

RECLAIMING DINAH:
A FEMINIST-LITERARY ANALYSIS OF
GENESIS 34.1-9

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Reclaiming Dinah:
A Feminist-Literary Analysis of Genesis 34.1-9

By

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Abstract

Patriarchal readings of Genesis 34 have traditionally understood the story of Dinah to be one of “crime and punishment”: Dinah is raped because she had the audacity to leave her father’s home without permission. While later interpretations of the story are not so blatantly offensive, their misogyny is still evident, albeit in a much more subtle (and potentially more dangerous) form. Feminist biblical scholars, therefore, are presented with the daunting task of redeeming Dinah from centuries of patriarchal interpretation. This thesis explores how such a redemption of Dinah is possible.

The task of redeeming Dinah is made possible through the interpretation of Genesis 34.1-9 as a “betrothal narrative” whose literary convention suggests a much more positive interpretation. By applying the structural arrangement of a betrothal type-scene as discerned by Robert Alter in Genesis 24 and Genesis 29 to Genesis 34, one can see how the narrative concerning Dinah offers a means of redemption. Dinah is no longer a victim to be blamed but a heroine in her own right a potential wife and mother. The narrative itself, far from condemning Dinah, offers her a means of redemption, a redemption foreclosed by the actions of Simeon and Levi. This thesis, therefore, provides a deeper insight into the apparent rape of Genesis 34, in order that readers can better comprehend Dinah’s presence in the text and provide to it new meaning.

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Introduction

This study concerns the story of Dinah, daughter of Leah and Jacob, and sister of Simeon and Levi. The narrative of Dinah is told in nine brief verses: first, Dinah goes out to visit the women of the land; second, Shechem, the son of a Hivite prince, saw (ראה) Dinah, seized (לקח) her, lay (שכב) with her, and humbled (ענה) her; third, because Shechem loves Dinah, he tells his father Hamor to get Dinah for his wife; fourth, Hamor requests the marriage of Dinah on behalf of Shechem (Genesis 34.1-9).

Traditionally, Genesis 34 has been read from an androcentric perspective, portraying the disobedience of a young Israelite woman. Reconstructivist feminist biblical scholars who find this traditional reading offensive, therefore, are presented with the task of redeeming Dinah from the patriarchal interpretation in an effort to reclaim the text, primarily through historical, linguistic, and textual analysis. There may, however, be another way to reclaim the text, that is, by arguing that Genesis 34 is a “betrothal narrative” whose literary convention suggests a much more positive interpretation.

My thesis will consist of four chapters. In chapter one, I will discuss several traditional androcentric readings whose net effect is to blame Dinah herself for her own misfortune. Such readings, as one may well suspect, provide ample fodder for feminist re-interpretations. In the second chapter, therefore, I will discuss a feminist approach which allows for the redemption of Dinah. Such a redemption, I believe, can be forcefully demonstrated by situating Genesis 34 within the framework of a “betrothal narrative” as evidenced by Robert Alter. In the third chapter, I will use Alter’s structural

argument to help place the narrative of Dinah within the confines of a betrothal narrative. In the fourth chapter I will discuss various themes contributing to the identification of Dinah as a potential wife and mother from a feminist-literary approach.

Chapter One: Scholarship Review

Traditional androcentric readings of Genesis 34 hold Dinah responsible for her defilement, which followed her unauthorized 'going out.' Early Christian and Orthodox Jewish readings are quite explicit on this point and hold Dinah solely responsible for what happens to her. Early-modern interpretations also used Genesis 34 as a text to teach women of the dangers they would encounter if they pursued their independence, using the threat of sexual violence to keep women in their place. These early-modern interpretations were also concerned with what effect Dinah's defilement had on Jacob and her brothers, Simeon and Levi.

Nineteenth-century womens' interpretations on Genesis 34, like writers before them, also hold Dinah responsible for her defilement. Dinah's brothers, Simeon and Levi, are condemned for their rage against the Hivites which suggests these women writers condone male violence towards women and condemn male violence directed towards men. In blaming Dinah, these nineteenth-century women identify themselves with other patriarchal writers and thinkers.

Modern historical-critical interpretations of Genesis 34 are not as misogynist as those of the early commentators, however, their sexist attitudes towards the text are more subtle and potentially more dangerous. John Skinner, Gerhard von Rad, Claus

Westermann, John C.L. Gibson, and Jione Havea all but ignore Dinah and focus their attention on Simeon, Levi, and Shechem.

Modern literary analysts of Genesis 34 include Meir Sternberg, Danna Fewell and David Gunn, and Robert Alter. Sternberg and Fewell and Gunn seek to redeem Shechem in later interpretations of Genesis 34, thereby, implying that Dinah is still to blame for her own misfortune. Dinah has, therefore, been interpreted to reflect traditional androcentric perceptions of women which support misogynistic ideologies. A re-interpretation of the text is, therefore, necessary. It is through a feminist-literary critical approach that I will try to redeem Dinah.

Chapter Two: Methodology

In this thesis I will employ a feminist-literary critical methodology. By utilizing feminist-literary criticism, this chapter will demonstrate how the position of women in the Hebrew Bible can be highlighted by challenging the patriarchal assumptions ingrained in the text and, therefore, provide the text with authority and value for women. A deconstruction of traditional androcentric ideologies is possible through the adoption of feminist hermeneutics and such a reading will have the effect of shedding more light on Dinah's position in Genesis 34.

This chapter, therefore, offers an analysis of feminist models of reading to better understand the strategies used by feminist biblical scholars including: the evolutionary approach; cultural relativism; the rejectionist approach; 'canon-within-a-canon' approach; and the holistic approach.

Feminist-literary criticism is the study concerned with discussion, evaluation, and interpretation of literature in its final form. A sampling of feminist-literary critical studies on Genesis 34 has been included to demonstrate a more egalitarian method of interpretation. Interpreting Genesis 34 in terms of its sentence formation, literary structure, and the portrayal of characters, feminist-literary criticism will provide the opportunity to interpret Genesis 34 as a betrothal narrative.

Chapter Three: Structural Arrangement

In chapter three I will discuss in detail the structure of betrothal type-scenes as proposed by Robert Alter. Alter claims that the archetype of the Homeric type-scene is to be understood as a recurrent block of narrative with an identifiable structure. The betrothal type-scene begins with the hero's emergence to a foreign land (1). The next elements of the type-scene are identified by the act of drawing water from a well and the establishment of a bond between the male and female characters (2). Following that is a description of the sharing of news with a family member(s) and a display of hospitality (3). The final element of Alter's type-scene is the betrothal itself (4).

Through the application of the type-scene to Genesis 24 and Genesis 29, Alter identifies the nature of literary artistry. I propose that Genesis 34 can be interpreted to exhibit the same literary conventions as that of Rebekah and Isaac, and Rachel and Jacob. Chapter three, therefore, includes a summary of the betrothal narratives in Genesis 24 and Genesis 29, which is followed by an analysis of Genesis 34. If, therefore, one applies Alter's structural argument of a type-scene to the betrothal narrative in Genesis 34, the

narrative suggests a more positive interpretation, offering a kind of redemption for Dinah as a potential wife and mother.

Chapter Four: Feminist Analysis

In the fourth chapter I will discuss the advantages of identifying Dinah as a potential wife and mother from a feminist-literary approach. A feminist analysis of the text is necessary in order that Dinah be reclaimed from the overwhelming amount of misogynist interpretations. I will discuss three themes to show how Dinah can be redeemed: *potential redemption*; *matrilineal descent vs. patrilineal descent*; and *ritual purity vs. ethnic purity*.

Under the theme *potential redemption* the role of the Israelite woman as wife and mother will be discussed. An analysis of Carol Meyers' text, *Discovering Eve: Ancient Israelite Women in Context*, will offer a positive interpretation of the female role in ancient Israel and applied to Dinah. Under the theme *matrilineal descent vs. patrilineal descent* the advantages of matrilineal descent will be discussed and applied to Genesis 34. Identifying Dinah through a matrilineal descent offers Dinah and Shechem many advantages not offered through patrilineal descent. An analysis of the symbolic matrilineage in Genesis 24 and Genesis 29 will also be considered in relation to Genesis 34. And, under the theme *ritual purity vs. ethnic purity* the issue of exogamous marriage in ancient Israel will be discussed. The ban on exogamous marriage is one that formulated in the book of Ezra and implies an ethnic ideology concerned with race. The

narrator in Genesis 34 however, suggests that Simeon and Levi are also concerned with ethnic purity and not ritual purity as often presumed.

Reading Genesis 34 in light of these themes, it is possible that Dinah be reclaimed from the clutches of patriarchal interpretations and a more positive reading of the narrative offered. Challenging traditional androcentric interpretations of Genesis 34 provides the occasion for further positive interpretations of biblical narrative.

Chapter One: Scholarship Review

1.1 Introduction

Throughout the history of biblical exegesis, patriarchal interpretations have dominated the field. These readings have tended to undermine the position of women. Early commentaries of Genesis 34, for instance, are examples of a patriarchal perspective as they hold Dinah accountable for her rape. While modern interpretations and literary analyses of the text are not so blatantly misogynist, the sexism is more subtle and potentially more dangerous. This chapter will outline and explain the history of patriarchal interpretations of Genesis 34 and develop an understanding as to why a re-interpretation of the text is necessary. My study of the views of scholars commenting on Genesis 34 will take into account: (1) Early Christian and Jewish Readings; (2) Early-Modern Interpretations; (3) Nineteenth-Century Womens' Interpretations; (4) Modern Historical-Critical Interpretations; and (5) Modern Literary Analyses.

1.2 Early Christian and Jewish Readings

Many early interpreters believe that Dinah's defilement was the consequence of an act of disobedience and, therefore, justly deserved. Dinah disobeyed her father as she went out from Jacob's house: had Dinah complied with the gender roles ascribed by Israelite culture and remained inside the home, Dinah would not have been viciously

raped. This kind of “blame-the-victim” interpretation can be discerned in early Christian and Jewish readings.

My discussion of early Jewish interpretations of Genesis 34 begins with some reflections from Genesis Rabbah:

And Dinah went out to see the daughters of the land. Yose of Onayyah writes, “For it was written, ‘And Leah went out to meet him’ (Gen. 30.16). She went out all made up to meet him, just like a whore. That is why it is written, ‘And Dinah, daughter of Leah, whom she had borne to Jacob, went out.’¹

According to the rabbis, then, Dinah is at fault because of her “whorish” behavior and she deserved what she got. Dinah acted independently and without regard to her position within society.

Furthermore, Dinah’s mother, Leah, is also blamed for Dinah’s behaviour. As Neusner summarizes, the “issue [of Dinah’s rape] then is the reference in particular to Leah, for, given her prominence in the narrative, the Torah wishes to associate her with her daughter’s frivolous behavior.”² The rabbis hold Dinah responsible for her rape and suggest that “she exposed herself to the danger by parading in public.”³ The rabbis’ reflections on Genesis 34.1 attribute Dinah’s ‘going out’ to those acts of a whore. However, since the text of Genesis 34.1 reads that Dinah’s explicit intention was “to see the women of the land,” it is somewhat stretching the point to suggest that Dinah’s intentions were as promiscuous as the rabbinical writers maintain.

¹ Jacob Neusner, *Genesis Rabbah: The Judaic Commentary to the Book of Genesis a New American Translation* (Georgia: Scholars Press, 1985), 146. [Jacob Neusner describes Genesis Rabbah as “the first complete and systematic Judaic commentary to the book of Genesis,” providing “a complete and authoritative account of how Judaism proposes to read and make sense of the first book of Hebrew Scriptures” ix-x].

² Neusner, *Genesis Rabbah*, 146.

³ Neusner, *Genesis Rabbah*, 149.

In addition to holding Dinah accountable for her rape, the rabbis also speak further of Dinah in a derogatory manner. Rabbi Berekhiah in the name of Rabbi Levi belittles Dinah by comparing Dinah to a piece of meat. He writes, "The matter may be compared to someone who had a couple pounds of meat in hand. Once he exposed it, a bird swooped down and grabbed it from him."⁴ Rabbi Berekhiah's reference to Dinah's virginity as a "piece of meat" devalues Dinah's position as a woman. A woman's value in ancient Israel was based on her virginity and should therefore be considered with the deepest regard. Berekhiah's position suggests that women are objects at the hand of men and men have the right to treat women according to how they see fit. The position of early commentators is extremely patriarchal and degrades the position of women in the Hebrew Bible. The rabbinical writer's misogynist attitudes towards women leave Dinah subject to ridicule and the byproduct of derogatory language.

One prominent Christian misogynist interpretation of Dinah from the early period is contained in the *Ancrene Wisse*, the "guide for anchoresses."⁵ Anchoritic works are a series of manuscripts which contain an assortment of works that "are united by similarities of style and religious outlook, as well as by the fact that they were all written with the same kind of reader in mind: anchoresses, religious women who lived as "enclosed hermits" in cells which were next to, or part of, churches."⁶ The *Ancrene Wisse* was intended as a guide for the anchorites' daily living offering rules and observances they were intended to follow.

⁴ Neusner, *Genesis Rabbah*, 149.

⁵ Anne Savage and Nicholas Watson, *Anchoritic Spirituality: Ancrene Wisse and Associated Works* (New York: Paulist Press, 1991), 8.

⁶ Savage and Watson, *Anchoritic Spirituality*, 8.

In an effort to teach women strategies to defend their hearts against impurity, the author of *Ancrene Wisse* warns women of the dangers that lurk outside their windows. “‘But dear sir,’ says someone, ‘is it then so mightily evil to peep out?’ ‘Yes it is, dear sister, because of the evil which comes of it.’”⁷ The objective of the text was to instill a sense of fear in the religious women so that they would avoid the temptation to sin and stay at home.⁸ The author uses biblical narratives as a teaching method to illustrate the dangers women face. For example, commenting on Genesis 3.6, the author writes, “Eve looked on the forbidden apple and saw it was fair; and she began to delight in looking at it, and she set her desire on it, and took it and ate of it, and gave it to her husband...Sight went before and made a way for harmful desire.”⁹ Genesis 34.1 is also used as an illustration of the dangers women face. “A maiden, Jacob’s daughter, called Dinah” writes the author, “went out to look at strange women – yet it does not say that she looked at men. And what do you think came of that looking? She lost her maidenhood and was made a whore.”¹⁰ The author uses the narratives of “disobedient and sinful” biblical women as a general understanding of what would undoubtedly occur if anchorites did not follow the guidelines set for them. The text also indicates that any sexual incident is the fault of the woman: the author moralizes, “take note of this: that this evil caused by Dinah did not come from the fact that she saw Hamor’s son, whom she sinned with, but came from her letting him lay eyes on her – for what he did was very

⁷ Savage and Watson, *Anchoritic Spirituality*, 66.

⁸ Robin Parry, *Old Testament Story and Christian Ethics: The Rape of Dinah as a Case Study* (Blethley: Paternoster, 2004), 101.

⁹ Savage and Watson, *Anchoritic Spirituality*, 67.

¹⁰ Savage and Watson, *Anchoritic Spirituality*, 68.

against her will at first.”¹¹ *Ancrene Wisse* was a very influential and widely read spiritual guide in the middle ages and its patriarchal message would have been clear to its readers. According to the *Ancrene Wisse*, the example of Dinah shows that women are to avoid going out, and thus avoid seeking independence and becoming self-reliant.

1.3 Early-Modern Interpretations

For Martin Luther, the story of Genesis 34 concerns the troubles that beset Jacob, the family patriarch. It is not really a story about Dinah.¹² When Luther does introduce Dinah, he does so in an unsympathetic manner. Luther is not concerned whether Dinah’s victimization had any physical, emotional, or psychological effects, but rather, he is concerned with Dinah’s age at the time of her defilement. Luther’s preoccupation with Dinah’s age is a method to chronicle Jacob’s life and to discuss the custom of marriage in ancient Israel. “Civil laws,” writes Luther, “assign 14 years to men but 12 to women as maturity for marriage.”¹³ As 12 years of age is necessary for being able to consort a man, Luther concludes that Dinah must therefore have been a minimum of 12 years old. Raising the issue of maturation, Luther acknowledges that “even though Dinah might be regarded as quite mature for marriage, in the text she is nevertheless called a ילדה, a little girl, for it was not the custom to give girls in marriage so quickly.”¹⁴

Luther’s concern also lies with the affect Dinah’s rape had on Jacob’s family. He writes, “not for him only was this sorrowful burden, but it was a terrible disgrace also for

¹¹ Savage and Watson, *Anchoritic Spirituality*, 68.

