The Story of Dinah:

Rape and Rape Myth in Jewish Tradition

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Abstract

The Story of Dinah: Rape and Rape Myth in Jewish Tradition examines Jewish commentary traditions on Genesis 34 (known as the Rape of Dinah Story) in order to identify Jewish attitudes regarding women – particularly those who have been violated –across time. Dinah is completely silent and mostly passive in Genesis 34. Consequently, interpretations of her actions and feelings/attitudes serve as a good source for identifying commentators' underlying values, and anxieties. This study uses Genesis 34 as a kind of "Biblical Rorschach Test." It examines key interpretations of Dinah from antiquity to the present and identifies through them patterns and claims about women within the cultural milieus across time. A second goal of this paper is to identify possible reflections of present day rape myths in Jewish sources. While it would be inappropriate to judge the attitudes regarding rape found in earlier epochs by today's standards, it is possible to locate themes denying the existence of rape, or "slut-blaming" attitudes towards rape victims.

Chapters One through Three introduces the topic, explores Genesis 34 in its own biblical context, provides a working definition of rape as it exists in the Tanakh, and outlines the feminist hermeneutics utilized in the analysis of the commentaries. Chapters Four through Eight analyze the commentary on the Dinah story across four epochs ("Intertestamental," Rabbinic, Medieval, and Modern), with the Modern Period divided into two chapters: Orthodox Commentaries (Chapter Seven), and Progressive Commentaries (Chapter Eight). The final chapter (Chapter Nine) summarizes the surprising and diverse findings, focusing on surprising changes in attitudes. It also indicates areas for further study.

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One happy task that comes at the completion of a project of this nature, is taking the opportunity to acknowledge those without whom it would never have come to fruition. First and foremost I must thank my advisor and mentor Rabbi Tamara Cohn Eskenazi, Ph.D. I have been privileged to be an advisee of Dr. Eskenazi's during my entire tenure as a rabbinical student at HUC-LA, and I could not have asked for a more invested advisor, wiser guide, or more caring mentor. Her enthusiasm and excitement for this project was clearly evident as she shepherded me through the writing process, and it often sustained and motivated me when I felt overwhelmed.

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Chapter One

Introduction: Looking for Answers

In the Summer of 2014, as I began my analysis of Genesis 34 – commonly known as "the Rape of Dinah" story – the news waves were consumed with stories of a recent massacre at a local Southern California college. Six people were killed, and 13 more wounded, by 22 year-old Elliot Rodger. According to the video log and manifesto[1] he left in his wake, Rodger wanted to "exact retribution" from "the girls in the hottest sorority on campus" who had "denied him sex." The videos and documents left behind by this disturbed young man, as well as his association with several underground online women-hating groups,[2] brought to the forefront a discussion about rape and rape culture that had long bubbled beneath the surface. This tragic event brought important questions into the public forum: what exactly is rape culture? How are misogynistic attitudes transmitted within culture? What, if anything, in our society promoted or reinforced this young man's belief that he had a "right" to sex from women and, denied that right, could exact deadly "retribution?"

In recent years, the issue of what defines "rape culture" - and the misogynistic attitudes underlying such culture – has often been a topic of public conversation. In addition to feminist forums[3] and websites dedicated to the topic,[4] popular media such

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[1] http://www.ibtimes.com/read-elliot-rodgers-140-page-memoir-manifesto-he-wrote-prior-his-shooting-university-1589868

[2] http://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-2638950/Women-hating-Pick-Up-Artist-groups-laud-virgin-killer-vile-murderous-comments-online.html

[3] Shannon Ridgway, "25 Everyday Examples of Rape Culture," *Everyday Feminist Website*, 3/10/14.

[4] *Force: Upsetting Rape Culture* website

as the Huffington Post,[5] BuzzFeed,[6] and Time[7] have all published articles discussing misogyny and how it leads to a culture of rape. But with the homicidal actions of Elliot Rodger, as well as the deeply misogynistic writings and videos he left behind, the conversation about misogyny and society's rape culture has intensified.

As a woman, I am profoundly concerned with how society views and treats women. As a rabbinical student deeply invested in the Jewish tradition, I am particularly concerned with how Jewish culture has regarded women across history, and if - or how - Jewish tradition has contributed to society's current attitudes towards women. I chose to analyze the Jewish commentaries on a biblical rape story, in part, because I hope to glean some answers to the many questions raised by the existence of rape culture in our society.

This paper examines Jewish attitudes regarding women – and, in particular, women whom have been violated – across time, by examining the Jewish commentary traditions on Dinah's story in Genesis 34. As a scriptural religion, Judaism is founded on the Tanakh (Hebrew Bible), which serves as the point of origin for most Jewish teachings. However, it is the interpretations and commentaries (Mishnah, Talmud, Midrash, Medieval, and Modern) on the Bible – primarily exegetical - that indicate Judaism's evolving beliefs, attitudes, and mores. These beliefs – and how they are reflected in Jewish theology - change across time to accommodate the changes and needs that develop throughout history. As George Nickelsburg suggests, "theological

[5] Elaine Williams, "Why Our Culture is Still a Rape Culture," and Zaron Burnett, "A Gentleman's Guide to Rape Culture," *Huffington Post*, 6/11/14.
[6] Ryan Broderick, "What is Rape Culture?" *BuzzFeed*, 2/5/14.
[7] Zerlina Maxwell, "Rape Culture is Real," *Time*, 3/37/14.

conceptions arise not in a vacuum but in response to historical circumstances and events."[8]

In keeping with Nickelsburg, Judith Hauptman argues that the exegetical devices used by the rabbis in the Babylonian and Jerusalem Talmuds are

> an attempt on the part of the rabbis to maintain the authority and sacredness of Scripture but, at the same time, to read their own, often more progressive social thinking into the ancient text. In this manner the rabbis are able radically to transform biblical institutions, such as marriage and divorce, and even modify their patriarchal configuration.[9]

That is, using Scripture as the point of origin, the rabbis modified the "meaning" of the text in order to fit the social/historical demands of their time. While I question Hauptman's suggestion that the rabbis tended towards "more progressive social thinking," and will discuss at length the treatment of the Dinah story in the rabbinic literature (Chapter Five), her premise, in general, is sound. I would expand it to include all Jewish biblical commentary across time – ancient, medieval, and modern. That is, even more contemporary exegetical commentary on textual passages also necessarily reflects the attitudes held by commentators of that given time, and responds to challenges in their cultural milieu.

Of present interest is how Jewish beliefs, attitudes, and mores regarding women – specifically women who have been violated – have changed across time. To do this, I

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[8] George Nickelsburg, *Jewish Literature Between the Bible and the Mishnah*, (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1981) 3.
[9] Judith Hauptman, "Rabbinic Interpretation of Scripture," *A Feminist Companion to Reading the Bible*, Athalya Brenner and Carole Fontaine eds., (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1997) 472.

examine the ancient, medieval, and modern commentaries on Genesis 34 looking specifically for: 1) characterizations of Dinah, 2) attitudes regarding her experience, and 3) any depictions of women in general. The Biblical story begins:

> Then Dinah, daughter of Leah who was born to Jacob, went out to see among the daughters of the land. And Shechem – son of Hamor the Hivite, ruler of the land – saw her, and took her, and laid her[10], and violated her. And his soul clung to Dinah daughter of Jacob, and he loved the maiden and he spoke tenderly to the girl. And so Shechem said to Hamor his father "take for me that child as wife!" (Gen 34:1-4)[11]

What follows is an account of negotiations regarding Dinah. Jacob, her father, is approached Shechem's father, but defers making a decision until his sons return from the field. At that point, Dinah's two full brothers – Simeon and Levi – take over. During negotiations for Dinah's betrothal, Simeon and Levi deal "deceitfully" with Hamor and Shechem; they say that all the men in the city of Shechem must become circumcised if Shechem is to be allowed to marry Dinah. The people of Shechem agree to these terms and, while the men of the city recuperate from their surgeries, Simeon and Levi arrive – sword in hand – and slaughter the town.

While the Dinah story is a torrid tale involving abduction, violation, and retribution, Dinah herself is, in many respects, a neutral character. She is neither a

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[10] **v2**: וישכב is the third person imperfect masculine singular of the qal very שכב (to lie down) with a conversive ו. This verb often connotes sexual relations (Gen 19:32-33, Ex 22:18, 2Sam 13:14), however the use of אותה (instead of עמה) is highly unusual. The only other examples of a form of את following the verb שכב are Amnon's rape of his sister Tamar (2Sam 13:14) and Lot's daughters intoxicating him and duping him into intercourse (Gen 19:33). All examples of שכב followed by את suggest non-consensual sexual relations which is why the translation is "laid her."

[11] My translation

matriarch requiring reverence by the tradition, nor a harlot or concubine deemed deserving of degradation. As Jacob's daughter, she is a member of the tribe and not considered a foreigner, and she does not fall into the class, usually described as "orphan, widow, and stranger," requiring special care. Biblical references to Dinah outside Genesis 34 are confined to the Torah and are also neutral and brief, including only the noting of her birth (Gen 30:21) and that she was one of the children Leah bore for Jacob (Gen 46:15).

In the story itself, Dinah is extremely passive, with her one action being that she "went out to see among the daughters of the land." All other action in the story is either done to her, or on her behalf. And, unlike Tamar (King David's daughter) who bewails her violation by her half-brother Amnon (2 Samuel 13), Dinah is silent throughout the story, giving us no insight into her emotional state. Additionally, while the position of this paper (presented in Chapter Two) is that when Shechem "saw her, and took her, and laid her, and violated her,"[12] he engaged in activity akin to rape, there is no actual word for rape in biblical Hebrew. As Mary Bader noted in her discussion of E. Gerstenberger's article on the relevant verb often translated as "rape," (*a).n.h*[13] "is indicative that 'physical or psychic force is used to alter the status of someone for the worse," but does "not necessarily mean 'rape.'"[14] For Gerstenberger, *(a).n.h.* always involves a negative shift in social status imposed on another, but it does not necessarily involve physical violation, or even connote sexual interaction. The absence of a readily identifiable Hebrew word for the act of rape, as well as the variety of meanings

[12] Gen 34:2 my translation
[13] For purposes of this paper, the *a.* in *(a).n.h.* represents the letter Hebrew *ein (ע)*.
[14] Mary Anna Bader, *Sexual Violation in the Hebrew Bible: A Multi-Methodological Study of Genesis 34 and 2 Samuel 13*, (New York: Peter Lang, 2006) 16.

attributable to the verb *(a).n.h.*, leaves the text somewhat ambiguous and open to interpretation.

Dinah's neutrality makes the Dinah story the perfect vehicle by which to examine Jewish attitudes regarding women and violation across time. Because Dinah is mostly passive, entirely silent, and not referred to in Torah outside this story in any substantive way, the thoughts, feelings, and motivations ascribed to Dinah in the commentary on Genesis 34 are interpretive projections on the part of the commentator. Additionally, since no word for rape exists in biblical Hebrew, and while the verb often translated as "rape" (*(a).n.h.*) always connotes some sort of degradation, the severity of that degradation can vary widely. This ambiguity serves the purpose of this paper as it provides commentators greater latitude to "project" their attitudes into the text, thereby giving potentially greater insight into the mores of the time. Essentially, I am suggesting that the Dinah story can work as a sort of "Biblical Rorschach Test," in that it serves to reflect the commentator's own attitudes, concerns, or anxieties, including those regarding women.

In addition to Dinah's neutrality and the Hebrew text's ambiguity, another element of the Dinah story will help illuminate the attitudes of commentators towards Dinah's violation. The judgments commentators express regarding the actions of Dinah's father and brothers – specifically Simeon and Levi – can help convey their attitude towards Dinah and her experience. In the story, Jacob is "silent" when he hears of his daughter's violation. How the commentators interpret Jacob's lack of reaction concerning Dinah will likewise give insight into their attitudes regarding Dinah and her experience.

Unlike their father Jacob, however, Simeon and Levi are not silent and, instead, deal "deceitfully" with Shechem and Hamor because he (Shechem) "had defiled their sister Dinah" (v 13). Simeon and Levi tell Shechem and Hamor that Dinah can marry into their family only if all the males of the city are circumcised, because giving their sister to an uncircumcised man would be "a disgrace for us" (v 14). Shechem and Hamor readily agree and, as the entire town recuperates from their surgeries, Simeon and Levi come to the town and slaughter all the men.

By modern standards this is clearly a condemnable overreaction; however the text's position itself is ambiguous. Father Jacob does indeed chastise his sons, saying "you have troubled me, by causing me to stink in the dwelling of the land – with the Canaanites and the Perizzites" (v 30). Jacob's concern, however, appears to be the prospect of revenge from other peoples for slaughtering the men of Shechem, and not with the morality of Simeon and Levi's action itself. Indeed, Jacob's sons respond with moral indignation: "But they said 'should our sister be made like a prostitute?" (Gen 34:31). The text itself is not clear as to whether the narrator views Simeon and Levi's actions as morally acceptable or rash and imprudent. The attitude commentators take towards Simeon and Levi will therefore also afford additional insight into their attitude regarding Dinah's violation.

The goal of this paper is to analyze these later interpretations in a systematic fashion in order to uncover underlying attitudes regarding women found in Judaism across time. In keeping with Nickelsburg and Hauptman, I expect that these attitudes will vary across time given the varying cultural milieu. Feminist criticism will guide the process. With its extensive work on portrayals of – and attitudes about – women in

biblical texts, feminist literary criticism is the natural methodology to utilize for this endeavor. This paper adapts feminist biblical literary hermeneutics in order to analyze the commentaries on Genesis 34, with the goal of gaining insight into Judaism's treatment of women across time.

A second goal is to ascertain underlying attitudes regarding rape in the commentaries examined. To do this, I scrutinize the commentaries for indications of the rape myths prevalent in today's contemporary society. The term "rape myths" refers to the "ubiquitous and pernicious extra-legal factors [that] have, over the centuries, played a dominant role in shaping and informing societies' definition, interpretation, and evaluation of sexual violence."[15] Such myths "make assumptions about the victim's character, respectability, and worthiness, while refuting both the seriousness of sexual violence and the rapist's moral culpability for this crime."[16] The rape myths most often seen in today's culture include:

> The belief that there is no such thing as rape, that rape is little more than normative consensual sexual intercourse, that women are to blame for their rape, that they make up false allegations of rape, and that they are, in their own eyes and in the eyes of others, devalued or dishonoured by their rape experience.[17]

By examining the Jewish commentaries on the story of Dinah for reflections of modern-day rape myth, my goal is not to censure a particular time in Jewish history, or various Jewish communities. Much like Ilana Pardes, I "attempt to make sense of the

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[15] Caroline Blyth, *The Narrative of Rape in Genesis 34: Interpreting Dinah's Silence*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010) 24.
[16] Ibid, 25.
[17] Ibid.

present in light of the past."[18] I seek to understand the evolution of Jewish thought regarding women and rape in the belief that, if we understand how negative perspectives about women developed, there is greater chance of changing them in the future.

I begin in Chapter Two with an analysis of the question: was Dinah raped? Modern scholars see different answers to this question in the text. After a review of the varying opinions, I present my own argument based on an analysis of the Hebrew – that Dinah was, indeed, raped by Shechem. Chapter Three provides a summary of feminist Biblical hermeneutics, expanded and modified to address Biblical commentary. Chapters Four through Eight examine the commentaries on the Dinah story from four epochs: Intertestamental Period (approximately 420 B.C.E. through the beginning of the 1st century C.E.), Rabbinic Period (2nd through 6th centuries), Medieval Period (7th through 15th centuries), and the Modern Period (beginning of the Age of Enlightenment – 1650s to present). The Modern Period is divided into two chapters: Orthodox Commentaries (Chapter Seven), and Progressive Commentaries (Chapter Eight). And, in Chapter Nine, I present my summary of the attitudes towards women presented in the commentaries on the Rape of Dinah story, as well as my thoughts on the impact those attitudes have had on modern day culture.

[18] Ilana Pardes, *Countertraditions in the Bible: A Feminist Approach*, (Harvard: Harvard University Press, 1992) 2.

Chapter Two

Rape in the Hebrew Bible: Was Dinah Raped?

Throughout much of Jewish history, Genesis 34 has been referred to as the "Rape of Dinah Story."[1] Whether commentators saw her as a sympathetic victim of a completely unsolicited attack, or as behaving in a manner that made her at least partially culpable for her own violation, most commentators in the ancient and medieval periods did not question that Dinah had been indeed raped by Shechem.

In recent years, however, the assumption that Dinah was a victim of rape, and Shechem a perpetrator, has been questioned by a number of scholars who have framed Genesis 34 instead as something akin to a "liaison"[2] or an act of "passion."[3] Others have focused on Dinah's action in relation to ancient family dynamic to argue that Dinah was not actually raped by Shechem. In addition to scholarly analysis, a very popular fictional work - *The Red Tent* – portrays Dinah's encounter with Shechem as a passionate love affair.[4]

Of the scholars that hold this view, Tikva Frymer-Kensky considers this story to be one about "the relationship between 'domestic affairs,' [patriarchal] control over household members, and 'external affairs,' boundary definition and the relationship with other groups."[5] By "going out," Dinah leaves the protection of the patriarchal system and makes herself, and the patriarchy itself, vulnerable. Frymer-Kensky

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[1] See: Jubilees, the Book of Judith, GenR 80:5
[2] Walter Brueggemann, *Genesis* (Atlanta: John Knox Press, 1982), 274.
[3] Calum Carmichael, *Women, Law and the Genesis Traditions* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1979) 33.
[4] Anita Diamant, *The Red Tent*, (New York: Wyatt Books, 1997).
[5] Tikva Frymer-Kensky, *Reading the Women of the Bible*, (New York: Schocken Books, 2002), 179.

concludes that it is most "probable that Shechem did not rape Dinah," and cites the aside in verse 7: "the men were grieved, and they were very angry, because he [Shechem] had done a vile deed in Isreael by lying with Jacob's daughter; which thing ought not to be done."[6] Frymer-Kensky explains that

> by using Israel, the aside invites the readers to switch from a concentration on Jacob's problem to their own interests as people of Israel… this narratorial statement forcefully admonishes the readers that it is utterly wrong **by lying with a daughter of Israel**. Nothing is said about forcible rape, for any sexual intercouse with a daughter is a moral outrage that may not be done. [bold in the original][7]

For Frymer-Kensky, the story in Genesis 34 involves issues of illicit sex, not rape, and the degredation that Dinah experiences ((*a).n.h.*)[8] comes from "the fact that the man has intercourse with her,"[9] not from being the victim of an unwanted attack. What Frymer-Kensky speculates is probable – that Shechem did not rape Dinah – Bechtel states outright. She argues that (*a).n.h.* refers not to Dinah's rape, but to her shame – shame she experiences for engaging in consentual premarital sex with Shechem. Bechtel uses the last line of the story, said by Simeon and Levi, "Has he [Shechem] made our sister like a harlot?" as proof. She expains:[10]

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[6] Ibid, 182.
[7] Ibid, 183.
[8] Gen 34:2 *(a).n.h.* – piel, imperf., 3rd per masc., fem suffix, with conversive vav.
[9] Ibid.
[10] I find Bechtel's assertion that "harlots are not raped" profoundly troubling as such a claim clearly reflects modern day rape myth. See Chapter Three for and overview of rape myths.

> Harlots engage in sexual relations for business purposes, so there is mutual consent. Harlots are not raped. They are women with no bonding or obligation to a family unit; they do not fit into the central social structure. By saying that Dinah has become like a harlot, Simeon and Levi show that Dinah has not been raped. Instead, she has crossed the tribal boundary and acted like a harlot without bonding or responsibility to the family or community.[11],[12]

Alice Bellis concludes her analysis of Bechtel with the statement "Dinah was a victim, not of rape, but of brothers who where overzealous in their concern for what they mistakenly believed was good for their group."[13]

I disagree with the modern commentators who suggest that Shechem's behavior in Gen 34:2, when he "saw her, and took her, and laid her and violated (*(a).n.h.*) her," can be seen as something other than his blatant violation of her, which is best termed as rape. By "rape" I mean – an encounter in which the victim is forcibly overpowered, is compelled to submit to a sexual encounter, and that experience leaves her in a state of violation. I derive my definition of "rape" from the Hebrew Bible, and I lay out support for my contention that Dinah was raped below. But first, it is necessary to understand what actually constitutes rape in the Hebrew Bible. To do this, I examine the passages in the Tanakh that have irrefutable themes of rape.

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[11] Alice Ogden Bellis, Helpmates, *Harlots, and Heros: Women's Stories in the Hebrew Bible*, (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2007), 75.
[12] I find Bechtel's opinion that harlots do not get raped particularly disturbing because it reflects the "bad girls get what they deserve" rape myth commonly found in contemporary society.
[13] Bellis, 77.

Rape in the Hebrew Bible

While there is not a specific word in biblical Hebrew for rape, there are examples in the Bible that clearly reference the act of rape. Outside of Genesis 34, the Tanakh contains one law addressing the act of rape, as well as two narratives with rape as the central theme. The biblical law is referenced in Deuteronomy 22:28-29, and the narratives are found in Judges 19 and 2 Samuel 13. It is from these passages that we glean what constitutes rape in the Hebrew Bible.

The Deuteronomic law outlines the penalties a man must pay if he forcibly engages in intercourse with a virgin who is not betrothed:

> If a man finds a virgin girl who is not betrothed and seizes (*t.f.s.*)[14] her and lies with (*sh.ch.v im*)[15] her, and be found, the man who lay with her shall give to the girl's father fifty pieces of silver. And he shall take her to him as wife because he violated (*(a).n.h.*)[16] her. He is not allowed to send her away all of his days. (Deut 22:28-29)[17]

The significant verbs in these verses are *t.f.s.*, *sh.ch.v.*, and (*a).n.h*. *T.f.s.* indicates the act of "seizing," and use of it in this passage demonstrates aggressive and overpowering action on the part of the man that is not wanted, nor consensual. Various examples of *t.f.s.* include when Potiphar's wife **seizes** Joseph's garment to try to coerce him to have sex with her (Gen 39:12), in reference to the act of **laying siege** to a city (Deut 20:19), and the **capturing** of King of Ai so that he could be brought to Joshua (Jos 8:23). As these verses suggest, as a verb *t.f.s.* indicates the use of force against another

[14] *t.f.s.* – qal, perf., 3rd person masc., sing, with fem suffix.
[15] *sh.ch.v.* – qal, perf., 3rd person masc., sing.
[16] *(a).n.h.* – piel, perf., 3rd person masc, sing, with fem suffix.
[17] JPS translation.

(or others). While *t.f.s*. does not necessarily connote sexual overpowering, it does indicate unwillingness on the part of the one being seized.

The next significant verb – *sh.ch.v.* – can connote simply the act of lying down, but the act of "lying with" (*sh.ch.v. im*) seen here indicates sexual relations. Examples of the sexual connotations for *sh.ch.v. im* include Reuben's lying with "Bilhah his father's concubine" (Gen 35:22), David lying with Bathsheba (2 Sam 11:4), and a prohibition against a man lying with his father's wife (Deut 27:20). The forceful act of seizing (*t.f.s.)* followed by "and he lay with her" *(v'sh.ch.v. imah*) indicates forced, nonconsensual intercourse.

Finally, *(a).n.h.* is translated here as "violated." The man is required to take the girl as wife "because he violated her." *(A).n.h.* is a difficult verb to translate and is central to the debate over whether or not Dinah was raped by Shechem. Every use of this verb root, however, regardless of verb form, connotes some sort of personal degradation. The intensity of that degradation ranges from simply being in a humbled state,[18] to affliction by God,[19] to violation of justice,[20] to the forcible physical violation of a person,[21] and to oppression by enslavement.[22]

In this passage in Deut 22:28-29, *(a).n.h.* clearly refers to "seizes her and lies with her," and argues for the more intense interpretation of *(a).n.h.,* suggesting forcible physical violation that is sexual in nature. We find in this passage that the punishment for a man's rape of a virgin includes payment to the girl's father. The perpetrator is also

[18] Gen 16:19, Zech 10:2, Isa 58:10, Ps 116:10 and 119:67
[19] 1Kings 2:26 and 11:39, Ps 107:17, Na 1:12
[20] Job 37:23
[21] Deut 21:14 and 22:24, Ju 16:5, Ps 105:18
[22] Ex 1:12

mandated to marry the girl and is not allowed to ever divorce, therefore he assumes responsibility for supporting her for the entirety of his lifetime.

Of the two rape narratives in the Bible (three including the Dinah story), Judges 19 is the most heinous due to its sheer brutality and betrayal, as well as its ultimate consequences for the woman, namely her death. In this story an unnamed woman, usually referred to in the secondary literature as "the Levite's concubine," leaves her Levite husband and returns to her father's house. After four months the Levite decides he wants her back and goes to her father's house to *l'daber al libah* "speak upon her heart."[23] Eventually, the Levite departs the father's house with his concubine in tow. That night they lodge at an old man's house in Gibeah – a Benjaminite city – where they run into terrible trouble:

> Now as they were making their hearts merry, behold, the men of the city, worthless men, surrounded the house, and beat at the door, and spoke to the master of the house, the old man, saying: 'Bring out the man who came into your house, that we may know (*y.d.a.*)[24] him.' And the man, the master of the house, went out to them, and said to them: 'No, my brothers, no, I beg you, do not so wickedly; seeing that this man has come into my house, do not do this vile thing.' Behold, here is my daughter a virgin, and his concubine; them I will bring out now, violate (*(a).n.h.*)[25] them, and do with them what is good in your eyes; but to this man do not do so vile a thing. (Jud 19:22-24)[26]

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[23] This is the same phrase Shechem uses after he has raped Dinah (v3).
[24] *y.d.a*. – qal, imperfect 1st person com plural, cohortative M.
[25] *(a).n.h.* – piel, imperf., 2nd person, masc. plural.
[26] JPS translation.

The old man offers up his virgin daughter and the Levite's concubine for *(a).n.h.* "violation" in order to keep the men from raping the Levite. But the men of the city persist and want "to know" the Levite anyway. So the Levite "grabbed (*h.z.k.*)[27] his concubine, and brought her out to them; and they knew (*y.d.a.*)[28] her, and abused (*a.l.l.*)[29] her all night until the morning; and when the day began to dawn, they let her go" (Jud 19:25). The concubine dies as a result of the ordeal and the Levite butchers her lifeless body into twelve pieces and sends them as a sign throughout the territory of Israel.

There are four relevant verbs in this story that serve to define Judges 19 as a rape scene. They include: *h.z.k.*, *y.d.a.*, *a.l.l.*, and (*a).n.h*. *H.z.k.* serves the same function as *t.f.s.* in Deut 22:28 – to convey the use of force. The Levite grabs his concubine and forces her out of the house to be molested by the mob. While the Levite is not the one who ultimately rapes his concubine, he facilitates her ordeal by forcibly overpowering her. Some examples of *h.z.k.* used in this manner include David's **overpowering** of the Philistine with a sling (1 Sam 17:50) and Amnon **forcing** Tamar to lay with him (2 Sam 13:14).

Much like *sh.ch.v. im* (to sleep with) in Deut 22:28, *y.d.a.* implies sexual relations. Often "to know someone" in the Hebrew Bible implies knowing them sexually. This is seen in Gen 4:1 when "the man **knew** Eve his wife; and she conceived," and when the mob in Sodom, wanting to rape the newcomers, called to Lot "and said to him, Where

[27] *h.z.k.* – hif, perf., 3rd person masc. sing, apoc vav conversive.
[28] *y.d.a.* – qal, imperf. 3rd person masc plural.
[29] *a.l.l.* – hitpael, 3rd person masc plural.

are the men that came in to you this night? Bring them out to us, that we may **know** them" (Gen 19:5).

In this context, *(a).n.h.* and *a.l.l.* are similar verbs, in that they both convey abuse or violation that involves suffering. The old man offers his daughter and the concubine to the mob for them to violate (*(a).n.h.*) instead of the Levite, and the mob abuses (*a.l.l.*) the concubine all night. One example of *a.l.l.* is when God discusses the plagues the Egyptians experienced during the Exodus. God reminds the Israelites to tell their children about the "things [plagues] I have **wrought** upon Egypt" (Ex 10:2).

The second rape narrative occurs in 2 Samuel 13 and involves the children of King David – Absalom, his sister Tamar, and their half-brother Amnon. The story begins: "And it came to pass after this, that Absalom the son of David had a beautiful sister, whose name was Tamar; and Amnon the son of David loved her" (2 Sam 13:1). Amnon is so distraught because of his unrequited love for Tamar that, at the suggestion of his "cunning" friend Jonadab, he schemes to get the girl. Amnon feigns illness and, when King David comes to check on him, he implores his father to send his sister Tamar to care for him. David grants Amnon's request and tells Tamar to "go now to your brother Amnon's house, and prepare him food" (2 Sam 13:7). After Tamar has arrived and cooked, Amnon clears everyone from the room and,

> he took hold (*h.z.k.*)[30] of her, and said to her, 'Come lie with me (*sh.ch.v im*), my sister.' And she answered him 'No! my brother, do not force (*(a).n.h.*) me; for no such thing ought to be done in Israel; do not do this shameful deed. And I, where shall I carry my shame? And as for you, you shall be as one of the base

[30] *h.z.k.* – hif, 3rd person masc sing vav Conversive.

men in Israel. And therefore, I beg you, speak to the king; for he will not withhold me from you. But he would not listen to her voice; but, being stronger (*h.z.k.*) than she, forced (*(a).n.h.*) her, and lay with (*sh.ch.v. et*)[31] her. (2 Sam 13:11-14)[32]

No one denies that this is a rape scene. The relevant verbs in this case are *h.z.k.*, *sh.ch.v. im/et*, and *(a).n.h.*, all of which are also found in one or both of the previously discussed scenes (Deut 22 and Judges 19). Here, *h.z.k.* implies that Amnon engaged in the same sort of forceful overpowering of Tamar that the Levite did when he grabbed his concubine in order to toss her to the mob (Judg 19:25). Similarly, Amnon's "lying with" Tamar implies the same type of sexual encounter demonstrated in Deut 22:28 (when a man rapes a virgin), but with even harsher connotations. The form seen in the Deuteronomy passage is *sh.ch.v. im*, which means literally "to lie with." In the 2 Samuel passage, however, the form used when Amnon rapes Tamar is *sh.ch.v. et*, which is a very unusual form seen only two other times in the Tanakh (Gen 19:33 and Gen 34:2). *Sh.ch.v. et* makes a direct object of the thing being laid with, such that "he laid her" would reflect the meaning of this form more precisely than "he laid with her." Whether the form of *sh.ch.v.* includes *im* or *et*, however, both covey a sexual encounter.

The only verb that is found in all three of the rape scenes (Deut 22:28-29, Judges 19, and 2 Sam 13) is *(a).n.h.*. In all three scenes *(a).n.h.* indicates the woman having been left in a state of violation after having been raped.

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[31] In this case the text reads *shacav et* instead of *shachav im*. Instead of implying "lying with," shacav et conveys that the thing being laid is a direct object. This is a very unusual form, found only in Gen 19:33 (Lot's daughters intoxicating him and using him sexually) and in Gen 34:2 (when Shechem rapes Dinah).
[32] JPS translation.

Taken as a whole, these three overt rape scenes delineate the three variables that constitute rape in the Hebrew Bible. They include:

1. The use of force in order to overpower the woman – *t.f.s.* and *h.z.k*.
2. An implied sexual encounter – *sh.ch.v. im/et* and *y.d.a*.
3. And, a woman who is left in a state of violation – (*a).n.h*.

For purposes of the paper, the definition of rape incorporates – and is restricted to - the components seen in the three accounts of blatant rape in the Bible. That is: rape, as portrayed in the Hebrew bible, is defined as when a woman is overpowered and forced to engage in a sexual encounter that leaves her violated. The question we now turn to is this: is the Dinah story also an example of rape? As noted above, a number of modern scholars think not.

Was Dinah Raped?

I do not agree with Frymer-Kensky's analysis that the Dinah story is simply one about patriarchal control over household members, and I find Bechtel's suggestion that Dinah was a harlot – and therefore incapable of being raped - deeply unconvincing.

While I agree with Frymer-Kensky that one component of the story revolves around patriarchy versus other groups, I do not find her suggestion - that the aside in Gen 34:7 ("by lying with a daughter of Israel") leads the reader away from the immediacy of the story - compelling. Every other element of the chapter involves these particular people in this particular situation. Additionally, we see Tamar – as she attempts to fend off Amnon – make a very similar statement. When Amnon took hold of her and said "come lie with me, my sister," Tamar replied:

No, my brother, do not force me; **for such a thing is not done in Israel**; do not do anything so vile! (2 Sam 13:12)

Even though Tamar references what is not to be done "in Israel," it in no way leads the reader away from the immediacy of her impending rape. In fact, the reference increases the immediacy of Tamar's situation because it heightens the horrific nature of what she is about to experience. Frymer-Kensky's suggestion - that immediacy of Dinah's brothers' outrage at hearing that she had been violated is somehow diminished because the brother's exclaim that such a thing is an outrage in Israel - is therefore not persuasive.

I also find Bechtal's reading of the last line of the story misguided. The text does not indicate that "Dinah has become like a harlot." Instead, the text suggests that Simeon and Levi are so angry because Shechem has treated Dinah like a harlot. If the proposal of marriage is seen as "payment" for the rape, it is reasonable that they would use the world "*zonah*" (harlot). The subject of the sentence is Shechem not Dinah; it is Shechem who "makes" Dinah "like a harlot," not Dinah who makes herself one (which would imply consensual sex). My reading of this passage is that Shechem forcibly violated Dinah. While his conduct might not have been deemed rape in a historical context (a prince of a city may have the "right" to take whatever he wants, and a woman's consent is not always relevant in the ancient world), by Biblical standards (not to mention modern ones), it was certainly rape.

Keeping in mind the definition derived from the three explicit rape narratives in the Hebrew Bible (Deut 22:28-29, Judges 19, and 2 Sam 13) – that rape is when a woman is overpowered and forced to engage in a sexual encounter that leaves her

violated - I base my conclusion that Dinah was raped on an analysis of the Hebrew itself. To begin with, while Dinah indeed "went out" from patriarchal protection, she did so "to see among the daughters of the land." Nothing in the text suggests that she went for any other reason than to engage socially with other women and girls. It was during this trip that Shechem "saw her, and took (*l.k.h.*) her, and laid (*sh.ch.v. et*) her, and violated (*(a).n.h.*) her." All of these verbs indicate Shechem's activeness and imply Dinah's passivity. There is nothing in this verse to suggest mutuality or a consensual exchange.

The first action Shechem engages in after he sees Dinah is *l.k.h.* "to take" her. The verb *l.k.h.* has a variety of meanings ranging from "to take" (Gen 12:5), "to seize" (Ex 17:5), to "to conquer/capture" (Num 21:25-26), and "to marry" (in Gen alone - 4:19, 11:29, 25:1, 26:34, 28:9, 38:6). This verb is used when the Israelites **capture** the Amorite cities (Num 21:25), when Pharaoh **takes** Sarai (Gen 20:2), and when a variety of male characters **marry** their wives. When *l.k.h.* indicates marriage then sexual relations is also implied. Since in this case *l.k.h.* is followed by the verbs *sh.ch.v.* (to lie down) and *(a).n.h.* (to violate), it demonstrates a more violent connotation. If marriage were meant in this case, then *sh.ch.v.* (to lie with) would be superfluous, and *(a).n.h.* (to violate) contradictory. Therefore, the most reasonable definition of *l.k.h.* in this instance would be "to take." Much like the man who seizes (*t.f.s.*) the virgin in Deut 22:28, Shechem also overpowered Dinah and took her by force.

Additionally, while the verb *sh.ch.v.* (to lie) often connotes sexual relations,[33] the use of the preposition *et* (directional) instead of *im* ("with") is highly unusual. The only other examples of *sh.ch.v. et* in the Hebrew bible are Amnon's rape of his half sister

[33] Gen 19:32-33; Ex 22:18, 2 Sam 13:14.

