

*Ron Clark*

## **The Silence in Dinah's Cry**

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### Zusammenfassung:

Die sexuelle Gewalttat an Dinah in Genesis 34 wurde von männlichen und weiblichen Exegeten verschiedener biblischer Forschungszweige diskutiert. Bereits ein erster Blick auf den Text hinterlässt bei Lesenden Fragen, Urteile und Anschuldigungen an die Figuren im Text sowie nach möglichen ethischen Implikationen. Eine genauere Analyse des Textes wirft Fragen nach einer angemessenen Guppenleitung und -führung auf sowie nach sozialer Gerechtigkeit in der Gemeinde JHWHs. Durch das Schweigen Jakobs, die Vergleiche zwischen Hamor/Shechem und den Jakobsöhnen und den Dialog unter den Hiwitern provoziert der Text die Lesenden zum Handeln.

Gewalt gegen Frauen sowie damit zusammenhängend die Gestalt der Gemeinschaft und ihr Glauben scheinen ein latentes Thema durch den gesamten Pentateuch wie auch in der israelitischen Geschichte zu sein. Der Text provoziert die Gemeinschaften noch immer.

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### **Two alternative interpretations in one text**

Two alternative interpretations seem to dominate the exegetical discussion of the Dinah story in Genesis 34.

The first interpretation suggests that Shechem did not rape Dinah and that the actions of Simeon and Levi were an expression of male dominance and control over women. While the text indicated that he had intercourse with the virgin, the interpretation of שָׁכַב, it is believed, does not suggest violent sexual action. According to this interpretation Dinah was out looking for a man and was taken by Shechem. While Shechem's intercourse was not acceptable by Jewish standards he was following the cultural standards of his own people. In 34:3 Shechem fell in love with Dinah and was willing to marry her. The intentions of Hamor and Shechem were about honor, love, economic advancement, cooperation, and trade.<sup>1</sup> The deceit, slaughter, and treachery by Simeon and Levi robbed Dinah of a chance to marry her love and find security in a loving relationship.<sup>2</sup> The cruelty of the sons of

Jacob was an injustice to Dinah, her husband Shechem, as well as the city of Shechem.<sup>3</sup> Judgment upon the irrationality of the sons of Jacob was a warning, given later by Jacob, concerning their abuse of power that dominated Israel.<sup>4</sup> In Genesis 49:5-7, Jacob has the last word concerning their actions and refuses to accept any part of their vengeance. This is viewed as the final words on their actions.

This interpretation is also illustrated by the silence of Jacob. His silence is interpreted as being reflective of a cool spirit and desire to act in a manner beneficial to both Israel and the surrounding neighbors. While his sons acted as “hotheads” and deceived the peaceful Shechemites, Jacob tried to act with honor, forgiveness, and patience.<sup>5</sup> The sons were those who overpowered the rational side of Israel and acted in a disgraceful manner.<sup>6</sup> Jacob's sons became odious because they lacked self-control and were irrational.<sup>7</sup>

This interpretative line is also present in Anita Diamanti's book *The Red Tent*, which suggests that Dinah was not raped. This fictional account portrays the intercourse between Dinah and Shechem (Shalem in the book) as a wonderful loving experience, “Shalem knew of my delight in him, my gratitude for him, my lust for him. I gave him everything. I abandoned myself to him and in him.”<sup>8</sup> The slaughter of the city of Shechem brought pain and sadness to Dinah, who was robbed of her chance to marry her lover and live in happiness. After the slaughter of Shechem, Diamanti had Dinah screaming, “Look at me, for I wear the blood of the righteous men of Shechem. Their blood stains your hands and your head, and you will never be clean again.”<sup>9</sup> Jacob, the sensitive hero in *The Red Tent*, is not part of this unholy alliance and his silence is seen as his strength and wisdom.

Both aspects of this interpretation cast judgment on the sons of Jacob for their deception and vigilantism. Their abuse of power is condemned since Dinah and Shechem, according to this interpretation, were willing to form a bond and attempting to benefit the community of Israel. Dinah's leaving home was an indication that she wanted to find a marriageable man in the foreign community.<sup>10</sup> Jacob's silence was understandable since he would have wanted to make the best out of a bad situation. Instead of listening to his wisdom Simeon and Levi were accused of acting as uncontrollable vigilantes.

The second interpretation suggests that Shechem raped Dinah and that Shechem and Hamor were men who manipulated and tried to abuse power on a helpless girl and her clan. Jacob's

failure to respond was a weakness and unwillingness to vindicate his daughter.<sup>11</sup> The sons of Jacob acted deceitfully because they were a small powerless group. The כָּפָה or “heel grabber” concept, which Jacob had practiced before he met Esau, was now being used by his sons for survival.<sup>12</sup> Circumcision, slaughter, and spoiling were methods used to communicate that Israel, as well as Dinah, should not be humbled as a prostitute.<sup>13</sup> Their answer to their father in the form of a question, “Should he treat our sister as a prostitute,” (Genesis 34:31) suggests that they felt justified in their actions and that the narrator leaves the audience with the question to ponder and reflect on the story.

### *Did Shechem Rape Dinah?*

The application of these theories leaves the reader with questions concerning violence against women. Does judgment concerning the abuse of power rest on the victims or perpetrators? How should leadership address the misuse of power and sexual rights? Should the faith community be angered by the humiliation and oppression of the weak?

The silence of Jacob and the actions of his sons are alleged answers to these questions.

They challenge the reader to either react against their actions or in light of them.

