

Rahab and the Spies An Exegetical Evaluation of Joshua 2

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Part 1 of 2

INTRODUCTION

Children love stories. Why? Because stories transport them from their own time and place into the action of a different time and place. The story becomes an opportunity for the child to share the thoughts, actions and feelings of the characters in the story. This experience gives power to the story because it immediately involves the listener, pulling him or her into the events and action of the story.

The narrative account of Rahab and the spies in Joshua 2 is one such story that propels the modern reader back into the ancient history of Israel, back into a time of anticipation and pivotal consequence for God's people. But the cultural milieu of the church today is considerably different from the circumstances surrounding God's people as they prepared to enter and conquer the "Promise Land." This historical-cultural gap is usually perceived as an obstacle to interpretation and application for the modern reader.

How do we bridge this gap between the original audience and the contemporary audience? Leland Ryken points out that "storytellers do more than entertain us. They interpret the characters and events that make up their stories. These storytellers mean something by their stories."¹ Ancient storytellers had an intended purpose in writing to their audiences as they composed their stories. By first understanding the specific message to the original situation of the hearers, we are able to apply the text for contemporary congregations. Sidney Greidanus affirms this conclusion when he writes, "Concentration on the original message is the only way toward valid application."²

The intent of this paper is to introduce relevant, modern applications for the church from the story of Rahab and the spies by first understanding why the author wrote his message. This paper will be divided into two sections. Part one will focus on how the

¹ Leland Ryken, *How to Read the Bible as Literature* (Grand Rapids: Academie Books, 1984), 57-58.

² Sidney Greidanus, *The Modern Preacher and the Ancient Text* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1988), 166.

text conveys its message through a structural analysis of its twenty-four verses. This analysis will include an in-depth discussion on the narrative's original author, original audience, characters, scenes and plot structure. Part two will contain a step-by-step exposition of Joshua 2 using the original language, where necessary, to assist our interpretation of the story. This step-by-step exposition will assist us in our discussion of the passage's original meaning and its application for the church today.

English biblical references will come from the *New American Standard Bible*, and Hebrew biblical references from the *Biblia Hebraica Stuttgartensia*, unless specified otherwise.

OVERVIEW OF JOSHUA 2

Authorship and Original Audience

Determining the author and the original audience of Joshua establishes the guidelines for discovering the original meaning of Joshua 2. Unfortunately, there is little agreement among scholars today concerning the authorship and dating of the book of Joshua because there is a scarcity of unequivocal information in the text regarding the original writer and his audience.

“Opinions vary widely concerning the original agent . . . from the writings in the Talmud which say that ‘Joshua wrote his own book’ to other sources which espouse the prophet, Samuel, as the compiler.”³ Some twentieth century scholars postulate that the book of Joshua came into its final form through the Deuteronomist writer(s) around the seventh or sixth century B.C.,⁴ which would exclude Joshua, Samuel or any other pre-monarchical compiler. But there is no clear or absolute evidence to support their suppositions. Unfortunately, the absoluteness of identifying the original author of the book of Joshua becomes highly speculative because the book's internal evidences are insufficient.

There is also considerable debate regarding the original historical audience of the book. Three texts within Joshua itself are frequently cited to suggest that the book's final composition could not have preceded the reign of Saul, Israel's first king. Specifically, older names of places are given newer monograms in Joshua 15:9,49,54.

³ Marten H. Woudstra, *The New International Commentary on the Old Testament: The Book of Joshua* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1981), 5.

⁴ David M. Howard, Jr., *An Introduction to the Old Testament Historical Books* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1993), 60.

Also, some incidents recorded in the book occurred after the time of Joshua, like the conquest of Hebron by Caleb (Josh. 15:13; Judg. 8:10-10) and the indication of Joshua's death (Joshua 24:39-31).⁵ These incidents demonstrate that Joshua himself was not alive when the book reached its final form. Nevertheless, there are sufficient clues, such as references to eyewitness accounts by the author (2:21; 5:1,6; 7:21; 8:26; 14:6-12; 15:16-19; 17:14-18) to indicate that these accounts might have been written near or during the actual time of these events.