¹² Martin Luther, *Luther’s Works* Vol 6 (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1987), 187.

¹³ Luther, *Luther’s Works*, 188.

¹⁴ Luther, *Luther’s Works*, 188.

his whole household and his sons.”¹⁵ That Luther only mentions his “sons” indicates that Luther’s interest lies with his male counterparts. To his credit, Luther appears to show remorse for Dinah by acknowledging that Shechem, whom Luther claims is also of a young age, had no right to rape and defile a young girl. However, Luther’s remorse is short lived as he states that since Dinah is “not yet mature for marriage” she is further “disgraced.”¹⁶ Luther is suggesting that had Dinah been of a mature age, for instance the age of Rebecca, which Luther rightly claims to be thirty, Shechem’s act of raping Dinah would have been acceptable. Therefore, an act of sexual violence is permitted so long as the recipient is mature. Given Luther’s understanding of the age of maturity for women, “further disgrace” would have been avoided had Dinah been raped at the age of 13.

Luther also discusses Genesis 34 in terms of a didactic narrative, warning women of the dangers of leaving their home. Dinah’s grievous sin was her curiosity: “Dinah wanted to see the daughters of this region, how they were decked out and adorned and how beautiful they were. The text seems to indicate the same, namely, that she was curious, since, indeed, she went out without the permission of her father and mother, on her own without a companion.”¹⁷ Luther blames Dinah’s immaturity for her going out stating that “she was still a child and did not fear any danger to her modesty.”¹⁸ Luther’s misogynist attitude towards Dinah is clearly reflected here. Luther blames Dinah for her rape and suggests that had Dinah developed the proper understanding of the female role in society, i.e., staying indoors, she would have forgone such defilement. Luther states:

¹⁵ Luther, *Luther’s Works*, 190.

¹⁶ Luther, *Luther’s Works*, 190.

¹⁷ Luther, *Luther’s Works*, 190.

¹⁸ Luther, *Luther’s Works*, 190.

It [Genesis 34] is an example which should be carefully noted and inculcated in girls. They should not form the habit of strolling about and looking out the windows (cf. 2 Sam. 6:16) and lounging around the door, but should learn to stay at home and never go anywhere without the permission of her parents or without companions. For the devil is laying snares against the modesty of this sex, which by nature is weak, irresponsible, and foolish and hence exposed to the snares of Satan.¹⁹

Luther does not condone Shechem for his violent behavior as he states that “it was an unworthy thing to do,”²⁰ however, it appears that Luther offers Shechem support and sympathizes with him saying, “he could have loved her whom he had seen and could have sought her for a wife.”²¹

In an attempt to minimize the effects of Dinah’s defilement, Luther suggests to readers that when a woman is the victim of rape, the rape is generally followed by murder and misery. “Murders and very serious calamities usually follow this wrong, as all the histories testify. Rape and the defilement of virgins have never passed by without body slaughter, and this deed is an example.”²² Dinah, according to Luther, should be grateful that Shechem only raped her for, as tradition allows, Shechem could have murdered her.

As a royal descendant, Shechem may have felt immune to the laws of the time. For example, in laws concerning the rape of a virgin who was not engaged to be married, the female victim was “required to marry her assailant – to make matters even worse – he was subsequently prevented from divorcing her (Deut. 22-28-29).”²³ Luther provides a selection of sayings which illuminate Shechem’s self-perception, “It is behaving like a

¹⁹ Luther, *Luther’s Works*, 193.

²⁰ Luther, *Luther’s Works*, 193.

²¹ Luther, *Luther’s Works*, 193.

²² Luther, *Luther’s Works*, 193.

²³ Eryl Davies, *The Dissenting Reader: Feminist Approaches to the Hebrew Bible* (Aldershot: Ashgate Publishing Limited, 2003), 3.

peasant for a prince to obey the laws of godliness and righteousness;" "Princes are exempt from the laws, they have their own privileges;" and, "I am a prince and lord of the land; why should I not be able to indulge myself?"²⁴ Therefore, Luther seems to be suggesting that Shechem should be allowed to get away with defiling Dinah because he is a prince and not subject to the law. Luther characterizes Shechem as evil, corrupt, and unethical, while still portraying Shechem as the dominant male character and casting Dinah as a weak female character.

To further add to his androcentricity, Luther writes,

Moreover, it is added in the text: "He spoke tenderly to her," that is, he soothed her with coaxing, kind, and comforting words which usually gladden a sorrowful heart. They were words of Love, to which he added promises and gifts that he might comfort and soothe the sorrowful, violated girl. But it is in vain, for she remains in her grief and sorrow.²⁵

Luther's perception of Genesis 34 is as follows: Dinah's rape caused much sorrow for her male family members, i.e., Jacob and her brothers; Dinah's level of maturity and curiosity ultimately led her to disobey the Israelite custom of female submission; and finally, Dinah should not feel sorrow as her life was spared.

Two hundred years after Luther wrote, misogynist commentaries on Genesis 34 were still common. Matthew Henry's 1725 commentary on the book of Genesis is another good example of a patriarchal point of view. Henry writes that Dinah was the "darling of the family, and yet she proves neither a joy nor a credit to them"²⁶ when she went out of her father's house. "She went out to see, yet that was not all, she went to be

²⁴ Luther, *Luther's Works*, 194.

²⁵ Luther, *Luther's Works*, 195.

²⁶ Henry, *Matthew Henry's Commentary on the Whole Bible* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson Inc., 1997), 160.

seen too...Note, the pride and vanity of young people betray them into many snares."²⁷

And, for Henry, the moral of the narrative was: "See what came of Dinah's gadding: young women must learn to be chaste, keepers at home...for those that are not keepers at home expose their chastity."²⁸ Henry's observations mirror Luther's in that women are to refrain from going out of the home. Henry uses the threat of sexual violence as a tactic to keep women in their place.

Henry's condemnation of Shechem's behavior is minimal and he only refers to Dinah's rape as the consequence of an act of disobedience; therefore, Dinah is presented as the assailant and not the victim. Henry glosses over Shechem's act of rape quickly by stating that "the court that Shechem made to her, after he had defiled her. This was fair and commendable, and made the best of what was bad; he loved her, and engaged his father to make a match for him with her."²⁹ Henry's wariness to discuss the topic of rape follows the tradition of early commentators.

Henry does not criticize Jacob for holding his peace after hearing the news that his daughter had been defiled, but criticizes him for allowing his sons to control his affairs, "Note, things never go well when the authority of a parent runs low in a family. Let every man bear rule in his own house, and have his children in subjection with all gravity."³⁰ Henry suggests that Jacob should have been the driving force behind his family's retaliation against the Hivites, however, Jacob's reaction to Dinah's rape was silence. Therefore, in the Early-Modern Period, Luther focused on the age of Dinah and

²⁷ Henry, *Commentary on the Whole Bible*, 160.

²⁸ Henry, *Commentary on the Whole Bible*, 160.

²⁹ Henry, *Commentary on the Whole Bible*, 160.

³⁰ Henry, *Commentary on the Whole Bible*, 160.

to what effect Dinah's defilement had on Jacob, and Henry scorns Dinah for going out without her father's permission, and uses the threat of sexual violence to keep women in their place.

1.4 Nineteenth-Century Womens' Interpretations

The Genesis 34 narrative was not thoroughly discussed by many nineteenth-century women.³¹ Four women who have discussed Genesis 34 have done so in such a manner as to condemn the actions of Dinah, further relegating her to the margins of interpretation. Sarah Trimmer's discussion of Genesis 34 forgoes the inclusion of Dinah's name and her brief comments lead Taylor and Weir to suggest that Trimmer's minimalist attitude toward the narrative is "characteristic of her unwillingness to engage issues in the text which may have been considered improper."³² Through Trimmer's discussion of Genesis 34, it is evident that Trimmer writes from a patriarchal perspective. She writes, "The shocking things related in this chapter [Gen. 34] show that it is dangerous for young women to go out by themselves, and make acquaintance with strangers; and that those people who give way to revenge often commit cruel and unjust actions."³³ Trimmer blames Dinah's defilement on her act of going out alone and condemns the actions of Simeon and Levi. In blaming Dinah, Simeon, and Levi, Trimmer undoubtedly sides with Shechem and the Hivites.

³¹ See the comprehensive study by Marion Ann Taylor and Heather E. Weir, eds., *Let Her Speak for Herself: Nineteenth-Century Women Writing on Women in Genesis* (Waco, Baylor University Press: 2006), 425.

³² Taylor and Weir, *Let Her Speak for Herself*, 425.

³³ As cited in Taylor and Weir, *Let Her Speak for Herself*, 425-426. Sarah Trimmer's original work is, *A Help to the Unlearned in the Study of the Holy Scriptures* (London: F. C. & J. Rivington, 1805).

Mary Cornwallis' interpretation of Genesis 34 is focused upon Dinah's age as she suggests Dinah's actions were typical of a young girl of about fifteen. Cornwallis also puts considerable weight on the idea of Dinah's going out to see a great festival. Cornwallis assumes this festival was an idolatrous festival and, therefore, Dinah went out without her parent's knowledge. Cornwallis writes, "Josephus says that she went to see a great festival. If so, it must have been an idolatrous one, and her going thither was probably unknown to her parents."³⁴ Like *Ancrene Wisse*, Cornwallis uses Genesis 34 as a teaching technique to warn women of the dangers which lie ahead. "Her misfortune is not without instruction, and teaches young women the necessity of circumspection in the choice of companions, as well as the danger of giving way to indiscreet curiosity."³⁵ Cornwallis also condemns Simeon and Levi for their "unlawful revenge" on the Hivites and, in doing so, aligns herself with the Hivites. "It was very unnatural that her brothers should keenly feel the injury; and the disgrace brought upon the family; but intemperate rage generally leads to unlawful revenge."³⁶ Cornwallis' interpretation of Genesis 34 holds Dinah accountable for her going out and cautions young women not to follow Dinah's behavior.

Sarah Hale showed no sympathy towards Dinah nor did she portray Dinah as a victim of violence. Hale thought Dinah's mission was to be "the beacon to warn the young of her sex against levity of manners and eagerness for society."³⁷ Taylor and Weir

³⁴ As cited in Taylor and Weir, *Let Her Speak for Herself*, 426.

³⁵ As cited in Taylor and Weir, *Let Her Speak for Herself*, 426. Mary Cornwallis's original work is, *Observations, Critical, Explanatory, and Practical on the Canonical Scriptures*, vol. 2 (London: Baldwin, Cradock, & Job, 1817).

³⁶ As cited in Taylor and Weir, *Let Her Speak for Herself*, 426-427.

³⁷ Taylor and Weir, *Let Her Speak for Herself*, 427.

write that Hale imputed to Dinah the qualities of “idle curiosity and weak vanity and warned all women against seeking excitement and amusement as these could lead to a potential fatal end for themselves and their families.”³⁸ Hale, like the nineteenth-century women who write before her, blames Dinah for her rape and they side with Shechem and the Hivites. Hale offers a misogynist summary of Genesis 34 as she writes that Dinah is “the only daughter of the patriarch Jacob. Her seduction by prince Shechem; his honourable proposal of repairing the injury by marriage, and the prevention of the fulfillment of this just intention by the treachery and barbarity of her bloody brethren Simeon and Levi, are recorded in Gen. xxxiv.”³⁹ Hale also holds Dinah responsible for involving Simeon and Levi in “deeds of revenge,” “‘She went out to see the daughters of the land;’ the result of her visit was her own ruin, and involving two of her brothers in such deeds of revenge has brought a curse upon them and their posterity.”⁴⁰ It is evident that, for Hale, the events of Genesis 34 will have lasting effects on the tribe of Jacob as result of Dinah.

M.G., an anonymous British Anglo-Catholic author who published on women in the Bible used Genesis 34 as a Bible lesson to teach young women about the issues of sexuality and, in doing so, laid the blame for Dinah’s ravishment on her own folly.⁴¹ M.G. teaches the young women of the value of their virginity as she states, “Oh, dear girls, watch and pray that you may keep that chastity, which is your most precious jewel,

³⁸ Taylor and Weir, *Let Her Speak for Herself*, 427.

³⁹ As cited in Taylor and Weir, *Let Her Speak for Herself*, 427-428. Sara Hale’s original work is, *Woman’s Record; or, Sketches of all Distinguished Women, from the Creation to A.D. 1854* (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1855).

⁴⁰ As cited in Taylor and Weir, *Let Her Speak for Herself*, 428.

⁴¹ Taylor and Weir, *Let Her Speak for Herself*, 428.

pure and spotless in His sight, that when He, the bridegroom of souls, shall come, you may go to meet Him, either among the chaste virgins or the holy matrons.”⁴² M.G., therefore, threatens young girls into believing that only women who have engaged in legal sexual behavior will be accepted into the gates of heaven. “Dinah ran in among the thorns, and was bruised and defiled; but if you follow His guidance He will keep you spotless as a lily, until He Himself comes to transplant you to bloom in Paradise, where the pure in heart shall see God [Matt. 4:8].”⁴³ M.G. uses Dinah’s defilement in Genesis 34 as an example to scare young girls into believing that it is their responsibility to keep their bodies pure and that man is not to blame if one loses their virginity out of wedlock.

Nineteenth-century women writers on Genesis 34, are ironically, just as misogynist and patriarchal as their male counterparts. They hold Dinah responsible for her rape as it was her act of going out that led to her defilement. Dinah’s brothers, Simeon and Levi, are condemned for their rage against the Hivites which suggests that these women writers condone male violence towards women, however, do not condone male violence directed towards men. In blaming Dinah, these four nineteenth-century women identify themselves as patriarchal writers and thinkers.

1.5 Modern Historical-Critical Interpretations

While modern interpretations of Genesis 34 are not so blatantly misogynist as the ones of the preceding era, the sexism is more subtle (and therefore potentially more

⁴² As cited in Taylor and Weir, *Let Her Speak for Herself*, 432. M.G.’s original work is, *Women Like Ourselves* (London: SPCK, 1893).

⁴³ As cited in Taylor and Weir, *Let Her Speak for Herself*, 432.

dangerous⁴⁴) in interpreting the text in a misogynistic way. For instance, many modern historical-critical interpretations of Genesis 34 reify misogynistic interpretations by seeking to redeem Shechem (and thereby imply that Dinah is still to blame).⁴⁵ In what follows I will use a number of scholars to typify the condemnation of Dinah and the redemption of Shechem.

John Skinner, for example, conceals his misogyny in his historical-critical commentary. Skinner suggests that Genesis 34 is a combination of two narratives. In the first narrative, Dinah, a young woman whom Shechem loved is abducted. Shechem requests Dinah in marriage from Jacob and her brothers and offers to accept any conditions that they may raise. Shechem agrees to the condition of circumcision, however, Simeon and Levi slay Shechem during his period of healing and retrieve their sister. Jacob reproves his sons as he fears an uprising in the country.⁴⁶ Narrative one, therefore, does not document Dinah's rape, Shechem is made to be a victim, and Simeon and Levi are condemned for their actions.

In the second narrative, Skinner interprets Genesis 34 as the "dishonoring" of Dinah but, through love, Shechem appeals to his father for a marriage with Dinah. The condition of circumcision is raised and Hamor convinces his tribe to agree to the term. "While the fever was on them, Simeon and Jacob rush the city, kill all males, capture the

⁴⁴ See Mieke Bal, *Lethal Love: Feminist Literary Readings of Biblical Love Stories* (Indiana: Indiana University Press, 1987), 1-8.

⁴⁵ A number of commentators have emphasized the fact that Shechem loved Dinah and so the rape is excusable. See for instance, Terence E. Fretheim, "The Book of Genesis: Introduction, Commentary, and Reflections," *The New Interpreter's Bible*, ed. Leander E. Keck, vol. 1 (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1994); Calum M. Carmichael, *Women, Law, and the Genesis Traditions* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1979); Gordon J. Wenham, *Word Biblical Commentary: Genesis 16-50*, vol. 2 (Dallas: Word Books, 1994); John H. Otwell, *And Sarah Laughed: The Status of Woman in the Old Testament* (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1977).