Tamar, and Lot's daughters' abuse of their father.[34] All examples of *sh.ch.v. et* in the Tanakh suggest non-consensual sexual relations.

Added to the issue of *sh.ch.v. et* is verb *a.n.h*. Every use of this very root in the Hebrew Bible, regardless of verb form, connotes some sort of personal degradation, and it is the only verb present in all three of the rape scenes defining rape. The intensity of the degradation associated with *(a).n.h.* can range from a humbled state,[35] to affliction by God,[36] to violation of justice,[37] to the forcible physical violation of a person.[38] This verse involves people (not God) and does not involve a form of punishment or retribution, therefore the most reasonable interpretation of *(a).n.h.* is that Shechem physically violated Dinah. Frymer-Kensky suggests that the word order in which we find *(a).n.h.* in the Dinah story indicates the Shechem/Dinah encounter was not rape: "In rape, the word *(a).n.h.* comes before the words 'lay with'; in other forms of illicit sexual intercourse, *(a).n.h.* comes after 'lay with'."[39]

The only evidence Frymer-Kensky uses to support this assertion is the comparison to Tamar in 2 Sam 13 in which "to violate" came before "to lay." This argument is not convincing, in part due to the use of *(a).n.h.* later in 2 Sam 13. In 2 Sam 13:32, Jonadab tells King David of the death of Amnon on Absalom's command, which he says "has been ordained from the day that he raped (*(a).n.h.*) his sister Tamar." Here, *(a).n.h.* is used to indicate the rape without any additional verbs to support it. Additionally, the quick succession of verbs in Gen 34:2 – took her, laid her, violated her

[34] 2 Sam 13:14 and Gen 19:33.
[35] Gen 16:19; Zc 10:2; Isa 31:4 and 58:10; Ps 116:10 and 119:67.
[36] Gen 15:13; Na 1:12; 1 Kings 2:26 and 11:39; Ps 107:17.
[37] Job 37:23
[38] Deut 21:14; Ju 16:5; Ps 105:18.
[39] Frymer-Kensky, 183.

– suggests rapid and intense action. Each of these verbs can have negative connotations on their own, however when taken together, the negative nature of the action is explicit.

To recap: the question of interest in this section is whether Dinah's experience with Shechem meets the definition for rape derived from the Hebrew Bible. The definition (outlined above) includes three components: 1) the use of force in order to overpower the woman, 2) an implied sexual encounter, and 3) a woman who is left in a state of violation. Based on this definition, I believe Gen 34 is clearly a story involving rape. Shechem exerted force over Dinah when he "took her" (*l.k.h.*), and the sexual nature of the encounter was explicit when he "laid her" (*sh.ch.v. et*). The directional quality of *sh.ch.v. et* negates any suggestion that this was a mutual encounter, and Dinah was clearly left in a state of violation (*(a).n.h.*) after the encounter.

To discount the suggestion that Dinah was indeed raped, may critics point to Gen 34:3 "And his soul clung to Dinah daughter of Jacob, and he loved the maiden and he spoke upon his heart about the girl."[40] Much has been made about Shechem "loving" Dinah to suggest that their encounter in verse Gen 34:2 was not rape. Bellis says "Rapists do not fall in love with their victims. This story does not 'feel' like a story of rape. Did Shechem really rape Dinah?"[41] Based, again, on the text itself, I reject this type of speculation. Shechem's profession of "love" comes after the quick succession of damning verbs – took her (*l.k.h.*), laid her (*sh.ch.v. et*), violated her (*(a).n.h.*) – in verse Gen 34:2. Whether or not rapists are capable of falling in love with their victims is not a question I can answer; nor, I believe, can Bellis. What we know from the text is that

[40] Translation is my own.
[41] Bellis, 75.

there was a violation and later a profession of love. All in all, I think the Hebrew clearly indicates that Shechem's encounter with Dinah was an act of rape.

Chapter Three

Methodology: Feminist Hermeneutics and Rape Myth

Feminist theory and feminist literary criticism of the Bible did not develop in a vacuum – they developed in response to patriarchal political structure, and patriarchal readings of Scripture, and therefore have (like all approaches) inherent biases. In order to utilize most effectively the feminist literary hermeneutics, it is important to understand, and accommodate for, such biases. Therefore presented below is a brief summary of feminist theory (the catalyst for feminist biblical literary criticism) and feminist biblical hermeneutics. Finally, I will discuss how such hermeneutics will be applied in the present context.

One cannot speak of "Feminist Theory" in a monolithic sense, as there are, in fact, many feminisms, with a range of labels (liberal, radical, psychoanalytic, etc.). This range of labels signal "that all feminists do not think alike," and indicate "the range of different approaches, perspectives, and frameworks a variety of feminists have used to shape both their explanations for women's oppression and their proposed solutions for its elimination."[1] Additionally, feminism has undergone a major change since the development of its earlier "waves" or "stages" which initiated much scholarship on the subject. Today, "much of contemporary feminist theory defines itself in reaction against traditional liberal feminism."[2]

Below is a brief overview of some major feminist varieties out of the many.

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[1] Rosemarie Tong, *Feminist Thought: A More Comprehensive Introduction*, (Charlotte: University of North Carolina, 2009) 1.
[2] Ibid.

While Liberal feminism has evolved through several iterations, it developed out of the Liberal school of thought in which "a just society" was seen as one that "allows individuals to exercise their autonomy and to fulfill themselves."[3] This ideal sprang out of 18th century Enlightenment thought. Mary Wollstonecraft (1759-1799) argued for women's access to education,[4] and Immanuel Kant declared that "unless a person acts autonomously, he or she acts as less than a fully human person."[5] In the 19th century John Stuart Mill and Harriet Taylor Mill expanded this idea and "conceived of rationality not only morally, as autonomous decision making, but also prudentially, as calculative reason, or using your head to get what you want."[6] Taylor Mill also made the issue an economic one by claiming "a married woman cannot be her husband's true equal unless she has the confidence and sense of entitlement that come from contributing 'materially to the support of the family.'"[7] All of these ideas percolated and set the stage for the Women's Suffrage Movement of the late 1800s and early 1900s. In the 1960s, liberal feminism morphed into a movement that proclaimed "in order to be fully liberated, women need economic opportunities and sexual freedoms as well as civil liberties."[8] Liberal feminism had moved into a highly political realm, with the forming of the National Organization for Women (NOW), and NOWs "essential identity and agenda were fundamentally liberal."[9] In the 1980s, liberal feminism again morphed – this time

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[3] Ibid, 11.
[4] Mary Wollstonecraft, *A Vindication of the Rights of Women*, ed. Carol H. Poston (New York: W. W. Norton, 1975).
[5] Immanuel Kant, *Groundwork of the Metaphysic of Morals*, trans. H. J. Paton (New York: Harper Torchbooks, 1958).
[6] Tong, 16.
[7] Ibid, 18.
[8] Ibid, 23.
[9] Ibid, 25.

into what was known as Second Stage Feminism. This Second Stage now focused on women and men working together to develop "the kind of social values, leadership styles, and institutional structures needed to permit both sexes to achieve fulfillment in the public and private world alike."[10] In sum, liberal feminism is now a movement which wishes "to free women from oppressive gender roles – that is, from those roles used as excuses or justifications for giving women a lessor place, or no place at all, in the academy, the forum, and the marketplace."[11]

As noted earlier, Liberal Feminism laid the foundation for all other feminist categories, and most of those categories developed in response to Liberal Feminism. Some of the following represent these developments: Radical Feminism focused on men's control over women's sexuality and reproductive rights, and saw women's oppression as women as the most fundamental form of human oppression.[12] Marxist and Socialist Feminism tried "to understand women's subordination in a coherent and systematic way that integrates class and sex, as well as other aspects of identity such as race/ethnicity or sexual orientation."[13] Psychoanalytic Feminists "maintain that the fundamental explanation for women's way of acting is rooted deep in women's psyche, specifically, in women's way of thinking about themselves as women" which impacts a women's self-definition and how she relates to the world.[14] And Multicultural, Global, and Postcolonial Feminism "push feminist thought in the direction of both recognizing

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[10] Ibid, 30.
[11] Ibid, 34.
[12] Alison M. Jaggar and Paula S. Rothenberg, eds., *Feminist Frameworks* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1984) 186.
[13] Nancy Holmstrom, "The Socialist Feminist Project," *Monthly Review Press 54*, no 10 (2002) 1.
[14] Tong, 129.

women's diversity and acknowledging the challenges it presents."[15] Meaning that multicultural feminism acknowledges that women from different ethnic groups, and socioeconomic status, experience feminist issues differently.

Feminist Hermeneutics

As this cursory overview of the many facets of feminism shows, what constitutes "feminism" varies greatly – though all facets of feminism tend to focus on the problem of the subordination of women. So too with feminist biblical literary criticism, since

> there is no single feminist program or analysis. Feminist analysis and aims differ in relation to individual and class experience, intersecting loyalties and identities (such as ethnic, national and religious identities), understanding of the root problem, and view of scriptural authority or normativity. As a consequence, specific goals and strategies of feminist action will differ.[16]

But this multiplicity of approaches can leave one wondering where to begin. In the area of theology, Rosemary Radford Ruether represents an important voice. She suggests "a method of correction" for what is termed the patriarchal suppression of women's presence and voices by developing a feminist hermeneutic that appeals to women's experience. By this she means that by becoming critically aware of the

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[15] Ibid, 200.

[16] Phyllis Bird, "What Makes a Feminist Reading Feminist? A Qualified Answer," *Escaping Eden: New Feminist Perspectives on the Bible*, eds. Harold Washington, Susan Lochrie Graham, and Pamela Thimmes. (Washington Square: New York University Press, 1999) 125.

"falsifying and alienating experiences imposed upon them as women by a male-dominated culture."[17] Ruether goes on to say,

> the critique of sexism implies a fundamental principle of judgment. This critical principle of feminist theology is affirmation of and promotion of the full humanity of women. Whatever denies, diminishes, or distorts the full humanity of women is, therefore, to be appraised as not redemptive. Theologically speaking, this means that whatever diminishes or denies the full humanity of women must be presumed not to reflect the divine or authentic relation to the divine, or to reflect the authentic nature of things, or to be the message or work of an authentic redeemer or a community of redemption.[18]

In essence, with her method of correction, Ruether rejects any texts, commentaries, or traditions that are not in keeping with the "full humanity of women." Especially in the realm of commentaries, this kind of rejection can significantly limit the material available for use.

In the area of biblical interpretation, Phyllis Bird takes a contrasting approach to that of Ruether, one focused on incorporating a "fundamentally dialogical approach." Bird sees the first step in biblical analysis as:

> an attempt to formulate the sense of the text in its ancient social and literary context – viewing the text as itself a response to a conversation in the author's own time, and effort to persuade an ancient audience of a new or alternative view. My response to the text comes only after I have clarified its

[17] Rosemary Radford Ruether, "Feminist Interpretation: A Method of Correction," *Feminist Interpretation of the Bible*, Letty M. Russell ed. (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 1985) 114.
[18] Ibid, 115.

terms – just as my response to a modern dialogue partner demands that I first attempt with all the means at my disposal to hear as accurately and sympathetically as possible what he or she means to say.[19]

Bird advocates a historical analysis as a first step in evaluating ancient texts, and argues that "dismissal of historical criticism simply means that unexamined assumptions are read into the text."[20]

The two approaches discussed above – Ruether's rejection out of hand of any text that are not in keeping with the full humanity of women, or Bird's process of first doing an historical analysis of the text to understand the point of view of the author prior to any critique of the text – contrast and conflict with one another. In addition to these two approaches, there are a number of other hermeneutical approaches to consider. Luise Schottroff et al provide a summary of scriptural hermeneutics first put forth by Carolyn Osiek in 1985 (and still undergirding many approaches, consciously or not):[21]

- The **Hermeneutic of Loyalty** sees the problem of biblically legitimated discrimination against women not in Bible itself but solely in its interpretation. Such an approach explains away issues of women's subjugation evident in the text.

[19] Bird, 126.
[20] Ibid, 128.
[21] Luise Schottroff, Silvia Schroer, and Marie-Theres Wacker, *Feminist Interpretation: The Bible in Women's Perspective*, (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1998) 37.

- The **Hermeneutic of Rejection** takes a very different stance, asserting the Bible can have no authority for women anymore, because the history of what the Bible has led to has to be seen throughout as a history of patriarchy.
- The **Hermeneutic of Revision** sees the existing patriarchal form of the Bible as husk (the human word) that is distinguishable from the non-patriarchal kernel (the divine word) of biblical revelation. One needs only to identify and peel off the identifiable husk to be left with the true nature of biblical revelation.
- The **Hermeneutic of the "Eternal Feminine**" asserts that the bible can only retain its validity today if its divinity is comprehended in symbols of the Great Feminine.
- The **Hermeneutic of Liberation** is tied to Liberation Theology and leans toward a feminism of justice or of toil for equality.

Given that the purpose of this project is to understand the beliefs, attitudes, and mores regarding women as reflected in commentaries on Genesis 34, it is vital that we get to fully hear the voices of those commentators without the rejection or dismissiveness found in many of hermeneutical approaches. At the same time, an approach is necessary that critically examines attitudes reflected in the text, so that important clues regarding the topic in question – attitudes regarding women - are not overlooked. Bird's approach to textual analysis lends itself most completely to the purposes of this paper. Bird approaches texts as a response to a conversation in each author's own time. She therefore attempts to understand the text in its historical, social, and literary context prior to any critical analysis of it. This approach that Bird

uses for analysis of Biblical texts, translates well for uses with later Jewish commentaries. In this paper, I utilize a somewhat modified version of this approach to evaluate the commentaries to "Rape of Dinah" story, written in ancient, medieval and modern times.

Because this paper addresses texts written over the span of more than 2500 years, it is impossible to provide complete historical contextualization for all of the commentaries reviewed. Instead, I focus on the texts "as a response to a conversation in the author's own time," and assume that the commentator's treatment of women reflects aspects of the author's given cultural milieu. Historical reductionism, however, is always a potential issue when addressing the distant past, and is much more so when reviewing multiple epochs. Keeping in mind that examination of the past is heterogeneous endeavor involving "the co-existence of socio-ideological contradictions between the past and the present, between differing epochs of the past, between different socio-ideological groups in the present, between tendencies, schools, circles and so forth, all given a bodily form,"[22] I tread very lightly when making generalized statements about the commentaries within a given time period. As I mentioned in Chapter One, I am interested in uncovering perceptions of women as reflected in Jewish commentary, and I utilize the Rape of Dinah story as a kind of "Biblical Rorschach Test" - a means of uncovering the attitudes, concerns, or anxieties of the commentator.

The second goal of this paper does, however, traipse uneasily into the realm of "ahistorical examination" of texts,[23] in that I seek to identify if and when commentators' attitudes about women reflect any of the rape myths ubiquitously found in today's

[22] Pardes, 4.
[23] Ibid, 3.

society. In the book *Confronting Rape and Sexual Assault*, Martha Burt defines "rape myths" as "prejudicial, stereotyped, or false beliefs about rape, rape victims, or rapists,"[24] that are "part of the general culture," in that "people learn them in the same way they acquire other attitudes and beliefs."[25]

Certainly, one avenue in which people acquire their attitudes and beliefs is through religious tradition and teachings and, as will be shown in the coming chapters, the attitudes conveyed in that tradition evolve over time. While it would be unfair to judge different points in history by modern notions of rape, we can examine historical religious texts to uncover similarities that may exist between attitudes seen then, and those now. As mentioned earlier, when it comes to present day rape myths, I "attempt to make sense of the present in light of the past."[26] Examining when and/or how such rape myths are incorporated into commentaries on the Dinah story will, I believe, give some insight into current use of such myths. I will not speculate about genetic connections (i.e. lines of influence) regarding rape myths. Rather, I will describe or show well parallels exist.

Burt explains that:

> Rape myths are the mechanism that people use to justify dismissing an incident of sexual assault from the category of "real" rape. Accepting or believing rape myths leads to a more restrictive definition of rape and is thus rape-supportive, because such beliefs deny the reality of the actual rapes.[27]

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[24] Martha Burt, "Rape Myths," *Confronting Rape and Sexual Assault* (Mary Odem and Jody Clay-Warner eds.), (Landam, MD: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, Inc., 1998) 129.
[25] Ibid, 131.
[26] Ibid, 2.
[27] Ibid, 130.

Burt also outlines four categories of rape myths that are often applied to women in today's society, as well as the primary one applied to men:[28]

- **Nothing Happened Myths**: remove an incident from the category of a "real" rape by denying that any incident, either sex or rape, occurred at all. (Since Gen 34:2 states explicitly that a sexual encounter occurred, this group of myths are not relevant to the analysis of the Dinah story).
- **No Harm Was Done Myths**: This category of myth is particularly impactful for women who are deemed sexually available, with prostitutes being the most obvious example. This category also includes the myth that "only bad girls get raped," and therefore must have done something to instigate her experience. This category of myth can take several forms, including the attitude that a woman is the sexual property of her lawful husband, and therefore he, and not her, is harmed by rape.
- **She Wanted It Myths**: This group of myths maintain that the woman wanted, invited, or even liked her experience of rape. Inherent in this group of myths is the idea that a woman could resist her rapist if she really wanted to and, therefore, if she got raped she must have in some way consented.
- **She Deserved It Myths**: This group of myths claim that the woman "deserved" being raped because she did something to bring it on. Whether the woman is seen as having been flirtatious and therefore invited the attack, or as having put herself in some kind of dangerous situation, these myths serve to blame the victim for the rapist's aggression.

[28] Ibid, 131-135.

- **Men Cannot Control Their Sexuality Myth**: In addition to the rape myths applied to women, there is the myth that men do no have control over their natural sexual appetites. This myth also serves to blame women for the experience of rape because it makes women responsible for men's behavior. A provocatively dressed woman, for example, is deemed as enticing the male beyond his ability to control himself.

So then, in addition to my primary goal of mining the commentaries on the Dinah story for attitudes, beliefs, and mores regarding women, I also examine the texts for indications of the rape myths outlined above.

Chapter Four

Intertestamental Period: Supportive Beginnings

This chapter examines the Jewish literature from the approximately five-hundred-year span of time known as the Intertestamental Period. This period "runs from the late Persian period to the Second Revolt (ca. 400 BCE-140 CE),"[1] and is called "Intertestamental" because it coincides approximately with the close of the Hebrew canon on one end, and the beginnings of the Christian canon on the other. This was a tumultuous time to be a Jew, as George Nickelsburg explains:

> Fundamental and far-reaching changes shook the Jewish people during these centuries. The Persian Empire fell. Alexander's victories brought Greek language and culture to the East. The persecution of the Jews by the Macedonian king, Antiochus IV, tested the mettle of Jewish faith and threatened to exterminate the religion. After a brief period of independence Palestine was devastated, Jerusalem was destroyed, and the Temple was leveled.[2]

While experiencing these tumultuous and devastating events, Jews "sought to make sense of them by interpreting their religious heritage and by creating new traditions that spoke with relevance and force to their circumstances."[3] As the primary purpose of the present study is to understand the evolution of Jewish thought regarding women, how the Jewish literature of this time period interpreted the Jewish religious heritage regarding Dinah is of particular relevance.

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[1] George Nickelsburg, *Jewish Literature Between the Bible and The Mishnah*, (Philadelphia: Fortress Press: 1981) viii.
[2] Ibid, 1.
[3] Ibid, 2.

The Book of Jubilees[4]

As Nickelsburg notes, the years 169-64 BCE were violently turbulent ones for the people Israel that gave rise to "a series of writings which exhorted pious, Torah-abiding Jews to stand fast in the face of persecution, confident of swift divine judgment against their enemies."[5] The *Book of Jubilees* falls around this timeframe although the book's precise date is still under debate, with James Charlesworth placing it between 161 and 140 BCE, and Nichelsburg between 175 and 100 BCE.[6] The author of *Jubilees* was likely a Jew living in Palestine/Judea, from a priestly family, and who was committed to conveying to his contemporaries "the necessity of strictly obeying the Law in the critical age in which they are living."[7] The author retells Genesis 1-Exodus 12, reproducing some text verbatim, deleting what he finds unnecessary and, most often, recasting the narrative "in keeping with his interests and purposes."[8] Originally in Hebrew, the *Book of Jubilees* is written as "an account of matters revealed to Moses during the forty days that he spent in Sinai."[9] Regarding the Dinah story, the author of *Jubilees* appears sympathetic to both Dinah and her brothers, and, through a number of deletions and additions to the Biblical text, expurgates the conduct of Jacob's clan and intensifies condemnation of the people of Shechem.

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[4] O. S. Wintermute, Jubilees, *The Old Testament Pseudepigrapha* (vol. 2) (ed: James H. Charlesworth), (Massachusetts: Hendrickson Publishers Marketing, LLC, 1983). All translations of *Jubilees* come from this edition.
[5] Ibid, 73.
[6] O.S. Wintermute, *The Old Testament Pseudepigrapha* (vol 2, ed. James Charlesworth), (Peabody, Mass: Hendrickson Publishers, 1983) 44.
[7] Ibid, 38.
[8] Nickelsburg, 74.
[9] Wintermute, 35.

Jubilees emphasizes Dinah's victimhood at the hands of Shechem, and sanitizes the story ensuring that she is perceived as in no way responsible for her own violation. As noted earlier, the biblical story begins as Dinah "went out, to see among the daughters of the land" (Gen 34:1). Dinah's sole action, and her sole moment of agency in the story, is that she "went out." Many later commentators use this action to implicate Dinah in her own violation.[10] Had she not crossed her familial social boundary,[11] goes this reasoning, had she not, in other words, ventured out "to see among the daughters of the land," then Shechem would never have had the opportunity to see, take, lay, and violate her. For some commentators,[12] as we shall see, Dinah's "going out" raises the question: to what degree was she responsible for her own violation and all that came in its wake? The author of *Jubilees* avoids this conundrum entirely by eliminating Dinah's one moment of action. Instead of saying that Dinah "went out," in *Jubilees* we find that she "was snatched away to the house of Shechem" (Jub 30:2). From the very start, the author conveys a sympathetic impression of Dinah as the victim of an unsolicited sexual violation.

The *Jubilees* retelling indicates further sympathy for Dinah by casting her not only as a virgin, but also as a child at the time of her encounter with Shechem. Genesis 34 gives no indication of Dinah's age or marital status except that she was old enough to "go out" to visit with the women of the area. However, Shechem refers to her as a "child" in Gen 34:4. In *Jubilees*, however, she is described as "an Israelite virgin" and as "little, only twelve years old" (ibid). While twelve years was the age a girl could be

[10] See chapter five "Rabbinic Period" for full discussion on Dinah's "going out."
[11] See Frymer-Kensky and discussion in Chapter Two.
[12] Frymer-Kensky, Bellis and Bechtel (see Chapter Two), and most midrashim from the rabbinic period (see Chapter Five).

betrothed in ancient Israel, *Jubilee's* description of her as "little" seems to suggest that she is no more than a child. This description, coupled with the suggestion that she had been kidnapped, removes any suggestion of culpability from Dinah, and presents her as a complete and sympathetic victim in her encounter with Shechem, just as it also removes her one moment of agency (her "going out").

The author further demonstrates sympathy for Dinah as the victim by supporting Simeon and Levi's behavior, in response to her attack, as morally righteous. In Genesis 34:13, Simeon and Levi deal "deceitfully" with Shechem and Hamor by indicating that Shechem can marry Dinah only if all the men of the city become circumcised. As the men recuperate from they surgeries, the two brothers enter the city and slay them all (Gen 34:25-26). Later, the other brothers take the Shechem women and possessions as booty (Gen 34:27-29). The biblical text is ambiguous about the righteousness of Simeon and Levi's actions. Their father Jacob is clearly unhappy with his sons' actions and rebukes them for risking retribution from the other people of the land. But Simeon and Levi respond with moral indignation, and demand "should our sister be made like a prostitute?" (Gen 34:31). The biblical account itself does not make clear which perspective – Jacob's or Dinah's brothers - is in the right morally. The author of *Jubilees*, however, unambiguously supports Simeon and Levi's actions. The author indicates that Simeon and Levi "executed judgment upon all the men of Shechem" that was "ordered in heaven against them" (Jub 30:5). There is no question, according to *Jubilees*, that Simeon and Levi's slaughter of the men of Shechem was right and just in light of the "shame in Israel" (ibid) caused by the rape of Dinah.

The author goes on to further validate the treatment of the men of the city of Shechem by suggesting that Jacob approved of Simeon and Levi's response. In the biblical text, Jacob has no response – emotional or otherwise - to hearing of the rape of his daughter, but he later rebukes his sons for their slaughter of the city. Upon hearing the news of the rape, Jacob simply "remained silent" until his sons returned from the field (Gen 34:5). It was Jacob's sons who were "sorrowful" upon hearing of Dinah's treatment, and "burned with fury because an outrage was done in Israel. To lay a daughter of Jacob – a thing not to be done" (Gen 34:7). But in *Jubilees* both "Jacob and his sons were angry at the men of Shechem because they defiled Dinah, their sister. And so they spoke treacherously with them and defrauded them and seduced them" (Jub 30:3). While in the biblical text it is clear that it is Jacob's sons who "deal deceitfully" with Shechem and Hamor, in *Jubilees* it appears that Jacob is also complicit in the deceit.

Jubilees also reinterprets Jacob's response to the slaughter and plunder of the city of Shechem; it even adds a caveat indicating that any concerns Jacob may have had were unwarranted. In the biblical text, Jacob responds to Simeon and Levi's pillage of Shechem with fear and anger: "you have troubled me, by causing me to stink in the dwelling of the land – with the Canaanites and the Perizzites" (Gen 34:30). In *Jubilees*, Jacob only "spoke with them [Simeon and Levi] because they slaughtered the citizens, for he was afraid of those who inhabited the land: the Canaanites and the Perizzites" (Jub 30:25). Jacob's speaking "with" his sons has a much softer connotation than the accusation "you have troubled me" in the biblical text. *Jubilees* also adds a second part to verse 25 that does not correspond to the biblical text. After indicating Jacob's fear of retribution from the other people of the land, *Jubilees* ends the chapter by stating "but

the terror of the Lord was in all the cities which surrounded Shechem and they did not rise up to pursue the sons of Jacob because a dread had fallen upon them" (Jub 30:25). This caveat serves to justify as righteous of Simeon and Levi's response to the rape of their sister.

Chapter 30 of the *Book of Jubilees* consists of twenty-five verses and, taken as a whole, it clearly conveys a sympathetic attitude toward Dinah, and outrage over her violation. Dinah is presented as the innocent victim of an aggressive foreigner who kidnaps and forcibly rapes her. Affinity for Dinah is further indicated by *Jubilees*' treatment of Jacob's sons. Their actions of retribution against the city of Shechem are supported as the only righteous course they could take. *Jubilees* illustrates this in verse 30:23 - "and on the day that the children of Jacob killed Shechem he [God] wrote (on high) for them a book in heaven that they did righteousness and uprightness and vengeance against the sinners and it was written down for a blessing."

The Book of Judith[13]

Micheal Coogan describes he *Book of Judith* as "a well-crafted work of fiction, an example of the ancient Jewish novel in the Greco Roman period," and is likely the work of "a single anonymous author."[14] Scholars are undecided as to whether *Judith* was originally written in Hebrew or Greek and, because it is clearly a work of fiction that conflates episodes from a variety of historical periods, it is impossible to determine precisely when it was written. However, "most scholars agree that it was written at

[13] Michael Coogan (ed.), *The New Oxford Annotated Apocrypha* (third edition), (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007). Translation of the *Book of Judith* comes from this edition.
[14] ibid, 32.

some point during the Hasmonean dynasty (165-37 BCE)."[15] The first seven chapters of this sixteen-chapter novel develop the crisis the people Israel must address. Jerusalem is under siege and the enemy – Assyrian general Holofernes - mocks Israel's God and declares "what god is there except Nebuchadnezzar [the ruler Holofernes serves]!" (Jud 6:2). When Holofernes's army appears in full array, the Israelites "conclude that God has sold them into the hand of the foreigner."[16] After a long siege, the people of Jerusalem are hungry and thirsty and ready to give up to Holofernes, but then Judith appears (in Chapter 8) as the devoutly pious woman who will ultimately save the Israelites.

When Judith is introduced in Chapter 8, we learn that she has "remained as a widow for three years and four months," mourning her husband with "sackcloth around her waist and dressed in widow's clothing" (Jud 8:5). We also learn that "she was beautiful in appearance, and was very lovely to behold"(Jud 8:7), and that "no one spoke ill of her, for she feared God with great devotion" (Jud 8:8). This pious, beautiful, and presumably celibate, woman addresses the people of Jerusalem and exhorts them not to give up, and says instead "let us give thanks to the Lord our God, who is putting us to the test as he did our ancestors" (Jud 8:25). She then tells the Israelites:

> Listen to me. I am about to do something that will go down through all generations of our descendants. Stand at the town gate tonight so that I may go out with my maid; and within the days after which you have promised to surrender the town to our enemies, the Lord will deliver Israel by my hand.

[15] Ibid.
[16] Nickelsburg, p 105.

> Only, do not try to find out what I am doing; for I will not tell you until I have finished what I am about to do. (Jud 8:32-34)

Chapter 9 is the pivotal chapter in the story in which Judith prepares herself for what she is "about to do," by crying out to God in a "loud voice" at the "very time when the evening incense was being offered in the house of God in Jerusalem" (Jud 9:1-2). This stirring prayer invokes the story of Dinah and cries out for retribution:

> O Lord God of my ancestor Simeon, to whom you gave a sword to take revenge on those strangers who had torn off a virgin's clothing to defile her, and exposed her thighs to put her to shame, and polluted her womb to disgrace her; for you said, 'It shall not be done' – yet they did it; so you gave up their rulers to be killed, and their bed, which was ashamed of the deceit they had practiced, was stained with blood, and you struck down slaves along with princes, and princes on their thrones. (Jud 9:2-3)

This prayer begins with a clear reference to Dinah and goes on to draw parallels between Dinah's experience and what the Assyrians would do to Jerusalem if they prevail in their siege.

After Judith completes her prayer, she goes on in Chapters 10 through 13, to enact her plan. She uses her beauty and feminine wiles to get close to, and seduce, Holofernes (the leader of the siege), and she ultimately gets him drunk and beheads him with his own sword. She and her maid then sneak the head back to into Jerusalem and give it to the leaders of the city. In Chapters 14 and 15, Holofernes's head is hung out for all the besieging warriors to see. Seeing their leader is dead, the enemy is overtaken with fright and flee, and the Israelites plunder their camp for thirty days. In the final

chapter, Judith sings a song of praise and thanks to God for delivering the enemy "by the hand of a woman" (Jud 16:5).

Judith is an interesting story for a number of reasons: it assumes a certain level of Torah knowledge, it clearly shows God as the champion of the oppressed, it has a surprisingly intense proto-feminist tone, and the language Judith uses in her prayer in Chapter 9 demonstrates several parallels between her and Simeon and Levi actions in the Genesis story.

Chapter 9 of *Judith* is her prayer to God as she prepares to go out and deceive (and ultimately kill) the enemy. Her prayer never explicitly names Dinah, but the context makes clear that she is the one being referenced. Judith's prayer begins "O Lord God of my ancestor Simeon, to whom you gave a sword to take revenge on those strangers who had torn off a virgin's clothing to defile her, and exposed her thighs to put her to shame, and polluted her womb to disgrace her, for you said 'It shall not be done' – yet they did it…" (Jud 9:2). This seems to assume a certain level of Torah knowledge as the implied reference to Genesis 34 would not make sense without it.

The *Book of Judith* also positions God as ultimate protector of the lowly. Judith implores God that "by the deceit of my lips strike down the slave with the prince and the prince with his servant; crush their arrogance by the hand of a woman. For your strength does not depend on numbers, nor your might on the powerful. But you are the God of the lowly, helper of the oppressed, upholder of the weak, protector of the forsaken, savior of those without hope" (Jud 9:10-11).

The most striking thing about the *Book of Judith* is what might be termed as its proto-feminism. The protagonist of the story is Judith – a widow. She is able to

accomplish what the leaders of the community (men) are unable to. She shows herself to be smart, savvy, and willing to do whatever necessary (including seductively exploiting her feminine appeal) to defeat the enemy. The story also demonstrates divine vengeance against those who have assaulted the women of Israel (it can also be read as "Israel as the women who has been assaulted").

This divine vengeance on behalf of Israelite women whom have been assaulted is clearly shown as Judith makes reference to Dinah's rape in her prayer to God,

> for you said, "It shall not be done" – yet they did it; so you gave up their rulers to be killed, and their bed, which was ashamed of the deceit they had practiced, was stained with blood, and you struck down slaves along with princes and princes on their thrones. You gave up their wives for booty and their daughters to captivity, and all their booty to be divided among your beloved children who burned with zeal for you and abhorred the pollution of their blood and called on you for help. O God, my God, hear me also, a widow. (Jud 9:2-4)

While God is not acting in Genesis 34, Judith explicitly condones Simeon's assault on the city of Shechem by bringing God into her prayer. God took vengeance for Dinah and would do so as well for Judith. Yet, this vengeance is quite different than that seen in Genesis 34 in which the primary focus is vengeance for the defilement of a member of the people Israel. The horrific assault of Dinah herself was, at best, secondary. This is quite different from Judith where the focus is explicitly on the rape itself. Judith begins her prayer describing the rape in which "those strangers who had torn off a virgin's

clothing to defile her, and exposed her thighs to put her to shame…" (Jud 9:2). In this instance, the violation of a virgin (Dinah) is the primary sin to be avenged.

Finally, Judith's prayer in Chapter 9 illustrates significant parallels with the Genesis 34 story. First is the issue of "defilement." In the Genesis story, Shechem is the son of the ruler of the city and has, therefore, significant power. He uses his physical strength to take, lay, and violate Dinah and thereby defile her, and he uses his father's political power to attempt to marry her. Just as Shechem uses his personal power to defile Dinah, so too, the Assyrians intend to use their military power to defile God's sanctuary. Judith prays to God in verse eight:

> Break their strength by your might, and bring down their power in your anger; for they intend to defile your sanctuary, and to pollute the tabernacle where your glorious name resides, and to break off the horns of your alter with the sword. (Jud 9:8)

In other words, just as Shechem raped Dinah and made her *tameh* (unclean), so too, the Assyrians intend to rape and pollute God's holy place.

The second parallel with Genesis 34 in Judith's prayer involves the issue of "deceit." In the Genesis story, Shechem and his father attempt to negotiate a marriage between the rapist and his victim. Shechem offers to give any bride gift as long as they will give to him "the maiden as wife" (Gen 34:12). But "the sons of Jacob answered Shechem, and Hamor his father with deceit" (Gen 34:13), because he had defiled Dinah. That deceit – agreeing to wed the two only if all the males of the city became circumcised – led to the destruction of the entire city. Similarly, Judith prays that her deceit will lead to the destruction of the Assyrians. In verse 10 she prays "by the deceit

of my lips strike down the slave with the prince and the prince with his servant; crush their arrogance by the hand of a woman." She also prays:

> Make my deceitful words bring wound and bruise on those who have planned cruel things against your covenant, and against your sacred house, and against Mount Zion, and against the house your children possess. (Jud 9:13)

The legitimization of deceit works to vindicate not only Judith, but Simeon and Levi as well. Judith asserts not only sympathy for Dinah as a violated woman of Israel, but equates her violation to the potential violation of God's holy temple by the Assyrians. As such, Judith declares Dinah a victim who must be avenged and she calls on God for divine retribution. That this divine retribution comes at the hands of a woman, moves this story to a place of genuine proto-feminism.

