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The Rape of Dinah: Motives for Incorporation in the History of the Patriarchs

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Abstract: This article presents a philological analysis of the tragic story of Dinah, the daughter of the patriarch Jacob, as described in Gen 34. A comprehensive analysis of the literary text in the context of the Bible as a whole reveals a number of contradictory elements within the narrative, which contribute to the heterogeneity and multi-layeredness of the biblical text. These elements indicate that the story underwent an earlier form and that the rape of Dinah was deliberately included in the narrative of the patriarchs. This article aims to elucidate the rationale behind the deliberate incorporation of Dinah's rape into the history of the patriarchs. The following three motives are posited as the reasons for this incorporation: 1) the conquest of Shechem as the first city in the land of Canaan; 2) the explanation of the curse of Simeon and Levi; 3) the preservation of the integrity and purity of the nation.

Keywords: rape, Dinah, uncleanness, Gen 34, Jacob

The narrative of Dinah's rape, found in Gen 34,[1] stands out as a jarring narrative break within the larger story of the patriarch Jacob. In the biblical account, Dinah goes out to meet the "daughters of the land," but is subsequently raped and then seduced and/or abducted by Shechem, a Hivite, who falls in love with her and wishes to marry her. In order to legally take Dinah as his wife, Shechem asks his father for help, and they go to Jacob to negotiate the terms of Dinah's marriage. During the negotiations, which include Jacob's sons, the rapist shows no remorse, although he does express a willingness to pay a high bride price. Unwilling to give their sister to such a criminal, Jacob's sons resort to deception: Shechem can only marry Dinah if he and his tribesmen agree to be circumcised. This condition is eventually agreed. On the third day after the circumcision, two of Jacob's sons (Simeon and Levi) enter the city of Shechem and kill all the men and take their sister back home.

The narrative of Dinah,[2] particularly in terms of its historical context and interpretation, has been a subject of considerable debate among scholars. This debate encompasses various perspectives on the story's meaning and significance, including its

1 With the exception of a few instances of literal translation, the translation of the Bible verses used in this article comes from the King James Bible.

2 The Book of Jubilees, a second-temple period text discovered among the Dead Sea Scrolls at Qumran, offers a unique perspective on the story of Dinah. *Jub.* 30:1–6 and 24–26 retells and condemns the "profanation" of the Israelite virgin, Dinah, employing an angelic speech, *Jub.* 30:7–17, 21–22 extends to a broader

historical accuracy, its connection to broader themes within the Hebrew Bible, and the interpretations offered by different religious traditions (Caspi 1985, 25–45; Geller 1990, 1–15; Wyatt 1990, 433–58; Kugel 1992, 1–34; Zlotnick 2002; Scholz 2002; Rofé 2005, 369–75; Schroeder 2007; Schroeder 2015; Shemesh 2007, 2–21; Zakovitch 2012, 116–29; Feinstein 2014, 65–68). However, this discussion shifts focus to a different aspect of Genesis: the potential impact of genealogical fluidity on the text's historical accuracy. This concept suggests that the inclusion of Dinah in genealogies may not always reflect a purely historical record, but could be influenced by various factors, including the evolving social and religious landscape of the time.[3]

The first mention of Dinah's birth is in Gen 30:21, where we learn that Leah (the daughter of Laban the Aramean of Paddan-Aram and Rebekah's sister), who had already borne six sons to the patriarch Jacob[4] – Reuben, Simeon, Levi, Judah, Issachar, and Zebulun, gave birth to a daughter named Dinah. The narrative progresses with an intriguing interweaving of childbirth and naming. The arrival of each son is accompanied by an elucidation of his name, frequently reflecting Leah's hopes and aspirations. When Zebulun, her sixth son, is born, she exclaims, "God has endowed me with a wonderful gift; now my husband will dwell with me" (Gen 30:20). The Hebrew *yizbəlēnî*, meaning "he will dwell with me," poignantly expresses Leah's longing for a deeper connection with Jacob. However, a curious anomaly breaks this pattern. Dinah, Jacob's only daughter mentioned by name, stands alone with no explanation of her name. Although the name "Dinah" is open to interpretation as either "her judgment" or "her vindication," the text itself remains silent on this matter (Drawnel 2004, 172). This omission prompts us to consider the social dynamics at play. Was the practice of naming with significance reserved solely for sons? Did the patriarchal structure view daughters as less deserving of symbolic names, considering they would eventually leave the household?

