

## 14. The Dinah Affair

Gen 34

Jacob has returned from serving Laban. He goes to Succoth, builds a house, makes “booths for his cattle.” He is all set. Then, without explanation, he goes to the city of Shechem, and buys the bit of ground where he had spread his tent “at the hand of the children of Hamor, Shechem’s father” (Gen 33:19).

Then comes the tale of Dinah. It is clearly composite: an early story which has been interwound with a later rewrite. It has been analyzed in 4DH terms. How does that work out? Here are the beginnings of three 4DH analyses.

**Bacon** (1891) sees sources J (early) and E (late). His J (early) stratum is on the left, and his E (late) stratum is indented and italicized at right. It begins:

*And Dinah the daughter of Leah, which she bare unto Jacob, went out to see the daughters of the land.*

And Shechem the son of Hamor the Hivite [the prince of the land] saw her, and he took her,

*and lay with her;*

and humbled her. And his soul clave unto – Dinah, the daughter of Jacob – and he loved the damsel,

*and spake kindly unto the damsel. And Shechem spake unto his father*

*Hamor, saying, Get me this damsel to wife.*

Now Jacob heard [that he had defiled Dinah his daughter] . . .

**Bissell** (1892) sees an early J and a later P. Similarly indented, we have:

*And Dinah, the daughter of Leah, which she bare unto Jacob,*  
went out to see the daughters of the land.

*And Shechem the son of Hamor the Hivite, the prince of the land,*  
saw her, and lay with her, and humbled her. And his soul clave unto Dinah the daughter of Jacob,

*and he loved the damsel,*

and spake kindly unto the damsel.

*And Shechem spake unto his father Hamor, saying, Get me this damsel to wife.*

Now Jacob heard that he had defiled Dinah his daughter . . .

**Driver** (1904) also sees an early J and a later P:

*And Dinah, the daughter of Leah, which she bare unto Jacob went out to see the daughters of the land [2] And Shechem the son of Hamor the Hivite, the prince of the land, saw her;*

and he took her and lay with her, and humbled her. [3] And his soul clave unto Dinah the daughter of Jacob, and he loved the damsel, and spake kindly unto the damsel.

*[4] And Shechem spake unto his father Hamor, saying, get me this damsel to wife.*

[5] Now Jacob heard that he had defiled Dinah his daughter . . .

All put the story beginning second. But how can Dinah be raped by *anybody*, before she even goes out into the land? It simply does not work.

**Skinner** (1910)<sup>1</sup> saw that the 4DH approach did not work, but nevertheless wound up with a modified 4DH analysis (J and E) as his best shot.

**Friedman** (2003) prints all Gen 34 in his J color: *he sees no differences*. This lets the story begin at its beginning, but only by dropping 4DH altogether.

It is obvious that we have two interwound stories, one where Shechem seeks to make Dinah a proper wife, with exchange of dowry and gifts; and one about the union of the *peoples*. Neither that nor any other suggestion<sup>2</sup> has received general assent; the problem has been called unsolvable.<sup>3</sup> But it is likely enough that an early story (Gen 34A) seeking a *legitimizing wedding for Shechem*, was revised as a more comprehensive proposal to *unite the two peoples* (34B).

If we forget 4DH and simply separate those themes, we get the following, with Gen 34A at left, and a later 34B, indented and italicized, on the right:

## 34A (Earlier)

## 34B (Later)

And Dinah the daughter of Leah, whom she bare unto Jacob,<sup>4</sup> went out to see the daughters of the land. [2] And Shechem the son of Hamor the Hivite, the prince of the land, saw her, and he took her, and lay with her, and humbled her. [3] And his soul clave unto Dinah the daughter of Jacob, and he loved the damsel, and spake kindly unto the damsel. [4] And Shechem spake unto his father Hamor, saying, Get me this damsel to wife. [5] Now Jacob heard that he had defiled Dinah his daughter; and his sons were with his cattle in the field; and Jacob held his peace until they came. [6] And Hamor the father of Shechem<sup>5</sup> went out unto Jacob to commune with him. [7] And the sons of Jacob came in from the field when they heard it; and the men were grieved, and they were very wroth, because he had wrought folly in Israel in lying with Jacob's daughter, which thing ought not to be done. [8] And Hamor communed with them, saying, The soul of my son Shechem longeth for y our daughter; I pray you, give her unto him to wife.

[9] *And make ye marriages with us; give your daughters unto us, and take our daughters unto you. [10] And ye shall dwell with us; and the land shall be before you; dwell and trade ye therein, and get you possessions therein.*

[11] And Shechem said unto her father and unto her brethren, Let me find favor in your eyes, and what ye shall say unto me, I will give. [12] Ask me never so much dowry and gift, and I will give according as ye shall say unto me; but give me the damsel to wife.

... and after v9-10, we are back again with Shechem's request for a marriage.

<sup>1</sup>Skinner (1910) 418; citing Meyer. For an overview, see Westermann (1981) 535.

<sup>2</sup>Including the disposition to see the story as *consistent*; Speiser (1964) 267.

<sup>3</sup>von Rad **Genesis** 330, "All modern expositors are agreed about the extraordinary difficulty of a literary analysis of this narrative, but there is no agreement on the means of arriving at a satisfying solution." By "literary analysis," he means "4DH analysis."

<sup>4</sup>We have never heard of Dinah before; she is here identified for the audience.