Testament of Levi[17]

The *Testament of Levi* comes from a collection of pseudepigraphic stories (*Testaments of the Twelve Patriarchs*), probably originally written in Hebrew, that utilize a testamentary form similar to that found in Genesis 49 (Jacob's deathbed scene). As Nickelsburg explains,

> The Testaments of the Twelve Patriarchs is a collection of twelve self-contained units. Each of these describes one of Jacob's sons on his deathbed (or just before his death), gathering his sons and making his testament in their

[17] H. C. Kee (trans), Testaments of the Twelve Patriarchs, *The Old Testament Pseudepigrapha* (vol. 1)(ed: James H. Charlesworth), (Massachusetts: Hendrickson Publishers Marketing, LLC, 1983). Translation of *The Testament of Levi* comes from this edition.

presence. Following the biblical model, each Testament contains a prediction about the future of the tribe and sometimes of Israel in general.[18]

Since the testaments are pseudepigraphic literature, they are extremely difficult to date. Charlesworth suggests that "the basic writing gives no evidence of having been composed by anyone other than a Hellenized Jew," and dates the work to Maccabean period.[19]

The Testament of Levi differs from the other testaments in that it does not focus on ethical concerns, but instead on "the divine origin of the priesthood."[20] While the author's primary goal in the *Testament of Levi* is to elevate the tribe of Levi and thereby the Priesthood, the author's agenda in retelling the Dinah story is to stress the evilness of the (non-Israelite) nations. In the opening chapter Levi, who is recounting his youth to his children, relates that he had been taken on a journey up to the heavens, and indicates that God sanctioned the slaughter at Shechem. He says that an "angel led me back to the earth, and gave me a shield and a sword, and said to me, 'Perform vengeance on Shechem for the sake of Dinah, your sister, and I shall be with you, for the Lord sent me'" (Levi 5:3).

Levi's reaction to Dinah's violation is the first significant issue addressed by Levi and is introduced directly after the narrator's preamble (Chapter 1). At the beginning of Chapter 2, Levi refers to the events in Shechem and says: "I was a youth, about twenty years old. It was then that, together with Simeon, I performed vengeance against Hamor because of our sister, Dinah" (Levi 2:2). The rest of Chapter 2 describes

[18] Nickelsburg 232.
[19] Charlesworth, 777-778.
[20] Ibid, 235.

Levi's trip to the heavens with an angel as his guide. In Chapters 3 and 4, Levi describes the injustices of humankind that are revealed to him in heaven. Chapter Five describes Levi's encounter with "the Holy Most High, sitting on the throne" (Levi 5:2) and, once he returns to earth with the angel, he is told to "Perform vengeance on Shechem for the sake of Dinah, your sister, and I shall be with you, for the Lord sent me" (Levi 5:3-4). Chapters 6 and 7 describe the attack on Shechem and Jacob's reaction, and the rest of the book (Chapters 8-19) describe the rest of Levi's life and the importance of the priesthood. The rape of Dinah, and the behavior of her brothers in the aftermath, is a pivotal issue for the first half of *The Testament of Levi*.

Throughout the testament, Levi is portrayed as zealous and elevated above other men. An angel takes him to view the heavens and informs him that he "shall announce the one who is about to redeem Israel" (Levi 2:10). And he advises Jacob "and Reuben that they tell the sons of Hamor that they should [not][21] be circumcised, because I was filled with zeal on account of the abominable thing they had done to my sister" (Levi 6:3). Levi then extrapolates his zeal to avenge his sister's attackers, and Shechem comes to represent other nations in general. Levi acknowledges that his actions put him in conflict with Jacob, but he insists "that God's sentence was 'Guilty,' because they had wanted to do the same thing to Sarah and Rebecca that they did to Dinah, our sister. But the Lord prevented them" (Levi 6:9). The implication being that the only thing that kept the nations from committing evil against Israel in the past was God. After listing a number of episodes in which the nations have behaved vilely towards Israel, Levi renames Shechem "City of the Senseless" because "as one might scoff at a fool, so we

[21] A variance exists among manuscripts.

scoffed at them" (Levi 7:2). So now Israel has been transformed from the nation violated to the one who scoffs at the violators. The message is clear: Israel is good; other nations are not.

While the text says nothing specific about Dinah or her experience of her ordeal, the implicit tone regarding Dinah is decidedly sympathetic. Levi is instructed by an angle to "'Perform vengeance on Shechem for the sake of Dinah," and is told that the angle will be with Levi during the event because "the Lord sent me." This positions Dinah firmly as a victim needing to be avenged. The text also mentions Dinah in the same grouping as Sarah and Rebecca (matriarchs), thus elevating her status in a manner that far exceeds that shown in Genesis 34 or later commentaries.

The Antiquities of the Jews[22]

The account of the Dinah story by ancient historian Flavius Josephus provides an interesting contrast to *Jubilees*, *Judith*, and the *Testament of Levi*. Josephus lived 37-100 C.E., and wrote *The Antiquities of the Jews* in the years later than the destruction of the Second Temple – at least a hundred years after the other texts. This was an extremely defeated and depressed point in Jewish history, and Josephus was personally reliant on Roman beneficence for his livelihood. So, instead of the fiery call to Jews for resistance and vengeance seen in *Jubilees*, *Judith*, and *Levi*, Josephus attempts to mollify his Roman audience in *Antiquities*. His attempt to make the Jewish people appear as unobjectionable as possible (to the Romans) is found in many of Josephus' writings and is clear in his account of the Rape of Dinah in *The Antiquities of the Jews*.

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[22] William Whiston (trans.), *The Works of Josephus: Complete and Unabridged*, (Massachusetts: Hendrickson Publishers, Inc., 1987). Translation of *Antiquities* comes from this edition.

Antiquities is a massive undertaking in which Josephus attempts to retell the whole of Jewish history, from the creation of the world up through his the events of his own lifetime. Much of this "history" Josephus recounts from the Hebrew Bible, and the entire work is made up of twenty books. The Dinah story is found in the twenty-first chapter of the first book. In retelling the rape of Dinah story, Josephus attempts to make the Jewish people appear unobjectionable by modifying the text in order to stress the deferential, accommodating nature of the Israelites, and by an emphasis on ritual.

In the Genesis 34 version, the text never explains why Dinah "went out to see among the daughters of the land."[23] In Josephus' story, the people of Shechem were "keeping a festival" and Dinah "went into the city to see the finery of the women of that country" (p. 51). This suggests friendliness toward – and even admiration of – the surrounding neighbors. Such openness to other cultures is important to Josephus who is keen to show that Jews are generally friendly to non-Jews. Additionally, Josephus shows Jacob as being deferential to the ruler of Shechem. Even though he did not believe it was appropriate "to marry his daughter to a stranger," Jacob "not knowing how to deny the desire of one of such great dignity… entreated him to give him leave to have a consultation about what he desired him to do" (ibid). And while Jacob is silent about Dinah's rape in Genesis, Josephus paints Jacob almost as bumbling fool – certainly a harmless one. Instead of telling Hamor that Shechem could not marry Dinah – or even being angry – Jacob "informed his sons of the defilement of their sister, and of the address of Hamor; and desired them to give their advice what they should do" (p. 52). Josephus omits entirely any reference to the most "damning" aspect of the story – that

[23] Gen 34:1

the Shechemites had been murdered after they had been circumcised and the town then looted. No mention is made of circumcision. Instead, the brothers (in this case all of them) attack at night and slew the men "but spared the women." Also, any reference to them looting the town is omitted.

Next, there is an interesting turn that seems to present the Israelites not as ones interested in vengeance, but strictly in religious ritual. The patriarch Jacob "was astonished at the greatness of this [his sons'] act, and was severely blaming his sons for it" (p. 52). The implication being that Jacob is angry with his sons not because they "brought trouble on" him[24], but because they acted in too great/elevated/aggressive a manner. This interpretation differs significantly from that found in *Jubilees*, *Judith*, and *Levi*, that indicate that Jacob's sons acted righteously when they slaughtered the Shechemites. In *Antiquities*, God does not appear to sanction the assault on Shechem either. God stands with Jacob but tells him "to purify his tents, and to offer those sacrifices which he had vowed to offer when he went first into Mesopotamia, and saw his vision" (ibid). Josephus seems to be stressing that Jews and their God are really only interested in religious ritual. The aggression and vengeance demonstrated by Jacob's sons was only an aberration and not to be feared as indicative of the people. This departs significantly from the vengeful Israelites – and their vengeful God – seen in *Jubilees* and *Judith*.

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Three of the four intertestamental texts discussed above project very little onto Dinah herself in their interpretations of Genesis 34, and reflect very little regarding the

[24] Gen 34:30

prevalent attitudes regarding woman at the time. As discussed in the introduction, since Dinah is mostly passive and entirely silent in the story, any thoughts, feelings, or behaviors ascribed to her are projections on the part of the commentator, and may reflect underlying attitudes, mores, and anxieties that are prevalent in the commentator's cultural milieu. But *Jubilees*, *Levi*, and *Antiquities* ascribe only minor details onto the character of Dinah, and vary only slightly from the biblical text itself. The author of *Jubilees* portrays Dinah as an innocent child who is violently abducted from her familial home (instead of "going out"), while Josephus (*Antiquities*) adds to the story that she went out for a friendly visit with the women of the neighborhood during a festival. *Levi* says nothing about Dinah herself, but does indicate that he was sanctioned by God to avenge his sister's violation. While these three texts project very little onto the character of Dinah in their telling of Genesis 34, they do all view her in a very sympathetic light, and as the victim of a violent and unwanted attack.

At best, one can surmise that nothing in these three texts suggests an underlying antagonism towards – or anxiety about – women in general. These texts, however, do not necessarily convey positive attitudes towards women either. *Jubilees*, *Levi*, and *Antiquities* all see Dinah as a victim requiring vengeance, but they say very little about Dinah as a woman, or convey attitudes about women in general.

The Book of Judith, however, provides an interesting contrast to *Jubilees*, *Levi*, and *Antiquities*, in that it conveys such a strikingly positive attitude towards women that it could be considered proto-feminist. *Judith* does this not only in its attitude towards Dinah (even though she is never named), but also through the protagonist of the story – Judith herself. Not only is Dinah's personal anguish a primary focus of

Judith's prayer, but Dinah is also elevated to such a degree that Judith compares her with the Holy Temple itself. Even more significantly, the only person to develop a plan to save Jerusalem from ruin, and then successfully enact that plan and save the day, is Judith – a woman. While the leaders of the city (all men) were ready to surrender to the Assyrian attack, Judith uses her cunning, and her beauty, to defeat the enemy and save the holy city.

In sum, these intertestamental texts, in their treatment of the Dinah story, do not convey any hostile attitudes towards women, and at least one text is intensely positive with regards to its treatment of women. In terms of the second query of this work, none of the texts reflect any of the rape myths identified in modern culture, in that none of them suggest that Dinah wanted the experience she had with Shechem, or that she deserved the attack she experienced in any way.

One does have to wonder, however, why the author of *Jubilees* felt it necessary to remove from Dinah her one moment of agency – when she "went out." The fact that Dinah "went out" in the biblical text (Gen 34:1) is seized upon by later commentators (see Chapter Five), and used to indict her as culpable for her encounter with Shechem. However in *Jubilees*, Dinah does not "go out," but is instead kidnapped from her familial home. Was the author of *Jubilees* attempting to shield Dinah from the type of criticism that she would receive in the rabbinic era? Or was he just trying to paint Shechem in as bad a light as possible? There is no way of knowing whether the author of *Jubilees* chose to eliminate Dinah's moment of action from his retelling of Genesis 34 for one of these reasons, or for another reason entirely. What is known, however, is that Dinah does not

fare nearly as well in the next epoch discussed (rabbinic era, see Chapter Five), as she does in the Intertestamental Period.

Chapter Five

Rabbinic Period: Reflections of Rape Myth

Unlike the sympathetic attitude towards Dinah found in texts from the Intertestamental period, the Talmudic texts and midrashim on Genesis 34 from the rabbinic period take a decidedly negative turn. Whereas *Jubilees* emphasizes Dinah's innocence and victimhood, and the *Testament of Levi* suggests that God sanctioned the slaughter of the City of Shechem due to the actions of Shechem the man, the texts of the 2nd to the 5th centuries C.E. frequently place blame for Dinah's degradation soundly on her own head. There are very few exceptions to this approach found in the rabbinic literature.

Rabbinic commentary on the Dinah story comes primarily in the form of midrash, or an interpretation that expounds on a specific Torah text. The primary compilations that address Genesis 34 are the *Midrash Rabbah* (*GenR*)[1] and *Midrash Tanhuma*.[2] Both these compilations are considered Amoraic midrashim, and can be "dated between 450 and 500 C.E." in the case of *Midrash Rabbah*, and slightly later for *Tanhuma*.[3] The majority of these midrashim explicate, in various ways, the first verse of the story in which Dinah "went out to see among the daughters of the land (Gen 34:1)." A number of other verses in the story are also referenced, most of which refer to the actions of Simeon and Levi, or Jacob.

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[1] H. Freedman (trans.), *Midrash Rabbah Genesis (vol. 2)*, (New York: The Soncino Press, Ltd., 1983). Translation of *GenR* come from this edition.
[2] John T. Townsend (trans.), *Midrash Tanhuma*, (New Jersey: KTAV Publishing House, Inc., 1989). Translation of *Tanhuma* comes from this edition.
[3] Esther Blachman, *The Transformation of Tamar (Genesis 38) in the Hisotry of Jewish Interpretation*, (Walpole, MA: Peeters, 2013) 159.

A theme of blame can be seen throughout most of the midrashim on Genesis 34, such that Dinah, her mother Leah, and Jacob are seen, at various times, as holding some culpability in Dinah's violation. Dinah and Leah are condemned primarily for immodesty, and the rabbis use several midrashim to comment on the immodest/immoral nature of women in general. Jacob is criticized for hubris and "withholding kindness" from his kin (specifically, his bother Esau), though a few midrashim also attempt to insulate him from rebuke. Surprisingly, unlike the vilification Shechem receives in Intertestamental texts such as *Jubilees* and the *Book of Judith* (see Chapter Four), he receives very little attention from the rabbis. Instead, the literature from the rabbinic period focuses most of its condemnation on Dinah herself.

The treatment of Simeon and Levi, however, steps outside of the blame motif seen with Dinah, Leah, and Jacob. While the rabbis do not extol the two brothers for their slaughter of Shechem the city, they go a long way to mitigate their culpability in the massacre and seek to explain or justify their behavior. Here again, Dinah is often blamed for instigating Simeon and Levi's brutal conduct and seen as bearing the greatest responsibility because she "went out." The relevant midrashim from *GenR* and *Tanhuma* are discussed below.

Condemning Dinah

As noted, the first verse of Gen 34 states that "then Dinah, daughter of Leah who was born to Jacob, went out, to see among the daughters of the land." "Going out" is the one action Dinah takes in the entire story; all other action, and any expressions of emotion, are on the part of Shechem and Hamor, or Dinah's family. After the first verse Dinah is completely a passive character in the story, and is entirely silent. The rabbis

seize on her one action and the verb *y.tz.a.*[4] ("went out") to explain – and, at times, justify - her fate.

The opening midrash on Gen 34 in *Midrash Rabbah* (*GenR* 80:1) appears, at first, to have little to do with Dinah or her violation, or even to be in any way related to the Book of Genesis. By its conclusion, however, *GenR* 80:1 sets the tone for many of the condemning midrashim that follow it. *GenR* 80:1 begins by describing a dispute between Jose of Maon and Rabbi the Nasi, in which Jose offends Rabbi with a sermon he gave at his local synagogue. His sermon revolved around a verse in Ezekiel, "Behold, everyone that uses proverbs shall use this proverb against the, saying: As the mother, so her daughter" (Ezek 16:44). Jose introduces a verse from Hosea to explicate the Ezekiel verse that reads: "Hear this, oh you priests, and attend, you house of Israel, and give ear, oh house of the king, for unto you pertains the judgment" (Hos 5:1). Jose's sermon expounds on Hos 5:1 in order to criticize the governing rabbinic body, as well as its leader (Nasi).

Furious with the implied reproof in Jose's sermon, Rabbi the Nasi (the leader of the community) summons Jose to his house so that they can debate the correct explication of Ezekiel 16:44. After much discussion, Rabbi posits that the real meaning of "Behold, every one that uses proverbs shall use this proverb against you, saying: As the mother, so the daughter," is that a mother's true character is revealed in her offspring because "a cow does not gore unless her calf kicks; a woman is not immoral until her daughter is immoral" (*GenR* 80:1, p. 736). Jose challenges this assertion by saying "then our mother Leah was a harlot!" This challenge indicates Jose's view of

[4] *y.tz.a*. – qal imperfect 3rd person fem sing vav Conversive.

Dinah as a harlot; since Dinah was Leah's only daughter, Rabbi must be implying that Leah had also been a harlot. Rabbi ends the midrash with the retort "Even so (Leah was a harlot), because it says, 'And Leah went out to meet him' (Gen 30:16), which means that she went out to meet him adorned like a harlot; therefore 'then Dinah the daughter of Leah went out'" (p. 736). Here, Rabbi posits that Leah's true nature (that of a harlot) was manifested in Dinah. Leah may have been Jacob's wife, but when she "went out" to meet him in Gen 30:16 she did so "adorned like a harlot" thereby indicating her harlot-like tendencies; when Dinah "went out," she didn't just look like a harlot, according to the midrash, she *became* one, thereby fully manifesting Leah's tendencies.

This midrash takes some interesting turns in order to arrive at a conclusion that condemns not only Dinah, but Leah as well. In order to hold Dinah responsible for her encounter with Shechem, the only active verb attributed to her – *y.tz.a.* (to go out) – must connote some immoral behavior. However, nothing in the Hebrew of Gen 34:1 suggests any such lewdness, Dinah simply "went out, to see among the daughters of the land." The midrash reshapes the meaning of *y.tz.a.* in this story by drawing a parallel between Dinah's "going out," and the same verb found in another story that has clear sexual connotations.

The biblical story in Genesis 30 referred to in *GenR* 80:1 involves Dinah's mother Leah, as well as Jacob and Leah's sister Rachel. According to it, Leah and Rachel are both wives of Jacob, but it was Rachel whom Jacob loved. Jacob is tricked into marrying Leah first, and worked another several years in order that he could marry Rachel as well. Rachel, however, is barren and desperately wants to conceive a child. When Leah's son Reuben finds some mandrakes (believed to be an aphrodisiac to facilitate

conception), Rachel asks Leah to give her some to help her get pregnant. Leah retorts, "was it not enough for you to take away my husband, that you would also take my son's mandrakes?" (Gen 30:15). Rachel promises Leah that, if Leah shares the mandrakes, Jacob would have intercourse with her that night. In Gen 30:15 "Leah went out (*y.tz.a.*) to meet Jacob and said 'you are to sleep with me, for I have hired you with my son's mandrakes."[5]

While the story in Gen 30 does have explicit sexual connotations, the sex involved is between Jacob and Leah (who are husband and wife), and nothing in story implies that Leah was "adorned like a harlot." Leah does demonstrate, however, a high degree of sexual boldness for a woman. She "hires" Jacob for the night by "paying" for him with the mandrakes, much the way a man hires a prostitute. Given the rabbis preoccupation with women's modesty (discussed below), Leah's boldness must have appeared to them as "harlot-like." So, naturally, if a woman's true character is manifested in her offspring, then Leah's immodest tendencies were to be manifested in Dinah's actual harlotry, providing a way to indict Dinah for her encounter with Shechem.

Both *Tanhuma* 8:14 and 8:15 support the characterization of Dinah and Leah found in *GenR* 80:1. *Tanhuma* 8:14 is a much abbreviated version of *GenR* 80:1, in which it uses the same proof text ("As the mother, so the daughter" – Ezek 16:44), but simply states, "This refers to Dinah. What is written of Leah (in Gen 30:16)? 'Leah went out to meet him.' So also (in Gen 34:1): "Now… Dinah… went out'" (p. 217). *Tanhuma* 8:15 refers to a different proof text (2 Kings 14:9) but ends with a similar indictment of

[5] JPS translation.

Leah and Dinah. The final line of midrash *Tanhuma* 8:15 seizes on the fact that Dinah is referred to as the "daughter of Leah" in order to condemn both mother and daughter. The last line says, "in every place the female child is accompanied by males, but here (Gen 34:1) she is accompanied by her mother. Thus, the corruption had begun with her mother" (p. 218). In this case, however, Leah corrupted Dinah not necessarily because she was herself was corrupt, but simply because she – and not some male – was accompanying Dinah at the time.

While *Tanhuma* 8:15 does ascribe negative characteristics to Shechem (and his father), neither *GenR* 80:1 nor *Tanhuma* 8:14 make mention of Shechem, or of Dinah's violation. Oddly, very few of the midrashim on Genesis 34, in *GenR* or the *Tanhuma*, mention Shechem at all. In this case, the focus is on Dinah as a harlot stemming from her mother's harlot-like tendencies. Leah and Dinah are painted as lascivious and immoral because one "went out" to see her husband, and the other to see other women. However, as we have seen, nothing in the Hebrew of either biblical story supports the antagonistic attitude toward Leah and Dinah found in these midrashim.

To better understand this pronounced hostility towards both Leah (one of the Jewish matriarchs) and Dinah, it is important to understand the attitudes that were held about women generally in the midrashic material. *GenR* 80:5 - and, with slight variations, *Tanhuma* 8:15 - discuss the creation of the first woman, while referencing Proverbs 1:25 ("But you have set for naught all My counsel") and Genesis 2:22 ("And Adonai built the rib") to explain women's contemptible nature.

In *GenR* 80:5, R. Joshua of Siknin retells – in the name of R. Levi – the story of creation of the first woman. According to R. Joshua, God contemplates with great

consideration what part of Adam should be used to create Eve. In the midrash, God says:

> I will not create her from [Adam's] head, lest she be frivolous; nor from the eye, lest she be a coquette; nor from the ear, lest she be an eavesdropper; nor from the mouth, lest she be a gossip; nor from the heart, lest she be prone to jealousy; nor from the hand, lest she be light-fingered; nor from the foot, lest she be a gadabout. (p. 738)

After running through all the potential problems that might come from creating Eve from various parts of Adam, God decides to use Adam's rib because it is "from the modest part of man, for even when he stands naked, that part is covered" (p. 738). And, as God creates each part of Eve, God orders her to "be a modest woman, be a modest women" (*ibid*). But, according to this midrash, women failed miserably in following God's "council" (Prov 1:25). *GenR* 80:5 uses a number of Biblical verses to illustrate the immodest and immoral nature of women. In *GenR* 80:5, God laments:

> I did not create her from the head, yet she is frivolous: *They walk with stretched-forth necks* (Isa 3:16); nor from the eye, yet she is a coquette: *And wanton eyes* (Isa 3:16); nor from the ear, yet she is an eavesdropper: *Now Sarah listened in the tent door* (Gen 18:10); nor from the heart, yet she is prone to jealousy: *Rachel envied her sister* (Gen 30:1); nor from the hand, yet she is light-fingered: *And Rachel stole the teraphim* (Gen 31:19); nor from the foot, yet she is a gadabout: *And Dinah went out* (Gen 34:1). (p. 738)

Women became, according to R. Joshua of Siknin, immodest and immoral in spite of God's best efforts. It is interesting to note that this midrash criticizes not just Dinah,

but Sarah and Rachel as well – both of whom are considered matriarchs of the Jewish people. The rabbis' willingness to condemn even the Jewish matriarchs for inappropriate or immodest behavior suggests a high degree of anxiety or discomfort with women generally. If even Sarah, Rachel, and Leah were prone to unseemly conduct, than all women would naturally be held as suspect.

GenR 80:5 concludes with another midrash in R. Levi's name illustrating the consequences when a woman "goes out," as well as an anonymous statement dismissing the horrific nature of Dinah's experience. The anonymous statement indicates that in Gen 34:2 the verb *sh.c.v.* (to sleep with) means that Shechem laid Dinah "in a natural way," and *(a).n.h.* (to violate) means he also laid her "unnaturally" (p. 739). This statement seems to suggest that Shechem engaged in different types of sexual intercourse with her, but avoids suggesting that she was the victim of violent rape. Additionally, GenR 80:5 discusses Dinah's "going out," and suggests that:

> This may be compared to one who was holding a pound of meat in his hand, and as soon as he exposed it a bird swooped down and snatched it away. *And Shechem, the son of Hamor, saw her* (Gen 34:2). (p. 738)

The logic of this midrash suggests that Dinah must certainly have known – or should have known – the dangers associated with "going out." Just as one would expect a bird of prey to swoop in and attack when someone walks around with exposed meat, so too women should expect to be preyed upon if they expose themselves. Common sense, the rabbis suggest, would dictate a woman not "go out" just as it dictates not providing vultures with an easy meal.

In addition to dismissing the violent nature of Dinah's experience, this section of *GenR* 80:5 also suggests a gullibility, or lack of common sense, on Dinah's part; she foolishly "exposed" herself to danger and got what one would expect. *Tanhuma* uses a similar metaphor to paint a much darker picture of Dinah than just lack of common sense.

Unlike most of the rest of the midrashim that focus on Dinah's "going out," *Tanhuma* 8:19 seizes on the verb *y.r.h.*[6] (to see) in order to indict her. Unlike in *GenR* 80:5, this midrash is not attributed to a specific rabbi, but instead represents the general or anonymous view. The first task in *Tanhuma* 8:19 is defining what *r.a.h.* "actually" means. The unidentified author states that "to see" actually also implies "to be seen." So when Dinah went out "to see," she also went out "to be seen." The midrash asks – "to what is the matter comparable?"

> To one who was walking in the marketplace with a piece [of meat] in his hand. A dog, having seen it, went after it, and snatched it from him. Thus did Dinah go out "to see" (and "to be seen") when Shechem saw her and seized her. (p. 220)

This midrash explains that when Dinah had gone out "to see," she was also intent on "being seen." The logic of the midrash is somewhat faulty in that one would have to assume that the man (or the meat) "wanted" to be seen. But the implication of the story is that Dinah was in some way immodest and wanted an encounter of some sort to occur because she went out "to be seen." This is similar to the characterization of Leah going out "adorned as a harlot" seen in *GenR* 80:1. With this interpretation of *r.a.h.*

[6] *r.a.h.* – qal imperfect 3rd person masc sing apoc vav Conversive.

Tanhuma 8:19 places greater agency and responsibility on Dinah than does *GenR* 80:5. In *GenR* 80:5, Dinah displays a lack of common sense; in *Tanhuma* 8:19, she actively instigates the expected outcome – being seen and seized. *Tanhuma* 8:19 makes its position on Dinah explicitly clear with the statement: "[it is] the wicked [who] 'see.'" So, while Shechem was certainly wicked for seeing and seizing Dinah, Dinah was also wicked because she went out "to see" and "to be seen."

Tanhuma 8:12 expands this discourse on Dinah's immodesty to address strictures for all women, by discussing where women are permitted to where jewelry. The midrash begins by suggesting that women should not wear jewelry out in public on the Sabbath, however it quickly expands the prohibition:

> Let her not, however go out into a public place with a single piece of jewelry. Now, our masters say: Even on a weekday she must not go out into a public place. Why? Because people will stare at her. Thus the Holy One gave jewelry to a woman only for her to adorn herself with them inside the house; for one does not give an opening to the trustworthy person, let alone to the thief. (p. 216)

The first portion of *Tanhuma* 8:12 seems to suggest that women should not go into public adorned in a fashion that will draw attention, because a modest woman does not call to herself the attention of strangers. However, the midrash goes on to limit women's access to the public generally – with or without adornment – with a verse 45:14 of Psalms: "It is therefore written: 'All Glorious is the King's daughter within.' So, if she acts to conceal herself and is worthy, 'her clothing is of gold brocade.'" Here, *Tanhuma* 8:12 suggests that the only women deserving of adornment are those who

conceal themselves "within" the house. This significant restriction on women's mobility is reiterated by splicing together parts of verses Gen 1:28 and Gen 2:12:

> There is already an allusion in the Torah about this thing, that a woman should not go about a lot in a marketplace. Where? Where it is so written: *Then God blessed them, and God said to them*: [be fruitful and multiply, fill the earth] (Gen 1:28), *and subdue her* (Gen 2:12). The man subdues the woman, and the woman does not subdue the man. But, if she walks about a lot and goes out to the marketplace, she finally comes to a state of corruption, to a state of harlotry. And so you find in the case of Jacob's daughter Dinah. All the time that she was sitting at home, she was not corrupted by transgression; but, as soon as she went out into the marketplace, she caused herself to come to the point of corruption. (p. 216)

Interestingly, the midrash assumes that Dinah went out into the marketplace, when Gen 34:1 says only that she "went out to see among the daughters of the land." *Tanhuma* 8:12 concludes that whenever a woman leaves the house there is potential for her to become corrupt. The simple act of "walking about a lot" can lead to the inversion of appropriate gender roles in which "the man subdues the woman." This midrash seems to convey a high level of anxiety regarding gender roles and control of women. The woman who interacts in public often, by leaving the house and going to the marketplace, is a threat to the rabbis ideal of appropriate gender roles.

Finally, in *GenR* 80:ll, R. Judah and R. Huna use Genesis 34:26, when Simeon and Levi "took Dinah from the house of Shechem and they went out," to engage in further critique of Dinah. This verse, towards the end of the story, is the first time the reader is

informed that Dinah had remained at the house of Shechem after being violated. Nothing in the text indicates whether she was being held captive or remained there of her own free will. Dinah is silent throughout the entire story, so we never know her point of view. This midrash, however, endows Dinah with a voice in order to critique her further.

In its discourse on Gen 34:26, *GenR* 80:11 begins:

> R. Judah said: "They dragged her out and departed. R. Huna observed: When a woman is intimate with an uncircumcised person, she finds it hard to tear herself away. R. Huna [also] said: She pleaded, *And I, where shall I carry my shame?* (2 Sam 13:13) (p. 743)

GenR 80:11 suggests that Dinah not only stayed at the house of Shechem willingly, but that her brothers had to drag her out, and it gives two explanations as to why. First, intimacy with an uncircumcised person (non-Jew) was considered so captivating that the woman (presumably Jewish) who has intercourse with a gentile "finds it hard to tear herself away." This interesting comment illustrates the rabbis' fear regarding interactions between Jewish women and non-Jewish men, and anxiety about their own sexuality.

The second reason given for Dinah's remaining at Shechem's house is more generous towards her, as it draws a parallel between her and David's daughter Tamar (in 2 Samuel 13) by putting Tamar's words in her mouth. In the midrash, R. Huna has Dinah cry out "And I, where shall I carry my shame" - the same words cried out by Tamar in 2 Samuel 13 just before she is raped by her half brother Amnon. She utters this line when trying to convince Amnon to give up on his plan of raping her. Unlike

Genesis 34 in which Dinah is completely silent and therefore her feelings about her encounter with Shechem remain unclear, Tamar's story in 2 Samuel 13 has no such ambiguity. Tamar is clearly a victim, and she protests Amnon's actions throughout the story. Drawing this parallel between Dinah and Tamar suggests the possibility that she was raped and therefore a victim (at least in part). Dinah may not have wanted to leave Shechem's house after their encounter, but that is to be expected after a woman has sex with a gentile – even if that sex is not consensual. It is also possible that the rabbis are acknowledging Dinah's "no win" situation; she has no place in society as a consequence of having been raped.

GenR 80:11 goes on to say that Dinah cried about carrying her shame until,

> Simeon swore that he would marry her. Hence it is written: *And the sons of Simeon… and Saul the son of a Canaanitish woman* (Gen 46:10): (this means, the son of Dinah who was intimate with a Canaanite). R. Judah said: It means that she acted in the manner of the Canaanites. R. Nehemiah said: It means that she was intimate with a Hivite [Shechem] who is included in the Canaanites. The rabbis said: [She was call so because] Simeon took and buried her in the land of Canaan. (p. 744)

The verse referred to in this midrash (Gen 46:10) comes from a list of all the Israelites, delineated by family, who went with Jacob down to Egypt during a famine. The verse addressed here lists all of Simeon's sons, and ends with the statement: "and Saul the son of a Canaanite women."[7] The Hebrew itself indicates that Saul's mother was a Canaanite (*hacna'anit*), but the rabbis choose to interpret *hacna'anit* as

[7] JPS Translation.

Canaanite-ish. In doing so they create a union between Simeon and Dinah that finds no support anywhere else in the Bible. One of the motivations for doing so was most likely the overt distaste displayed in rabbinic literature for intermarriage. By saying that Saul's mother was "Canaanitish," they can then make Dinah Saul's mother and prevent the problems created by Simeon's marrying a Canaanite. Putting aside the obviously problematic issue of incest that a union between Dinah and her full brother Simeon creates, the rabbis not only solve the problem of Simeon's intermarriage with this interpretation, but they also create a further opportunity to critique Dinah.

Canaanites were enemies of the Israelites and considered evil and idolatrous, so describing Dinah as "Canaanitish" has significant implications. The Canaanites are seen as the descents of Noah's grandson Canaan, who was cursed by his grandfather due to his father's (Ham's) immodest treatment of Noah (Gen 9). And the Canaanites are one of the nations God instructs the Israelites to utterly destroy so that the Israelites will not be tempted to follow their example and sin against God (Deut 20:17-18).

R. Judah's explanation of why Dinah is referred to as "Canaanite-ish" is the most damning – that "she acted in the manner of the Canaanites." This characterization suggests a level of wanton immorality that surpasses even that found in the midrashim equating her to a harlot. R. Nehemiah suggests a neutral explanation – that Dinah had sex with Shechem who was Hivite and therefore considered part of the Canaanites. Since the encounter in Gen 34 establishes this fact, R. Nehemiah adds nothing new. The rabbis conclude on a more generous note than R. Judah's, however: Dinah was considered Canaanitish simply because "Simeon took and buried her in the land in

Canaan." This conclusion still solves the problem of Simeon marrying a Canaanite without casting further aspersions on Dinah's character.

Conflicted Over Jacob

Unlike Dinah, who is uniformly condemned by the rabbis in the midrashim, the assessment of Jacob varies considerably. One prolonged discussion severely berates Jacob for the variety of ways he is seen as responsible for Dinah's violation (*GenR* 80:4), another (*Tanhuma* 8:16) lauds him as righteous and meritorious, and two others (*GenR* 80:6 and *Tanhuma* 8:13) attempt to explain Jacob's silence at hearing of what was done to his daughter (Gen 34:5). While these rabbis readily agree in their opinion of Dinah, they are much more conflicted when it comes to Jacob.

The midrash that sees Jacob as responsible for Dinah's violation, namely *GenR* 80:4, puts forth a theology that is both problematic and difficult for the modern reader to understand. In it, the rabbis suggest that Dinah's encounter with Shechem was Jacob's punishment for his own sins, and they give a variety of examples to support their view. *GenR* 80:4 begins:

> R. Judah ben Simeon commenced: *Do not boast of tomorrow* (Prov 27:1), yet you [Jacob] have said: *Let my righteousness testify for me tomorrow* (Gen 30:33)! Tomorrow your daughter will go out and be violated. Thus it is written, *Then Dinah the daughter of Leah went out.* (p. 737)

R. Judah, in this midrash, clearly rebukes Jacob's behavior by citing a story (Gen 30) about his machinations regarding payment for the years he was in service to his father-in-law Laban. The reference to Prov 27:1, however, reflects disapproval with more than just Jacob's boasting. In its entirety, Prov 27:1 states: "Do not boast of

tomorrow, for you do not know what the day will bring." But the story beginning on Genesis 30:25 is all about Jacob's manipulation of what the future will bring.

The story involves Jacob who, after many years working for Laban, wants to set out on his own with his family and possessions. When he asks Laban for payment for his labor, Laban is evasive and noncommittal, and suggests that Jacob tell him what he [Jacob] thinks he is owed. Jacob finally proposes that he go through Laban's flocks and cull "every speckled and spotted animal – every dark-colored sheep and every spotted and speckled goat (Gen 30:32)." Jacob then says in Gen 30:33 (the relevant verse), "*In the future* when you go over my wages, *let my righteousness toward you testify for me*: if there are among my goats any that are not speckled or spotted or any sheep that are not dark-colored, they got there by theft." Essentially, Jacob pledges to Laban (letting his "righteousness testify for" him) that he will separate out and keep only the animals with certain markings. The expectation is that Jacob's marked animals would produce other marked animals as offspring, and Laban's unmarked animals would produce only unmarked offspring.