In Gen 32:23, as Jacob prepares to cross the Jabbok River on his way back to Canaan, we encounter a puzzling detail: "he took his two wives, his two maidservants, and his eleven children." The Hebrew word in this verse is *yəlādâw*, which literally means "his children." However, we would expect the word *bānâw*, meaning "his sons," since the number does not match. Benjamin, Jacob's twelfth son, was born later, on the way to Bethlehem, so he is not included in the count. This leaves us with eleven sons, which means that the daughter born to Jacob in the meantime is

critique of exogamous marriage, and *Jub.* 30:18–20 connects the killing with the subsequent elevation of the sons of Levi to the priesthood (Drawnel 2004, 235–36).

3 Yair Zakovitch (2012, 120–29) claims that the present form of the text in Genesis 34 concerning Dinah's encounter with Shechem has undergone significant redaction. He proposes the existence of an earlier narrative that omits the element of rape and its attendant details, such as Dinah's removal from Shechem's dwelling.

4 Jacob also had Joseph and Benjamin with his second wife Rachel; Dan and Naphtali with his slave Bilhah; and Gad and Aser with his slave Zilpah (Gen 30:35).

not counted in the biblical narrative. The question then arises: why is Dinah omitted here? Jewish scholars have pondered this question, but have not found a definitive answer. In one of his commentaries, Rashi explains that Dinah was hidden from Esau in a basket to prevent him from marrying her. However, Rashi argues that Jacob was punished for this act. He suggests that if Jacob had not kept Dinah away from his brother, she would have been under Esau's protection and would not have fallen into the hands of Shechem (*Aggadat Bereshit* 32:23:1). While this explanation may seem unconvincing, Rashi suggests that Dinah's concealment is the reason she is not included among Jacob's eleven children in the biblical passage.

In Gen 46:8–15, a list of Jacob's *bānâw û-ḇənoṯâw*, meaning "sons and daughters," who settled in Egypt is presented. However, the list only includes thirty-three male names: Reuben (1) and sons of Reuben: Hanoch (2), Phallu (3), Hezron (4) and Carmi (5); sons of Simeon (6): Jemuel (7), Jamin (8), Ohad (9), Jachin (10), Zohar (11) and Shaul (12); sons of Levi (13): Gershon (14), Kohath (15) and Merari (16); sons of Judah (17): Er (18), Onan (19), Shelah (20), Pharez (21) and Zarah (22); sons of Pharez: Hezron (23) and Hamul (24); sons of Issachar (25): Tola (26), Phuvah (27), Job (28) and Shimron (29); sons of Zebulun (30): Sered (31), Elon (32) and Jahleel (33). While the text seems to deliberately ignore the existence of Dinah, it does make further reference to her, e.g. in Gen 46:15: "These were the sons of Leah, whom she bore to Jacob in Padan Aram, with his daughter Dinah. All the persons, his sons and his daughters, were thirty-three." Interestingly, in Gen 35, which immediately follows the story of Dinah in Gen 34, another list of Jacob's children is presented, yet Dinah is once again omitted. Assuming that the current form of the biblical text describing the rape of Dinah has undergone editorial revisions, there is possibility of the existence of an earlier narrative behind the text as it is now. This raises crucial questions about the story's original purpose and meaning within the broader context of the text: Was it created to justify the plundering of Shechem? Does it sufficiently justify Jacob's curses against Simeon and Levi? Was it also intended to discourage mixed marriages?

1. The Conquest of Shechem as the First City in the Land of Canaan

The rape of Dinah took place in the land of Canaan, in Shechem, where Jacob had come to settle. He had set up camp outside the city and purchased a parcel of land from the sons of Hamor, Shechem's father, for one hundred *kesitas* (Gen 33:19). However, the violent events surrounding Dinah may serve as a justification for the eventual conquest of Shechem. As Jacob lay on his deathbed, preparing to bless his sons, he said to Joseph: "Moreover I have given to you one Shechem, i.e., "ridge" [pronounced as in the name of the city Shechem] above your brothers, which I took from

the Amorites" (Gen 48:22), and a little further on it turns out that he conquered the place promised to Joseph with his "sword and bow." If we read this as referring to the city of Shechem rather than as another mountain slope on which there was a settlement, it could be argued that Jacob[5] was the conqueror of this city. This interpretation is consistent with the description given in the text without the need to consider the connection with the revenge of the sons, which in this case would fit as a later interpolation into the text about Dinah.