The application also may suggest something about our response to sexual violence. Susanne Scholz indicates that the text, from a feminist perspective, poses an ethical dilemma. “How shall readers deal with the rape in light of the killing? In a culture that rarely addresses the issue of rape it is not surprising that a story about the rape of a woman and the murder of the rapist did not get much attention.”<sup>14</sup> She also suggests that interpreters, in their attempts to be objective, may “marginalize the rape and advance an understanding that supports rape-prone theory and praxis.”<sup>15</sup>

### **Re-examining Genesis 34**

#### *34:1-4*

In this section Jacob and his family have moved to the region of the Hivites.<sup>16</sup> Dinah has traveled out of the camp to see the daughters of the land.<sup>17</sup> While away one of the sons of the village chief, Shechem, saw her, took her, and had intercourse with her. Afterward Shechem spoke tenderly to her, possibly out of love. The exegetical debate concentrates on this section of the text.

One view concerns the interpretation of **צֵא**, **שָׁכַב**, and **עָנָה**. Dinah's going out, **צֵא**, has been interpreted as an improper action.<sup>18</sup> *Genesis Rabbah* states that her "going out" indicates she is acting like a whore (80:1.y; 80:2.i).<sup>19</sup> It possibly indicates that she left her home to see the foreign women of the region.<sup>20</sup> While this seems to be a harmless action to modern readers, other commentators indicate that her actions represented defiance,<sup>21</sup> curiosity,<sup>22</sup> independence,<sup>23</sup> or a need for companionship.<sup>24</sup> Does **צֵא** indicate that Dinah was a young woman fleeing the oppressive nature of her father's house in order to seek love with a forbidden man?

"Dinah leaves because she is Leah's daughter and not dependent upon Jacob to help her...At the opening stages of chapter 34, she is ready to break away from her family, if only temporarily, and is looking to find a new assembly of people, 'the women of the land,' who, she hopes, will embrace her and make her feel more secure and at home."<sup>25</sup>

Second, application of the phrases "intercourse," **שָׁכַב** and "defile" or "humble," **עָנָה**, are also in question.<sup>26</sup> Was Dinah the victim of violent rape or involved in consensual intercourse? Lyn Bechtel defined the use of **שָׁכַב** not as rape but only as sexual relations.<sup>27</sup> While **עָנָה** indicated humbling or afflicting, it is only in the sense of losing sexual purity (Deuteronomy 22:22-27).<sup>28</sup> She suggests that only when **בָּכַשׁ** occurs with **חָזַק** (overpower) is the act of rape implied (Deuteronomy 22:25-27; 2 Samuel 13:11-14). She would suggest that in Genesis 34, Shechem only took, **לָקַח**, Dinah which, with **שָׁכַב**, implied intercourse and not necessarily rape. Bellis gives compelling evidence that "abducting" virgins, i.e. eloping with them, in nomadic cultures, is an acceptable, albeit non-preferred, form of choosing a wife and consummating the marriage.<sup>29</sup> Bechtel sees the sons of Jacob as the real culprits because they were not willing to share, as were Dinah and Shechem, with their neighbors. Shechem violated the clan's purity and the sons of Jacob were intent upon destroying the Shechemites for fear of losing pride.

Shechem's love and tenderness, after the intercourse, are also interpreted as his willingness to marry Dinah and are indications, to some, that he did not rape her.<sup>30</sup> He spoke kindly to her and wanted her as a wife. This, according to Bechtel, is not a sign of a rapist but a youth overcome with passion. The Hebrew writer is seen as one passing judgment because Israel's cultural norms were violated, not because Shechem raped Dinah.

The other view in the debate suggests that Shechem did rape Dinah. Dinah's motion away from the camp does not become the issue.<sup>31</sup> While definitions of **נָצַח** may cast Dinah as suspicious, the use of **נָצַח** in the story indicates motion. Dinah is in motion from Israel's camp to the city of Shechem. Jacob has purchased land from Hamor and has earned the right to work, worship, and live peacefully in the land (33:19). Dinah's motion to the city of Shechem should not be a threat but an act within the context of peace and trust. Hamor moves, **נָצַח**, to Israel's camp in order to maintain peace or cover his son's violation (34:6). The sons of Jacob come, **נָבֵא**, from the field and grieve (v7). Shechem and Hamor come, **נָבֵא** to their home to talk to the men (v20). The men of the city were those who went out, **נָצַח** or departed from the city, possibly indicating men of war (v24). Finally, Simeon and Levi come upon the city and the other brothers come upon the slain, **וַיִּבְּאוּ** (25, 27). It seems that the Shechemites would not have felt threatened by the sons of Jacob because they were fulfilling their agreement. However, the city was deceived and the motion was violent rather than peaceful. The word **נָצַח** seems to indicate motion to a foreign community (Shechem or the camp of Israel, v1, 6)<sup>32</sup> with a potential threat of conflict while **נָבֵא** seems to indicate coming without the perception of violence or to establish peace (v7, 20). The irony was that, due to the covenant between the Shechemites and Jacobites, Shechem became "home" to Simeon and Levi before they attacked. The irony was also that Shechem should have been friendly to Dinah since Jacob had bought land from Hamor, making it a safe environment. The **נָצַח** should not cast suspicion upon Dinah but Shechem. Dinah should have felt safe in the city but he treated her as an outsider.

Dinah's humiliation, regardless of her location, does seem to be a major focus in the text. The use of the Qal waw imperfect **לָקַח**, **רָאָה**, and **שָׁכַב** produce the result and the Piel waw imperfect of **עָנָה** (defiled) indicated an act of humiliation and shame.<sup>33</sup> Dinah was humbled because her virginity was violated when Shechem humiliated her by his actions of seeing, taking, and having improper intercourse with her.<sup>34</sup> **עָנָה** also suggests oppression and violation of another's human rights. While a common word for intercourse **שָׁכַב** was used the surrounding verbs indicate a violation of Dinah's personal rights and sexual exploitation. Just as Amnon lay with and humiliated Tamar, in 2 Samuel 13:14 (**עָנָה** and **שָׁכַב**), as an act of rape, so Shechem equally humiliated Dinah by having sex with her.<sup>35</sup> Here a difference to 2 Samuel 13 becomes important: the text uses the words **שָׁכַב אֶתָּהּ** what can be translated as "he laid her," because Dinah is the object, instead of the more common "he laid with her" **שָׁכַב עִמָּהּ** with Dinah being a willing participant.<sup>36</sup>