In addition, there are a number of other clues which point to the probable time and circumstances of the original audience. One protuberant clue is that the writer of Joshua assumes that the audience is familiar with the contents and teachings of Deuteronomy and the Pentateuch. G.J. Wenham has found five theological themes which bind Deuteronomy and Joshua together: the holy war of conquest; the distribution of the land; the unity of all Israel; Joshua as the successor of Moses; and the covenant.⁶

Because of the seemingly divergent testimony within the book itself, scholars establish two boundaries for its dating. The earliest proposed date of composition falls before the beginning of the monarchy, and the latest proposed date of composition is during the exile. This allows for three different potential Israelite audiences (i.e. pre-monarchical, monarchical, and exilic).⁷

In Joshua 2 alone, the author gives the reader a number of allusions to passages in the Pentateuch. These indicators, though not conclusive in and of themselves, might push us toward an original audience before the days of the monarchy who were continuing in the conquest of Canaan.⁸ Here are three of these allusions:

- Moses sends twelve men, including Joshua, to spy out the land of Canaan (Num. 13.1-16).
- God promises to send fear among the inhabitants of Canaan (Ex. 23.)
- Rahab's words of Saving Faith come from Deuteronomy 4:39.

In addition to these internal written evidences, the narrative structure assists us in finding the book's meaning and relevance. Marten Woudstra, along with Richard Pratt, divides Joshua into three main sections:⁹

⁵ Richard L. Pratt, Jr., *He Gave Us Stories* (Phillipsburg, NJ: P & R Publishing, 1990), 288-289.

⁶ Woudstra, *The Book of Joshua*, 4.

⁷ Pratt, *He Gave Us Stories*, 289.

⁸ *Ibid*, 289.

⁹ Woudstra, *The Book of Joshua*, 42-44.

- I. Conquest of the Land (1:1–12:24)
- II. Inheritance of the Land (13:1–22:34)
- III. Covenant Life in the Land (23:1–24:33)¹⁰

These textual divisions characterize how Israel was to continue the process of holy war, how Israel was to divide and administrate the land of Canaan, and how consequential it was for Israel to live in faithful obedience to the covenant.¹¹ Pratt incorporates these three motifs into one overarching theme for the original audience: “how to live in the land God had given them.”¹²

This theme of “how to live in the land God had given them” addressed a specific need at a specific time in the life of the nation of Israel, and was immediately understood by Israel. Thus, the original message from the book of Joshua is applicable for today’s audience because it is the same God who desires to save his people and demands their loyalty, and because we are the same people of God.

The next phase of our analysis of Joshua 2 will include the literary constructs of characterization, setting, and plot structure. Leland Ryken asserts, “Biblical stories are always built out of three basic ingredients: characters, setting, and plot (action). Reading a story involves paying attention to the interaction of these three elements.”¹³

CHARACTERIZATION IN JOSHUA 2

“Whenever a biblical storyteller goes beyond the documentary impulse to record what happened and proceeds to describe how it happened, he thereby signals that he wishes us, the readers, to share an experience with one or more of the characters.”¹⁴

The narrator of Joshua could have easily documented the results from the spies’ mission to Jericho. Instead he invited the reader to enter the story with him and to become personally involved through his use of the characters of the story.

The first chapter opens with God commissioning Joshua to lead the nation and ends with Joshua issuing his first instructions to the people. The reader expects the crossing of the Jordan to follow immediately, but instead the narrator zooms in for a close-up view of an event that precedes the Israelite invasion. It is an episode that requires the reader to experience the actions of the characters.

¹⁰ Pratt, *He Gave Us Stories*, 289.

¹¹ *Ibid*, 289.

¹² *Ibid*, 289.

¹³ Ryken, *How to Read the Bible as Literature*, 35.

¹⁴ *Ibid*, 34.

Joshua

Joshua's role in the story of Rahab is in stark contrast to chapter one where he was given prominence as God's chosen successor to Moses. Joshua is mentioned only in verse 1 as he directs the spies to spy out the land, and in verses 23 and 24 when, at the end of their mission, the spies return and report to him the results of their mission. He assumes a functionary role in chapter 2.

Two Israelite Spies

The two spies are not identified by name throughout the entire narrative. They are flat in description. Their characterization is "built around a single quality or trait."¹⁵ In the case of these two men, their single trait known in the narrative is their role as spies.

They were entrusted with the significant and dangerous mission of gathering information about the inhabitants of Canaan for the forthcoming invasion. These men with their "covert operation" skills would have elicited a sympathetic response from their audience. They were hunted by the king's men inside and outside of Jericho, and concealed by a Canaanite woman in the middle of a fortified enemy stronghold. They then hid themselves for three days in enemy territory before attempting the perilous crossing of the Jordan River.