2. The Explanation of the Curse of Simeon and Levi

In the aftermath of the assault, Shechem attempted to defuse the tense situation and secure the approval of Dinah's father, Jacob, by proposing marriage to Dinah. The biblical text provides few details about the nature of their relationship after the incident. However, it does mention Shechem's professed affection for Dinah, saying that he "spoke to the girl's heart" (Gen 34:3). Faced with this challenge, Shechem approached his father, Hamor, to act as a mediator in negotiations with Jacob. Hamor initiated the discussion: "And make marriages with us; give your daughters to us, and take our daughters to yourselves. So you shall dwell with us, and the land shall be before you. Dwell and trade in it, and acquire possessions for yourselves in it" (Gen 34:9–10). For the family of Jacob, ordinary – though wealthy – shepherds, the guarantee of peace from the family of Hamor, as well as the freedom to move, live and work within the territory of the Hivites, seems like a very good deal. On the other hand, it is difficult to say how much Hamor himself would gain from the agreement with Jacob. He was certainly concerned about his son's life, since he decided to help him in the negotiations to obtain Jacob's consent to marry his daughter, who had been wronged by Shechem (Barmash 2020, 76). It should be noted, however, that the Bible does not say that Shechem feared revenge from Dinah's family for her injury. Rather, Genesis emphasises the fact that he loved her very much and cared for her (Gen 34:3, 8, 12, 19).

But Jacob's sons, motivated by a desire to uphold the family honour, responded with a deceitful plan. They agreed to the marriage on the condition that all the men of Shechem undergo circumcision (Gen 34:14). This willingness to undergo circumcision, a foreign practice to the Hivites, can be interpreted as evidence of Shechem's

5 In the book of Jubilees, Jacob was part of the revenge: "Jacob and his sons were angry with the Shechemites because they had defiled their sister Dinah. They spoke deceptively with them, acted in a crafty way toward them, and deceived them. Simeon and Levi entered Shechem unexpectedly and effected a punishment on all the Shechemites. They killed every man whom they found in it. They left absolutely no one in it. They killed everyone in a painful way because they had violated their sister Dinah" (*Jub.* 30:3–4; VanderKam 1989, 191; Zlotnick 2002, 71).

strong desire to marry Dinah. Though, it seems strange that they would agree to undergo such self-mutilation in order to gain some material and cultural benefits (the promise of uniting into one people with the family of Jacob). It also seems strange that the sons of Jacob proposed that all the Hivites should be circumcised, which is a very high price to pay for marrying the daughter of the patriarch. These are questions that cannot be answered without deeper cultural studies in the area, and the interpretation of the whole story may depend on the answers to these questions.[6]

According to the account, when the men were in great pain on the third day after circumcision, Simeon and Levi (Dinah's full brothers) entered Shechem and killed all the men, taking Dinah home with them. It is worth noting that during the negotiations, Dinah remained in Shechem, with the Hivites, and it is unclear why Jacob and his sons did not immediately come to her aid if she was being held by force. It is possible that they feared a direct confrontation that might fail and therefore resorted to trickery. In any case, on the third day of circumcision, Dinah's brothers plundered the city and abducted the local women and children. Given that, as it seems from Gen 34:25, only Simeon and Levi participated in the act of bloody revenge, and they were cursed by Jacob on his deathbed for carrying out this revenge (Gen 49:5–6), it is believed that the whole story was created in order to justify this very curse (Frankel 2015).