⁴⁶ John Skinner, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on Genesis* (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1930), 417.

women and children, and carry off the spoil.”⁴⁷ The second narrative, therefore, documents Dinah’s defilement, but it is Shechem who is presented as the victim, not Dinah. And, finally, Simeon and Levi are made to look blood thirsty as their mass slaughter of the Hivites was committed during their time of fever. Although Skinner combines two narrative overviews of Genesis 34, both offer a similar understanding of the narrative. Dinah is left to blame for her defilement and Shechem is presented as the victim of the narrative while Simeon and Levi are reproached for their revenge against the Hivites. Skinner’s patriarchal interpretation of Genesis 34 is, therefore, reminiscent of his predecessors, albeit more subtly.

Research on Genesis 34 during the 1970s and 1980s focused mostly on the male presence in the narrative with minimal attention being given to Dinah. Gerhard von Rad’s commentary on Genesis 34 expresses a similar ideology to that of Martin Luther.⁴⁸ Like Luther, von Rad is concerned with Dinah’s age and blames her defilement on her act of ‘going out.’ Von Rad states:

The story describes very realistically how Dinah once stepped outside the small circle allotted to the life of the ancient Israelite woman, how she looked around rather curiously at the ‘women of the land,’ i.e., at the settled Canaanite women, and how she thus loosened the stone which became a landslide.⁴⁹

Evidently, von Rad holds Dinah accountable for the violence which followed her ‘going out.’ It is clear that von Rad believes the role of women is in the home and that breaching the domestic barrier will undoubtedly lead to a woman’s demise.

⁴⁷ Skinner, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on Genesis*, 417.

⁴⁸ Gerhard von Rad, *Genesis: A Commentary* (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1972).

⁴⁹ von Rad, *Genesis: A Commentary*, 331.

In his conclusion, von Rad's position on the narrative becomes clear to his readers. He states:

Shechem is not a city, but one who has fallen in love with the girl, Dinah. Simeon and Levi are not tribes but the brothers who seek to purify the honour of their violated sister at the cost of a morally ambiguous deed. . . The narrator is clearly concerned to do justice to the Shechemites. Their offers in vs. 8-10 and v. 12 are generous and without guile.⁵⁰

Von Rad does not interpret Genesis 34 as the story of the rape of Dinah but as a story of love. The narrator, according to von Rad, is concerned with redeeming Shechem and, therefore, condemns Simeon and Levi for their vengeance on the Hivites and are portrayed as the evil characters of the narrative. Von Rad's interpretation is damaging to the text as he misinterprets and ignores crucial elements of the narrative and implies that violence toward a male is far more damaging than violence toward a female. Therefore, Shechem's murder receives more sympathy than Dinah's defilement even though Shechem's murder was the result of his act of defilement.

Claus Westermann is not as misogynistic in his analysis of Genesis 34 as scholars who precede him. Westermann, however, offers minimal commentary on Dinah and focuses primarily on Simeon and Levi.⁵¹ Westermann acknowledges that Dinah was victimized as his translation of Genesis 34.2 reads, "Then she saw Shechem, the son of Hamor the Hivite, the chief of the land. He seized her, lay with her, and thus did violence to her."⁵² However, Westermann quickly moves on to Genesis 34.3 and states that Shechem fell in love with Dinah and requested Dinah as his wife. Westermann justifies

⁵⁰ von Rad, *Genesis: A Commentary*, 335.

⁵¹ Claus Westermann, *Genesis: A Practical Commentary* (Michigan: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1987).

⁵² Westermann, *Genesis: A Practical Commentary*, 235.

Shechem's defilement of Dinah in his use of the conjunction "but." "But," states Westermann, "Shechem fell in love with the girl"⁵³ and, therefore, any act which precedes Shechem's love is excused.

Like Westermann, John C.L. Gibson also offers minimal commentary on Genesis 34. Gibson blames Dinah for her defilement stating that it was her "ill fate to attract this young man's attention . . . and he had his pleasure with her."⁵⁴ However, Gibson forgets that Dinah did not 'go out' with the intention of attracting a young man, she went out 'to see the women of the land.' To place blame on Dinah for seducing Shechem is, therefore, reading too much into the text. Furthermore, Gibson also focuses on the conjunction "but" in his interpretation. He states, "But then he fell in love with her, and decided that he must do the right thing. He asked his father to arrange a marriage and to offer an inflated bride-price, in the hope that this would assuage the injured feelings of her family."⁵⁵ Gibson's use of the word "but" excuses Shechem for defiling Dinah, however, Gibson is quick to gloss over Dinah's rape and suggests that in offering to marry Dinah he was doing a great favor for Jacob's family. Defiling Jacob's daughter did not warrant a substantial bride-price; the fact that Shechem was willing to marry Dinah should have sufficed as a bride-price. Gibson, therefore, offers a patriarchal interpretation of Genesis 34 as he presents Shechem as a kind of hero for Dinah.

Jione Havea offers a post-colonial reading of Genesis 34 wherein Havea raises the question of who is the victim of the narrative. Havea is torn between Dinah and Shechem as he feels both characters have been victimized. Havea, however, fails to acknowledge

⁵³ Westermann, *Genesis: A Practical Commentary*, 237.

⁵⁴ John C.L. Gibson, *Genesis Volume 2* (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1982), 213-214.

⁵⁵ Gibson, *Genesis*, 214.

that Shechem only becomes a victim after his own victimization of Dinah. In identifying Shechem as a victim, Havea minimizes the defilement and victimization of Dinah. Havea states, "I am torn between a woman victim, who came to look, to explore women, and a 'man of the earth,' of the land, a native, who ends up wanting to make the visitor his woman; I am torn between a foreign woman (Dinah) and a native man (Shechem)."⁵⁶

Havea also blames Dinah for the victimization of the 'women of the land' and, once again, minimizes the defilement of Dinah. Havea writes, "I too am sympathetic for what happened to Dinah, but I am also sympathetic for the women on whom she came 'to look.' I am torn between women, between a foreign woman (Dinah), who in coming 'to look' seems to be whoring around other women, and native Shechemite women, the objects of Dinah's look."⁵⁷ Havea has developed a deep concern for the Shechemite women throughout his interpretation. Shechemite women do not figure prominently in Genesis 34, however, in his interpretation of the narrative, Havea offers the women of Shechem a position in the narrative which rivals Dinah's. Havea is once again "torn" in his analysis as he states, "The exploration and exploitation of native Shechemite women was prevented by the eyes, hands and penis of their prince. In this regard, I am torn between two penises, one that saves by being uncovered, circumcised, and one that violates, while being covered, uncircumcised,"⁵⁸ Havea is attempting to diminish Shechem's act of defiling Dinah by blaming Dinah for Simeon and Levi's mass slaughter of the Hivites and capturing of the Hivite women. However, Havea fails to acknowledge

⁵⁶ Wesley J. Bergen and Armin Siedlecki, eds., *Voyages in Uncharted Waters: Essays on the Theory and Practice of Biblical Interpretation in Honor of David Jobling* (Sheffield: Sheffield Phoenix Press: 2006), 178-179.

⁵⁷ Bergen and Sidelecki, eds., *Voyages in Uncharted Waters*, 178.

⁵⁸ Havea, *Whoring Dinah*, 178.

that in agreeing to the circumcision, Shechem and Hamor agreed to exogamous marriages between Israelite men and Hivite women. Havea states that he is “torn” between the Israelites and the Hivites, however, throughout his interpretation of the text it becomes evident that Havea is in fact making a case for the Hivites and, therefore, blaming Dinah. Therefore, in a subtle way, many of the modern historical-critical interpretations of Genesis 34 continue to hold Dinah accountable for her rape as commentators seek to redeem Shechem and the Hivites.

1.6 Modern Literary Analyses

Meir Sternberg argues that Genesis 34 is a story of a “delicate balance.”⁵⁹ Through Shechem’s rape of Dinah and the mass slaughter of the Hivites by Simeon and Levi, Sternberg argues that the narrator achieves a sense of literary balance. According to Sternberg, Genesis 34 “focuses on two acts of violence—the rape of Dinah and the revenge taken by her brothers—seeking to bring the crime and punishment into balance.” However, “the trouble is that mass slaughter will not balance against rape according to conventional normative scales.”⁶⁰ Therefore, the slaughter of the Hivites receives more sympathy for Sternberg than the rape of Dinah. Sternberg considers verses 1-12 as “the *accumulation* of maximal sympathy for Jacob’s sons;” verses 13-26 as “the *complication* of response, through a progressive balancing of the two sides;” and verses 27-31 as “the *stabilization* of the balanced attitude, with Simeon and Levi turned protagonists.”⁶¹

⁵⁹ Meir Sternberg, *The Poetics of Biblical Narrative: Ideological Literature and the Drama of Reading* (Indiana: Indiana University Press, 1987), 445.

⁶⁰ Sternberg, *The Poetics of Biblical Narrative*, 445.

⁶¹ Sternberg, *The Poetics of Biblical Narrative*, 446.

Sternberg's interpretation is therefore an analysis of Simeon and Levi and their function within Genesis 34.

According to Sternberg, the opening phrase of Genesis 34 is the narrator's attempt at gathering sympathy for Simeon and Levi, whom Sternberg considers the victims of Dinah's rape. However, Jacob's sons are not mentioned until verse five which follows the rape scene; nevertheless Sternberg does not wish to accumulate sympathy for Dinah, but for Simeon and Levi.

As Sternberg argues, the verbs selected in Genesis 34.1-2 are important in describe Shechem's crime against Dinah:⁶²

Dinah, the daughter of Leah whom she had borne to Jacob, went out to see the daughters of the land. Shechem, the son of Hamor the Hivite, the chief of the land, saw her, and *he took her and lay with her and abused her*.

However the three verbs of force give way to the three verbs of endearment in verses 3 and 4:

And *his soul clung* to Dinah the daughter of Jacob, and *he loved* the maiden, and he *spoke tenderly* to the maiden. And Shechem spoke to his father Hamor, saying Get [literally, Take] me this girl for a wife.

"Verse 3," says Sternberg, "does not quite counterpoise, still less cancel out, the impact of its predecessor."⁶³ While Sternberg does not excuse Shechem of raping Dinah he does however suggest that had the narrator reversed the order allowing Shechem to profess his love for Dinah before he raped her readers would sympathize more easily with Shechem. Sternberg suggests that the rape of Tamar acts as a model for the narrator of Genesis 34

⁶² The following translation of Genesis 34.1-4 is Sternberg's. It is important to note that not all scholars follow the same translation as he.

⁶³ Sternberg, *The Poetics of Biblical Narrative*, 447.

(assuming, of course, that Sternberg's readers will agree that to love then to rape is more acceptable than to rape then to love).

Sternberg's argument of a literary balance, he claims, is also supported by the activity of the Hivites and Jacob's sons, and the inactivity of Jacob. The verb חרש ("kept still") describes Jacob's inactive response to hearing his daughter's defilement, and suggests "inertness or neglect" which is supported elsewhere in the biblical text.⁶⁴ However, within the context of Genesis 34, Sternberg argues that the verb has a "double omission: both to act and to speak."⁶⁵ Jacob does not reach out to his sons physically or verbally leaving Simeon and Levi to react apart from their father in the massacre of the Hivite tribesmen, ensuring their position as the real heroes of the story.⁶⁶ Jacob finally breaks his silence in Genesis 34.30 "only to reveal himself as the tale's least sympathetic character."⁶⁷ Sternberg argues that had Jacob reproached Simeon and Levi for "the massacre or the abuse of the rite of circumcision or even the breach of contract, he would gain a measure of understanding and support from the reader. But he does not even remotely protest against any of these offences."⁶⁸ Sternberg shames Jacob for his inactive behavior and in doing so becomes an advocate for fighting violence with violence.

Following Simeon and Levi's massacre of the Hivites, one can all but sympathize with the Hivite people. It is here where Sternberg loses sympathy for his heroic brothers. However, in an attempt to regain sympathy for Simeon and Levi, Sternberg interprets the narrator's comment that "the brothers came upon the slain" in verse 27 as excluding

⁶⁴ See for example, Exodus 14.14; Numbers 30.15; 2 Samuel 13.20; 2 Kings 18.36; and Proverbs 11.12.

⁶⁵ Sternberg, *The Poetics of Biblical Narrative*, 448.

⁶⁶ Sternberg, *The Poetics of Biblical Narrative*, 472.

⁶⁷ Sternberg, *The Poetics of Biblical Narrative*, 473.

⁶⁸ Sternberg, *The Poetics of Biblical Narrative*, 473.

Simeon and Levi in an attempt to redirect the negative attention away from his heroes. However, one is left to wonder that if Simeon and Levi were capable of killing the Hivite tribesmen, were they not capable of looting them as well? And, does Sternberg truly believe that killing is a less severe offence than stealing? Sternberg's attempt to achieve a literary balance in Genesis 34 is subtle in its patriarchy but its effects are damaging to the female conscious reader. Sternberg uses Simeon and Levi to earn the sympathy of his readers as Dinah quickly becomes a secondary character having little influence on the narrative.

In their cleverly titled rebuttal to Sternberg, "Tipping the Balance," Fewell and Gunn call Sternberg's theory of "to love is to rape" morally demeaning, and thus call into question Sternberg's scale of values. Fewell and Gunn do not acknowledge the presence of any balance in Genesis 34. In fact,

the narrator tips the balance in Shechem's favor: Shechem moves from raping an object to loving a woman and seeking to make restitution for the wrong he has done to her. If sympathy is being accumulated, it seems to us to be sympathy for Shechem. Even our concern for Dinah is lessened as we view Shechem's resolve to take care of her.⁶⁹

Fewell and Gunn remain firm in their position that Dinah's brothers do not deserve the attention Sternberg gives them, as an act of rape can never be balanced out with further acts of violence.

Fewell and Gunn recognize that Shechem's attitude towards Dinah in verse 2 is objectified by the narrator's choice of language: "Shechem sees her, takes her, lies with her, and rapes her." In verse 3 however, Dinah becomes a "real person" for Shechem:

⁶⁹ Danna Fewell and David Gunn, "Tipping the Balance: Sternberg's Reader and the Rape of Dinah," *Journal of Biblical Literature* 110 (1991): 197.

“his soul clings to Dinah,” he loves the young woman, and he speaks to the young woman’s heart. Accordingly, Shechem becomes committed to Dinah and he expresses his desire for Dinah’s hand in marriage, “So Shechem spoke to his father, saying, “Get me this young girl for a wife.”” Fewell and Gunn do not interpret Genesis 34.1-4 as “accumulating sympathy for the absent, uninvolved brothers,” but rather as,

the narrator creating a complicated ethical situation calling for a compromised, but realistic, resolution. However one views the rape, one must acknowledge that the narrator tips the balance in Shechem’s favor: Shechem moves from raping an object to loving a woman and seeking to make restitution for the wrong he has done to her.⁷⁰

Therefore, according to Fewell and Gunn, Shechem is deserving of the reader’s sympathy for his effort to restore Dinah’s character. Fewell and Gunn are critical of Sternberg’s androcentric interpretation and suggest that a rapist deserves sympathy is patriarchal in the extreme.

Fewell and Gunn are critical of the unanswered question of responsibility by Sternberg. Sternberg praises Simeon and Levi for their “heroic gesture” while shunning Jacob for his silence. Fewell and Gunn recognize Jacob’s silence as “wisdom in the face of a potentially explosive situation for his family as a whole. In fact, by avoiding confrontation, he allows the Hivites to offer a potential solution of restitution.”⁷¹ Jacob is angry with his sons for their irrational behavior as they acted without responsibility. “They leave him to face the consequences, him and the rest of his family—the women and children. Jacob is still *paterfamilias* and still has to deal with the threat to the family’s very existence—a threat that the brothers’ actions have exacerbated beyond

⁷⁰ Fewell and Gunn, “Tipping the Balance,” 197.

⁷¹ Fewell and Gunn, “Tipping the Balance,” 208.

measure.”⁷² Sternberg seeks to equalize the narrative and suggests that Simeon and Levi achieve such a balance, therefore approving of their violent behavior. Fewell and Gunn, however, respond to Genesis 34 with “an ethic of responsibility where relationships, care, and consequences shape moral choices.”⁷³

For Sternberg, Dinah is a function of the plot⁷⁴ and he fails to give Dinah the attention she deserves. Recognizing Sternberg’s minimization of Dinah’s role, Fewell and Gunn seek to redeem Dinah of her silence and provide her with a voice. Dinah deserved the rite to be married and Fewell and Gunn applaud Shechem for such recognition as they state, “her best interest within the narrow limits of this society is to marry Shechem, the man who loves her and takes delight in her.”⁷⁵ However, Fewell and Gunn present Dinah’s option of marriage as a decision Dinah herself must make. Fewell and Gunn however, may be anachronistic as in the patriarchal society of which Dinah was a product, she is under the authority of her father until marriage. She could not make this decision herself. Fewell and Gunn attempt to present Dinah in a favorable position, as being worthy of Shechem, however, they fail to minimize the rape itself. If Dinah were to marry her assailant, she would be reminded of her victimization every day.