King of Jericho and his Emissaries

As with Joshua, the king of Jericho and the men who search for the spies inside Jericho and in the surrounding countryside play a functionary role in the narrative, becoming the primary antagonists in the story. The king and his soldiers create tension and suspense for the audience. These first Israelite hearers would have responded in contempt to the aggressive and open hostility against their fellow country men. But this contempt also would have included mockery of the king and his emissaries, for it was one of their own who deceived and led them on a "wild goose chase."

The General Populace

The general populace of Canaan performs an essential role in the plot. From Rahab's testimony in verses 9-11 and the spies' report in verse 24, we know that fear has totally gripped the citizens of Jericho and the surrounding countryside. As flat characters, their function is to disclose first to the spies and then to Joshua that these people are terrified of the approaching Israelites. The soon-to-be invasion and warfare for Canaan will be "easy-pickens," just as God promised in Deuteronomy 2:25. This group of antagonists represents the opponents faced by the original readers, and is utilized to reassure Israel that God's promise to give them a land is indeed certain.

¹⁵ Pratt, *He Gave Us Stories*, 142.

Rahab

“Every story has a central character.”¹⁶ The protagonist is the central figure, and in this passage Rahab plays that part. In the role of the protagonist, Rahab finds herself arrayed against the King and his men. Even though her profession as a prostitute might be repugnant to the reader, she conceals the two spies and deceives the authorities, which not only saves the lives of the Israelite soldiers, but proscribes (implicates) the city of Jericho to destruction.

As Joshua was highlighted in chapter 1, so Rahab is highlighted in chapter 2. She gives us a close-up and personal view of one Canaanite living in the Promised Land. This chapter portrays her in an exemplary and representative manner. This exposure of Rahab would elicit a warm and compassionate response from the readers. These readers were to appreciate and commend her courageous acts in the face of imminent harm to herself and her family.

Lord

The Lord’s presence is felt in the story through the direct discourse of the characters. Four times (2:9,10,11,12) Rahab speaks and acknowledges that the Lord is the providential controller of the events surrounding the nation of Israel and the approaching invasion. The certainty of the promise given by the Lord to Israel is recognized two additional times by the spies (2:14,24). Even though God is not directly in the foreground, there is a revelation of his purpose and will for Israel found in the narrative.

NARRATIVE STRUCTURE (SCENES AND PLOT)

Not only does an examination of the characters in Joshua 2 contribute to the meaning of the text, but the ancient Hebrew techniques of scene composition further supplement the purpose of the narrator. In this section we will focus on the author’s use of the Hebrew conventions of scene depiction and plot structure to develop the original meaning of the narrative.

“In Old Testament prose,” says J.P. Fokkelman, “the scene is about the most important unity in the architecture of the narrative.”¹⁷ Each of these individual units exists separately because it presents the happenings of a particular place and time,¹⁸ but

¹⁶ Ryken, *How to Read the Bible as Literature*, 43.

¹⁷ J.P. Fokkelman, *Narrative Art in Genesis: Specimens of Stylistic and Structural Analysis* (Amsterdam: Van Gorcum, 1975), 9.

¹⁸ Adele Berlin, *Poetics and Interpretation of Biblical Narrative* (Sheffield: Almond, 1983), 125.

all these units collectively become the individual building blocks upon which our understanding of the story is seen in the context of the whole narrative.

There are fourteen such building blocks within Joshua 2 (see Figure 1: *Scene Divisions in Joshua 2*). The boundaries of the narrative are clearly fixed by an inclusio in the first scene (Joshua's command to the spies) and the last scene (the Spies report to Joshua). The introduction and conclusion frame the body of the story, focusing the attention of the reader on the words and action of Rahab, who is immediately introduced in Scene Two. Throughout these scenes temporal and spatial variations impart information to the reader by giving more detailed attention to certain events rather than to others.¹⁹

Scene 1	Joshua sends spies to Canaan	(1a)
Scene 2	The Spies enter house of Raha	(1b)
Scene 3	The King is told of spies presenc	(2-3)
Scene 4	Rahab hides the spies	(4a)
Scene 5	Rahab's deception	(4b - 5)
Scene 6	Rahab hides the spies	(6)
Scene 7	The King's men pursue the spies	(7)
Scene 8	Rahab's profession of fait	(8-14)
Scene 9	Rahab's act of faith	(15)
Scene 10:	Rahab's covenant with the Spies	(16-21a)
Scene 11:	Rahab displays the scarlet cord	(21b)
Scene 12:	The Spies hide in the hill country	(22)
Scene 13:	The Spies return to Joshua	(23)
Scene 14:	The Spies report to Joshua	(24)

