

Women of the Bible: Dinah, who was defiled

Pilgrim Lutheran Church Mary/Martha Society Gathering – 2026 September 20

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- Invocation and Prayer
- Last time, August 16, 2026, we considered the Widow of Nain. Our Sunday Adult Bible Class “Basic Bible Accounts” in considering Joseph and his eleven brothers reminded me of Dinah (דִּינָה [Diy nah /dee·naw/]), whom we had previously omitted from this study and so whom we consider today. (See the page on Pilgrim’s website with the working chronological list of all the women whom we both have studied and will study, linking our handouts when available: www.pilgrimlc.org/bible-studies/women-of-the-bible.)
- The account of Dinah, who was defiled, is in Genesis 34:1-31, although Genesis 33:18-20 and 35:1-7 provide relevant preceding and following details, if they do not also book-end the account of Dinah with the name of God, otherwise absent from ch.34, as *CSSB* notes. (*Lutheran Service Book*’s Three-Year Lectionary Series perhaps not surprisingly does not make use of the narrative of Dinah, who was defiled.)
- Some notes may help us understand and apply the account:
 - 33:18-20: Jacob comes to the city of Shechem:** V.18: Jacob’s safe return to Paddan-aram answered Jacob’s prayer of 28:21 some 20 years earlier. The city and the son of Hamor share the name “Shechem” (the name of the son apparently is serving as the name of the city, that is, the city of the guy named Shechem [confer 34:24], though *CSSB* says the son probably was named for the city; Roehrs-Franzmann says Hamor’s father was also called “Shechem” [referring to 12:6-7; 35:1-4]). V.19 Jacob’s purchase of the land on which he had camped seems to introduce him to Hamor’s sons (perhaps including Shechem, if not also to Hamor himself). V.20 Jacob faithfully confesses the God of his fathers, Abraham and Isaac (and seemingly intends to live apart from those in the city who would worship other gods, though *CSSB* seems to criticize Jacob for “lingering” there [confer Roehrs-Franzmann, perhaps the *CSSB*’s source on that]).
 - 34:1-4: Dinah goes out, and Shechem defiles her:** V.1 in addition to six sons (Reuben, Simeon, Levi, Judah, and later Issachar and Zebulun, who probably would have been pretty young at this point), Leah bore a daughter to Jacob (Dinah is the only named daughter of Jacob about whom we are told [confer Genesis 46:15], perhaps because she remained unmarried unlike any other daughters). Keil-Delitzsch says a 13-15-year-old Dinah went out “to make acquaintance with”, and Roehrs-Franzmann says Dinah went out “to look at with delight” the women of the land and describes it as “more than innocent curiosity, dangerous as that might have been.” V.2 the Hivites are descendants of Noah’s son Ham through his son Canaan, who gives the land its name. There seems to be intentional contrast between Dinah’s seeing the women of the land and Shechem’s seeing Dinah in the process. Already in Eden, seeing led to coveting and taking. Shechem seized, lay with, and humiliated Dinah. Seizing can have the sense of taking captive (confer v.17, where the same verb is used, and v.26). Laying with can have the sense of sexual relations. Humiliating can have the sense of mishandling or afflicting. *TLSB* puts it simply, “Raped her”. (Confer and compare the report of the rape of Tamar, the daughter of David, in 2 Samuel 13:11-14, which we have discussed previously, though it comes later.) V.3 perhaps genuine love (Roehrs-Franzmann finds evidence of it; or at least lust?)

results on Shechem's part (confer v.8). V.4 Shechem asks his father to make Shechem's relationship with Dinah legitimate (even as she stays in his custody?). *TLSB* notes that God "later forbade" Israelite marriages to foreigners, but already Abraham had avoided it in Isaac's case, and Isaac and Rebekah had preferred Jacob's not doing it.