Robert Alter’s literary commentary on Genesis 34 is not as extensive as Sternberg or Fewell and Gunn’s, however, Alter does provide interesting insights on the narrative’s grammatical construction. Alter begins his analysis of Genesis 34 by stating that Dinah was an immigrant’s daughter and not a daughter of the land and, therefore, a ready target

⁷² Fewell and Gunn, “Tipping the Balance,” 209.

⁷³ Fewell and Gunn, “Tipping the Balance,” 209.

⁷⁴ Fewell and Gunn, “Tipping the Balance,” 209.

⁷⁵ Fewell and Gunn, “Tipping the Balance,” 210.

for rape.⁷⁶ Alter does not state that Dinah's defilement was a consequence of her 'going out' as do earlier commentators but, rather, because Dinah was a foreigner in the land of Hamor. Furthermore, Alter argues that the verb שכב ("lay with") in Hebrew is more brutal because, instead of being followed by the preposition "with," (ב) it is followed by a direct object.⁷⁷ However, Alter continues by stating that in this particular form the verb *may* denote rape. Alter's use of the verb "may" suggests that he is aware that discrepancies arise in the interpretation of texts and, therefore, use of the verb שכב may not be used in the context of rape in Genesis 34.

Alter also offers a grammatical analysis of verse 27. Genesis 34.27 reads, "Jacob's sons came upon the slain and looted the town, for they had defiled their sister." For Alter, the word *they* is in need of further discussion. Alter suggests that the use of the plural does not accurately represent Dinah's defilement. It was Shechem who defiled Dinah, not the Hivite tribesmen, therefore, the singular form should have been used. Alter states that by using the plural form, Simeon and Levi are offered a kind of justification for the massacre they have perpetrated.⁷⁸ Alter's grammatical analysis is accurate, however, one must question Alter's motives behind such analysis as Alter seemingly condemns Simeon and Levi for their revenge on the Hivites and suggests that a mass slaughter was not warranted for the defilement of their sister. Although Alter does not excuse the behavior of Shechem, Shechem's act of defilement is minimized in Alter's

⁷⁶ Rober Alter, *The Five Books of Moses: A Translation with Commentary* (New York: W.W. Norton and Company Inc., 2004), 188.

⁷⁷ Alter, *The Five Books of Moses*, 188.

⁷⁸ Alter, *The Five Books of Moses*, 193.

analysis of verse 27. It is because of analyses, such as Alter's, that a re-interpretation of the text is, therefore, necessary.

1.7 Conclusion

In summary, Early Christian and Jewish commentaries, Early-Modern Readings, and Nineteenth-Century Womens' Interpretations, see Dinah as the disobedient daughter of Jacob. Commentators of Genesis 34 use it to illustrate the dangers women face by acting independently, and thus warn women of the dangers of acting without restraint. Modern Historical-Critical Interpretations and Modern Literary Analyses of Genesis 34, on the other hand, have sought to redeem Shechem, thereby imply that Dinah is still to blame. It is against this background that I will show that Dinah can be reclaimed through a feminist interpretation of Genesis 34

Chapter Two: Methodology

2.1 Introduction

In chapter one, detailed examples were provided to show how many interpreters believe that Dinah's defilement was the consequence of her disobedience and, therefore, justly deserved. Interpreters have also sought to redeem Shechem for his wrongful act and, in doing so, imply that Dinah is still to blame. For the most part, however, these scholars were not aware of, or chose to ignore, the modern trends in feminist scholarship. By utilizing feminist scholarship, this chapter will demonstrate how the position of women can be highlighted by challenging the patriarchal assumptions ingrained in the text and, therefore, provide the text with authority and value for women. This chapter thus seeks to deconstruct androcentric ideologies by encouraging the adoption of a feminist hermeneutic, for only then is it possible to re-interpret a favorable position for Dinah within Genesis 34.

2.2 Feminist Hermeneutics

Hermeneutics is identified as the practice and theory of interpretation. Today, the term *exegesis* is generally used to describe the rules and principles for establishing not only the philological, but also the historical sense, of biblical texts.⁷⁹ According to Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza, "the discipline of hermeneutics in antiquity and today explores how the meaning of a text is produced and how it can be understood. The notion

⁷⁹ Schüssler Fiorenza, "Feminist Hermeneutics," *The Anchor Bible Dictionary Volume 2 D-G*, David Noel Freedman, ed (New York: Doubleday, 1992), 785.

of hermeneutics derives from the Greek word *hermeneuein* and means, to interpret, exegete, explain, or translate.”⁸⁰ *Feminist hermeneutics*, therefore, is concerned with the process of interpreting the Bible from a feminist perspective and in an emancipatory way.⁸¹ As Schüssler Fiorenza suggests,

Feminist scholars and activists in religion have developed new ways of interpreting the Bible (and other culturally influential texts) in order to prevent biblical knowledge from being produced in the interest of domination and injustice. We not only engage in the activity of feminist biblical meaning-making as “interpretation” that is not just concerned with giving the text its “due” in and through a correct “exegesis” or a “close-reading.” We are also concerned with analyzing the contextualizations of such interpretations in wo/men’s lives that are embedded in structures of domination.⁸²

By adopting a feminist hermeneutics in the exegesis of Genesis 34, I will exonerate Dinah from any wrongdoing and interpret the text as an empowering narrative for the female-conscious reader. Interpreting Genesis 34 from a feminist perspective will challenge the patriarchal presuppositions embedded in the text and redefine the narrative to meet the demands of feminist theory. As Schüssler Fiorenza argues, feminist hermeneutics is, “an ongoing process within the context of women’s societal and ecclesial struggles for justice and liberation. It also highlights proposed solutions rather than the experiences and questions which have engendered them.” My feminist interpretation of Genesis 34 offers a solution as it proposes reading the narrative as a betrothal scene, therefore, offering Dinah redemption from her rape. Betrothed women

⁸⁰ Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza, *Wisdom Ways: Introducing Feminist Biblical Interpretation* (Maryknoll: Orbis Books, 2001), 69.

⁸¹ Schüssler Fiorenza, *Wisdom Ways*, 17.

⁸² Schüssler Fiorenza, *Wisdom Ways*, 1-2.

were subject to a position of prominence in ancient Israel and as a society built on status, marriage offered women the means to be considered members of society.⁸³

Toril Moi, in her seminal study, *Sexual/Textual Politics: Feminist Literary Theory*, identifies what it means to be a feminist critic. "Much like any other radical critic, the feminist critic can be seen as the product of a struggle mainly concerned with social and political change, her specific role within it becomes an attempt to extend such general political action to the cultural domain."⁸⁴ Moi's position will be applicable to my interpretation of Genesis 34 as a betrothal narrative as such an interpretation seeks to challenge the traditional social and political standards inherent in ancient Israelite culture. For feminist critics like myself, therefore, it is imperative that such a social and political change is not only plausible but fundamental to the enhancement of the position of women in the biblical text. Elaine Showalter has insisted such a feminist critical revolution is necessary for the growth of feminist-literary criticism. She writes:

feminist criticism has shown that women readers and critics bring different perceptions and expectation to their literary experience, and has insisted that women have also told the important stories of our culture. . . the success of feminist criticism has opened a space for the authority of the woman critic that extends beyond the study of women's writing to the reappraisal of the whole body of texts that make up our literary heritage. Whether concerned with the literary representations of sexual difference, with the ways that literary genres have been shaped by masculine or feminine values, or with the exclusion of the female voice from the institutions of literature, criticism, and theory, feminist criticism has established gender as a fundamental category of literary analysis.⁸⁵

⁸³ See chapter three below.

⁸⁴ Toril Moi, *Sexual/Textual Politics: Feminist Literary Theory* (London: Methuen and Co. Ltd, 1985), 23.

⁸⁵ Elaine Showalter, *The New Feminist Criticism: Essays on Women, Literature and Theory* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1985), 3.

Feminist-literary criticism is not exclusive of women but, feminist criticism began as an effort to overcome issues rooted in gender. "Women generated feminist criticism, fought for its importance, and often suffered in their careers for being identified with a radical critical movement."⁸⁶ As Lillian S. Robinson points out:

feminist scholars have been protesting the apparently systematic neglect of women's experience in the literary canon, neglect that takes the form of distorting and misreading the few recognized female writers and excluding the others...the predominately male authors in the canon show us the female character and relations between the sexes in a way that both reflects and contributes to sexist ideology.⁸⁷

Therefore, it becomes the task of feminist literary critics to suggest alternatives to male-dominated canon.

The statement of Audre Lorde⁸⁸ that "the master's tools will never dismantle the master's house" has become the rallying cry for feminist theorists. Schüssler Fiorenza argues that "this statement is true if one understands the tools of inquiry as rules, norms, and regulations for how to do intellectual work. . . Used as "tools" for deconstructing the "master's house," methods of inquiry can serve to reconstruct a new and different house. . . as long as we discard the master's intellectual frameworks and theories and do not use them as plans and blueprints."⁸⁹ Therefore, in order to meet the demands of feminist theory, feminist biblical scholars must construct new interpretative methods to redefine biblical narrative. Mary Ann Tolbert agrees with Schüssler Fiorenza's methodological

⁸⁶ Showalter, *The New Feminist Criticism*, 4.

⁸⁷ Showalter, *The New Feminist Criticism*, 106.

⁸⁸ Audre Lorde was an active member of the feminist movement in the 1960's as she focused on the experiences and values of white middle-class women. Lorde was concerned with the differences between the normative experiences of white women and the marginalized experiences of black women. Lorde actively challenged the issues of racism in feminist theory. For further reading on Audre Lorde see, Alexis De Veaux, *Warrior Poet: A Biography of Audre Lorde* (New York: W.W. Norton, 2004).

⁸⁹ Schüssler Fiorenza, *Wisdom Ways*, 5.

position and further suggests that feminist discourse is itself a process which will evolve gradually. As Tolbert states, "to destroy the oppressive structure of society using the tools that structure itself supplies is a process of erosion. The complete shaking of the foundations of patriarchal culture which feminism envisions will not happen hastily. . . Incremental changes, like erosion, will eventually bring down the fortress."⁹⁰ Women must explicitly and concretely adopt as their own those values and visions that Western man has reserved for himself and re-apply those values to the liberation of women.⁹¹

Through the practice of the interpretation of the Bible and biblical tradition, feminist biblical critics must recognize that the biblical text was written from a particular perspective which reflects the attitude of the narrator. As Tolbert argues, "All interpretations are "subjective," that is, all readings are influenced by the vested interests and concerns of the interpreter. . . Interpretation, then, is always a subjective activity, in the sense that it is always influenced by the conscious and unconscious concerns of the interpreter."⁹² As biblical texts are seen as thoroughly androcentric Schüssler Fiorenza argues that a hermeneutics of suspicion is necessary to critically evaluate biblical texts as patriarchal articulations. Schüssler Fiorenza identifies the practice of hermeneutics of suspicion as being concerned with

the distorted ways in which wo/men's actual presences and practices are constructed and repeated in and through kyriocentric language and media. . . Consequently, a hermeneutics of suspicion is best understood as a deconstructive practice of enquiry that denaturalizes and demystifies linguistic-cultural practices of domination. . . it has the task of

⁹⁰ Mary Ann Tolbert, "Defining the Problem: The Bible and Feminist Hermeneutics." *Semeia* 28 (1983): 121.

⁹¹ Freedman, ed., *The Anchor Bible Dictionary*, 785.

⁹² Tolbert, *Defining the Problem*, 117.

disentangling the ideological functions of kyriocentric text and commentary.⁹³

Therefore, this hermeneutical approach demands that readers be suspicious of the “text’s ideological innocence and that they learn to question its underlying assumptions.”⁹⁴

Eryl Davies points out that, “feminist biblical critics are only too aware that readers of the Bible have traditionally succumbed to the ideology of the text and adopted it as their own. They have read ‘with the grain’ of the text, without pausing to question its underlying values and assumptions.”⁹⁵ A dissenting reader, who reads ‘against the grain,’ therefore, challenges the dominate strategies ascribed by patriarchy. Davies suggests that reading ‘against the grain’ is a difficult task as it is the natural assumption of the reader to adopt the ideology of the text and identify with the narrator’s point of view.⁹⁶ Therefore, reading ‘against the grain’ becomes an important tool in the interpretation of Genesis 34 as it offers feminist critics the means to challenge the narratives assumptions and insights and making visible what the text contrives to keep hidden.⁹⁷

Biblical scholars engaged in the practice of feminist hermeneutics seek to read a text “in light of the oppressive structures of patriarchal society.”⁹⁸ Tolbert identifies two types of feminist interpreters. First, there are those feminist interpreters who “aim primarily at exposing the androcentric bias or oppressive intention operative within a text, to show the text to be unalterably patriarchal and, therefore without authority or value.” And secondly, “other feminist readings attempt to highlight the social, religious,

⁹³ Schüssler Fiorenza, *Wisdom Ways*, 176.

⁹⁴ Davies, *The Dissenting Reader*, 89.

⁹⁵ Davies, *The Dissenting Reader*, 91.

⁹⁶ Davies, *The Dissenting Reader*, 94.

⁹⁷ Davies, *The Dissenting Reader*, 91.

⁹⁸ Tolbert, *Defining the Problem*, 119.

and political power of women which has been ignored, overlooked, or hidden by patriarchal hermeneutics.”⁹⁹ Through the practice of feminist hermeneutics it is my intention to constructively meet both criteria of feminist interpretation identified by Tolbert in the interpretation of Genesis 34. First, I will show that interpretations of Genesis 34 are highly patriarchal and, therefore, have no authority within feminist discourse. However, I will argue that the biblical narrative can in fact be altered to suggest a more positive reading of the text. Secondly, in offering a positive interpretation of the text, I will highlight the position of social power Dinah can be identified with. Through such a positivistic interpretation of Genesis 34, I am proposing that equality can be discerned within the text through reading Genesis 34 as a betrothal narrative.

2.3 Feminist Models of Reading

Eryl Davies states that feminist biblical scholars are presented with the problem of reading a text whose ideological position with regard to women seems so discordant with their own beliefs and values.¹⁰⁰ Feminist critics, therefore, have had to develop their own strategies to approach biblical texts.

Early feminists in the late nineteenth and early twentieth-centuries developed an “evolutionary approach.” As the name indicates, this approach argues that women’s lives, over time, were improving incrementally as “primitive concepts of the early period inevitable gave way, in time, to more advanced and sophisticated ways of

⁹⁹ Tolbert, *Defining the Problem*, 119.

¹⁰⁰ Davies, *The Dissenting Reader*, 17.

thinking.”¹⁰¹ Adherents to this theory argue that biblical customs, beliefs, and values which concern women in general, change in a positive direction. As Davies summarizes, “Passages which implied their subservient and inferior position belonged, by and large, to the early period of Israel’s history, whereas later texts recognized women’s legal and social status and evinced a much stronger sense of their inherent dignity and worth.”¹⁰²

Davies provides readers with an example to illustrate this point further:

In the earlier text (Gen. 2:4b-25), usually dated to approximately the ninth-century BCE, the creation of women was regarded almost as something of an afterthought, and her subordinate position was emphasized by the fact that she was created from the rib of man as a helpmate to cure his loneliness; but in the later account (Gen. 1:1-2:4a), belong to perhaps the fifth century BCE, man and woman were created simultaneously in God’s image and likeness, and were regarded as equal partners participating in a common enterprise.¹⁰³

Advocates of the ‘evolutionary approach’ include Thierry Maertens. In *The Advancing Dignity of Woman in the Bible*, Maertens retraces the position of women in the Hebrew Bible through to the New Testament. Maertens concludes that the attitude towards women in later traditions was much more appealing than that of earlier traditions. For feminist evolutionists, “to blame the Bible for the inferior status accorded to women was both unfair and misguided,” rather, “it should be applauded for elevating the status of women and for pointing the way towards the ideal of true equality.”¹⁰⁴

Few feminists, however, have been persuaded by this line of approach and have recognized that it is beset with serious flaws.¹⁰⁵ Many have argued that biblical

¹⁰¹ Davies, *The Dissenting Reader*, 17.