But the rest of Gen 30 describes the elaborate process Jacob undertakes to ensure that Laban's unmarked flock produced only ***marked*** animals, such that from Laban's flocks "he produced special flocks for himself, which he did not put with Laban's flocks" (Gen 30:40). In addition to adding substantially to his wealth by this process, Jacob also manipulated the process to ensure that the only unmarked animals came from the feebler animals in the flock, such that "the feeble ones went to Laban and the sturdy to Jacob" (Gen 30:42). By manipulating the breeding process, Jacob "grew

exceedingly prosperous, and came to own large flocks, maidservants and menservants, camels and asses" (Gen 30:43).

There is much about Jacob's behavior in this Genesis story that the rabbis might find irksome. Jacob assures Laban of his righteousness, and then goes on to manipulate the situation such that he enriches himself, as well as weakens Laban. Jacob appears to have benefited from his trickery since he "grew exceedingly prosperous." But by introducing Prov 27:1, and focusing on Jacob's perceived "boasting of tomorrow," the midrash is able to punish Jacob by holding him accountable for Dinah's violation. Because he boasted (about his righteousness) of tomorrow, the rabbis retort "tomorrow your daughter will go out and be violated."

While the first part of *GenR* 80:4 chastises Jacob for boasting, the second section rebukes him for "withholding kindness:"

> R. Huna commenced in the name of R. Abba Bardela the priest: *To him that is ready to faint kindness is due from his friend* (Job 6:14). The Holy One, blessed be He, reproved him: 'Thou hast withheld kindness from your brother; when she married Job, did you not convert him? You would not give her in marriage to one who is circumcised [Esau]; lo! She is married to one who is uncircumcised. You would not give her in legitimate wedlock; lo! She is taken in an illegitimate fashion'; thus it is written, *then Dinah went out*. (p. 737)

This rather confusing passage refers to Gen 33 in which Jacob and his brother Esau are reunited after many years of estrangement. Jacob had stolen Esau's blessing in Gen 27, and had fled after discovering that Esau was planning on killing him as

retribution. The brothers had not seen each other since that event, and Jacob feared that Esau was still planning on seeking revenge when they met up again in Gen 33.

In *GenR* 80:4, R. Huna refers to an extra biblical tradition in order to rebuke Jacob. The tradition refers to the meeting of the brothers in Gen 33, suggesting that Esau wanted to marry Dinah during that meeting, but Jacob forbade it. R. Huna suggests that, because Jacob "withheld kindness" from his brother Esau (a circumcised male) by forbidding his marriage to Dinah, Dinah was "married"[8] to one who was uncircumcised (Shechem). Had Jacob allowed the "legitimate wedlock" with Esau, she would never have been taken "in an illegitimate fashion." Here, R. Huna puts the blame for Dinah's encounter with Shechem soundly on Jacob's ungraciousness.

The last section of *GenR* 80:4 is the most damning of Jacob, and suggests that Dinah was dishonored in order to dishonor him:

> R. Simeon ben Lakish commended: *And he erected there an altar, and called it El-elohe-Israel* (Gen 33:20). He [Jacob] declared to Him 'Thou art God in the celestial spheres and I am a god in the terrestrial sphere.' R. Huna commented in the name of R. Simeon ben Lakish: [God reproved him]: 'Even the synagogue superintendent cannot assume authority of himself, yet thou did take authority to thyself! Tomorrow thy daughter will go out and be dishonored,' as it is written, *Then Dinah went out*. (p. 737)

Here, the midrash condemns Jacob for outlandish hubris. When Jacob builds the altar to El-elohe-Israel in Gen 33:20, R. Huna indicates that he declared himself "a god in the terrestrial sphere," thereby assuming an honor to which he was not entitled. In

[8] Intercourse was considered one method of becoming wed according to the rabbis.

order to strip Jacob of undeserved honor, the midrash has God proclaiming that Dinah "will go out and be dishonored." This very troubling theology sees Dinah's violation as mere collateral damage in the chastisement of Jacob.

Whereas both R. Huna and Simeon ben Lakish in *GenR* 80:4 depict Jacob as boastful, arrogant, and withholding - and therefore responsible for Dinah's violation, R. Aha in *Tanhuma* 8:16 presents a picture that clashes dramatically with that characterization:

> Another interpretation (of Gen 34:1): *Now [Leah's daughter] Dinah… went out*. But [had she gone out] from sin? After all, Jacob had said (in Gen 32:10): *I am unworthy of all the kindnesses*. R. Aha said: [The Holy One said]: I have nourished your ancestors from their [good] deeds, but you said: *I am unworthy*! The Holy One said to him: Jacob, [it is] through your righteousness [that] I have done all these miracles of which you say that you are unworthy. But look, she is going out; yet your merit shall remain for you. *Now [Leah's daughter] Dinah… went out*. (p. 218)

Here, instead of boastful, Jacob is presented as humble and unassuming. Instead of the picture of a man declaring himself "a god of the terrestrial sphere" as seen in *GenR* 80:4, the Jacob in *Tanhuma* 8:16 sees himself as unworthy of all that God has given him, such that God has to reassure Jacob that he is indeed worthy and meritorious. This midrash seeks to exonerate Jacob - in no uncertain terms – of any accountability for Dinah's going out. This desire to exonerate Jacob is made abundantly clear in the closing line: "But look, she is going out; yet your merit shall remain for you."

While *GenR* 80:4 and *Tanhuma* 8:16 seek to demonstrate Jacob's accountability – or lack there of – for Dinah's degradation, *Tanhuma* 8:13 (and, with some modifications, *GenR* 80:6) seeks to explain Jacob's odd response at learning about Shechem's attack on Dinah. In Gen 34:5 we learn that "when Jacob heard that he [Shechem] had defiled Dinah his daughter, while his sons were with the livestock in the field, Jacob remained silent until they came in." Similar to modern readers, the rabbis appear troubled by Jacob's lack of response regarding Dinah's ordeal, and they try to provide an explanation:

> *Now Leah's Daughter Dinah… went out*. This text is related (to Prov 11:12): *One who despises his neighbor is lacking sense*. Whoever scorns his neighbor is called *Lacking in sense*. But, if that same person who was despised was a person of knowledge and understanding, he would put his hand over his mouth and be silent. Thus it is stated (ibid, cont.): *But a person of understanding will keep silent*. *One who despises his neighbor is lacking in sense*. This is Hamor, the father of Shechem who said: *The soul of my son, Shechem, longs for your daughter* (Gen 34:8). *But a person of understanding will keep silent*. This is Jacob of whom it is stated: *So Jacob kept silence until they came* (Gen 34:5). For what reason? On account of this corruption: *Now Leah's daughter Dinah [whom she had borne to Jacob] went out… [then Shechem ben Hamor the Hivite, the Prince of the land, saw her, So he took her, lay with her, and violated her]* (Gen 34:1-2). (p. 217)

This midrash uses Prov 11:12 to paint a picture of Jacob as discerning and wise in the face of Hamor's foolishness. Hamor came to ask for Dinah as a wife for Shechem

just after Shechem had violated her. Surely, there are few better examples of a person scorning his neighbor and, based on Prov 11:12 shows that Hamor was "lacking in sense." But, instead of responding with similar foolishness and attacking Hamor and Shechem, Jacob demonstrates "knowledge and understanding" by keeping silent. This midrash attempts ameliorate the implication in the biblical story that Jacob was indifferent to the plight of his daughter. Instead of detached disinterest, or even ineptness, *Tanhuma* 8:13 suggests that Jacob's silence was really the result of "knowledge and understanding."

Absolving Simeon and Levi

Similar to their consensus regarding Dinah, the rabbis are in agreement regarding the actions of Simeon and Levi. However, instead of condemning the brothers as they do Dinah, the rabbis work to exonerate her brothers of blame for their actions. The midrashim on Simeon and Levi – the brothers of Dinah, who instigate the massacre of the city of Shechem – are found in *GenR*; *Tanhuma* does not specifically mention the two at all.

As noted earlier, Genesis 34 introduces Simeon and Levi as Shechem and Hamor are negotiating with Dinah's family for her hand in marriage. Shechem has indicated that he will give anything they want as a bride price, they need only name it and he "will give whatever you say (Gen 34:12)." As a response to Shechem's plea:

> Jacob's sons answered Shechem and his father Hamor – speaking with deceit because he had defiled their sister Dinah – and said to them, "We cannot do this thing, to give our sister to a man who is uncircumcised, for that is a disgrace among us. Only on this condition will we agree with you; that you will

become like us in that every male among you is circumcised. Then we will give our daughters to you and take your daughters to ourselves; and we will dwell among you and become as one kindred. But if you will not listen to us and become circumcised, we will take our daughter and go." (Gen 34:13-17)

Shechem and Hamor agree to the plan and quickly set about circumcising all the men of the city. It is at this point that Simeon and Levi make their direct appearance:

> On the third day, when they [the men of Shechem who have been circumcised] were in pain, Simeon and Levi, two of Jacob's sons, brothers of Dinah, took each a sword, came upon the city confidently, and slew all the males. They put Hamor and his son Shechem to the sword, and took Dinah out of Shechem's house, and went away. (Gen 34:25)

It is hard to not see Simeon and Levi's deceit and murdering rampage as an over reaction to Dinah's violation (even Jacob seems troubled, see Gen 34:30), yet the two are met with greater approval in the midrashim than any of the other characters in the story. Dinah, Jacob, and Shechem and Hamor (to the degree they are mentioned) are all rebuked in at least some of the midrashim; however, Simeon and Levi receive no such reproof. While none of the midrashim specifically endorse the brother's actions, they go a long way to explain and justify their conduct, and when they do place a degree of "blame" it is usually on Dinah and her "going out."

GenR 80:10 serves primarily to explain some elements of the text that seem redundant or unclear to the rabbis. First, the midrash ponders why Gen 34:25 states "that the two sons of Jacob, Simeon and Levi, took each man his sword:"

Since it says, *Simeon and Levi*, do we not know that they were Jacob's sons? But - *sons of Jacob* - teaches that they did not take counsel with Jacob. *Simeon and Levi* – they did not take counsel with each other. (p. 742)

Here, the rabbis indicate that Simeon and Levi acted independently of Jacob (not taking his counsel), and independent of each other (not taking counsel with each other). The midrash attempts to suggest that the massacre was ***not*** a conspiratorial act, as implied in Gen 34:13 which has: "Jacob's sons answered… speaking with deceit," but instead an independent, impulsive one that could naturally occur under such circumstances.

Next, *GenR* 80:10 discusses why, in Gen 34:25, Simeon and Levi are referred to as "brothers of Dinah:" "was she then the sister of these two [only] and not the sister of *all* the tribal ancestors? She is called by their name, however, because they risked their lives for her sake" (p. 742).

Interestingly, here the midrash reinforces the familial connection of all the tribes, and ignores a more obvious answer to the question of why they were called "brothers of Dinah" – that Simeon and Levi were Dinah's full brothers (as were Reuben and Judah). According to this midrash, Simeon and Levi are referred to as "brothers of Dinah" only because they took extraordinary measures – and risked their own lives – on her behalf.

Finally, *GenR* 80:4 wants to understand why, when in Gen 34:25 the brothers come upon the city of Shechem, the text says they "came upon the city confidently:"

Samuel asked Levi ben Sissi: What is the meaning of - *And came upon the city confidently*? They felt confident in the strength of the patriarch, he replied.

> Now Jacob had not desired that his sons should act so, but when his sons did perpetrate that deed he said: "Shall I let my sons fall into the hands of the heathens?" What did he do? He took his sword and bow and stood at the entrance to Shechem and exclaimed, "If the heathens come to attack my sons, I will fight them." (p. 737)

Interestingly, this midrash attempts to brush over the antagonism Jacob felt towards the two seen in the text. In the penultimate verse of the biblical story Jacob scolds Simeon and Levi, "You have brought trouble on me, making me odious among the inhabitants of the land, the Canaanites and the Perizzites; my men are few in number, so that if they unite against me and attack me, I and my house will be destroyed" (Gen 34:30).

GenR 80:12 goes on to more fully explicate the above verse (Gen 34:30) in order to explain Simeon and Levi's actions, as well as Jacob's rebuke of them. The rabbis' discussion revolves around the first part of the verse, "And Jacob said to Simeon and Levi: You have troubled me:"

> The Rabbis commented: The vat was clear, and ye have muddied it. The Canaanites have a tradition that they will one day fall by my hand, but the Holy One, Blessed be He, has stated: *Until thou be increased, and inherit the land* (Ex 23:30) – to sixty myriads. R. Judah ben Simeon said: [They answered]: 'The vat was muddied, and we have purified it." And they said: *Should one deal with our sister as with a harlot* (34:31)? "Will they treat us as common property," they exclaimed. What caused all this? The fact that Dinah went out. (p. 744)

In *GenR* 80:12, the conflict between Jacob and the brothers is explained as having to do with a matter of timing, not with the sons' murderous actions. In the midrash, God has a plan in place to which the Canaanites are privy: the descendants of Jacob *will inherit the land* when the Israelites increase in numbers to a certain point (*sixty myriads*). Since, at the time of Dinah's encounter with Shechem, the Israelites still had very limited numbers, the Canaanites were leaving Jacob and his family in peace. This *clear vat* of peace is *muddied* by the sons' actions, and Jacob therefore tells Simeon and Levi that *you have troubled me*.

Simeon and Levi, however, disagree with Jacob's indictment of them. Instead, they believe, *the vat was muddied,* not because of their own actions, but because of those by Shechem. Because Shechem treated Dinah like a harlot, the *vat was muddied*. By responding the way in which they did, Simeon and Levi see themselves as having purified the situation, not muddying it.

GenR 80:12 leaves Jacob and his two sons in a state of conflict, as does Genesis 34. All three believe that *trouble* has ensued from Dinah's encounter with Shechem, but they disagree on what that trouble was or who caused it. In this midrash we see father and sons clearly at odds and in conflict, and Dinah is portrayed as responsible for it. When *GenR* 80:12 asks "What caused all this?" the answer is "*the fact that Dinah went out*."

While *GenR* 80:10 and 80:12 are concerned with explaining certain aspects of the text, and are basically neutral regarding Simeon and Levi, *GenR* 80:2 and 80:8 go to great lengths to shield them from any blame.

The discussion in *GenR* 80:2 uses a verse from the prophet Hosea (6:9) in order to justify the actions of Simeon and Levi. The midrash begins: "*And as troops wait for a man, etc.* (Hosea 6:9): as robbers sit in the road, slay people and seize their wealth – did Simeon and Levi act thus in Shechem?"

GenR 80:2 starts out by displaying anxiety about Simeon and Levi's murderous response to Dinah's violation. Is it possible that two sons of Jacob are no better than common robbers? The midrash continues to answer that question decidedly in the negative:

> Therefore Scripture continues: *The company of priests*: as a company of priests assemble at the threshing-floor to receive their portion [the priestly dues], so did Simeon and Levi act in Shechem: *They [robbers] murder in the way toward Shechem, because they have committed whoredom* (ib.). Simeon and Levi acted with a reason, *And they said: Should one deal with our sister as with a harlot* (Gen 30:31)? (p. 736)

While *GenR* 80:2 does not specifically condone Simeon and Levi's conduct, it does provide a justification for it. Just as "priests assemble at the threshing floor" to take what they are due, so too Simeon and Levi took the lives of the men in Shechem for a reason. Jacob sons were not wanton murderers like the robbers in Hosea 6:9, but instead righteous men (akin to priests) seeking justice and their due.

Dinah, however, fares badly in the eyes of the midrash once again. After providing justification for Simeon and Levi's actions, *GenR* 80:2 ends with the line: "And what caused this? The fact that *Dinah the daughter of Leah went out*." So while Simeon

and Levi are recounted as having murdered the men of Shechem "with a reason," Dinah is the one seen as ultimately responsible for all of the mayhem caused by her brothers.

Finally, with regard to Simeon and Levi, R. Samuel in *GenR* 80:8 seeks to exonerate them completely by justifying their "deceit," and indicating that Shechem and Hamor were really the deceitful ones and got what they deserved. *GenR* 80:8 begins with a discussion about Gen 34:13 in which the "sons of Jacob answered Shechem… with guile (deceit)": "R. Samuel ben Nahman said: What think you: that we have a case of deceit here? [No, for] the Holy Spirit states, *Because he had defiled Dinah their sister*" (Gen 34:13).

Even though the Biblical text makes clear that the sons of Jacob lied to Shechem when they said they would intermarry if the men of Shechem underwent circumcision, R. Samuel ben Nahman argues that it was not really a "case of deceit" because they had a justifiable reason for the deception. The fact that Shechem had defiled their sister freed the brothers, according to R. Nahman, from the obligation to be forthright in their dealings with him.

The next section of *GenR* 80:8 to deal with Jacob's sons revolves around Gen 34:23, and suggests that their pillaging of the city Shechem was actually fortuitous. Gen 34:23 comes in the middle of Shechem and Hamor's conversation with the people of Shechem as they attempt to convince the men to undergo circumcision so that they may intermarry with Jacob's tribe. Father and son say to the people: "*Shall not their cattle and their substance and all their beasts be ours, if we only agree to their terms, so that they will settle among us"* (Gen 34:23). The midrash concludes: "They [the people of

Shechem] thought to despoil them [Jacob and his sons] and were themselves despoiled."

Instead of reading Shechem and Hamor's plea to the people of their city as an attempt to join forces with Jacob's tribe, *GenR* 80:8 attributes sinister connotations to the verse. The people of Shechem were not looking to join forces with Jacob's tribe, but instead to despoil it. However, because of the actions of Simeon and Levi, justice prevailed and the Shechemites were themselves despoiled.

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Juxtaposed with the support and affirmation Dinah receives in the literature from the Intertestamental period, the condemnation and vitriol directed her way in the rabbinic literature is truly striking. The midrashim uniformly criticize Dinah, with the critique ranging from seeing her as merely naïve and venturing out when she should have known better (*GenR* 80:5), to accusing her of harlotry (*GenR* 80:1; *Tanhuma* 8:14, 8:15), and suggesting that she wanted the encounter with Shechem to happen (*Tanhuma* 8:12). Dinah is also held responsible for the conflict between her father and her brothers (*GenR* 80:12), and is accused of choosing to stay at Shechem's house because she found it "hard to tear herself away" after having sex with a gentile (*GenR* 80:11).

The range of attitudes and behaviors the rabbis project onto the passive and silent character of Dinah suggest a great deal of discomfort with women in general; indeed, in two of midrashim rabbinic rebukes are generalized onto "women" as a category (*GenR* 80:5, 80:11; *Tanhuma* 8:12). These two midrashim declare, that in creating the first woman from Adam's rib, God sought to produce women as modest

beings. Instead, say these midrashim, women turned out to be creatures who are frivolous, coquette, eavesdroppers, jealous, light-fingered, and gadabouts.

The literature of the rabbinic period appears to be particularly concerned with gender roles, specifically how women should behave, and the ramifications when gender roles are inverted. *GenR* 80:1 and *Tanhuma* 8:15 hint at this concern in their treatment of Dinah's mother Leah. *GenR* 80:1 accuses Leah of adorning herself like a harlot when she goes out to see her husband after she has "purchased" Jacob for the night from her sister Rachel with some mandrakes (Gen 30:16). This contrasts with the biblical account where nothing in the Hebrew suggests that Leah was "adorned like a harlot" in Genesis 30:16; she simply goes out to meet her husband in order to tell him that he would be spending that night with her. Her behavior is, however, bold in that she takes command of Jacob's time once she has "purchased" her night with him. Because of this Bible story in which Leah exhibits control when she "purchases" Jacob's time, and "informs" him where he will be sleeping, Leah is accused of exhibiting harlot-like tendencies (that are eventually fully manifested in Dinah).

Tanhuma 8:15 hints at a similar discomfort with inverted gender roles, this time having to do with who is supposed to "accompany" girl children. This midrash explains that "in every place the female child is accompanied by males, but here (Gen 34:1) she is accompanied by her mother. Thus, the corruption had begun with her mother." Because Leah engaged in what was considered a "man's job" – accompanying a girl child – Dinah suffered a terrible "corruption." The message in these two midrashim suggests terrible consequences when gender roles are upended.

What *GenR* 80:1 and *Tanhuma* 8:15 imply regarding Leah – that inverted gender roles leads to trouble – *Tanhuma* 8:12 makes explicit for all women. *Tanhuma* 8:12 seeks to limit women's engagement in the marketplace by restricting her to the home. This midrash states that women should not be allowed outside of the home because, "the man subdues the woman, and the woman does not subdue the man. But, if she walks about a lot and goes out to the marketplace, she finally comes to a state of corruption, to a state of harlotry." When women trespass appropriate gender roles by going to the marketplace, suggests Tanhuma 8:12, than one can only expect harlotry as a result.

The midrashim of the rabbinic period suggest a high degree of discomfort and anxiety on the part of the rabbis regarding women in general, as well as appropriate gender roles, and male/female power dynamics. The midrashim from this period also reflect many of the rape myths prevalent in our society today. Specifically, the literature is rife with examples of three types of rape myth. Those suggesting that: "she wanted it," "she deserved it," and "men cannot control themselves."

Multiple midrashim refer to Dinah as a harlot (one who seeks sex in exchange for payment), which indicates an underlying belief that she in some way sought out the encounter she had with Shechem. Additionally, one accuses her of having gone out in order "to be seen," and therefore was actively seeking some sort of encounter. All of these fit into the "she wanted it" category of rape myth. Some midrashim imply that Dinah should have known the dangers associated with going out, and therefore got what she deserved (*GenR* 80:5, *Tanhuma* 8:12), which is in keeping with the "she deserved it" rape myth. And the midrashim that compare Shechem with a bird of prey

(*GenR* 80:5) or a dog (*Tanhuma* 8:19) pouncing on unprotected meat, fit with the "he couldn't control himself" prevalent in society today.

Chapter Six: Medieval Period

Redeeming Dinah

The Middle Ages gave rise to the *Mikra'ot Gedolot* – a comprehensive volume often referred to as the "Rabbinic Bible" – which consists of the biblical text with Masoretic notation, the Aramaic translation of the Bible, and commentaries by a number of Medieval Jewish thinkers. The pages of the *Mikra'ot Gedolot* are set up around the biblical text such that it often seems as if the commentators (living in different times and places) engage in an active discussion about the pertinent verses of the text, in which their respective perspectives and personalities become evident through the course of the commentary. The three primary commentators in the *Mikra'ot Gedolot* are *Rashi*, *Ramban*, and *Ibn Ezra* (see below), though different versions of the *Mikra'ot Gedolot* also include a variety of commentators of lesser significance. Outlined below are brief biographies of the medieval commentators who provide significant commentary on the Rape of Dinah story.

Rabbi Shlomo Yitzchaki (1040-1105) – best know by the acronym **Rashi**[1] – lived in Troyes, France during the 11th century and is considered the "father of all biblical and Talmudical commentators," as his commentary "constitutes the basis upon which *Ramban* and others base their interpretation of the Chumash [Five Books of Torah]."[2] *Rashi* was "recognized as the leading Torah authority of his time," and wrote his

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[1] Nosson Scherman and Meir Zlotowitz (eds), *The Torah: with Rashi's Commentary Translated, Annotated, and Elucidated*, (New York: Mesorah Publications, Ltd., 1995). Translation of *Rashi* comes from this edition.

[2] A. J. Rosenberg, *Mikraot Gedolot: Genesis (vol 2)*, (New York: The Judaica Press, Inc., 1994) 459k.

commentaries such that students could "view Scripture through the perspective of the Oral Tradition.[3]"[4]

Commentary on the Chumash (Five Books of Torah) by Rabbi Moshe ben Nachman (1194-1270) – better known as **Ramban**[5] – is second only to *Rashi* in popularity.[6] *Ramban* lived in Gerona, Spain until he was forced to leave Spain after the Barcelona Disputation of 1263. He was a noted Talmudist, Kabbalist, and physician who eventually migrated to the land of Israel where he died in 1270.

By far, the most comprehensive Medieval commentaries on the Rape of Dinah story come from *Rashi* and *Ramban*. Other commentators who contributed significantly to the conversation on the Dinah story include the following:

Abraham **ibn Ezra**[7] (1089-1164) was born in Tudela, Spain and spent much of his life there. However, he also spent the last 24 years of life outside of Spain and survived as "a poor wandering scholar."[8] *Ibn Ezra* had an incredible breath of knowledge and functioned as a "poet, mathematician, astronomer, astrologer, grammarian, physician and philosopher," and was "one of the outstanding and colorful scholars of medieval Jewry."[9]

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[3] The Mishnah, Talmud, and Midrash were originally transmitted orally and comprise the Oral Tradition.
[4] Scherman and Zlotowitz, xxii.
[5] Yaakov Blinder, *The Torah: With Ramban's Commentary Translated, Annotated, and Elucidated: Genesis (vol 2),* (New York: Mesorah Publications: Ltd., 2005). Translation of *Ramban* come from this edition.
[6] Rosenberg, 459j.
[7] H. Norman Strickman and Arthur Silver (trans), *Ibn Ezra's Commentary on the Pentateuch – Genesis*, (New York: Menorah Publishing Company, Inc., 1988). Translation of *ibn Ezra* comes from this edition.
[8] Ibid, x.
[9] ibid, vii.

Rabbi David Kimchi (1160-1235) – also known as **Radak** [10]– lived in Narbonne, France during the 12th century and concentrated his commentary on the *peshat* or plain meaning of the text. Even though he concentrates primarily on the plain meaning of the text, *Radak* often quotes the midrashim in order to "demonstrate that he did not consider this form of exegesis as inferior or less authentic" (than *peshat*).[11] *Radak* breaks with the rest of the Medieval commentators, in that he affirms many of the attitudes demonstrated in the rabbinic period midrashim, while most of the other commentators ignore or contest them. Unlike the other medieval commentators, Radak is dismissive of Dinah's experience, and instead, is more interested in the ramifications he sees her violation having on the spiritual wholeness of her family.

Rabbi Obadiah Sforno (1470-1550) – referred to simply as **Sforno**[12] – "was a noted 16th century Biblical exegete, philosopher, and halachic authority."[13] Living in Italy at a time when many Jews were becoming disaffected from their faith, Sforno strove to write a commentary in order to "reclaim Jews who had become estranged to their heritage, or at least had begun to adopt a questioning attitude to their once holy and rock firm beliefs."[14]

Commentary on Dinah

The most striking feature of the medieval commentary on the Dinah story, as a whole, is the degree to which the commentators attempt to shelter Dinah from the abuse inflicted upon her by the rabbis in the midrashim of the rabbinic period (see

[10] Eliyahu Munk, *Hachut Hameshulash (vol. 3)*, (New York: Lambda Publishers, 2003). Translation of Radak come from this edition.
[11] Eliyahu Munk, *Hachut Hameshulash (vol. 1)*, (New York: Lambda Publishers, 2003).
[12] Munk, vol. 3. Translation of Sforno comes from this edition.
[13] Rosenberg, 459l.
[14] Munk, vol. 1, Chapter 5.

Chapter Five). With only one significant exception, all of the medieval commentators ignore, push back on, or overtly challenge the condemning and hostile attitude towards Dinah displayed in the midrashim. This refusal, by most of the medieval commentators, to incorporate into their own commentaries the vitriol heaped on Dinah in the rabbinic midrashim is particularly striking given the place that the rabbis held in the medieval (as well as modern) psyche. The rabbis of the rabbinic period were considered by the medieval leaders to be the sages who saved Judaism after the destruction of the Second Temple; and the Judaism practiced by Jews today has its origin in the rabbinic period. So their choice to ignore or challenge the rabbinic sages is not one the medieval commentators would have endeavored to do lightly, and should be seen as reflecting a deep discomfort with the rabbinic attitudes towards Dinah (and, by extension, women in general).

Rashi on Dinah

Rashi's commentary is known for adhering closely to the teachings found in the rabbinic literature (midrashim), and his treatment of Dinah is no exception. He is, however, selective about what elements of the midrashim he references in his commentary. His treatment of Dinah ends up being significantly more favorable towards her than that found in the rabbinic literature.

Rashi begins his commentary on Genesis 34 by noting that Dinah is referred to as the "daughter of Leah (Gen 34:1)," and asks the question: "and not the daughter of Jacob?" He answers this question by pulling from a midrash found in *Genesis Rabbah* (*GenR* 80:1) that states Dinah was called "the daughter of Leah" because Leah was also one "who would go out." In Leah's case, she went out to meet her husband Jacob (see

Chapter Four for a comprehensive analysis of the midrashim). *Rashi* concludes his discourse on Gen 34:1 by again alluding to *GenR* 80:1, and stating that the aphorism "like mother, like daughter" developed as a result of Dinah's "going out" (p. 383). *Rashi's* only other comment on Dinah reflects *GenR 80:5*, and indicates that the verb *sh.c.v.* (to sleep with) means that Shechem laid Dinah "in a natural manner," and the verb *a.n.h*. (to violate) means that he did so "in an unnatural manner" (p. 383).

More interesting than what *Rashi* says about Dinah, is what he does not say. While he clearly alludes to *GenR* 80:1 in his description of Dinah, he omits the most damning aspects of the midrash from his commentary. While *GenR* 80:1 implies that Dinah was like her mother because she fully manifested Leah's harlot-like tendencies, *Rashi* says simply that Dinah was like her mother because they both "went out." But unlike the midrashim, *Rashi* does not attach any negative implications to that action. Additionally, he praises Leah elsewhere (commentary on 30:16) for "going out" with the best of intentions, "because she was desirous and putting forth effort to increase the tribes" (p. 333), and thereby negates the negative connotations the midrashim attribute to Dinah's "going out." *Rashi* also omits entirely the midrashim that make generalized negative statements about women's morality (*GenR* 80:5), or proscriptions on women's "going out" to the marketplace (*Tanhuma* 8:12). Not only does *Rashi* not engage in the same invective about Dinah (and by extension, Leah and women generally) seen in rabbinic literature, his omissions seem an attempt to redeem her in light of the midrashim's vilification.

Rashi further insulates Dinah by implying that Shechem's behavior was both truly outlandish, and unexpected. He does this by referring to Gen 34:7 that states: "and

such a thing is not done." *Rashi* argues that the thing that "is not done" is "to violate virgins." *Rashi* suggests that this prohibition is universal "for the nations of the world restricted themselves from sexual immorality because of the flood" (p. 383). Here *Rashi* is referring to the story in Genesis 6 in which God floods the earth in order to start over with Noah because the people had sunk into utter depravity, as well as to the covenant with Noah in Genesis 9. By suggesting that all peoples had refrained from violating virgins since the time of the flood, *Rashi* implies that Shechem engaged in massively aberrant – and therefore unexpected – behavior, which could not have been anticipated. Unlike the midrashim of the rabbinic period that suggest that Dinah should have known better than to go out, and therefore got what she deserved when she did (*GenR* 80:5, *Tanhuma* 8:19), *Rashi* indirectly defends Dinah by implying that Shechem's behavior could not be foreseen.

Ramban on Dinah

Unlike *Rashi*, who tries to stay in line with the literature of the rabbinic period even as he insulates Dinah from criticism, *Ramban*'s position often directly contradicts that found in the midrashim. While the rabbinic literature emphasizes Dinah's one action in the story (that she "went out" – *y.tz.a.*) in order to chastise both her and her mother, and *Rashi* notes Dinah's "going out" but does not comment on it, *Ramban* does not comment on the verb *y.tz.a.* in any way. Instead, his discussion of Gen 34:1 revolves around why Dinah is referred to as "daughter of Leah who was born to Jacob" (Gen 34:1). In his commentary, he ignores entirely the rabbinic literature that criticizes mother and daughter, and instead states that the reason Dinah is called "daughter of Leah" is simply to illustrate "that she was the full sister of Simeon and Levi, who were

zealous for her and took vengeance for her" (p. 215). He goes on to state that the only reason the text mentions that Leah had "bore [Dinah] to Jacob" was to indicate that all of Dinah's brothers – even her half brothers - "were zealous for her" (ibid). *Ramban*'s commentary on the first verse of Gen 34 establishes his radical departure from the midrashim, which he continues throughout his commentary on the Rape of Dinah story.

Ramban's next significant departure from the rabbinic literature revolves around the verb *(a).n.h.* As discussed in Chapter Two, *(a).n.h.* is a difficult verb to translate, and can have a range of meanings, although all possible interpretations of *(a).n.h.* involve some form of degradation. *Ramban* quotes *Rashi* and differs with his (and the midrashim) suggestion that Shechem "afflicted" (*(a).n.h.)* Dinah by having sex with her "in an unnatural manner." He also refers to *ibn Ezra* (discussed below) in order to refute his contention that the text states "afflicted" because Dinah was a virgin and therefore suffered pain when Shechem had sex with her.

Instead, *Ramban* makes a stunning assertion regarding the verb *(a).n.h.*, the very nature of rape, and Dinah's character. *Ramban* states unequivocally, "any act of intimate relations that is carried out against the will of a woman [even if she is not a virgin] is called an 'affliction' (*(a).n.h.)*" (p. 216). *Ramban* goes on to say that the use of *(a).n.h.* in Gen 34:2 is to convey "that she was taken by forces and did not consent to the advances of the prince of the land, thus [the text is] speaking in praise of [Dinah]" (ibid). *Ramban* not only turns the midrashim's negative characterization of Dinah on its head with his commentary, he also speaks to the trauma ("affliction") that any woman who had been raped would experience. And finally, he not only avoids criticizing Dinah (as *Rashi* did), he forcefully praises her.

Ramban goes on to vindicate Dinah further in his discussion of Gen 34:12. Verse 12 comes as Shechem is trying to convince Dinah's family to allow her to marry him. He is willing to offer anything to get what he wants and says "require of me a very large bride gift (*mohar*) and a gift (*mattan*), and I will give whatever you say to me, only give to me the maiden as wife" (Gen 34:12).[15] *Ramban*'s discussion revolves around the two types of gifts – *mohar* and *mattan* – that Shechem is offering. He explains that *mohar* refers to property that the groom gives to the bride, but *mattan* refers to the property that the **bride brings** from her father's house (called *melog*-property) that the groom has use of as long as the two remain married. *Ramban* explains that Shechem offered to "give her property of his own, which would be considered as if it were property brought to the marriage from her father's house, and would be considered by him as *melog*-property" that Dinah could take with her in the case of divorce (p. 220).

The question that *Ramban* asks is why would Shechem offer to give to Dinah a gift **she** would normally be required to bring to the marriage? He answers this question in a manner that serves to further elevate Dinah, and paints her unquestionably as a righteous victim. He indicates that:

> The reason for this great attempt at appeasement was so that they should give her to him for a wife willingly, for the girl herself would not reconcile herself to him, and she would cry out and weep all the time. This is also the explanation for *and he spoke tenderly to the girl* (v3). And this is why he said to his father *take for me that child as wife!* (v4). For she was already in his house and under his control, and he was not afraid of her brothers, for he was *the*

[15] My translation.

prince of the land (v2), so how could they steal her back from him and take her out of his house? (p. 220)

Unlike the midrashim that portray Dinah as having to be dragged reluctantly from Shechem's house (*GenR* 80:11), *Ramban* indicates that Dinah is Shechem's miserable captive. She is also so impressive and resistant that Shechem is willing to give anything to get her family's support and approval for the "marriage." Here again, *Ramban*'s stance of support for Dinah, and his defense of women who have been violated, puts him at odds with the perspective seen in the rabbinic period.

