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**THE RAPE OF DINAH:
HOW LOCALES AND ERAS INFLUENCED RABBINIC SCHOLARS AND COMMENTATORS**

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**Thesis Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of
Requirements for Ordination**

**Hebrew Union College-Jewish Institute of Religion
Graduate Rabbinic Program
New York, New York**

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Advisor: Rabbi Nancy Wiener**

Summary

The Bible is full of characters that become known to us through their actions and words. Genesis 34 is devoted to Dinah: she is raped, she is loved and her male family members avenge her attack. However, Dinah herself never speaks and, with the exception of the first two words of the chapter, וַתֵּצֵא דִינָה, she never becomes an active character in the chapter. It is up to the reader, then, to interpret what role, if any, Dinah has. One can only research and decide who the true victim(s) were: Dinah or the inhabitants of the land that were ravaged by Jacob's sons. Dinah's words were muted – her character silenced by the authors.

This thesis explores the commentaries of Rashi, Rashbam, Ibn Ezra, Ramban, Rabbag, Abravanel, Sforno, Shadal, Malbim, Zornberg and Scholz. Their perceptions of women and rape will be presented through their writings on the Dinah story. Each commentator wrote during a unique time period and was influenced by the general history of the world at that time. The wars, economy, and status of Jews in their respective countries may have affected their thoughts, and, therefore, their commentaries.

This thesis will research the following areas: 1) Commentators' views of women and rape, 2) How the historical setting influences commentators, and 3) How our historical setting influences contemporary research and modern commentaries.

This thesis contains an Introduction, five chapters arranged by historical era, as well as a Conclusion.

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Introduction

The Bible is full of characters that become known to us through their actions and words. In Genesis 34, however, the protagonist Dinah is introduced to the reader through her actions, but her words are not heard. The entire chapter is devoted to her: she is raped, she is loved and her male family members avenge her attack. However, Dinah herself never speaks and, with the exception of the first two words of the chapter, וַתֵּצֵא דִינָה, she never becomes an active character in the chapter. Instead, the words and voice of Dinah are absent from the text. It is up to the reader, then, to interpret what role, if any, Dinah has. What truly happened between Dinah and Shechem can only be speculated. One can only research and decide who the true victim(s) were: Dinah or the inhabitants of the land that were ravaged by Jacob's sons. Dinah's words were muted – her character silenced by the authors. Her screams of pain or of ecstasy cannot be heard. One cannot determine if there was a rape or not, or how Dinah became a victim; of either rape or her brothers' scapegoating, in their plan to ravage a group of people, in the name of revenge.

This thesis explores the commentaries of Rashi, Rashbam, Ibn Ezra, Ramban, Ralbag, Abravanel, Sforno, Shadal, Malbim, Zornberg and Scholz. Their perceptions of women and rape will be presented through their writings on the Dinah story. Each commentator wrote during a unique time period and in a specific country. Each of these commentators was influenced by the general history of the world at that time. The wars, economy, and status of Jews in their respective countries may have affected their thoughts, and, therefore, their commentaries.

This thesis will research the following areas:

1. Commentators' views of women and rape.
2. How the historical setting influences commentators.
3. How our historical setting influences contemporary research and modern commentaries.

Chapter One: Dinah and Rape in the Bible and Early Rabbinic Texts

Setting:

The Dinah story is placed between two other stories. Genesis 33 recalls Jacob's making amends with his brother, Esau. At the conclusion to this chapter, Jacob buys a piece of land from Hamor, Shechem's father. The Dinah story is not randomly placed into the text; rather it flows from Chapter 33 with relative ease since a relationship between the key characters is already established. Chapter 35 continues with the line of Jacob, focusing on the covenantal scene between God and Jacob, who becomes Yisrael, and ends with an account of the twelve sons of Jacob, an interesting point since no one would know that Jacob had a daughter.

The Dinah story was written some time between the tenth century BCE and the Babylonian exile of 586 BCE. According to Friedman¹, the Yahwist author(s) dominates the narrative. The Yahwist was from the Southern Kingdom of Judah, and tended to highlight the tribes and leaders from Judah who lived between 848-722 BCE. However, according to Friedman, two different stories make up the Dinah story; the J and the E authors have each written a perspective of the story, and their work has been edited to form one complete story. Both sources tell stories about the city of Shechem, which Jeroboam built and made the capital of Israel. These two stories are very different from one another. According to the J story, the capturing of Shechem was through a deceitful and vengeful act (verses 25-29), whereas in the E story, Jacob purchases land through a

¹ Friedman, Richard Elliot. *Who Wrote the Bible?* (USA: Harper and Row, 1987), 62.

business transaction (verses 15-24). The J author describes Israel acquiring land in Shechem through a massacre, while the E author has him buying it.² Shechem was an important city in Israel and how it became Israelite territory is at the heart of the story.

Genre:

Like many other stories found in Genesis, the Dinah story is a narrative account of what happened to a young person. Similar Genesis stories revolve around one of our patriarchs such as Isaac as a young man. The Dinah story in Genesis 34 is unique because it is centered on a young woman. This story serves as a typescene³ within the Tanakh; a typescene of coerced women. For example, the Dinah story is a typescene for the Amnon and Tamar story. In both of these stories, women are coerced and forced into sexual activities that are beyond their control. Here, Dinah represents the young women of her time who were either abused by husbands, strangers, or relatives.

Translation

וַתֵּצֵא דִּינָה בִּתְ-לֵאָה אֲשֶׁר יָלְדָה לְיַעֲקֹב לִרְאוֹת בְּבָנוֹת הָאָרֶץ:

1. And Dinah, the daughter of Leah that was born to Jacob went out to see (view) with⁴ the daughters of the land.

² Ibid. p. 63

³ A typescene is a biblical literary term used to describe a narrative structure that serves as a template for other narratives that contain similar themes. Alter, Robert. The Art of the Biblical Narrative. Perseus Book Group: USA, 1983.

⁴ The preposition וְ, can be translated as part of the phrase "to visit/see the daughters of the land." I have chosen to read this as though Dinah was touring the area with native women of the land. If this is true, then these women would have heard Dinah's cries of rape. Can women, though, be witnesses of rape? Maimonides lists ten people who are not competent to serve as a witness to testify – women are on this list. By gezerah shavah, it is derived that only men can serve as witnesses. Maimonides reasons that the Bible uses only a masculine form when speaking of a witness. Joseph Caro questioned this, stating that the Bible itself constantly uses the masculine form. The Talmud suggests a different reason; the place of the woman is in the home and not in court. Women are however allowed to testify on certain matters that they have expertise in, for example customs or places only frequented by women. In post-Talmudic times, the

וַיֵּרָא אֹתָהּ שָׁכֵם בֶּן-חַמּוֹר הַחִיטִּי נָשִׂיא הָאָרֶץ
וַיִּשָּׁח אֹתָהּ וַיִּשְׁכַּב אִתָּהּ וַיַּעֲנֶה:

2. And Shechem, son of Hamor the Hittite, prince of the land, saw her and he took her, and he lay with her, and he raped her.⁵

וַתִּדְבֹק נַפְשׁוֹ בְּדִינָה בַת-יַעֲקֹב וַיֵּאָחֶב אֶת-הַנָּעַר וַיְדַבֵּר עַל-לֵב
הַנָּעִר:

3. And his soul attached itself with Dinah the daughter of Jacob, and he loved the young child, and he spoke to the heart of the girl.⁶

וַיֹּאמֶר שָׁכֵם אֶל-חַמּוֹר אָבִיו לֵאמֹר קַח-לִי אֶת-הַיְלָדָה הַזֹּאת
לְאִשָּׁה:

4. And Shechem spoke to Hamor his father saying, "Take for me this girl⁷ to be (as) a woman (or wife)!"

וַיַּעֲקֹב שָׁמַע כִּי טָמְאָה אֶת-דִּינָה בְתוֹ וּבָנָיו הָיוּ אֶת-מִקְנֵהוּ בַּשָּׂדֶה
וַהֲחֹרֵשׁ יַעֲקֹב עַד-בָּאִם:

5. And Jacob heard that he had blemished Dinah his daughter; and his sons were in the field with their cattle, and Jacob was silent⁸ until they came (returned).

וַיֵּצֵא חַמּוֹר אָבִי-שָׁכֵם לְדַבֵּר אִתּוֹ:

6. And Hamor, the father of Shechem, went out to Jacob to speak with him.

Israel, the disqualification of women as witnesses was abolished by the Equality of Women's Rights Act of 5711/1951.

⁵ This can also be translated as "abused" or "defiled". There is an ongoing modern debate over whether or not the rape of Dinah actually occurred. In her book, *Upon the Dark Places*, Ilona Rashcow discusses the rape of Dinah and uses the narrator's Hebrew grammar to confirm the rape. In biblical Hebrew, the normal grammatical construct שָׁכַב lie with, is used to infer sexual contact, a mutually agreed upon act.

However, שָׁכַב, lie, used with a direct object and not a preposition, is used when the act is forced, a rape.

⁶Can also be translated as "spoke kindly to the girl." (JPS Translation)

⁷Can also be translated as "child".

וּבְנֵי יַעֲקֹב בָּאוּ מִן־הַשָּׂדֶה כְּשִׁמְעוּם וַיִּתְעַצְבוּ הָאָנָשִׁים
וַיַּחֲרֹרְרוּ לָהֶם מְאֹד כִּי נָבְלָה עֲשָׂה בְּיִשְׂרָאֵל לְשָׂכֵב אֶת־בֶּת־יַעֲקֹב
וְכֵן לֹא עָשָׂה:

7. And Jacob's sons came from the field when they heard, and they were saddened⁹ because¹⁰ he had done a disgraceful thing in Israel, by lying with the daughter¹¹ of Jacob; and thus it was not done.¹²

וַיְדַבֵּר חָמוֹר אֲתָם לֵאמֹר שְׁכֶם בְּנִי חָשְׁקָה נַפְשׁוֹ בְּבָתְּכֶם
תֵּנוּ נָא אֹתָהּ לוֹ לְאִשָּׁה:

8. And Hamor spoke with them saying, "Shechem my son, his soul desires¹³ your¹⁴ daughter; give her¹⁵ please¹⁶ to him as a wife.

וְהִתְחַתְּנוּ אִתָּנוּ בְּנֵיכֶם תִּתְּנוּ־לָנוּ וְאֵת־בְּנֹתֵינוּ תִּקְחוּ לָכֶם:

9. And marry with us (intermarry); your daughters you will give to us, and our daughters you can take for yourselves.¹⁷

וְאִתָּנוּ תִּשְׁבּוּ וְהָאָרֶץ תְּהִיָּה לִפְנֵיכֶם שְׁבוּ וּסְחָרוּ וְהָאֶחָזוּ בָּהּ:

10. And with us you will dwell¹⁸, and the land will be before you; dwell¹⁹ and trade, and get²⁰ (property) in it.

⁸Can also be translated as "held his peace." This further questions the amount of anger Jacob had towards Shechem for raping his daughter.

⁹Can also be translated as "were in pain or sorrow".

¹⁰Or "for".

¹¹ The language here underscores Dinah's status as daughter and fact that her status as daughter, not wife, is connected to the action being disgraceful.

¹² Referring to the "lying with."

¹³Or "craves", "attaches", "longs".

¹⁴ The plural is used here, possibly denoting the non-Jew's desire for Jewish women.

¹⁵ A mapik is used in the word "Oh-tah" ... why?

¹⁶Normally a command, but the word is attached, therefore making the phrase a command plus "please".

¹⁷ Hamor wants to please his son badly and offers the women in his land for the object of his son's desire.

Moreover, marriage for Hamor represents the unification of two peoples.

¹⁸Or "settle".

¹⁹Ibid.

²⁰Or "hold".

וַיֹּאמֶר שְׁכֶם אֶל־אָבִיהָ וְאֶל־אֶחָיו אֲמָצָא־חַן בְּעֵינֵיכֶם
וְאֲשֶׁר תֹּאמְרוּ אֵלַי אֶתֶּן:

11. And Shechem said to her father and to her brothers; "May²¹ I find favor in your eyes, and what you will say to me I will give."²²

הֲרַבּוּ עָלַי מֵאֹד
מִנְחָה וּמִתּוֹן וְאֶתְנָה כְּאֲשֶׁר תֹּאמְרוּ אֵלַי וְתַנּוּ־לִי אֶת־הַנְּעָרָה לְאִשְׁהָ:

12. Make for me the bride-price and marriage-gift high and I will give that which you will say to me and ²³ give me the young child as a wife."

וַיַּעֲנוּ בְנֵי־יַעֲקֹב אֶת־שְׁכֶם וְאֶת־חָמוֹר אָבִיו בְּמַרְמָה וַיִּדְּבְרוּ
אֲשֶׁר טָמְאָה אֶת־דִּינָה אֲחֹתָם:

13. And the sons of Jacob answered Shechem and Hamor his father with deceit²⁴, and they said that he blemished²⁵ Dinah their sister.

וַיֹּאמְרוּ אֲלֵיהֶם לֹא נוּכַל לַעֲשׂוֹת הַדָּבָר הַזֶּה לְתֵת אֶת־אֲחֹתֵנוּ
לְאִישׁ אֲשֶׁר־לוֹ עֶרְלָה כִּי־חֲרָפָה הוּא לָנוּ:

14. and they said to them, "Do not do this thing, to give our sister to the man who is uncircumcised²⁶; for that would be a disgrace for²⁷ us.

אֲדִי־בָזָאת נֹאמֹת לָכֶם אִם תַּחֲנוּן כְּמִנוּ לְהַמְלִל לָכֶם כָּל־זָכָר:

15. Only on this will we consent²⁸ to you; if you will be like us, for you all to circumcise every male,

²¹Or "let me".

²²Regarding the bride price, since she was no longer a virgin.

²³Or "but".

²⁴Or "fraud," leading to the upcoming revenge they take for the rape of their sister.

²⁵See footnote #2.

²⁶Literally "who has foreskin".

²⁷Or "to".

²⁸Or "agree".

וְנָתַנּוּ אֶת־בָּנֵיהֶם לָכֶם וְאֶת־בָּנוֹתֵיכֶם נָשָׁאֲנוּ וְנִשְׁכְּנוּ אִתְּכֶם
וְהָיִינוּ לָעָם אֶחָד:

16. And we will give our daughters to you all, and your daughters we will take for us, and we will dwell²⁹ and we will be as a single people.

וְאִם־לֹא תִשְׁמָעוּ אֵלֵינוּ לְהַמְצִיל וְלִקְחוּ אֶת־בָּתְּנֵנוּ וְהָלַכְנוּ:

17. And if you do not obey us by circumcising, and we will take our daughter and we will leave."

וַיִּטְבוּ דְבָרֵיהֶם בְּעֵינֵי חָמוֹר וּבְעֵינֵי שָׁכֶם בֶּן־חָמוֹר:

18. And their words were good in the eyes of Hamor and in the eyes of Shechem the son of Hamor.

וְלֹא־אַחַר הַנָּעַר לַעֲשׂוֹת הַדָּבָר כִּי חָפֵץ בָּתִּיתָּעֲקֹב וְהָיָא נִכְבָּד
מִכָּל בֵּית אָבִיו:

19. And the young male did not waste time to do the thing (circumcision) because he had desire in the daughter of Jacob, and he was respected (or honored) more than all the house of his father.

וַיָּבֹא חָמוֹר וּשְׁכֶם בְּנוֹ אֶל־שַׁעַר עִירָם
וַיְדַבְּרוּ אֶל־אֲנָשֵׁי עִירָם לֵאמֹר:

20. And Hamor and Shechem his son came to the gate of their city and they spoke with the men of their city, saying:

הָאֲנָשִׁים הָאֵלֶּה שְׁלָמִים הֵם אִתָּנוּ וַיָּשְׁבוּ בָאָרֶץ וַיִּסְחָרוּ
אֹתָהּ וְהָאָרֶץ הִנֵּה נְחֻבַת־יָדַיִם לִפְנֵיהֶם אֶת־בָּנוֹתֵם נָשָׁאֲנוּ לְנָשִׁים
וְאֶת־בָּנֵיהֶם נָתַן לָהֶם:

21. These people are peaceful. They are with us and will settle in the land and they will travel in it and the land here stretches to the waters before them. We will take their daughters for us as wives and our daughters we will give to them.

²⁹Or "settle".

אִךְ-בָּזֹאת יֵאָתוּ לָנוּ הָאֲנָשִׁים לְשִׁבְתָּ אִתָּנוּ לְהִיּוֹת
לְעָם אֶחָד בְּהַמּוֹל לָנוּ כָּל-זָכָר כְּאִשְׁרֵי הֵם וְנִמְלִים:

22. So, with this, condition the men will settle with us, to be as one people. By circumcising all males, as they are all circumcised.

מִקְנֵיהֶם וְקוֹנֵיהֶם וְכָל-בְּהֶמְתָּם חֵלּוּא לָנוּ הֵם אִךְ יֵאָוֶתֶה לָהֶם
וְיָשְׁבוּ אִתָּנוּ:

23. Their cattle, and their acquired property, and all their beasts. Behold! If will be for us, if we comply for them and they will settle with us.

וַיִּשְׁמְעוּ אֶל-חָמוֹר וְאֶל-שָׁכֶם בָּנוּ כָּל-יִצְחָאִי שְׁעַר עִירוֹ
וַיִּפְּלוּ כָּל-זָכָר כָּל-יִצְחָאִי שְׁעַר עִירוֹ:

24. And they heard Hamor and Shechem his son, all went out of the gate of the city and they circumcised all males. All males that went out of the gate of the city.

וַיְהִי בַיּוֹם הַשְּׁלִישִׁי בְּהִיּוֹתָם כְּאֲבִים וַיִּקְחוּ שְׁנֵי-בְנֵי-יַעֲקֹב
שְׁמֹעוֹן וְלֵוִי אֶת־דִּינָה אִשׁ חֲרָבָו וַיָּבֹאוּ עַל-הָעִיר בְּטַח
וַיַּהַרְגוּ כָּל-זָכָר:

25. And it came to pass on the third day when they were in pain, and two of Jacob's sons – Shimon and Levi – Dinah's brothers, took his sword and came to the city sure (of themselves) and they killed every male.

וְאֶת-חָמוֹר וְאֶת-שָׁכֶם בָּנוּ הָרְגוּ לְפִי-חֶרֶב
וַיִּקְחוּ אֶת-דִּינָה מִבֵּית שָׁכֶם וַיֵּצְאוּ:

26. And Hamor and Shechem his son they killed by the sword and they took Dinah from the house of Shechem and they went out.

בְּנֵי יַעֲקֹב בָּאוּ עַל-הַחֲלָלִים וַיָּבֹאוּ הָעִיר אֲשֶׁר טָמְאוּ אַחֲוֵתָם:

27. The sons of Jacob came to the corpses and they plundered the city that was blemished by their brethren.

אֶת־צֹאֲנֵם וְאֶת־בָּקָרָם וְאֶת־חֲמֹרֵיהֶם וְאֶת־אֲשֶׁר־בְּעִיר
וְאֶת־אֲשֶׁר בַּשָּׂדֶה לָקְחוּ:

28. The sheep and the oxen and their donkeys³⁰ and they took that which was in the city and that which was in the field.

וְאֶת־כָּל־חֵילָם וְאֶת־כָּל־טָפֶם וְאֶת־נְשֵׁיהֶם שְׁבוּ וַיָּבֵאוּ וְאֶת
כָּל־אֲשֶׁר בְּבֵית:

29. And all their precious stones and all their children and their wives they captured and they plundered all that was in their houses.

