

*Parshat Vayislach***Did Dinah Fall in Love with the Prince of Shechem?****Dear Rebbetzin,**

I read *The Red Tent* by Anita Diamant some time ago and I found it very captivating and interesting. It was very helpful to read about the biblical personalities and their relationships, especially since I don't have much Jewish background. I remember reading about the beautiful love story between Ya'acov's daughter Dinah and the prince of Shechem in *The Red Tent*. When I was talking with my sister – who had been a year in a seminary in Israel – she said that I had the facts all wrong, and that Dinah detested the prince. We got into a big fight over it, and I'm turning to you to help me clarify the relationship between Dinah and the prince of Shechem?

**Ahuva Gold****Dear Ahuva,**

I'm glad you asked me to clarify the relationship between biblical figures, since much of the popular reading out there, including *The Red Tent* may be very misleading. The aim of such books is a captivating story, rather than being true to the Torah. Not only does *The Red Tent* completely contradict the oral explanation of the Torah, it also distorts passages in the Bible itself. For example, Naftali is mentioned as a son of Leah, rather than Bilhah (*Bereishit* 30:7-8), and Dinah is described as falling in love with Shechem. The main faulty perspective of *The Red Tent* is that it expresses a complete lack of understanding of the greatness of our matriarchs and patriarchs. Nevertheless, this bestseller has some merit in sparking a renewed general interest in Women in the Bible. In contrast to the approach of this novel, I will attempt to answer your question through the traditional method of textual analysis, which teaches an appreciation of the true greatness of our holy ancestors. In this way, I endeavor to inspire us all to walk in their 'soulprints.'

**The Violation of Dinah**

It is hard to imagine that a young woman of lesser class would not fall head over heels in love with the distinguished prince who desired her. Yet, Dinah, daughter of Ya'acov, was very different from the young women which modern Western authors can picture. Scripture testifies to her spiritual greatness, in that she took no pleasure from Shechem's advances. Rather, she was repulsed and despised the 'noble' prince.

**ספר בראשית פרק לד פסוק ב** וַיֵּרָא אֶתָּה שָׁכֶם בֶּן חָמוֹר הַחִיטִּי נָשִׂיא הָאֶרֶץ וַיִּקַּח אֶתָּה וַיִּשְׁכַּב אִתָּה וַיַּעֲנֶהָ:

"When Shechem the son of Chamor the Chivite, prince of the country, saw her, he took her, lay with her, and defiled her" (*Bereishit* 34:2).

The Hebrew word וַיַּעֲנֶהָ/Vay'aneha – "he defiled her" clearly refers to rape as Ramban explains:

**רמב"ן על בראשית פרק לד פסוק ב**

...כל ביאה באונסה תקרא ענוי, וכן לא תתעמר בה תחת אשר עניתה (דברים כא יד), וכן ואת פלגשי ענו ותמת (שופטים כ ה) ויגיד הכתוב כי היתה אנוסה ולא נתרצית לנשיא הארץ, לספר בשבחה:

...Any forced intercourse is called ענוי/inui – defilement. Likewise, "You shall not treat her as a slave, because you have forced her – עֲנִיתָה/inita" (*Devarim* 21:14); "They raped – עֲנוּ/inu my concubine and she died" (*Shoftim* 20:5). Scripture tells us that she was raped and not interested in the prince of the land, to tell of her praise (Ramban, *Bereishit* 34:2).

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## Reunited with her Family

Ramban continues to describe how Dinah screamed and cried constantly. Otherwise, Shechem would not have needed to ask his father, "Take for me this girl for a wife" (*Bereishit* 34:4). Since he already had Dinah captured in his room, as the prince of the land, he had no need to fear that anyone would take her away from him. It was only because of Dinah's resistance towards him, that he tried to bribe her family into convincing her to concede willingly to the match (Ramban, *Bereishit* 34:12). Rather than cursing her family and fleeing from their sight, never to be reunited, as *The Red Tent* reads, Dinah welcomed her brothers' rescue from the evil city of Shechem, where she had been imprisoned. A proof that Dinah remained with her family is that she is enumerated among the seventy souls of the seed of Ya'acov that descended to Egypt (*Bereishit* 45:15).

## Replay of the Garden of Eden

ספר בראשית פרק לד (א) וַתֵּצֵא דִּינָה בִּתְּ לֵאָה אִשְׁרָ יִלְדָּהּ לִיעֶקֶב לְרִאשֹׁת בְּבוֹנוֹת הָאָרֶץ:

"Dinah the daughter of Leah, whom she bore unto Ya'acov went out to look upon the daughters of the land" (*Bereishit* 34:1).