Ibn Ezra on Dinah

Ibn Ezra's comments on Dinah are quite limited. He says only that she "went out" (Gen 34:1) of her own accord (meaning that she did not ask her parents permission), that the text says Shechem "humbled her" (Gen 34:2) *a.h.n*. to indicate that she was a virgin and therefore suffered pain during the assault, and that she was a minor when the event occurred. *Ibn Ezra* derives this last assertion – that she was a minor when she was attacked by Shechem – from verse 17 in which the sons of Jacob say to Shechem: "But if you do not listen to us and be circumcised, then we will take our daughter and we will go" (Gen 34:17).

Ibn Ezra indicates that Jacob's sons referred to their sister as "our daughter" for two reasons: because they were speaking for their father Jacob, and because she was a child and therefore both their responsibility and under their control. While *Ibn Ezra* does not explicitly exonerate Dinah from the culpability heaped upon her in the rabbinic literature (see Chapter Five), he does try to shield her from blame by

suggesting that she was a child at the time of the attack and therefore free of any responsibility for it.

Radak on Dinah

Unlike *Rashi* and *Ramban*, *Radak* adds very little new regarding Dinah herself. He does, however, make some interesting comments about rape that run contrary to the attitudes of the majority of medieval commentators. He begins by referring to Gen 34:2 and the verb *a.n.h* (to violate):

> The reason why the Torah uses the word *(a).n.h.* when what Shechem had done was more in the nature of a seduction than a violent rape, is that this term is used in connection with a virgin having intercourse, something usually very painful for her. The term is also used on account of this reason in Deuteronomy 22:29. (p. 665)

Interestingly, by focusing on the verb *a.n.h* and ignoring the other verbs present in the passages he discusses, *Radak* discounts the forceful elements of not only Dinah's encounter with Shechem, but also the virgin who is seized and raped in Deut 22:29 (see discussion in Chapter Two). By interpreting *a.n.h*. as nothing more than the natural pain a virgin experiences during her first sexual experience, and by ignoring the obvious force connoted in the verbs *t.f.s.* (to seize – Deut 22:28) and *l.k.h.* (to take – Gen 34:2), *Radak* reshapes these two rape scenes into something "more in the nature of a seduction," and engages in the same faulty reasoning seen in modern commentators such as Frymer-Kensky and Bechtel (see Chapter Two). *Radak*'s interpretation of Dinah's experience also clashes significantly with the opinions of commentators of the period – most of whom see Dinah as the victim of a violent rape.

Radak's other comment on rape is in reference to Gen 34:7, and shows the same lack of sympathy for Dinah's experience as he does above. "Jacob's sons came in from the field because they had heard [of Dinah's violation] and were sorrowful. And the men burned with fury because an offense was done in Israel. To lay a daughter of Jacob – a thing not to be done" (Gen 34:7).

Radak takes a stance similar to that claimed by Frymer-Kensky when he suggests that "the rape of Dinah was considered as a stain on the spiritual wholeness of all the family of Israel." Much as Frymer-Kensky discounts the immediacy of Dinah's experience – and places the focus instead on the integrity of the familial group - because of the reference to Israel in Gen 34:7, *Radak* places greater concern on the family's "spiritual wholeness" than on Dinah's personal experience (p. 666). Here again, *Radak* diverges significantly from the positions held by most medieval thinkers.

Sforno on Dinah

Sforno makes no comment on verse 1 of the Dinah story, and he has very little to say about Dinah generally. He does make clear, however, that he sees her as a victim of rape with his comment on the statement that Shechem's "soul clung to Dinah" (Gen 34:3): "This was the opposite of Amnon – having raped Tamar – whose infatuation with her turned to disgust the moment he had satisfied his biological urge" (2 Sam 13:14-16) (p. 668).

While Shechem's reaction was the opposite of Amnon's, this was evident only after Shechem had raped Dinah (as Amnon raped Tamar). Both men began by raping a woman in order to satisfy "his biological urge," after which one "clung" to his victim (Shechem) and the other hated his (Amnon). By contrasting Shechem's experience with

Amnon's, Sforno indicates the similarity between Dinah and Tamar – they were both woman who had been raped to "satisfy" the man's urges.

Commentary on Jacob

Much like the midrashim from the rabbinic period, the commentators of the medieval period have mixed impressions of Jacob.

Ramban on Jacob

Even though there are a number of midrashim from the rabbinic period both condemning and supporting Jacob, *Rashi* is curiously silent regarding him. *Ramban*, however, centers his discourse about Jacob regarding the negotiations for Dinah's hand in marriage between Shechem and Hamor, and Dinah's family. In Gen 34:13, "The sons of Jacob answered Shechem, and Hamor his father, with deceit, and they said amongst themselves that he (Shechem) had defiled their sister Dinah."[16]

It is the deceit on the part of the "sons of Jacob" during these negotiations that makes the later massacre of the city of Shechem possible. Jacob's sons deceive Shechem and Hamor by telling them that they will intermarry with them only if all of the male Shechemites become circumcised. And it is as the men of the city are recuperating from their circumcision surgeries – and are physically vulnerable – that Simeon and Levi slaughter the town.

Ramban notes that Jacob was present at the negotiations and addresses the question as to why Jacob did not speak up in light of his sons' deception:

> Hamor and Shechem addressed [Dinah's] father and her brothers. However, the elder (Jacob) did not respond to them at all for his sons spoke in

[16] My translation.

> his place in this matter to protect his honor because, since this incident was a matter of disgrace for them, they did not want [Jacob] to have to open his mouth to speak about it at all. (p. 222)

Having established that Jacob remained silent during the negotiations because his sons wanted to protect his honor, *Ramban* then asserts that Jacob never intended to follow through marriage agreement because "it is not credible that Jacob should have been willing to marry off his daughter to the Canaanite Shechem who had defiled her!" (p. 222). Here, *Ramban* indicates that Jacob cared more for her wellbeing than is actually indicated in the biblical text itself. It seems inconceivable to *Ramban* that a man would be willing to marry his daughter off to the person who had raped her. Once again, *Ramban* demonstrates greater sensitivity of Dinah's experience (and of women generally) than what appears in the rabbinic literature.

With this interpretation, *Ramban* establishes that Jacob was aware of – and complicit in – the deception of Shechem and Hamor perpetrated by his sons, which raises another question for him: if Jacob was complicit in the deception, why did he become so angry with Simeon and Levi in verse 30 when he declared "you have troubled me"? *Ramban* answers this question by explaining that Simeon and Levi went further than the plan developed by all the brothers and sanctioned by Jacob:

> [The brothers] would go to the city on the third day, when [the Shechemites] were in pain and would forcibly take their daughter [Dinah] from Shechem's house. This was the plan for all the brothers, and it was undertaken with the sanction of their father. Simeon and Levi, however, wanted to take

vengeance against [the Shechemites] and they killed all the men of the city, although that was not part of the original plan. (p. 223)

Ramban's interpretation paints Jacob as a man willing to engage in an elaborate deception in order to rescue his abducted daughter, but not one willing to cross other, more significant, moral boundaries. *Ramban* continues his discussion of Jacob's anger toward Simeon and Levi by pointing out Jacob's moral compass: "It is also plausible that Jacob's anger [at Simeon and Levi] … was because they killed the men of the city, who had done nothing wrong to him, whereas it would have been fitting for them to have killed Shechem alone, for he deserved to die" (p. 226). Here again, *Ramban* demonstrates greater consideration for Dinah's needs than shown in the midrashim.

Ibn Ezra on Jacob

Similar to his limited commentary on Dinah, *Ibn Ezra* has very little to say about Jacob. His only comment is on Gen 34:30 in which Jacob chastises Simeon and Levi for the destruction they had wrought in Shechem. *Ibn Ezra* explains what Jacob means when he said to his sons that they had made him "to stink" *b.a.sh*. in the eyes of the other inhabitants of the land. *Ibn Ezra* explains that Jacob meant "they will hate me as one loathes something which gives off a horrible smell."

Radak on Jacob

Radak affirms *GenR* 80:4 that blames Dinah being raped on Jacob's withholding her from marrying his brother Esau. At the same time he agrees with *Ramban*'s characterization of Jacob's unwillingness to engage in immoral behavior. Other than that, *Radak* contributes very little regarding Jacob except to comment on his cowardice. He does so with his interpretation of the verb *b.a.sh.* in Gen 34:30 when Jacob tells

Simeon and Levi that they have caused him "to stink in the dwelling of the land." With his translation of *b.a.sh.*, *Radak* has Jacob saying that his sons have endeavored:

> To cause me shame. The Canaanites in the region will despise me and try to remove me from the district as one removes a person who exudes a putrid stench. Yaakov [Jacob] reacted in the time-honored fashion of being afraid, almost a trademark of his, whereas his sons were stout-hearted men willing to avenge the shame inflicted upon their very personalities. (p. 611)

Radak's contempt for Jacob, and his approval of Simeon and Levi, are palpable in his interpretation of Gen 34:30. While some of the midrashim criticize Jacob, *Radak* indicates a higher degree of contempt than demonstrated therein.

Sforno on Jacob

Sforno says very little about Jacob other than explaining his silence at hearing of the rape of his daughter: "He refrained from starting a quarrel until his sons would have been informed of what happened so that they could be on their guard against their adversaries" (p. 668). Here Sforno suggests that Jacob kept silent not out of indifference to Dinah's plight, but out of an abundance of caution in order to protect the rest of his clan.

Commentary on Simeon and Levi

As with the commentary on Jacob, the medieval commentators are quite mixed in their impressions of Simeon and Levi.

Rashi on Simeon and Levi

With his comments on Gen 34:13, *Rashi* seeks to exonerate Simeon and Levi for their actions in the city of Shechem, again keeping in accord with the midrashim of the

rabbinic period. Gen 34:13 says that "the sons of Jacob answered Shechem, and Hamor his father, with deceit and they said amongst themselves that he (Shechem) had defiled their sister Dinah."[17] Rashi suggests, however, that the word translated as "with deceit" (*b'mirmah*), actually means "with wisdom." As indicated in the Sapirstein edition of *Rashi*'s Commentary, *Rashi* derives this meaning from *GenR* 80:8, and explains:

> Thus it was permissible for them to use any necessary means in order to bring about the death of Shechem, for he had committed a sin for which a non-Jew is subject to the death penalty. This supports *Rashi*'s pervious point, that *b'mirmah* of our verse does not mean "with treachery (deceit)." Using legal means would not be termed "treachery" (p. 384).

Interestingly, while *Rashi*'s comment exonerates Simeon and Levi for their killing of Shechem, he makes no mention of the moral appropriateness of the brothers slaughtering all the men in the town.

Ramban on Simeon and Levi

Ramban takes a very different approach to Simeon and Levi's slaughter of the city of Shechem than does *Rashi*. First he outlines Simeon and Levi's motivation for engaging in behavior so far outside that which Jacob had condoned (see above), and then he describes Jacob's critique of his sons' behavior. First, Simeon and Levi's motivation:

> The idea behind this incident with Shechem is that Jacob's sons (Simeon and Levi) – because the people of Shechem were wicked in any event, and their blood was consequently like water to them – wanted to take vengeance from

[17] Ibid.

them "with a vengeful sword," so they killed the king, as well as all the men of his city, because they were his servants and obeyed his bidding. And the covenant of the circumcision [which the Shechemites had undergone] did not mean anything to [Jacob's sons], for [in their opinion] it was done only to ingratiate themselves with their master [Shechem]. (p. 227)

So, according to *Ramban*, Simeon and Levi slaughtered the men of Shechem because they wanted vengeance for what Shechem had done to Dinah, and because the people of Shechem were wicked, which made their circumcision covenant meaningless. *Ramban* goes on to show that Jacob points out two faults with his sons' reasoning. The first is that Simeon and Levi put Jacob's tribe in peril, as indicated in Gen 34:30 when Jacob declares "you have troubled me, by causing me to sink in the dwelling of the land – with the Canaanites and the Perizzites!" *Ramban* then refers to a different story entirely to point out Jacob's second criticism of his sons' behavior. In Genesis 49, when Jacob is near death, he gathers his sons around him to tell them his impressions of them. Of Simeon and Levi, Jacob says:

Simeon and Levi are a pair; their weapons are tools of lawlessness. Let not my person be included in their council, let not my being be counted in their assembly. For when angry they slay men, and when pleased they maim oxen. Cursed be their anger so fierce, and their wrath so relentless. I will divide them in Jacob, scatter them in Israel (Gen 49:5-7).[18]

By incorporating Gen 49, *Ramban* has Jacob chastise Simeon and Levi for wanton murder:

[18] JPS translation.

> And elsewhere (Gen 49:7) he [Jacob] cursed their anger because they did an injustice to the people of the city [of Shechem], for they had said to [the Shechemites] in his presence, *We will dwell with you and become a single people* (Gen 34:16), and [the Shechemites] chose [to become intermarried with] them and put their trust in their word. And perhaps they would have repented [and turned] to God, [since they had already gone so far as to circumcise themselves]. So, [Jacob told them], they killed [the Shechemites] for no reason, for they had not wronged them in any way. This is what [Jacob meant when] he said, their weapons are tools of lawlessness (Gen 49:5). (p. 227)

Unlike the rabbinic sages, as well as *Rashi*, who attempt to exonerate Simeon and Levi for their rampage in the city of Shechem, *Ramban* calls attention to the text where Jacob curses them because of their immoral killing of the Shechemites.

<u>Ibn Ezra on Simeon and Levi</u>

Ibn Ezra uses Gen 34:13 ("The sons of Jacob answered Shechem, and his father Hamor, with deceit…") to illustrate that Simeon and Levi's acts were not completely independent as suggested by the midrash (*GenR* 80:10):

> Simeon and Levi acted with the full consent of their brothers. This is clear from… [the verse]. The "sons of Jacob" refers to all of the brothers. Jacob spilled his anger on Simeon and Levi because they killed the men of Shechem.

So, according to *Ibn Ezra*, all of the brothers were complicit in the slaughter of Shechem; Simeon and Levi were the sole recipients of the Jacob's ire because they preformed the actual killing of the Shechemites.

Radak on Simeon and Levi

Unlike *Rashi* who attempts to insulate Simeon and Levi from criticism, and *Ramban* who severely chastises the two, *Radak* wholeheartedly endorses Simeon and Levi's actions. He does so with his commentary on the verse in which Simeon and Levi "each took his sword, and came upon the city security and killed every male" (Gen 34:25.

> In this instance, Simeon and Levi, although all the brothers were in complete agreement of what was being planned… When it came to carrying out their plan, the other brothers were afraid and did not risk their lives in that undertaking. Only Simeon and Levi considered the fate of their sister as paramount. The Torah accords them full points for considering themselves as the brothers of Dinah par excellence, although at least four more of the brothers were Dinah's brothers both from the father and from the mother. (p. 668)

Here, *Radak* sees Simeon and Levi acting in a noble fashion when they massacred the city of Shechem, again departing from the perspectives of *Rashi* and *Ramban*.

Sforno on Simeon and Levi

While his treatment of Dinah and Jacob is quite limited, Sforno does make some interesting comments regarding the actions of Simeon and Levi. He begins his analysis of Gen 34:13 in which Dinah's brothers answer Shechem and Hamor "with deceit" regarding intermarriage and circumcision:

> They [the brothers] demanded that the people circumcise themselves expecting them to refuse. Alternatively, they thought that Shechem and Chamor

> [Hamor], although prepared themselves to circumcise themselves, would not be able to convince the townsfolk to follow their example. (p. 669)

So, according to Sforno, this deceit was not expected to be an issue because they never thought the people would follow through on such a suggestion. But, in fact, the people – including Shechem and Hamor – did take the suggestion of circumcision seriously, and followed through with the endeavor. This fact creates a problem for Sforno, in that he now needs to explain why Simeon and Levi were unwilling to allow their sister to marry Shechem once he had been circumcised (and made "kosher"). He does this by explaining that:

> They [Simeon and Levi] said that the kind of *ipso facto* voluntary circumcision which Shechem and his father were willing to perform on themselves was not relevant after Shechem had already defiled their sister. They considered this as in the category of *itnan zonah*, offering the price paid to a whore as a sacrifice on G'd's altar. (p. 669)

Sforno discounts the circumcision of Shechem and Hamor as an utter debasement – something akin to the payment to a prostitute (*zonah*) in place of a proper sacrifice to God. Having introduced the idea of a *zonah*, Sforno goes to great lengths to ensure that Dinah is not seen as being one. He does this with his commentary on the final verse of the story (Gen 34:31) in which Simeon and Levi respond to Jacob's chastisement with the righteously indignant retort, "should our sister be made like a prostitute?" (Gen 34:31). Sforno explains that, with this response, Simeon and Levi were indicating that:

> Only a harlot does not have anyone standing up in her defense, avenging violence done to her… [Our sister] was not a harlot. It is incumbent upon us to avenge her disgrace. Once the inhabitants of the region will understand this they will have no reason to attack us. (p. 611)

Sforno makes clear that he sees the circumcision of Shechem and Hamor as nothing more than their attempt to make Dinah a *zonah* by paying (with their foreskins) for the sex Shechem had inflicted upon Dinah. She was not a *zonah*, Sforno assures us, because only a *zonah* has no one to avenge for them when they are raped. But Dinah had Simeon and Levi, not only to avenge the violence she incurred, but also to prove that she could never be seen as a harlot. With his take on Simeon and Levi's rational for slaughtering the city of Shechem, Sforno decidedly rejects the midrashim from the rabbinic period that paint Dinah as a harlot because she "went out." Additionally, with his interpretation of Simeon and Levi's actions, Sforno addresses Jacob's anxiety about making the tribe vulnerable (Gen 34:30). He suggests that the other peoples of the land will see the brothers actions as justifiable, given that their sister was not a *zonah* and therefore needed to be avenged.

Commentary on Shechem, Hamor, and the City of Shechem

While pre-rabbinic literature (see Chapter Four) decries Shechem as a kidnapper and rapist of the worst order,[19] and deems the people of Shechem as inherently evil,[20] the rabbinic literature (see Chapter Five) ignores them almost entirely, and reserves its vitriol primarily for Dinah. This trend changes again in the medieval period, in that Shechem and the Shechemites again come under significant scrutiny.

[19] See the Book of Jubilees.
[20] See the Testament of Levi.

Rashi on Shechem

Since *Rashi* usually tries to stick closely in his commentary to material found in the earlier rabbinic midrashim, and the midrashim say so little about Shechem, his comments about Shechem are quite limited. He does, however, veer from the rabbinic literature somewhat by suggesting duplicity on the part of Shechem and Hamor in his comments on Gen 34:16. Verse 16 comes during the negotiations between Shechem/Hamor and Jacob's clan for Dinah's hand, and directly after they have required circumcision as the prerequisite for the union to occur: "Then we will give to you our daughters, and your daughters we will take to us. Then we will dwell with you and we will become as one people" (Gen 34:16).

Rashi compares Gen 34:16 with Shechem and Hamor's retelling of the proposal to the Shechemites a few verses later (Gen 34:21) to illustrate their underhandedness:

> You find in the stipulation which Hamor stated to Jacob and in the response of the sons of Jacob to Hamor, that they hung [i.e. attributed], the [greater] significance upon the sons of Jacob, [to be able] to take the daughters of Shechem whomever they chose for themselves, and their own daughters they would give to them according to their own opinion [i.e. as they saw fit], for it is written – *And **we will give** our daughters* – [which implies] according to our opinion [i.e. as we see fit], *and your daughters **we will take** to ourselves*, [which implies] all according to our desire. But when Hamor and Shechem, his son, spoke to the residents of their city (verse 21), they turned the words around. [They said], *Their daughters **we will take** for ourselves as wives, and our*

daughters ***we will give*** *to them*, in order to appease them so that they should consent to be circumcised. (p. 385)

Rashi indicates that Shechem and Hamor never intended to afford Jacob's clan the prestige implied in the agreement in Gen 34:16, that would allow Jacob's clan to pick the Shechemite women they wanted for themselves, and give their daughters only as they saw fit. Instead, Shechem and Hamor's duplicitous nature is revealed when they reversed the word order (and the implied prestige) when speaking to their townsfolk.

<u>Ramban on Shechem</u>

Much as Testament of Levi from the pre-rabbinic period (see Chapter Four) portrays the Shechemite people as sinister and deserving of the treatment of they got at the end of Simeon and Levi's swords, *Ramban* indicates that the Shechemites engaged in all forms of immorality:

> Weren't the people of Shechem – and all the seven [Canaanite] nations – perpetrators of idolatry, sexual immorality and all the [other acts considered] abominations to God? In many places Scripture proclaims loudly about them [*and their attachment to idolatry, such as … where the nations that you are driving away worshiped their gods] on the high mountains and on the hills and under every leafy tree etc.* (Deut 12:2), and [*When you come to the land that Adonai, your God, gives you], you shall not learn to act according to the abominations of those nations* (ibid, 18:9), and, concerning sexual immorality, *For the inhabitants of the land who were before you committed all these abominations* (Lev 18:27). (p. 224)

Ibn Ezra on Shechem

As with Dinah, Jacob, and Simeon and Levi, *Ibn Ezra*'s commentary on Shechem is quite limited. He does, however, affirm *Rashi*'s perception of Shechem and Hamor as duplicitous, and suggests that they had not engaged in negotiations for Dinah's hand in good faith: "Shechem and Hamor had evil designs on Jacob and his sons for they said "Their livestock, and their possessions, and all their cattle – won't it become ours?" (Gen 34:23).

Radak on Shechem

Radak's comments on the City of Shechem center on the of the biblical text that explains what occurred after Simeon and Levi had slaughtered the men of the town: "The sons of Jacob came upon the dead bodies and plundered the city that had defiled their sister" (Gen 34:27).

Radak explains why, if Shechem was the one to violate Dinah, the text uses the plural form of "to defile" (*t.m.h.*):

> [This form of *t.m.h*. is] to demonstrate by means of this that the men of this city had defiled their sister. This became public knowledge in the region after the sons of Yaakov killed the people who had tolerated this crime, the townspeople had watched the violent rape and had not lifted a finger to stop it. (p. 610)

For *Radak*, the entire city of Shechem was complicit in the violation of Dinah because they did nothing to stop it, and therefore deserved to loose their lives and have their property plundered.

Sforno on Shechem

Similar to *Rashi*, Sforno's limited comments on Shechem emphasize their duplicitous nature. In Sforno's case, however, the object of derision is not Shechem and Hamor but the Shechemites as a whole. He indicates that:

> These men had not circumcised themselves in order to become Jews and embrace monotheism but only in order to lay their hands on the vast possessions of the family of Yaakov [Jacob], as their leaders Chamor [Hamor] and Shechem had promised them. (p. 669)

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With the coming of the Middle Ages and the advent of the *Mikra'ot Gedolot*, we find another significant shift in attitudes towards both Dinah and women in general. In the literature of the Intertestamental period (420 B.C.E – 1st century C.E.), the attitude toward Dinah is, in all cases, positive and supportive, and the ideals found in the *Book of Judith* can only be described as proto-feminist it its treatment of Dinah and the story's protagonist – Judith herself. Those pro-women sentiments take an ugly turn in the rabbinic era (2nd – 5th centuries C.E.), in that the midrashim repeatedly accuse Dinah of harlotry, criticize all women as immoral, and seek to restrict women's movements outside the home. Most of the medieval commentators do not display the concern with gender roles and locus of control seen in the rabbinic period, and they attempt to push back on the vitriolic attitudes of the rabbinic period, with commentary more consistent with attitudes towards Dinah as found in the Intertestamental period. The only exception to this attempt to counter the earlier rabbinic sources is *Radak*, who consistently reiterates the attitudes found in the rabbinic era midrashim. As a result of

this push back, women fare much better in the medieval commentary than they do in the rabbinic era.

In terms of rape myths, the only commentator to reflect such attitudes is *Radak*, whose commentary consistently stays in line with the rabbinic midrashim. He demonstrates the "she wanted it" myth when he refuses to see Dinah's experience as a rape, and instead refers to it as "more in the nature of seduction." *Radak* ignores the intensity and rapid-fire nature of the verbs found in Gen 34:1 (saw, took, laid, violated) in order to minimize Dinah's violation as a seduction. He also reflects the "no harm" myth by stressing that the one harmed by Dinah's encounter with Shechem was not Dinah herself, but was actually Jacob. *Radak* sees God as having punished Jacob by dishonoring him through the violation of Dinah. In *Radak*'s reading of Gen 34:1, Dinah was mere collateral damage; the one truly being harmed was her father. While *Radak's* commentary does reflect rape myths found in modern society (as do the midrashim of the rabbinic period), none of the other major commentaries of the medieval period do so.

Chapter Seven: Modern Period

Orthodox Commentaries

The modern age presented Jews – and Jewish commentators – with some significant new challenges. With the Age of Enlightenment, Jews were permitted to exit the confines of the European ghettos to which they had been relegated for several centuries, and begin participating fully in society. As Jews were exposed to the Enlightenment's ideas that were taking hold throughout Europe, a new intellectual movement known as the Haskalah – or Jewish Enlightenment – began to develop significant influence within the Jewish communities of Western and Eastern Europe. The Haskalah emphasized rationality and "encouraged Jews to study secular subjects, to learn both the European and Hebrew languages, and to enter fields such as agriculture, crafts, the arts and science."[1] And with the new focus on secular subjects, came the incorporation of rationalism and scientific methods into the study of the Bible and rabbinic literature.

This new engagement with contemporary society, as well as the rise of the Haskalah movement, brought with it the desire, by many, to modernize Judaism and Jewish customs in order to fit in more readily with the surrounding culture. The most significant efforts to modernize Judaism began in the early 19th century in Germany where the congregations in Seesen, Hamburg, and Berlin began making significant "reforms" to traditional Jewish practice.[2] This was the beginning of what would become

[1] Jewishvirtuallibrary.org/jsource/Judaism/Haskalah
[2] Jewishvirtuallibrary.org/jsource/Judaism/The_Origins_of_Reform_Judaism.html

known as Reform Judaism, the movement that became the dominant form of Judaism in Europe and the United States within a century.[3]

Not all Jews supported attempts to modernize Judaism, however. Both the Haskalah and the Reform movement received significant pushback, both from those who were opposed to any Jewish involvement in modern society, as well as those who supported Jewish interaction with contemporary culture, but opposed altering Jewish practice. Four Torah commentaries were written, at least in part, as a response to the advent of Reform Judaism (see below), as well as the use of secular scholarship in Bible and Talmud study. In due course, this factional tension gave rise to three distinct movements within Judaism - Reform, Orthodox, and Conservative – with the Reform Movement being the most willing to make innovations, the Orthodox Movement being the least amiable to changes in practice, and the Conservative Movement attempting to engage with modernity while still adhering to traditional Jewish Law with only minor alterations. Both the Reform and Conservative Torah commentaries incorporate scientific methods in their Bible commentaries, while most Orthodox commentaries refrain from doing so.

In addition to engagement with modernity and the development of Jewish movements seen in the 19th century, Jewish commentators met with another significant challenge in the 20th century. While much of Jewish practice, irrespective of movement, had been a realm reserved exclusively for men, the advent of feminism in the mid-20th century brought about rethinking of women's role in Jewish practice, as well as Jewish

[3] ibid.

scholarship. These changes served to deepen the factional divide among the various Jewish movements.

All these factors contributed to the cultural milieu of the modern Jewish commentators and influenced biblical commentary. Unlike the Middle Ages that saw the development of the *Mikra'ot Gedolot* (see Chapter Six) in which various commentaries were presented side by side in order to "discuss" the meaning of the biblical text, the factionalism of the modern age gave rise to commentators producing their own individual translations and commentary on the Chumash (The Torah, also termed The Five Books of Moses). Each of these modern commentators maintained a particular point of view and agenda that undergirded their interpretive choices about the text. Since the goal of this paper is to understand Jewish cultural attitudes regarding women in society, I have excluded scholarly analyses (also a modern innovation) of the Dinah text, and have limited my analysis to the Chumashim most often read and studied by the typical "Jew in the pew."

Outlined below are the Torah Commentaries most often used and studied by Jews since the early 19th century, including those Chumashim produced for specific Jewish movements. While the Reform and Conservative movements each developed Chumashim that came to be considered the standard for their particular movement, what constitutes the standard Chumash for the Orthodox movement is less well defined. The reason for this ambiguity is that within Jewish Orthodoxy exist several factions with widely varying attitudes about appropriate customs, practice, and Jewish engagement with the wider society. These factions range in ideology from the reasonably progressive Modern Orthodox Movement that emphasizes adherence to

Halakah (Jewish Law) but also promotes active engagement with non-Jewish culture, to the ultra-orthodox Haredi factions that live as insular societies and spurn interaction with non-Haredi members, as well as modernity in general.

Whether coming from the perspective of Reform, Conservative, or one of the factions of Orthodox Judaism, all of the commentaries – whether written by an individual or a group – make choices about what to emphasize and what to understate, and those choices reflect much about the cultural milieu of the commentator and his or her readers. All modern Torah commentaries benefit from the long and varied history of pre-existing commentary upon which they draw. This point is particularly relevant for the purposes of this paper's examination of attitudes regarding women. In commenting on the Dinah story, modern commentaries that emphasize the perspective about women prevalent during the rabbinic period (see Chapter Five), say something very different about the commentator's cultural milieu than those commentaries that place greater emphases on the outlook seen in the pre-rabbinic (see Chapter Four) and Medieval (see Chapter Six) time periods.

Because the orthodox commentaries differ from the others in that they shun modern and scientific innovations in Bible commentary, I have divided the discussion of modern commentaries into two sections: Orthodox and Progressive. The present chapter addresses the significant Orthodox commentaries written since the start of the Enlightenment; the following chapter addresses Progressive commentaries. Within each section, the commentaries are discussed in chronological order of Chumash's original publication date.

Heketav Vehakabbalah*[4] *(1839)

The commentary by Yaakov Tzevi Mecklenburg – entitled *Heketav Vehakabblah* – was the first written specifically in opposition to the reforming efforts that came with the Haskalah movement. *Hekatav Vehakabbalah* was originally written in Hebrew, and was translated into English in 2001. Mecklenburg served as the rabbi of Koenigsberg for over 30 years, during which time he passionately "fought the Reform movement, even attempting to break up a gathering of Reform synagogues convened in the city of Braunschweig during the year of 1844."[5] *Heketav Vehakabbalah* was published in 1839 and was designed "to demonstrate the indivisibility of the written Torah and its counterpart the oral Torah."[6] The oral Torah is represented in the literature of the rabbinic period (Mishnah, Talmud, and Midrash), and Mecklenburg sought to "prove that the written Torah [Hebrew Bible] without the oral Torah is not incomplete, but is a **perversion** of the Torah's moral and ethical principles."[7]

Dinah

Given that Mecklenburg wrote *Heketav Vehakabbalah* in order to prove the interdependence of the written Torah and the oral Torah, it is interesting that he completely ignores the midrashim of the rabbinic period in his comments on Dinah. Instead, he refers to a later midrash from the 8th century[8] to indicate Dinah's innocence. In his comments on Gen 34:1, Mecklenburg focuses on that fact that Dinah went "to see

[4] All Haketav Tehakabblah translations come from: Yaakov Tzevi Mecklenburg, *Haketav Vehakabbalah*, Eliyahu Much (trans.), (New York: Lambda Publishers, Inc., 2001)
[5] ibid, iii.
[6] ibid, iv.
[7] Ibid.
[8] The midrash *Pirke de Rabbi Eleizer*

among the **daughters of the land**" instead of on her "going out" (the primary focus of the rabbinic literature):

> She wanted to see the kinds of dresses the local girls wore, the kind of jewelry they had, etc., in the manner which is customary for young girls to do. Even the prophet Jeremiah (2:32) already asked the rhetorical question: *can a maiden ever forget her jewelry, a bride her adornments?* According to *Pirkey de Rabbi Eliezer* the daughter of Yaakov was a homebody, not venturing outside. What did Shechem son of Chamor [Hamor] do to lure her outside and to get to know her? He brought with him a bunch of girls who began to play and amuse themselves and play music in front of Yaakov's residence. This aroused Dinah's curiosity, as a result of which she stepped outside to watch the goings on. (p. 469)

Instead of referencing the numerous midrashim from the rabbinic period that berate Dinah as an immodest harlot (see Chapter Five), Mecklenburg instead references the later *Pirke de Rabbi Eliezer* midrash to depict Dinah as a simple and innocent girl, who is enticed into a dangerous situation by a musical display that appears harmless and friendly. By doing so, Mecklenburg pushes against the attitudes of the midrashim of the rabbinic period, and with his reference to Jeremiah, he makes clear that he sees it as normal and natural for a girl to be enticed by such a display of music and friendship. This perspective directly contradicts the perspective demonstrated in the rabbinic literature. Other than making clear that Dinah was the innocent victim of a violent rape (which he does in his comments to Gen 34:5, 7, and 13), Mecklenburg makes no further comment about Dinah.

Jacob

Similar to the midrashim (GenR 80:6 and Tanhuma 8:13 – see Chapter Five) and *Ramban* in the medieval period (see Chapter Six), Mecklenburg ponders why Jacob remained silent upon hearing his daughter had been raped (Gen 34:5). His conclusion is similar to that of the midrashim that see Jacob as exercising the necessary caution under the circumstances:

> The Torah's point is that Yaakov [Jacob] did not push the panic button calling his sons to come in from the field in the middle of the day. He did not inform them of the rape until after they had come home in the evening so as not to agitate them needlessly. Sforno writes that the expression ("remained silent") implies that he did not begin an altercation with the locals until his sons would come home and would hear what happened and they would protect themselves from their adversaries. (p. 469)

Simeon and Levi

Mecklenburg agrees with *Rashi* that when Jacob's sons answer Shechem and Hamor *b'mirmah* "with deceit" (Gen 34:13), the proper translation is actually "with wisdom." He goes on to state that:

> It is even possible that the word *b'mirmah* is the word which the brothers said to Chamor and Shechem. By using the word *b'mirmah* they implied the following "everything you have spoken of you said with guile. You suggest that the girl has willingly remained with you and you proposed intermarriage between our two families in order to gloss over the fact that our sister is being held by you against her will. You make it appear that you want to appease us

and that the only step missing in resolving the whole problem is our agreeing *ipso facto* to what has occurred as an act of gross violence. We are not stupid enough not to be able to see through all this. You have first violated her by detaining her, by raping her, and you continue to detain her against her will, refusing to let her go home." Anyone analyzing the fury of the brother and their emotional state realizes that at such a time they did not want to waste many words in lengthy negotiations. They therefore contented themselves with a single word which expressed all their thoughts. This word was the word *b'mirmah*. As soon as they had uttered this word, which expressed their collective attitude, they calmed down somewhat and engaged in planning their vengeance. (p. 471)

With this explanation of *b'mirmah*, Mecklenburg not only explains the behavior of Simeon and Levi, but also counters any suggestion that Dinah willingly stayed at Shechem's house after their sexual encounter. This interpretation directly counters midrash GenR 80:11 that Dinah had to be dragged from Shechem's residence by her brothers.