¹⁰² Davies, *The Dissenting Reader*, 17.

¹⁰³ Davies, *The Dissenting Reader*, 18.

¹⁰⁴ Davies, *The Dissenting Reader*, 19.

¹⁰⁵ Davies, *The Dissenting Reader*, 19.

documents do not present a gradual development in the status of women. Carolyn Pressler, for example, argues that family laws in Deuteronomy are not anymore humane than the laws which precede them.¹⁰⁶

More promising is an approach associated with the cultural relativists. This approach suggests that the Hebrew Bible evolved out of a particular historical, cultural, and social situation and therefore must be read within the context from which it was written. Davies states, “modern readers of the Bible must therefore accept the historical time-conditionality of its writings and recognize that they are often expressive of ways of thinking which are no longer our own.”¹⁰⁷ Many feminists find solace in the cultural relativist approach, since it allows for the identification of oppressive statements in terms of their historical context and, in turn, alleviating the burden modern readers of the biblical text continue to bear. Davies states,

Such a strategy has been welcomed by some feminist biblical critics as providing a solution to the problem caused by the presence in Scripture of statements that are degrading or condescending in their attitude towards women. The offending passages, it is argued, are merely a reflection of beliefs and customs of people who had very different frames of reference from our own and who belonged to a cultural system far removed from one which we inhabit.¹⁰⁸

A leading advocate of the cultural relativist approach is Carol Meyers. Meyers has written several texts from this methodological perspective including, *Discovering Eve: Ancient Israelite Women in Context*; *Households and Holiness: The Religious Cultural of Israelite Women*; and *The Tabernacle Menorah: A Synthetic Study of a Symbol From the Biblical Cult*. Meyers argues that the position of women in ancient Israel is to be regarded

¹⁰⁶ Davies, *The Dissenting Reader*, 19.

¹⁰⁷ Davies, *The Dissenting Reader*, 20.

¹⁰⁸ Davies, *The Dissenting Reader*, 21.

with the same importance as the position of men. For example, with respect to the high death rate in ancient Israel a woman's reproductive ability was highly valued and therefore regarded as just as important as a man's position within the public sphere. Meyers' depiction of Israelite women casts them as strong and significant members of society whose contribution was as equally as important as man's.¹⁰⁹

Cultural relativism, however, has been criticized by scholars who claim that it is damaging to a text to suggest that it only applies to the society in which it was produced. If this were so, the biblical text has the potential of becoming a "museum-piece." "Reading the Bible," writes Davies, "as an historically-conditioned book courts the risk that it may come to be regarded as nothing more than a museum-piece, an antiquated relic of the past having little or no relevance for the issues of present-day concern."¹¹⁰

Another approach widely used by feminists is a 'canon-within-a-canon' method. This approach allows scholars to create their own canon from material which they deem useful and disregard that which is demeaning. "By means of such dexterous proof-texting," states Davies, "feminists are able to argue that the Bible was not as sexist as was often supposed, and that it contained material which could be used as a valuable weapon in the battle for female emancipation."¹¹¹ Therefore, by focusing on the positive images of women in the Hebrew Bible, adherents of this approach are able to enhance the position of biblical women. Advocates of the 'canon-within-a-canon' approach include Elisabeth Cady Stanton and Phyllis Tribble as they believe it is their duty as feminist

¹⁰⁹ For a complete reading of Meyers understanding of the role and function of ancient Israelite women see, Carol Meyers, *Discovering Eve: Ancient Israelite Women in Context* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1988), 139-164.

¹¹⁰ Davies, *The Dissenting Reader*, 22.

¹¹¹ Davies, *The Dissenting Reader*, 28.

biblical scholars to recover positive images of biblical women. Therefore, instead of being oppressed by the negative aspects of the biblical text, feminist biblical scholars “should highlight its positive aspects; instead of berating the Hebrew Bible for its unrelenting patriarchal emphasis, they should celebrate the fact that a feminine viewpoint has survived in the tradition despite all the efforts to suppress it.”¹¹²

As Tribble suggests, refuge can be discerned in the book of Ruth as the female presence is prominent in a male-dominated society. Naomi was determined to find a suitor for Ruth, her widowed daughter in-law, and Ruth was relentless in her effort to win the affection of Boaz. Also, in the Song of Songs, Tribble finds no suggestion of male domination or female subordination as the text is founded upon the notion that love is harmony. Therefore, neither male nor female asserts power or possession over the other.¹¹³ “By focusing on such positive images of women, adherents of this strategy argue that the Hebrew Bible is not entirely devoid of a female perspective, and while they recognize the overwhelming patriarchal stamp of Scripture, they believe that there are fundamental impulses in the biblical tradition that are representative of more inclusive ways of thinking.”¹¹⁴ However, the ‘canon-within-a-canon’ approach has also been criticized for “inviting the reader to exploit a partial view of Scripture, and to focus on specific texts to the exclusion of others, it inevitably courts that risk of violating the integrity of the biblical message as a whole.”¹¹⁵

¹¹² Davies, *The Dissenting Reader*, 27.

¹¹³ For further reading on Tribble’s position on the Book of Ruth and Song of Songs see, Phyllis Tribble, *God and the Rhetoric of Sexuality* (Fortress Press, 1978).

¹¹⁴ Davies, *The Dissenting Reader*, 28.

¹¹⁵ Davies, *The Dissenting Reader*, 28.

In contrast to the 'canon-within-a-canon' approach is the holistic approach. Advocates of this theory maintain that the biblical text is to be considered and viewed in its entirety, and seek to refrain from isolating portions of the Bible. Davies concludes that the holistic strategy is the most effective way for feminist critics to deal with the biblical texts which are demeaning towards women. He further suggests that

the presence of such passages in the Hebrew Bible is openly acknowledged, but it is argued that, provided due account is taken of the overall context of Scripture, the patriarchal bias can be counterbalanced with one which is less sexist and discriminatory. Texts which view women negatively should be viewed in the light of others which offer a more positive assessment of their role and contribution; narratives which appear to be imbued with male chauvinistic attitudes should be seen in the context of others which are free of sexist presuppositions.¹¹⁶

Therefore, passages which depict women as the sexual property of man should be read in light of those passages where a woman exploits her sexuality to achieve a goal. For example, 2 Samuel 11 depicts the story of a powerful king who uses his prominent position to demand sexual gratification from a married woman. The story of David and Bathsheba should be read in light of the story of Judah and Tamar (Genesis 28). After the death of her husband Er, Tamar was determined to bear a son. Posing as a prostitute, Tamar seduced her father-in-law, Judah, to guarantee her status as an Israelite woman. The holistic approach is appealing to feminist scholars as it provides the biblical text with literary balance.

In line with Davies's suggestion I, too, will employ a holistic approach with the goal of analyzing the text of Genesis 34, paying close attention to the grammar, syntax, and vocabulary of the passage and, importantly to see Genesis 34.1-9 within the larger

¹¹⁶ Davies, *The Dissenting Reader*, 29.

context of betrothal scenes such as the ones in Genesis 24 and 29. This holistic approach has much in common with literary criticism as produced elsewhere in the academy.¹¹⁷ There remains no one single way to do feminist biblical interpretation and the strategies discussed only represent a sampling of the approaches available to feminist scholars.

2.4 Feminist-Literary Criticism

Literary criticism is the study concerned with discussion, evaluation, and interpretation of literature in its final form. Feminist-literary criticism has, as Plain and Sellers suggest, “transformed the academic study of literary texts, fundamentally altering the canon of what is taught and setting a new agenda for analysis, as well as radically influencing the parallel process of publishing, review and literary reception.”¹¹⁸ Therefore, evaluating Genesis 34 in terms of its formation of sentences, literary structure, and the portrayal of characters, feminist-literary criticism will provide an opportunity to interpret the characterization of Dinah and the events contributing to her betrothal.

David Clines and Cheryl Exum have compiled their work in an effort to introduce ‘new’ literary criticism into the study of biblical texts. Clines and Exum identify ‘new’ literary criticism with a literary theory movement originating in the 1960’s known as post-structuralism. Feminist criticism, therefore, is to be considered a paradigm for ‘new’

¹¹⁷ Literary interpretation of biblical narrative began to gather steam in the early 1980’s and is still part of the current methodological arsenal. See, Edward L. Greenstein, *Essays on Biblical Method and Translation* (Georgia: Scholars Press, 1989); Shimeon Bar-Efrat, *Narrative Art in the Bible* (Sheffield: Almond, 1989); David M. Gunn and Danna Nolan Fewell, *Narrative in the Hebrew Bible* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1993); and David Clines and Cheryl Exum, *The New Literary Criticism and the Hebrew Bible* (Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1993).

¹¹⁸ Gill Plain and Susan Sellers, *A History of Feminist Literary Criticism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 2.

literary criticism as it “can be expected to influence the way we read the Hebrew Bible in the present decade.”¹¹⁹

Clines and Exum argue that feminist criticism is not focused upon the texts themselves but upon texts in relation to another intellectual or political issue. “The starting point of feminist criticism is of course not the given texts but the issues and concerns of feminism as a world view and as a political enterprise.”¹²⁰ Therefore, recognizing the marginalization of ancient Israelite women by men and the denied access to positions of societal measure, “then a feminist literary criticism will be concerned with exposing strategies by which women’s subordination is inscribed in and justified by texts.”¹²¹ Feminist-literary criticism is not proposing a radical rejection of all other methods of reading, but, it “uses a variety of approaches and encourages multiple readings.”¹²² For example, a feminist-literary critical reading of Genesis 34 may concentrate on the silencing of Dinah’s voice and her suppression within the text, or it may offer Dinah a voice amongst the texts overarching patriarchy, or feminist literary criticism may identify Genesis 34 within the larger realm of androcentric texts which the Hebrew Bible is constructed upon.

In her book *Literature and Feminism*, Pam Morris also defines feminism as a “political perception” which she has based on two fundamental premises: “(1) that gender difference is the foundation of a structural inequality between women and men, by which women suffer systematic social injustice, and (2) that the inequality between the sexes is

¹¹⁹ J. Cheryl Exum and David J.A. Clines, *The New Literary Criticism and the Hebrew Bible* (Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1993), 17.

¹²⁰ Exum and Clines, *The New Literary Criticism*, 17.

¹²¹ Exum and Clines, *The New Literary Criticism*, 17.

¹²² Exum and Clines, *The New Literary Criticism*, 17.

not the result of biological necessity but is produced by the cultural construction of gender differences.”¹²³ Morris’s definition of feminism is rooted in the desire to understand “the social and psychic mechanisms that construct and perpetuate gender inequality and then to change them.”¹²⁴ One method to change the inequality between the sexes is through the criticism of literature.

Feminists who study and are critical of literary works are interested in how women’s inferiority is reinforced by literature. Morris argues that it became apparent to women that a re-examination of literary works was necessary and feminist critics also began to question literary commentaries as well.¹²⁵ Morris says that male critics “usually assume that their perception of a text will be shared by all readers, even when the interpretation offered is restrictively masculine or even misogynistic. The universal reader, like the writer, is assumed to be male.”¹²⁶ As evident in the previous chapter, early male commentaries and early-modern interpretations of Dinah’s function in Genesis 34 are highly misogynistic and reflect androcentric values and beliefs. According to Sydney Janet Kaplan, feminist criticism begins “in the personal response of women readers to women writers, and in the implicit repudiation of a critical stance which claims to be objective.”¹²⁷ Therefore, male critics cannot objectively critique the roles and attitudes of women in literature because they are men. Morris recognizes that a man can identify as a feminist, however, it has to be recognized that “a feminist man will always

¹²³ Pam Morris, *Literature and Feminism* (Oxford: Blackwell Publishers, 1993), 1.

¹²⁴ Morris, *Literature and Feminism*, 1.

¹²⁵ Morris, *Literature and Feminism*, 37.

¹²⁶ Morris, *Literature and Feminism*, 38.

¹²⁷ Gayle Greene and Coppelia Kahn, eds., *Making a Difference: Feminist Literary Criticism* (London and New York: Methuen, 1985), 37.

be positioned quite differently from a feminist woman in relation to gender-based social injustice. He can recognize and deplore the structures of gender inequality, but he cannot experience them as a woman.”¹²⁸ Women are able to identify with objectified and suppressed women as they can more easily relate to female characters.

With the rise of feminist biblical scholarship in the 1970s and 1980s, Genesis 34 has been subject to re-interpretation in an effort to reclaim the text from the clutches of patriarchal interpreters. Ita Sheres examines Genesis 34 from a literary-critical and feminist perspective. Sheres’ analysis includes a discussion on the physical violence that was inflicted on Dinah and its implications including psychological damage and social ruin.

Identifying Dinah as “a woman who tried to socialize in a new environment,”¹²⁹ Sheres considers Dinah’s going out as a means to achieve “familial fortune.”¹³⁰ The narrator tells us that Dinah’s reason for “going out” was social but with further analysis the act of going out becomes highly complex. Sheres focuses on Dinah’s motivations as she casts Dinah in the role of “an active woman who was aware of her tribe’s traditions”¹³¹ and, like Rebekah and Rachel, was intent on finding a husband.

Sheres recognizes Dinah’s affiliation with her mother, Leah, who was the unloved wife of Jacob and suggests that this identification is the meaning behind Dinah’s going out. Leah was forced upon Jacob by her father Laban, she was not desired like her sister Rachel. Sheres identifies Dinah in terms of her unloved mother and suggests that Dinah

¹²⁸ Morris, *Literature and Feminism*, 2. Morris notes that not all feminists agree with her on this position.

¹²⁹ Ita Sheres, *Dinah’s Rebellion: A Biblical Parable for Our Time* (New York: Crossroad, 1990), 17.

¹³⁰ Sheres, *Dinah’s Rebellion*, 82.

¹³¹ Sheres, *Dinah’s Rebellion*, 82.

had no choice but to go out otherwise she would be subject to remaining inside the tent.

As Sheres summarizes, “Accordingly, Dinah cannot sit in his ‘tent,’ because her father Jacob is not interested in her the way he is interested in Joseph, the son of Rachel.”¹³²

Sheres also suggests that Dinah’s going out may be the result of Jacob’s unstable household, “Jacob is undoubtedly the patriarch of the family, but it is a family in turmoil looking for stability in a new land and searching for a power base that will establish their legitimacy.”¹³³ Therefore, going out may be used in the text to signify

belonging, security, and community. Rebekah and Rachel “go out” of their home because they belong in their community and are looking forward to continuing that association. Dinah “goes out” because she belongs only marginally and is not yet part of a cohesive community. At the opening stages of chap. 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 at home.¹³⁴

According to Sheres, when Shechem sees Dinah, he recognizes her longing for a community. Nevertheless, Dinah’s going out is followed by her rape.

Sheres draws two conclusions regarding Dinah’s rape which are related to her going out. First, Dinah left her father’s house and is identified as a “worthless woman.”¹³⁵ Therefore, “whatever happened to her in the wake of leaving was predicated on that act, moreover, in that instance, the “going out,” Dinah was looking to be raped.”¹³⁶ Second, Dinah’s act of leaving the house of her father was “ideologically disastrous,” and Dinah was immediately punished for it. Identified as a “worthless woman” Dinah still functions

¹³² Sheres, *Dinah's Rebellion*, 82.

¹³³ Sheres, *Dinah's Rebellion*, 84.

¹³⁴ Sheres, *Dinah's Rebellion*, 84.

¹³⁵ Sheres, *Dinah's Rebellion*, 87.

¹³⁶ Sheres, *Dinah's Rebellion*, 87.

as a member of Jacob's family, however from a familial perspective, she is condemned. Ideologically, Dinah is marginalized from the outset because she "rebels and attempts to do precisely what the strict theodicy articulates not to do. In that context, her socializing effort is not just a mistake by an outright sin for which she has to be punished."¹³⁷

Sheres' analysis of Genesis 34 focuses on Dinah's position within Jacob's family and her attempt to integrate into a larger community. Dinah's integration according to Sheres resulted in her rape which had both familial and communal affects, destructive to Dinah's character. However, Sheres' feminist interpretation of the Genesis 34 narrative presents readers with the notion that Hebraic women were in control over their role in society and were not destined to function as marginal members of society.