<sup>5</sup>We note in passing that even the early 34A repeats information, as though trying to make the story credible for an audience which had never heard of *any* of this stuff.

But now the “sons of Jacob” make a condition:

34A (Earlier)

34B (Later)

[13] *And the sons of Jacob answered with guile, and spake, because he had defiled Dinah their sister, [14] and said unto them, We cannot do this thing, to give our sister to one that is uncircumcised; for that were a reproach unto us. [15] Only on this condition will we consent unto you: if ye will be as we are, that every male of you be circumcised; [16] then we will give our daughters unto you, and we will take your daughters to us, and we will dwell with you, and we will become one people. [17] But if ye will not hearken unto us, to be circumcised; then will we take our daughter, and we will be gone.*

[18] *And their words pleased Hamor, and Shechem Hamor's son. [19] And the young man deferred not to do the thing, because he had delight in Jacob's daughter, and he was honored above all the house of his father. [20] And Hamor and Shechem his son came unto the gate of their city, and communed with the men of their city, saying, [21] These men are peaceable with us; therefore let them dwell in the land, and trade therein; for, behold, the land is large enough for them; let us take their daughters to us for wives, and let us give them our daughters. [22] Only on this condition will the men consent unto us to dwell with us, to become one people: if every male among us be circumcised, as they are circumcised. [23] Shall not their cattle and their substance and all their beasts be ours? Only let us consent unto them, and they will dwell with us. [24] And unto Hamor and unto Shechem his son hearkened all that went out of the gate of his city; and every male was circumcised, all that went out of the gate of his city.*

[25] And it came to pass

*on the third day, when they were sore,*

that two of the sons of Jacob, Simeon and Levi, Dinah's brethren, took each man his sword,

*and came upon the city unawares, and slew all the males.*

[26] And they slew Hamor and Shechem his son with the edge of the sword, and took Dinah forth,

*[27] The sons of Jacob came upon the slain, and plundered the city, because they had defiled their sister. [28] They took their flocks and their herds and their asses, and that which was in the city, and that which was in the field; [29] and all their wealth, and they took all their little ones and their wives, took they captive.*

and made a prey, even of all that was in the house. [30] And Jacob said to Simeon and Levi, Ye have troubled me, to make me odious to the inhabitants of the land, among the Canaanites and the Perizzites; and I being few in number, they will gather themselves together against me and smite me; and I shall be destroyed, I and my house. [31] and they said, Should he deal with our sister as with a harlot?

With a few rough edges, *every word of both stories* is here accounted for.

The structure is like that of Noah (§9): an early story updated, with the update interwound with the original. With Noah, the point of the update was to include the food rules; with Dinah, it is to include the prohibition of mixed marriages, as set out in Ezra 9 and echoed in Nehemiah 13.

This gives us a rough date. Gen 34B, the rewrite, is post-Exilic.

### Why Genesis 34A?

The older half of the Noah story was derived from Babylonian tradition. But nothing of that kind explains Gen 34A, which is so closely related to Gen 34B as to be an earlier version of the same thing. Where does it come from?

One great Old Testament theme is the replacing of the elder by the younger; often, with the youngest of four sons replacing the older three.<sup>6</sup>

Jacob's original sons were four: Reuben, Simeon, Levi, and Judah. Simeon and Levi do terrible things, even in the first version of the Dinah story, and they may be considered as eliminated by those deeds. That leaves Reuben, who is guilty of a heinous (that is, a sexual) crime in the next part of Genesis:

**Gen 35:21.** And Israel journeyed and spread his tent beyond the tower of Eder. [22] And it came to pass, while Israel dwelt in that land, that Reuben went and lay with Bilhah his father's concubine;<sup>7</sup> and Israel heard of it.

Just that much. No response from "Israel" (the renamed Jacob) is mentioned. But it will suffice to disqualify Reuben also, and there remains only Judah.

It is a rather scrappy procedure. One strange detail is the role of Dinah. She is the only female to be listed among the progeny of Jacob; no other daughter is mentioned, and it is very likely that daughters were not routinely included in these genealogies, in a culture based on inheritance and succession by sons. This the Dinah writer knows, and so Dinah was added to the record elsewhere:

**Gen 30:21.** And afterwards she bare a daughter, and called her name Dinah.

**Gen 46:15.** These are the sons of Leah, whom she bare unto Jacob in Paddan-aram, *with his daughter Dinah*; all the souls of his sons *and his daughters* were thirty and three.

There are no other daughters in the genealogical record, and these two passages are suspect as later insertions; patches<sup>8</sup> added to make some other passage work better in its own context.

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Was there some meaning in Jacob's gratuitous journey to Shechem?

- Shechem, between Mounts Ebal and Gerizim, was the holiest place in Israel.
- That Shechem is here a person rather than a place suggests that we are seeing it at its very beginning. In antiquity, ancientness is always a strong argument.
- Purchasing a burial site (though Jacob here has no one to bury) invokes Abraham's purchase of a burial site for Sarah (Gen 23), and strengthens the continuity between Jacob and Abraham, the founder of that line.

There may be a hint here, of something otherwise lost.

<sup>6</sup>The greater success of the younger son is the constant theme of the Grimm tales.

<sup>7</sup>Not his own mother. Sleeping with a father's concubines is a sign of having succeeded the father as ruler; see the advice of Ahithophel in 2Sam 16:20-23.

<sup>8</sup>For the function of a "patch," see again p34.