Shechem

Mecklenburg presents Shechem as a conniving rapist who will go to great lengths to lure and violate an innocent girl. He sums up his opinion of Shechem and his father by putting words in the mouths of Simeon and Levi in his comments on Gen 34:13:

> They told Shechem and Chamor to their faces that they knew that Shechem had violated and defiled Dinah against her will; they implied that

> although no doubt the actual act had been performed in the privacy of a house where there were no witnesses, they judged the perpetrator on the basis of what Dinah's status was now, i.e. that both Shechem and his father refused to let her go home. Just as Shechem had needed to use violence to get Dinah into the house where he had raped her, he now kept her against her will also. No doubt the purpose of the detention was to perpetrate further acts of defilement upon her. (p. 472)

Hirsch Commentary on the Torah[9] (1867)

The second Torah commentary to be published in an attempt to stave off the reforming attitudes of the Haskalim was written by Samson Raphael Hirsch who was born in Hamburg, Germany in 1808, and is considered the father of Modern Jewish Orthodoxy. As a child he attended public school, and he received his Jewish education at home.[10] Having been ordained as a rabbi in 1829, Hirsch then went on to the University of Bonn where he studied classical languages, history, and philosophy.[11] Hirsch "was both a modernist and a traditionalist," who sought to demonstrate that "traditional Judaism and Western culture" were compatible."[12]

Hirsch's commentary on the book of Genesis was first published in German in 1867, and was translated into English in 1966.[13] While as a pulpit rabbi Hirsch adopted many of the trappings of the Jewish Reformers (clerical robes, choir, sermons in the

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[9] All Hirsch translations come from: Samson Raphael Hirsch, *Commentary on the Torah*, Isaac Levy (trans.), (London: The Judaica Press, Inc., 1966).
[10] jewishvirtuallibrary.org/jsource/biolgraphy/Hirsch.html
[11] ibid.
[12] ibid.
[13] Samson Raphael Hirsch, *Commentary on the Torah (vol. 1)*, Isaac Levy (trans), (London: The Judaica Press, Inc., 1966).

vernacular),[14] he "spent the early part of his career in persistently counteracting the heretical arguments of the early Reformers."[15] In the author's preface to his own commentary, Hirsch asserts that his aim in writing his commentary was "to explore and establish the facts out of which the Jewish outlook on the world and on life has formed itself, and which, for all time, form the norms of Jewish life."[16] While Hirsch does not explicitly cite the sources he uses to underpin his commentary, he clearly alludes to both the midrashic literature from the rabbinic period, as well as commentary from the middle ages.

Dinah

Similar to *Rashi* in the 11th century (see Chapter Five), Hirsch's treatment of Dinah attempts to be consonant with the midrashim of the rabbinic ear, while also trying to insulate Dinah from the worst of the rabbinic vitriol. For his commentary on Gen 34:1, Hirsch writes:

> *The daughter of Leah*, [means Dinah was] equally the child of Leah as are the greater portion of all future Jewish people; and *she was born unto Jacob* [means that] Jacob's spirit lived equally in here. And even if she was mishandled, and added to that, perhaps gave the opportunity for it by her "going out," out of the family circle into the midst of strangers she was, nevertheless, through and through, a daughter of Jacob. She went out to look around at the girls of the country, to get to know the foreign girls. She was a young girl and curious. (p. 517)

[14] Jewishvirtuallibrary.org.
[15] Hirsch, x.
[16] ibid, vi.

Here, when Hirsch says "perhaps she gave the opportunity for it [the rape] by her "going out," he is clearly alluding to the midrashim that upbraid Dinah for "going out," but he also does much to attenuate the rabbinic criticism. He does not emphasize the rabbis' problems with Dinah "going out," but instead mentions it only in passing. He also paints Dinah as an innocent and sympathetic character who would naturally want to "get to know the foreign girls" because "she was a young girl and curious."

Hirsch continues to cast Dinah as a sympathetic character with his commentary on two additional verses in which he portrays her as vulnerable and defenseless. His commentary on Gen 34:4, in which Shechem has become attached to Dinah and demands of his father "take for me that child as wife," seethes with contempt for Shechem and sympathy for Dinah: "My lord Shechem speaks somewhat dictatorily. That she is to become his wife seems to him to be a matter purely dependent on his wish. After all he is the lord of the manor and she – a foreign Jew-girl" (p. 518). Hirsch makes the sense indicated in this comment – that Dinah was vulnerable and powerless – explicit in his comment on Gen 34:7: "Shechem would not have dared to treat the daughter of a citizen in such a manner, infringing the rights of a respectable community, only because she was a 'Jew-girl' could it have happened" (p. 519).

Jacob

Most of Hirsch's commentary on Jacob relates to Gen 34:5 in which "when Jacob heard that he [Shechem] had defiled Dinah his daughter, while his sons were with the livestock in the field, Jacob remained silent until they came in" (p. 520). Much as the midrashim (*Tanhuma* 8:13 and *GenR* 80:6) and Sforno (in the middle ages) had before

him, Hirsch grappled with the silence Jacob displayed upon hearing his daughter had been violated.

While the midrashim paint Jacob's silence as his displaying discernment and wisdom in the face of Hamor's foolishness (see Chapter Five), and Sforno attributed Jacob's silence to his showing an abundance of caution for the whole tribe (see Chapter Six), Hirsch's interpretation has a decidedly pathetic quality to it:

> Jacob's silence shows up the whole situation. Jacob was an old man, perhaps already ninety-seven years old. Had there been a question here of getting anything done by reason, by resort to rights or anything of that nature, Jacob would certainly not have remained silent. If the old grey-haired father goes to the lord and demand his dishonored daughter back – if there was any hope at all of the voice of justice and rights to be listened to – the impression made would certainly be greater than achieved by the younger sons and brothers. Jacob's silence shows that already beforehand he knew only too well how hopeless any appeal to justice or human rights would be, and the only way would be some resort to force which would be a matter for younger hands (p. 518).

Jacob was passively silent, according to Hirsch, because he understood the futility of acting in the situation. This pitiable portrayal of Jacob is quite rare in Torah commentary. As one of the Jewish patriarchs, Jacob's behavior is, at times, seen as contemptible, but never as feeble. The only exception to this portrayal of Jacob comes from *Radak* in the 12th century who accuses Jacob of cowardice (see Chapter Six).

While Hirsch veers from previous commentators in his interpretation of Jacob's silence, his opinion of Jacob's unwillingness to marry Dinah to Shechem corresponds completely with that of *Ramban* from the 13th century. In his comments on Gen 34:8-12, Hirsch explains that Hamor decided to negotiate with Dinah's brothers and not with Jacob because he knew he would get nowhere with Jacob as "no compensation would be acceptable to a father for his daughter's honor" (p. 520).

Simeon and Levi

While the midrashim from the rabbinic era attempt to shield Simeon and Levi from blame and direct it instead towards Dinah, the commentators from the Medieval period are split on their perceptions of the brothers with some completely exonerating the brothers, and others completely condemning their actions. Hirsch takes a more nuanced view of Simeon and Levi, in which he condemns their slaughter of the city while remaining sympathetic to pain that motivated them. Hirsch takes a close look at Gen 34:7. He then develops the implications and explains why the sons of Jacob are "sorrowful" and "burned with fury" when they heard their sister had been violated:

> The men's feelings were affected in two ways. By [sorrowful], the painful feeling of forcible renunciation, of having to give something up, loss. Their pure, innocent Dinah was no longer there, that they had lost even if they would succeed in getting her back out of the hands of Shechem. That was one way they felt, their personal feeling towards their lost sister. Then the wicked deed filled them with fiery indignation, for Shechem had disgraced *Israel* in violating a daughter of *Jacob* (p. 519).

Having recounted the brothers in a sympathetic manner, Hirsch goes on to condemn Simeon and Levi's actions in his comments on Gen 34:25:

> Now the blameworthy part begins, which we need in no wise to excuse. Had they killed Shechem and Chamor [Hamor] there would be scarcely anything to say against it. But they did not spare the unarmed men who were at their mercy, yea, and went further and looted, altogether made the inhabitants pay for the crime of the landowner. For that there was no justification. For that Jacob too reproached them: You have "clouded" me, our reputation, our name, our honor, which was clear as crystal you have besmirched, have brought me in evil odor even with the Canaanites and the Perizzites. And just as you have dealt unjustly so you have dealt unwisely, we are so few in number etc. (p. 523).

Shechem

Hirsch says very little about Shechem beyond suggesting that he abused his power as "lord of the manor" to violate Dinah (see above). He does, however, dismiss as insincere Shechem's statement "require of me a very large bride gift and a gift and I will give whatever you say to me, only give to me the maiden as wife" (Gen 34:12):

> All this sounds very nice and fair, and would indeed be so had the gracious lord had the grace to first return the girl to her family, and then, when she was free, sue for her hand. But as it was, to deal with the father and brothers while keeping the girl in durance vile, meant no more than an attempt *pro forma* to give a legal appearance to an act of bare-faced rape and violence (p. 520).

Malbim Flashes of Insight[17] (1874)

Meir Yehuda Leibish (Malbim) was the third, and possibly most insistent, of the modern commentators to write a commentary in opposition to the Haskalah and efforts to reform Judaism. Born in 1809, Malbim became chief rabbi of Romania in 1858 where he actively fought against members of the Haskalim who wanted to build a new modern synagogue in Bucharest patterned after the reform synagogues in Western Europe.[18] Malbim wrote his commentary originally in Hebrew (it was translated into English in 2009), and was motivated to write it in order "to show how the Oral and Written Law blended together in perfect harmony."[19]

Dinah

Unlike Hirsch who acknowledges Dinah's "going out" put her in harms way, but is mostly supportive of her, or Mecklenburg who states unequivocally that Dinah had been lured out and was completely innocent, Malbim makes no direct comment about Dinah at all. He ignores completely the multiple midrashim from the rabbinic period that chastise Dinah, and instead focuses primarily on the actions of Simeon and Levi, and the culpability of the Shechemites.

Jacob

Malbim's only mention of Jacob revolves around the conflict he has with Simeon and Levi in the last two verses of the story (Gen 34:30-31). He suggests that Jacob's primary concern is that his tribe was in a precarious position for two reasons: Jacob is an outsider and not a member of the "inhabitants of the land," and Jacob's "nationality

[17] All translations for Malbim come from: Mendel Weinbach (ed.), *Malbim Flashes of Insight on Bereishis/Genesis*, New York: Mesorah Publications, Ltd., 2009).
[18] Jewishvirtuallibrary.org/jsource/judaica/ejud_0002_001
[19] Weinbach, 10.

and religious values are in opposition" to those of the Canaanites and Perizzites. Jacob rebukes his sons, according to Malbim, and states that "by attacking the city of Shechem the brothers had fanned these coals of hatred into a flame, arousing the ire of those who far outnumbered Yaakov's little tribe and who were not bound by blood ties to retaliate" (p. 243). Malbin has Jacob's sons retort that a show of strength is what is needed in this situation: "if we remain silent now, they will continue doing to us whatever they please. We need to show that we have the power to strike back at all those who commit evil against us" (ibid).

Simeon and Levi

In his comments on Gen 34:13-15, Malbim indicates that Simeon and Levi "answered Shechem, and Hamor his father, with deceit" by making no mention "regarding the true cause of their anger, the crimes of kidnap and rape, crimes that could be redressed by nothing short of the death penalty" (p. 239). Instead, they focus on the "stigma of foreskin" in order to entice Shechem and Hamor, and the city of Shechem, into a vulnerable position. Malbim suggests that if Simeon and Levi had indicated the true source of their ire (the rape of their sister), then Shechem and Hamor would have understood that no resolution was possible with Jacob's clan. By focusing on circumcision, Malbim suggests that Simeon and Levi ensure the ability to retaliate for what was done to Dinah.

Shechem

Having explained why Simeon and Levi act "with deceit," Malbim then goes on to explain in his comment on Gen 34:25 why not only Shechem and Hamor, but also entire city, deserve Simeon and Levi's murderous response:

> Each of the seven Noachide laws carries capital punishment for those who violate it, and one of the Noachide laws is the prohibition against theft, including "human theft," i.e., kidnapping. For his rape and abduction of Dinah, therefore, Prince Shechem was liable to death. And because the people of Shechem neither prosecuted their prince nor protested against him for his high-handed crimes, they too, transgressed one of the seven Noachide laws, "*dinim*," the requirement that justice be done, that the other six Noachide laws be enforced. For this, they, too, incurred the death penalty (p. 241).

The Essential Torah Temimah[20] (1902)

Boruch Halevi Epstein (1860-1941) was the last of the four commentators to write a Torah commentary specifically designed to combat the reforming tendencies of the Haskalah movement. His work – *The Essential Torah Temimah* – was first published in Hebrew in 1902 and was designed to "show that this Torah, the Written Law, is a twin sister, as it were, to the Oral Law. They are inseparable – as body and soul, as flame and wick – the one, intimately enmeshed with the other."[21] Epstein's comments on Genesis 34 are quite terse, and pull entirely from literature from the rabbinic period. In addition to the midrashim, he also references the Talmudic literature. Epstein completely discounts the commentary from the medieval period, and unlike the other early modern commentaries, *Torah Temimah* is the only one to specifically reference the midrashim most condemning of Dinah (see Chapter Five), or to endorse and support the negative attitudes toward women found in the rabbinic literature.

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[20] All translations for Boruch Halevi Epstein come from: Halevi Epstein, *The Essential Torah Temimah*, Shraga Silverstein, trans. (New York: Feldheim Publishers, 1989).
[21] Ibid, IX.

Dinah

In his comments on the first two verses of the Dinah story (Gen 34:1-2), Epstein invokes the rabbinic literature to paint Dinah as a harlot, and dismiss the horrific nature of her ordeal. Regarding Dinah's "going out," Epstein relates the comments from the Jerusalem Talmud: "Now was our mother Leah a harlot [that she is brought into this context of rape?] – But because it is written: *And Leah went out to him* (Gen 30:16), we relate Dinah's going out to Leah's going out" (*Yerushalmi, Sanhedrin* 2:6) (p. 146). By using this passage, Epstein invokes the attitude prevalent during the rabbinic period that Dinah was a harlot who manifested Leah's harlot-like tendencies since they were both known to have "gone out" (see Chapter Five).

Regarding the second verse involving Dinah (Gen 34:2), Epstein is interested in the nature of Dinah's "affliction" as described in the verb *a.n.h*.[22] This time he cites the Babylonian Talmud: "What is the intent of *And he afflicted her*? He afflicted her through abnormal intercourse" (*Yoma* 77b) (ibid). Unlike most of the medieval and modern commentary that preceded *Torah Temimah*, Epstein does not convey Dinah's affliction as the result of rape, but instead describes it merely as "abnormal intercourse."

Epstein's final comment on Dinah is in regards to Gen 34:7 in which Jacob's sons "burned with fury" because Shechem had "done a vile thing in Israel." Here, he again references the Babylonian Talmud: "There are some who say that Job lived in the days of Jacob and married Dinah, Jacob's daughter; for it is written – *You speak as one of the vile women* (Job 2:10) and here - *Because he had done a vile thing*" (Bava Bathra 15b) (p.

[22] See Chapter Three for a full discussion of the verb *(a).n.h.* and the difficulties in translating it.

147). With this interpretation, Dinah has been transformed through analogy into a vile woman.

Simeon and Levi

Epstein says very little of consequence about either Jacob or Shechem, and his only significant comment about Simeon and Levi is in reference to Gen 34:25 in which, on the third day after the city had been circumcised, "each took his sword" and killed all the men: "Nowhere in the Torah do we find anyone under thirteen being referred to as "*ish*," ["a man"]; but we do find a thirteen-year-old being referred to as "a man," for it is written – *Simeon and Levi, each man, his sword* (Gen 34:25) – and we have learned that at that time they were thirteen [that is, Levi, the younger brother, was thirteen]" (*Nazir* 29b, see *Rashi*) (p. 147-8).

The Stone Edition Chumash[23] (1993)

The Stone Edition Chumash (commonly known as the *Stone* commentary) was published in 1993 by the Orthodox publishing house Mesorah Publications with the goal of presenting "the ancient wine of Sinai in the vessel of today's vernacular."[24] Written in English, *Stone* assures its readers that it "attempts to render the text as our Sages understood it,"[25] and that "the content and perspective of the translation and commentary are eternal; only the idiom is current."[26] In its introduction, *Stone* acknowledges that there are, at times, differences among the commentators and states that "where there are differing interpretations, we follow *Rashi*, the 'Father of

[23] Nosson Scherman, *The Stone Edition Chumash*, (New York: Mesorah Publications, Ltd., 1993).
[24] Ibid, xiii.
[25] Ibid, xiv.
[26] Ibid, xiii.

Commentators,' because the study of Chumash has been synonymous with Chumash-*Rashi* for nine centuries."[27] This claim is important when we turn to the interpretation of Dinah's story.

Dinah

In its comments on Gen 34:1, *Stone* begins with discussion about Dinah's designation as "daughter of Leah." It concludes that Dinah is referred to as such:

> because Dinah *went out* – in contradiction to the code of modesty befitting a daughter of Jacob – she is called the *daughter of Leah* because Leah, too, was excessively outgoing (Gen 30:16). With this in mind, they formulated the proverb, "Like mother like daughter" (*Rashi*). Even though the Sages teach that Dinah was lured out of the house, this implied criticism is valid, for she would not have gone if it had not been natural for her to be extroverted. She is also called the *daughter of Jacob*, because his distinguished reputation [in addition to her great beauty (*Radak*)] influenced Shechem to covet her (*Or HaChaim*) (p. 181).

Stone invokes the spirit of the rabbinic literature by accusing Dinah of being "excessively outgoing." While it alludes to the commentary in *Heketav Vehakabbalah* by Mecklenburg that is very sympathetic towards Dinah, and asserts that Shechem lured her out (see above) and therefore she is innocent of wrongdoing, *Stone* negates Mecklenburg's sympathetic tone by casting aspersions upon Dinah's innate nature. *Stone* suggests that the "implied criticism" of the midrashim is valid because "she would not have gone if it had not been natural for her to be extroverted."

[27] Ibid, xiv.

Interestingly, *Stone* asserts in its preface that it follows *Rashi* whenever commentators disagree and yet, in this instance, it counters *Rashi* both in content and in spirit. *Rashi*'s only comment on Gen 34:1 is that Dinah is called "the daughter of Leah because Leah too was one "who would go out," which led to the aphorism "like mother, like daughter" (see Chapter Five). *Rashi*'s comments regarding Gen 34:1 are neutral towards Dinah, in that he excludes any content from the midrashim that are damning of her. But he also praises Leah elsewhere (see Chapter Six) for having the best of intentions when she "went out" and, by extension, serves to praise Dinah as well. Additionally, *Rashi* also suggests, in his comments to Gen 34:7, that Shechem's behavior was so outlandish and against cultural norms as to be completely unpredictable. While *Rashi* focuses all of the responsibility for the rape of Dinah soundly on Shechem's head and portrays Dinah as an innocent, *Stone* suggests that Dinah holds some culpability for her own violation because she was, like her mother Leah, "excessively outgoing."

While *Stone* suggests Dinah's culpability for her encounter with Shechem because of her innate and overly extroverted nature, it does acknowledge her victimhood in its comments to Gen 34:2: "It is to Dinah's credit that she resisted Shechem's blandishments even though he was a prince (*Ramban*). Because of his Royal status, no one came to Dinah's aid, despite her screams (*Or HaChaim*)" (p. 181). *Stone* cites *Ramban* in this comment, however by using the word "blandishments" to describe Shechem's behavior, *Stone* negates much of the sentiment that *Ramban* unequivocally asserts. While *Stone* indicates that Dinah screamed during her encounter with Shechem (suggesting that she resisted him), the word "blandishments" implies that Shechem flattered Dinah, or spoke coaxingly to her. However, *Ramban* states outright that Dinah

"was taken by force," and goes on to proclaim that "any act of intimate relations that is carried out against the will of a woman is called an 'affliction'" (see Chapter Six). *Ramban* acknowledges the horrific and violent nature of Dinah's encounter with Shechem, while *Stone* minimizes it by referring to Shechem's behavior as mere "blandishments."

Jacob

As has been demonstrated in previous chapters (see Chapters Five and Six, and above), the attitude toward Jacob in the commentaries has ranged from contempt to complete support. *Stone* sides with the commentaries that view Jacob as beyond reproach. In its summary of Gen 34:5-12, *Stone* portrays Jacob as a much more engaged father than is represented in the biblical text itself:

> Jacob's suspicions must have been aroused when Dinah did not return home. Presumably he inquired after her and heard the terrible news that she was being held prisoner in Shechem's home and had already been violated. *Alshich* comments that if Shechem had not yet assaulted her, Jacob would have risked everything to rescue her, but since it was too late, he waited for his sons to come home so that they could plan their response (p. 181).

According to *Stone*, Jacob is a concerned and conscientious father. Interestingly, however, *Stone* sees Dinah's virginity as the only thing worthy of a protective response from her father Jacob. Since Dinah had already lost that in her encounter with Shechem, it was unnecessary for him to risk "everything to rescue her" immediately. Instead, he could wait "for his sons to come home so that they could plan their response."

Simeon and Levi

In its summary of Gen 34:13-24, *Stone* appears most troubled by the prospect of Jacob's clan considering intermarriage with the Shechemites, and explains that Jacob's sons answered Shechem and Hamor "with deceit":

> in order to dispel any notion that Jacob's family could have acquiesced to an intermarriage – even if faced with superior force and certainly not for financial considerations – the Torah says at the outset that the sons answered Shechem and Hamor *cleverly*, meaning that they had no intention of accepting the proposal of Shechem and Hamor (*Haamek Davar*). The Torah (v. 13) justifies their deception by saying parenthetically that they resorted to it only because *he had defiled their sister* (Midrash); they could not sip tea and trade pleasantries with the criminals who now sought to clothe their lust in the respectability of the wedding canopy. But, *Radak* explains, because their response was not truthful, Jacob, the embodiment of truth, remained silent (p. 182-3).

Here, the *Stone Chumash* manages to justify the actions of Simeon and Levi as an appropriate response to circumvent intermarriage with the Shechemites, and praise Jacob for his lack of participation in the deception because of his truthful nature.

Shechem

Stone sums up its opinion of Shechem and Hamor in its comments to Gen 34:18 in which the words of Jacob's sons "appeared good in the eyes of Hamor and in the eyes of Shechem son of Hamor."

> The father was as foolish as the son! (*Lekach Tov*). Both were so blinded by greed – Shechem for Dinah, and Hamor for the profits of a business

relationship with Jacob's family – that they did not realize that the brothers were looking for a way to save their sister. (p. 183)

The Gutnick Edition Chumash[28] (2003)

The *Gutnick Edition Chumash* was published in 2003 and was an attempt to catalog the teachings Menachem Mendel Schneerson (1902-1994), who is known as the Lubavitcher Rebbe.[29] Schneerson led the ultra orthodox Hasidic Chabad-Lubavitch movement from 1951 until his death in 1994. Chabad-Lubavitch "is by far the most well-known" Hasidic sect today and is thought to have over 200,000 members worldwide.[30]

Schneerson was known for his innovative teachings expounding upon the comments of *Rashi* (known as *Rashi Sichos*).[31] The *Gutnick* Chumash seeks to covey the ideals inherent in these teachings rather than provide a verse-by-verse commentary of the text. The two main *Rashi Sichos* addressed in the *Gutnick* commentary on Genesis 34 are entitled: *Was Dinah at Fault?* And, *Yaakov's [Jacob's] Rebuke*.

Was Dinah at Fault?

Gutnick's commentary on Genesis 34 begins with the question: *Was Dinah at Fault?* The commentary references *Rashi*'s comment that suggests Dinah is called "daughter of Leah" because both mother and daughter "went out" (see Chapter Six), and asks "why did *Rashi* choose an interpretation which seems to speak negatively about Dinah?" *Gutnick* explains:

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[28] Chaim Miller, *The Gutnick Edition Chumash: The Book of Genesis*, (New York: Kol Menachem, 2003).
[29] Ibid, vii.
[30] Myjewishlearning.com/history/Jewish_World_Today
[31] Miller, viii.

> At first glance, one might argue that *Rashi*'s comment was intended to prove Dinah's innocence, for her outgoing nature was not her own fault, but rather a trait that she had inherited from her mother.
>
> However, such an argument is clearly unacceptable, for it would make no sense to prove Dinah's innocence at the expense of incriminating Leah. Furthermore, *Rashi* stresses that Leah's famous act of outgoingness had the purest of motives: "She desired and was seeking means to increase the number of the tribes." (*Rashi* to Gen 30:17) (p. 239)

Gutnick goes on to establish that Dinah is innocent, not because it was not her fault that she was outgoing, but because "going out" is something to be commended not condemned. While *Rashi* omits reference to the most condemning aspects of the rabbinic midrashim in his comments (see Chapter Six), the *Gutnick* portrays Dinah (and her mother Leah) in a way that completely contradicts the midrashim. The rabbinic literature accuses both Dinah and Leah of inherent lasciviousness because they "went out"; *Gutnick* suggests that they are not only innocent, but both have the purest of motives.

Gutnick explains that the one truly at fault is Jacob. It cites *Rashi* (who refers to the midrashim) who indicates that Dinah was violated because Jacob would not allow her to marry his morally debased brother Esau:

> *Rashi*'s account of Ya'akov's [Jacob's] punishment implies that Dinah was so obviously talented that Ya'akov was in fact certain that she had the ability to make Eisav [Esau] into a good person, without becoming corrupted herself. The only doubt here was that since ultimately Eisav had free choice, there was no

guarantee that even Dinah would make him repent. Therefore, *Rashi* writes that there was a possibility of failure, "perhaps she would have influenced him positively." Nevertheless, Ya'akov was wrong in withholding his daughter from Eisav because she definitely had the ability to make him a better person, and every effort should be made to help a person do *teshuvah*, even if one is not guaranteed success. So, in the final analysis, Ya'akov was guilty. He had nothing to lose, for he could be certain that Dinah's personality would be impervious even to Eisav's wickedness, and on the other had, Eisav had everything to gain. (p. 240)

Gutnick ends its discussion of Dinah with a section entitled "The Last Word" that outlines appropriate behavior for women.

From Dinah's conduct we can learn that those Jewish women who are blessed with a God-given ability to influence others positively, should make sure to use their talents productively outside the home as well. Of course, a Jewish woman must always maintain an air of modesty, and even when she is outside the home it should be recognizable in her actions that *the entire glory of the king's daughter is within* (Ps 45:14). Nevertheless, while retaining the utmost guard in all matters of modesty, it is crucial that Jewish women who are capable of bringing others closer to Judaism spend time outside the home, utilizing their God-given talents for the sake of Heaven. (Based on *Likutei Sichos* vol. 35, pp. 154-5) (p. 241)

Gutnick's summary of this *Rashi Sicha* on the Dinah story is striking in light of the midrashim upon which *Rashi*'s comments are based. In the midrashim, women are

portrayed and inherently immodest, and are restricted from "going out" into the marketplace (see Chapter Five). *Gutnick* turns that ideology on its head, and instead encourages women to spend time outside the house.

Ya'akov's [Jacob's] Rebuke

The lesson on Jacob's rebuke of Simeon and Levi begins by explaining that they "did not spill innocent blood, God forbid, when they killed the people of Shechem. Rather the people were in fact liable for the death penalty." This lesson then refers to Jacob's deathbed rebuke of Simeon and Levi (Gen 49:6) and asks why, if the Shechemites deserved the death penalty, "did Ya'akov disapprove of Shimon and Levi's actions?" The answer is that Jacob was angry because his sons did not demonstrate appropriate faith in God:

> Ya'akov criticized his sons "Since your plan was justified on halachic (legal) grounds, you would have had God's help. The fact that you did not see any means of success in the natural scheme of things should not have stopped you. You should have relied on God to help you, and not made a deceptive plan which has caused *chilul Hashem* (desecration of God's name). (p. 242)

The Shechemites did deserve to die, says *Gutnick*, but Simeon and Levi should have had faith that God would have provided justice. Instead, they lacked faith and acted out their own vengeance, and were therefore deserving of Jacob's reproach.

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The attitudes toward Dinah in most of the modern Orthodox commentaries are consistent with those found in most of the medieval commentaries – decidedly supportive and affirming of Dinah, and see her as a righteous victim. Regarding the

issue of Dinah's "going out" that received so much condemnation in the rabbinic period, most of the modern Orthodox commentators either justify her "going out" as natural behavior for any young girl, or, in the case of *Gutnick*, extol her for having done so.

There are, however, two significant exceptions to this positive view of Dinah found in the modern commentaries, one much more troubling than the other. Epstein's *The Essential Torah Temimah* was published in 1902 and relies exclusively on rabbinic era literature. As can be expected from such a commentary, *Torah Temimah* reflects and thus perpetuates, the same degrading attitudes, seen in the midrashim, that portray Dinah as a harlot who brought her experience upon herself. Epstein dismisses the horrific nature of Dinah's experience, and instead designates her "affliction" as nothing more than "abnormal intercourse." Given that Epstein relies entirely on rabbinic literature for his commentary, it is not surprising that his comments reflect the same rape myths ("she wanted/deserved it") introduced into Jewish interpretation during the rabbinic period.

Harder to understand, however, is the *Stone Chumash*. *Stone* was first published in 1993 and, while it relies on and cites commentaries that are very supportive of Dinah (*Rashi*, *Ramban*, *Heketav Vehakabbalah*), it goes to great lengths to negate the very intent of those commentaries it invokes. Where *Ramban* indicates that Dinah had been taken by force and decries such an experience for all women, *Stone* minimizes Dinah's experience by referring to Shechem's actions to mere "blandishments." Where *Rashi* makes no judgment regarding Dinah's "going out," and praises her mother Leah elsewhere (comments on Gen 30:16) for doing so, *Stone* accuses her of being "in contradiction to the code of modesty." This dismissal of *Rashi*'s viewpoint is

particularly interesting given that *Stone* states unequivocally: "where there are differing interpretations, we follow *Rashi*, the 'Father of Commentators'."

Stone works hard to portray Dinah as culpable - and ends up validating contemporary rape myth ("she deserved it" "it wasn't really rape") - even when doing so requires undermining its own defined methodology. One has to wonder what underlying anxiety is problematic enough for the *Stone* writers to circumvent the intent of commentators they so revere? While answering this question is beyond the scope of this paper, it is important to note because Stone is so widely used in orthodox communities today. It is also important to note that *Stone* reintroduces into its modern commentary the rabbinic era rape myths that had been largely resisted for over a thousand years.

Chapter Eight: Modern Age

Progressive Commentaries

As noted in the previous chapter, the modern age presented significant new challenges for Jewish commentators. With the Haskalah and its interest in the use of scientific methods in the study of Bible and other ancient texts, as well as the rise of feminism and the demand by many women for inclusion in both Jewish practice and scholarship, came the need for new approaches to Torah commentary. The progressive movements in Judaism (Reform and Conservative) were much more willing than Orthodox commentaries to accommodate this need by incorporating Jewish scholarship and feminist ideals into their commentaries. Outlined below are the significant progressive commentaries of the modern era.

Hertz Pentateuch (1936)[1]

For several decades after its publication in 1936, the commentary edited by Joseph Herman Hertz "was the most widely used Torah commentary in English-speaking synagogues."[2] Hertz served as the chief rabbi of the United Hebrew Congregations of the Commonwealth (a position commonly known as "chief rabbi in England") from 1913 until his death in 1946. While the United Hebrew Congregations of the Commonwealth is the "largest organization of Orthodox synagogues" in the United Kingdom,[3] Hertz himself could not be readily characterized as conventionally Orthodox. He "was a graduate of the first class of the Jewish Theological Seminary of America," the school that would go on to serve the yet to be established "Conservative

[1] J. H. *Hertz* (ed.), *The Pentateuch and Haftorahs*, (London: Soncino Press, 1936).
[2] Reuven Hammer, "Tradition Today: Remembering Chief Rabbi *Hertz*," *The Jerusalem Post*, 3/22/2012.
[3] Ibid.

Movement" and which "represented the approach of the Historical Positive movement in Judaism that had been founded by Zecharia Frankel."[4] Hertz demonstrates his willingness to veer from the more traditionally Orthodox approach demonstrated by *Hirsch* (see above) in preface to the first edition of his commentary:

> Jewish and non-Jewish commentators – ancient, medieval, and modern – have been freely drawn upon. "Accept the truth from whatever source it come," is sound Rabbinic doctrine – even if it be from the pages of a devout Christian expositor or of an iconoclastic Bible scholar, Jewish or non-Jewish. This does not affect the Jewish Traditional character of the work. (p. vii)

Hertz's willingness to draw upon work by not only non-Jews, but also those who approach the Bible as scholarship, runs counter to the approach taken by Hirsch and other more traditional commentators. In an article remembering Hertz, Reuven Hammer sums up *Hertz's* commentary as "and excellent combination of traditional Biblical commentary and modern understanding. In recent times it has fallen out of favor due to a number of factors. To its misfortune, it is both too liberal and not modern enough."[5]

Hertz's comments on the Torah text are concise often to the point of seeming terse, but he communicates much in both what he says and what he does not say.

Dinah

Unlike most of the midrashim on Gen 34:1 from the rabbinic period, as well as *Hirsch* and other modern commentators, *Hertz* makes no mention of Dinah's only action, that she "went out" (*y.tz.a.*). Instead, he focuses on the verb *r.a.h.* – to see –

[4] ibid.
[5] ibid.

indicating that "and to be seen" had been added in the Samaritan text.[6] In his comments, however, he never alludes to the midrash (*Tanhuma* 8:19 – see Chapter Five) that seizes on this idea of "to be seen" in order to chastise Dinah for immorality. Instead, he states simply that "to see" means "to make friendship," and ends by rebuking Jacob: "It was wrong of Jacob to suffer his daughter alone and unprotected to visit the daughters of the land" (p. 127). In his commentary on Gen 34:2, he says simply that the verb for violated implies "by force." With this short commentary to Gen 34:1-2, Hertz not only paints Dinah as a sympathetic victim of rape, but also indicates that she was alone and unprotected.

Jacob

Similar to *Ramban* in the 13th century, Hertz attempts to shield Jacob from criticism for not preventing Simeon and Levi from slaughtering the city of Shechem. Interestingly, in his comment to penultimate verse of the story in which Jacob rebukes his sons for causing him to "stink in the dwelling of the land (Gen 34:30)," *Hertz* appears to be attempting to shield the biblical text itself from criticism as well:

> Jacob has been criticized for merely rebuking his sons because their action might cause him personal danger, and not pointing out the heinous crime they had done in taking advantage of the helplessness of men with whom they had made a pact of friendship. Scripture, however, often lets facts speak for themselves, and does not always append the moral or the warning to a tale. Moreover, this chapter is supplemented by Jacob's Blessing in Gen 49:5. In reference to Simeon and Levi, the dying Patriarch there exclaims: *Simeon and*

[6] *Hertz*, 127.

Levi are brethren; weapons of violence their kinship… Cursed be their anger, for it was fierce, and their wrath, for it was cruel (Gen 49:5). (p. 129)

Here, in his one comment on Jacob, Hertz echoes *Ramban* from the medieval period, who also suggests that Jacob rebukes his sons because of their wanton violence.

Simeon and Levi

Not unlike *Hirsch* before him, Hertz is both highly critical of Simeon and Levi's murderous actions, and understanding of the impulse that motivated them. In his comment on Gen 34:13, in which Jacob's sons negotiate with Shechem and Hamor "with deceit" by saying they will intermarry with them if all the men Shechem become circumcised, Hertz says:

> Knowing that they were outnumbered by the citizens of Shechem, Jacob's sons resort to devious methods to carry out their determination to avenge their sister's dishonor. Their proposal would, if adopted, render the male population weak and helpless for a time; and this would give them the opportunity of making a successful attack. But why should all the men of the city suffer for the misdeed of one of their number? The sons of Jacob certainly acted in a treacherous and godless manner. Jacob did not forgive them to his dying day (see Gen 49:7). (p. 128)

Having unequivocally reprimanded Simeon and Levi for their actions, Hertz then goes on to explain their actions in his comment to Gen 34:31 (when Jacob's sons respond to his rebuke with moral indignation):

> Jacob' sons reply that the dishonor of their sister had to be avenged, and there was only one course of action to follow. High-spirited and martial men

have among all nations and throughout history often yielded to blind cruelty when dealing with an outrage of this nature. (p. 129)

Shechem

Similar to the rabbinic period, Hertz says very little about Shechem and his father Hamor beyond seeing the two as duplicitous, as reflected in his comment on Gen 34:10:

> The cordiality of Hamor's invitation is to be contrasted with what he told his townsmen in v. 23. To induce them to adopt his suggestion, he promises that it would be profitable to them, and they would gradually absorb the rich possessions of Jacob's household. (p. 127)

The Torah: A Modern Commentary[7] (Original Date – 1981; Revised Edition - 2005)

The first Torah commentary written specifically to represent a particular movement was *The Torah: A Modern Commentary*, which was designed to serve those who practiced Reform Judaism. *The Torah: A Modern Commentary* was first published in 1981 and is mostly the work of W. Gunther Plaut, and is commonly referred to as the *Plaut Commentary*. *Plaut* was significantly revised in 2005, and the discussion below reflects this Revised Edition.