I think that the beginning of this text sets the stage for the upcoming negotiations between Hamor and Shechem (34:4). Shechem demanded that his father obtain Dinah as a wife, **קח לי את הילדה הזאת לאשה** (notice **ל קח** in the imperative).<sup>37</sup> It is also interesting that Shechem does not refer to Dinah as a young lady, **נערה** (v3), but as a child, **ילדה** (v4). The narrator seems to indicate that Shechem's desire to marry is also about control. In the text Hamor is forced into negotiations due to the indiscretion and desires of his son. A surface reading of the text suggests that Shechem loves Dinah, but his affection for her is displayed by sexual lust (**שכב**) and a desire for ownership (child **ילדה** rather than young maiden **נערה**).

The first four verses of this text suggest that Dinah is the victim of Shechem's greed and lust.

#### 34:5-17

The showdown begins between the heads of both the clans. Hamor and Jacob started the negotiations, however short lived they were. Hamor as the chief, **נסי**,<sup>38</sup> of the city approached Jacob, the head of his clan. For some unknown reason Jacob waited for his sons to return from the fields. The negotiations began with Hamor and the Jacobite clan.<sup>39</sup> In a turn of events the sons of Jacob entered the negotiations. Shechem also entered the discussion. I think it is interesting that Jacob was silent during these negotiations. What began as a dialogue between the two heads of clans ended as a dispute among sons.<sup>40</sup>

The use of **בנת**, **בת**, **אב**, and **אחות** are also interesting indications of the judgment from the narrator. In the beginning of the text Dinah was called **בת לי**, the daughter of Leah (v1). She was called Jacob's daughter during the humiliation (v3, 5, 7). During the dialogue with Shechem, Dinah was indirectly called a daughter and sister (her father and her brothers, v11). At the point when the perpetrator spoke, without confessing wrong, was a point when Jacob could have passed judgment. Yet the text indicated that it was his sons who spoke (v13). From this point forward Dinah is their sister, **אחותם** (v13, 14, 31) or their daughter, **בתני** (v17).<sup>41</sup> Jacob only speaks at the end of the text and is not referred to as her father. While the sons were Jacob's sons (v5, 7, 13, 25, 27) Dinah became the property of her brothers (v11, 17, 25). Compared to the strong alliance between Shechem and Hamor Jacob

and his sons are divided.<sup>42</sup> At the end of the story Jacob rebukes his sons while his sons question their father and his family ethics.

The deception of the sons of Jacob would be understandable to a father who practiced a **קִב** lifestyle.<sup>43</sup> After the meeting with Esau (Genesis 33) and the blessing from *Yahweh* (Genesis 32:28) Jacob, whose identity was “heel grabber,” had become a settler (Genesis 33:18-20). His sons answered deceitfully, **רִם**, which would have been typical of Jacob's conduct. Dinah was humbled, **ענה**, defiled, **טמא**, and foolishness had been done in their clan, **נבלה** (v2, 5, 7). Jacob's sons reacted as powerless people seeking vindication for an attack upon their sister as well as their very reputation. They became **קִב**, “heel grabbers,” rather than their father.

#### 34:18-29

Hamor and Shechem discussed the value of a covenant between the men of the city and the Jacobites. Shechem did not confess any wrong but, along with his father, discussed the benefits of trade, commerce, and an alliance with the outsiders. The men blindly followed the chief and his son, who was more honorable, **כבוד**, than any others. They were able to persuade the men to become circumcised since all their livestock and property will belong to the Shechemites (v23). It seems that it was not only the sons of Jacob who spoke deceitfully to those of the family and city of Hamor.

The story ended with Simeon and Levi going out, **צא** but this time they were not humiliated. They humiliate. The powerless was no longer a young virgin; it was the sore and suffering men of war.<sup>44</sup> From what the text indicates, Dinah was taken from Shechem's house – suggesting that she was there since her **עני** (34:26). The men were killed and the city plundered. The sons of Israel humiliated the mighty Shechem, who had humiliated the daughter of Israel. The sons of Israel struggled with God and man and overcame. In light of the anger and powerlessness that they must have felt it is understandable why they acted in such a gruesome method. If one only understands the anger, frustration, and helplessness that causes vigilantism then the actions of Simeon and Levi become clear.<sup>45</sup>

#### 34:30-31

The text ends with a question rather than a judgment. Genesis 34:30 indicates a judgment from Jacob, “You have brought ruin on **me**” (**עברתם אותי**) As the head of a clan Jacob's

reputation or honor, כְּדָב, was important. Jacob claimed that he was an offensive odor or stink, בַּאֲשׁ, to the Canaanites and Perizzites. His shame and fear were grounded in his fear and insecurities. The man, who shamed his brother and deceived his father and father-in-law, was now concerned about his own reputation. Jacob's failure to act or speak seems to be explained by his fear of the powerful Canaanites. Jacob, in this section of Genesis, failed to act as יָקָב.