וַיֹּאמֶר יַעֲקֹב אֶל־שִׁמְעוֹן וְאֶל־לֵוִי עֲכָרְתֶּם אֹתִי
לְהַבְאִישְׁנִי בַיָּשָׁב הָאָרֶץ בְּפָנָעַנִי וּבַפָּרָצִי
וְאֵלֵי מִתִּי מִסָּפָר וְנֶאֱסָפוּ עָלַי וְהָכֹתִי וְנִשְׁמַדְתִּי אֲנִי וּבֵיתִי:

30. And Jacob said to Shimon and Levi 'you brought trouble to me, to make me odious (reek) to the people that dwell in the land, with Canaanites and Perizzites. And I have little number of men and they will join together and they will attack me, and I will be destroyed, I and my house!'

וַיֹּאמְרוּ הַקְּזוּלָה גַּעֲשֶׂה אֶת־אֲחוֹתֵנוּ:

31. And they said 'like a whore, he will make our sister?'³¹

Structure:

Genesis 34:1-17: Dinah Story

I. Setting (34:2-3)

- A. Dinah goes out (34:2)
- B. Shechem sees her and rapes her (34:3)

II. Plea for Dinah

- A. Shechem to father (34:4)
- B. Yaakov hears about rape (34:5)
- C. Hamor speaks with Jacob (34:6)

- 1. sons of Jacob are angry at Shechem's defilement of Dinah (34:7)

III. Negotiations for Dinah (34:4-6)

³⁰ Same word as Hamor....coincidence?

³¹ Or, "He made our sister a whore."

- A. Hamor propositions on Shechem's behalf (34:8-10)
 - 1. give Dinah to him for wife (34:8)
 - 2. make marriages with them (34:9a)
 - 3. exchange of daughters (34:9b)
 - 4. land benefits (34:10a)
 - 5. trade benefits (34:10b)
- B. Shechem's proposition (34:11-12)
 - 1. what Jacob wants he will get (34:11-12a)
 - 2. give Shechem what he wants (34:12b)
- C. Sons of Jacob give conditions (34:13-17)
 - 1. circumcise yourselves, then we will give our daughters and take your daughters, and then we will be a single people (34:15-16)
 - 2. if you do not obey us, then we will take Dinah and go (34:17)
- D. Hamor and Shechem agree (34:18-19a)
- E. Results: Shechem gets circumcised (34:19)
- IV. Negotiations with Hivvites (34:20-24)
 - A. The men are peaceful (34:20-24)
 - 1. let them dwell in the land and trade in it (34:21a)
 - 2. let us take their daughters as wives, and let us give them our daughters for wives (34:21b)
 - 3. BUT, we must get circumcised, like they are (34:22)
 - B. Shouldn't everything of theirs be ours? (34:23-24)
 - C. Results: Hivvites get circumcised (34:24)
- V. Jacob's Sons Seek Revenge (34:25-29)
 - A. setting: third day (34:25)
 - B. killing of Hamor and Shechem (34:26a)
 - C. taking of Dinah (34:26b)
 - D. plundering the city (34:27-29)
 - 1. they take sheep, oxen, and asses (34:28)
 - 2. all their wealth (34:29a)
 - 3. all their little ones and wives (34:29b)
 - 4. all that is in the house (34:29c)
- VI. Jacob's Response to the Revenge (34:30-31)
 - A. The sons have brought trouble onto "me", being fewer in number than the Hivvites (34:30a)
 - B. "I and my" house will be destroyed (34:30b)
- VII. Brother's Response to Jacob (34:31)
 - A. should he make our sister as a whore? (34:31)

While the narrative structure appears to be linear, the content is highly complex. By its position at the beginning of the story, the reader may infer that the sexual act, rape or not, is its focal point. However, the sexual act sets up the rest of the story, and therefore

serves as an introduction to the story. The forced sexual act committed by Shechem on Dinah introduces the theme of deceit that continues throughout the rest of the story, when Jacob and Hamor negotiate for the unification of the two peoples, and when Jacob's sons ravage the inhabitants of Shechem. Shechem takes advantage of Dinah by first lying with her and then forcing her. Once the sexual act has been committed, the negotiations between the Hivvites and the Israelites begin to take place. Dinah's brothers are owed money from fines incurred by Shechem for taking away Dinah's virginity. Each of the tribes states its conditions for the other. Finally, the two tribes agree upon the conditions that will allow for peace to exist. This peace is not long lived, for Dinah's brothers soon ask themselves "Shouldn't everything of theirs be ours?" This selfish and greedy thinking leads them to ravage the Hivvite City, and justify their barbaric actions as revenge for the attack on their sister.

Status of Women in the Ancient Near East

In the Ancient Near East a woman's status was divided into four stages: ילדה -- young girl, נערה - 12 full years, בוגרת - six months after being a בוגרת, אישה -- woman.

The clearest statements about a female's status are articulated in Mishnah Ishnut Chapter Two. A בוגרת was a female who had completed her status as a נערה. In the Mishnah, the sages said that a female became a בוגרת when "her breasts have grown just sufficiently to fold over her chest and look like a wrinkle." (M. Ishut 2:7) They then determined other criteria to determine בגרות (M. Ishuth Chapter 2:8).

If she might enter בגריות after six months, if the "signs" are not present, then the minimum span from the status of נערה to בוגרת is only six months. When she grew two pubic hairs, after the age of twelve full years, she entered נערה. Six months later, she entered בגריות. Her status on the last day of the six months depended on signs: if she manifested the signs of בגריות then she was a בוגרת, but otherwise she remained a נערה. The sages disputed about when a female actually transitioned from being a נערה to a בוגרת, based on when she actually showed the signs physically. Moreover, in the mishnaic text the sages differed on whether a female became a בוגרת while in the stage of נערה.

A נערה differed from a בוגרת. Once she became a בוגרת she was released from her father's authority with respect to all those rights that he possessed during her נערות (Ket. 39a). The Talmud expanded upon this explaining that a father could not betroth his daughter when she was a בוגרת, neither was he entitled to the labor of her hands, to what she found, to annul her vows, or to take her marriage settlement if she was widowed or divorced after erusin. A daughter who became a בוגרת was not supported from her dead father's estate, since her בגריות released her from his authority she was not maintained from his property. (Ket. 59b) By extension, if she was raped or seduced during her נערות, the fine and other payments were her father's, but if the case did not come to court until she became a בוגרת, all the payments were made to her directly. "One who rapes or seduces a בוגרת is not liable to the fine, as the text says, "נערה" (Deut 22:28), not a בוגרת" (Ket. 38a).

According to the Mishnah, a man who marries a woman commits himself to ten things (some Rabbinic and some from Toraitic): maintenance, clothing, conjugal rights, ketubah, medical expenses, ransom from captivity, burial, alimony during her widowhood, alimony for her daughters after his death, and inheritance of her ketubah by her sons (M. Ishuth 12:1,2). Likewise, a man has his rights in the marriage. The woman is taken as a wife for cohabitation and she is obligated to him for it (Ned. 15b). Moreover, some of a woman's work belongs to her husband (Ket. 46b). The rabbis enacted the husband's right to her earnings in return for his liability to maintain her (Ket. 47b). Moreover, the Amoraim hold a different opinion. They taught that the law was enacted for the wife's benefit, since they could not be sure that her earnings would suffice for her maintenance. Furthermore, anything that a woman found belonged to her husband. Some rabbis said they enacted this law to prevent any arguments between the spouses, others suggested that it was enacted to prevent the woman from stealing any money from the husband. Another law was enacted to provide the husband with the right to all the profits of her property during her lifetime. In contrast to these spousal obligations, a woman was obligated to do three kinds of work for her husband: work that was profitable, housework, and work of affection. Therefore, based on this data, one could infer that the status of women was that of property. They were property under their father's care and once married, became the property of their husbands. Very few precautions were made under Jewish Law in order to protect these women from harm and from abuse.

Throughout Jewish texts, the woman's status as a human being is recognized in legislation. There were certain laws that reveal an inferior status assigned to women in Israelite society. A man could sell his daughter as payment for a debt (Ex 21:7), but he was forbidden to force her into prostitution (Lev 19:29). If she were sold into bondage, her master was forbidden to resell her. If he was not satisfied with her, she could be redeemed; if he gave her to his son, he was to treat her as a daughter. At marriage, a man "takes" the wife as property.

The classical writings of Judaism, written by men, and encompassing a period of over 2000 years, naturally depict a variety of views of women. Therefore, it is impossible to decipher one single attitude towards women. However, some attitudes came to the forefront. Women were not obligated to learn Torah, and few were therefore learned. Many negative attitudes towards women are embedded in rabbinic literature. In Genesis Rabbah (45:5), women are described in the following ways: they are greedy, eavesdroppers, lazy, and jealous. In the Talmud (Shab 33b) women are said to be "light-minded," and they were feared as a source of temptation. A woman's voice was a sexual enticement as were her hair and her leg (Ber 24a). On the other hand, it is said that a man without a wife lives without joy, blessing, and good, and that a man should love his wife as himself and respects her more than himself (Yev 62b).

As the rabbis elaborated upon the laws regarding rape in the Torah, two terms became central to their discussions:

1. ANUSAH: A woman raped. The rapist cannot marry a woman he has raped. If a woman is raped in the open field, it will be assumed that the act was done against the woman's will since her cries would not have been heard. However, if the act was done in the city, it will be assumed that the act was consensual since someone would have heard her cries in the city and is therefore not a rape.³²

2. B'TULAH: A woman who has not experienced sexual intercourse and whose hymen is intact. Genesis 24:16 defines it as "A virgin whom no man had known." Genesis Rabbah 60:5 suggests that this refers to her never experiencing natural (vaginal) intercourse, nor having been "known" even unnaturally. However, the rabbis suggested that "If she had unnatural (some way other than vaginal, such as anal) intercourse she is still a virgin, as our Rabbis said 'if she had intercourse (in a non-vaginal way) with ten men she is still a virgin.'" (Kid 9b) This loophole created by the Rabbis, enabling women to retain their virginity refers only to unnatural intercourse with someone other than her husband, since Kid. 9b also suggests "but her husband –everyone agrees if he cohabitated with her unnaturally, he renders her a non-virgin."

Regarding the rape of a virgin: Some earlier rabbinic authorities maintain that she is still a virgin with respect to the penalty for rape or seduction. The penalty is 50 silver shekels for the rape, or seduction of a virgin, as it is written in Exodus 22:15 "If a man seduces a virgin..." Deuteronomy 22:28 "If a man comes upon a virgin...[he] shall pay the father fifty [shekels of] silver." From these two texts, the existence of a penalty for a rape is deduced. There is no payment of damages for the rape or seduction of a בוגרת (young

³² Deuteronomy 22:25-27

woman aged 12 ½ years) only a fine for pain and suffering, shame, and blemish if she were raped.³³

The rapist of a child must marry her, according to Deuteronomy 22:29 "She shall be his wife ... he cannot put her away all his days." (Unless marriage between them is forbidden) The נערה or her father may refuse her marriage to the violator, in which case the violator must pay a fine. A person who seduces a נערה has no obligation to marry her. Therefore, determining if Shechem raped or seduced Dinah is key to the story. Also, determining her age is equally important in order to understand who is owed damages and who is owed restitution for pain and suffering, etc.

Rape is discussed only briefly in the Talmud. ענה - rape, and the actual Dinah story, are mentioned in Yoma 77a-b, 82b-83a, Baba Kamma 59a, Sanhedrin 70a-b, and Nazir 23a.

Yoma 77a-b: "If you afflict my daughters or take other wives besides my daughters-- though no one else be about, remember, God will be witness between you and me.(Genesis 31:50)" This is quoted in the Talmud and refers to abstention or denial of marital intercourse, which is considered an affliction (תענה). Genesis 34:2 is quoted (" -- and he lay with her and raped her") to substantiate R. Papa's view that intercourse itself is an affliction. "R. Abbaye responded: He afflicted

³³ Biale, Rachel. *Women and Jewish Law* (New York: Schocken Books, 1984) p. 240.

her through other forms of intercourse.” Here we learn that both the denial of marital intercourse and “other forms” of intercourse (i.e. non-vaginal) are afflictions.

Yoma 82b-83a: Here the rabbis focus not on only maidens, but on betrothed maidens. “It is lawful to save a betrothed maiden at the expense of her would-be rapist’s life... thus, also in the case of murder.” The rabbis draw a parallel between the teaching that one should rather be killed than transgress the prohibition of murder with the circumstances surrounding the rape. Therefore, when one is commanded to rape a maiden, such as during a war or battle, one should be killed rather than violating her. The woman’s body and sexuality we learn are a valuable commodities and are more important than the life of a man.

Baba Kamma 59a: Refers to whether or not depreciation of a vine should be considered when dealing with grapes: “For who could be the Tanna who takes into consideration the depreciation of the vine, if not R. Simeon b. Menasya: ‘Even in the case of rape, no compensation is made for pain, as the female would in any case have subsequently to undergo the same pain through her husband.’ The Rabbis however disagreed with him, stating in Ket 39a-b, “One who is forced to have intercourse cannot be compared to one who acts willingly.” In other words, the pain is not just the pain of penetration – it is both physical and psychological as well.

Sanhedrin 70a-b: Ubar the Galilean gave the following exposition: The letter vav (and) occurs 13 times in the passage dealing with wine: AND Noah began to be a husbandman,

AND he planted a vineyard: AND he drank of the wine AND was drunken. AND he was uncovered within his tent. AND Ham the father of Canaan, saw the nakedness of his father, AND told his two brethren without. AND Shem and Japheth took a garment, AND laid it upon their shoulders, AND went backwards and covered the nakedness of their father, AND their faces were backwards, AND they saw not their father's nakedness. AND Noah awoke from his wine, AND knew what his younger son had done unto him. [Concerning the last verse] Rav and Samuel differ, one maintaining that he castrated (סרסו from the root סרס, to emasculate) him, whilst the other says that he sexually abused (רבעו from the root רבע, to copulate in an unnatural way) him. He who maintains that he castrated him reasons thus: Since he cursed him by his fourth son, he must have injured him with respect to a fourth son. But he who says that he sexually abused him, draws an parallel between 'and he saw' written twice. Here it is written, "And Ham the father of Canaan saw the nakedness of his father" whilst elsewhere it is written "And when Shechem the son of Hamor saw her [he took her and lay with her and defiled her]. Now, on the view that he emasculated him, it is right that he cursed him by his fourth son; but on the view that he abused him, why did he curse his fourth son; he should have cursed himself? --Both indignities were perpetrated. In this Talmudic excerpt, one can understand that seeing another person's nakedness is equated with sexual violation. Therefore, at the very least, Dinah was sexually violated.

From these citations, we learn that the Biblical texts ascribe to women an inferior status. In the Mishnah, women are presented as property of their husbands. Moreover, the women have three obligations in their marriage, with the "work of affection" or sex as

one of these. From the Talmud we learn that women are part of their husbands' property holdings and are expected to engage in marital intercourse. Moreover, these texts assume that a woman's virginal body is a highly valuable commodity – yet again property that cannot be damaged. Lastly, nakedness is linked with sexual violation and therefore Dinah, raped or not, was violated by Shechem and therefore her value was diminished.

Chapter Two: 11-14 Century Spain and France

The famous 11-14 century Spanish and French commentators, Rashi, Rashbam, Ibn Ezra, Ramban, Ralbag, offered their understandings of this complicated story. They were familiar with Bible, Mishnah, Talmud, and Midrash. They were also influenced by the dominant cultures among which they lived.

Historical Background of the Jews of Ashkenaz

Ashkenazic Jewry began to develop in Western Europe under medieval Christian rule. For a time, the once strong feudal system was replaced by a ruling monarchy brought into power by Charlemagne (742-814). He revived imperial Roman rule in the west and expanded the empire into central Europe. A half a century after his death, three kingdoms were created so that the Jews living in those regions were faced with a society that was increasingly becoming feudal.

Jewish merchants in northern France and the Rhineland were well connected with other tradesman and were therefore treated well by the ruling powers. Charlemagne's son, Louis the Pious (778-840) placed the property and well being of the Jews under royal protection. In the tenth and eleventh centuries, Jewish merchants were on excellent terms with kings and barons and other ruling class people. Soon, Jewish communities were appearing in growing urban centers and along the Rhine River.

These early Ashkenazic Jewish communities were small and homogenous. Jewish craftsmen and artisans were barred from several main occupations. Therefore, the two

areas that Jews became active in were trade and the growing of grapes and making wine. Jewish ownership of vineyards in France was common. These Ashkenazic Jews were not trained in the military, but they knew how to use arms and carried them as well. The Jews of each town constituted an independent, self-governing, sociological entity. These *kehillot* or Jewish communities had no professional bureaucracy and no exilarch appointed to rule. The judicial courts of these communities upheld laws enacted by the Sanhedrin and the high courts of the exilarchs in Babylonia and established *takkanot* or special regulations.

Flourishing centers of rabbinic scholarship appeared in the tenth century in the Rhineland cities of Mainz and Worms, and later in northern France at Troyes and Sens. The most famous of the early teachers was Rabbeinu Gershom of Mainz. Another famous teacher was Rabbi Solomon ben Isaac of Troyes (1040-1105), known as Rashi.

Even during this period of security for the Jews, they did occasionally face difficulties from fanatic Christians and brutal lords. In November 1095, Pope Urban II proclaimed the First Crusade. In the late spring and summer of 1096, the Jewries of many cities were besieged, pillaged, and slaughtered, unless they would consent to baptism. These massacres of 1096 did not result in a change of Jewish legal status. The violence was not led by authorities and was not condoned by the emperor, Henry IV.

In the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, the professions of many Ashkenazic Jews was money lending. There were groups of Christians in this business as well, but the Jews

had the advantage of not being within legal jurisdiction and control of the Church, which was opposed to the making of profits on loans, or usury. The barons and kings became silent partners in this business, which the Church was unsuccessfully attempting to banish.

Aside from economic factors, Jews were also persecuted in the name of religion. The mere presence of Christianity provided a threat to the Church and thus to the spiritual health of society.³⁴ Blood libel accusations of Jews as well as the belief that Jews had demonic qualities were common.

In 1182 Jews of France were expelled and their property confiscated. A few years later, in 1198, the Jews were invited back and an additional royal tax imposed on their activities. In the thirteenth century, the English kings compensated for the deficits in the royal treasury but simply continuing to increase taxes on the Jews. In 1290, Jews were ordered to leave England – their capitol and property went to the king. These Jews immigrated to France, which was already pulling back from its Jews. By 1306, an edict of expulsion was issued and all Jews were forced to leave France, leaving all of their property to the French treasury.

In Germany, Jews continued to establish new communities and only at the end of the century did outbursts against the Jews occur there, killing 140 Jewish communities. During the Black Death (1349), many believed that the Jews had poisoned the wells of

³⁴ Selzer, Robert. *Jewish People, Jewish Thought* (New York: Macmillan Publishing, 1980), p. 357.