34:5-17: Jacob and his sons meet with Shechem and Hamor and "demand" circumcision: V.5 Jacob hears that Shechem had defiled his daughter Dinah (the first of 3 uses of the verb נָמַץ, נִמְצָה [*tame' /taw·may/*] in this passage [confer vv.13 and 27], the first three uses in the Old Testament), that is, made her unclean, perhaps sexually, religiously, and ceremonially (Keil-Delitzsch says because it was an uncircumcised man who had seduced her). (From whom Jacob hears is not said, and perhaps his hearing at all is curious if Dinah has remained with Shechem.) How many of the sons are referred to in vv.5 and 7 is not clear (also in v.13; for his part, Benjamin is not born until later [35:16-18]). Vv.6-7 Hamor and presumably also Shechem (confer v.11; perhaps also other sons of Hamor as suggested by 33:19?) speak with Jacob and his sons (of indeterminate number). V.8 "give" in this verse is perhaps not at odds with "get" in v.4, as customs of bartering perhaps avoided crass language of purchasing (but compare v.12). Vv.9-10 *TLSB* comments, "Hamor's interest was more than in his son's marriage. He wanted Jacob's house to be assimilated to the Hivite culture and economy" (confer vv.21 and 23). *CSSB* suggests the Canaanites (consciously?) wanted to benefit from the blessings Jacob had received from the Lord. Vv.11-12 Shechem asks for "favor" (the Hebrew *chen* is often "grace"), but Shechem is willing both to pay whatever bride price to Jacob in order to compensate for the loss of a daughter and to give whatever gift to Dinah as a dowry (compare Keil-Delitzsch gift to the bride and presents for the brothers and mother). V.13 the sons of Jacob (again of indeterminate number, also unclear as to how, if at all, Jacob is included [confer/compare v.17]) deceive Shechem and Hamor. *CSSB* refers to the children being deceptive like their father was deceptive, and Roehrs-Franzmann points to the deceptiveness of Hamor and Shechem (not that one group's deceptiveness justifies the other's). *TLSB* offers a reason of their thinking themselves outnumbered, and *TLSB* quotes Luther's characterization of their action as mortal sin. Vv.14-16 the sons of Jacob agree to give Dinah to Shechem, and other daughters and sons in marriage and to share land as one people, if every male is circumcised. As *TLSB* notes, "By demanding that the Hivites be circumcised, Jacob's sons treated this sign of God's sacred covenant flippantly. They used God's holy institution for a secular, even sinful, purpose." (Presumably their intention already at this point was to do what they did do in vv.25-29, and not some wrongful willingness to use circumcision as an outward sign of unity that would not have been true in the heart.) V.17 *TLSB* notes, "The brothers assumed the role of their father when referring to their sister" as "our daughter".

34:18-24: Hamor and Shechem persuade the men of the city to be circumcised: Vv.18-20 pleased by Jacob's sons' deceptive offer, Hamor and his most-honored son Shechem quickly go to the gate of the city, where, as *TLSB* notes, "political business was transacted". Vv.21-23 Hamor and Shechem make their case for assimilating the Israelites and their property through marriage. V.24 The men agree and were circumcised.

34:25-29: Simeon and Levi kill the recovering men, take Dinah, and plunder the city: *TLSB* notes that "Pain from a surgery such as circumcision is often most intense on the third day." The Divinely-inspired Moses at this point indicates the role of Simeon and Levi, two of Leah's six sons and so full brothers to Dinah, in killing all the men of the city (Keil-Delitzsch adds the two brothers' servants). Roehrs-Franzmann says the full brothers

“felt particularly entitled to avenge their sister’s honor”, though we note that the other four are not mentioned as doing so. *CSSB* says “Shechem’s crime, serious as it was, hardly warranted such brutal and extensive retaliation”. V.26 they “took” Dinah out of Shechem’s house and “went away” (perhaps took her home before plundering the city; what becomes of Dinah is not said). Vv.27-29 perhaps still only Simeon and Levi (confer v.30; 49:5-7 but compare Keil-Delitzsch) take the animals, wealth, and surviving women and children (the reversal of what the Hivites had intended; *CSSB* says their greed led to their downfall). *TLSB* comments, “In biblical times, conquering armies often enslaved women and children of captured cities” and that “Sometimes the slaves would later be sold”.