According to Talmudic tradition, Simeon and Levi were fourteen and thirteen years old at the time of Dinah's defilement (who herself was only six years old[7]; although according to *Demetrius Chronographus*, Dinah was defiled at the age of sixteen and four months), and at the time of the revenge (Bader 2008, 111–13). It appears that these boys were not yet of an age to plan and execute such a revenge. This perspective, in conjunction with the young age attributed to Dinah, suggests that the story of Dinah was created at a later date than the story of Jacob's blessings and curses on his deathbed. At that time, there was already a certain degree of uncertainty about the age of Dinah's brothers, and the probability of the implementation of the revenge plan by two minors was not taken into account. The author of the fragment about Jacob's death would therefore have to tacitly assume that Simeon

6 Not unimportant for our analysis is the fact that, according to Herodotus of Halicarnassus, in those lands the majority of peoples, including the Egyptians, practised circumcision and it was shameful for a man not to be circumcised. Only the Philistines were not circumcised, which was due to their Aegean origin (in 1 Sam 17:26, 36, when David spoke of Goliath, he called him an "uncircumcised Philistine," and this was clearly intended as an insult) (Spence and Exell 1881, 407). The question then arises: how could Shechem agree to their demand if he was already circumcised?

7 In the book of Jubilees, Dinah was the victim of a rape at the age of twelve: "There [i.e., in Salem, near Shechem] Jacob's daughter Dinah was taken by force to the house of Shechem, the son of Hamor the Hivite, the ruler of the land. He lay with her and defiled her. Now she was a small girl, twelve years of age. He begged her father and her brothers that she be given to him as a wife" (*Jub.* 30:2; VanderKam 1989, 191; Zlotnick 2002, 71).

and Levi were already adult men (which still seems unlikely that these two killed all the men in Shechem).

It is worth emphasising that Jacob[8] did not like what his sons had done. He believed that revenge would make the Canaanites and Perizzites to hate his family. In the biblical story of Dinah, we look in vain for his clear opposition to the planned crime of his sons. We only know that after the fact he was very concerned, or even terrified, that he, his family, and his people would be destroyed. Although he remained passive at the time of his sons' conspiracy, it is challenging to ascertain whether he was aware of their intention to exact revenge on the entire Hivite people. The biblical narrative does not provide a definitive answer to this question.

As previously stated, Jacob's blessings in Gen 49 contain an additional intriguing element: the curse of Simeon and Levi. In this passage, Jacob delivers a severe condemnation of these two sons: "Instruments of cruelty are in their dwelling place. Let not my soul enter their council... in their anger they slew a man, and in their self-will they hamstrung an ox" (Gen 49:5–6). Their father subsequently curses them and denies them an inheritance. He does not explicitly state what specific situation he is referring to, which may have been the reason why they are mentioned in the story of Dinah as the ones who massacre the inhabitants of Shechem. It is noteworthy that in the same narrative, it is not only these two brothers of Dinah who are depicted as being influenced by anger; it is also stated in general terms about her brothers. The possibility of the later separation of Simeon and Levi from the rest of the brothers is also indicated by the Greek translation (right table), which, in relation to the analogous Hebrew passage (left table) speaking of Dinah's brothers, distinguishes this particular pair. This distinction is made in order to place the responsibility for the bloody act of revenge on them (Frankel 2015):

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8 It is not known who informed Jacob, and his sons, that Dinah had been sexually abused, since she herself was staying in Shechem at the rapist's house, but when he heard of the rape, he remained silent (*wəheḥĕriš*) and waited until his sons returned from the field (Gen 34:5). In this passivity, in this lack of a clear reaction on Jacob's part, one might seek tacit approval for the sons to deal with the culprit themselves. But the text itself gives no such indication. Apart from that, it would mean that Jacob is unable or unwilling to take personal responsibility for the wrong done to his daughter and to inflict the appropriate punishment himself. Apart from the age of the sons, it could be assumed that he simply wanted to discuss the matter with the male members of the family, which is more likely in the text, if only because the sons are involved in the negotiations between the parties.

It is also difficult to say what the contextual meaning of the expression under discussion might be, e.g. in English, "to be speechless at the news of something tragic," because Jacob did learn of the serious wrong done to his daughter? Impulsive people show an immediate, often not fully thought-out reaction to the news of tragic events. Jacob, as the personification of a wise patriarch, does not react in accordance with the negative emotions that arise in a person at this time. He simply "fell silent," in the sense that he experienced these emotions strongly inwardly, but did not show them outwardly. From this perspective, such "silence" cannot be identified with "silent acceptance" of revenge. This would be an over-interpretation, and if the sons understood their father's silence in this way, the biblical story clearly shows that they were wrong, because Jacob was angry about the act of revenge, and later – on his deathbed – did not bless the two sons mentioned.