Europe. In the fourteenth century, Germany was fragmented into dozens of principalities. Therefore, the surviving Jews were never expelled from Germany, because there was no central authority that could have expelled them. Many localities expelled the Jews and then invited them back, but confined them to specific areas. Many Talmud scholars moved to Poland and Spain during the thirteenth to fifteenth centuries, leading to a period of impoverishment for German Jews.

In one major area, living among Christians in Europe had a significant impact on Jewish family life and its treatment of women. Influenced by the church's enforced monogamy, Rabbenu Gershom enacted a *Takkanah*, making monogamy the rule of the Jews of Ashkenaz. Up until that point in time, polygamy was the practice observed by all. This *Takkanah* created a new and unique lifestyle for the Jews; no longer could men "have" wives and concubines for procreation purposes. Therefore, "a new set of questions and issues arose pertaining to marriage ... Legal discussions about when a marriage could or should be ended, once focused solely on failures to fulfill obligations, now raised concerns about the non-tangible, non-contractual aspects of a successful marital relationship."³⁵

Rashi:

Solomon ben Isaac (1040-1105) was born in France to a father who was a scholar. His birthplace, Troyes, was then the Capitol City of Champagne, which attracted merchants from all over the world. Rashi learned about banking, currencies, and trade. After he was married, he studied at Mainz and Worms. His main teachers were Jacob ben Yakar at

³⁵ Wiener, Nancy. *Jewish Marriage: From Commercial/Legal Transaction to Spiritual Transition* p. 9

Mainz and Isaac ben Eleazar ha-Levi at Worms. When Rashi was about 25 years old, he returned to Troyes. In 1070, he founded a school that became even more important than the academies in which he had studied. Rashi had no sons, but all three of his daughters married important scholars. One of his daughters had four sons, one of whom was known in rabbinic circles as Rabbeinu Tam. All of Rashi's grandsons belonged to the group of French scholars who founded the school of Tosafot. Rashi's last years were interrupted by the First Crusade (1095-96), to which he lost relatives and friends. During this time, Rashi transferred his school to Worms to continue his studies. His burial place is not known.

Rashi commented on most of the books of the Bible. However, some of the comments ascribed to him on Job, Ezra, Nehemiah, and Chronicles are no longer believed to be his, since the style and method of exegesis are different. Rashi was both a philologist and a linguist who derived his grammatical principles from rabbinic literature and the Hebrew works of the Spanish grammarians, Menahem ben Jacob ibn Saruq and Dunash ben Labrat. Rashi's method focused on giving the easiest and simplest comments so that the general community could easily understand them. His language is concise and straightforward, due to his assumption that the reader is fully familiar with the relevant biblical details. Rashi's commentary is a compromise between the literal and the midrashic interpretations. The latter was the principle method in French biblical exegesis, and thus he added the former. At least three-quarters of Rashi's comments are based on rabbinic sources. The few that are original are mainly philological explanations. When basing his interpretations on Midrashim, Rashi preferred material

that was closest to the literal interpretation of the text. Furthermore, when commenting on texts, Rashi would sometimes abridge a Midrash or augment it. Rashi depended heavily upon help from Targum Onkelos in preparing for his Biblical commentary.

Rashi's Commentary on Genesis 34

1 בַּת־לֵאָה

And not the daughter of Jacob? However, because of her going out she was called the daughter of Leah, since she (Leah) too was in the habit of going out, as it is said: "and Leah came forth toward him" (above 30:16).

2 וַיִּשְׁכַּב אֵתָהּ

In a natural way.

וַיַּעֲנֶהָ

And afflicted her. [i.e. he was intimate with her] in an unnatural way.

3 וַיְדַבֵּר עַל־לֵב הַנַּעֲרָה׃

[i.e. he spoke] seductive words, Look how much money your father squandered for a small parcel of land. I will marry you, and you will acquire the city and all its fields.

7 וְכֹן לֹא יַעֲשֶׂה׃

To violate virgins, for the nations (the general population) had refrained from elicit relationships because of the Flood.

8 שָׁכַם בְּנֵי חָשִׁיקָה נָפְשׁוֹ

He desires.

12 מִתּוֹרָה

Ketubah

13 בְּמַרְמָה

With cunning/guile.

אֲשֶׁר טָמְא אֶת דִּינָה אֲחֹתָם׃

Scripture states that this was not trickery because [after all] he had defiled their sister Dinah.

14 כִּי־חֲרָפָה הוּא לָנוּ

To us, it is a defect. If someone wishes to insult another person, he says, "You are uncircumcised," or "[You are] the son of an uncircumcised person." Wherever חֲרָפָה is mentioned, it is an [expression of] insult.

15 נֹאמֹת לָכֶם

We will consent to you, an expression like (וַיֹּאמְרוּ הַכֹּהֲנִים), "And (the priests) consented," (II Kings 12:9).

לְהַמְלִיךְ

lit. to be circumcised. This is not in the active voice but in the passive.

16 וְנִתְּנוּ

The second "nun" is punctuated with a "dagesh," because it serves instead of two "nuns."

וְאֵת־בְּנֵיכֶם נִקַּח־לָנוּ

You find in the stipulation that Hamor suggested to Jacob, and in the reply of Jacob's sons to Hamor, that they [Hamor and Shechem] attached importance to Jacob's sons, [allowing them] to take whomever of the daughters of Shechem they would choose for themselves, and their daughters they would give to them [the people of Shechem], as they (the sons of Jacob) wished, for it is written: "Then we will give you our daughters," as we wish, "and we will take your daughters for ourselves," however we wish. But, when Hamor and his son Shechem spoke to their townsmen, they reversed the matter, [and said (verse 21),] "We will take their daughters for ourselves as wives, and our daughters we will give them," in order to appease them (the townsmen), that they would consent to be circumcised.

21 הָאֲנָשִׁים הָאֵלֶּה שְׁלָמִים הֵם אֲתָנוּ

With peace and sincerity.

וְהָאָרֶץ הִנֵּה רַחֲבַת־יָדַיִם

[The metaphor is that of] a person whose hand is wide and generous. That is to say: You will not lose anything [if they trade here]. Plenty of merchandise comes here, and there is no one to purchase it.

22 בְּהַמְוִיל לָנוּ כָּל־זָכָר בְּאֶשֶׁר הֵם נִמְלִיִּם:

By being circumcised.

23 אֵד נֹאמֹתָ לָהֶם

Regarding this matter, and thereby, they will dwell with us.

25 שְׁנֵי־בְנֵי־לֵעָקֹב

They were his sons, but nevertheless, Simeon and Levi conducted themselves like other people, who were not his sons, for they did not take counsel with him.

אֶחָי דִּינָה

Since they risked their lives for her, they were called her brothers.

בְּטַח

Because they (the townsmen) were in pain. The Aggadah says: They were confident in the strength of the elder (Jacob).

27 עַל־הַחֲלָלִים

to strip the slain.

29 וְאֶת־כָּל־חֵילָם

their money, and similarly; "amassed this wealth (הַחֵיל) for me" (Deut. 8:17); "and Israel amasses wealth (חֵיל)" (Num. 24:18); "and leave over their possessions (חֵילָם) to others" (Ps. 49:11).

שְׁבוּ

a term denoting captivity. Therefore, the accent is on the latter syllable.

30 עֲכָרְתֶּם אֹתִי

an expression denoting murky water [meaning that] now my mind is not clear [without worry]. The Aggadah [explains]: The barrel was clear, but you have made it murky. (i.e., I saw our way clear to co-exist with the Canaanites, but now you have spoiled the possibility to do so.) The Canaanites had a tradition that they would fall into the hands of Jacob's sons, but they said [that this would only happen], "Until you are fruitful and inherit the land" (Exod. 23:30). Therefore, they have been silent.

מִתְּנֵי מִסְפָּר

few men.

31 הַקְּזוּנָה

Abandoned (implies) one who is unprotected.

אֶת־אֲחוֹתֵנוּ

[Onkelos renders] לְאֶחָתָנָא, our sister.

Observations about Rashi's treatment of Dinah:

Rashi retains the distinction enumerated in the Talmud and states that "He lay with her" means in the natural sexual way. "He raped her" refers to an unnatural sexual way. Moreover, his commentary in verse three portrays a negative attitude toward women, presenting them as people who are always seeking more material possessions. Surely this negative depiction colors his commentaries about Dinah and her rape. By positing women as people who are never satisfied and who seek more material goods, Dinah becomes a woman willing to sleep with a man in order to gain something from it, instead of becoming a victim to a rape. Lastly, Rashi's commentary regarding the word "כְּזוֹנֶה" assumes that any unprotected woman can be put in harm's way and therefore suggests that Dinah had been unprotected.

In verse one, Rashi relates Dinah to her mother Leah, stating that they both "went out." This may seem like a reference to the age-old saying "like mother like daughter," and thus one can infer that since the rabbis did not look favorably upon Leah, they would do the same towards her daughter. In verse two, Rashi seems occupied not as much with the rape as much as he is with the way in which Shechem and Dinah had sex. Rashi writes about the "natural way" and the "unnatural way" that Shechem and Dinah have intercourse, with no specific mention of the rape. In verse three, Rashi writes that Shechem most likely spoke words of consolation to Dinah, thus one may infer that Shechem has done something wrong. Moreover, the examples of the consoling words Shechem says to Dinah that Rashi provides, also convey to the reader the negative view Rashi had of women; materialistic and selfish. The "thing that should not have been

done" in verse seven refers to the violation of virgins, according to Rashi. Here, concern for Dinah is overlooked; instead it is the loss of her value as a virgin as well as the diminishing of her marriage price which is a concern to the commentator. Moreover, in verse thirteen, Rashi writes about the fact that the guile on the part of Jacob's sons was not there since Scripture allows for this situation to exist because Shechem had violated Dinah.

Rashbam:

Samuel ben Meir (1080-1174) was a commentator on the Bible and Talmud. He was born in northern France, and was the grandson of Rashi and the son of a great Tosafist, Meir. He studied mainly with his grandfather in Troyes. Samuel ben Meir earned his livelihood from sheep farming and viticulture. He led a life of extreme piety and modesty. In addition to his commentaries on the Bible and Talmud, he devoted himself to *piyyutim* and wrote a grammatical work, *Sefer Daikut*.

Samuel's biblical commentaries are characterized by his devotion to the literal meaning of the text (*peshat*). He constantly refers to "the profound literal meaning of the text, or the *פֶּשֶׁט*." He strongly condemns earlier commentaries, including those of his grandfather, Rashi. In his opinion, *פֶּשֶׁט* and *דרש* belong in different categories. The former explains Scripture according to the laws of language and logic, while the latter basing itself on redundancies in language employing the hermeneutic rules by which the Torah is expounded.

His exposition is concise and lucid and confined to the explanation of the subject matter and language. He does not usually state the difficulties explicitly; but these may be inferred from their solutions in the commentary. Unlike his grandfather, he gives one explanation only. He takes the cantillation into consideration; like Rashi, he often uses French glosses to explain words and he often interprets verses in accordance with contemporary custom and usage. In contrast to Rashi however, he insists that biblical Hebrew differs from Mishnaic Hebrew, and thus the meaning of a biblical word cannot therefore be determined by its meaning in Mishnaic Hebrew. Occasionally, however, when he cannot find a biblical parallel he deviates from this rule.

In addition to his importance as a biblical commentator, Samuel ben Meir is also one of the first and most important Tosafists. The most significant and important works are his supplements to Rashi's commentary on the Talmud where Rashi did not manage to complete his final version.

Rashbam's Commentary on Genesis 34

1 וַתֵּצֵא דִינָה

Because outside of the city her tent was pitched and she went out from there and entered the city.

7 וַיֵּצֵא יַעֲקֹב בָּאוּ מִן־הַשָּׂדֶה

Amidst this, Hamor went out to talk with Jacob and he found them and he spoke with them, etc.

9 וְהִתְחַתְּנוּ אֲתָנּוּ בְּנֵיכֶם תְּתַנּוּ־לָנוּ וְאֵת־בְּנֵיתֵינוּ תִּקְחוּ לָכֶם:

With the sons of Jacob, the marriage ceremony for their honor to give and to take. But when they told the thing to the people of their city, they said it is irregular to honor the sons of the city that they will be the takers and the givers so that they seduce/persuade them, that they will heed them to be circumcised.

10 וְסָחְרוּהָ

Drag along.

16 וְנָתַנּוּ

Dagesh like they gave us “Natnu” to “Natan-nu.” And thus, “we were given Egypt” (Lamentations 5:6) it is like וְנָתַנּוּ

19 וְלֹא־אֶחָד

From another place “וְלֹא־אֶחָד” (Exodus 24:28) that it is the example already like “break down” (Exodus 23:24).

וְהָיוּ נִכְבָּדִים

And they listened to him.

25 בְּהִיוֹתָם כְּאֲבִים

According to the ways of the land. And the simple meaning of Bible that they were feeling pain from the 1st day and from the 2nd day.

וַיֵּבְאוּ עַל־הָעִיר

That they sat/dwelt and did not take heed of them. And thus every בֵּטחַ is in every place that is in between the Torah and the Prophets.

30 לְהַבְאִישָׁנִי

יִי is like “because you have made us abhorrent” (Exodus 5:21).

Observations about Rashbam's treatment of Dinah:

Rashbam focuses on the people in the story, but does not cover the rape itself. His commentary brings to light the argument he had with Rashi over the fact that the people of Shechem were not wary of Jacob and his sons, as they were securely dwelling (commentary to verse 25). Therefore, one may discern from this commentary that the later ravaging of the land and people of Shechem by Jacob's sons was unexpected and deceitful. Rashbam does not link any of the events he comments on with the interaction

between Shechem and Dinah. It is as if it is either unimportant or so clear in its details and meaning that no further explanation is necessary. In verse one, he writes that Dinah had gone out to the city, perhaps placing blame of the rape onto the victim, Dinah. There is absolutely no commentary written on the rape, which in itself may provide the reader with commentary regarding how little Rashbam wanted to focus on this violent action.

Ralbag:

Levi ben Gershom (1288-1344) lived primarily in France and was a mathematician, astronomer, philosopher, and biblical commentator. Little is known about his life, but he did maintain relationships with important Christian people.

His first work, the Sefer ha-Mispar, was written in 1321 and is a scientific work dealing with mathematics. He also published a commentary on the 13 hermeneutical rules of Rabbi Ishmael as well as a commentary on the aggadot of Bava Batra, entitled Mehokek Zafun.

Levi wrote commentaries to Job (1325), Song of Songs (1325 or 1326), Ecclesiastes (1328), Ruth (1329), Esther (1329), the Pentateuch (1329-38), the Prophets (1338), Proverbs, Daniel, Nehemiah, and Chronicles (1338). All of these were published. His commentary on Job was one of the first books to be printed in Hebrew. The biblical commentaries contain literal explanations and he discusses philosophical issues in the text with regard to miracles and the Messiah.

Ralbag's commentary on Genesis 34

2 וַיַּעֲנֶה:

It's possible that he had intercourse with her unnaturally and as the Rabbi says (Rashi). Because the people of the places were sexually polluted. Or, it is possible that the pain inflicted on a virgin. (Radak) Like it is said, with a young girl betrothed "because he violated another man's wife" (Deuteronomy 22:24). And with the rape of a virgin it says "because he has violated her" (Deuteronomy 22:29).

21 הָאֲנָשִׁים הָאֵלֶּה שְׁלָמִים

It deals with matters of peace and it means to say they are already at peace with us. Or, it would have to do with perfection and a character trait as they said to Abraham. "God is prince, you are our chosen one" (Genesis 23:6) And because of this it is appropriate that they would listen to them and circumcise every male, in order that they are able to marry with them, so that they will be one nation.

הַחֲבֵת יִדְּנִים

And therefore the place will not be narrow because of them.

מִתֵּי מִסְפָּר

Small nations that can be counted easily.

31 תְּקוּלָהּ יַעֲשֶׂה אֶת־אֲחֻזָּתָהּ:

We received this from our Rabbi, our masters, our fathers, whom they said to Jacob "Will Shechem make our sister into a whore?" That he should not be killed for what he did to her. And this is because the sons of Noah were commanded about sexual matters and may be put to death because of them but is exempt for violating a whore. Like the Rabbis say "ז"ל מאימתי חייב עליה מבי קרו לה רביהא דפדנא" "from what time may they be responsible and punish them accordingly, when she would be called the mistress of someone."

Observations about Ralbag's treatment of Dinah:

The Ralbag in verse two attempts to understand the term וַיַּעֲנֶה and explains how it

happened to Dinah. First, he says that it occurred because the people of the place were

sexually polluted and therefore, they had unnatural sex with her. Second, he suggests the

verb means that pain was inflicted upon Dinah, a virgin. It is important to note that the Ralbag is the earliest commentator who allows for Dinah to experience the pain of rape. Moreover, from this statement, his disgust for the rape is implied. There is a connection here to the Talmudic³⁶ belief that the pain of rape is not just the pain of penetration but the psychological pain a woman experiences as well. The third possible understanding is that the pain is not hers, but the pain experienced by the men who have a claim on her body, as in the case of sex with a betrothed woman. In verse 31, he gives a justification for Jacob's sons' actions regarding the pillaging of the people of Shechem.

³⁶ Ket. 39a-b

Historical Background of the Jews of Spain

Many Jews settled in the Byzantine Empire and in Muslim Spain. In the early eleventh century, immigrants from the Middle East and North Africa augmented Spanish Jewry, so it became the most populated Jewish settlement outside of Babylonia. Jews spread throughout Muslim Spain, and also in the small Christian kingdoms of Northern Spain. The Jews in Muslim Spain were active in most branches of trade and industry, as well as owning land and farming.

“Muslim authorities in Spain ruled a heterogeneous population, which included Berbers, Arabs, and Christians; the Jews were considered a useful and especially loyal sector of the population.”³⁷ For example, Hasdai ibn Shaprut (915-980) was appointed court physician, administrator of the department of customs, and diplomat. He was also the official head of the Jewish community and patron of Jewish writers and scholars.

Early in the eleventh century, small Muslim principalities arose – often at war with each other. Many of the leaders employed Jewish courtiers in their administrations. Later on during the mid-eleventh century, Sephardic Jewry came out from cultural and intellectual dependence on the East to combine knowledge of culture and science and literature with Jewish theology and philosophy.

In 1086, Jewish life was shaken when the Almoravides, fanatics from Northern Africa, were invited to Spain to lead a counter offensive against the Christian kingdoms of the

³⁷ Roth, Cecil. *A History of the Marranos* (New York: Sepher-Hermon Press, 1992), p. 345.

north that had captured the important city of Toledo in the central part of the country. The Almoravide ruler expelled the Jews from the state administration in order to cleanse his ruling government.

The climax of the Golden Age of Andalusian Jewry took place during the early twelfth century. Many Jewish poets, scholars and writers came out of this period, such as Abraham ibn Ezra (1089-1164) who was a poet and biblical exegete and Judah Halevy (1075-1141) who was a poet and philosopher.

In 1146 the threat of a Christian conquest in Spain brought fervent Muslim troops from North Africa, the Almohades. This Berber dynasty of Morocco engaged in the most horrific persecution of Christianity and Judaism in the history of medieval Islam.³⁸ Synagogues and academies were closed and Jews were forcibly converted to Islam. Some continued to practice Judaism secretly, while others fled to the Middle East. Some Sephardic Jews settled in Egypt, like Moses Maimonides who was one of the greatest medieval Jewish philosophers. When the Almohides were pushed out of Spain about a half century later, the power had shifted to the Christian side. At that point, the Jewish communities were able to come out and practice their religion in the open, both in territories under Christian and Muslim rule.

