"²

² 2 Samuel 22:17-18