Gen 34:13 the sons of Jacob answered Shechem and Hamor his father	Gen 34:13 the sons of Jacob answered Shechem and Hamor his father
Gen 34:14 said to them	Gen 34:14 Simeon and Levi, the brothers of Dinah, said to them

In light of the aforementioned alterations, it is probable that it was originally Jacob's sons who perceived Shechem's desire to marry Dinah as an opportunity to sack the city. The accentuation of the role of Simeon and Levi in the murder of the inhabitants of Shechem (Gen 34:25) may have been a subsequent addition, elucidating the hitherto ambiguous issue of Jacob's cursing of these two of his descendants.

3. Preserving the Integrity and Purity of the Nation

The tragic story of Dinah begins with her going out *lirʾôṯ biḇnôṯ hāʾāreṣ*, which can be translated as "to see the daughters of the land" (Gen 34:1). The meaning of the phrase *lirʾôṯ bə-* is not entirely clear, and it could also mean "to enjoy something." This has led to the suggestion that Dinah simply wanted to have a good time, perhaps by going for a walk with the local girls and getting to know them. Many scholars have looked for clues in the text that might suggest or foreshadow the misfortune that was to befall Dinah. Some have even questioned whether she was somehow to blame for what happened to her. Rashi (*Bereshit Rabba* 80:1) draws attention to the fact that in this chapter Dinah is referred to as the daughter of Leah, but the phrase "daughter of Jacob" is omitted. Why is this? Rashi points out that it is to suggest a certain similarity between the daughter and the mother. In another part of the biblical story, Leah is said to have *wattēṣēʾ*, meaning "she went out," to meet Jacob in order to spend the night with him in exchange for her son Reuben's mandrakes, which she had given to Rachel (Gen 30:16). The same verb is used in the story of Dinah, who *wattēṣēʾ*, meaning "she went out," to see the local girls. It is possible that, as in the case of her mother, Dinah's "going out" has a negative connotation, suggesting bad intentions. Some scholars even see this as an example of the adage "like mother, like daughter" (Kass 2003, 478). Interestingly, the use of the same verb in relation to a man does not necessarily imply bad intentions. For example, when Jacob *wayyēṣēʾ*, which means "he went out," from Beersheba and went to Haran (Gen 28:10), Rashi does not speak of Jacob's bad intentions. Instead, he explains that the verb was used deliberately to convey the sense of emptiness left behind when a righteous person leaves. When Jacob *wayyēṣēʾ*, which means "he went out," from the city mentioned, its radiance, splendor, and glory went with him. This would not have been the case with anyone

else (Lawee 2019, 217). This raises the question of why a woman's (Dinah's) going out is perceived negatively, while a man's (in this case Jacob's, although he is said to have been a righteous man) going out is perceived positively.

When Shechem saw Dinah, he kidnapped her and raped her. The Hebrew verb *wayʿannehā* is used in this passage translated "he raped her." Classical translators of this passage ascribe to this verb the meaning of "forced to have sexual intercourse," emphasising the tinge of coercion supposedly inherent in the root *ʿayin-nûn-hê*. On the other hand, Ellen van Wolde and Hilary Lipka argue that the biblical expression *wayʿannehā* discussed here should not be translated as "and he raped her" (with the consecutive *wāw*). In their view, it is a verb of the *piʿel* group, in which the above-mentioned root does not refer to rape or sexual abuse, but to the (general) defilement of a woman, for example by treating her with disrespect (in the context of social status). A similar view is taken by Washington, who adds, on the basis of an analysis of Deut 22:24, 29, that in the case of the verb *ʿayin-nûn- hê*, it refers to some sexual abuse, but not to acts of sexual violence (Freedman 1990, 51–63; Bechtel 1994, 19–36; Van Wolde 2002, 543; Frymer-Kensky 2002, 179–98; Washington 2004, 208; Gravett 2004, 279; Lipka 2006, 87–90).