Another biblical scholar, Caroline Blyth, considers the "apparent rehabilitation" of Shechem in the Genesis 34 narrative following the rape of Dinah. Blyth's analysis of the Hebrew language used by the narrator in reference to Shechem is not as "redemptive" as commonly assumed by readers. "A number of scholars appear to consider the supposed rehabilitation of this rapist as perfectly justifiable, given the circumstances presented in the text. Their interpretations therefore contain no outright condemnation of Shechem or his crime, but rather offer a validation of the narrator's apparent call leniency, mitigation, and compromise."¹³⁸ Blyth's analysis of the language used in Genesis 34.3, 11-12, which is frequently used by scholars as evidence of Shechem's redemption, will be used by me to reveal another facet of Shechem. Blyth argues that the "Hivite prince is depicted as a man who has formed an intense and erotic emotional

¹³⁷ Sheres, *Dinah's Rebellion*, 87.

¹³⁸ Caroline Blyth, "Redeemed by His Love? The Characterization of Shechem in Genesis 34," *Journal for the Study of the Old Testament* 33 (2008): 4-5.

attachment to Dinah, which is essentially self-seeking, uncontrolled and utterly at odds with the ethico-religious standards of biblical Israel...readers would have been appalled at his selfish and self-interested attempts to retain possession of something that he had no right to claim as his own.”¹³⁹

The verb אהב is generally translated by biblical scholars in the positive sense of ‘to love,’ which suggests that Shechem developed heartfelt feelings for Dinah; this sense is compatible with the usage of this verb elsewhere in Genesis where love is conveyed between a man and a woman. However, Blyth argues that the root of this verb may have derogatory connotations, in which case Shechem’s love was nothing more than “uncontrollable passion and illicit erotic desire which transgresses biblical Israel’s strict laws regarding marital fidelity or sexual integrity.”¹⁴⁰ Blyth also notes that the language used in Genesis is similar to the language used in another biblical narrative. In 2 Samuel 13.1-4, the use of the verb אהב is used in reference to the lustful actions of David’s son Amnon. Blyth concludes that “like Amnon’s desire for Tamar, Shechem’s ‘love’ for Dinah was utterly inappropriate, transpiring as it did from an illicit sexual relationship with a virgin out of the formal bonds of matrimony.”¹⁴¹

Blyth concludes that the phrase דבר אל לב literally translating as “to speak to the heart,” occurs nine times in the biblical text and generally conveys a sense of benevolence. This phrase found in Genesis 34.3 has been interpreted by scholars as Shechem’s attempt to undo the wrong he has caused. However, Blyth notes that this very phrase is used in yet another biblical narrative depicting “sexual violence where, it may

¹³⁹ Blyth, “Redeemed by His Love?,” 13.

¹⁴⁰ Blyth, “Redeemed by His Love?,” 9.

¹⁴¹ Blyth, “Redeemed by His Love?,” 9.

be argued, the subject's need to 'speak to the heart' of his audience is motivated, less by a desire to allay his audience's fears than by primarily self-seeking considerations, and is aimed as much at benefiting the speaker as reassuring the one whom he addresses."¹⁴² Blyth identifies this narrative as Judges 19.2 where a Levite speaks to the heart of his concubine in an effort to bring her home with him. Upon her retrieval, the Levite makes no attempt to further communicate with the concubine as she was merely a "possession for him to have,"¹⁴³ just as Dinah was a possession for Shechem.

Contrary to the opinion of many scholars, the narrator's portrayal of Shechem in the "redemptive verses" of Genesis 34 may not have been intended to 'rehabilitate' Shechem at all. A reading that favors a positive interpretation of Shechem are as "unethical as it is inaccurate, for it would imply that rape is a crime all too easily atoned by reassuring words and gestures of commitment and that the excruciating suffering of rape victims can be simply brushed aside, reduced to an irrelevance that is unworthy of consideration."¹⁴⁴

Suzanne Scholz has studied the concept of rape in nineteenth-century German medical textbooks and applied her findings to Genesis 34. Comparing biblical commentators and forensic scholars, Scholz argues that the topic of rape is one that many commentators try to avoid altogether. For example, just as biblical commentators omit explicit discussions about rape, so medical scholars identify rape as a subcategory of illegal intercourse. Scholz provides a close analysis of several textbooks which identify rape with other forms of illegal intercourse including pederasty, sodomy, lesbianism, and

¹⁴² Blyth, "Redeemed by His Love?," 11.

¹⁴³ Blyth, "Redeemed by His Love?," 12.

¹⁴⁴ Blyth, "Redeemed by His Love?," 17.

bestiality. Adolph Henke maintained that “rape was not an issue unto itself; it belonged with ‘unnatural intercourse.’”¹⁴⁵ So too, Eduard van Hofmann entitled the chapter on rape in his famous medical textbook, *The Illegal Satisfaction of the Sexual Urge*. And, just as biblical commentators conclude that love is the result of rape, so medical scholars conclude that rape resulted from libido. As Scholz notes,

The question was whether the physical stimulation of a woman forced her psychologically to give in and consent to the forced sexual intercourse. Forensic scholars imagined that her libido took over so extensively that the woman was not raped physically. Her body supposedly enjoyed the physical manipulations so that her will power collapsed.¹⁴⁶

Furthermore, when discussing the rape of a girl, forensic scholars usually refer to the girl as being under the age of fourteen. German law codes maintain that any adult male sexual act with a girl under the age of fourteen (with or without consent) as rape. Forensic scholars would therefore testify in favour of the accused stating that the rape victim appeared older than fourteen. “Rape was punishable only if the perpetrator knew or could have assumed that the female individual had not yet reached this age.”¹⁴⁷ Therefore, the physical maturity of a girl may be used to excuse the actions of the rapist. As Scholz suggests, the elaborate concern about Dinah’s age among biblical scholars resembles the forensic debate.¹⁴⁸ In an attempt to salvage the text, Scholz offers readers her own interpretation of the “rape” in Genesis 34 through rhetorical criticism.

Scholz’s analysis of Genesis 34.2-3 is focused upon the actions of its characters.

“Grammatically, Shechem is the subject and Dinah is the object. Six verbs in rapid

¹⁴⁵ As quoted in Suzanne Scholz, *Rape Plots: A Feminist Cultural Study of Genesis 34* (New York: Peter Lang, 2000), 74.

¹⁴⁶ Scholz, *Rape Plots*, 81.

¹⁴⁷ Scholz, *Rape Plots*, 84.

¹⁴⁸ Scholz, *Rape Plots*, 84.

succession describes them. The first three report rape, the last three its ramification.”¹⁴⁹ Genesis 34.2 is constructed with three verbs, “And he took her and he laid her and he defiled her.” Scholz states that the use of the Hebrew participle “את” in Genesis 34.2 in conjunction with the verb שכב (“to lay”) is not translated with the preposition “with,” but left untranslated as the sign of the direct object. Therefore, grammatically, Dinah is designated as the “object of activity.”¹⁵⁰ Shechem does not lie “with” Dinah as Shechem is “the subject of the verb and she the object. Dinah does not consent. No doubt “Shechem laid her.””¹⁵¹ Scholz’s grammatical argument is also supported by the biblical rape narrative of Amnon and Tamar (2 Samuel 13). J. P. Fokkelman maintains that in verse 14 the verb and object marker (שכב שת) describe “clearly the sexual act of violence of which Amnon is the subject and Tamar the objectified, depersonalized victim.”¹⁵² The third verb, ענה “to defile” also poses a problem for scholars who do not translate as “to rape,” despite the translation of classical reference books.¹⁵³ Francis Brown, S. R. Driver, and Charles Briggs translate the verb as “1. Humble, mishandle, afflict; 2. Humble a woman by cohabitation; 3. Afflict; 4. Humble, weaken.”¹⁵⁴

Scholz concludes that the function of the three verbs לקח, שכב את, and ענה is twofold. First,

¹⁴⁹ Scholz, *Rape Plots*, 136.

¹⁵⁰ Scholz, *Rape Plots*, 136.

¹⁵¹ Scholz, *Rape Plots*, 136.

¹⁵² As quoted in Scholz, *Rape Plots*, 137.

¹⁵³ For those assuming Dinah was not raped see: Lynn Bechtel, “What if Dinah Wasn’t Raped? (Genesis 34),” *Journal for the Study of the Old Testament* 62 (1994), pp. 19-36; N. Ararat, “Reading According to the ‘Seder’ in Biblical Narrative: To Balance the Reading of Dinah Episode,” *Haisfrut* 27 (1978), pp. 15-34; Y. Zakovitch, “A Survey of the Literary Study of the Bible in Israel,” *Newsletter of the World Association for Jewish Studies* 20 (1982), pp. 19-38.

¹⁵⁴ Francis Brown, S.R. Driver, and Charles Briggs, *Hebrew and English Lexicon of the Old Testament, Based on the Lexicon of William Gesenius* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1951), 660.

[T]he verbs can be treated similarly to the rhetorical device of hendiadys, a feature of Hebrew syntax in which two words are used to describe one activity. Here, the three verbs connected by conjunctions express the single action of rape. The use of this device underscores this act. *Secondly*, the three verbs suggest a progressive severity. They emphasize Shechem's increasing use of violence against Dinah in v. 2b.¹⁵⁵

In Shechem's attempt to overcome his deceitful act of raping Dinah, Shechem claims to have fallen in "love." However, in the "context of rape" states Scholz "אהב does not simply mean 'to love.'"¹⁵⁶ Shechem raped Dinah, and only after her rape did Shechem consider his actions.

Naomi Graetz approaches Genesis 34 from a Jewish feminist perspective. Graetz identifies herself as a feminist who, because of her religious orientation, respects the "authority inherent in the traditional text,"¹⁵⁷ and has therefore integrated both her political and spiritual beliefs. "We [Jewish feminists] bring to the texts questions from our time and seek to uncover meanings that we believe are dormant in the text, that relate to these questions... We slough over the question of authority of the Bible, since we anchor our creativity within the text."¹⁵⁸ Interpretations of the biblical texts are therefore derivative of a feminist and religious consciousness.

Graetz's interpretation of Genesis 34 focuses on Dinah as the daughter and the Bible's attitude towards women. "It is safe to generalize that in all patriarchal societies, daughters are less valuable than sons. In such societies, daughters have value primarily

¹⁵⁵ Scholz, *Rape Plots*, 138.

¹⁵⁶ Scholz, *Rape Plots*, 140.

¹⁵⁷ Naomi Graetz, *Unlocking the Garden: A Feminist Jewish look at the Bible, Midrash and God* (New Jersey: Gorgias Press, 2005), 4.

¹⁵⁸ Graetz, *Unlocking the Garden*, 4.

on the marriage market and their potential to bear children.”¹⁵⁹ Dinah’s monetary value was her sexual purity.

If she violates the sexual code by losing her virginity prior to marriage, this transgression constitutes a loss of face to the family. Therefore the father’s primary responsibility is to protect his daughter in his home. It would seem that the daughter is a burden to her father in all matters relating to her sexuality because of the potential threat it poses to the family’s honor.¹⁶⁰

The only acceptable role for Dinah in an ancient Israelite society was to be a wife and a mother as the role of daughter was potentially dangerous.

After raping and falling in love with Dinah, Shechem requested Dinah in marriage. While Jacob’s immediate response to hearing of the defilement of his daughter was silence, Dinah’s brothers reacted with anger as Shechem “had committed an outrage in Israel by lying with Jacob’s daughter—a thing not to be done” (Genesis 34.7). Jacob, his sons, and the Shechemites agreed upon a condition of circumcision however Simeon and Levi were not satisfied with the agreement. After the mass slaughter of Hamor, Shechem, and their tribesmen, Jacob speaks to his sons saying “You have brought trouble on me, making me odious among the inhabitants of the land” (Genesis 34.30). Graetz suggests Jacob’s statement implies “that they had ‘muddied’ his heretofore clean reputation.”¹⁶¹ Simeon and Levi respond to their father with a rhetorical question, “Should our sister be treated like a whore?” (Genesis 34.31). “This message” writes Graetz, “is that our sister is not to be “made” (*yaaseh*) into an object of scorn. The text,

¹⁵⁹ Graetz, *Unlocking the Garden*, 27.

¹⁶⁰ Graetz, *Unlocking the Garden*, 27.

¹⁶¹ Graetz, *Unlocking the Garden*, 28.

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.”¹⁶²

Graetz considers the biblical attitude towards unbetrothed virgins in the Book of Deuteronomy in contrast to the law of unbetrothed virgins in Exodus 22. 15-16. In Exodus, the object is “to protect the financial interests of the father” whereas in Deuteronomy, concern lies with “rectifying the moral and personal wrong committed against the maiden.”¹⁶³ Deuteronomy 22.28-29 reads:

If a man comes upon a virgin who is not engaged and he seizes her and lies with her, and they are discovered, the man who lay with her shall pay the girl’s father fifty [shekels of] silver, and she shall be his wife. Because he has violated her, he can never have the right to divorce her.

As a Hivite, Shechem was not obliged to abide by Israelite law; however “he behaved according to the norms in his willingness to marry Dinah.”¹⁶⁴ According to the Book of Deuteronomy, Simeon and Levi interfered with Dinah’s only chance at marriage. An opportunity of marriage would have offered Dinah’s family the relief Jacob, as a father, so desperately desired. Dinah would have married into a family of royalty and a relationship would have been created between nations. “The law of Deuteronomy can thus be considered an internal commentary on the story of Dinah.”¹⁶⁵

Lyn Bechtel presents the argument that given the group-oriented society of which Dinah was a member, Genesis 34 is not the story of a rape but rather focuses on the dynamics of the interaction between insiders and outsiders and their allegiance to their individual groups. Furthermore, Bechtel sees modern scholarly interpretations of Genesis

¹⁶² Graetz, *Unlocking the Garden*, 29.

¹⁶³ Graetz, *Unlocking the Garden*, 29.

¹⁶⁴ Graetz, *Unlocking the Garden*, 30.

¹⁶⁵ Graetz, *Unlocking the Garden*, 30.

34 as imposing modern understandings of rape onto the text which is problematic for Bechtel as there is no definitive word for “rape” in Hebrew.

Bechtel’s definition of rape is a compilation of work which she has assembled to meet the demands of modern thought. Rape is defined as:

Man’s forcible, aggressive sexual intercourse with a woman who at the time does not consent and shows obvious resistance or vigorous struggle. It is a forceful, nonconsensual boundary and identity violation, a hostile sexual act that uses the penis as a weapon and can therefore cause psychological damage and/or physical injury to the woman...it is an exploitative act that silences the male’s feelings of vulnerability, inferiority, and lack of control...by creating the illusion of power, control, dominance and superiority.¹⁶⁶

In accordance with Bechtel’s “modern” definition, Genesis 34 is the story of the rape of Dinah. However, according to Bechtel’s ancient Israelite understanding of group-oriented societies, Genesis 34 does not fit the criteria of a rape story and, therefore, Bechtel seeks to reclaim Dinah’s position within the narrative through an analysis of group-oriented societies. Bechtel characterizes ancient Israel as a group-oriented society as she states,

When a society is group-oriented, most people derive their identity eternally from the strongly bonded group to which they belong, that is, the society as a whole and the household groups within it...group-orientation is not just simply belonging to a group, but involves the automatic group allegiance, responsibility, obligation, and attachment of the individual to the group.¹⁶⁷

Dinah acted as an individual but was encouraged through her actions to uplift the group to which she belonged. Bechtel highlights the importance of group-orientation boundaries and how potentially dangerous it is to step outside that which has been prescribed for the group. “Boundaries are related to geography, ethnicity, and the correct ancestral lineage

¹⁶⁶ Bechtel, “What if Dinah is Not Raped?,” 20-21.

¹⁶⁷ Bechtel, “What if Dinah is Not Raped?,” 21.

and most importantly with allegiance. There is purity inside the group and impurity outside the group.”¹⁶⁸ However, if it is the intention of the group to maintain the boundary of purity did Dinah not intentionally breach this boundary and threaten the very existence of the group by going out on her own? And, as an Israelite woman, Dinah was considered to be pure, however, the Hivites were of a separate nation and considered impure, therefore Dinah’s actions polluted the group she belonged to or could potentially do so.

Bechtel also recognizes the importance of marriage and family in group-oriented societies. Women were highly valued as the producers of children and therefore the producers of continued life. “Women have significant power and value within society. The idea of woman being devalued or having no power is inconceivable.”¹⁶⁹ In order for procreation to occur, sexual intercourse is necessary. “Sexual intercourse between a man and a woman,” says Bechtel, “is not perceived in romantic or spiritual terms, but in terms of the perpetuation of the family/group.”¹⁷⁰ Therefore, Bechtel perceives Dinah and Shechem’s sexual encounter as necessary for group development.