Figure 1: *Scene Divisions in Joshua 2*

Ryken has brought attention to the unifying design of scenes in narratives.²⁰ The coherence and arrangement of the events depicted in scenes point us towards the plot structure (i.e. dramatic flow) of the story. "The essence of plot is a central conflict or set of conflicts moving toward a resolution."²¹

¹⁹ Pratt, *He Gave Us Stories*, 164-167.

²⁰ Ryken, *How to Read the Bible as Literature*, 44.

²¹ *Ibid*, 40.

Joshua 2, with its fourteen scenes, represents a five-step episodic pattern of resolution. In this five-step configuration the dramatic flow of the story progresses “in a pyramidal fashion.”²² The Rahab episode presents us with a Problem, Rising Action and Tension, a Turning Point, Falling Action, and a Final Resolution.²³

In the opening verse we see a problem arise, Joshua orders the spies on a pivotal intelligence gathering mission preceding the invasion of Canaan. Following the introduction of the problem, there is an interval of rising action as tension mounts in the description of the confrontation with Rahab by the King’s men and the subsequent hunt for the spies. Action within the story strikingly slows as Rahab offers an explanation for her actions to the Israelite infiltrators.

After this dramatic climax the narrative turns to a regressing movement by the spies as they cleverly hide from their Jerichoite pursuers, following the advice of Rahab, and return to the Israelite camp. When the spies report to Joshua, the story comes full circle, for the problem that was stated in verse 1 has been resolved in verse 24. This provides conceptual balance to the narrative as can be noted in Figure 2. The idea of symmetry or balance within the plot structure is an underlying characteristic of Old Testament narratives.²⁴

Figure 2 visually displays how these fourteen scenes can be grouped together into five distinct phases. These phases correspond to the five steps in the dramatic flow of the passage as previously stated.

The value of outlining the structural pattern of Joshua in this manner is to maintain as primary the original intention of the biblical author. Some overly zealous scholars and laymen confer too much attention on Rahab’s “lie” and her disreputable profession (i.e. as a harlot) so that other key literary devices by the author are missed. Literature is an act of communication.²⁵ Analyzing how the plot is thrust forward at the beginning of the story by conflict, how the conflict intensifies through the middle of the story, and how the conflict is finally resolved at the end of the story sharpens our focus on the author’s original intention for his first readers.

The fourteen scenes mentioned earlier will be now be discussed within the episodic structure of the story

²² Pratt, *He Gave Us Stories*, 200.

²³ *Ibid*, 200.

²⁴ Pratt, *He Gave Us Stories*, 184.

²⁵ *Foundations of Contemporary Interpretation*, Moises Silva, gen. ed. (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1996), 136.