34:30-31: Jacob speaks to Simeon and Levi: V.30 Jacob tells Simeon and Levi that they have brought trouble on him by making him stink to the other inhabitants of the land. *TLSB* comments, “This cruel deed might give Jacob an evil reputation.” As noted above, the Hivites were Canaanites in some sense but perhaps here the Hivites are distinguished from the Canaanites and from the Perizzites. Jacob’s “household” obviously includes Simeon and Levi and their growing families (confer 46:10-11). V.31 *TLSB* comments, “Question implies that Jacob did not care how Dinah was treated”, when, in fact, Jacob seemed to be considering the needs of the many over the needs of the one. Dinah should not have been treated like a prostitute, but Shechem wanted to make Dinah his wife, and Simeon and Levi could have tried justice at the city gate, waited for a command from God to attack the city, or trusted in God’s ultimate justice.

35:1-7: God moves Jacob to Bethel: V.1 God tells Jacob to move up to Bethel (Jacob does not get back to his father Isaac until 35:27). Vv.2-3 Jacob directs his household and those with them to prepare for the move. V.4 Jacob hides their foreign gods and religious jewelry under the terebinth tree near Shechem (*TLSB* suggests plunder from Shechem). V.5 God puts terror into the cities around them so they do not pursue Jacob (*TLSB* specifically links the cities’ desire to kill the Israelites to what the sons did at Shechem). Vv.6-7 Jacob and all those with him safely arrive in Bethel and faithfully worship God there.

- Aside from Genesis 46:15, Dinah is not mentioned elsewhere in Holy Scripture, although her brothers Simeon and Levi’s actions are recalled by Jacob/Israel in Genesis 49:5-7 (confer/compare Numbers 3:5-13; Joshua 19:1-9; and see also Revelation 7:2-8).
- About what else does our consideration of Dinah raise questions or prompt discussion? Roehrs-Franzmann discusses God’s use of afflictions, even those arising within one’s own family, as discipline, even a cross that comes after a particularly high moment of faith. *TLSB*’s Law-Gospel Application Note says the following: “One sin leads to another. Shechem rapes Dinah, and Jacob’s sons abuse God’s holy institution of circumcision so they could massacre the men of Shechem. Christians, beware! Those who treat God’s holy things carelessly and who nurture vengeance prepare for themselves lasting misery. Zeal for a right cause is good, but moderation and due process are also required. The same Savior who died for us also died for sinners such as Shechem and Jacob’s sons.”
- Concluding Prayer, *LSB* 764 (on next page), and Benediction.
- Next time (October 18?) on Gomer (Hosea 1:1-3:5)?

764 When Aimless Violence Takes Those We Love



1 When aim - less vi - o - lence takes those we love,
 2 When pass - ing years rob sight and strength and mind
 3 Our faith may flick - er low, and hope grow dim,
 4 Be - cause Your Son knew ag - o - ny and loss,
 5 Through long grief - dark - ened days help us, dear Lord,



When ran - dom death strikes child - hood's prom - ise down,
 Yet fail to still a strong - ly beat - ing heart,
 Yet You, O God, are with us in our pain;
 Felt des - o - la - tion, grief and scorn and shame,
 To trust Your grace for cour - age to en - dure,



When wrench - ing loss be - comes our dai - ly bread,
 And grief be - comes the fab - ric of our days,
 You grieve with us and for us day by day,
 We know You will be with us, come what may,
 To rest our souls in Your sup - port - ing love,



We know, O God, You leave us not a - lone.
 Dear Lord, You do not stand from us a - part.
 And with us, shar - ing sor - row, will re - main.
 Your lov - ing pres - ence near, al - ways the same.
 And find our hope with - in Your mer - cy sure.

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