The question thus arises as to whether the sexual intercourse between Dinah and Shechem can be considered sexual violence. In other words, was Dinah having intercourse with the son of Hamor against her will? It should be noted that accepting the hypothesis that Dinah was not sexually abused does not automatically imply that she was not dishonoured. Gen 34 also emphasises three times that Shechem *ṭimmēʾ*, i.e. "dishonoured or made unclean" Dinah:

Gen 34:5	Gen 34:13	Gen 34:27
ṭimmēʾ ʾēṯ dinâ bittô	*ṭimmēʾ ʾēṯ dinâ ʾăḥōṯām*	*ṭimmʾû ʾăḥōṯām*
had defiled Dinah his [Jacob's] daughter	had defiled Dinah their sister	had defiled their sister

In the Mosaic Law, the term "sexual uncleanness" referred exclusively to adultery and prohibited marital unions. Given that both Shechem and Dinah were young and unmarried individuals, not bound by any betrothal or marriage arrangements, the use of the verb *ṭimmēʾ* could be considered unjustified. Nevertheless, the author of the biblical text emphasises that she was made unclean and dishonoured (Harrington 2020, 176). Why? Furthermore, the heroine herself, Dinah, is not allowed to speak and express the extent of her own suffering in relation to the seemingly shameful act of Shechem. The text reveals nothing about what is going on inside Dinah herself.

In ancient times in the Middle East, a virgin who lost her chastity brought shame on her family and her social status was degraded. A woman's virginity was crucial in negotiating the amount of money a prospective bridegroom would have to pay as

compensation to the father of his future wife. In the legal discourse on sexual relations with an unmarried virgin, if a man seized her and slept with her, he should give her father fifty shekels of silver and take her as his wife, without the possibility of abandoning her for the rest of his life (Deut 22:28–29). The will or testimony of the woman was not taken into account – such a woman had to marry the *de facto* perpetrator of the rape. From the perspective of the modern Western worldview, such a law seems unacceptable, but at the time of Dinah, the practice of "forced" marriage was intended to ensure the future of a girl who had lost her virginity in this way. If the father did not consent to his daughter's marriage to the rapist, the fine had to be paid regardless. In such a case, the woman remained in the house under the care of her father (Exod 22:16). In the light of the biblical text, the question arises as to why Dinah was not either married to Shechem or why the payment of the appropriate amount for the loss of virginity was not sufficient?

The harrowing tragedy of Dinah, which reveals the dark history of the patriarchal period, is repeated in the reign of King David (2 Sam 13), when his eldest son Amnon raped his sister Tamar (by another mother). The news of the rape saddened David, but he remained passive and chose not to take punitive action against Amnon. Amnon's brother Absalom (David's son, but by another woman) took revenge on Amnon and was banished by David for three years (after which his father forgave him for murdering his brother). It should be pointed out that both biblical stories begin with rape and end with the death of the rapist. Both fathers are united by despair, caused by the suffering of the child, and by external passivity in acting to punish the perpetrators of evil. In both stories, revenge is taken by the siblings. Here it is worth showing that the author of the account of Tamar modelled on similar incidents from the account of Dinah, in order to prepare the ground for his own, distinct perspective on the shameful act of *nəḇālâ* in Israel (2 Sam 13:12). The act of rape itself is also introduced in both texts with similar expressions:

Gen 34:2	2 Sam 13:14
wayyiqqaḥ ʾōtāh wayyiškaḇ ʾōtāh way ʿannehā	*wayyeḥĕzaq mimmennâ way ʿannehā wayyiškaḇ ʾōtāh*
took her and lay with her and violated/forced her	overpowered her and violated/forced her and lay with her

In addition to the similarities, there are significant differences between the two stories. While Shechem loved Dinah with great love after the shameful act, Amnon felt great hatred towards Tamar. For Shechem, Dinah is a woman from a foreign people, whereas Tamar is Amnon's sister. Dinah's relationship with Shechem is unclear, whereas Tamar – firstly – cried out for help during the rape, and – secondly – tried to stay in Amnon's house so that he would look after her. Dinah stayed in Shechem's house, while Tamar was thrown out of Amnon's house by him. Shechem spoke

tenderly to Dinah and wanted to marry her – Amnon responded to Tamar's cries of despair with harsh words and drove her out of his house. Simeon and Levi slaughtered the men of the town of Shechem (collective punishment), whereas Absalom ordered his servants to kill Amnon alone (individual punishment). A final difference worth mentioning here is that Shechem belonged to a foreign people, whereas Amnon belonged not only to the same people as the victim (and thus as the person who later punished him), but also to the same family as her (and the avenger) (Scherman 2000, 282).