Jewish life in Christian Spain reflected a mixture of the feudal life in Europe and the life that was characteristic of Jews in Muslim lands. The Sephardim had a wide range of occupations: shopkeepers, artisans, physicians, and only a few moneylenders. Spanish

Jewry had a broader range of social classes, ranging from poor and lower-middle class to a small but influential number of Jews who participated in the state administration.³⁹

The legal status of Jews in Spain was similar to that of the Jews in the kehillot of northern Europe. The separate communities were each given charters (furors) that guaranteed the economic rights of the members and the community's freedom to live according to the customs and talmudic laws. These Alamos, or Sephardic communities, were larger in population than the northern kehillot and held their own bureaucracy, social services, educational institutions and court system. The Spanish Jews studied the natural sciences, mathematics, and philosophy, which influenced their new Jewish theology, the Kabbalah.

During the thirteenth century, in the north, anti-Jewish acts were on the rise. In the 1360s, the victorious leader of a military struggle for the throne of Castile (Henry of Trastamara) used anti-Jewish slogans to win support. Mobs slaughtered and pillaged the Jewish communities throughout the Castile and Aragon regions. These massacres were just one wave of violence found at that time. When the violence turned and made Christians its victim, the authorities quickly put an end to them. In 1391, thousands of Jews converted to Christianity to save their lives and possessions. Moreover, Spanish rulers introduced degrading legislation against the Jews.

³⁸ Ibid, p. 348.

³⁹ Ibid, p. 365.

Ibn Ezra:

Abraham Ibn Ezra (1089-1164) was a poet, grammarian, biblical commentator, philosopher, astronomer, and physician. He was born in Tudela, Spain and his life can be divided into two periods. The first was when he lived in Spain. He traveled a lot and established a close relationship with Judah Halevi. The second period is from 1140 until his death. He left Spain for Rome, and became a traveling scholar. Most of his works are from this period.

He left Italy for France, where he continued to write commentaries on the Tanakh. The Tosafot often quotes his questions. Eventually, as an old man, he made his way to Eretz Yisrael.

His commentaries focus on the grammatical structures of the Hebrew texts. He quotes earlier authorities like Rashi and either agrees or disagrees with them. He, at times, takes issue with the midrashic explanations in commentaries. He often draws on his own travel experiences and the lessons he learned.

Ibn Ezra's Commentary on Genesis 34

From herself (on her own).

1 וּתְצַא דִּיהָ

Like the way one passes virginity.

2 וְיַעֲנֶה:

3 וַיִּדְבֹר עַל־לֵב הַנָּעִר:

That he spoke to her words of compassion and mercy.

5 כִּי טָמָא

Shechem.

13 חֲרָפָה

For generations and this was the blemish, because circumcision was done in Israel.

וַיִּדְבְּרוּ אֲשֶׁר טָמָא

And they spoke that Shechem had defiled their sister, because we found that they spoke "friendly words" (Genesis 37:4) like he spoke to him. Or, the meaning was, because they answered in guile with the passing of the experience.

14 אֲשֶׁר־לֵן עֲרָלָה

Circumcision of the flesh and its meaning is with words of weight, and thus a "man of impeded speech" (Exodus 6:12) "ears are blocked." (Jeremiah 6:10) They said to Abraham "And he blemished himself: (Genesis 17:1). And thereby violated God's charge to "be whole." No. Opposite is true. The proof is offered from the animal kingdom. As to their question, why remove that which God created, we respond that God also created the umbilical cord is proof.

17 אֶת־בָּתְנֵי

The small ones, and they (the ten) spoke for the sake of their father.

19 וְלֹא־אֲחֵר

We aren't clear. Like "וְאַחֲרַי עַד עֵתָהּ" (Genesis 34:5). Only from this binyan the dagesh is heavy, and the pa'al past tense. For example, "בִּרְךָ נְבוֹת אֱלֹהִים מֶלֶךְ" (1 Kings 21:13).

21 שְׁלָמִים

They come with peace.

חֲבֻת־מָקוֹמַיִם

Places, like "וַיֵּד תִּהְיֶה לָךְ" (Deuteronomy 23:13).

22 גִּלְתִּי

From the conjugation and silent letter – the something that disappears after the letter after the N"פ in the paal. "כִּי לֹךְ אֲתָהּ" (Jeremiah 10:6).

בהמור

Has already been explained.

23 מקנהם וקנהם

And behold, they thought badly about Jacob and his sons as they said "מקניהם וקניהם".

25 ביום השלישי

Third day for all is the word. It is half of seven, which is a quarter and this deed that Shimon and Levi had done with the knowledge of brothers, as it's written "במרמה" and sons of Jacob, all of them, and Jacob got angry with Shimon and Levi, because they had killed the people of Shechem.

29 ואת כל אשר בבית:

Meaning the house of Hamor, or the house of Shechem.

30 להבאישלי

They will hate me as one would hate something with a stench.

מתני מספר

Like people and something that can be counted as a little because Aaron the Cohain the head of the yeshiva (Gaon of Pumbedita) explained in Deuteronomy 33:6 "there are too few to count."

31 ולאמריו

Shimon and Levi spoke.

הכוונה געשה

Shechem.

Observations about Ibn Ezra's treatment of Dinah:

Ibn Ezra provides Dinah with some independence when he comments on verse one, saying that she went out on her own. In verse two, Ibn Ezra states that Dinah was raped because she was a virgin. In verse three, words of consolation are given to Dinah from Shechem, perhaps implying that the rape was the fault of Shechem and not Dinah. Ibn Ezra uses mostly grammar-based commentary that does not deal with the interactions between Shechem and Dinah. His commentary mentions that the rape was "natural, due

to the fact that she was a virgin." This counters Rashi's perception of the rape being "unnatural" or sexual intercourse other than vaginal. Perhaps this allows the reader to decipher what types of sexual practices were viewed as correct and permissible while other types of sexual practices were seen as immoral or improper.

Ramban:

Moses ben Nahman (1194-1270) was a Spanish rabbi and scholar and leading author of talmudic literature in the Middle Ages. He was also a philosopher, kabbalist, biblical exegete, poet and physician. He was born in Catalonia where he exercised extensive influence over Jewish public life. The majority of his works are on the Talmud and halakha. He was also a talented paytan, writing poetry and prayers. He wrote his Torah commentary in his old age and composed the majority of it in Spain. Unlike Rashi, he devoted his work to finding the exact meaning of a word and concerned himself mostly with the sequence of the biblical passages and with the deeper meaning of the Bible's laws and narratives. He also added his own commentary to that of aggadic and halakhic works within the biblical commentary.

His biblical commentary also reflects his views on God and Torah. He believed that the Torah is the word of God, and it is the source of all knowledge. The Bible not only tells the past, but tells of the future as well. Ramban often quoted Rashi and Ibn Ezra. He disagreed often with Rashi and occasionally praised Ibn Ezra and, on occasion, sharply attacked his views. Ramban was the first commentator to introduce Kabbalah into his commentary.

1 בַּת-לֵאָה אֲשֶׁר יָלְדָה לְיַעֲקֹב

[the reason is] to state that she was the sister of Simeon and Levi, who were irritated for her sake and avenged her cause. [And Scripture mentions further to remind], "whom she had borne unto Jacob," in order to allude to the fact that it was because of this that her brothers were envious of her.

2 וַיִּשְׁכַּב אִתָּהּ

He lay with her in a natural way.

וַיַּעֲנֶה:

Unnaturally. This is Rashi's language. But there is no need for this for all forced sexual connection is called "affliction." Likewise, "You shall not deal with her as a slave, because they have afflicted her (Deuteronomy 21:14)." And so also: "And my concubine they afflicted, and she is dead (Judges 20:5)." Scripture thus tells us to praise her – because she was forced, and she did not consent to the prince of the country.

7 וְכָל לֹא יַעֲשֶׂה:

To rape or to do violence to maidens, for the nations "had fenced themselves round" against unchastity as a result of the flood. This is Rashi's language. But I do not know this, for the Canaanites participated in עֲרִיּוֹת with women, beasts and males, as it is written, "For all these abominations have the men of the land done, that were before you (Leviticus 18:27)," and they did not begin such practices in that generation, and even in the days of Abraham and Isaac, [the patriarchs] they then feared lest they kill them to take their wives. Instead, the expression, "And thus it ought not to be done" refers back to the word "ב' yisrael" because he had done a vile deed in Israel, and thus it should not be done among them, עַל כֵּן אָמַר בְּיִשְׂרָאֵל. For it was not a base deed among the Canaanites. And Onkelos translated: "It is not proper that it be done," to say that it is forbidden, and that is why it was a vile deed in Israel.

12 מֹהָר

מֹהָר refers to the marriage contract which is given to virgins, as it is written, according to the dowry of virgins (Exodus 22:16), these being the presents which the young men send to the virgins when they marry them.

וּמִתָּן

Garments or silver and gold [which the groom sends] to her father and to her brothers. And in Bereshit Rabbah (80:7) they (rabbis) said: Mohar/dowry is the מִתָּנָן or wife's settlement; matan/gift is the additional settlement above the usual dowry, these bring in the language of the Jerusalem Talmud (Yerushalmi Ketubot 5:8) "the regular dowry" and "the usufruct estate," that is to say, that which he gives her of his properties to be

accounted as if she had brought them from her father's house, the produce of which belongs to him.

The reason for this conciliatory gesture is in order that they willingly give her to him as a wife, because the maiden did not consent to him and she steadily protested and cried.

This is the sense of the verse, "וַיִּדְבֹּר עַל-לֵב הַנָּעִר;" Therefore he said,

"קַח-לִי אֶת-הַיְלָדָה הַזֹּאת לְאִשָּׁה;" as she was already in his house and in his power, and he did not fear her brothers because he was the prince of the country and how could they steal her from him and remove her from his house? Now Shechem's great desire was because the maiden was very beautiful. However, Scripture did not narrate her beauty as it did in the case of Sarah, Rebekah, and Rachel because it did not want to mention that which was to her a stumbling block of iniquity (Ez 18:30), while Scripture speaks only in praise of the righteous women but not of this one. Similarly, Scripture does not mention what happened to her after [this rescue from Shechem's house]. In line with the simple meaning of Scripture she stayed with her brothers, "shut up, living as widows" (II Samuel 20:3) as she was considered defiled in their sight, as it is written, because he had defiled Dinah their sister (v 13). Our rabbis have differed on this matter (Bereshit Rabbah 80:10). The most feasible option is that of he who says that Simeon took her and upon her death, he buried her in the land of Canaan, this is like what we have said, that she was with him in his house as a widow, and she went down with them to Egypt, and there she died but was buried in the Land of Israel. Her grave is known by tradition to this day; it is in the city of Arbel with the grave of Nitai the Arbelite. It is possible that Simeon brought up her remains from Egypt out of pity for her [while the Israelites were still in Egypt] or that the children of Israel brought them up together with the bones of her brothers – all the tribes – just as our Rabbis have mentioned (in Mechilta, Exodus 13:19).

13 וַיַּעֲנוּ בְנֵי-מְעֵלָה אֶת-שָׁכֶם וְאֶת-חָמוֹר אֲבֵיו בְּמַרְמָה

Now Hamor and Shechem spoke to her father and her brothers (v 11), but the patriarch did not answer them at all as his sons spoke in his place on this matter out of respect for him since the affair was a source of shame to them, they did not want him to speak about it at all.

There is a question [which may be raised] here. It would appear that they answered with the concurrence of her father and his advice for they were in his presence, and it was he who understood the answer, which they spoke with guile, and if so, why was he [so] angry [afterwards]? (V 30) Moreover, it is inconceivable that Jacob would have consented to give his daughter in marriage to a Canaanite who had defiled her. Now surely all the brothers gave that answer with guile, but Simeon and Levi alone executed the deed, and the father cursed only their wrath. (Genesis 49:7) (But if all the brothers shared responsibility for the answer and the plan, why did Jacob single out only Simeon and Levi for chastisement?) The answer is that the guile lay in their saying that every male of theirs was to be circumcised (v 15), as they thought that the people of the city would not consent to it. Even if perhaps they would listen to their prince and they would all become circumcised, they would come "on the third day, when they were in pain (v 25)," and would take their daughter from the house of Shechem. Now this was the advice

of all the brothers and with the permission of their father, but Simeon and Levi wanted to take revenge on them and so they killed all the men of the city.

It is possible that Jacob's anger in cursing their wrath (Genesis 49:7) was because they killed the men of the city who had committed no sin against him; they should have killed Shechem alone. It is this, which Scripture says, "And the sons of Jacob answered Shechem and Hamor his father with guile and spoke because he had defiled Dinah their sister, for they all agreed to speak to him with guile because of the נבלה which he had done to them.

Now many people ask: "but how did the righteous sons of Jacob commit this deed, spilling innocent blood?" The Rabbi (Rambam) answered in his Book of Judges saying that the "Sons of Noah" are commanded concerning Laws and thus they are required to appoint judges in each and every district to give judgement concerning their six commandments [which are obligatory upon all mankind]. "And a Noahide who transgresses one of them is subject to the death penalty by the sword. If he sees a person transgressing one of these seven laws and does not bring him to trial for a capital crime, he who saw him is subject to the same death penalty." It was on account of this that the people of Shechem deserved death, since Shechem had committed an act of robbery and they saw and knew of it, but they did not bring him to trial."

But these words do not appear to me to be correct for if so, our father Jacob should have been the first to obtain the merit of causing their death, and if he was afraid of them, why was he angry at his sons and why did he curse their wrath a long time after that and punish them by dividing them and scattering them in Israel? Were they not meritorious, fulfilling a commandment and trusting in God who saved them?

In my opinion, the meaning of "Laws" which the Rabbis have counted among their seven Noahidic commandments is not just that they are to appoint judges in each and every district, but He commanded them concerning their laws of theft, overcharge, wronging, and a hired man's wages; the laws of guardians of property, forceful violation of a woman, seduction, principles of damage and wounding a fellowman; laws of creditors and debtors, and laws of buying and selling, and their like, similar in scope to the laws with which Israel was charged, and involving the death-penalty for stealing, wronging or violating or seducing the daughter of his fellowman, or kindling his stack, or wounding him, and their like. And it is also included in this commandment that they appoint judges for each and every city, just as Israel was commanded to do (Deuteronomy 16:18), but if they failed to do so they are free of the death penalty since this is a positive precept of theirs [and failing to fulfill a positive precept does not incur the death-penalty]. The Rabbis have only said (Sanhedrin 57a): "For violation of their admonishments there is the death-penalty," and only a prohibition against doing something is called an "admonishment." And such is the purport of the Gemara in Tractate Sanhedrin. And in the Jerusalem Talmud (Sanhedrin 58b) they have said: "With respect to Noahide laws, a judge who perverts justice is to be slain. If he took a bribe he is to be slain. With respect to Jewish laws, [if after having heard both parties] you know perfectly well what the proper legal decision should be, you are not permitted to withdraw from the case without

rendering a decision, and if you know that it is not perfectly clear to you, you may withdraw from the case. But with respect to their laws, even though you know the law perfectly well you may withdraw from it." From this it would appear that a non-Jewish judge may say to the litigants, "I am not beholden to you," for it is only in Israel that there is an additional admonishment – "*Lo taguru*" (*you shall not be afraid*) *of the face of any man* (Deuteronomy 1:17), meaning "You shall not gather in your words before any man (Sanhedrin 6b)" and surely he is not to be slain for failing to make himself *chief, overseer, or ruler* (Proverbs 6:7) in order to judge superiors. [Ramban thus disagrees with Rambam, who writes that the people of Shechem had incurred the death penalty by not having brought Shechem to justice.] Moreover, why does the Rabbi [Rambam] have to seek to establish their guilt? Were not the people of Shechem and all seven nations (Deuteronomy 7:1) idol worshippers, perpetrators of unchaste acts, and practitioners of all things that are abominable to God? In many places Scripture loudly proclaims concerning them: "*Upon the high mountains, and upon their hills, and under every leafy tree* (Deuteronomy 12:2); *Thou shalt not learn to do after the abominations* (Deuteronomy 18:9); *For all these abominations have the men of the land done* (Leviticus 18:27). However, it was not the responsibility of Jacob and his sons to bring them to justice.

But the wicked matter of Shechem was that the people of Shechem were wicked [by virtue of their violation of the seven Noahide laws] and had thereby forfeited their lives. Therefore Jacob's sons wanted to take vengeance of them with a vengeful sword, and so they killed the king and all the men of his city who were his subjects, obeying his commands. The covenant represented by the circumcision of the inhabitants of Shechem had no validity in the eyes of Jacob's sons for it was done to curry favor with their master [and did not represent a genuine conversion]. But Jacob told them here that they had placed him in danger, as it is said *You have troubled me, to make me odious* (verse 30) and there [at the time he blessed the other children], he cursed the wrath of Simeon and Levi for they had done violence to the men of the city whom they had told in his presence, *And we will dwell with you, and we will become one people* (Genesis 34:16). They would have chosen to believe in God and trust their word, and perhaps they might have indeed returned to God and thus Simeon and Levi killed them without cause for the people had done them no evil at all. It is this which Jacob said, *Weapons of violence are their kinship* (Genesis 49:5).

And if we are to believe in the book, "The Wars of the Sons of Jacob"⁴⁰, their father's fear was due to the fact that the neighbors of Shechem gathered together and waged three major wars against them, and were it not for their father who also donned his weapons and warred against them, they would have been in danger, as is related in that book. Our Rabbis have mentioned something of this conflict in their commentary on the verse, *Which I took out of the hand of the Amorite with my sword and with my bow* (Genesis 48:22). They said (Rashi) "All the surrounding nations gathered together to join in battle against them, and Jacob donned his weapons to war against them," just as Rashi writes there. Scripture, however, is brief about this because it was a hidden miracle, for the sons of Jacob were valiant men, and it appeared as if *their own arm saved them* (Psalms 44:4),

⁴⁰ See Ginzberg, Louis. *The Legends of the Jews* (Philadelphia: JPS, 1942), Vol. I, pp. 404-411.

and they did not all assemble to *pursue after the sons of Jacob* (Psalms 35:5), for they would have fallen upon them *as the sand which is on the sea-shore in multitude* (I Samuel 13:5). And this is the meaning of *the terror of God* (Psalms 35:5), for the terror and dread (Exodus 15:16) of the military prowess they had seen fell upon them. Therefore Scripture says, *And Jacob came to Luz...he and all the people that were with him* in order to inform us that not one man among them or their servants was lost in warfare (Numbers 31:49).

21 הָאֲנָשִׁים הָאֵלֶּה שָׁלְמִים

The men of the city thought that they hated them as they saw them dejected, and it angered them very much. Perhaps they guarded themselves against them and installed in their city bars and doors, for Jacob's sons were mighty men and *valiant men for the war* (Jeremiah 48:14). But now Hamor and his son Shechem told them, "Do not fear and do not keep distant from them for they are whole-hearted with us."