Simeon and Levi asked a question that may have expected a response or have been rhetorical. "Should he treat our sister [not your daughter, R.C. as a זָנָה?" I think that this question is similar to Jonah 4:11 which also demanded a response. No, Shechem should not have treated her as a זָנָה.<sup>46</sup> It seems that Jacob was left with an ethical dilemma illustrated by the underlying statement, "Should *you/we* let her be treated as a זָנָה?"<sup>47</sup>

#### *Simeon and Levi: Heroes or Fools?*

Early commentators on this text do not condemn the sons of Jacob but they do condemn Shechem's behavior. Josephus (*Antiquities of the Jews*, 1:21:1) wrote that Dinah went into the city of Shechem during a festival in order to see the women of the city. According to Josephus Shechem "defiled her by violence." In his account Simeon and Levi slaughter the men of the city during another festival. For Josephus, the actions were ruthless but an act of vengeance because their sister was raped.<sup>48</sup> Philo uses metaphors between Dinah, who represents justice, and Shechem, who represents greed and uncontrollable behavior. Philo alludes to the story of Dinah and Shechem but clearly condemns the man's actions.<sup>49</sup>

*Pseudo-Philo* indicated that Shechem raped and humiliated Dinah and that the sons of Jacob murdered all of the people in Shechem (*Pseudo Philo* 8:7.5-8). In the *Testament of Levi* the author suggested that Levi saw himself as an avenger and vindicator of the one who did an abominable thing to his sister (*Testament of Levi* 6:4). While the author wrote that their slaughter and deception of the Shechemites was a sin (possibly in the eyes of their father who cursed them in Gen. 49), Levi stated that God had passed judgment upon the Shechemites.<sup>50</sup> *Testament of Levi* claimed that the Shechemites were immoral and tried to do the same thing to Sarah and Rebecca. The Shechemites were guilty of murder and rape and died not at the hands of Levi and Simeon, but by the hand of God (*Testament of Levi* 6:11). Finally, the tract *Joseph and Asenath* suggest that Simeon was the violent tempered man who was controlled by Levi. Yet this text indicates that Shechem insulted the sons of

Israel by defiling Dinah (*Joseph and Asenath* 23:2[3]; 14[13]). Due to this the Lord punished Shechem and lifted up Levi for his zealotry.

Were the sons of Jacob correct in their actions? One can only speculate. While it is easy to judge their actions from a modern perspective I believe that the Hebrew writer has left indications for us to understand judgment and meaning in the story.

#### *Judgment and meaning in the story*

Little is written about the narrator's judgment on the story except *Genesis Rabbah* which indicates that his judgment (34:27) was from the Holy Spirit. First, the text tells us something about *violence to women and social justice*. The humiliation of Dinah was defilement טמא, and folly, נבלה, in Israel.<sup>51</sup> Simeon and Levi became the heroes not because of their zeal for ritual purity but because of their desire for social justice.<sup>52</sup> Shechem degraded Dinah, despite how he treated her afterward. Greed, power, or envy did not motivate Simeon and Levi; anger and a feeling of powerlessness motivated them. "Should he treat our sister like a זונה?" was a question of social justice. Dinah's helplessness was a reflection of Israel's feelings of powerlessness. Their deception was a method of leveling the playing field with a powerful city.

While there is strong debate over whether Dinah was raped (sex by force) or had consensual sex with Shechem the narrator gives indication that what was done to her was wrong. Shechem is not vindicated by ancient commentators and his actions, according to the narrator, were נבלה and brought נבלה and טמא on Dinah. Dinah is silent, but the narrator is not. Shechem has violated the rights of Dinah as well as the covenant with the Jacobites. His emotions afterward are inconsequential. His actions have already spoken to the reader. The narrator is crying out for justice, even if Dinah cannot.

Second, the text tells us something about *leadership*. Jacob's silence and hesitance before and during the negotiations indicated a failure to lead. While *Yahweh* had been active in Genesis 33 and 35, God was now silent. Hamor and Shechem displayed more unity than Jacob and his sons. After Genesis 34:11 the sons of Jacob seem to defend their defiled sister. In the end, Jacob avoided conflict from the oppressors rather than confronting them. While Simeon and Levi acted deceitfully, Jacob refused to act. Leadership should not allow a sister in the community to be humiliated.

While debate again exists concerning the voice of Jacob, the question remains, “Why doesn't Jacob vindicate the one whose name means “judgment” or “justice” (דָּן)?” Jacob is as silent as Dinah, until the end. The final discussion has Jacob speaking but not having the last word. The story ends with a question which is meant to provoke thought and reflection. Yet the question does not come from Jacob but his sons, who display leadership in a story focused around violence, manipulation, oppression, and fear. While vigilantism is not the answer to a leadership crisis it happens when one exists.

### **The Scream of the Past: A Culture of Domestic Violence**

In my experience with ministry in abuse and sexual assault, I have noticed that people tend to blame abuse on alcohol, drug addiction, race, or economic status. Domestic violence affects all races, social groups, and sexes. My clergy trainings with Communities Against Domestic Violence (CADV); a non-profit organization committed to creating awareness in our communities, have focused on faith communities and leadership. Faith communities are viewed as being slow to respond to abuse and sexual assault. Faith communities do not teach and preach texts such as Genesis 34. Is this silence similar to Jacob's?

#### *Power and Relationships*

Power is needed for human existence, relationships, and self-identity. When this power is shared among people it creates a web of relationships that have the potential to sustain life, create communities, and build other relationships.

“In its ideal form, power as the ability to engage in internal relationships is virtually synonymous with life itself. In this sense, power is potentially nearly identical with sexual energy.”<sup>53</sup>

According to James Poling power is both personal and social. Personal power is actualized through a relational web while social power is actualized in a social web.<sup>54</sup> All humans use power in relationships with people, communities, and institutions. Sometimes this power is misused in an attempt to control or abuse others. A person's fear and desire to control life motivate the abuse of power.<sup>55</sup> This control may be achieved through the use of institutions and one's ideologies.<sup>56</sup> Abuse is about gaining control. “When a man hits a woman, he has

not lost control; he achieves and maintains control.”<sup>57</sup> Power and control are at the heart of domestic violence, abuse, and rape, not addictions.

Power should be shared personally and socially in the web of relationships. In abuse and sexual violence this power has not been shared because men have found a way to use power in their relationships with women. This abuse has occurred institutionally through male privilege and ideologically through social tolerance and teaching. A culture that allows the oppression of women and destruction of masculinity has been created through this abuse of power.

