

Joshua 2:12

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

Now therefore, I pray you, swear unto me by the LORD, since I have shewed you kindness, that ye will also shew kindness unto my father's house, and give me a true token:

Analysis

Having confessed faith in Israel's God, Rahab immediately seeks covenant protection for her family. The request 'swear unto me by the LORD' (hishav'u na li vaYahweh, הִשָּׁבְעוּ נָא לִי בַיהוָה) invokes Yahweh's name as witness and guarantor of the oath. This demonstrates her understanding that Israel's God binds His people to keep commitments made in His name. The basis for her request is reciprocal kindness (chesed, חֶסֶד)—'since I have shewed you kindness, that ye will also shew kindness.' Chesed means covenant loyalty, faithful love, and steadfast kindness, often describing God's covenant faithfulness toward Israel. Rahab's use of this covenant term shows she seeks to enter into covenant relationship with Israel and their God. Her concern extends beyond self-preservation to 'my father's house'—parents, siblings, and extended family. The request for 'a true token' (ot emet, אוֹת אֱמֶת) asks for a reliable sign ensuring the agreement's fulfillment. This covenant-making between Rahab and the spies foreshadows the inclusion of Gentiles in God's covenant people through faith, a major theme fulfilled in Christ's Great Commission.

Historical Context

Ancient Near Eastern treaties and oaths were considered absolutely binding, especially when made in a deity's name. Breaking such oaths invited divine curse and human revenge. Rahab's request demonstrates her understanding of Israelite covenant theology—oaths made in Yahweh's name were inviolable. Family

solidarity was central to ancient Near Eastern culture; individuals rarely sought salvation apart from their household. Rahab's concern for her extended family reflects this cultural value, which also appears in New Testament household conversions (Acts 16:31-34). The scarlet cord given as a token (verse 18) served dual purposes: identifying Rahab's house during conquest and symbolically representing salvation through blood, prefiguring Christ's blood-bought redemption. Ancient city warfare typically involved total destruction of inhabitants, making Rahab's request for family protection a matter of life and death. The spies' willingness to make this covenant demonstrates the beginning of Israel's mission to be a blessing to the nations (Genesis 12:3).

Related Passages

1 Corinthians 13:4 — Characteristics of love

John 15:13 — Greatest form of love

Study Questions

1. How does Rahab's concern for her family's salvation challenge individualistic Western Christianity that often ignores household evangelism?
2. What does the exchange of covenant loyalty (*chesed*) teach about the reciprocal nature of covenant relationships?
3. In what ways does Rahab's covenant with the spies prefigure the inclusion of Gentiles in God's covenant people through Christ?

Interlinear Text

וְעַתָּה ה	הַשְׁבָּעוּ	נָא	לִי	בְיְהוָה ה	כִּי		
H6258	Now therefore I pray you swear	H4994	H0	unto me by the LORD	since		
	H7650			H3068	H3588		
וְעָשִׂיתִּי מְ	עֲמָכָּ מְ	חֶסֶד	וְעָשִׂיתִּי מְ	גַם	אֶתְּ מְ	בֵּית	
I have shewed	H5973	kindness	I have shewed	H1571	H859	H5973	house
H6213		H2617	H6213				H1004
אֲבִי	חֶסֶד	וְנָתַתָּ מְ	לִי	אֹת	אֶמֶת:		
unto my father's	kindness	and give	H0	token	me a true		
H1	H2617	H5414		H226	H571		

Additional Cross-References

Joshua 2:18 (Parallel theme): Behold, when we come into the land, thou shalt bind this line of scarlet thread in the window which thou didst let us down by: and thou shalt bring thy father, and thy mother, and thy brethren, and all thy father's household, home unto thee.

James 2:13 (Parallel theme): For he shall have judgment without mercy, that hath shewed no mercy; and mercy rejoiceth against judgment.