23 מִקְנֵהֶם וְקִנְיָנָם וְכָל-בְּהֵמָתָם

The reason for referring to cattle by the word *מִקְנֵהֶם* is that beasts of the herds which are in the field are called *מִקְנֵה* [from the root *קנה* which means acquire] because whether they are clean or unclean, they are the mainstay of a man's substance, just as it is written *Behold, the hand of the Eternal is upon thy cattle which are in the field, upon the horses, upon the asses, upon the camels, upon the herds, and upon the flocks* (Exodus 9:3). And those which do not constitute a herd, as, for example, single beasts in the house, are not called *מִקְנֵה* and they are included in the term, *and all their beasts*. It may be that *מִקְנֵה* and *all their beasts* both refer to the same cattle, and the redundancy is for the purpose of emphasis, meaning, *and all their beasts*, which were very numerous.

Observations about the Ramban's treatment of Dinah:

The Ramban uses the words of Rashi to comment on the rape in verse two. He also adds that forced sex is considered to be an affliction and quotes from two verses in the Tanakh to substantiate his claim. Later, in verse seven, Ramban comments that the vile act is that of raping virgins. Here the resistance to force is a key concept that Ramban chooses to focus on. Perhaps this is due to the era in which he lived; an era where forced conversions under Muslim rule continued to threaten the existence of Judaism. Ramban continues in his commentary on verse seven by stating that the vile deed had been done in Israel, while for other peoples the deed may not have been vile. Forced conversions were

considered to be vile for the People of Israel, whereas for other peoples it may not have been. Ramban states about the proper treatment of women who have been defiled in verse twelve, as well as the contractual obligations a groom has to the father of the bride regarding the marriage contract written for virgins. In this contract, a virginal woman is worth specific material possessions for her father, in exchange for her virginity to her future husband. Ramban then spends quite a bit of time commenting on verse thirteen, which is interestingly where he disagrees with Rambam and believes that the brothers were not justified in the murders of the people of Shechem. Moreover, he concentrates on the guile and contractual negotiations between Jacob's sons and Hamor. He focuses on the negotiations, contracts, and what belongs to whom...including Dinah. It is also interesting to note that in the wake of the forced conversions in Spain during his time, Ramban's commentary to verse thirteen expresses his concern over the sincerity of the circumcision/conversion that the people of Shechem engage in, perhaps reflecting his own concern over the sincerity and legitimacy of the conversions of hundreds of Jews in Spain. The image of the rape of Dinah juxtaposed with the reality of the forced conversions of Jews in Ramban's time surely underscores the perceptions of power over the powerless and strength over the weaker party.

Chapter Three: Fifteenth Century Italy and Portugal

Historical Period:

When the Jews were expelled from Spain, many headed towards Portugal. Neither the Jews residing in Portugal nor the ruling monarchy truly wanted the Jews from Spain, but the ruler Joao II anticipated a large profit from these Jews entering his country. Thirty families, along with Rabbi Isaac Aboab, (the last Sage of Castile) were allowed to settle in Oporto. Another 600,000 paid the tax of 100 *cruzados* a piece, and settled in other parts of the country. Others entered the country on the payment of a poll tax of eight *cruzados* for each adult, based on the agreement that they would not remain for longer than eight months. The condition upon which they entered Portugal was not fulfilled. Joao II was succeeded by his cousin, Manoel "the fortunate" (1495-1521). An arranged marriage was planned for him and Ferdinand and Isabella's daughter, Isabella. However, she would not enter his country until it had been "purified" of the Jews. On November 30, 1496, the marriage treaty was signed. Less than a week later, on December 5, a royal decree was issued that banished the Jews and Moslems from the country. They were given ten months to leave.

Since Manoel did not want to lose the value of the Jews as his citizens, he began a plan to convert the Jews to Christianity. On Friday, March 19, 1497 orders were given for all Jewish children between 4-14 years old were to be presented for baptism on the following Sunday, the beginning of Passover. At that time, those children who were not presented voluntarily were seized by officials and forced to serve in the army. Violence and kidnapping took place, in addition to scenes of desperation -- parents trying to save their

children by throwing them down wells and then killing themselves. In some cases, babies were distributed throughout the country, as far as possible from home, to be brought up in Christian homes. Moslem children remained untouched, for fear of retaliation in countries under Moslem rule.

On the final date of departure, Jews came to the capital and were herded (20,000 of them) to the palace, *Os Estaos*, and were kept without food or water. The Queen's apostate physician Master Nicholas visited often and tried to persuade the Jews to convert. Many did. Those who did not were sprinkled with holy water and declared Christians.

"The expulsion from Portugal is thus, as a matter of fact, a misnomer. The number of those who were able to emigrate was so exiguous as to be negligible. What put an end to the resistance of the Jews in the country was a General Conversion of unexampled comprehensiveness, knowing almost no exceptions and carried out by means of an unbridled exercise of force."⁴¹

The expulsion of the Jews from Spain and the calamity that befell the Jews in Portugal left the converso population completely without guidance. "Now alone, they had to find ways of maintaining their own identity by commemorating their Jewish past and leading a separate way of life, believing that in time they would return to Judaism."⁴² Their survival was at stake.

⁴¹ Beinart, Haim. "The Conversos and Their Fate," in *Spain and the Jews: The Sephardic Experience 1492 and After* (ed. Kedourie, Elie; London: Thames and Hudson, 1990), p. 60.

⁴² *Ibid.*, p. 115.

The Jewish community of Italy in the fifteenth century provided a bridge between Ashkenazic and Sephardic Jewish communities. For example, the philosophies of Maimonides and other Sephardic philosophers and rabbis were brought into Italy. Gradually, Jews from Portugal, Southern France, Germany and Spain arrived in Italy to become protected under the *condottas*, which were contracts drawn up between municipalities and Jewish moneylenders that protected the Jews and allowed them certain privileges. In addition to moneylending, many Italian Jews entered the field of arts and crafts as well as medicine.

Italian Jewish preachers utilized Greek and Latin literature in their sermons, and Jewish biblical exegetes applied classic rhetoric to the study of the Bible.⁴³ Italy became the greatest early center of Hebrew printing. Music was written for the synagogues and Leone de' Sommo established a Jewish theater that produced Hebrew dramas. The Jewish creativity felt within the Renaissance did not create an actual Jewish Renaissance.

Despite good relations with Renaissance princes, the Jew was still viewed as a deliberate disbeliever of Christ. Blood libels still led to expulsions, specifically after 1475, when a Franciscan monk stirred up charges of ritual murder in the city of Trent, which had repercussions in Italy. The political conflicts pushed Jews to seek refuge in other cities, which was possible due to a politically fragmented Italy. However, in the sixteenth century, the conditions and situation for Jews in Italy would continue to decline.

⁴³ Seltzer, Robert. p. 497.

The education for upper class women in the Renaissance was similar to that of men.

"The same intellectual and emotional development which perfected the man was demanded for the perfection of the woman."⁴⁴ Women were to influence distinguished men and to continue to be praised for beauty as well as disposition and education.

Women during this time were perceived as intelligent creatures; in fact, a compliment to women was to praise them for their mind and courage similar to men.⁴⁵ During the Renaissance, many Italian Jews adapted the culture, language, and tastes of Italians.

Abravanel:

Judah Abravanel (1437-1508) was born in Lisbon and studied Jewish philosophy along with Christian theology. During his life, he was involved in state commerce and finance. Abravanel, the son of an eminent Sephardic Court Jew who left Spain for Italy in 1492, wrote a work on cosmic love in the Neo-Platonic tradition that was widely admired by Italian Humanists. Judah was influenced by the Ralbag and wrote a Torah commentary as well as commentary's to the Song of Songs and the Prophets.

Abravanel's Commentary on Genesis 34

The Commentary is very lengthy. The most relevant parts have been translated in full. Others are summarized by the author and appear in italics.

And Jacob came to the city of Shechem. Until Hamor the father of Shechem came out. (Genesis 33:18-20 and 34:1-5) Shechem knew when he saw that when he came near to Mamre, Kiryat Arba, for it is where Jacob was living in Hebron. His sons were shepherds of sheep in Shechem and it was no more than one day of a distance between the two.

⁴⁴ Burckhardt, Jacob. *The Civilization of the Renaissance in Italy* (USA: Harper and Row, 1958), p. 391.

⁴⁵ *Ibid*, p. 391.

And therefore Jacob sent to see how his sons were and how the sheep were. But, the place where Dinah was raped was very far from Hebron (where Isaac was). And you can ask about this that the Rabbis say that Shechem is a place for punishment. There Dinah was violated, there tribes ruined things, and because of this it appears to me that Shechem was the name of the whole area. And Hamor was the leader of that whole land, and at the beginning of this territory Jacob met as he was coming to Padan Aran and there the incident occurred with Dinah in Shalem, a district in the territory of Shechem and from there, Jacob went to Beit El and from there Jacob went to Hebron where Isaac his father was. And near to there was a place called Shechem in that district itself. There, sons of Jacob would raise the flock of their father. The matter with Dinah happened in the place that was initially called Shalem, and ultimately became Shechem.

The sons of Jacob were shepherding at the farther end, more distant from that district and since they were all included in an area called Shechem, the rabbis said it was a place fit for punishment... Jacob purchased the land from Hamor. It was land where he first pitched his tent. This bothered people, and he wanted to buy it. Hamor was old, so he sent his sons. They go to the tents of Jacob and see Dinah. "There is no doubt that they spoke to her and Shechem became desired of her of his soul."

Ibn Ezra wrote that Jacob stayed in the city for many years because Dinah was seven years old, Simeon and Levi were young boys when he came there. And because Jacob entered into the land of Canaan, the holy land, bought property, he built an altar to thank God for all the good things that God did for him – bringing him to this land and saving him from Laban and Esau and to give him property in this holy land...and perhaps the matter of the altar has something to do with Dinah. When Jacob built the altar, all his sons and daughters ate there and the people of the city came to see this inauguration of the altar. Shechem saw Dinah and desired her.

The story tells us that Dinah the daughter of Leah that was born to Jacob went out. It doesn't tell us this to her detriment, which she was the daughter of a woman who went out (Rashi). Leah was modest. When Jacob came to her, he did not recognize her. And that she went out, it was to Jacob to say "come to me" and it was only to the entrance of her house and for the purpose of heaven. But this verse comes to tell us in praise of Dinah that what happened to her did not happen because she is the daughter of an immodest woman, rather the daughter of Leah – one who was taught to stay in her house, because it was Rachel who was the Shepherdess and Leah did not go out. Also, because of her father, she was the daughter of Jacob, one who sat in the tents. And if the father was modest, all the more so, the daughter. This teaches us that she did not go out for any bad intention, but to see the daughters of the land; not the men of the city or sons of the city, but daughters of the city. Meaning, to see the daughters of the city, what they were wearing, and their jewelry. Since in the house of Jacob, there were no other young females except her and she wanted to learn about the young women of the city, as young women are want to do.

There is no doubt that Dinah did not go out alone without the company of a man or woman. Though this is not mentioned by the verse, because it is understood...but,

Scripture says "Shechem the Prince of the land," to tell you that because he was prince of the land, he did this by force and did not care who was with Dinah, and did not care about Jacob or his sons.

"And Hamor the father of Shechem went out, etc." (Chapter 34:6-35:1) Until God spoke to Jacob. The scripture tells us that Jacob heard about the rape of Dinah and this touched his soul. He kept silent because his sons were in the field with the sheep. And therefore he kept silent until they came in order to consult with him to decide what to do, because Jacob did not send for them and did not know them until they came, lest they would get worked up, but he was silent until they came. At the time that they were accustomed to come. Hamor, the father of Shechem, seeing that Jacob did not get worked up from the matter, thought that either he did not know what happened or that he was not worried about him because as an old man, Jacob is like a woman and therefore he went out to speak with him about the marriage. Because Hamor was an old man and was honored he would only go out from his house for a strong reason and this was one. "And Hamor went out, etc" And Hamor was with Jacob speaking to him about what happened when the sons of Jacob came from the field and because of this, Hamor was forced to speak to all of them; he means to say to the father and sons together. And behold, the scripture notes that the sons of Jacob, when they came, heard the matter – or that they came from the flocks WHEN they heard the matter. The sages in the midrash say, "if they came from the field when they heard and they cried or they came when they heard the matter." What it says is that they were sad and very angry. This is because of three reasons that are mentioned in my commentary. "And he took her and he raped her." 1) Regarding him taking her, Shechem took Dinah with force and brought her to his house. It says "he did an outrage in Israel," it means to say because she is a daughter of Israel. It was not proper for him to take her by force because she had an avenger and avengers, her father and her brothers and this rape was an outrage according to the laws of Israel, their father and his honor. 2) Regarding what it is said, "And he lay with her." It says to lie with the daughter of Jacob meaning that it is not proper to lie with the daughter of a great man like Jacob. And he degraded her virginity without marriage. 3) And regarding "And he raped her." It says and thus it should not be done meaning the lying was not proper to be done as forceful and as he did it. Because it is forbidden to a son of Noah to lie with a virginal woman unless through marriage, and therefore it says "וְכִן לֹא יַעֲשֶׂה"

... "For sadness is only that people become saddened through his bad luck for what happened and to the point that he did not seek revenge." Therefore, it says כִּי נִבְלָה עֲשָׂה בְּיִשְׂרָאֵל לְשָׂכַב אֶת-בֵּית יַעֲקֹב וְכִן לֹא יַעֲשֶׂה meaning that they were saddened from the disgrace that is attached to their family, the house of their father. The whoring of Dinah or that she was penetrated by an uncircumcised male. Therefore, it says "to lie with the daughter of Jacob" because any kind of lying with an uncircumcised person would be a disgrace.

However, the anger that they had with Shechem was because he defiled her through rape – force and strength which is something not done amongst them and he also did something with their sister that is not proper for them as well, according to their (people of Shechem) customs. That is why it says "this should not be done," meaning it is not a

custom of the people of Shechem to be with a woman except through marriage, not through just sleeping with the person, and therefore it says "it should not be done" as it should not be done in our place."

...If so, we can say then that the sadness was because of their family and religion that their sister would sleep with an uncircumcised male. And anger was against Shechem for the rape that he did. While they are in a state of sadness and anger, Hamor thinks that they do not know the truth of the matter and implies (Hamor advises Jacob's sons that it is to their benefit that Dinah marry Shechem) it is beneath Shechem's honor to marry from a family of shepherds. "It is as if he is advising them it is to their benefit to marry Shechem."

"And he says 'you can take' out of fear by what Shechem did, that on his own he took her by force. Therefore, he says "our daughters you take for yourselves." Therefore, Hamor says when you want, you can take from the daughters of the land by force, as Shechem took Dinah, because we will not mind.

"אֲמַצְאֶתְךָ בְּעֵינֵיכֶם וְאֲשֶׁר תֹּאמְרוּ אֵלַי אֲתָנִי." And for me, it is enough to have the honor from you to marry Dinah."

"As far as the dowry, you tell me what it is and I will give it. And if my father asks you of a large dowry because of his stature of leader of the land, I ask you to agree to give a large dowry and gift for your sister and I will pay it, whatever you tell me. Meaning, if you want me to pay all of it or 1/2 or 1/3 because I want you to give me the young girl and I do not mind about the dowry – I want the girl.

Abravanel continues to discuss the guile and disagrees with the traditional commentaries that propose the guile is from the sons of Jacob in order for the men of Shechem to circumcise themselves and be in pain so they can take revenge for the rape of Dinah. Abravanel proposes that the guile is that the sons of Jacob never specifically stated that they would give Dinah to Shechem.

"What appears correct to me is that they answered with guile without specifically stating and since the love that is connected to the act of intercourse is completely weakened or nullified at the completion of such an ugly act, as happened with Amnon and Tamar, scripture testifies that it is not the case with Shechem and Dinah. After he slept with her, even though by force, his soul cleaved to her for two reasons. 1) She is the daughter of Jacob and outstanding in her perfection and therefore he did not find her disgusting, his soul did cleave to her. 2) Because Dinah herself being so beautiful and full of grace, it says "וַתִּדְבֹק וַתִּשָּׂא בְדִיעָהּ בְּתִיעָקֶב וַיֵּאָהֵב אֶת־הַנָּעַר וַיְדַבֵּר עִלְלָהּ הַנָּעַר;" Because Dinah was so saddened and pained because of the rape, the desecration of her virginity and beauty, Shechem spoke to her heart. Words of joy, vows, and promises to fulfill her every desire and wish so that she would want him. Because of this, Shechem said to his father – take for me this woman as a wife. Seek her hand from her father and brothers. 3) And he raped her. He did not sleep with her willingly and with great pain and forcibly. Why at the end it says וַיִּעְנֶה And perhaps it says וַיִּעְנֶה because intercourse is pleasurable

by nature, even though it can start at rape, it can end being willing, at least as far as being a natural pleasure. It is mentioned in the Gemara – a woman came to the rebbe and said “I have been raped, taken forcibly.” He asks her “Was there any subsequent pleasure in the act, and it would make her forbidden to her husband.” She answered “if a person comes and places on Yom Kippur, honey on a person’s mouth by force, would the sweet taste on the mouth mean anything?” This is proof that the natural pleasure would not be removed with rape. Therefore, the verse says about Dinah, there was pain and no natural pleasure connected with this intercourse. What is meant by וַיַּעֲנָה is this. The great pain attributed to the will of a person made her soul pained and made it impossible to feel with natural senses. This all proves that Dinah was totally full of this sin. If not for this, there is no doubt that the brothers, had they come upon her in the house of Shechem, they would have killed her – the adulterer and adulteress. It was clear to them that she was totally forced and raped with no pleasure.

There was no other female except her and she wanted to learn about the young women of the city, as young women are wont to do. There is no doubt that Dinah did not go out alone without the company of a man or woman through this is not mentioned by the verse, because it is understood...but, scripture says Hamor, the prince of the land, to tell you that because he was the prince of the land, he did this by force and did care who was with Dinah and did not care about Jacob or his sons. But, it is said וַיִּשְׁכַּב אִתָּהּ וַיַּעֲנָה and you already see how Rashi explains this as natural and then unnatural sexual intercourse practices. (vaginally and anally) How could you talk about him doing this? And Ibn Ezra explains that she was a virgin and it is why it says וַיַּעֲנָה since it is natural to be painful as a virgin. It is included in וַיִּשְׁכַּב - it is the same thing. Why should the verse mention this? There is no need for it. Except to tell you the truth – factually of what happened. Shechem did three bad things as she passed by in the marketplace.

1) He took her into his house forcibly. This is disgusting. Even if he was to take her for purposes of marrying her it is not proper to take her by force.

2) And he lay with her and raped her virginity. That when he'd circumcised himself, they would give him Dinah as a wife. Rather they arranged their words so that they could do everything they did without profaning their words and lying in their faith. *And Abravanel goes on.* To say that the sons of Jacob are offering words of advice for what is best for the people of Shechem. That generally speaking, they should get circumcised so that one could marry Dinah and all would be good between the two peoples. It is never explicitly said that they would give Dinah to Shechem. They make it more general. In verse 17 וְאִם-לֹא תִשְׁמְעוּ אֵלֵינוּ לְהַמְוִל וְלִקְחוּ אֶת-בְּתוּלָתוֹ וְהָלַכְנוּ, they do say it negatively, but never clearly state that they will give Dinah. “After he circumcised himself, he comes and talks to her father at the gate of the city. These people are peaceful with us. Look at the guile of their words to the people of their city. They do not tell them they are doing this in order that Dinah will be given to Shechem as a wife. They also do not tell them about the potential dispute surrounding the fact that Shechem slept with Dinah. Just the opposite, because if the people would think if one man sinned, why should the community suffer? “And after that he introduces the elements of greed, saying “מִקְנֵהֶם וְקִינָם וְכָל-בְּהֶמְתָּם” and says meaning that you know that these people are rich and few in number, and we are many. So whatever they have will end up in our hands whether it be renting houses and land to them or through cheating, thievery, or stealing. And if they want to go, we can

take all that is theirs so that ultimately everything that is theirs will become ours. Just let's be nice to them so that they will stay in the land. And the people of the land were seduced to do this either to satisfy their masters or because of the greed to acquire the possessions of Jacob and his sons, and therefore were willing to be circumcised.