“In essence, it is the combination of a belief in male authority, the objection of women, a socio-cultural system that forces women to be economically dependent on men, and the ability of batterers to use physical force with relatively few legal or social consequences that accounts for why family violence is so pervasive and why a disproportionate number of victims are women.”<sup>58</sup>

Sexual violence is caused by an institutional and ideological abuse of power. Men use this power to manipulate, control, and/or humiliate women, the community, and their families. Shechem used his honor to violate Dinah and manipulate her family, his father, and a city. His failure to admit that he violated Israel's honor was an indication that he disregarded the Jacobite clan. His manipulation of the young girl was also a manipulation of Israel. The social web of power had been created through Jacob's purchase of the land (Genesis 33:19) but was disregarded through the humiliation of Dinah. Shechem and Hamor's negotiations with Israel and the men of Shechem was a further step in manipulating the social web of power in order to advance their personal and commercial interests.

Condemning women caught in sexual or domestic violence, for their location or powerlessness is an example of ideological abuse. The victims should not be further victimized. Dinah should not be victimized or further humiliated. Her movement, location, dress, motives, or attitudes should not be used to condone her oppression. Shechem's motives or lack of force should also not justify his humiliating Dinah. Genesis 34 calls the community of faith to be angered concerning violations of social justice. Why, because the sisters of the community do not deserve to be humiliated.

*The Scream of the Future: The Response of the Community*

The real issues behind Genesis 34 involve Jacob's silence and the narrator's judgment. The communities of faith have been accused of failing to help victims of abuse. According to some authors, churches and synagogues have contributed to domestic violence and empowered abusers to continue controlling their spouses. This accusation has come about because of the community's lack of response to the issues of domestic violence or condemnation of victims.

Communities of all faiths have been accused of supporting abuse and sexual oppression because they have been silent on the issues of domestic violence and sexual assault. The community's silence, as Jacob's silence, continues to empower abusers, vigilantism, deception, and shame. Just as Jacob was silent and failed to act on behalf of Dina, his violated daughter, faith communities have also been accused of failing to act for their violated sisters. Why are they silent? Is it possible that we continue to become entangled in discussions of whether Shechem used force or truly loved Dinah? Have we created fictional love stories rather than listening to Dinah's humiliation? Is it possible that the narrator, who is outside the story, is the only objective voice in the problem?

Dinah was called the *daughter of Leah* (34:1). Since Jacob loved Rachel more than Leah is it possible that Jacob's failure to act was due to his dislike for Dinah? Is it possible that Jacob felt a prejudice against Dinah due to her mother or her "improper actions?"

Communities may have failed to act because of similar prejudices. Assumptions that women who are battered have chosen their "bed" or seem to desire these relationships are at the heart of failures to act in abuse cases. Assuming that women who are raped or date raped asked for this because of dress, location, profession, reputation, or personality are judgments upon their נָצַח. Assuming that boys will be boys only justifies Shechem and calls us to remove the foreskins of truth and become victims ourselves. The sons of the community should not care about נָצַח, they should care that נְבִלָה should not be done in their community.

It is also possible that Jacob's choice to be silent was due to *fear*. In 34:30 he was angry because he was "a stench to those around." His willingness to enter a covenant with a pagan people is surprising, since *Yahweh* did not command him to do this. Levi and Simeon's decision to fight when the men were sore may indicate that Hamor's city had an

army that could only be defeated by Jacob's clan through deception. Communities of faith may fail to act for abuse and rape victims out of fear. The fear of legal issues, law suits, restraining orders, confronting abusers, and angry people may cause churches and synagogues to withdraw their hand from victims of abuse and sexual assault.

For whatever reason Jacob refused to protect Dinah, the Genesis text seems to disrespect his actions. Proverbs 21:13 states that "The one who shuts their ear to the cry of the poor will cry out and not be heard." Deuteronomy 22:23-29 assumes that a raped woman's screams would be heard by others and she would be rescued. There seems to be no excuse for the community's silence or failure to respond concerning the issues of abuse or sexual violence. Nancy Nason-Clark has indicated that Christian churches' silence about sexual violence has been regarded by some as an act of complicity."<sup>59</sup> God expects the faith community to respond to the cries of victims.

Many of the Christian and Jewish communities of faith have also been accused of supporting abuse because of a strict stance against divorce.<sup>60</sup> They call men and women to be together through "better or worse." Abuse is considered the "worse" part in marriage and women are asked to stay and make their husband happy. In other cases the woman feels guilty and responsible for the breakup of the marriage. Churches and synagogues may have contributed to marriage becoming an institution and abuse of power rather than a relational web of equal power. Rather than a covenant the marriage has become a method of enslavement.

Finally, Christian churches have been accused of using the scriptures to subordinate women to men.<sup>61</sup> Texts concerning the sinfulness of Eve/women (1 Timothy 2:9-13), prostitutes and sinful women (Proverbs 5), *Yahweh's* statement against divorce (Malachi 2:14), women who cause the angels to sin (1 Corinthians 11:2-10), and complete submission to husbands (Ephesians 5; Colossians 3) have been used to create "an abusive society maintained and supported by the dominant mythologies of the day." Yet *Yahweh* has never encouraged men to control, abuse, or oppress their wives.