The narrative of Dinah (as well as the narrative of Tamar) strongly emphasises that a *nəḇālâ*, or "wickedness" (Gen 34:7), has been committed against a member of their community. The Hebrew term *nəḇālâ* is usually translated as "wickedness, abomination, obscenity, insult, disgrace, anger, foolish act, vile thing," and even "crime," or "carrion." In the context of the narrative of the wrong that Shechem did to Dinah, it can be said that *nəḇālâ* is an act that "repels," or "is repulsive," or "wicked." It is also noteworthy that this Hebrew word in the context of sexual relations appears in other places in the Hebrew Bible. Deut 22:21, for example, describes the case of a girl who married a man who later accused her of lacking virginity. In such a situation, the Torah's decision is clear: the woman is to be stoned for committing an act called *nəḇālâ*. Such an act was considered disrespectful to the people one belonged to, and also an insult to the sanctity of that people. Therefore, the punishment was severe. In addition, the term *nəḇālâ* is also used in the Bible to describe sexual relations with other people's wives, as well as rape (Judg 7:23–24; 20:6; Jer 29:23).

Although Dinah's brothers are described as being grieved by what happened to their sister, Gen 34 focuses more on the fact that a great evil and injustice has occurred within the community of Israel,[9] rather than expressing empathy for the girl herself. It could be argued that the description of the event, especially the reaction of the brothers, reflects a more legalistic and seemingly "heartless" approach to the problem, rather than a purely "human" one based on compassion. The brothers decide to punish (in the form of revenge) because "such an act" should not have happened in Israel. This is rather than necessarily seeking to bring relief to their sister, show her support, or make her feel safe.

The seemingly heartless attitude of the narrative towards the whole situation may be due to the fact that the story may have been adapted at a later stage to fit a particular vision of the Israelite community, one in which evil has no right to enter, and if it does happen, it should be resolutely suppressed. The narrative clearly condemns the act committed by Shechem against Dinah, but it also emphasises the brothers' revenge. On the other hand, it ignores the aspect of the victim herself, and especially

9 Cf. *Jub.* 30:5 (VanderKam 1989, 192; Zlotnick 2002, 72): "Nothing like this, namely the defilement of an Israelite woman, is to be done anymore from now on. For their punishment [i.e., of the Shechemites] had been decreed in heaven."

her emotions. Both observations show that the narrator was interested in generalising the message of individual evil and elevating it to the rank of an important event (in this case, evil) for the whole community. This is also evidenced by the use of the expression *bə-yiśrāʾēl*, i.e. "in Israel," which is something of an anachronism, since Jacob and his sons did not yet constitute a people, and certainly not "Israel." In fact, it is not until Exod 1:9 that the term *ʿam bənê yiśrāʾēl*, i.e. "the people of the sons of Israel" appears, and even there "Israel" is not yet mentioned as a separate people. The use of this term in the story of Dinah may therefore have contributed to the attempt to justify some forms of revenge against foreign peoples, precisely at the time when this text was undergoing such transformations.

It would seem that in the time of Ezra and Nehemiah,[10] who clearly opposed the increase in intermarriage and the general tendency to break down the traditional isolation, there could have been some changes in the content of the text about Dinah as well. One clue may be the issue of circumcision, which was practiced almost universally by all peoples and tribes in this area during the patriarchal period. In contrast, at the time of the Second Temple, there were already much fewer of these peoples, and perhaps the Israelites could distinguish themselves in this respect, since one of the legal-religious problems that was considered was the issue of Israeli women entering into marriage with uncircumcised men (Lange 2008, 80–81; Harrington 2020, 292). By comparing certain passages from the story of Dinah and from the Book of Nehemiah, one can clearly see this difference, that is, two opposing views on this matter:

Gen 34:9	Neh 13:25
make marriages with us; give your daughters to us, and take our daughters to yourselves.	made them swear by God, saying, "You shall not give your daughters as wives to their sons, nor take their daughters for your sons or yourselves."