Regarding verse 25. וַיְהִי בַיּוֹם הַשְּׁלִישִׁי, On the third day, "I consider it to be not the third day of circumcision because how could the sons of Jacob postpone their revenge? But it was the third day from what happened to Dinah, because immediately when Shechem spoke to his father to get him to get her for a wife, and the sons of Jacob replied concerning circumcision. On the second day, Shechem was circumcised and went out to speak at the gate of the city. On the third day, they were all circumcised and on that very day, while they were all in pain from circumcision, Shimon and Levi came to their homes...and killed them all. And they also killed Hamor and his son Shechem, but Dinah they took from their house since she had been raped..." Abravanel rationalizes the death of Hamor and Shechem and the people of the city because the sons of Noah are obligated in the laws of sexual misdeeds and stealing. Since no one in the city protested what had been done, they were all guilty and warranted the death penalty. Since the people had coveted, it was okay for the sons of Jacob to take all of their possessions. "בָּאוּ עַל-הַחֲלָלִים וַיַּבִּיזוּ הָעִיר אֲשֶׁר טָמְאוּ אֲחֻזָּתָם" Jacob knew nothing about this. And the sons answer with verse 31, וַיֹּאמְרוּ חֲכֹזְלָה עָשָׂה אֶת-אֲחֻזָּתָנוּ. Abravanel says that verse 31 is the reason why it is a sufficient answer because if they do not kill everyone there, it was okay to sleep with Dinah because she is a prostitute.

"This story was written to teach us, how great is the troubles of a daughter. For Jacob had twelve sons born to him and did not receive from them any disgrace, humiliation and danger that he got from his daughter. And to also let us know just how great position and honor that you should place your lives in your hands – your wives, your sons, and all that you possess in order to avenge yourself upon your enemy."

3) "To tell you how appropriate it is for women of stature that they should be wary of going outside the doors of their house. The Midrash Tanhuma states: What is the law about a woman going outside her house with gold jewelry on Shabbat? Rabbis taught that she should not go out, not go out to a public place because people would look at her for her jewelry. A woman should only adorn herself in her home because you should not place something to lead to a breach of the laws before a proper person, all the more so before a thief." The Psalms say "all honor and glory of a daughter of a king is inside the home."

Observations about Abravanel's treatment of Dinah:

It is interesting to note that in the beginning of his commentary, Abravanel provides a

location for the rape by stating that it occurred in "שֶׁלֶם." The word שֶׁלֶם, from the root

שְׁלָם means peaceful or completion. What is most obvious is the fact that this place שְׁלָם became anything but a place of peace and completion for Dinah; it is the place where she found violence and became fragmented – both literally and physically. Moreover, within this passage, the word rape is not used. Instead, Abravanel uses euphemisms for the horrific and violent act against Dinah like “the matter with Dinah” or “what happened to Dinah.”

Abravanel dates the first meeting between Shechem and Dinah as taking place prior to Dinah’s going out in verse one. He writes of the days when Dinah was seven years old and Jacob built the altar to God. It was at that point when the people of Shechem came to see the inauguration of the altar, and it was at that point when Shechem saw Dinah for the first time.

As opposed to commentators like Rashi, Abravanel states that what happened to Dinah was not in spite of her mother’s immodesty, but rather in praise of her mother’s modesty. Dinah, he believes, did not go out for any bad intention. Instead, he argues that since Dinah was the only girl in the house of Jacob, she simply wanted the company of other young females. Moreover, when she did go out, he points out that she did not go out alone; and that Shechem did “this” (meaning the rape) by force without any regard for Jacob or his sons. Abravanel, like his predecessors, sees Jacob and his sons, not Dinah, as the people most affected by this act of force.

Abravanel points out that it was an outrage to rape a daughter of Israel, since rape goes against the laws of Israel, insulting her (Dinah's) father, and his honor. Moreover, he states that it was improper to lay with a daughter of a great man. By lying with Dinah, he took Dinah's virginity without marriage because it is forbidden to a son of Noah to lie with a virginal woman unless it is through the act of marriage. Furthermore, any type of sexual act with an uncircumcised male is considered to be a disgrace. Because of this disgrace, Dinah's brothers were both angry and sad about the rape.

Abravanel's commentary on the word ויענה provides background on the possible perceptions of women at that time. He writes that "intercourse is pleasurable by nature, even though it can start at rape, it can end being willing, at least as far as being a natural pleasure." Abravanel's commentary sheds light on the male dominated hierarchical society in which he lived. Through this statement, one can presume that a husband may not only initiate sex with his wife, but also possibly force her to have sex with him, since by the end of the act she may become a willing partner. Later on however, he does allow for the possibility of rape to exist, by stating that Dinah was so full of pain that she was unable to feel with natural senses. Therefore he believes that she was raped since she was forced and raped without any pleasure.

Abravanel clearly holds contempt for the actions that Shechem makes pertaining to Dinah. For example, he writes "this is disgusting," when describing Shechem forcibly taking Dinah to his house. However, when Abravanel writes of Dinah's brothers' actions of force toward the people of Shechem, his writing ("It is never explicitly said that they

would give Dinah to Shechem”) shows that he wants to vindicate the brothers as not liars but simply clever speakers. Later on during his commentary to verse twenty-five, he proposes an entirely different sequence of events in order to rationalize the deaths of Hamor and Shechem and the people of the city.

With this commentary, Abravanel begins to portray Dinah in a different light from many other commentators. Regarding the rape of Dinah, Abravanel places no blame on her. He, in fact, states that she was simply looking at the women of the land, as young women are wont to do. He focuses his commentary on the rape but more specifically on the outcome from the rape. He looks deeply at the guile between Hamor/Shechem and Jacob’s sons. Moreover, he details the contractual negotiations and guile between the two camps.

Sforno:

Obadiah ben Jacob (1470-1550) was an Italian biblical commentator and physician. Born at Cesena, Sforno was attached to his brother who supported him financially for a time. He studied in Rome and eventually settled in Bologna, where he played an active role in resuscitating a Hebrew-printing house and in organizing the community. He established and conducted a *beit-midrash*. Italian rabbis addressed halakhic questions to him.

His reputation rests mostly on his commentaries on the Pentateuch, Song of Songs, and Ecclesiastes, which first appeared in Venice in 1567; on Psalms in 1586; on Job in 1589; and on Jonah/Habbakuk/Zecheriah in 1724-1728. He generally limited himself to the

literal exegesis of the biblical text and avoided mystical and kabalistic interpretations. He pays little attention to philology as well.

Sforno's Commentary on Genesis 34

3 וַתִּדְבֹק נַפְשׁוֹ בְּדִמְיָהּ

In the case of Amnon and Tamar it was reverse, once he violated her.

בְּתִי-יַעֲקֹב

Because she was the daughter of Jacob, who was honored by all, as it says, "for he wanted Jacob's daughter" (Genesis 34:19)

5 וְהִחַרְשׁ יַעֲקֹב עַד-בָּאָם:

He was silent in going out to fight with them until his sons' arrival and learn of this and they would be able to guard themselves from their enemies.

6 וַיֵּצֵא חֲמוּר

When he saw that Jacob was silent, he grew worried that he (Jacob) was plotting against him.

7 וַיִּתְעַצְבוּ הָאֲנָשִׁים

Their distress was due to the outrage, which had been done in Israel and a shameful act in Israel. Even though this was not the case with the heathen nations, which was a shameful act in Israel as it says:

וְכֵן לֹא יַעֲשֶׂה:

It was most uncommon to violate the daughter of a person of renown; therefore they were extremely angered that it had happened to them.

10 וְסִחְרוּהָ

Normally strangers were not allowed to trade, as we find "a local person can prevent an outsider from trading or doing business" (Baba Batra 21a).

12 הֲרַבִּי עָלַי מְאֹד מְהֵרָה

As compensation for my guilt and transgression against you.

13 בְּמִרְמָה

The request that they should circumcise themselves was made either in the belief that they would refuse, or that they would be unable to convince their townspeople to do so.

וַיִּדְבְּרוּ אֲשֶׁר טָמְאָה אֶת דִּמְעָה אֲחוֹתָם:

They answered that the offer of extravagant gifts made by Shechem and his father was inappropriate because he had already defiled her, for it would appear as a prostitute's hire.

14 כִּי־חֲרָפָה הוּא לָנוּ:

It would imply that there is no fitting man among the circumcised who would marry her.

17 וְלָקַחְנוּ אֶת־בִּתְּנוֹ

Though she is still in your house, we will take her from you.

וְהִלְכָנוּ:

With all our wealth, from which you will derive no benefit.

19 וְהוּא נִכְבָּד

Even so, he did not delay doing the thing (circumcision), for he wanted Jacob's daughter.

21 הָאֲנָשִׁים הָאֵלֶּה שְׁלָמִים הֵם אִתָּנוּ

They are peaceable toward us and do not wish to avenge their humiliation.

25 וַיַּחֲרֹגוּ כָל־זָכָר:

For they had circumcised themselves only in the hope of gaining their livestock and possessions, as Hamor and Shechem had said to them (verse 23).

26 וְאֶת־חֲמוּר וְאֶת־שָׁכֶם בָּנוּ הָרְגוּ

They searched and located them.

27 הָעִיר אֲשֶׁר טָמְאָה אֲחוֹתָם:

For Shechem would never have committed (this evil) if it had not been considered non-abhorrent (acceptable) to them and common practice for the lords to take any girl they desired without her consent, as wives or concubines, as we find "And they took for themselves women, whoever they chose" (Genesis 6:2).

30 עֲבַרְתֶּם אִתִּי

They will say we broke our word after they became circumcised.

31 הֲכֹזֶלֶתָהּ מַעֲשֵׂה אֶת־אֲחוֹתֵנוּ:

Is she a harlot who is not worthy to have her humiliation avenged, that the people of the land (treat her) in this manner? She is our sister, not a harlot, and we were right to avenge her humiliation. When the inhabitants of the land will consider all this they will not be inclined to attack us. (the attack is justified)

Observations about Sforino's treatment of Dinah:

In verse three, Sforino refers to the story of Amnon and Tamar, which was clearly a rape situation in the Bible. When he refers to Dinah as the daughter of Jacob, he mentions that Jacob was "honored by all." Perhaps this provides insight as to Dinah's status via her father's status, and that she was perceived to be his property. He comments that the "thing that is not done" refers to the violation of the daughter of a person of renown, yet again referring to the status of Jacob. Moreover, he attributes the outrage as being done in Israel and not to Dinah. He later brings in his first references to his own time, by stating that the violation of daughters of renowned people are uncommon. In verse twelve, Sforino writes about the compensation Shechem owed to Jacob due to his "guilt and transgression" thereby stating Shechem's knowledge and acknowledgement of his wrongdoing. Moreover, his commentary reflects the possible fear of Jacob's sons that there may be confusion over the payment to the family for damages for the rape as being a prostitute's wages if a marriage followed. Verse fourteen reflects Sforino's belief that the rape is the concern of Dinah's family because it will affect their ability to marry her off in the future. Throughout his commentaries, Sforino repeatedly either refers to the status of Jacob and Dinah to justify the guile of Jacob's sons, or he allows the status of Jacob and Dinah to affect how he perceives them as characters in the story. Sforino's commentary for verse twenty-seven indicates his belief that society teaches people what is acceptable behavior. Lastly, his commentary on verse thirty-one gives the reader the perception that he feels the attack on the people of Shechem was justified by Jacob's sons. Moreover, the humiliation that takes place in this chapter is Dinah's and not just her family's.

Chapter Four: Western European Modern Commentators

Historical Period:

Under Napoleon, the Jews of Western and Central Europe, Jews were first offered equal citizenship (Emancipation). Influenced by the Enlightenment notions of liberty and equality, Jews were given rights they had never before enjoyed. Napoleon was defeated at the battle of Leipzig in 1812, forced to abdicate and defeated again in 1815, France was returned to the Bourbon Dynasty and the German states were organized in a defensive alliance. Moreover, the Congress of Vienna was created in June 1815 in order to stabilize the balance of power in Europe. Some Jewish communities sent representatives to this Congress in order to seek out confirmation of their civil rights as Jews that they had received from France under Napoleon's reign. "German governments were easily able to disown the equality bestowed on the Jews by the French, so that many earlier limitations on Jewish residence and occupation were retained or even reimposed."⁴⁶

Post 1815 Europe experienced a period of political conservatism. The societal views and perceptions did not allow for Jewish rights to exist as they once had. Jews were once again treated as aliens and were not able to take part in German-Christian culture without first converting to Christianity. In 1819 there were attacks on Jews in the German countryside and these attacks were used by the governments as ways to postpone granting rights to Jews.

⁴⁶ Seltzer, Robert. p. 527.

Europe in the late Nineteenth century was rapidly changing: businesses and industry were expanding and these professions provided Jews with ways to earn a living based on their knowledge of banking and trade. It was during this time that many Jews left their villages in favor of settling in larger cities that offered positive economic futures. The economic situation of many Jews in Western and Central Europe improved during the 1850s and 1860s, making them a middle-class socioeconomic group.

Within the Jewish communities of Central and Western Europe, Emancipation and the Enlightenment also had an impact. "Emancipation meant the destruction of the old corporate status of Jewry, the end of the quasi-political functions of the *kehillot*, a consequent weakening of the Jewish community's power to enforce religious discipline and to provide that inner security that comes from knowing where one stands in relations to the outside world. The end goal was to make one's Jewish identity a private commitment rather than a legal status, leaving it a complex mix of destiny and choice."⁴⁷ Jews began to think in terms of belonging to not only a religion, but to a nation of people as well.

Enlightenment attitudes also created the first attempts to modernize worship. This early phase of the Reform Movement "sought to bring the externals of Judaism into closer harmony with contemporary European standards of decorum, solemnity, and reverence, in order to improve the image of the Jews in the eyes of enlightened Christians."⁴⁸

⁴⁷ Ibid, p. 544.

⁴⁸ Ibid, p. 580.

Reform Judaism was also an attempt to curb the conversion to Christianity by Jews who were on the periphery of practice. In 1810, the first Reform temple was built in Berlin. It was soon closed down, but another one quickly opened in Hamburg eight years later. The worship experience was different and new: choral singing took place with an organ, a new prayer book was used, and liturgy was edited to fit into a newer theology that rejected the need for redemption of Jews for the arrival of the Messiah.

During the nineteenth century, Jews across Europe were exposed to a new era of *Haskalah* (Hebrew for Enlightenment), during which Jewish writers broke away from traditional patterns and, writing in Hebrew, utilized the forms of secular literature. More than a writing movement, the *haskalah* also became an ideological movement. Most of the leaders of this movement, the *maskilim* or enlighteners, felt that Jews needed to modernize their ways of life and to absorb what the secular world offered them. These *maskilim* were a group of social critics who wanted medieval thought to end and praised science and rational thought. Important *maskilim* included Samuel David Luzzatto, or Shadal.

Shadal:

Samuel David Luzzato (1800-1865) was an Italian scholar, philosopher, Biblical commentator and translator. His father was an artisan. His mother died when he was only 13 years old, and he was forced to assist his father in his artistry. Shadal's own wife also died, and he entered into a levirate marriage with his sister-in-law. He was appointed professor of the newly established rabbinical college in Padua in 1829. There he taught

Bible and studied. He wrote a Hebrew commentary to the Pentateuch and the Haftorot, as well as on the Books of Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekial, Proverbs, and Job. He was a traditionalist and greatly venerated Rashi. He strongly opposed Ibn Ezra's commentary and his dislike for him is clear in his commentaries. His writings reflect a strong foundation of knowledge in revelation, tradition, and the election of Israel. He believed that the Torah and the Ten Commandments must not be rationalized, nor can morality become separate from religion since the two are intertwined. Shadal had a sense of religious Zionism and he wanted Jews to return to the land and build it up.

Shadal's Commentary on Genesis 34:

1 וַתֵּצֵא דִּינָה

This story was written in order to understand the words of Jacob's blessing where he says "ארור אפס" (Genesis 49:7).

לְרֵאוֹת בְּבִגְדֵי הָאָרֶץ

To understand the women of the land and their customary clothes, like the משפט הבנות, "the way of young maidens" (Exodus 21:9). The Samaritan Bible, they say להראות (to show of her clothes).

2 וַיִּשְׁכַּב אִתָּהּ

עמה is like אותה (Isaiah 13:16)

וַיַּעֲנֶהָ

He slept with her forcefully, meaning against her will.

3 וַיְדַבֵּר עַל-לֵב הַנָּעִי

Words of goodness and consolation, like "words to the heart of Jerusalem and called to her" (Isaiah 40:2), "you have spoken gently" (Ruth 2:13, "Speak comfortably" (2 Samuel 19:8), "Spoke kindly" (Genesis 50:21), "Spoke encouragement" (2Chronicles 30:22 and 32:6). And the consoling words were so that he could take her as his wife. Rashi said it should say "אשאך" without the yud as Rabbi ע"ח.

5 וַהֲרִישׁ יַעֲקֹב

And he sat and waited and was quiet. "Why then do you sit idle instead of escorting the king back?" (2Samuel 19:11) "You hold your peace" (Exodus 14:14), thus also the root

חשה. "and yet we do nothing to recover it from the hands of the King of Aram" (1Kings 22:3), "And you are sitting idle" (Judges 18:9)

7 כִּי נִבְלָה עֲשָׂה בְּיִשְׂרָאֵל

"Outrage or נִבְלָה" Most of time it is said about the perpetrator. But sometimes we find an act [such as this] is a shameful and disgraceful act, to whom it has been done? Like "for to him I will show favor and no treat you vilely" (Job 42:8), and similarly such is the meaning here. The obscene thing he did in Israel was to our family.

וְכֵן לֹא יַעֲשֶׂה

Violations of virgins walking in the road, is not considered a proper act by any nations. And behold, Shechem in his doing this thing to Israel. In effect he is abusing them and scorning them and showing how unimportant they were in his eyes. And tomorrow if he wants he will kill a man of them on the road. This is their meaning, in my opinion, because they were not sad about the people doing the outrage, but because of their concern for their honor and for their souls they feared.

12 מְהֵרָה

Close to language of price.

13 בְּמִרְמָה

They thought that they would never agree to be circumcised. And therefore they would be quit from them and could save their sister. When they saw they were circumcised and there would be no escape from giving her to them. So, Simeon and Levi by themselves woke up and did what they did in anger and in rage so that they would not have to give their sister to an outrageous man who blemished her. (Ramban) But their intentions from the beginning to kill were not likely, because if that were the case, Jacob would not have cursed Simeon and Levi by themselves at the time of his death. Moreover, if they all were of the same opinion, how could it be that the remaining brothers did not go with them? Because in the end, the deed was not without danger, because the women were able to rebel against the two men, the murderers of their husbands, sons, and fathers and brothers.