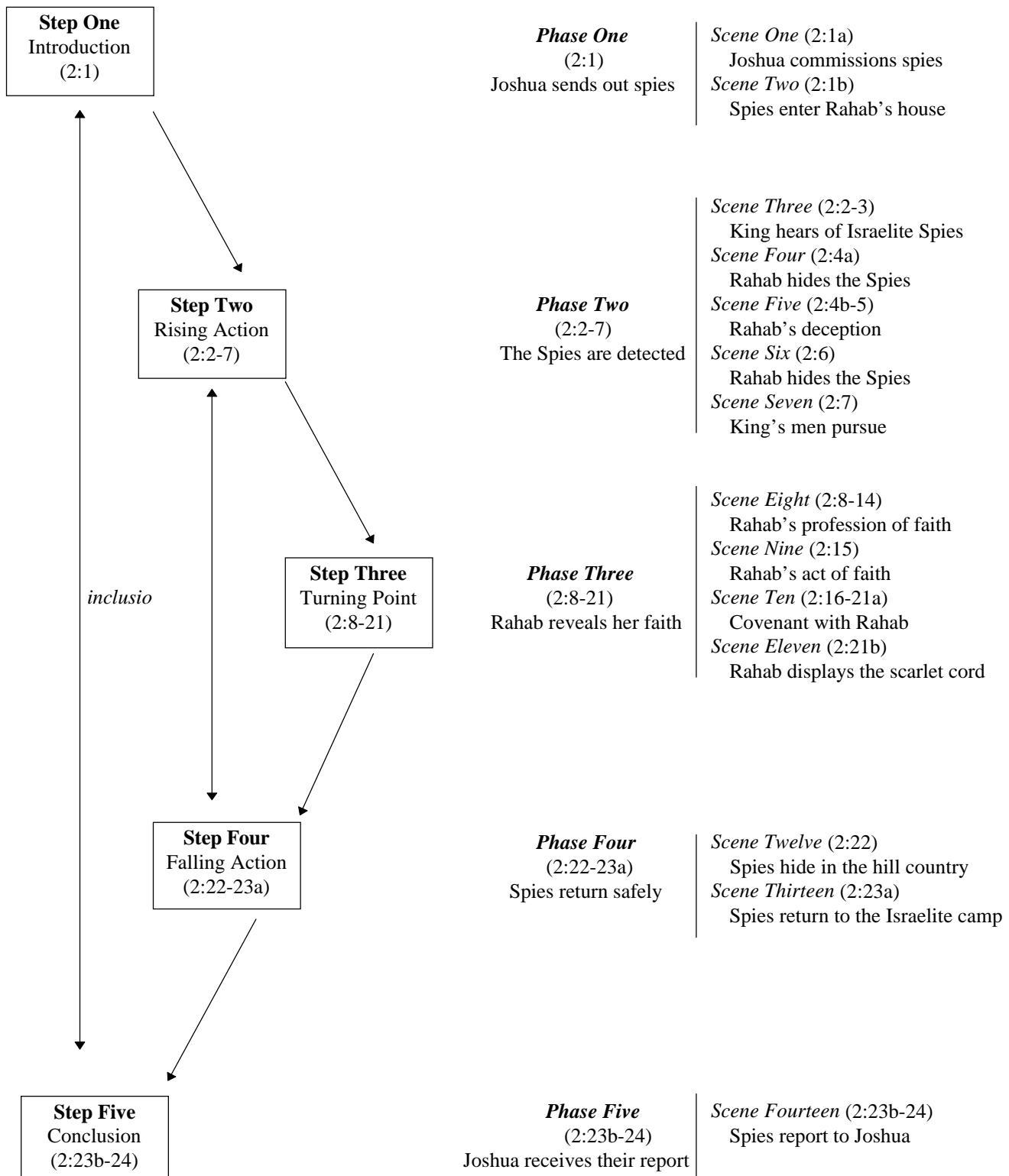


FIGURE 2. *Dramatic Flow of Joshua 2*

Phase 1: Problem (1a)

Scene 1: Joshua sends spies into Canaan (1a)

וַיִּשְׁלַח [wayishlach, “and he sent”]: Joshua, chapter 1 ends with the Reubenites, Gadites and the half-tribe of Manasseh affirming Joshua’s leadership as the entire Israelite body prepares to enter Canaan. The opening scene of chapter 2 is marked by temporal, locative and character changes from chapter 1. Joshua’s exchange with the Israelites in 1:10-18 is interrupted by a waw consecutive and an imperfect verb in 2:1a, וַיִּשְׁלַח [wayishlach, “and he sent”]. This waw consecutive represents subsequent action to the preceding verses. Location and character clues are clearly apparent because Joshua shifts from speaking directly to the two-and-a-half Israelite tribes to conversing with just two Israelites.

Scene 2: Spies enter Rahab’s house (1b)

וַיֵּלְכוּ [wayelecu, “and they went”]: An obvious geographical and time shift occurs between the first half of verse one and the second half of verse one. The spies obey Joshua’s orders, cross the Jordan and end up in the house of a prostitute. The first waw consecutive with the imperfect verb וַיֵּלְכוּ [wayelecu, “and they went”] indicates ensuing action to the previous statement. A second and third waw consecutive in this scene (וַיָּבֹאוּ [wayabo’u, “and they entered”; וַיִּשְׁכְּבוּ [wayishcebu, “and they stayed”]) complete the activity of the spies in this scene. Action in the story dramatically accelerates in this second scene because large gaps of time have been quickly disregarded by the use of these waw consecutives.

Furthermore, a new character has been introduced into the story, Rahab. By breaking the waw consecutive sequence in verse 1b and utilizing a nominal clause introduced by a single waw (וַיִּשְׁמְעָהּ, “and her name”) between the second and third waw consecutive, the writer interjects a parenthetical statement. This parenthetical statement helps build suspense and curiosity into the story.