Dinah

Plaut makes its perception of Dinah readily evident from the very beginning in the table of contents, which is broken down by *parsha* (weekly Torah portion) and subheadings in the revised edition. The subheading in *Parshat Vayishlach* for Genesis

[7] W. Gunther *Plaut* (ed.), *The Torah: A Modern Commentary Revised Edition*, (New York: URJ Press, 2005).

34 is entitled "The Rape of Dinah." Before readers see a word of commentary, they know that this is a story of a woman's violation and physical assault.

In the commentary itself, *Plaut* first refers to Dinah's "going out" (Gen 34:1), only instead of engaging the midrashim that criticize Dinah, *Plaut* simply says: "Of Rebekah and Rachel, too, it was said that they went out (24:15 and 29:9) and found husbands; Dinah went out to visit with the daughters of the locality and was raped." Interestingly, while *Plaut* does discuss two of the matriarchs in terms of "going out," it does not include reference to Leah, who is such a factor in the commentary of the rabbinic period. He seems to be responding to rabbinic teachings that isolate Leah's action and criticize it. *Plaut* appears to try to avoid any reference that could reflect negatively on Dinah, and instead focus on references that will portray her in a positive light.

In its discussion of Gen 34:2 – Dinah's encounter with Shechem – the *Plaut* commentary discusses the issues in translating the word for rape, as well as lays out the legal procedures outlined in the Bible for dealing with situations of rape:

> *Raped her*. Literally, "he lay with her, forcing her." The verb *a.n.h*. is also used for the Egyptians oppressing the Israelites (Ex, 1:11-12). There is no single biblical word for rape; the current Hebrew term *a.n.s*. is postbiblical, appropriated from Esther 1:8, where it appears in a nonsexual context. Such an offense brought guilt on the offender's whole community (Gen 20:9, Deut 24:4). According to the law of Deut 22:28-29, if a man has violated a virgin, he has to marry her and is prohibited from ever divorcing her. In addition, her father is to receive compensation. Rabbinic law added to this rule: If the woman refused to marry her assailant, he only had to pay the fine. (p. 223)

It is interesting to note that *Plaut* refers to rabbinic law that increases a woman's personal agency (in that she can refuse to marry her assailant), while it ignores all of the rabbinic literature that chastises Dinah as a harlot.

Jacob

Plaut has very little to say about Jacob other than a comment on Gen 34:31 in which Jacob rebukes Simeon and Levi for causing him trouble: "*You have made trouble for me*. Or, 'you have muddied what was clear,' a reference to his reputation."

Simeon and Levi

Plaut uses the opportunity of comments on Gen 34:31, when Simeon and Levi respond indignantly to their father "should our sister be make like a prostitute?" to examine how differently Simeon and Levi view Shechem's actions as opposed to Shechem and Hamor:

> *Like a whore*. The outrage of the brothers stands in contrast to Shechem and Hamor's view of the rape as a civil offense that could be righted by making personal and pecuniary adjustments (which is the way later Torah saw it; see Deut 22:28). The brothers considered the violation of Dinah as a defilement of the whole family. Our tale finds its replay in the story of Tamar's violation by her brother Amnon; an act that is avenged by Absalom, another brother, and results in the killing of the rapist (2 Sam 13:20-29). (p. 226)

Having introduced the comparison to Tamar, *Plaut* then stresses again its opinion of Shechem's actions:

> Note also that while Shechem loves Dinah, the rape of Tamar by Amnon (both of them children of David, 2 Sam 13:1) ends by Amnon disliking his victim.

But in both cases, death is visited upon the assailant – the kind of retribution to which many people in our day can better relate than to having such violence against women settled by a mere fine. (p. 226)

With this comment, *Plaut* not only ensures that Dinah is viewed as a righteous victim, but it also speaks to the horrific nature of rape in current society.

Shechem

Other than indicating Shechem's duplicity in negotiations with Jacob's tribe (comment to Gen 34:23), *Plaut* says little else about Shechem.

Etz Hayim[8] (2001)

Etz Hayim (published in 2001) was originally published in English and is the second Torah commentary written expressly to represent a specific Jewish movement – in this case the Conservative Movement. In its preface, *Etz Hayim* outlines the ideology of the Conservative Movement and how that ideology impacts its commentary on the Torah:

> Conservative Judaism is based on Rabbinic Judaism. It differs, however, in the recognition that all texts were composed in given historical contexts. The Conservative Movement, in short, applies historical, critical methods to the study of the biblical text. It views the Torah as the product of generations of inspired prophets, priests, and teachers, beginning with the time of Moses but not reaching its present form until the postexilic age, in the 6th or 5th century B.C.E. The Torah is viewed by us, in the words of Harold Kushner, as "God's first word, not God's last." (p. xxi)

[8] The Jewish Publication Society, *Etz Hayim: Torah and Commentary*, (New York: The Rabbinical Assembly, 2001).

Etz Hayim divides its each parashah in its commentary into three parts, first addressing the *p'shat* (contextual meaning of the text), then the *d'rash* (the relevant midrashic commentary), and finally the *halakhah l'ma-aseh* (how contemporary Conservative Jewish Law is linked to the biblical text).

Dinah

True to its ideology "based on Rabbinic Judaism," the *Etz Hayim* refers to the literature of the rabbinic period in its comments on Dinah, but it dampens the vitriol seen in the rabbinic midrashim. In its comments on Gen 34:1, the *Etz Hayim* posits that "girls of marriageable age normally would not leave a rural encampment to venture alone into an alien city," and suggests that the text "subtly criticizes Dinah's highly unconventional behavior through its use of the Hebrew stem meaning 'to go out'" (p. 206). *Etz Hayim* goes on to say that Dinah's "going out" "has been interpreted by some medieval and modern commentators as a reference to some coquettish or promiscuous conduct," and that the phrase *daughters of the land* in Gen 34:1 also "carries undertones of disapproval" (p. 206). While the *Etz Hayim* does indicate the general attitude displayed in the rabbinic midrashim, it omits reference to the most damning aspects that condemn Dinah. It is also interesting to note that while *Etz Hayim* suggests that "some medieval and modern commentators" rebuke Dinah for "coquettish or promiscuous conduct," it omits entirely any reference to the fact that these negative interpretations of Dinah's behavior originate in the rabbinic literature, and it does not draw upon medieval sources that defend her.

Etz Hayim does not, however, question that Dinah had indeed been violently raped. In its comments to Gen 34:2, it discusses the verbs "took" (*l.k.h*), "lay" (*sh.c.v.*),

and "force" (*a.n.h*), and concludes that these are "three Hebrew verbs of increasing severity [that] underscore the brutality of Shechem's assault on Dinah" (p. 207).

Jacob

The only substantive comment about Jacob in *Etz Hayim* is found in the pshat section, and is in reference to his silence at hearing that Dinah had been raped (Gen 34:5): "the need to exercise restraint, pending the arrival of his sons, is understandable, but his passivity throughout the entire incident is noteworthy" (p. 207). Interestingly, unlike the midrashim from the rabbinic era that are the bases for much of the Conservative Movement's commentary, *Etz Hayim* does not attempt to explain Jacob's silence,.

Simeon and Levi

Etz Hayim, much like the midrashim of the rabbinic period, attempts to explain and justify Simeon and Levi's murderous behavior. In its comments to Gen 34:13 – where Jacob's sons answer Shechem and Hamor with guile [or deceit] – it suggests that: "the narrator informs us that the brothers' acceptance of intermarriage with the Shechemites is a ruse. Dinah, who is still being held by the perpetrator, cannot be liberated by a tiny minority in the face of overwhelming odds – except by cunning" (p. 208). It also suggests that the phase "he had defiled" in Gen 34:13 serves as a "reminder of the enormity of the offense [and] places the brothers' 'guile' in its proper perspective" (p. 208).

In its comments on Gen 34:26, *Etz Hayim* works to shield Simeon and Levi from blame by focusing on two verbs: that they **took** Dinah and **went out**. It suggests that "the entire affair began with Dinah 'going out' and being 'taken' (vv. 1,2). It concludes

with the same two Hebrew verbs, but in reverse order. As far as Simeon and Levi are concerned, their account with Shechem is settled. They take no part in the plunder of the city" (p. 210).

Shechem

In its comments on Gen 34:12 and Gen 34:23, respectively, *Etz Hayim* seeks to demonstrate Shechem's desire to make reparations, and Hamor's duplicitousness. The comments on v.12 deal with Shechem's offer of a "very large bride gift," and suggest: "the Hebrew word *mohar* refers to the payment made by the prospective husband in return for the bride. The amount is usually fixed by custom. Shechem's readiness to pay far beyond that is a tacit recognition of the need to make reparations" (p. 208).

Etz Hayim's comments on v.23 indicate Hamor's underhandedness: "Hamor here has omitted the promise of landed property rights for the newcomers and has inserted the assurance of dispossessing them of their belongings. As the occasion is a public ratification of the agreement, he is clearly guilty of double-dealing" (p. 209).

The Torah – A Women's Commentary[9] (2008)

Published in 2008, *The Torah: A Women's Commentary* is unique in that it "collects and showcases the teachings of Jewish women in the first comprehensive commentary on the Torah written entirely by women" (p. xxxi). *The Women's Commentary* seeks to "incorporate women's experiences and women's history into the living memory" of the Jewish people (p. xxv), and "it focuses most sharply on women in the Torah and on texts particularly relevant to women's lives" (p. xxxi). It is divided by parshah (weekly Torah portion), and each parshah is written by different Jewish

[9] Tamara Cohn Eskenazi and Andrea L. Weiss (Eds.), *The Torah: A Women's Commentary*, (New York: URJ Press, 2008).

women scholars from across the field. The commentators for *Parshat Vayishlach* – the portion in which the story of Dinah is found – are Dr. Shawn Lisa Dolansky (Assistant Professor of Religious Studies at Northeastern University) and Dr. Risa Levitt Kohn (Director of the Jewish Studies Program and Professor of Hebrew Bible and Judaism at San Diego State University). Dolansky and Kohn refer to themselves as biblical "interpreters" and, unlike any of the preceding commentaries, concentrate their focus on what the text says about the ancient culture in which it was written, instead of attempting to derive some universal or contemporary meaning from the text itself.

Dinah

Given the commitment of the *Women's* commentary to focus "most sharply on women in the Torah," it is not surprising that it pays particular attention to Dinah in the rape of Dinah story. The authors begin with a summary of the story that suggests "a crucial question for modern interpreters is whether or not Dinah was raped" (p. 190). And continue:

> The assumption made by most interpreters is that Dinah did not consent to the sexual act. However, the question of consent, so central to the modern notion of rape and of women's rights in general, is entirely ignored in this text. Dinah's consent is not the issue…
>
> If we contemporary interpreters are sensitive to the ancient context in which the story was recorded, we need to entertain the possibility that there is a fundamental difference between our modern concept of rape and what may represent rape in the biblical texts. (p. 191)

Having established that what constitutes "rape" in contemporary society differs from that in ancient times, Dolansky and Kohn go on to suggest that "the Bible, even in its rape laws, was primarily concerned with the juridical and social-status consequences of the tort involved in sleeping with a virgin without either marrying her or compensating her father" (p. 190). For Dolansky and Kohn then, the Dinah story cannot be evaluated by our modern conceptions of rape.

In their verse-by-verse commentary, Dolansky and Kohn make some significant points. In their comments on Gen 34:1, they refer to Gen 33:1-2 in order to note that the distinction "daughter of Leah" also connotes that she was the daughter of "the wife that Jacob did not want" (p. 191). They also suggest that "Dinah seems free to leave" *to see among the daughters of the land*, "but she does so at her own risk," and they note that "nowhere in the text is she criticized for her action" (p. 191).

Regarding Gen 34:2, Dolansky and Kohn point out that "interpretive debates about the story and its import revolve around the meaning of the word *innah* [the verb *(a).n.h.*], here rendered as 'rape'," and conclude:[10]

> The word *innah* should not be translated as rape, and what happened to Dinah certainly should not be understood as an act of rape in the modern sense of the word. Rather, the term demonstrates in this passage, as elsewhere, a downward movement in a social sense, meaning to "debase" or "humiliate" (Gen 16:6). Though an affront to the woman's family, the term does not carry with it the psychological and emotional implications for the woman that the contemporary notion of rape suggests. In this particular text, the woman has no

[10] I disagree with the conclusions presented by Dolansky and Kohn. For discussion of rape in the Hebrew Bible see Chapter Two.

> voice, and the narrator has no interest in whether or not she consented to the sexual act. Bear in mind that according to ancient Near Eastern mores, Dinah would have been considered to have been disgraced even if she had consented. (p. 191)

Dolansky and Kohn reaffirm their hypothesis that Dinah's violation was her "downward movement in a social sense" with their interpretation of Gen 34:5 in which "Jacob heard that he [Shechem] had defiled Dinah his daughter." They focus on the word for "defiled" – *timei* – and suggest that the use of the word indicates

> that Dinah's status has changed for the worse. Other forms of this word are used in Leviticus for "pollution" or "impure," a condition that can be temporary (as in Gen 11:44, 15:31, and 18:20). Something defiled can often be rendered pure with proper ritual purification. In the case of Dinah, it appears that marriage to Shechem could potentially change her status from "defiled" to "pure." (p. 192)

<u>Simeon and Levi</u>

All of Dolansky and Kohn comments focus, in some way, on Dinah and her experience, and do not tend to focus specifically on the other characters in the story. They do, however, make some interesting comments about Simeon and Levi. Regarding the phrase "an outrage against Israel" found in Gen 35:7, Dolansky and Kohn indicate that "the sons were angry because of the 'outrage against Israel.' The only 'Israel' in this story is Jacob himself; but he is not the one outraged. Rather, it is his sons, the *B'nai Yisrael*, who are affected and who take action in response" (p. 192).

And in their comments on Gen 34:26 (when Simeon and Levi remove Dinah from Shechem's house), Dolansky and Kohn explain:

> After her initial encounter with Shechem, Dinah does not return to her father's house. But in Shechem's house, her status is equally problematic as she is not officially his wife. An alien in a foreign household, lacking a negotiated marriage and children, Dinah is literally on the social fringe. Her removal from Shechem's house at this point in the story does nothing to improve the situation. With a voided marriage but the sexual status of wife, there is no acceptable place for her in society. (p. 194)

In their comments on the final verse in the story, in which Simeon and Levi respond to Jacob's rebuke (Gen 34:31), the interpreters conclude:

> The brothers choose to view the offer of money in compensation for Dinah's virginity not as an elevation of her status, but rather as a statement about Dinah's availability as a prostitute. Their explanation for their behavior makes clear that Dinah herself is not culpable. This position stands in stark contrast to tendencies in the ancient (and modern) world to blame the woman for the family's shame. (p. 195)

In the final pages of the chapter on *Parshat Vayishlach,* the editors of *The Torah: A Women's Commentary* include a counterweight to the interpretation by Dolansky and Kohn in a *Contemporary Reflection* by Laura Geller (Senior Rabbi of Temple Emmanuel in Beverly Hills, California) (p. 204-5). While Dolansky and Kohn focus entirely on the perspective of the ancient author, Geller relays the relevance of Dinah's story in contemporary society. Referring to an early section of *Parshat Vayishlach* (Gen 32:23-

25) in which Jacob sends his wives and eleven children across a river ahead of him, Geller writes:

> Eleven children cross the river? But Jacob already at this point has twelve children. What about Dinah, his daughter? What happened to her? Rashi, quoting a midrash, explains: 'He placed her in a chest and locked her in.' While many commentaries understand that by locking Dinah in a box Jacob intends to protect her from marrying his brother Esau, we know the truth of the story. Hiding Dinah – locking her up – is a powerful image about silencing a woman. (p. 204)

Geller goes on to say that this silencing continues in the aftermath of Dinah's rape:

> In an ultimate act of silencing, the commentaries understand Dinah's rape as Jacob's punishment for withholding her from Esau. Dinah's rape is *Jacob's* punishment? What about Dinah? What has she done? How does she feel? Our text is silent. (ibid)

Decrying the violence against, and silencing of, women that continues in society today, Geller concludes her essay with a call to action:

> What happens to Dinah in the aftermath of her ordeal? We do not know. We never hear from her, just as we may never hear from the women and girls in our generation who are victims of violence and whose voices are not heard. But the legacy of Jacob as Israel, the one who wrestles, demands that we confront the shadowy parts of ourselves and our world – and not passively ignore these facts. The feminist educator Nelle Morton urged women to hear each other 'into

speech.' Dinah's story challenges us to go even further and be also the voices for all of our sisters. (p. 205)

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The attitude towards Dinah in *Plaut* and *Etz Hayim* are much what one would expect given the movements within Judaism for which they were produced. *Plaut* – a product of the Reform Movement with its liberal ideals and openness to innovation – is completely supportive of Dinah and makes no reference to damning rabbinic era midrashim. *Plaut* also makes an implied declaration against rape and rape myth with its attitude toward Simeon and Levi's massacre of Shechem, suggesting that their murderous response is "the kind of retribution to which many people in our day can better relate than to having such violence against women settled by a mere fine" (p. 226). While this statement appears to be intentionally somewhat hyperbolic, it does convey the gravity with which *Plaut* views rape and violence against women.

As the commentary for the Conservative Movement, *Etz Hayim* necessarily stays more in line with the rabbinic literature than *Plaut*, but it also attempts to mitigate the criticism the rabbis heap on Dinah. While *Etz Hayim* does see Dinah's "going out" as "highly unconventional behavior" and suggests that "some medieval and modern commentators" have accused Dinah of having behaved promiscuously, it omits any direct mention of the rabbinic era midrashim that condemn Dinah as a harlot. It also omits reference to the medieval commentary that defends her. With its comments on Dinah, *Etz Hayim* appears to be caught in a balancing act of attempting to adhere to the ideal that Conservative Judaism is based on Rabbinic Judaism and the rabbinic

literature, while, at the same time, distancing itself from the rabbinic beliefs that are the most offensive to modern sensibilities.

More surprising than the attitudes towards Dinah found in *Plaut* and *Etz Hayim*, are those found in *Hertz* and the *Women's Commentary*. Joseph *Hertz* was the chief rabbi of the primary organization of Orthodox Synagogues in the United Kingdom, know as the United Hebrew Congregations of the Commonwealth, and his commentary served as the primary Torah commentary found in English speaking congregations (irrespective of movement) for decades after its publication. The *Hertz* commentary is completely supportive of Dinah and ignores the midrashim of the rabbinic era entirely. And, while he chastises Simeon and Levi for their wanton violence, *Hertz* also indicates a degree of understanding for their need to avenge their sister as "high –spirited and martial men have among all nations and throughout history often yielded to blind cruelty when dealing with a n outrage of this nature."

Perhaps most interesting and troubling are the comments found in the *Women's Commentary*. While *Hertz*, *Plaut*, and *Etz Hayim* all readily agree that Dinah was indeed raped by Shechem and indicate a high degree of sympathy for her, Dolansky and Kohn in the *Women's Commentary* indicate that "what happened to Dinah certainly should not be understood as an act of rape in the modern sense of the word" (p. 191). They instead see this as a story of "downward movement in a social sense," and suggest that the word *innah* (to violate) "does not carry with it the psychological implications for the woman that the contemporary notion of rape suggests" (p. 191). Dolansky and Kohn remind the reader that "the narrator [of the Dinah story] has no interest in whether or not she consented to the sexual act" (ibid).

While it is probably true that the ancient Near Eastern narrator of Genesis 34 had little interest in Dinah's experience when Shechem took her, laid her, and violated her, it appears that Dolansky and Kohn are equally disinterested. While they conscientiously strive to be "sensitive to the ancient context in which the story was recorded," they lack any sensitivity for Dinah - the one to experience the violation in the story.

One has to wonder about the sterility, and lack of concern for Dinah, demonstrated in Dolansky and Kohn's commentary – sentiments that are entirely absent from Geller's *Contemporary Reflection*. One of the objectives of this paper is to identify anxieties regarding women reflected in the commentary. *The Torah: A Women's Commentary* was a groundbreaking development in 2008 in that it is the first full Torah commentary ever written entirely by women. Did Dolansky and Kohn feel constricted by the weight of that endeavor? Did they feel it necessary to approach the Dinah story in a sterile and clinical manner in order to not appear too emotional, or too biased in favor of women? I do not have answers to these questions. I can only say that I find it perplexing that the primary commentary in a volume dedicated to incorporating "women's experiences and women's history into the living memory" of the Jewish people, would completely ignore the experience of Dinah herself.

Chapter Nine: Conclusion

Tradition and Rape Myth

I began my analysis of the Rape of Dinah story in the summer of 2014, hoping for some insight into the evolution of rape culture, and the rape myths that are ubiquitous in our present day society. Specifically, I wanted to glean some understanding of whether or not Jewish tradition incorporated these values that are so hostile towards women and, if so, when were they introduced, and how have they been maintained. Being deeply invested in Judaism, my goal was not to condemn the Jewish tradition, but instead, much like Ilana Pardes, I wanted to "make sense of the present in light of the past,"[1] with the hope that such insight can effect change for the future.

While I was hoping for answers, I never expected significant surprises. As a student of Jewish history, I knew there were negative portrayals of women in Jewish texts, and had expected that those negative attitudes would be, more or less, consistent throughout the tradition, and change only with the reforming attitudes that came with the Haskalah. My assumptions, it turns out, were completely in error; Jewish tradition does not follow a straight line of negative and demeaning rhetoric regarding women as represented in the commentary on Dinah. In fact, much of the tradition is quite supportive of Dinah, and pushes back against the negative portrayal of women as inherently immoral that was introduced into Jewish tradition during the rabbinic period (2nd through 6th centuries C.E.).

All of the extant Intertestamental Period literature (approximately 420 B.C.E. through the beginning of the 1st century C.E. – see Chapter Four) that predates the

[1] Pardes, 2.

rabbinic era, is supportive of Dinah, and decries the violation she experienced. *Jubilees* portrays Dinah as a young, innocent girl who is kidnapped and forcibly violated by a stranger, and sees the slaughter at Shechem as retaliation sanctioned by God. The proto-feminist *Book of Judith* elevates Dinah by comparing her to the Holy Temple, and paints Judith (the only significant female character in the story) as Jerusalem's rescuer, who crushes the arrogance of the Assyrians (Israel's enemy) "by the hand of a woman." While the *Testament of Levi* and *Antiquities of the Jews* place less emphasis on Dinah than the other Intertestamental books, they both see her as a righteous victim deserving of justice. None of the Intertestamental literature reflects, in any way, the rape myths we see in contemporary society today. There is no attempt to discount Dinah's experience as not "really" rape in the Intertestamental literature, and none of it places blame on Dinah herself for her experience.

This positive stance regarding Dinah found in the Intertestamental period changes dramatically during the rabbinic period (2nd through 6th centuries - see Chapter Five). The midrash of this era found in the compilations *Genesis Rabbah* and *Tanhumah* universally condemn Dinah, and no longer see her as a righteous victim deserving justice. Instead they cast her as a "harlot" who got what she deserved because she dared to "go out." The rabbis in these texts universalize their contempt for Dinah onto her mother Leah and women in general, in that women are characterized as inherently immodest, and therefore subject to corruption. The literature of the rabbis clearly reflects significant anxiety regarding women, as well as concern about appropriate gender roles and locus of control, and sees any "going out" of women into the marketplace as a recipe for disaster. Many of the midrashim suggest, both implicitly

and explicitly, that women should be restricted to the home, and that they become corrupted and lascivious when they venture out.

In addition displaying anxiety regarding women and gender roles, these rabbis also introduce into the tradition, for the first time, attitudes consistent with many of the rape myths that have been so prevalent in history all the way to today. Time and again Dinah is termed a "harlot" in the midrashim and blamed for provoking - and/or wanting - her experience with Shechem. Somewhat milder condemnation of Dinah, also found in the midrashim, acknowledges her violation, but suggests that she should have known that venturing out was dangerous, and therefore is culpable in her own assault do to her gullibility. Without exception, these midrashim blame Dinah for her own rape because she was either too immodest and provocative, or because she used poor judgment and thereby put herself in danger. These attitudes seen in the rabbinic literature are very similar to the "slut blaming" rape myths we see today, in which a woman who has been raped is blamed for causing – or wanting – that violating experience.

Surprisingly, the commentaries from the medieval period (7th through 15th centuries – see Chapter Six) veers dramatically, for the most part, from the vitriol against women found in the rabbinic period. With one exception, all the main medieval commentators – even those referring to the midrashim – either attenuate the negative attitudes displayed in the rabbinic literature, ignore the midrashim entirely, or make statements that overtly counter the attitudes found therein. *Rashi* references the midrashim but omits the damning aspects of the rabbinic commentary, while *Ramban* emphatically supports Dinah in direct contradiction to the midrashim, and *ibn Ezra* and

Sforno largely ignore them altogether, and affirm Dinah's righteous victimhood. None of these medieval commentators makes any comments that reflect what we know today as rape myth. Instead, they often seem to push back on the sentiments found in the rabbinic period.

The only important exception to the affirmation of Dinah found in the medieval period is the commentary by *Radak*, which incorporates some of the worst attitudes of the rabbinic literature. *Radak* dismisses the very existence of rape, and indicates that Dinah's experience (and that of the virgin found in Deut 22:29) was "more in the nature of a seduction," and he reduces the "affliction" (*(a).n.h.*) Dinah experiences at the hands of Shechem to merely the natural pain any virgin would experience during intercourse. *Radak* is far more concerned with the "stain on the spiritual wholeness of all the family of Israel" that he feels results from Dinah's encounter with Shechem, than he is with the violation of Dinah herself. He affirms the rape myth mentality introduced in the rabbinic period by suggesting that Dinah's experience was not "really" rape, and that it is really her family's honor (not Dinah herself) that is harmed by the episode. While *Radak*'s commentary is consonant with the rabbinic literature, it controverts the other medieval commentators, and runs in direct conflict with *Ramban*, who not only elevates Dinah, but also declares unequivocally that "any act of intimate relations that is carried out against the will of a woman is called an 'affliction' *(a).n.h.*"[2]

Just as like the medieval period, the modern age (1650s to present) holds some major surprises when it comes to commentary on Dinah. In the early years of the modern age, four commentaries were written specifically as an attempt to resist the

[2] Blinder, 216.

attitudes of Jewish reform that came with the advent of the Haskalah (Jewish Enlightenment). Of these four highly "traditional" commentaries (*Heketav Vehakabbalah*, *Hirsch Commentary*, *Malbim Flashes of Insight*, and *The Essential Torah Temimah* – see Chapter Seven), only one – *Torah Temimah* – incorporates any of the hostile rhetoric found in the rabbinic literature. *Heketav Vehakabbalah* indicates Shechem cunningly lured Dinah out (where he could assault her) by having the women of the area offer Dinah friendship with a musical display, and places the blame for the event entirely on Shechem. While *Hirsch* acknowledges that Dinah "perhaps gave the opportunity for it [the rape] by her 'going out,'" he does not condemn her for it. Instead, he suggests that "going out" is natural behavior for a girl as "she went out to look around at the girls of the country, to get to know the foreign girls. She was a young girl and curious."[3] And *Malbim* makes no direct comment about Dinah's behavior at all, and instead focuses on the behavior of her brothers. *Malbim* indicates his sympathy for Dinah by justifying Simeon and Levi's behavior because Shechem deserved death "for his rape and abduction of Dinah," and the people of Shechem also deserved to die because they "neither prosecuted their prince nor protested against him for his high-handed crimes."[4]

In addition to being highly supportive of Dinah, none of these three orthodox commentary from the early modern period - *Heketav Vehakabbalah*, the *Hirsch Commentary*, or *Malbim* - reflect any of the rape myths we see in contemporary society. None of them tries to dismiss the traumatic nature of Dinah's violation, nor do any of them blame Dinah for her experience. *Torah Temimah*, however, contradicts these

[3] Hirsch, 517.
[4] Weinbach, 239.

early modern commentaries with its rabid misogynistic vitriol. *Torah Temimah* reintroduces the rabbinic era idea that Dinah became a harlot because of her mother's harlot-like tendencies, and it dismisses the "affliction" Dinah experiences as not really rape, but merely "abnormal intercourse." *Torah Temimah* is the only orthodox commentary from the early modern period that affirms the rape myth ideology that had been introduced in the rabbinic period.

Results from the more recent orthodox commentaries from the modern period were also surprising and, at times, puzzling. The next significant orthodox commentary to be produced after *Torah Temimah* – *The Stone Chumash* - was not published until 1993. *Stone* describes itself as attempting "to render the texts as our Sages understood it," and assures its readers that it follows *Rashi*'s commentary "because the study of Chumash has been synonymous with *Chumash-Rashi* for nine centuries." And yet, with more than 2000 years of commentary from which to choose – including *Rashi's* pro-Dinah stance – *Stone* chooses to incorporate the damning ideology of the rabbinic period. *Stone* accuses Dinah of acting "in contradiction of the code of modesty befitting a daughter of Jacob," and condemns her mother Leah as well for being "excessively outgoing." *Stone* also minimizes the horrific nature of Dinah's encounter with Shechem by referring to Shechem's behavior as mere "blandishments" (flattering or pleasing statements).[5]

Here again we see the "slut blaming" attitudes prevalent in modern society. However, *Stone's* incorporation of rape myth into its commentary on Dinah presents some interesting and perplexing questions. Whereas *Torah Temimah* states that it

[5] Scherman, 181.

attempts to show the inseparable nature of the Written Torah and the rabbinic literature (Oral Torah),[6] *Stone* indicates that it defers to *Rashi* when there are contradictions among commentators.[7] Since *Torah Temimah* relies exclusively on the rabbinic literature as source material, one would expect it to incorporate the attitudes and values demonstrated in the midrashim. But as *Stone* states unambiguously that it relies on *Rashi* when there is disagreement among commentators, one would expect *Stone* to incorporate *Rashi's* supportive attitude of Dinah. However it does quite the opposite, and instead introduces attitudes that accuse her of immodesty, and indicates that she deserves to be criticized for her inherent tendency towards excessive outgoingness. One has to question why *Stone* – a Torah commentary published little more than twenty years ago – would choose to controvert its own methodology in order to stress themes so hostile to women?

Stone's choices are particularly perplexing in light of the *Gutnick Chumash* that was published in 2003. *Gutnick* is an ultra-Orthodox commentary in which all of the comments are based on *Rashi Sichot* (explications of *Rashi's* teachings) that were given by the Lubavitcher Rebbe throughout his life. One would expect *Gutnick* to be far more "traditional" than even *Stone*, however *Gutnick's* comments on Dinah appear almost liberal when compared with those found in *Stone*. Whereas *Stone* chastises Dinah for being overly extroverted, *Gutnick* encourages women who have the "God-given ability to influence others positively," to "use their talents productively outside the home."[8] While *Stone* indicates that "going out" is contrary to the "code of modesty befitting a

[6] Epstein, IX.
[7] Scherman, xiv.
[8] Miller, 241.

daughter of Jacob (i.e. Jewish women),"[9] *Gutnick* suggests that while a woman "must always maintain an air of modesty," it is also crucial that she "spend time outside the home."[10] While both *Stone* and *Gutnick* hold *Rashi* as the as the ultimate guide in their commentary, it is the ultra-Orthodox *Gutnick* that proves more consistent with *Rashi*, and is supportive and liberating of women in its commentary on Dinah. While *Stone* reintroduces the rape myths seen in the rabbinic literature, *Gutnick* refers to *Rashi* and turns that very ideology on its head.

Much of the progressive commentary on the rape of Dinah (see Chapter Eight) is what one would expect, in that it is supportive of Dinah and decries the violation she experiences. *Hertz* – the most often used English commentary for several decades after its publication in 1936 – ignores the midrashim that condemn Dinah and criticizes Jacob for leaving Dinah "alone and unprotected to visit the daughters of the land."[11] *Plaut* also ignores the midrashim and indicates its disdain for sexual violence with its comment on the killing of Shechem, suggesting it was "the kind of retribution to which many people in our day can better relate than to having such violence against women settled by a mere fine."[12] And while *Etz Hayim* does refer to the rabbinic midrashim, it significantly attenuates the vitriol directed at Dinah therein.

Of the progressive commentaries, the only real surprise was the interpretation by Dolansky and Kohn found in the *Women's Commentary*. While Dolansky and Kohn did not introduce or affirm the rape myths seen in the rabbinic period, they did stress that "what happened to Dinah certainly should not be understood as rape in the

[9] Scherman, 181.
[10] Miller, 241.
[11] *Hertz*, 127.
[12] *Plaut*, 226.

modern sense of the word."[13] Dolansky and Kohn seem to focus so intently on remaining "sensitive to the ancient context in which the story was recorded," one in which "the narrator has no interest in whether or not she [Dinah] consented to the sexual act," [14] that they overlook the experience of Dinah herself. Unlike the *Book of Judith* that was written during the Hasmonean dynasty (165-37 B.C.E.), and that bewails Dinah's experience as one in which strangers tore "off a virgin's clothing to defile her, and exposed her thighs to put her to shame, and polluted her womb to disgrace her,"[15] Dolansky and Kohn focus on the term translated as rape – *innah* – and suggest that it "does not carry with it the psychological and emotional implications for the woman that the contemporary notions of rape suggests."[16]

I find Dolansky and Kohn's approach to the Dinah story troubling, especially in light of the fact that their comments appear in the *Women's Commentary* – a chumash dedicated to incorporating "women's experiences and women's history into the living memory" of the Jewish people.[17] If the *Book of Judith* – written over two thousand years ago – can demonstrate profound sympathy for Dinah's experience, I have wonder why Dolansky and Kohn – writing in the twenty-first century – are unable to convey similar sympathy or understanding.

Why Such Analysis Is Important

I have spent over three years working on this project and, periodically during that time, the same questions would occupy my internal world, namely: why is this

[13] Eskenazi and Wise, 191.
[14] Ibid.
[15] Coogan, 43.
[16] Eskenazi and Wise
[17] ibid, xxv.

important? What is there to be gained from analyzing the evolution of commentary on Genesis 34? Why is it crucial to understand what various Jewish commentators have to say about rape, and about women, across history? As a result of my internal ruminations, as well as my conversations with many (mostly Jewish) women about these and related questions, I came to two answers. Such an analysis is important because of the insight it gives regarding the nature of the Jewish tradition, and, at least in part, the nature of rape culture.

The Power of Tradition and the Danger of Reductionism

For many of us raised in a faith tradition, statements beginning with phrases like "the Bible says" or "our tradition tells us" wield tremendous power. Depending on how they are used, such statements have the power to uplift, or to denigrate. But irrespective how they are employed, these phrases imply that there is one unified tradition that is transmitted through the text. As this cross time analysis illustrates, the assumption that Jewish tradition is unified and monolithic is erroneous, at least as it pertains to attitudes towards women. How the Jewish tradition treats women, as represented by commentary on the Dinah story, varies widely between and within epochs. Across time, Jewish commentators have accentuated the elements of the tradition consonant with their own values and cultural milieu, and underplayed those that with which they where uncomfortable (I imagine the process is probably similar in other faith traditions as well).

Awareness of Judaism's multi-varied tradition, especially as it relates to treatment of women, is important on two levels. First, it highlights the need for Jewish professionals (rabbis, cantors, and educators) to take care to avoid reductionist

attitudes – often characterized by statements like "our tradition tells us" - when teaching about Jewish texts and tradition. It is not unusual for clergy to teach about a particular aspect of the tradition as if it was "*mi Sinai*" or "from Sinai," suggesting that Judaism has been on one continuous path since Moses received the Torah on top of Mount Sinai. While most clergy familiar with Jewish tradition recognize the inaccuracy in this type of reductionism, doing so is often viewed as a harmless simplification in order to impart important moral truths.