Feminist-literary biblical critics, according to Schüssler Fiorenza, “must deconstruct the dominant paradigms of biblical interpretation and reconstruct them in terms of a critical rhetoric that understands biblical texts and traditions as a living and changing heritage, one which does not legitimate patriarchal oppression but can foster

¹⁶⁸ Bechtel, “What if Dinah is Not Raped?,” 22.

¹⁶⁹ Bechtel, “What if Dinah is Not Raped?” 22.

¹⁷⁰ Bechtel, “What if Dinah is Not Raped?,” 22.

emancipatory practices.”¹⁷¹ Feminist biblical interpretation must position the struggles of women at the centre of its interpretative objectives in order to transform patriarchal structures. A transformation of patriarchal structures is necessary in both biblical times and in present times as it alleviates the burden of focusing only on the androcentric biblical text and its authority.¹⁷² As Schüssler Fiorenza contends, the Bible is written in androcentric language and has been used as a means to further a patriarchal agenda. However, the Bible has also served to “inspire and authorize women and other non-persons in their struggles against patriarchal oppression”¹⁷³ which has ultimately led women to develop their own strategies to deal with the androcentric ideologies permeating the Bible, including feminist-literary studies. Indeed, feminist-literary studies “carefully show how androcentric texts construct the politics of gender and feminine representation. . . the silences, contradictions, arguments, prescriptions, and projections of biblical texts, as well as the Bible’s discourses on gender, race, class, or culture, must be unraveled to show their ideological inscription of the patriarchal politics of otherness.”¹⁷⁴ Feminist critics therefore seek to deconstruct, challenge, and reject the androcentric politics of the biblical texts.

In her doctoral dissertation *Terrible Silence, Eternal Silence: A Consideration of Dinah’s Voicelessness in the Text and Interpretative Traditions of Genesis 34*, Caroline Blyth quotes 17th century French philosopher Blaise Pascal, “The eternal silence of these infinite spaces terrifies me.” Blyth is referring “not to the heavens as Pascal was, but to

¹⁷¹ Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza, *But She Said: Feminist Practices of Biblical Interpretation* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1992), 5.

¹⁷² Schüssler Fiorenza, *But She Said*, 8.

¹⁷³ Schüssler Fiorenza, *But She Said*, 21.

¹⁷⁴ Schüssler Fiorenza, *But She Said*, 34.

the 'infinite spaces' within the text and traditions of Genesis 34, where, instead of hearing Dinah's voice, we are confronted by a silence that is absolute."¹⁷⁵ Dinah's experience is contextualized by the author within a strictly patriarchal ideological framework, thereby denying her a voice. Blyth has adopted a feminist critical approach to overcome Dinah's marginalization and to provide her with a voice with which to share her story.

Blyth argues that there is an "ethical demand for the responsible reader to criticize and challenge 'unpalatable' texts, revealing their inherent articulation of injustices, and recognizing their potential to perpetuate these injustices within the readers own contemporary context."¹⁷⁶ According to Blyth, a feminist methodology recognizes that biblical narratives are the product of "patriarchal ideologies and gender stereotypes, which contribute in no small way to the perpetuation of women's silencing and marginalization."¹⁷⁷ Feminist criticism, therefore, "encourages readers not to acquiesce to the authority of the text's unpalatable androcentric and at times misogynist literary representations, but rather to make a moral claim on them to subvert this authority, and to uphold these representations for scrutiny and critical evaluation."¹⁷⁸

Reading Genesis 34 in light of feminist-literary criticism, Dinah unquestionably becomes the subject of the narrative, rather than "the object of androcentric interpretative concerns."¹⁷⁹ Dinah's silencing within Genesis 34 therefore "demands an ethical response, for such silence does not merely signify an absence from textual consideration,

¹⁷⁵ Caroline Blyth, "Terrible Silence, Eternal Silence: A Consideration of Dinah's Voicelessness in the Text and Interpretative Traditions of Genesis 34." PhD diss., University of Edinburgh, 2008, 13.

¹⁷⁶ Blyth, "Terrible Silence, Eternal Silence," 14-15.

¹⁷⁷ As quoted in Blyth, "Terrible Silence, Eternal Silence," 15-16.

¹⁷⁸ Blyth, "Terrible Silence, Eternal Silence," 16.

¹⁷⁹ Blyth, "Terrible Silence, Eternal Silence," 17.

but is, in its own right, a violating act of female repression.”¹⁸⁰ Feminist biblical criticism, therefore, attempts to expose the injustices in the biblical texts and traditions and re-interpret the position of women to reflect a positive and fair reading of biblical narrative. In the words of Judith Fetterley, “Feminist criticism represents the discovery/recovery of a voice, a unique and uniquely powerful voice.”¹⁸¹

A feminist critical approach to biblical narrative invites the reader to become conscious of the methodological practice of biblical interpretation.¹⁸² As feminist criticism emerged out of the second-wave feminist movement of the 1960s and 1970s it is important to bear in mind that much biblical interpretation until recently was conducted by male critics and scholars for male readers. Male scholars were not concerned with the position of women in biblical narrative, but rather, used the negative portrayal of women to further the position of men. By using a feminist critical approach, feminist conscious readers can challenge the patriarchal framework previously ascribed to the Old Testament. Elizabeth Gross describes the development of feminist theory as the following: Women and the feminine have become worthwhile objects of theory and research after being denied value in patriarchal terms; women are now focal points of empirical and theoretical investigation. Women are also being conceptualized as man’s equal, and patriarchal discourses are either being rejected outright or are being accepted less and less.¹⁸³ These advancements in feminist theory provide feminist scholars, like

¹⁸⁰ Blyth, “Terrible Silence, Eternal Silence,” 17.

¹⁸¹ As quoted in Blyth, “Terrible Silence, Eternal Silence,” 17.

¹⁸² Alice L. Laffey, *An Introduction to the Old Testament: A Feminist Perspective* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1988), 220.

¹⁸³ Carole Pateman and Elizabeth Gross, eds., *Feminist Challenges: Social and Political Theory* (Boston: Northeastern University Press, 1986), 191.

myself, with the appropriate foundation to challenge previous interpretations of Genesis 34 which favor an androcentric reading and offer an alternative interpretation, one which supports an egalitarian perspective.

Feminist re-interpretations of Genesis 34 seek to reclaim the text from the constraints of patriarchy and demonstrate that the Dinah narrative can in fact be liberating for Hebraic women. Sheres, Scholz, Blyth, Graetz and Bechtel are to be commended for the way in which they have successfully challenged previous interpretations and have redeemed Dinah. I also wish to employ feminist criticism in an attempt to redeem Dinah and will do so in a way similar to the methods employed by feminist biblical scholars reviewed in this thesis. My approach will also be literary and textual and suggest that the surrounding betrothal scenes provide us with an important clue to how Dinah may be redeemed.

2.5 Conclusion

As Schüssler Fiorenza suggests, women have been engaged in the practice of reading the biblical texts throughout the centuries, however a feminist/womanist hermeneutics as the theoretical exploration of biblical interpretation in the interest of women is a very recent practice.¹⁸⁴ Feminist biblical scholarship has emerged over the last thirty years and while it has been the recipient of much criticism, scholars engaged in feminist scholarship have actively fought for their place in academia.

¹⁸⁴ Schüssler Fiorenza, "Feminist Hermeneutics," 784.

According to feminist scholarship, androcentric language and texts do not describe and comprehend reality. Rather they are ideological constructs that produce the invisibility and marginality of women.¹⁸⁵ Feminist interpretation, therefore, requires a hermeneutics of suspicion that can unmask the ideological functions of androcentric commentary.¹⁸⁶ In an effort to resist the overarching patriarchal interpretations of the Bible, feminist scholars have adopted their own strategies and approaches to read biblical narrative in favor of feminism. Such strategies have provided feminists with the appropriate methodological understanding to effectively analyze literary works through feminist literary criticism. Feminist-literary criticism as suggested by Schüssler Fiorenza

seeks to foster a hermeneutic of resistance to the androcentric politics of the canonical text. Such a feminist literary hermeneutics aims to deconstruct, debunk, and reject the biblical text...A critical feminist reading can only break the mold of the sacred androcentric text and its authority over us when it resists the androcentric directives and hierarchically arranged binary oppositions of the text, when it reads against "their androcentric grain."¹⁸⁷

A feminist approach will allow readers to document the case against women which contribute to Israelite women's inferiority, subordination, abuse, and also allows for the reinterpretation of scripture and challenge the sexist ideology of the text. Feminism, according to Phyllis Trible, "recounts tales of terror in memoriam to offer sympathetic readings of abused women." Adopting a feminist perspective will allow me the privilege of interpreting Genesis 34 on behalf of Dinah.

¹⁸⁵ Schüssler Fiorenza, "Feminist Hermeneutics," 785.

¹⁸⁶ Schüssler Fiorenza, "Feminist Hermeneutics," 785.

¹⁸⁷ Schüssler Fiorenza, "Feminist Hermeneutics," 787.

Chapter Three: Structural Arrangement

3.1 Introduction

Literary scholar Robert Alter suggests that “a coherent reading of any art work, whatever the medium, requires some detailed awareness of the grid of conventions upon which, and against which, the individual work operates.”¹⁸⁸ These conventions are necessary in the communication of the literary work and function according to such things as structure, repetition, and symmetry. Accordingly, a grid of conventions offers readers a directional understanding of a text.¹⁸⁹ To communicate this notion of biblical convention, Alter adopts a concept from Homeric scholarship. He writes, “students of Homer have generally agreed that there are certain prominent elements of repetitive compositional pattern in both Greek epics that are conscious convention, one which has been designated ‘type-scene.’”¹⁹⁰

The notion of type-scenes was first studied by Walter Arend in 1933.¹⁹¹ Arend studied various Homeric scenes depicting arrival, sacrifice, preparation, journeys, etc., and “diagrammed such scenes, showing that they are each built up by a sequence of elements that normally occur in the same order.”¹⁹² Mark W. Edwards has categorized the characteristics of Homeric type-scenes as follows: 1) A narrative which consists of extensive, but limited, typical or repeated details and action-sequences which undergo numerous and repeated combinations; 2) a narrative is said to be composed of a structure

¹⁸⁸ Robert Alter, *The Art of Biblical Narrative* (New York: Basic Books, Inc., Publishers, 1981), 47.

¹⁸⁹ Alter, *The Art of Biblical Narrative*, 47.

¹⁹⁰ Alter, *The Art of Biblical Narrative*, 50.

¹⁹¹ Walter Arend, *Die typischen Szenen bei Homer* (Weidmann, 1933).

¹⁹² Mark W. Edwards, “Homer and Oral Tradition: The Type-Scene,” *Oral Tradition* 7/2 (1992), 290.

of certain elements, however, there is no “standard” form of a type-scene; 3) elaboration or amplification to convey emphasis; 4) originality in the use of conventional material can be observed by examining the functional relationship of type-scenes to the story pattern; 5) narrative may carry a significance that goes deeper than the surface level, and invoke meanings inherited from the whole tradition of oral poetry.¹⁹³ Although biblical narrative does not contain the same descriptive details that are provided in Homeric scholarship, Alter proposes that “there is a series of recurrent narrative episodes attached to the careers of biblical heroes that are analogous to Homeric type-scenes in that they are dependent on the manipulation of a fixed constellation of predetermined motifs.”¹⁹⁴

This chapter seeks to describe in detail the conventions of betrothal type-scenes as proposed by Robert Alter. Alter claims that the archetype of the Homeric type-scene is to be understood as a recurrent block of narrative with an identifiable structure. The betrothal type-scene contains the following elements: (1) the hero’s emergence to a foreign land, (2) the act of drawing water from a well, and the establishment of a bond between the male and female characters, (3) the sharing of the news with family members, and a display of hospitality, and finally (4) the betrothal itself.

Although the schema of type-scenes originated in pre-biblical traditions of ancient Greece, what is truly fascinating is its application to biblical literature. Alter states that what is interesting is not the “schema of convention but what is done in each individual application of the schema to give it a tilt of innovation or even to refashion it radically for

¹⁹³ For a complete detailed listing of Arend’s characteristics of Homeric type-scenes see Mark W. Edwards, *Homer and Oral Tradition: The Type-Scene*, 4-7.

¹⁹⁴ Alter, *The Art of Biblical Narrative*, 51. Cf. Erich Auerbach, *Mimesis*, for the difference between biblical and Homeric narrative.

the imaginative purposes at hand.”¹⁹⁵ Through the application of the type-scene schema to Genesis 24 and Genesis 29, Alter identifies the intricate nature of literary construction. The following chapter presents a summary of the betrothal narratives in Genesis 24 and Genesis 29, which is followed by a detailed analysis of a betrothal narrative in Genesis 34.

3.2 Genesis 24: Rebekah and Isaac

Genesis’ first and most elaborate betrothal scene is the betrothal of Rebekah and Isaac (Genesis 24.10-67). Sent to a foreign land, Abraham’s servant travels to Mesopotamia to seek a bride for his son, Isaac (element 1). Possessing knowledge of social customs, the servant went to a well at dusk with the hope that a woman would come to draw water. He spoke to the Lord saying,

I am standing here by the spring of water, and the daughters of the townspeople are coming out to draw water. Let the girl to whom I shall say, “Please offer your jar that I may drink,” and who shall say, ‘Drink, and I will water your camels’ – let her be the one whom you have appointed for your servant Isaac.

Before the servant could finish speaking to the Lord, Rebekah came upon him carrying a water jar upon her shoulder. The servant immediately recognized Rebekah’s qualities. Running to meet Rebekah, the servant asked her for a drink of water and Rebekah graciously offered him her jar, watering his camels as well (element 2). Knowing that his prayers had been answered, the servant adorned Rebekah with gold jewelry. Rebekah ran to tell her mother’s household of her

¹⁹⁵ Alter, *The Art of Biblical Narrative*, 52.

encounter and after hearing the account, Rebekah's brother, Laban went out to meet the servant. Abraham's servant was provided with a place to sleep, food to eat, and shelter for his camels (element 3). Pleased with the hospitable nature of Rebekah's family, the servant shared the nature of his visit, "My master made me swear, saying, 'Your shall not take a wife for my son from the daughters of the Canaanites, in whose land I live; but you shall go to my father's house, to my kindred, and get a wife for my son.'" Speaking on behalf of his sister Laban answered the servant saying, "Look, Rebekah is before you, take her and go, and let her be the wife of your master's son, as the Lord has spoken." Agreeing to her new fate, the servant presented Rebekah and her family with wealthy gifts before she mounted a camel leaving her family behind (element 4). Arriving in the Negeb, Rebekah dismounted from the camel at the sight of Isaac and he led her into his mother's tent solidifying her role as his wife.

The betrothal of Rebekah and Isaac is characterized by its length and attention to details as Alter states, "The most striking feature of this version of the type-scene is its slow, stately progress, an effect achieved by the extensive use of dialogue, by a specification of detail clearly beyond the norm of biblical narrative, and, above all, by a very elaborate use of the device of verbatim repetition."¹⁹⁶ Esther Fuchs compliments Alter's position as she states, "The pace of plot development is slowed down by the repetition of phrases, and the detailed description of action, and frequent dialogue."¹⁹⁷

For example, Abraham's servant asked Rebekah for a drink of water from her jar and the

¹⁹⁶ Alter, *The Art of Biblical Narrative*, 53.

¹⁹⁷ Esther Fuchs, "Structure and Patriarchal Functions in the Biblical Betrothal Type-Scene: Some Preliminary Notes," *Journal of Feminist Studies in Religion* 1 (1987), 46.

narrator provides great detail as to how Rebekah let down her jar upon her hand and offered the servant a drink. And, after he had finished drinking, Rebekah offered water to the servant's camels and filled her jar at the well again before quenching the thirst of his camels (Genesis 24. 17-20). Fuchs notes that the offering of water is mentioned four times throughout the betrothal type-scene. First in Genesis 24.14, secondly in verses 18-20, thirdly in verses 43-44 and fourthly in verses 45-56. Fuchs suggests that the repetition of the offering of water emphasizes "that the encounter with Rebekah and the consequent betrothal are divinely sanctioned. It also stresses Rebekah's generosity and kindness."¹⁹⁸

Alter offers a characterization of Rebekah and Isaac through an analysis of their actions. The actions of Rebekah and Isaac complement one another as Rebekah dominates the betrothal scene and Isaac remains absent. Alter states that Isaac's absence from the betrothal scene "nicely accords with the entire career of Isaac, for he is manifestly the most passive of patriarchs,"¹⁹⁹ allowing others to act for him. Michael Martin also notes that "a key innovation in Isaac's betrothal episode in Genesis 24 is seen in the fact that a surrogate for the groom, not Isaac himself, is the main character, an innovation that highlights the general "passivity" of Isaac."²⁰⁰ Alter also notes that this is the only betrothal scene where the female draws the water from the well instead of the stranger which indicates the multitude of Rebekah's actions. Rebekah's actions play a pivotal role in her betrothal narrative as Alter notes "she is the subject of eleven verbs of

¹⁹⁸ Fuchs, "Structure and Patriarchal Functions," 46.