In an attempt to prevent the process of cultural assimilation with neighbouring peoples, the story of Dinah may have been written at the time of the controversy over the "purification of the Jewish people." The proposed legal solution of uniting with a foreign people – "we will dwell with you and become one people" (Gen 34:16) – was unacceptable. The author may have deliberately introduced certain changes in the Book of Genesis (e.g. concerning her birth in Gen 30:21, adding her to the list of those who went to Egypt in the description of Gen 46:15) in order to

10 The author of the Aramaic Levi Document (ALD) portrays Dinah's interaction with Shechem as a form of "desecration" (4Q213a, 3–4). In contrast to the Genesis account, where the focus is on Shechem's act of violence, the Aramaic Levi Document assigns culpability to Dinah. The text explicitly states that she "profaned her name (i.e., herself) and the name of her ancestors, and shamed all her brothers" (4Q213a, 3–4). This perspective suggests a strong emphasis on female purity and the sanctification of children as they would enter the temple (Drawnel 2004, 1–2; Harrington 2020, 135, 291–92).

show that similar values already existed in the patriarchal period. The last sentence of the brothers, which *de facto* sums up the whole story: "If [we] allow our sister to be treated as a *zônâ*, i.e. a harlot" (Gen 34:31), can be interpreted as follows: could a holy family unite with an unclean family?

Conclusion

It is important to note that, upon examination of the Bible, it becomes evident that there was no inherent issue with engaging in interactions with neighboring peoples for an extended period of time. The Scripture makes mention of Hagar, Sarah's Egyptian slave and concubine of Abraham, Keturah, a descendant of Japheth, son of Noah, and Abraham's second wife after Sarah's death, Rebekah the Aramean, wife of Isaac, Leah and Rachel the Arameans, daughters of Laban (Rebekah's brother) and wives of Jacob, Asenath, daughter of the Egyptian priest Poti Fera and wife of Joseph, Zipporah, daughter of the Midianite priest Jethro and wife of Moses, Bathsheba, wife of Uriah the Hittite and wife of King David, etc. No evidence exists to indicate that these individuals underwent a process of conversion. Members of neighboring tribes often intermarried, although it seems natural that at least one side had to adopt new values, norms of life, social roles, and probably also faith. It even seems that there was a period of settlement of early Israel in the land of Canaan, in which either the Canaanites, Hittites, Perizzites, Jebusites, Ammonites, Moabites, Egyptians, and Amorites (Ezra 9:1) could have theoretically joined the Israelite people. The situation underwent a transformation with the introduction of the concept of a chosen people and a holy offspring, which underscored a distinctive bond with God (belonging was contingent upon birth).

This raises the question of why the narrative of Dinah was presented as exceptional during Abrahamic times, given that the changes were implemented at a considerably later juncture. While the traditional interpretation of the narrative focuses on the tragic fate of Dinah and the moral implications of the story, a textual analysis of the Hebrew Bible suggests that the text may have undergone significant redaction. Consequently, it is plausible to posit an earlier, less dramatic narrative. This might have involved Jacob's family arriving in Shechem, settling peacefully, and engaging in pastoral activities. The traumatic incident of Dinah's violation and its subsequent events, such as her rescue, might be later additions. Dinah's conspicuous silence and her absence from the narrative after her violation raises questions about her role and the extent of her suffering. It can be a deliberate choice by the author, intended to emphasize the passivity of women in ancient societies, or her absence is a result of the narrative's focus on the actions of men and the broader implications of the story.

The ambiguity surrounding the motivations of the characters and the potential for subsequent editorial modifications in the history of the patriarchs remains a topic of ongoing debate among scholars. Was there a distinct account pertaining to Shechem, wherein it was Jacob who engaged in combat with the inhabitants of that city and secured its surrender through his own efforts? Is it possible that a later editor may have attributed the slaughter to Simeon and Levi, incorporating the narrative of rape as a motive for their actions? Was the immediate response of Jacob's family primarily to the act of rape itself, or was the emphasis placed on the potential "dishonor" associated with intermarriage with a Canaanite "impure" family? The constraints of the biblical text as a singular historical document render it difficult to determine the precise historical events that occurred in Shechem with absolute certainty. Further study, including the exploration of archaeological evidence or the analysis of related ancient Near Eastern texts, may provide additional insights.

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