14 כִּי־חֲרָפָה הוּא לָנוּ

(The foreskin) In Rashi, it is written "שִׁמְעִי" or circumcision of someone who is unfit.

15 אֲדָה־בְּזֹאת נִאֲמַת לָכֶם יֵאָס וְהָיוּ כְּמֵנוּ לְהַמְלִי לָכֶם קָל־זָכָר

It seems that later it fell from the root and according to Radak, the shorash is יֵאָס, and is a kal form. And it is from the example of the language "For that is your due" (Jeremiah 10:7), and it is closer than the root יֵאָס will be, the meaning of the word is nice. It is like נֵאָס that also means nice.

Refers to his own work on Grammar.

A piel verb.

Therefore his father listened to him and went with him to speak to the people of his city.

When they spoke with the sons of Jacob, your daughters we will take for us and our daughters your take for yourselves. And therefore the reverse. To convince both sides (to satisfy each one).(Rashi and Rashbam)

It is a Nifal verb from מול the same grammatical structure as the rabbinic word נידון. He then refers to his book on grammar.

They thought badly of Jacob and his sons.(Ibn Ezra)

They dwelt secure. Wherever it says בטח in the Bible, it refers to people's dwelling places (Rashbam). And so Onkelos translates, he dwelt in safety, also Yerushalmi translates it as the same but Rashi translates it as in Midrash, Shimon and Levi depended on the strength of the old man.

As Targum Yerushalmi –for although they were together in killing and were not consulted, because if that were not the case, they also would have gone and not have left alone in danger. Nevertheless, after all the inhabitants were killed, they also came to share the booty.

And they took payment from them for the pain and humiliation caused to them. And so it is the opinion of the one who puts in the trope marks, and he refers to his book on grammar.

It would not be appropriate here to have an etnach/pause here except for the fact that it makes for a smoother reading. They made it as if it were two different statements:

את-צאנם ואת-בקרם ואת-חמריהם לקחו And

ואת אשר-בעיר ואת-אשר בשדה לקחו And it is similar in Genesis 7:13, Jeremiah 21:9, and Ezekial 12:10.

As if to say, it is fitting for us to take vengeance upon him because of our honor he has desecrated. However, Simeon and Levi only said this reply in their great anger. It went against their intellect for since he was going to take her after for a wife, his honor would not be diminished but increased. But after he agreed with them to be circumcised. Also, they had no reason to worry that something bad would happen to them either now or in the future because at the time, when they married into the family of the ruler of the land, who would touch them? Therefore, it was not but anger and revenge, and because of this their father was mindful of this, until the day he died and cursed their anger. Rashi explains אֶת־אֲחֵינוּ. He finds it problematic that it should have said to our sister, indeed in some translations the word אֶת as its meaning, and explains הַכּוֹזֵבִים as belonging to everyone. Will he make our sister as a whore?

Observations about Shadal's treatment of Dinah:

Shadal's commentary does not blame Dinah for the rape. Instead, he attributes her "going out" to her acting like all other young girls at that time. In verse two, Shadal states that Shechem forced her to have sex against her will. This is clearly then viewed at as a rape. Later, in verse seven, Shadal believes that the violation of virgins is an act that is considered to be shameful and disgraceful for all nations. Therefore, one could propose that he believed Shechem should have known that raping Dinah was not proper nor allowed – even within his people. Lastly, in verse thirteen, Shadal attributes some power and will for survival by stating that the murders that Simeon and Levi did were not without danger since "the women were able to rebel against the two men, the murderers of their husbands, sons, and fathers and brothers." Although Shadal allows for some modern views of women to be expressed within his commentary, he does maintain (in verse 27) that Dinah's rape humiliated her family and pained them, not her.

Malbim:

Meir Loeb ben Jehiel Michael (1809-1879) was a rabbi, preacher, and biblical exegete.

He was born in Volochisk (Poland). He married when he was 14, but divorced after a short time. He went to Warsaw where he became widely known as the "illui (an exceptionally intelligent scholar) from Volhynia." He then married a daughter of a Rabbi who maintained him while he studied. He was appointed rabbi of Wreschen (Breslau) and finally became the chief rabbi of Rumania in 1858.

Because of his uncompromising stand against Reform, disputes broke out between him and the communal leaders of the town, leading to his imprisonment. He was freed through the intervention of Moses Montefiore, on the condition that he leave Rumania and not return. Malbim went to Constantinople to refute the charges. His defense was denied and he was forced to leave Rumania in 1864. During his years of wandering he suffered persecution.

His fame rests on his commentary on the Bible. His first published commentary was on the Book of Esther (1845) followed by one on Isaiah (1849) and several others. He wished to strengthen the position of Orthodox Judaism in exegesis, knowledge of Hebrew, and the exposition of the Bible according to its plain meaning...thereby weakening the Reformers in those three areas.

His commentary on the Bible is based on three fixed principles: there are no repetitions of synonyms, every word in a sentence is essential to the meaning in accordance with the

rules of the language, and every statement conveys a sublime thought (metaphors, etc are important in understanding the meaning).

Malbim's Commentary on Genesis 34:

Verse 1-2:

וְתִצַּח דִּינָה Lest one say that Dinah was guilty of loose behavior, the narrative stresses that in no way was she at fault. She was בַּת-לֵאָה modestly keeping to her quarters – and that Leah אֲשֶׁר יָלְדָהּ לְיַעֲקֹב her birth being linked to Jacob, signifying that she was modest and pure. She was not in the habit of venturing forth for boys, but only לְרֵאוֹת בְּבָנוֹת הָאֶרֶץ and to observe their ways. Nor should one say that she had already entered into a promiscuous relationship with Shechem, as in fact he נִיָּחָה אִתָּהּ for the first time and took her by force. Nor could one rescue her from him, since he was בְּרוֹחַמִּיּוֹר הָחַי וְשָׂנֵא הָאֶרֶץ Accordingly, his guilt was three-fold. He נִיָּחָה אִתָּהּ by force, and that is robbery; and he נִשְׁכַּב אִתָּהּ defiling her since he was uncircumcised. And he נִעְנָהּ as she did not agree with him, it was rape, considered as inflicting pain upon her, which means that he was also guilty of robbery against her private person.

Verse 3:

It is made clear that when he first took her, it was not in order to make her his wife; it was abduction to satisfy the intensity of his momentary lust, as was his way. Had he intended from the very first to make her his wife, he would not have raped her, but would instead had waited until she was given to him freely. It was, rather, only afterwards that his soul strongly clung to her. Now, there is a difference between אַהֲבָה and דְּבַק הַנֶּפֶשׁ. Should a prince of the land come to desire a lowly daughter of paupers, this would be described as אַהֲבָה and not דְּבַק הַנֶּפֶשׁ, for social strata and levels of personal endowment separate their souls, and the soul of a higher man will not cling to that of a daughter of inferiors, even if he loves her. On the other hand, two people of equal stature will sometimes find themselves emotionally attached to one another precisely because of their equality, even without there being physical love between them. Here both things were present. וְתִדְבֹק נָפְשׁוֹ בְּדִינָה because she was בַּת-יַעֲקֹב regarding her to be his equal – Jacob too, being a prince and a nobleman – and also because נִיָּחָהּ אִתָּהּ הָעֵר there was physical love on account of her beauty. It was then that he נִדְבָר עַל-לֵב הַנָּעִר. Until now, when it had only been animal lust, the term אַהֲבָה was not really an appropriate description, since if he had truly loved her, he would not have subjected her to this outrage that was like an act of murder against her body. True love sprung forth only after the passing of the animal lust – whereupon he regretted having abused her, and he spoke tenderly to her, consoling and comforting her in her pain and distress.

Verse 4:

Then he said to his father, קח־לִי אֶת־הַיְלָדָה הַזֹּאת לְאִשָּׁה. He called her a girl because she had said to him that she was not yet of age to be independent, but a minor under her father's control, and it was thus necessary that her father consent to this marriage.⁴⁹

Verse 5-6:

It is stressed that had Jacob known that she had not yet been defiled, he would have done all in his power to prevent her being defiled. Since, however, Jacob וַיַּעֲצֹבוּ הָאֲנָשִׁים וַיַּחֲרֹם לָהֶם מְאֹד so that haste would avail him nothing, he וַיֵּצֵא חָמוֹר אֶבְרִישָׁכֶם אֶל־יַעֲקֹב לְדָבָר אֲתוֹ. In the interim, וַיַּחֲרֹשׁ יַעֲקֹב עַד־בָּאִם.

Verse 7:

They arrived while Hamor was speaking to Jacob and they thus had no opportunity to confer with Jacob. וַיַּעֲצֹבוּ הָאֲנָשִׁים וַיַּחֲרֹם לָהֶם מְאֹד. Sadness is experienced when one is afflicted in some way, without there being the desire for revenge upon anyone in particular; displeasure, on the other hand, is focused upon the one who did the wrong and there is the desire for revenge. Hence the terms appearing here match accordingly. וְכֵן לֹא יַעֲשֶׂה, his deed comprising two aspects. One, he defiled her; since he was circumcised, that would have been true even if it had not been against her will. Although it is not an outrage among the Noahides, it is an outrage and a disgrace among the Israelites for a woman to have intercourse with a man who is not circumcised. In respect of this, they were saddened, at the disgrace that was theirs. There was no displeasure as such, however, not even at Shechem, for he knew not the moral standards of the children of Israel according to which the uncircumcised sex organ was shameful. Hence the deliberate emphasis of this verse. In Israel, specifically, it was an outrage in the laws of the Israelites, and on account of her being the daughter of Jacob, in whose eyes the outrage is loathsome. Two, the very act of abduction by force and the crimes of the robbery and kidnapping are not presented also by the laws of the children of Noah. In respect of this, there was great displeasure on their part and they sought to avenge themselves upon Shechem who was guilty of violating the Noahide standards of behavior.

Verses 8-9:

Hamor addressed himself only to the general issue, as befits the ruler of a country in whose power it is to modify the laws of the land at will. There was a general rule among the families that citizens should marry only citizens, not aliens; and so too that aliens should not have the same freedoms as did the citizens. These laws, Hamor now wanted to change to their advantage, that being the essence of Hamor's words. As regards the details of the proposed marriage that he left for Shechem to discuss. He said, "שְׁכֶם בְּנֵי חֲשֵׁקָה נָפְשׁוּ בְּבָתְּלָם." Now, there is a difference between חֲשֵׁק and אֲהָבָה. Desire is blind and irrational, a great man sometimes desiring a daughter of low estate, or someone ugly and deformed. He was thus saying that Shechem's desire was irrational, since he could find better and more beautiful women among his own people. וְהִתְחַתְּנוּ אִתָּנוּ and you will benefit by it, since thereafter נָא אֲתָה לִּי לְאִשָּׁה.

⁴⁹ This refers to Ket 48b.

will be regarded a permanent citizen of the land. The Midrash⁵⁰ writes: You can intermarry with us- Said R. Eliezer: A Jew never places his finger into the mouth of a non-Jew, unless the non-Jew first places his finger into the mouth of the Jew. Hence, וְהִתְחַתְּנוּ אִתָּנוּ and Deut 7:3 "Do not intermarry with them." They proposed first, they were the ones who said, "You can intermarry with us." --Our Sages have explained here that there is a difference in meaning between the word "וְהִתְחַתְּנוּ" when it is followed by the word "אִתָּנוּ" and when it followed by the word בּוֹ or בָּם. When one initiates a proposal of marriage, the words הִתְחַתְּנוּ אִתָּנוּ are appropriate; and when the other replies, whether in agreement with or in rejection of the proposal, there will appear the words הִתְחַתְּנוּ בָּם. The Midrash also asserted that the initiative always comes from the non-Jew, and that is why it says there (Deut 7:3) "Do not marry them." Our Sages declare that assuredly the non-Jew proposes and the Jew responds. Therefore it is written there בָּם לֹא הִתְחַתְּנוּ (addressed to the Jew), which refers to the words of response (that it should be negative). But here he said, וְהִתְחַתְּנוּ אִתָּנוּ, since it was Hamor who initiated the proposal. The meaning of the Midrash –its statement that "you can intermarry with us" means that they proposed first, is therefore clear. Therefore, in the case of King David, the verse (1Sam.18:23) said, "to intermarry with the king" as it is reasonable to assume that a king takes the initiative. As for (1Kings 3:1), "And Shlomo wed the daughter of Pharaoh," the אִתָּנוּ follows the general rule, emphasizing that Shlomo was the initiator, in that he converted her to Judaism.

Verse 10:

Hamor pointed out six things that would henceforth be theirs, and in respect of which the alien usually stood at a disadvantage with the citizen. He could not marry into the local population, whereas בְּנֵיכֶם תִּתְּנוּ-לָנוּ. He was not permitted to dwell in the market-place area, and in other choice locations of the city – while שְׁבוֹ he could not make use of land that belonged to the public domain – whereas, וְהָאָרֶץ תִּהְיֶה לְפָנֵיכֶם, he could not remain there for a long time – whereas תִּשְׁלְבוּ he could not trade freely וְיִסְחָרוּהָ he could not acquire permanent title to land –whereas in contrast, you will be הָיָה וְהָיִיתֶם

Verses 11-12:

Now Shechem broached the personal matter of the marriage; and here he had to deal with their rage against him for his brutality to Dinah. He therefore said: וְאֶמְצָא-חַן בְּעֵינֵיכֶם to forgive my sin: וְנָאֲשֶׁר תִּאמְרוּ אֵלַי: by way of compensation for the shame and dishonor and injury, אֶתֶּן. As regards to the future, מְאֹד מְנַחֵר יִמְתֵּן which means wedding gifts as well, וְאֶתְּנָה in return for your giving her to me as a wife.

Verse 13:

They responded with cunning and forethought. The focus of their wrath was a desire for revenge against the people of Shechem for the kidnapping of Dinah and Shechem's violent rape of her. As is made clear below, these were crimes for which all the population of Shechem deserved to die – for these crimes specifically, not, however, for his having had intercourse with her, as such, and defiling her. Although this too grieved them, they could not, however, take revenge and punish him for it, since he was ignorant

⁵⁰ Genesis Rabbah 80:7.

of their mores, that to them the foreskin was impure. They focused upon the kidnapping and the abuse inflicted upon her – despicable crimes also in Noahide law – and not upon his having defiled Dinah as a result of not being circumcised, which was not an abomination except in Israelite law. Their deep cunning thus lay in making it appear as if they cared not at all about the kidnapping or the violent rape – indeed, that they could even forgive him for those things and let him have Dinah, if only he were not uncircumcised. They indicated that the sole thing which disturbed them was that **אָשֶׁר טָמֵא אֶת דִּינָה אֲחֵיהֶם** because he was uncircumcised, since it was considered by their religion as a blemish. They spoke harshly to Shechem only about this, and so he was reassured that they bore him no malice for the kidnapping and the forced rape, only for his having defiled Dinah by her intercourse with an uncircumcised man. Accordingly, Shechem was made to believe that if only he would be circumcised they would give him Dinah. This is their guile, for had they spoken harshly of the kidnapping and the rape, he would have realized that their hearts were set in hatred against him – and he would have been wary of their vengeance.

Verse 14:

The brothers now replied accordingly to Shechem's earlier words "whatever you tell me, I will give it" in compensation for the shame endured and the disgrace, so as to wipe away the wrong committed by insisting that the one thing which distressed them was the fact of defilement. As he was not, however, familiar with their mores and way of life, they were not actually holding it against him, and therefore demanded no compensation for the shame and the disgrace. That all belonged to the past, and they were addressing themselves only to what pertained to the future – his desire to marry Dinah. But, **לֹא נוֹכַל לַעֲשׂוֹת הַדָּבָר הַזֶּה לְתֵת אֶת־אֲחֵינוּ לְאִישׁ אֲשֶׁר־לוֹ עָרְלָה כִּי־חֲרָפָה הִוא לָנוּ**, not for all the treasures in the world.⁵¹

Verses 15-16:

Therefore, only **אִם תְּהִי קָמְנוּ לְהַמְלֵךְ לָכֶם כָּל־זָכָר**: this alone will suffice, and we shall demand none of that to which every citizen is entitled under the law. **אֲדִי־בָזֵאת נָאֵת לָכֶם**. Even if we are not permitted to become equal citizens, in respect of right-of-residence and ownership of land, nevertheless, **וְנִתְּנוּ אֶת־בְּנוֹתֵינוּ לָכֶם** and become one people. We ask only that **וְנִשְׁכְּנוּ אִתְּכֶם וְהָיִינוּ לָעָם אֶחָד** as far as living in this land, despite being as aliens in respect of all the other things (listed in verse ten).

Verse 17:

Do not imagine that we would then avenge ourselves for what has already occurred. No! For that was not committed willfully, but in ignorance of our conviction that the uncircumcised is shameful, and Shechem is therefore blameless. Instead, we will merely **וְהָלַכְנוּ וְהָיִינוּ אֶת־בְּנוֹתֵינוּ לָכֶם** this place. In this manner did their great cunning totally blind them. Shechem completely failed to discern the animosity in their hearts for what he had done, nor that they plotted vengeance. As a result, he was not on guard against them. By insisting that they desired neither dowry nor presents nor equal rights with all citizens, he became convinced that no amount of treasure would avail here, but only his circumcision.

⁵¹ San. 97a.

Moreover, he was persuaded that if they all be circumcised, then the sons of Jacob would never depart from this land of theirs. They would then desire to intermarry with them, and would also pay heavy taxes for the right to do business and to hold land. All this would sway the population; it is stated below: **וְכָל-בְּהֶמְתָּם וְקִנְיָנָם וְקָנָהּם** (verse 23).

Verse 19:

Had they (Jacob and his sons) made it conditional upon everyone first being circumcised, and also that they be granted full-citizen status, there would have been a delay until all had in fact been circumcised and had agreed to accept them as permanent residents. But having been told by Jacob and his sons that they would welcome this marriage subject only to circumcision, and that they desired nothing else, Shechem was assured that once he was circumcised they would let him have Dinah. Therefore, he was the first to circumcise himself. The verse stressing that it was done not for the sake of the mitzvah of milah, but solely because **כִּי חָפֵץ בְּבִת-יַעֲקֹב**. Now, there is a difference between the term **חָפֵץ** and the expressions **אָהַבָה** and **הִשְׁקָה נַפְשׁוֹ**, found earlier. The term **חָפֵץ** covers every kind of thing that one may desire – such as the desire to achieve, the desire to build, or the desire for gold. It appears here because, after discovering the stature of Jacob and his sons, there stirred a desire within him that was related to the advantages of her being the daughter of a man of great wealth. It went beyond his desire for the maiden herself and his love for her. When, therefore, he approached the city's inhabitants, he related to this aspect, so as to influence their hearts with a desire for Jacob's wealth. Our Sages declare that the love of the Holy One Blessed Be He, for Israel, is expressed in every one of these forms: through **דְּבִקָה**, **הִשְׁקָה**, **חֲפִצָּה**, and **אָהַבָה**.