Phase 2: Rising Action and Tension (2 - 7)

Scene 3: King is told of the spies entry into his city (2 - 3)

וַיֵּאמֶר [waye’amar, “and he was told”]: The division between scene 2 and scene 3 is again highlighted by the waw consecutive with an imperfect verb וַיֵּאמֶר [waye’amar, “and he was told”]. Other division clues are the introduction of additional characters into the narrative and a locality shift. The King of Jericho and the messenger who brings news of the Israelite presence in the city sustain tension as the story begins to slow. A different locale is depicted from that of scene 2. Now the reader finds himself in the court of the

king listening to a report from his men. The opening phrase of verse 3 is a waw consecutive with an imperfect verb וַיִּשְׁלַח [wayishlach, “and he sent”], but it does not constitute a scene break because it corresponds with the king’s response from the previous verse.

Scene 4: *Rahab hides the spies (4a)*

וַתִּקַּח [waytiqach, “and she took”]: A significant time gap occurs between verse 3 and verse 4 which isolates these verses from the earlier scene. The author opens this segment with a waw consecutive and an imperfect verb וַתִּקַּח [waytiqach, “and she took”]. This continuity signifies antecedent action by Rahab, and is likely a comment inserted into the story by the author. This is the first notation in the plot pertaining to Rahab’s intentions. The NASB and the NIV both use the pluperfect tense of the verb “took” to communicate this antecedent action (“the woman had taken the two men and hidden them”).

Scene 5: *Rahab’s response to the King’s men (4b & 5)*

וַתֹּאמֶר [wato’mer, “and she said”]: Scene 5 opens with a waw consecutive and an imperfect verb וַתֹּאמֶר [wato’mer, “and she said”]) which launches Rahab into her answer regarding the whereabouts of the spies. The writer has moved into the background in this scene, allowing Rahab to speak for the first time. Other scene division clues are the characters, Rahab and the King’s men, and the location of the discourse, in or near Rahab’s home.

Scene 6: *Rahab hides the spies (6)*

וְהִיא [wehi’, “but she”]: As in scene 4, the storyteller gives us an authorial comment concerning the condition of the spies. But unlike scene 4, this scene begins with a break in the waw consecutive chain by using a simple waw and the personal pronoun “she” (וְהִיא [wehi’, “but she”]). This alteration informs the reader that the hiding of the spies is a prior action; the spies were already hidden when the King’s men arrived to question Rahab.

Scene 7: *The King’s men pursue the spies (7)*

וְהָאֲנָשִׁים [weha’enashim, “so the men”]: A change in subjects occurs in verse 7 which causes a seventh scene division in verse 7. The simple waw attached to the noun “men” (וְהָאֲנָשִׁים) is contrasted with the personal pronoun “she” in verse 6. An additional boundary marker is the impetuous search of the King’s soldiers outside of the city. Scenes 2

through 6 all take place within the walls of the city. But upon hearing Rahab's "lie," scene 7 shifts geographically beyond the city walls.

Phase 3: Turning Point (8 - 21)

Scene 8: Rahab's profession of faith and request for safety (8-14)

וְהֵמָּה [wehemah, "and they"]: Now that the search for the spies moves outside Jericho, the drama returns inside the city. This scene shift is clearly defined by the combination of the simple waw with the pronoun "they" followed by the adverb "before" (בְּפָנֵיהֶם), which describes antecedent action. The narrator lays a framework in verse 8 by use of straight narration and a shift in surroundings for the dramatic dialogue that will take place in verses 9ff.: "she came up to them on the roof." A significant temporal variation occurs in this section of the story. Until this point the events reported to the audience have been presented at a rapid and uniform pace, but the action in scene 8 decelerates significantly, drawing the audience's attention to the words of Rahab and the spies.

Scene 9: Rahab's act of faith (15)

וַתִּזְרְקֵם [watoridem, "and she let them down"]: Later we will see that verses 8-21 mark off a rhetorical unit through the use of a structural pattern called a chiasm. The focal point of scene 9 is that Rahab exercises her faith in letting the spies down by the rope. Rahab and the spies are still conversing when the author deposits this evaluative comment within the middle of their discourse. Pratt suggests that authorial comments often form their own scenes.²⁶ This can be ascertained because the use of a waw consecutive with the imperfect verb וַתִּזְרְקֵם [watoridem, "and she let them down"] is a summation statement by the author. In addition, there is an obvious shift from dramatic narration in verse 13 to straight narration in verse 14, and then back to dramatic narration in verse 15.