Why do we need this detailed description of Dinah? Was there another Dinah which required the verse to state "*daughter of Leah whom she bore unto Ya'acov*?" Scripture emphasizes that Dinah is the daughter of Leah, because their souls are connected in a way which goes beyond the attachment of mother and daughter. Dinah had within her the part of her mother which had been destined for Esau. Arizal explains that when the snake polluted Chava with his poison, good and evil became mixed within every soul. This caused the shell of the first rebellious Chava to become absorbed by Leah and carried on to Dinah. Leah was able to rectify and remove the shell of the first Chava, to become completely holy and righteous. However, the remnant of the dregs that were still cleaving to Leah, carried over to Dinah, a name that means harsh judgement. She was holy as well, yet a remnant of the shell of the first Chava still clung to her, since she had not completely rectified herself. (Arizal, *The Gate of Articles of Chazal, the Article of the Steps of Avraham Avinu*). The underlying reason why Shechem desired Dinah so much was that Dinah's soul had a spark of Chava and Shechem was the incarnation of the original serpent. This is why he is called, "Chivite" meaning serpent in Aramaic (Targum Onkelus, *Bereishit* 3:1). Dinah's soul had absorbed a trace of the spiritual pollution that the serpent had injected into Chava. When Shechem violated her, it was during her menstrual period, so that he re-absorbed this trace of impurity, as it states, "her menstrual flow shall be upon him" (*Vayikra* 15:24). Her name, "Dinah," alludes to menstruation- the word for menstruating in Hebrew is נִידָה/*nidah* the exact letters of the name דִּינָה/Dinah. The story of Dinah and Shechem is the replay of Chava and the snake. Dinah was finally able to rectify Chava by expelling the impurity she had absorbed from the snake back onto Shechem.

## Her Jewish Essence Remains Pure

What happened to the child that Dinah conceived through the rape by Shechem ben Chamor? Osenat, Dinah's daughter, was sent away with an amulet on her neck upon which was written: "Whoever cleaves to you, cleaves to the seed of Ya'acov" (Targum Onkelos, *Parashat Vayechi* 48:9). The angel, Gabriel, brought her to Egypt, to the house of Potifar, who adopted her. When Yosef ruled over Egypt, all the women wanted to gaze at him, because of his beauty, as it states, "Daughters tread on the wall" (*Bereishit* 49:22). Each of them cast something down from the wall as a gift for Yosef. Since Osenat had nothing else to throw, she hurled the amulet from around her

neck. In this way, when Yosef saw that she was the granddaughter of Ya'acov, he married her (Chizkuni, Bereishit 41:45); ([Women at the Crossroads](#) p.36). Yosef, the righteous overcame sexual temptation and is therefore the antithesis of Shechem, son of Chamor (meaning donkey, physical/animalistic), the Chivite (meaning snake). Shechem was unable to bridle his animalistic desires, so he lost both the city of Shechem and Dinah to Yosef. Yosef, the archetype of sexual discipline, was able to elevate what Shechem lost. He received Dinah's and Shechem's daughter, as a wife, and the city of Shechem, where he was eventually buried (*Bereishit* 48:22 with Rashi); (Inspired from Rabbi Avraham Greenbaum, *Azamra*).

### Dinah –Divine DNA

In spite of the tainted nature of her conception, Osenat became the wife of Yosef the *tzaddik*. As Yosef's soulmate, like him, she was sealed with complete sexual chastity. Moreover she,, merited to become the mother of Efrayim and Menashe, two tribes considered equal in holiness to the sons of Ya'acov. This proves that the inner essence of Osenat's mother, Dinah, remained unaffected and pure even when she was defiled by Shechem (Rabbi Tzaddok of Lublin, *Yisrael Kedoshim* 10). The power of her innate holiness is furthermore expressed on a collective level, by bringing about the circumcision of the entire city. Dinah's daughter, Osenat, is the first person through whom it becomes established that the Jewish lineage follows the mother. In this way, Dinah teaches us that no matter what kind of experiences a Jewish woman may have gone through in her past; there is a place within her soul that remains completely intact and pure in its holiness. This holy spark is carried over to the children she conceives. The fact that Dinah is the first woman to verify that Judaism depends on the mother is hinted by the letters of Dinah's name, which consists of the letters D, N, and A plus the letter H or the Hebrew letter ה/*heh* that represents Hashem. Thus Dinah represents 'the DNA of Hashem' (*Women at the Crossroads* pp. 29-30).