Many have viewed the communities of faith as silent or oppressive towards victim's rights and protecting those in abuse. This has created a *Theology of Suffering*, as is described by some scholars. This *Theology of Suffering* has become a problem to those in abusive

relationships. The pressure to “bear one’s cross” or “suffer with Christ” teaches them to tolerate unhealthy patterns in marriage.<sup>62</sup> It teaches them to feel isolated, since their church family is silent or unwilling to help them.<sup>63</sup> It also teaches them to feel oppressed since they are taught that the scriptures “command” their submission to brutal men. While they may identify with the oppressed and crucified Jesus on the cross, it can be unhealthy to their spiritual growth. While a constant focus on the death and suffering of Christ will stunt spiritual growth, so this similar focus can encourage these victims to continue as caretakers, dependents, and cause them to struggle with self-esteem.<sup>64</sup>

1. The prevalence of sexual violence raises questions about human nature.
2. The silence of the church and society on sexual violence raises questions about the nature of community.
3. The structure of oppression in sexual violence raises questions about God.<sup>65</sup>

The community of faith must answer the question: “Does our sister deserve to be treated as a אָנע?” This question not only requires an answer but a response. If the answer is yes, then we humiliate the victim, as did Shechem. If the answer is no, then what do we do? Should we continue in silence out of fear, hesitation, or weakness, as did Jacob? If the answer is no, the Hebrew writer encourages us to respond as leaders of a community of faith. While deception and vigilantism may be characteristics of a בָּרָא, heel grabber, community; they are not characteristics of the community of faith. The community of faith is challenged to respond through leadership, confrontation, boldness, and a strong faith in *Yahweh*.

In this way the community wrestles with God and man and overcomes.

In this way there is no silence in Dinah’s cry.

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<sup>1</sup>Walter Brueggemann, *Genesis*, Interpretation (Atlanta: John Knox Press, 1982): 275, 277; “The report on Shechem is obviously given from a polemical Israelite perspective. While there is indication that his intentions were not entirely dishonorable, the story is tilted against any good intention he may have had ... there is no hint in the son’s proposal of anything but good faith, even if it is good faith that is tinged with rancor and a reluctance to

compromise.”. Brueggemann also claimed that Shechem and Hamor sought cooperation, largeness of vision (one people, v22), and advanced economic interest.

<sup>2</sup>Since the sons took Dinah out of Shechem's house (34:26) Fewell and Gunn assume that Dinah was there of her own accord, see Dana Nolan Fewell and David M. Gunn, “Tipping the Balance: Sternberg's Reader and the Rape of Dinah,” *Journal of Biblical Literature* 110:2 (1991): 200.

<sup>3</sup> See also Naomi Graetz, “Dinah the Daughter,” *A Feminist Companion to Genesis*, ed. Athalya Brenner (Sheffield: Sheffield, 1993). Graetz indicates that Shechem was willing to obey the law of the Mesopotamian legal sources by offering a bride price. “The brothers were wrong to interfere with his obligation to marry and wrong to cut off her only chance of marriage.” (Graetz, 308). Brueggemann also wrote that the brothers' insistence upon Shechemite circumcision was a result of the desire for social control and exploitation. Their demand for circumcision, slaughter, and looting was disproportionate to the original offense (Brueggemann, 278).

<sup>4</sup> Noble claims that the narrator's attitude that Simeon and Levi overreacted is seen in Jacob's deathbed curse (Genesis 49:5-7), see Paul Noble, “A ‘Balanced’ Reading of the Rape of Dinah: Some Exegetical and Methodological Observations,” *Biblical Interpretation* 4:2 (1996): 193.

<sup>5</sup>Brueggemann refers to Jacob as “the seasoned voice of maturity,” and his response (Genesis 34:30) as “one of clear-headed pragmatism.” “If Jacob would have had his way, the settlement with Shechem would have been honored” (Brueggemann, 278, 279). “Hamor and Jacob are peace-loving and conciliatory; their sons are impetuous and heedless of the consequences that their acts must entail.” (E.A. Speiser, *Genesis Volume 1: Introduction, Translation, and Notes*, Anchor Bible [New York: Doubleday, 1962], 268).

<sup>6</sup> Fewell and Gunn claim that the sons take over the argument without giving Jacob a chance to discuss the issue (Fewell, 198). Neufeld also wrote that “Jacob should have realized that his sons were being deceptive, and if he did, then he should have tried to intervene or at least delay matters long enough to determine what they were up to.” (Ernest Neufeld, “The Rape of Dinah,” *Jewish Bible Quarterly* 25 [1997]: 222)

<sup>7</sup>“The sons remain blind to the larger economic issue, blind to the dangers they have created, blind to the possibilities of cooperation, and blind even to the ways they have compromised their own religion in their thirst for vengeance and gain” (Brueggemann, 279).

<sup>8</sup>Anita Diamanti, *The Red Tent* (New York: Picador, 1997): 192.

<sup>9</sup>Ibid., 206.

<sup>10</sup>I will discuss below the sources that indicate that Dinah's "going out" was a sign that she was acting like a prostitute.

<sup>11</sup>"The need to exercise restraint, pending the arrival of his sons is understandable, but his passivity, throughout the entire incident is remarkable" (Nahum M. Sarna, *Genesis*, The JPS Torah Commentary [New York: JPS, 1989]: 234). Wenham also is surprised that a fierce reaction from Jacob does not occur when he is informed of Shechem's actions, see Gordon Wenham, *Genesis 16-50*, The Word Biblical Commentary (Dallas: Word, 1994): 311.

<sup>12</sup>Noble believes that the offering of a bride payment, מָהָר, was, to Simeon and Levi, a statement that Dinah was a זָנָה (Noble, 194). Wenham claimed that Simeon and Levi were heroes defending ritual purity and social justice (Wenham, 319).

<sup>13</sup>Of Genesis 34:31 von Rad wrote: "To be sure, Jacob's role here is weak. His censure is more a peevish complaint. By contrast the answer of the two sons is proud and implacable; and the ancient reader, who felt more than we do the burning shame done to the brothers in the rape of Dinah, will not have called them wrong." See Gerhard von Rad, *Genesis*, Old Testament Library, revised edition (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1972): 334.

<sup>14</sup>Susanne Scholz, "What 'Really' Happened to Dinah: A Feminist Analysis of Genesis 34." *Lectio Difficilior* 2:2001, [www.lectio.unibe.ch/01\\_2/s.htm](http://www.lectio.unibe.ch/01_2/s.htm)

<sup>15</sup>Ibid.

<sup>16</sup>The LXX calls them Horites (Ἰσραηλιτῶν) I have noticed that the newer version of BHS no longer considers this a variant.