Such reductionism however, at least as it relates to Judaism's treatment of women, is far from harmless. Because all the movements within Judaism practiced today – even those most liberal - have their origin in the rabbinic period, it is impossible to ignore entirely the rabbinic literature's contribution to the tradition, including the overt hostility toward women demonstrated in the midrashim on Dinah. Therefore, a rabbi attempting to simplify Jewish tradition for her students will often resort to one of three paths when teaching about the tradition's treatment of women. Either she will teach the midrashim's vitriol towards women as valid, ignore the parts of the rabbinic literature deemed offensive, or acknowledge that the rabbis held those ideas but reject the rabbis' perspective as insignificant or obsolete.

None of these approaches is fair to those being taught, or to the tradition itself. Affirming the caustic view that women are inherently immoral and should be sequestered at home, presents obvious issues for anyone interested in affirming the inherent value of all humans (both male and female), or for those concerned about perpetuating the attitudes inherent in rape culture. Ignoring the more unpleasant aspects of the rabbinic literature is certainly an approach that has been employed by

others in the past (see Chapters Six, Seven, and Eight), but shielding learners from such unpleasantness also keeps them ignorant of the malleable and ever-evolving nature of the Jewish tradition. And rejection of the rabbinic underpinnings of the tradition – an approach usually seen in the most liberal congregations – serves to convey a sense of disconnection from the totality of the Jewish tradition.

In addition to providing professionals with a cautionary note about employing reductionist approaches when teaching about tradition, awareness of the Jewish tradition's varied treatment of women, as represented in this analysis, benefits students of the tradition as well. During a very specific time in history, women were characterized in demeaning terms within the Jewish tradition. But much of the rest of Jewish history pushes back against that ideology, or challenges it outright. The student who understands the tradition is not uniform or monolithic, especially in its portrayal of women, is better prepared to examine the motives of those who attempt to push the worst representations of women as *mi Sinai*.

Rape Culture

We live in a society in which nearly twenty percent of women are raped, and another forty-four percent experience forms of sexual violence other than rape, during their lifetime.[18] Taken together, the vast majority (64%) of American women have (or will) experience some sort of sexual violence at some point in her life. Additionally, almost nine percent of women who experience rape do so at the hands of their intimate

[18] Matthew J. Breiding et al, *Prevalence and Characteristics of Sexual Violence*, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention Morbidity and Mortality Weekly Report, September 5, 2014, 63(SSo8); 1-18.

partner, and "many victims of sexual violence, stalking, and intimate partner violence were first victimized at a young age."[19]

As stark and unsettling as these statistics are, they do not convey the real horror undergirding the numbers. For we also live in a culture that often denies or dismisses a woman's experience of rape, or blames her for her own violation, while at the same time exalting pop icons who make overt and covert references to the benefits of raping women.[20] We live in a rape culture in which, through the process of enculturation, girls and boys are raised to believe a man's role is to take sex by whatever means, and it is the woman's role to give it. Given that this dynamic is so entrenched in our culture, it is not difficult to understand how Elliot Rodger (see Chapter One), the disturbed young man who went on a murdering spree in order "exact retribution" for women who "had denied him sex," came to his conclusions about women and his right to covet their bodies.

Even though the issues of rape culture and rape myth are real, they so permeate most aspects of our society that often we hardly think to question them.[21] I fervently believe that, in order to effect change for the future, we must understand the past, which brings us to an important question: how did the rape myth mentality come permeate our society? As Taylor and Thoth note in the *Encyclopedia of Child Behavior and Development*, "cultural elements and themes are not innate to the human

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[19] Ibid.

[20] Two examples include Robin Thicke's song "Blurred Lines," and Rick Ross' song "You ain't even know it."

[21] I am reminded of a conversation I had with a fellow rabbinical student several years ago. My classmate was a young, straight woman who said to me, without a trace of incredulity, "everyone knows that, even if you don't have to deal a creepy uncle as a kid, you at least won't make it out of college without being raped."

experience, but are rather learned and taught."[22] We *learn* rape myths through the enculturation process. Writing in 1998, Martha Burt indicates that:

> Rape myths are part of the general culture. People learn them in the same way they acquire other attitudes and beliefs – from their families, their friends, newspapers, movies, books, dirty jokes, and lately, rock videos.[23]

Burt omitted "religion and religious teaching" from her list methods of enculturation, however religion is one of the seven primary factors sociologists tell us influence transmission of cultural attitudes and beliefs.[24] Which brings us to the crux of this project: what role does Judaism play in rape culture and the perpetuation of rape myth? Is Jewish tradition guilty of teaching and promoting rape myths?

The answer, like all answers regarding Jewish tradition, is a multi-varied one. Certainly, a rape myth mentality was introduced into the Jewish tradition during the rabbinic period. Key midrashim of that time universally criticize and blame **Dinah** for an experience in which **Shechem** "saw her, and took her, and laid her, and violated her."[25] Dinah is repeatedly accused of being immodest, immoral, and innately a harlot, and the midrashim about her universalize that attitude all women, and suggest that a woman will become corrupt and lascivious if she is not restricted to the home. All of these ideas seen in the rabbinic literature are consistent with the rape myth mentality we see in culture today.

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[22] Matthew Taylor and Candace Thoth, *Cultural Transmission, Encyclopedia of Child Behavior and Development*, (New York: Springer Science+Business Media, LLC, 2011) 449.
[23] Martha Burt, Rape Myths, *Confronting Rape and Sexual Assault* (Mary Odem and Jody Clay-Warner eds.), (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, Inc., 1998) 136.
[24] http://www.ocs.cnyric.org/webpages/phyland/global_10.cfm?subpage=19595
[25] My translation.

But the rabbinic period is only part of the story. None of the pre-rabbinic period literature reflects any of the attitudes seen in the rabbinic literature, and the vast majority of medieval commentators attempt to nullify the attitudes seen in the midrashim, including the *Rashi*, who is considered the tradition's most prominent commentator. And *Ramban*, who is second in prominence only to *Rashi* in the *Mikra'ot Gedolot* (see Chapter Six), not only pushes against the attitudes in the midrashim, but declares unequivocally that "any act of intimate relations that is carried out against the will of a woman is called an 'affliction.'" Only *Radak* of the medieval period entertains the rabbinic period attitudes as valid.

A similar situation arises in the modern period, in that most of the modern commentators attempt to negate the attitudes seen in the rabbinic literature. The only modern commentaries to incorporate the rape myth mentality seen in the midrashim are *Torah Temimah* (1902) and the *Stone Chumash* (1993). As noted above, *Stone* is the most troubling because it contradicts its own methodology in order to preserve the rape myth mentality, and because it use is so widespread in orthodox communities.

Whether or not Jewish tradition can be used today as a means of perpetuating rape myth in society depends how the rabbi teaches, and the sources she teaches from. Communities that utilize the *Stone Chumash*, and that teach from it without contextualizing the whole of the tradition, are more likely to reinforce a rape myth mentality than those utilizing any of the other modern Torah commentaries.

Questions Requiring Further Examination

The results of this analysis of commentary on Genesis 34 indicate at least three questions requiring further examination. First, what factors contributed to the rabbis'

introduction of rape myth ideology into the tradition during the rabbinic period? Since the rabbinic literature plays such a significant role in Jewish tradition, contextualizing the circumstances under which those attitudes developed would be helpful to contemporary students. Second, why did the *Stone Chumash* choose to contradict its own, unambiguously stated, commitment to follow *Rashi*, and instead choose to reintroduce the vitriol *Rashi* had attempted to negate? As the primary chumash utilized among orthodox Jews today, understanding the underlying ideology that prompted such a choice would be invaluable to contemporary learners. And third, why were Dolansky and Kohn (in the *The Torah: A Women's Commentary*) committed to dismissing Dinah's experience as not rape in its historical context? As a Jewish commentary written entirely by women, the *The Torah: A Women's Commentary* broke ground in completely uncharted territory. Therefore, understanding the motives underlying Dolansky and Kohn's choices, as well as those of the editors, would help add contextualization to this brand new endeavor.

Appendix

Annotated Translation of Genesis 34

1) Then[1] Dinah, daughter of Leah whom she bore to Jacob[2], went out[3],[4] to see among[5] the daughters of the land.

2) And Shechem – son of Hamor the Hivite, ruler of the land – saw her, and took her,[6] and laid her,[7] and violated her.[8],[9],[10]

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[1] The conversive ו is commonly translated as "and," but can also be translated as "now," "for," and "then." **v1**: It is translated here as "then" because it serves as a transition between narratives. The narrative transitions immediately before (Gen 33:18) and immediately after (Gen 35:1) this narrative both begin with a conversive ו.

[2] Wenham (*Word Biblical Commentary*) suggests that the description of Dinah as "daughter of Leah who was born to Jacob" reflects the situation's family dynamics. He indicates that Dinah "is daughter of Jacob's unloved wife Leah, hence Jacob's relative unconcern at her disgrace. She is also the full sister of Simeon and Levi, who, as a result of their father's apathy, take the law into their own hands (p. 310)."

[3] **v1**: ותצא is the third person imperfect feminine singular of the qal verb יצא (to go out). With the conversive ו it translates as past tense.

[4] In *Genesis Rabbah,* the rabbis discuss extensively the fact that Dinah ותצא "went out." In all cases of the feminine for of the word, they use this word to find fault, primarily with Dinah, but also with Leah her mother and Jacob her father. In one discussion, both Leah and Dinah are seen as "harlots" because they "went out" (Leah to meet Jacob and demand sex of him in Gen 30:16, and Dinah presumably to behave immodestly) (GenR 80:1). Two more discussions blame the massacre at Shechem on Dinah because her brothers had to defend her honor after she "went out" (GenR 80:2-3). In other discussions Jacob is held accountable for Dinah's rape. In these cases, God rebukes Jacob by facilitating the rape of his daughter (GenR 80:4). This particularly disturbing interpretation suggests a theology in which God will harm a child as a means of punishing the parent.

[5] **v1**: לראות בבנות הארץ is translated "to see among the daughters of the land" instead of "to see the daughters of the land" because of the ב beginning בבנות.

[6] **v2**: ויקח is the third person imperfect masculine singular of the qal verb לקח (to take) with a conversive ו. לקח has a variety of meanings ranging from "to take" (Gen 12:5), "to seize" (Ex 17:5), to "to conquer/capture" (Num 21:25-26), to "to marry" (in Gen alone - 4:19, 11:29, 25:1, 26:34, 28:9, 38:6). This verb is used when the Israelites capture the Amorite cities (Num 21:25), when Pharaoh takes Sarai (Gen 20:2), and when a variety of male characters marry their wives. When לקח indicates marriage then sexual relations is implied. Since in this case ויקח is followed by the verbs וישכב (to lie down) and ויענה (to violate), it demonstrates a more violent connotation. If marriage were meant in this case then וישכב would be superfluous, and ויענה contradictory.

[7] **v2**: וישכב is the third person imperfect masculine singular of the qal very שכב, to lie down, with a conversive ו. This verb often connotes sexual relations (Gen 19:32-33, Ex 22:18, 2Sam 13:14), however the use of אותה (instead of עמה) is highly unusual. The only other

3) And his soul[11] clung[12] to Dinah daughter of Jacob,[13] and he loved[14] the maiden[15] and he spoke[16] tenderly[17] to the girl.[18]

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examples of a form of את following the verb שכב are Amnon's rape of his sister Tamar (2Sam 13:14) and Lot's daughters intoxicating him and duping him into intercourse (Gen 19:33). All examples of שכב followed by את suggest non-consensual sexual relations.

[8] **v2**: ויענה is the third person imperfect masculine singular (and third person feminine singular suffix) of the piel verb ענה (to oppress, humiliate or violate) with a conversive ו. Every use of this verb root, regardless of verb form, connotes some sort of personal degradation. The use of ענה as representing degradation ranges in intensity from simply being in a humbled state (Gen 16:19, Zc 10:2, Isa 58:10, Ps 116:10 and 119:67), to affliction by God (Gen 15:13, 1Kings 2:26 and 11:39, Ps 107:17, Na 1:12), to violation of justice (Job 37:23), to the forcible physical violation of a person (Deut 21:14 and 22:24, Ju 16:5, Ps 105:18) to oppression by enslavement (Ex 1:12). In this verse, the situation involves people (not God) and does not involve a form of punishment or retribution. The most reasonable interpretation of ענה in this verse is Shechem's physical violation of Dinah. [On debates regarding this verb see Bellis's *Helpmates, Harlots, and Heroes*, and Frymer-Kensky's *Reading the Women of the Bible*.]

[9] **v2**: The quick succession of the verbs שכב לקח ענה in suggests rapid and intense action. Additionally, each of these verbs can have negative connotations taken alone, but taken together the negative nature of the action is explicit.

[10] In recent years several scholars have argued against ענה in verse 2 as indicating rape. Frymer-Kensky suggests in *Reading the Women of the Bible* that, for ענה to indicate rape it must come **before** the word שכב. The only evidence she uses to support this assertion is Amnon's rape of Tamar (2Sam 13:14). This argument is not compelling because later in 2Sam 13 (v32) Jonadab (David's servant) uses the word ענה to refer to the rape of Tamar (by Amnon) without any additional verbs supporting it.

[11] **v3**: נפש has a variety of meanings ranging from one's breath (Jb 41:13) to one's personality (Gn 27:4, 1S 18:3, Ps 124:7). In most cases, however, נפש connotes that intangible component that animates humans and animals (Gen 1:20, 2:7, 9:4-5, 35:18, Ru 4:15, Hos 4:8).

[12] **v3:** ותדבק is the third person imperfect feminine singular of the qal verb דבק (to cling, cleave to: Gen 2:24 and 19:19, Jos 23:12, 2S 20:2 and 23:10, 2K 5:27 and 18:6, Ps 101:3 and 102:6, Job 19:20, Ezek 29:4) with a conversive ו.

[13] In verse 1 – prior to the violation – Dinah is described as "the daughter of Leah." In verse 3 – after the violation – Dinah is now described as "the daughter of Jacob." Prior to the rape, as "the daughter of Leah," Dinah displays personal agency by "going out to see among the daughters of the land." After the rape, she looses all personal agency and is silent. At the time she is referred to as "the daughter of Jacob" Dinah's fate is determined entirely by men, namely her brothers.

[14] **v3**: ויאהב is the third person imperfect masculine singular of the qal verb אהב (to love) with a conversive ו. There are several other examples of this word in Genesis all of which indicate some form of familial attachment. These familial attachments include parental love - Abraham loves his son Isaac (22:2), and Isaac loves his son Esau while Rebecca loves her

4) And so[19] Shechem said to Hamor his father "take[20] for me that child[21] as wife!"

5) When[22] Jacob heard that he [Shechem] had defiled[23] Dinah his daughter, while[24] his sons were with the livestock in the field, Jacob remained silent[25] until they came in.

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son Jacob (25:28), and the marriage bond - Isaac loves his wife Rebecca (24:26), Jacob loves his wife Rachel (29:18 and 29:30).

[15] **v3**: הנער is an irregular spelling of הנערה (girl or maiden). As a rule, נערה can imply a virgin or marriageable girl (1King 1:2), a newly married woman (Ju 9:3), or a servant (Gen 24:61).

[16] **v3**: וידבר is the third person imperfect masculine singular of the piel verb דבר (to speak) with a conversive ו.

[17] **v3**: The literal translation of וידבר על לב is "and he spoke upon the heart of..." Some form of this construct is seen only six other times in the TaNaKh (Jud 19:3, 2 Sam 19:8, Isa 40:2, Hos 2:16, Ru 2:13, 2 Ch 30:22). It can be translated as "kind," "tender," "encouraging," or "placating." In each instance, this construct appears after some form of trauma as a means of comfort. The Levite "encourages" his concubine to return after a separation (Jud 19:3). Joab demands that king David "placate" his troops after he has humiliated them with his mourning for his rebellious and fallen son Absalom (2Sam 19:8). God speaks "tenderly" to the Israelites after having severely punished them (Isa 40:2). God "placates" the Israelites, telling them that their relationship with God will be restored after a breach (Hos 2:16). Boaz speaks "kindly" to Ruth because she has suffered great loss and shown tremendous loyalty (Ru 2:13). And Hezekiah "encourages" the Israelites when they return to keeping Pesach after having abandoned God (2Ch 30:22). Shechem speaking "tenderly" to Dinah (v 3) is in keeping with the idea of comforting one after a trauma.

[18] Verse 3 is a transition point in the story. In verse 2, Shechem sees, takes, lays, and violates Dinah. In verse 4, Shechem demands that the "child" he has violated become his wife. Verse 3 is the only place where Shechem appears "tender," and it is only after he has violated Dinah and before he attempts to acquire her.

[19] **v4**: I translate the ו here as "and so" instead of as "and" to show the connection between Shechem's love for Dinah and his demanding that his father get her for his wife.

[20] **v4**: קח-לי is the imperative form of לקח (to take). Here Shechem demands that his father "take for him" Dinah as wife. See note #6.

[21] **v4**: Dinah, whom Shechem referred to as נערה (girl/maiden) when he was comforting her after the rape, refers to as that הילדה (child) when he, Shechem demands her as a wife.

[22] **v5**: I translate the ו here as "when" instead of "and" to illustrate the temporal nature of the verse.

[23] **v5**: טמא is the third person perfect masculine singular form of the piel verb טמא, profane, defile. All examples of the piel form of this verb in the Tanach involve some sort of dishonor or defilement. God's name can be "profaned" (Ezek 43:7), the tabernacle, the land, the alter, and the house of God can be "defiled" (Lev 15:41, 18:28, 2King 23:16, Jer 7:30). One may make oneself ritually unclean (Lev 11:44), and a priest may declare something unclean (Lev 13:8-59).

6) Then[26] Hamor, Shechem's father, went out to speak with him.

7) Meanwhile,[27] Jacob's sons came in from the field because they had heard[28] and were sorrowful.[29] And the men burned[30] with fury because an offense was done in Israel. To lay[31] a daughter of Jacob – a thing not to be done.

8) But[32] Hamor talked to them, saying "Shechem, my son, his soul desires[33] your daughter. Please give her to him for a wife.

9) Marry[34] us! Give to us your daughters, and take to you our daughters.

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[24] **v5**: The two conversive ו are translated here as "when" and "while" in order to connote temporal transitions in the narrative.

[25] **v5**: והחרש is the third person masculine singular form of the hiphil verb חרש, to keep still, be silent. The hiphil of this verb gives the silence a forced quality. Abraham's servant keeps silent in order to observe Rebecca (Gen 24:24). When a father keeps silent regarding his daughter's vows, then she has responsibility for them (Num 30:4). Saul keeps silent in spite of scoundrels despising him (1Sam 10:27). After the fall of Absalom, the people questioned keeping silent about bringing back king David (2Sam 19:11). The people were forced to keep silent because the king commanded it (2King 18:36). The officials kept silent after Jeremiah spoke because they had not heard the king (Jer 38:27). And Zophar asks "will you idle talk reduce others to keeping silent?" (2Sam 13:20).

[26] **v6**: I translate the ו here as "when" instead of "and" to illustrate the temporal nature of the verse.

[27] **v7**: The conversive ו is translated as "Meanwhile" here in order to connote a temporal change in the narrative.

[28] **v7**: כשמעם is translated here as "because they had heard," but it can also be translated as "when they had heard" or "upon their hearing."

[29] **v7**: ויתעצבו is the third person masculine plural form of the hithpael verb עצב, to feel grieved, be distressed, be outraged. The only other occurrence of the hithpael form this verb is before the flood when God regretted making human beings (Gen 6:6).

[30] **v7**: ויחר is the third person masculine singular form of the qal verb חרה, to burn – with anger.

[31] **v7**: לשכב is translated here as "to lay" instead of "to lie with" because it is followed by את and not עם. The את implies objectification, while עם suggests mutuality.

[32] **v8**: I translated the ו here as "but" instead of "and" to show the conflict between v7 and v8.

[33] **v8**: חשקה is the third person perfect feminine singular of the qal verb חשק (to love, bind). Forms of this root are rare in the Tanach and refer to: love that a human shows God (Ps 91:14), desire (1King 9:19), binding something (Ex 38:28), and to be bound (Ex 27:17 and 38:17). I chose to translate this as "desire" instead of "love" because of Shechem's demand of Dinah in verse 4.

[34] **v9**: והתחתנו is the masculine plural imperative of the hithpael verb חתן, to marry, become related through marriage, with a conversive ו.

10) You may settle with us. And the land will be before you: dwell,[35] and trade,[36] and possess[37] it!

11) And Shechem said to her father and to her brothers, "Let me find favor[38] in your eyes and whatever[39] you say to[40] me, I will give."

12) Require of me[41] a very large bride gift[42] and gift and I will give[43] whatever you say[44] to me, only[45] give to me the maiden[46] as wife.

13) The sons of Jacob answered[47] Shechem, and Hamor his father, with[48] deceit[49] and they said amongst themselves[50] that he [Shechem] had defiled[51] their sister Dinah.

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[35] **v10**: שבו is the imperative masculine plural of the qal verb ישב, to sit, to inhabit/dwell. The use of this verb to indicate dwelling or living occurs several times in the Tanach (Gen 4:20, 13:6, and 36:20, 1S 27:8, Is 13:20, Jer 17:6, and Job 15:28).

[36] **v10**: וסחרוה is the imperative masculine plural of the qal verb סחר, to trade, with a third person feminine singular suffix. The qal form of this verb can connote wandering (Jer 14:18) or acting as merchants or buying agents (Gen 23:16, 1King 10:28).

[37] **v10**: והאחזו is the imperative masculine plural of the niphal verb אחז, be seized, hold fast. The niphal of this verb can also connote holding fast (Gen 22:13) and settling in the land (Jos 22:19).

[38] **v11**: The construct אמצא חן – in this form - occurs six other times in the Tanach and, in each case, suggests an individual's desire to be viewed favorably by another. Twice the favor is sought from God (Ex 33:13 and 2Sam 15:25), and four times it is sought from those perceived to be in a more powerful position (Gen 33:15, Ru 2:2 and 2:13, 2Sam 16:4).

[39] **v11**: אשר can also mean: who, which, that, whoever, and since. I chose to translate it as "whatever" because Shechem appears to be imploring Jacob and his sons to marry Dinah and appears willing to give whatever necessary to gain their agreement.

[40] **v11**: תאמרו אלי literally means "you say to me," but in this context "you ask of me" makes more sense.

[41] **v12**: עלי literally means "upon me" or "over me," and the verse would literally read "Upon me a very large bride gift…" I chose to translate it as "require of me" because Shechem is stating he will pay any price asked of him.

[42] **v12**: מהר literally means the gift to be given to the bride's family. This word quite rare and only occurs two other times in the Tanach (Ex 22:16 and 1Sam 18:25).

[43] **v12**: See note #38.

[44] **Verse 12**: תאמרו is the 2nd person imperfect masculine plural form of the qal verb אמר (to speak).

[45] **v12**: I chose to translate the vav here as "only" because it is consistent with Shechem's intense request.

[46] **v12**: Since they are discussing a female (Dinah) this word should be הנערה, however the spelling in the text is הנער.

[47] **v13**: ויענו is the 3rd person plural imperfect masculine form of the qal verb ענה with a conversive ו. This verb occurs many times in the Tanach and can range in meaning from

14) And they said to them "We are not able[52] to do this thing – to give our sister to a man that has a foreskin[53] – because it is a disgrace[54] for us.

15) However[55], we will enter into this agreement[56] with you if you become like us[57] by circumcising[58] all your males.

16) Then[59] we will give to you our daughters, and your daughters we will take to us. Then we will dwell[60] with you and we will become as[61] one people.

"answer" (Gen 23:14, 1King 18:21, Job 40:1), to "return a greeting" (2King 4:29), to "let one know" (1Sam 9:17, Is 30:19) to "testify" (Gen 30:33, 2S 1:16).

[48] **v13**: I translated the ב in the word במרמה as "with" instead of "in" because it made more sense idiomatically.

[49] **v13**: מרמה has a variety of connotations, but all refer to some sort of deceit or fraud, including: Jacob stealing Esau's blessing (Gen 27:35), fraudulent business practices (Ho 12:8 and Mic 6:11), betrayal (2King 9:23), and disappointment (Pr 14:8).

[50] **v13**: I included the "among themselves" here because it seems unlikely that they would make this statement to Shechem or Hamor.

[51] **v13**: See note #21.

[52] **v14**: נוכל is the first person imperfect common plural of the qal verb יכל. This verb has a variety of connotations all referring to "ability", including: "to endure" (Isa 1:13, Ps 101:5), "to be capable of" (Hos 8:5), "to be able to/have power to" (Gen 24:50, Gen 31:35, Num 9:8, Num 22:6, Isa 57:20, Est 8:6), "be superior/be victorious" (Gen 30:8, Is 16:12, Ps 13:5), and "grasp/understand" (Ps 139:6).

[53] **v14**: The word ערלה occurs only 4 other times in the Tanach and ranges in meaning from "foreskin" (Gn 17:11), to "a whole penis" (1S 18:25, Dt 10:16), to "a fruit not yet to be eaten" (Lv 19:23).

[54] **v14**: The word חרפה occurs only this one time in the books of Torah, but many other times in the Tanach as a whole. It always connotes some sort of score (Ezek 21:33) or disgrace (1Sam 25:39) ranging from physical mutilation (1Sam 11:2), to desecrated Jerusalem (Neh 2:17), to the association of such disgrace with wickedness (Pr 18:3).

[55] **v15**: אך occurs 158 times in the Tanach and can vary in meaning from "surely/indeed" (1King 22:32), to "only" (Gen 7:23), to "however" (Jer 34:4). Given that Shechem is being presented with the only option for marrying Dinah, "however" makes the most sense idiomatically.

[56] **v15**: נאות is the 1st person imperfect common plural of the niphal verb אות. This is a rare verb that occurs only one other time in the Tanach (2K 12:9).

[57] **v15**: כמנו is the 1st person common plural of the particle preposition כמו. This form of this preposition is quite rare and occurs only two other times in the Tanach (Deut 5:26 and 2Sam 18:3).

[58] **v15**: להמל is the infinitive construct of the niphal verb מול (to circumcise). While the niphal form of this verb occurs elsewhere in Torah (Gen 17:10-11), this is the only example of the infinitive construct of this verb.

[59] **v16**: I translated the vav on ונתנו as "then" instead of "and" to highlight the if/then quality of the statement.

17) But[62] if you do not listen to us and be circumcised[63], then we will take our daughter[64] and we will go."

18) And their words appeared good[65] in the eyes of Hamor and in the eyes of Shechem son of Hamor.

19) And the young man did not tarry[66] to do the thing because he delighted[67] in the daughter of Jacob - and he was honored[68] (most) from the entire house of his father.

20) So[69] Hamor, and Shechem his son, went to the city gate and they spoke to the men of the city saying:

21) "These men are at peace[70] with us, so[71] they shall dwell[72] in the land and trade[73] in it, since,[74] behold, the land is spacious[75] before them. Their daughters we will take to us as wives, and our daughters we will give to them.

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[60] **v16**: See note #33.
[61] **v16**: לעם אחד literally means "for one people" or "to one people". I chose to translate the preposition ל as "as" because it makes more sense idiomatically.
[62] **v17**: The vav is translated as "but" instead of "and" here to demonstrate the explicit threat if the agreement isn't followed.
[63] **v17**: See note #58.
[64] **v17**: It has been unclear whether Jacob is a part of these negotiations. Up until this point it appears that only Dinah's brothers are negotiating. But "our daughter" makes that unclear. The plural "our" suggests that the brothers are still part of the process, but "daughter" makes it possible that Jacob has jointed the discussion. Either way, the brothers assume – in part or in whole – responsibility for their sister.
[65] **v18**: וייטבו is the 3rd person imperfect masculine plural form of the qal verb יטב with a conversive ו. The literal translation of this verb is "will/shall be good." I translated it as "appeared good" to highlight the imperfect nature of the verb form.
[66] **v19**: ולא אחר is the 3rd person perfect masculine singular of the verb אחר with the negative prefix לא and a congjunctive ו.
[67] **v19**: חפץ is the 3rd person masculine singular of the qal verb חפץ. This verb occurs numerous times in the Tanach, and can mean "want/desire" (Isa 1:11), "to take pleasure" (Gen 1K 10:9), "to wish" (Job 13:3), "to be willing" (Isa 42:21) and "to be inclined" (2Sam 2:7).
[68] **v19**: נכבד is the participle masculine singular absolute of the niphal verb כבד, which literally means "to be heavy." The present form of this verb occurs eight other times in the Tanach and means "to be honored" (1Chr 4:9), "to enjoy respect" (2King 14:10), "to behave with dignity" (2Sam 6:20), and "appear in one's glory" (Ex 14:4, Ps 87:3).
[69] **v20**: I translated the conversive vav as "So" here instead of "And" to illustrate the immediate action taken by Hamor and Shechem after the conversation with Dinah's brothers.

22) Indeed,[76] the men will agree[77] with this – to dwell with us and be one people, only[78] we must be circumcised[79] - all males - like them who are circumcised[80].

23) Their livestock, and their possessions, and all their cattle – won't it become ours? So, we shall be in agreement[81] with them, and they shall dwell with us."

24) And they all listened[82] to Hamor and to Shechem his son; all went out[83],[84] of the city gate and were circumcised[85] – all males – all who go out of their[86] city gate.

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[70] **v21:** The adjective שלמים occurs several times in the Tanach and ranges in meaning from "uninjured or safe" (Gen 33:18), to "complete" (Gen 15:16), to "peaceable, in relation of peace" (1King 8:61, Isa 38:3). I chose to translate it as "at peace" because it made the most idiomatic sense when followed by אתנו (with us). "At peace with us" also highlights Simon and Levi's deception. In v25 it becomes clear that the sons of Jacob certainly were not "at peace" with the Shechemites.

[71] **v21**: I chose to translate this conjunctive ו as "so" instead of "and" to illustrated that the Jacob clan's ability to dwell in the land was contingent on them being peaceful.

[72] **v21**: וישבו is the 3rd person imperfect masculine plural with a conjunctive vav. See note #36.

[73] **v21**: ויסחרו is the 3rd person imperfect masculine plural of the qal verb סחר with a conjunctive ו. See note #37.

[74] **v21**: I translated the ו here as "since" instead of "and" to illustrate the contingent nature of the verse.

[75] **v21**: רחבת ידים literally means "wide (or broad) hands." This idiom appears four other times in the Tanach (Jdg 18:10, Isa 22:18, Neh 7:4, 1Chr 4:40) and always indicates an area of land that is spacious.

[76] **v22**: אך can be translated as "surely," "indeed," and "however." "Indeed" makes the most sense given the context.

[77] **v22**: יאתו is the 3rd person imperfect masculine plural form of the niphal verb אות. See note #59.

[78] **v22**: I translated the ב in בהמול as "only" instead of "in" because it made more sense idiomatically. The literal translation could be: "Only with this will the men be willing to dwell with us and be one people; upon our circumcising every male as they are circumcised."

[79] **v22**: בהמול is a niphal infinitive construct of the niphal verb מול. This form of the verb "to be circumcised" occurs three other times in the Tanach (Gen 17:10, 17:13, and Ex 12:48).

[80] **v22**: נמלים is the participle masculine plural form of the niphal verb מול. See note #83.

[81] **v23**: See note #58.

[82] **v24**: וישמעו is the 3rd person imperfect masculine plural form of the qal verb שמע with a conversive ו. This form of this verb occurs 39 times in the Tanach and ranges in meaning from "to hear" (Gen 3:8), to "to listen to" (Am 5:3), to "heed" (Gen 17:20), to "obey" (Ex 24:7), to "understand" (Gen 11:7), to "try/examine" (Deut 1:16).

[83] **v24**: כל יצאי is the masculine plural participle construct of the qal verb יצא. See note #3.

[84] Verse 24 parallels verse 1. Just as Dinah's "going out" sets the stage for her violation, so too all the men's "going out" set the stage for their eventual massacre.

25) Then,[87] on[88] the third day, when[89] they were in pain,[90] the two sons of Jacob – Simon and Levi brothers of Dinah – each[91] took his sword, and came upon the city safely[92] and killed every male.

26) And they killed[93] Hamor and Shechem his son – put them to the sword.[94] And they took[95] Dinah from the house of Shechem and they went out.[96]

27) The sons of Jacob came upon the dead bodies[97] and plundered[98] the city that had defiled[99],[100] their sister.

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[85] **v24**: וימלו is the 3rd person masculine plural form of the niphal verb מול with a conversive ו. See note #83.
[86] **v25**: Lit. "his"
[87] **v25**: I translated the ו here as "then" instead of "and" to illustrate the temporal transition.
[88] **v25**: I translated the ב in ביום as "on" instead of "in" because it makes more sense idiomatically.
[89] **v25**: The ב in בהיותם is translated as "when" because it makes the most sense idiomatically.
[90] **v25**: כאבים is the masculine plural participle of the qal verb כאב meaning pain. This verse is the only time this form of כאב occurs in the Tanach.
[91] **v25**: איש is translated as "each" because it makes more sense idiomatically as referring to the two brothers.
[92] **v25**: בטח is a common masculine singular noun of the verb בטח, to trust, be safe. This noun implies security or safety when in association with going or dwelling (1King 5:5, 1Sam 12:11).
[93] **v26**: הרגו is the 3rd person perfect form of the qal verb הרג (to kill). Uses of this verb range in meaning from "to legally execute" (Lev 20:16), to "killing in war" (1King 9:16), to "slaughtering an animal" (Isa 22:13).
[94] **v26**: Literally "put before a sword." I chose to translate this as "put to the sword" because it makes more sense idiomatically.
[95] **v26**: ויקחו is the 3rd person masculine imperfect form of the qal verb לקח (to take) with a conversive ו. See note #6.
[96] **v26**: ויצאו is the 3rd person masculine imperfect form of the qal verb יצא (to go out) with a conversive ו. See notes #3 and #87.
[97] **v27**: החללים is an adjective masculine plural absolute meaning dead or pierced (with a sword). This form of this word only occurs three other times in the Tanach (1Sam 31:8, 1King 11:15, and 1Chr 10:8), and refers to dead bodies in each case.
[98] V27: ויבזו is the 3rd person masculine plural form of the qal verb בזז (to plunder) with a conversive ו. This form of this verb occurs six other times in the Tanach (Gen 34:29, 2King 7:16, Neh 2:19, Ps 109:11, 2Chr 14:13, 2Chr 25:13), and always connotes destruction of a city and looting of its people and possessions.
[99] **v27**: See not #23.
[100] **v27**: Interestingly, the narrator refers to "the city that had defiled their sister" and not to "Shechem."

28) They took the flocks, and the cattle, and their male asses that were in the city and that were in the field.

29) And all their wealth,[101] and all their children, and all their women they Jacob's sons took as captives[102] or plundered[103] – everything in the houses.

30) And Jacob said to Jacob and to Levi "You have troubled me, by causing me to sink in the dwelling of the land – with the Canaanites and the Perizzites – and I am with very few, and they will gather against me, and smite me and I will be destroyed, I and my house.

31) But[104] they said "Should our sister be made like a prostitute?"[105]

[101] **v29**: Literally "all their power/strength."
[102] **v29**: שבו is the 3rd person plural perfect form of the qal verb שבה. This verb occurs numerous times in the Tanach and always connotes taking captives in times of battle.
[103] **v29**: See not #100.
[104] **v31**: I translated the conversive ו as "but" instead of "and" to demonstrate Simon and Levi's rejection of Jacob's rebuke.
[105] V31: הכזונה is the common feminine singular absolute noun זנה (harlot, prostitute) with a particle interrogative ה and a particle preposition כ. Literally, this would read "whether like a prostitute." I translated the interrogative as "should" because it makes more sense given the context. Literally: "Should he make our sister like a prostitute?"

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