Scene 10: Rahab's covenant with the spies and their escape (16-21a)

וַתֹּאמֶר [wato'mer, "and she said"]: After one short parenthetical statement the author returns to the dramatic discourse between Rahab and the spies, continuing the second part of the conversation that was left unfinished in verse 14. A scene shift occurs by employing a waw consecutive with an imperfect verb (וַתֹּאמֶר [wato'mer, "and she said"]). The use of the waw consecutive in this scene is intended to continue the dialogue from verse 14. Verse 14 is a later statement that was interrupted by the authorial comment in

²⁶ Pratt, *He Gave Us Stories*, 156.

verse 15. As in scene 8 the slow pace of the scene draws attention to the words of the characters.

Scene 11: Rahab displays the scarlet cord (21b)

וַתִּקְשֹׁר [watiqshor, “and she tied”]: Scene 11 is the last scene in phase three and is separated from scene 10 through the spatial strategy of the chronicler. The tying of the scarlet cord by Rahab to a window becomes subsequent action to the spies’ stealthy departure from her home. Secondly, a character shift occurs in this scene, from Rahab and the spies together to Rahab alone.

Phase 4: Falling Action (22 - 23a)

Scene 12: Spies hide in the hill country (22)

וַיֵּלְכוּ [wayelecu, “and they left”]: The pace of the story returns to its accelerated mode in phase four. Scene 12 includes four successive waw consecutives with imperfect verbs (וַיֵּלְכוּ [wayelecu, “and they left”]; וַיָּבֹאוּ [wayabo’u, “and they went”]; וַיִּשְׁבּוּ [wayeshebu, “and they stayed”]; וַיִּבְקְשׁוּ [wayebaqsu, “and they searched”]). This results in a “faster-than-reality quality”²⁷ to the text. The character of Rahab from scene 11 has been replaced with the two different groups of characters: the Israelite spies and their pursuers. Likewise, the setting changes because the spies are no longer inside Jericho. They hide in the hill country for three days while the King’s soldiers pursue them on the road to the Jordan River. The soldiers’ hunt for the spies is an antecedent action, but does not call for a new scene because their pursuit of the spies is not a disconnected operation, but is part of the same game of “hide-and-seek.” The phrase וְלֹא מָצְאוּ [welo’ matsa’u, “and they had not found them”], though negative, continues the waw consecutive chain and becomes a summation statement by the compiler.

Scene 13: Spies return to Joshua (23a)

וַיִּשְׁבּוּ [wayashubu, “and they started back”]: The last scene in phase 4 returns the audience to the situation with which the passage began. It is not only the waw consecutive of an imperfect verb (וַיִּשְׁבּוּ [wayashubu, “and they started back”]) which divides this scene from scene 12, but also the geography and the individuals within the scene differ. The spies leave the hill country and ford the Jordan. Corresponding to the fast action of scene 12, this scene also demonstrates a “faster-than-reality quality” because of its three successive

²⁷ Ibid, 165.

waw consecutives within the span of one verse (וַיֵּשְׁבוּ [wayashubu, “and they started back”]; וַיֵּרְדוּ [wayeredu, “and they went down”]; וַיַּעְבְּרוּ [waya‘aberu, “and they forded”]).

PHASE 5: RESOLUTION OF THE PROBLEM (23b-24)

Scene 14: Spies report to Joshua (23b-24)

וַיָּבֹאוּ [wayabo’u, “and they came”]: The last scene in the plot structure brings resolution to the problem that was first stated in phase 1 and scene 1. Seeing Joshua back in the story, the original readers anticipated that the story was almost at an end. Chapter 2 opens with Joshua sending out the spies and concludes with the spies returning to Joshua and delivering their report. The scene begins with a waw consecutive with an imperfect verb (וַיָּבֹאוּ [wayabo’u, “and they came”]), and designates a geographical scene change from scene 13. Phase five concludes with the last of the waw consecutives on imperfect verbs (וַיִּסְפְּרוּ [wayesaperu, “and they told”]), and becomes the summary statement for the entire story. Time seems to stand still as the spies report in direct discourse to Joshua. The alteration from fast to slow action between verses 23a and verse 23b-24 indicates that their report has special significance for the story.