<sup>17</sup>The Hebrew has also been translated "be seen by..."

<sup>18</sup>The verb שָׁרַח "to go out" has an Akkadian and Aramaic equivalent which indicates promiscuous conduct. Sarna, 233. Some commentators see this as a judgment upon Dinah's actions by the Hebrew writer (Graetz, 312; Wenham, 310. *Genesis Rabbah* 80:1).

<sup>19</sup>In Neusner's translation the writers blamed Dinah for the whole episode. She is compared to her mother Leah (Genesis 30:16) who also went out as a whore to her husband, see Jacob Neusner, *Genesis Rabbah: The Judaic Commentary to the Book of Genesis: A New American Translation, Volume 3: Parashiyyot Sixty-Eight through One Hundred on Genesis 28:10 to 50:26* (Atlanta: Scholar's Press, 1985), 145-47. Cotter also mentions that there are two historical thoughts on Dinah's "going out." One (Josephus and Theodotus)

indicate that she was attending a Shechemite festival, and the other (Talmud) suggest that she was practicing immodest behavior, see David W. Cotter, *Genesis*, Berit Olam (Collegeville, MN: The Liturgical Press, 2003), 252-3.

<sup>20</sup>The daughters of Canaan (24:3,37; 28:1,6,8) and of Heth (27:46) were terms expressing disapproval in Genesis. Being with the daughters of the land, בנות הארץ, may also indicate improper association with pagan people (34:2).

<sup>21</sup>“Girls of marriageable age would not normally leave a rural encampment to go unchaperoned into an alien city. The text casts a critical eye upon Dinah's unconventional behavior through the use of the verbal stem נצ” (Sarna, 233). Sarna also indicates that post-biblical uses of ונצת בהו” indicate a woman exhibiting promiscuous behavior (ibid., 367).

<sup>22</sup>Ita Sheres, *Dinah's Rebellion: A Biblical Parable for Our Times* (New York: Crossroad, 1990): 84.

<sup>23</sup>Sharon Pace Jeansonne, *The Women of Genesis* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1990): 91.

<sup>24</sup>Neufeld, 221.

<sup>25</sup>Sheres, 82, 84.

<sup>26</sup>The focus of ענה indicated defilement or a loss of personal sexuality. It can be used for pre-marital sex with virgins (Deut. 21:14; 22:24,29), prostitution (Ezek. 23:17), or adultery (Ezek. 18:6,11,15; 33:26). The term, however, reflects oppression, affliction, and weakness. Sarna suggests that the “Three Hebrew verbs of increasing severity underscore the brutality of Shechem's assault on Dinah” (Sarna, 234).

<sup>27</sup>Lyn M. Bechtel, “What if Dinah is not Raped? (Genesis 34),” *Journal of the Study of the Old Testament* 62 (1994): 24.

<sup>28</sup>Bechtel also claims that in Dinah's case, similar to Deut. 22:22-24, the humiliation occurs because she has no hope of bonding with Shechem, since he is a foreigner. The Piel of ענה indicated an intense humiliation (ibid.). Fewell and Gunn claim that Dinah could have been defiled, נטמ, only because she was no longer a virgin (Fewell, 207).

<sup>29</sup>Alice Ogden Bellis, “Dinah and Shechem: The Politics of Interpretation and the (Aes)Et(h)ics of Translation,” *International SBL Conference*, Singapore, June 2005.

<sup>30</sup>Bechtel claims that “Sociological studies reveal that rapists feel hostility and hatred toward their victims, not love.” Elsewhere Bechtel writes that the psychological context does not indicate that this is rape.” (Bechtel, 29, 31).

<sup>31</sup>Wenham does suggest, however, that Dinah was “sailing too close to the wind” (Wenham, 310). Geller suggests that she is only making a “friendly acquaintance with the women of the land.” This because of the covenant between Hamor and Jacob which should have opened the door for friendly relationships, see Stephen A. Geller, “The Sack of Shechem: The Use of Typology in Biblical Covenant Religion,” *Prooftexts* 10 (1990): 3. Josephus, *Antiquities* 1:21:1, indicates that she attended a Shechemite festival.

<sup>32</sup>“This second ‘going out’ is intended to ameliorate the disastrous consequences of the first [going out by Dinah]” (Sarna, 234).

<sup>33</sup>I think that “humiliate intensely” may not be the best understanding of Piel ענה (Bechtel, 24). Williams indicates that the Piel can suggest causative or repeated action of the verb. The humiliation of Dinah can suggest defilement or impurity, see Ronald J. Williams, *Hebrew Syntax: An Outline*, second edition (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1976): 27. Keefe suggests that the chain of verbs indicate rape, see Alice A. Keefe, “Rapes of Women/Wars of Men,” *Semeia* 61 (1993): 87. See also Sarna, 234, and Cotter, 254.

<sup>34</sup>Notice that seeing and taking indicate greed or lust in Genesis (3:6; 6:2).

<sup>35</sup>Scholz also suggests that the translation of cleave indicated that Shechem “kept Dinah close to him” which does not indicate love but control.

<sup>36</sup> Scholz.

<sup>37</sup>Sarna suggests that this “taking” is to “make amends for the taking” in 34:1 (Sarna, 234).

<sup>38</sup>Hamor is called a נסי, which is a chief over a rural city, rather than a מלך or king over a city-state. The city of Shechem is still rural during the time of this story and Hamor’s democratic discussion with the men of the city, is not typical of a king but an influential ruler (Sarna, 233). Josephus, (*Antiquities* 1:21:1) calls Shechem a king.

<sup>39</sup>Notice that Hamor went to talk with Jacob, וַיִּדְבַּר (v6) but spoke with them, וַיִּשְׁמַע (v8), possibly the brothers.