Verse 21:

He began by speaking of the advantages they would gain by having the sons of Jacob remain in their midst. **וְהָאֲנָשִׁים הָאֵלֶּה שְׂלָמִים הֵם אִתָּנוּ** and will therefore help us against any foe; **וְיָשְׁבוּ בְּאֶרֶץ** which until now has remained desolate due to its being sparsely populated; **וְיִסְחֲרוּ אִתָּהּ** which will lead to an increase of wealth and commerce. On the other hand, what they demand from us is that **וְהָאֲרָץ הִנֵּה רֹחֶבֶת-יָדַיִם לְפָנֵיהֶם** so as to have ample pasture for their sheep and that **אֶת-בָּנֵתֵם נִשְׁחָלֵנוּ** that we should consent to intermarry with them. (To the party whose consent to a marriage is sought, one will ascribe the initiative: *we will take our daughters and give our daughters*, that we should give consent to it; while above, when the sons of Jacob were opposed, he placed the decision up to them, *giving us your daughters*.) We would thus achieve advantages from both sides. By settling in the land they will do business in it, and the conditions they propose for our intermarrying with them will be to our advantage.

Verses 22-23:

They only require that we be circumcised, whereupon

מִקְנֵהֶם וְקִנְיָנָם וְכָל-בְּהֶמְתָּם הָלֹא לָנוּ. For afterwards, whenever we should wish to drive them out of the land or refuse to intermarry with them, they will give us all they possess to gain our **וְיָשְׁבוּ אִתָּנוּ**.

Verse 24:

Stressing that they were not circumcising for purposes of conversion, but only because **וַיִּשְׁמְעוּ אֶל-חֲמוֹר** who told them that by this means they would acquire all the wealth of Jacob's sons. It proves how great was their urge to consume a strangers' substance⁵² even to suffer the pain of circumcision in order to plunder. This is borne out by the fact that only those listened and only those were circumcised **כָּל-יִצְחָאִי שְׁעָר עִירָו** which means that those who live in the city but not those entering the city gates, those living in the villages. The latter had no desire to acquire Jacob's wealth, so they did not submit to circumcision.

Verses 25-26:

By law, they deserved death for the following reasons. 1) They did not prosecute Shechem who had openly committed a robbery without protest from anyone, notwithstanding that Noahides are commanded against robbery, as Rambam writes in the Law of Kings. 2) Shechem refused to set Dinah free. He imprisoned her in his house instead, so that should they not let him have her peacefully, he would wage war against them. Jacob was thus entitled to remove her from under Shechem's jurisdiction by killing the men of Shechem who were prepared for war and would have killed him. It became clear that they cast their eyes upon Jacob's wealth, and had allowed themselves to be circumcised only so as to rob him at any opportunity, as was explained. Therefore, on the third day, **וַיִּזְכְּרוּם בְּהִיּוֹתָם כְּאֲבִים** and regretted the circumcision, planning to avenge themselves for it upon the sons of Jacob for having brought upon them this pain, **וְעַל-כֵּן יִשְׁמְעוּן וְלֹא** being **שְׁנֵי-בְנֵי-יַעֲקֹב** upon whom it was incumbent to do battle for Jacob, and who were **אֲחֵי דִינָה** and could not free her in any other way, **וַיִּקְחוּ אִישׁ חֶרֶב וַיָּבֹאוּ עַל-הָעִיר בֵּטָח וַיַּהֲרֹגוּ כָּל-זָכָר**. They attained their purpose, in that **וַיִּקְחוּ אֶת-דִּינָה מִבֵּית שָׂכָם וַיֵּצְאוּ**.

Verses 27-29:

Rescuing Dinah was the main aim of Simeon and Levi. The rest of Jacob's sons arrived later, **וַיָּבֹאוּ הָעִיר** indemnity for the disgrace - **אֶת-צֹאנָם וְאֶת-בְּקָרָם וְאֶת-חֲמֹרֵיהֶם וְאֶת-כָּל-חֵילָם וְאֶת-כָּל-טָפְסָם וְאֶת-נְשֵׁיהֶם שְׁבוּ וַיָּבֹאוּ** all their goods and **בְּבֵית** **כָּל-אֲשֶׁר בְּבֵית**.

Verse 30:

When even without this, I am hated in their eyes because I, a stranger, dwell among the **וַיִּשְׁבּוּ הָאָרֶץ** and because they differ from me in nationality (hence, the **וַיִּבְרָא**). Moreover, you have **לְהַבְאִישְׁנִי** to them, so that **וְהָכֹנִי** they who are the blood-avengers without my being able to stand them, because **וַיִּמְסְכּוּ וַיִּמְסְכּוּ** and they are a great multitude that can **וַיִּשְׁמְדֵנִי**.

Verse 31: **וַיֹּאמְרוּ הַכֹּזֶלֶת נַעֲשָׂה אֶת-אֲחֹתֵנוּ**

They replied, to the contrary, that it was precisely due to our being few in number and aliens in the land, that they had begun intruding upon us by taking away our sister as if she were a harlot. If we now remain passive, they will deal with us arbitrarily and we

⁵² Ovadia 11.

must therefore show them that we have the capability to wreak vengeance upon anyone who does evil to us.

Observations about the Malbim's treatment of Dinah:

Malbim follows Shadal in his perceptions regarding women. He also attributes to Dinah and women both independence and emotions. In verses one and two, he states clearly that Dinah was in no way at fault. He believes Shechem to be at fault for three reasons: 1) he took her by force, 2) he defiled her while being uncircumcised, and 3) he inflicted pain upon her. Moreover, Malbim suggests that the rape was a type of robbery, since Shechem stole from her person. The concept of women as property is lessening at this time, when Jews were becoming emancipated and influenced by other secular cultural perceptions of women. In verse three, Malbim suggests that had Shechem actually intended upon taking Dinah as a wife, he would not have raped her and instead would have waited until a marriage contract had been settled upon. Malbim, in verse seven, regards the rape as an outrage in the laws of Israel, since she was the daughter of Jacob. The crimes of robbery and kidnapping however were in violation of the Noahide standards that applied to all peoples. In his commentary to verses eight and nine, Malbim spends time discussing the contractual negotiations regarding the intermarrying of the people of Shechem and the Israelites. Through Midrashim, Malbim is able to teach that the Shechemites were the initiators in this contract, while the Israelites were the ones responding. The commentary to verses eleven and twelve discuss Shechem's need to deal with the rage directed at him for his raping of Dinah. Furthermore, in the commentaries to verse thirteen, Malbim rationalizes how the entire people of Shechem were to be punished by death, instead of just Shechem for the rape. He discusses the

Noahide laws that were applied to all people for the kidnapping and robbery of Dinah's person. The rape and defilement of Dinah however, only violated Israelite law.

Verse seventeen provides the reader with insight into Malbim's own historical period. He writes about the fact that one who would intermarry with the people of Shechem "would also pay heavy taxes for the right to do business and to hold land." Perhaps this statement reflects the time when Jews in Western Europe had to continuously pay taxes in order for them to exist in the business world and to own land. Later Malbim also remarks about the "full-citizen status" that would be granted to the Israelites in verse nineteen. This is quite significant, since this remark clearly parallels the historical era in which Jews were granted emancipation and were given "full-citizen status" themselves. Later, in his commentary to verses twenty-five and twenty-six, Malbim once again focuses on why the people of Shechem were deserving of their death sentences carried out by Simeon and Levi. Lastly, in verse thirty, Malbim may have conveyed his own feelings regarding his Judaism and Jewish identity to his readers; "I am hated in their eyes because I, a stranger, dwell among the land and because they differ from me in nationality." Certainly being a Jew in a free land was confusing, and at times, uncomfortable.

Chapter Five: Twentieth Century Feminist Interpretations

Historical Background

In the post-modern world, Jews in the West have made great strides socially, economically and politically. Joseph Lieberman, for example, an orthodox senator from Connecticut ran for the Vice Presidency of the United States of America.

Although there is still anti-Semitism throughout the world (including parts of America), Jews remain virtually untouched by the violence that once plagued them. The aftermath of WWII and the Holocaust produced great sympathy for the Jewish people; some argue that it was because of the Holocaust that Jews received Israel as their Homeland. The creation of the State of Israel as a homeland precipitated the creation of a Palestinian Nationalist Movement that demanded a homeland for its people as well. This conflict between Israeli/Jews and Arabs is still in existence today, albeit with several attempts to find peaceable ways to live together as two separate peoples.

The role of women has changed significantly during the last generations in the United States. The ERA has been passed, sexual harassment in the workplace is not tolerated, and although women still earn seventy percent less than men, more and more women are working as executives than ever before. In the religious realm, women have made great strides, beginning with Sally Priesand, the first woman to become an ordained Reform Rabbi by HUC-JIR in 1972.

The modern world has allowed women's voices to be heard in many arenas; from sports to entertainment to scholarship; women have become experts and have earned the respect from society in each of their fields of expertise. Feminist theory, once an idea, has now come to the forefront of academia. Feminist academicians now can be found at many colleges and universities, and at seminaries. These professors spend their time researching, writing, and teaching about the necessity of seeking out the woman's perspective in all media. Biblical studies is no exception. As our knowledge of rape and violence, and the sociological influences that contribute to its prevalence in society have entered public discourse, scholars have come to reconsider the story of Dinah in a new light.. Their vantage point, their questions and concerns reflect uniquely contemporary sensibilities.

Aviva Zornberg:

In her book, A Quest for Wholeness, Aviva Zornberg writes about why Dinah was raped. She brings out Rashi's commentary of Genesis 35, when Jacob is delayed on his journey in returning to his father. It is because of this delay that "all these things (including the rape of his daughter Dinah) happen to him." (Gen 35:22)

Zornberg provides a Midrash (Gen. Rabbah 80:3) seeking out the reason for Dinah's rape.

R. Yehuda bar Simon said: "Do not boast of tomorrow" (Proverbs 27:1) – yet you said, "Tomorrow, let my honesty testify for me" (Genesis 30:33). Tomorrow, your daughter will go out and be tormented by Shechem. R. Hanina said: "A friend owes loyalty to one who fails" (Job 6:14) – you have withheld love from your brother.

Here, two differing views as to why Dinah was raped are offered. R. Hanina speaks of the failure in love, similar to another midrash where Jacob hoards his love for Dinah and keeps her "locked up" in the family. R. Yehuda finds Jacob's confidence about the future objectionable. He uses the verse from Proverbs as a prooftext, "Do not boast of tomorrow," to suggest that Jacob is guilty of arrogance about his righteousness, as demonstrated in the word "tomorrow." The verse continues and Zornberg suggests that here Jacob is found "radically responsible for Dinah's fate: he speaks of the future with an arrogance that is inappropriate to the real mystery, the discontinuity of history, as seen by one fully participating in its contingencies."⁵³ Therefore, she proposes that what happens to Dinah is a result of Jacob's hollow bravado. It is not her fault, but the fault lies with her father. This perspective of the rape is proposed by Zornberg and should be noted as distinct from the classical commentaries.

Susan Scholz:

Dr. Scholz⁵⁴ explores Genesis 34 and specifically the rape of Dinah. She analyzes the text and provides modern theories and views on rape within her commentary. She draws upon feminist theory and interprets the text from the viewpoint of the subjugated, the victim of the rape rather than from the perspective of the powerful.

⁵³ Zornberg, Aviva. *Genesis: The Beginning of Desire* (USA: JPS, 1995), p. 227.

⁵⁴ Scholz, Susanne *Rape Plots: Genesis 34*. Peter Lang: New York, 2000. Dr Scholz is Assistant Professor of Biblical Studies at The College of Wooster. She received her Ph.D. in Old Testament from Union Theological Seminary in New York.

Scholz proposes that one of the main functions of rape is as a "societal expression." In other words, rape expresses the male hierarchy in society and its need to continuously oppress women. A vehicle to express this presumed hierarchy is the act of rape. "The violence of rape keeps women in their societal place."⁵⁵

It is interesting that so many of the rabbinical commentators suggested that it was Dinah's fault for getting raped, due to her "going out" (Genesis 34:1). Scholz offers a different perspective: "People who blame the raped victim-survivor support the status quo to prevent themselves from criticizing society. Their need to believe in a world where bad things do not happen to good people makes them blame the raped woman. The way people evaluate the victim-survivor is thus related to their general attitudes about society."⁵⁶

According to Scholz, Genesis 34 offers two ethical problems: a rape, and the killing of the rapist and his people. Many commentators minimize the rape and stress the killing, and even credit Shechem the rapist for his love and marriage proposal to Dinah. Scholz provides five foci that marginalized Dinah's rape. Three of these (1, 3, 4) apply to generations of male commentators as well.

1. Scholars focused on the male characters to interpret the narrative.
2. Scholars applied source criticism to interpret the story.
3. Scholars characterized Genesis 34 as a story about Israelite tribal history.
4. Interpreters read Genesis 34 as a debate about xenophobia in ancient Israel.

⁵⁵ Ibid, p. 26.

⁵⁶ Ibid, p. 31.

5. Several interpreters labeled their interpretations as feminist, but still marginalized the rape.

In the Biblical story the rape of Dinah is marginalized, putting the consequences and reactions to it, the violent mass murders of the people of Shechem, at the center.

Scholz believes that the rape is the central act in the chapter and all other actions result from it. Furthermore, she asserts that "rape must be understood from the perspective of the victim-survivor... [because] everything happens because of her."⁵⁷ Lastly, many classical commentators believe that the revenge is more important to the story than the rape, and the feminist interpretation suggests that there is an inextricable tie between the rape and the revenge. However, Scholz boldly proposes that "revenge is the original form of violence in the story."⁵⁸ Here Scholz sees a connection between the rape and the revenge. "The connection of the rape and the resulting revenge clarifies that no easy solutions are available to stop the rapists and rape-prone behavior. In this regard Genesis 34 invites contemporary readers to address the prevalence of rape through the metaphoric language of a story."⁵⁹

She summarizes by saying, "Although both the rape and the revenge shape the story, the rape is the reason for telling it."⁶⁰

⁵⁷ Ibid, p. 168.

⁵⁸ Ibid, p. 168.

⁵⁹ Ibid, p. 169.

⁶⁰ Ibid, p. 178.

Modern Feminist Debates:

There are some modern feminist biblical scholars who debate whether a rape actually happened in the Dinah story. Ilona Rashcow, in her book, Upon the Dark Places, discusses the rape of Dinah and uses the narrator's Hebrew grammar to confirm the rape. In biblical Hebrew, the normal grammatical construct שָׁכַב, lie with, is used to infer sexual contact, a mutually agreed upon act. However, שָׁכַב, lie, used with a direct object and not a preposition, is used when the act is forced, a rape. She then uses an example from the Amnon/Tamar story to confirm her theory. In contrast to Rashcow's theory, Lyn Bechtel, a feminist biblical researcher, feels that the act that occurred between Dinah and Shechem was *not* a rape, but a mutually consented upon affair. She argues that one of the most unnerving things about the so-called rape of Dinah is that rapists do not usually fall in love with their victims. Therefore, she concludes that this story does not then "feel like a story of rape" (Bechtel, "Genesis 34"). Moreover, Bechtel feels that the Hebrew alone can prove to readers that there was no rape. She points out that in Hebrew, there is no word for "rape". The Hebrew word used in the biblical text is וַעֲנָה; Bechtel translates the word as "shame", from the root עָנָה. She then interprets the "non-rape" between Dinah and Shechem as an act that is shameful to Dinah (because she is not married). Furthermore, Bechtel uses the last sentence of the story to support the non-rape theory in the Dinah story. She claims that "Has he (Shechem) made our sister like a harlot?" shows that Dinah has been made into a harlot, and since harlots cannot be raped, Simeon and Levi show that Dinah has not been raped. Instead she has crossed the tribal boundary and acted like a harlot without any bonding or responsibility to the family or

the community (Bechtel, "Genesis 34"). This is a key verse in the Dinah story, fraught with gaps and misinterpreted words.

Likewise, biblical scholars Danna Fewell and David Gunn interpret the "rape" of Dinah as a consensual sexual act. They state that their interpretation provides measures of sympathy for Jacob, Hamor, and Shechem as complex heroes making the best of a flawed world.⁶¹ Moreover, they believe that Dinah is not a hopeless girl waiting to be rescued, but a young woman who could have made her own choices.

Another biblical scholar, Meir Sternberg, engaged in a debate⁶² with Fewell and Gunn over the rape of Dinah. His response to their interpretation could not be more opposite. He brings to the forefront what seem to be both linguistic and feminist problems in Fewell and Gunn's arguments.

These feminist commentators and scholars bring new questions and issues to the forefront. These questions and issue truly reflect the post-modern world and the society in which they live. Feminism and beliefs of equality have influenced the way in which people study and explore text. Instead of focusing on the guile and revenge in the end of the chapter, the focus has been shifted to include the rape and the sexual experiences of verse two. The question of guilt, who is to blame for the rape, and most importantly how did Dinah feel are all valid today. Never before did these questions get asked, and now we will begin to find answers. The modern egalitarian era in which we live serves as a

⁶¹ Bellis, Alice Ogden. *Helpmates, Harlots, and Heroes* (Kentucky: Westminster Press, 1994), p. 88.

⁶² *Journal of Biblical Literature* volume 111(1992): pp. 476-79

foundation for women to search for the voices of other women in the text, and allows for the reader to seek out Dinah in order to discover what happened to her in Genesis Chapter 34.

Conclusion:

This thesis explored the commentaries of Rashi, Rashbam, Ibn Ezra, Ramban, Ralbag, Abravanel, Sforno, Shadal, Malbim, Zornberg and Scholz. Each of these commentators were influenced by both the historical events and by the status of the Jewish community at the time in which they lived. In the earlier commentators' writings, their perceptions of women were most likely the mirror image of what the outer world perceived women to be: gossips, unintelligent, and the property of men (either their father or husband).

Moreover, the rape of Dinah was viewed as a sexual act that Dinah allowed to occur.

The fault and blame rested upon her, as well as the shame brought onto her father and brothers.

In time, the world changed and so did the perceptions of the commentators. Beginning with Abravanel in the fifteenth century, the place of blame begins to steer away from Dinah, although he continues to see Jacob and his sons as being most affected by the rape. Although Abravanel felt contempt for Shechem, he still allowed for the possibility of rape becoming a mutually agreed upon act. Likewise, Sforno brings in a reference to his own time, by stating that the violation of daughters of respected people is uncommon. Moreover, he allows Dinah to own some of the humiliation, not just her family.

Shadal and Malbim are the commentators who greatly reflect the larger world's changing perception of human beings and women. Women in the period of Enlightenment and Emancipation were viewed as intelligent and relatively independent people. In their commentaries, they attribute both independence and emotions to Dinah. In Malbim, she

is finally able to feel the rape; its pain and shame. Moreover, he charges Shechem with the crime of robbery, since he stole from Dinah. The concept of women as property is changing, due to Emancipation and the influences of the secular world. Lastly, Malbim conveys his own views on being Jewish in the world by his commentary to verse thirty, "I am hated in their eyes because I, a stranger, dwell among the land and because they differ from me in nationality." Here is one of the clearest ways in which one can find history influencing a commentator's writings.

In today's post-modern western world, women are no longer viewed as property. The role of women is increasing in many areas of business and religion and scholarship. Modern Feminist scholars and commentators have begun to provide voices for those long unheard in biblical texts. Dinah is no exception. Through their writings, we are able to hear Dinah's pain, her screams, and her cries throughout Genesis 34. The ways in which we read and understand Dinah are being radically transformed. Now that we have heard her, we must share her sounds with the larger world.

קול אישה, the voice of a woman, is no longer a sexual distraction. It is full of intelligence and honesty, and it must be heard by all.

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