<sup>40</sup>“Jacob’s passive role in the story is never more remarkable than it is here, where after Hamor’s speech, not Jacob but his young sons take over the conversation and stipulate the conditions.” (von Rad, 333). “The need to exercise restraint [...] is understandable, but his [Jacob’s] passivity throughout the entire incident is remarkable” (Sarna, 234).

<sup>41</sup>I think it is interesting that the text switches from our daughters to our daughter (v16,17). It seems to me that the writer is telling the reader that the sons, rather than her father, were acting on behalf of Dinah.

<sup>42</sup>Shechem is referred to as the son six times (2,8,18,20,24,26) and Hamor is his father five times (33:19; 34:4,6,13,19). What is interesting is that their relationship is mentioned throughout the story while Dinah's protector switches from Jacob to her brothers.

<sup>43</sup>Notice that Jacob made a practice of deceiving, while also being deceived, until after his meeting with Esau.

<sup>44</sup>I am suggesting that **נָשִׂים** in 34:24 means for those men "able for war". The text *Joseph and Asenath* suggests that the men of Shechem were 30,000 warriors (*Joseph and Asenath*, 23:2).

<sup>45</sup>"The story in this telling offers no helpful words for the female – or male – readers. We all do well to be angry about this incident." (Ralph W. Klein, "Israel/today's Believers and the Nations: Three Test Cases," *Currents in Theology and Mission* 24 [1997]: 234).

<sup>46</sup>Regardless of the meaning of **נָשִׂים**, Dinah did nothing that deserved being treated as a prostitute (against the interpretations presented above). Simeon and Levi did not interpret her motion to the city as grounds for sexual intercourse. Bellis indicates that the issue was permission from the male rather than rape. In the ancient semitic world the victim is the man to whom she belongs. Lying with Dinah with only her consent suggested that she was a prostitute.

<sup>47</sup>"The text, which does not explicitly criticize the brothers for their violent act of revenge or Jacob for being a silent father, is left wide open to interpretation" (Graetz, 305).

<sup>48</sup>Louis H. Feldman, "Philo, Pseudo-Philo, Josephus, and Theodotus on the Rape of Dinah," *The Jewish Quarterly Review* 94:2 (2004): 262.

<sup>49</sup>Ibid., 256.

<sup>50</sup>Lamp indicates that the Shechemites, in *T. Levi* 6, were punished for 1) violating Dinah, 2) their desire to do the same thing to Sarah, 3) their persecution of the nomad Abraham, 4) harassment of Abraham's pregnant flocks, 5) their mistreatment of Jeblae, who was born in Abraham's house, see Jeffrey S. Lamp, "Is Paul Anti-Jewish? *Testament of Levi* 6 in the Interpretation of 1 Thessalonians 2:13-16," *Catholic Biblical Quarterly* 65:3 (2003): 419.

<sup>51</sup>"*Nevalah* is a powerful term describing offences of such profound abhorrence that they threatened to tear apart the fabric of Israelite society" (Sarna, 234). Brueggemann indicated that **נָשִׂים** was used in the P document for ritual purity (Leviticus 5:2; 11:25, 28; 12:2; 15:18; 22:8). The narrator was supporting P for a desire to purify Israel from the Canaanites (Brueggemann, 275). Noble wrote that the term **נָשִׂים** was the narrator's term, not the sons' of Jacob (Noble, 189, 192).

<sup>52</sup>Wenham, 319. I also think it is interesting that the *T. Levi* and *T. Simeon* were concerned with justifying the actions of Levi and Simeon. The texts indicate that the Shechemites were violent people and indicated that Levi was opposed to the agreement with Shechem. For further discussion see: Tjitze Baarda, "The Shechemite Episode in the Testament of Levi: A Comparison with Other Traditions," *Sacred History and Sacred Texts in Early Judaism, A Symposium in Honour of A.S. van der Woude*, ed. Jan Bremmer, F. Garcia Martinez (Kampen, the Netherlands: KOK Pharos, 1992): 11-74; Benjamin Goodnick, "Simeon the Scapegoat," *Jewish Bible Quarterly* 20 (1992): 168-73, 81.

<sup>53</sup>James Newton Poling, *The Abuse of Power* (Nashville: Abingdon, 1991): 25.

<sup>54</sup>*Ibid.*, 26.

<sup>55</sup>*Ibid.*, 27.

<sup>56</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>57</sup>Carol Adams, *Woman Battering* (Minneapolis: Augsburg Fortress, 1994): 11,14.

<sup>58</sup>Nason-Clark, 4.

<sup>59</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>60</sup>Ron Clark, *Setting the Captives Free: A Christian Theology for Domestic Violence* (Eugene, OR: Cascade Books, 2005), 87-90. For the Jewish community's response to abuse from clergy see Carol Goodman Kaufman, *Sins of Omission: The Jewish Community's Reaction to Domestic Violence* (Cambridge: Westview, 2003).

<sup>61</sup>Clark, "Submit or Else: Intimate Partner Violence, Aggression, Batterers, and the Bible." *Psychology and Biblical Studies*, National SBL Meeting, 2006, [www.psybib.home.att.net/2005/clark.submit2.htm](http://www.psybib.home.att.net/2005/clark.submit2.htm).

<sup>62</sup>Clark, *Setting the Captives Free*, chapter 9.

<sup>63</sup>"As long as Christian theology and pastoral practices do not publicly repent their collusion in sexual, domestic, and political violence against women and children, the victims of such violence are forced to choose between remaining a victim or remaining a Christian." Elisabeth Schuessler Fiorenza, "Introduction," *Violence Against Women*, ed. Elisabeth Schuessler Fiorenza and Mary Shawn Copeland (Maryknoll, NY: SCM Press, 1994), xviii.

<sup>64</sup>Joanne Carlson Brown, "Because of the Angels: Sexual Violence and Abuse," *Violence Against Women*, 4. See also Fiorenza, xiv-xv; and Nason-Clark, 4.

<sup>65</sup>Poling, 13-14.

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