¹⁹⁹ Alter, *The Art of Biblical Narrative*, 53.

²⁰⁰ Michael W. Martin, "Betrothal Journey Narratives" *The Catholic Biblical Quarterly* 70 (2008), 509.

action and one of speech, going down to the well, drawing water, filling the pitcher, pouring, giving drink.”²⁰¹

Fuchs further argues that Rebekah “behaves as a typical biblical heroine.” Also noting that the “speech acts” attributed to Rebekah “amount to positive responses to the servant’s questions and requests. As speech acts they entail consent, obedience, a readiness to comply with a male speaker’s wishes.”²⁰² Alter deals with Rebekah’s active role in Genesis 24 by suggesting that her dominant presence is indicative of her presence in future narratives. Alter states that Rebekah was the “shrewdest and most potent of the matriarchs, and so it is entirely appropriate that she should dominate her betrothal scene.”²⁰³ Although Rebekah’s actions dominate the betrothal narrative, her actions comply with traditional masculine ideologies ascribed by ancient Israel. Although she dominates a great portion of her betrothal narrative, outshining Abraham’s servant and her brother Laban, it is Isaac who dominates at the end of the narrative when he meets Rebekah and brings her into his mother’s tent.²⁰⁴

In his analysis of Genesis 24, Alter also includes a characterization of Laban in which Alter comments on the canny nature of Rebekah’s brother. Genesis 24.30-31 reads: “As soon as he had seen the nose-ring, and the bracelets on his sister’s arms. . . He said, “Come in, O blessed of the Lord.” Laban’s concern does not lie with Rebekah but with his own self-gain. Laban proves to be motivated by greed and wealth and the

²⁰¹ Alter, *The Art of Biblical Narrative*, 54.

²⁰² Fuchs, “Structure and Patriarchal Functions,” 47.

²⁰³ Alter, *The Art of Biblical Narrative*, 54.

²⁰⁴ Fuchs, “Structure and Patriarchal Functions,” 47.

identification of this quality early on in Genesis 24 further develops in Genesis 29 when Laban's daughter enters into a betrothal with Jacob.

Alter's analysis of the betrothal scene of Genesis 24 is focused upon the characterization of Rebekah, Isaac, and Laban. Alter, however, alludes to flexibility within type-scene narratives, i.e. Rebekah's domination and Isaac's absence, and such flexibility with the type-scene suggests that Genesis 34 can be read as an example of a betrothal type-scene.

3.3 Genesis 29: Rachel and Jacob

Travelling to the land of the East (element 1), Jacob saw a well in a field next to a flock of sheep. The well was covered with a large stone and Jacob watched as the shepherds uncovered the well and watered their flocks. After conversing with the shepherds, Jacob learned that they were from the land of Haran which led Jacob to inquire of the wellbeing of Laban, his mother's brother. The shepherds respond to Jacob's inquiry and introduce Laban's daughter Rachel, who arrives at the well to draw water for Laban's flock of sheep. Jacob uncovered the well before watering the sheep of his mother's brother and then kissed Rachel, weeping aloud (element 2). Rachel ran to share the news with her father that a kinsman had arrived. Laban invited Jacob into his home saying, "Surely you are my bone and my flesh!" (element 3) Jacob worked for Laban one month before the conditions of his work were discussed. Both Laban's daughters were discussed as Jacob recognized Leah's lovely eyes, but it was Rachel's

beauty and grace that led Jacob to serve Laban seven years (element 4). However, Jacob's love for Rachel was so strong that seven years only seemed like a few days (Genesis 29.1-20).

Alter begins his analysis of Genesis 29 by describing this betrothal as

Jacob's personal story, one which will involve a deep emotional attachment rather than a family treaty ("Jacob worked for Rachel seven years, and they seemed a few days in his eyes through his love for her" [Gen. 29.20]), and so it is fitting that we come to the well through his point of view.²⁰⁵

Throughout the betrothal scene, Jacob is the central character and the elements discussed by Alter are based purely on Jacob's involvement as Rachel's contribution to the narrative receives minimal interest. Alter combines his analysis and narration of the betrothal scene, considering the elements of the type-scene systematically.

Alter begins his analysis by commenting on the purpose of Jacob's journey east as an escape from his brother's wrath and upon his arrival in Haran, Jacob is immediately attracted to the local well as a known gathering place and the betrothal type-scene is set into motion. Jacob, the future bridegroom, draws water from the well for Rachel's flock only after he removes the rock coving the mouth of the well. Alter states,

This minor variation of the convention contributes to the consistent characterization of Jacob, for we already know him, as his name at birth (Ya'aqov) has been etymologized, as the "heel-grabber" or wrestler, and we shall continue to see him as the contender, the man who seizes his fate, tackles his adversaries, with his own two hands.²⁰⁶

Alter suggests that the rock-covered well symbolizes Rachel's fertility and, therefore, appropriate that the well is blocked as Jacob will have to labor to obtain the woman he

²⁰⁵ Alter, *The Art of Biblical Narrative*, 54.

²⁰⁶ Alter, *The Art of Biblical Narrative*, 54.

wants. Martin, however, has suggested that Jacob's feat of strength is not the underscore the characterization of Jacob, but rather sees such an act as the fourth element of Alter's betrothal type-scene schema. Martin writes,

I disagree only with Alter's reading of the lifting of the stone as a complete departure from the normal pattern. In fact, it is a creative adaption of element 4, the expected moment of the betrothal story wherein the suitor gives a gift or performs a service that ingratiates himself with the bride. Whereas the suitors in some scenes simply give bridal gifts to the bride/her family in order to ingratiate himself, in other scenes the suitor performs some distinctive service for the bride /her family that reveals much about his essential character (Jacob removes a stone [Genesis 29; Moses drives away shepherds [Exodus 2]; David slays a giant [1 Samuel 17]).²⁰⁷

Alter also notes that the dialogue between Jacob and Rachel is minimal while Rebekah and Abraham's servant engage in a lengthy discussion. Rachel runs to tell her father of her encounter and, in turn, Laban runs to meet Jacob. Fuchs argues that Rachel has little control over her betrothal scene as she does not control a single verse and plays the role as messenger. Fuchs states:

Rachel is not allowed to control even a single verse, and is tucked away, as it were, as the subject of subordinate clauses (Gen. 29:6, 9, 12, 16,17), or else functions as a direct object (vss. 10-12; 18-19). The three intransitive verbs she controls as subject, "come," "run," and "tell," evoke the role of a messenger. And indeed Rachel serves as little more than a hyphen between Jacob and Laban. As soon as Laban appears on the scene, Rachel disappears; the narrative focus shifts from Jacob and the shepherds to Jacob and Laban.²⁰⁸

The role of bride in the betrothal scene of Genesis 29 diminishes greatly compared to Genesis 24.

²⁰⁷ Martin, "Betrothal Journey Narratives," 510.

²⁰⁸ Fuchs, "Structure and Patriarchal Functions," 48.

Alter analyzes Rachel's physical features and the influence her appearance has on her betrothal scene. Alter notes that Rebekah's beauty is identified early in her betrothal, "the girl was very fair to look upon, a virgin, whom no man had known. She went down to the spring, filled her jar, and came up" (Genesis 24.16). Rebekah's beauty becomes part of her identity as Alter states, "Rebekah's beauty is part of her objective identity in a scene that she dominates, an item in her pedigreed nobility along with her virginity, and so it is appropriately announced the moment she enters the scene."²⁰⁹ The nature of Rachel's appearance is not mentioned until verses 16 and 17 when Leah and Rachel vie for the affection of Jacob, "Now Laban had two daughters; the name of the elder was Leah, and the name of the younger was Rachel. Leah's eyes were lovely, and Rachel was graceful and beautiful." Alter suggests that the late inclusion of the nature of Rachel's physical appearance acts as a prelude to the agreement on a bride-price.²¹⁰ Alter suggests that "one can clearly see that the betrothal type-scene, far from being a mechanical means of narrative prefabrication for conveying the reader from celibate hero to a married one, is handled with a flexibility that makes it a supple instrument of characterization and foreshadowing."²¹¹ Alter's technique of characterization and foreshadowing can also be discerned through his analysis of Laban.

Alter suggests that Laban's enthusiasm over the arrival of Jacob is not the result of Jacob himself but the result of what possessions Jacob may have brought with him. In Genesis 24, Laban was delighted at the sight of his sister's gifts and once again, Laban was motivated by financial gain. Therefore, Rebekah and Rachel only function in terms

²⁰⁹ Alter, *The Art of Biblical Narrative*, 56.

²¹⁰ Alter, *The Art of Biblical Narrative*, 56.

²¹¹ Alter, *The Art of Biblical Narrative*, 56.

of their monetary value. Rebekah is exchanged for jewelry while Rachel is exchanged for Jacob's services. Ita Sheres also comments on the betrothal scenes in Genesis 24 and Genesis 29 and the minimal involvement of its brides. Sheres argues that "the males control the courting ritual, which takes place in an environment that is seminomadic. Men determined whether and whom the women would marry. Although the women sometimes had a voice in the matter, the final decision was the men's. The motivation for courtship was materialistic."²¹²

Alter's analysis of Rachel and Jacob's betrothal in Genesis 29 is far more comprehensive than his analysis of Genesis 24. But perhaps the most interesting part of his study is his comparison of the two betrothal scenes. He writes:

In stark contrast to the stately movement of the dialogue of Genesis 24, with its formal modes of address and its ample synonymity, the dialogue here is a rapid exchange of brief questions and answers that seem almost colloquial by comparison.²¹³

The difference in the dialogical movement between the two narratives further suggests that each betrothal type-scene takes on a life of its own, as it is not necessary that all betrothals follow a precise pattern. In applying the type-scene schema to Genesis 34, Dinah will be identified in terms of her marital status and not as a victim of rape. Such identification will allow for the redemption of Dinah. As Cheryl Exum states, marriage "was the only positive role available to most women in ancient Israelite society."²¹⁴

Alter's approach allows the reader to not only consider the elements of the type-scene systematically, but to see how each type-scene flaunts the convention. The

²¹² Sheres, *Dinah's Rebellion*, 59.

²¹³ Alter, *The Art of Biblical Narrative*, 55.

²¹⁴ Cheryl Exum, *Fragmented Women: Feminist (Sub)versions of Biblical Narrative* (Pennsylvania: Trinity Press International, 1993), 59.

following analysis will first establish how the betrothal type-scene functions in Genesis 34.1-9, and also show how it goes against the convention in order to highlight the role that Dinah plays.

3.4 Genesis 34: Dinah and Shechem

Genesis 34 begins with the phrase, ותצא דינה בת־לאה אשר ילדה ליעקב בבנות הארץ, “Now, Dinah, daughter of Leah whom she had borne to Jacob, went out to visit the women of the land.” Genesis 34.1 contains the first element of Alter’s type-scene: the departure of the hero (element 1). Dinah goes out just as Abraham’s servant and Jacob go out and, in all three narratives, the act of going out takes the same grammatical form, the Qal imperfect third person singular. Ita Sheres argues that as Dinah “goes out” the narrative “ought to be viewed in that light, namely, courtship.”²¹⁵ Therefore, Dinah is not to be identified as disobeying her father for going out without permission but, rather, identified as following a specific pattern of events, in this case, looking for a husband.

Alter identifies the act of drawing water from a well as the second type-scene element; however, I will be identifying the second type-scene element as the meeting scene (element 2). The use of the verb, “to go out,” in reference to Dinah is suggestive of socialization and was the purpose for going out. Dinah goes out to see the women of the land and, as a known gathering spot for women, a well was in all likelihood Dinah’s destination to socialize. Rebekah and Rachel both go out to draw water from a well and at

²¹⁵ Sheres, *Dinah’s Rebellion*, 59.

both wells, the act of socializing occurs as Rebekah converses with Abraham's servant and Rachel converses with Jacob.

In her text, *Water from the Well*, Anne Roiphe describes the affair of a woman's visit to a well. She writes:

Over a slope of the hill he saw several young women approaching, their pitchers held on their shoulders. They may have called to one another in greeting. . . She walked with determination, a steady walk, unafraid. Her dark hair had slipped out from its binding, and easily she pushed it back away from her eyes. She paused as she approached the rim of the well. The light behind her was fading. The evening star would within the hour pull up over the horizon's edge. Her beauty could not be questioned. She was a virgin. She was dressed in the way that maidens of the time dressed.²¹⁶

Roiphe's position suggests that gathering at a well was a common occurrence for women and a well was a destination for women to gather and socialize with local women. Marla Brettschneider and Robinson Rose also suggest that a well was a gathering spot common amongst ancient Near Eastern women.

In ancient Near Eastern cultures, women from all families and peoples gathered at the common well to draw water for their homes and animals. Often wells were sites of contestation between peoples in need. Perhaps as often they were spaces where villagers and travelers alike found sustenance in many forms. Thus, the well came to be a necessary meeting place for women of various backgrounds and communities. . . For many women of these cultures, the well became a symbol of meeting and sharing across boundaries and lives.²¹⁷

Therefore, it is reasonable to argue that as Dinah's motivation for going out was to socialize with women of the land; a well was in all likelihood her intended destination as a known gathering spot for women to engage in social behavior. In the three betrothal

²¹⁶ Anne Roiphe, *Water from the Well* (New York: HarperCollins Publishers, 2006), 107-108.

²¹⁷ Marla Brettschneider and Dawn Robinson Rose, eds., "Meeting at the Well: Multiculturalism and Jewish Feminism," *Journal of Feminist Studies in Religion* 19 (2003): 85.

narratives of Genesis 24, 29, and 34, the act of going out on behalf of a female is followed by the act of socialization, and in each narrative, the act of socializing occurs with a prospective husband.

Genesis 34.2 reads: וירא אתה שכם בן חמור החוי נשיא הארץ ויקח אתה וישכב אתה ויענה ("and when Shechem the son of Hamor the Hivite prince of the land saw her, he seized her and lay with her and humbled her"). It should be noted that Shechem's violent sexual act is preceded by the verb ראה ("to see"). This verb occurs in all three betrothal type-scenes and serves a necessary function in the second element of Alter's type-scene convention: the establishment of a bond. Jacob "sees" Rachel (Genesis 29.2), and wants her for his wife after falling in love with her (Genesis 29.18). The servant of Abraham "sees" Rebekah and determines that she will be a good wife for Isaac (Genesis 24.62-67). Sheres notes the parallels by stating that Shechem's act of seeing is not unlike those of Isaac and Jacob. She states, "At first glance, he [Jacob] is not very different from Isaac, who "lifted up his eyes and saw" Rebekah falling off a camel (23:63); Isaac then recognized her as his bride. Nor is Shechem's "sighting" of Dinah different from Jacob's "seeing" the beautiful Rachel (29:10).²¹⁸ These acts of 'seeing' by male characters which lead to marriage and intimacy in Genesis 24 and 29, indicates a "seeing-affection-marriage" relationship that forms part of the narrative structure in Genesis 34. Sheres further argues that the term "seeing" to invoke love (as well as lust) is pervasive in Genesis. Isaac falls in love with Rebekah and Jacob falls in love with Rachel after merely "seeing" the women. While the actions which follow Shechem's act of "seeing" Dinah

²¹⁸ Sheres, *Dinah's Rebellion*, 84.

are much more provocative than those of Genesis 24 and 29, Dinah will also be the recipient of Shechem's love and affection.

According to the common interpretation, Genesis 34.2 depicts the rape of Dinah by Shechem. However, Nicolas Wyatt has studied the vocabulary of verse two and concludes that such a common interpretation is not supported by the text's grammatical construction. Wyatt states:

The verb *lāqah* need not have the sense of 'seize' of RSV: in v. 4 it has the more neutral sense of 'get' in the phrase 'Get me this girl as a wife.' Its basic meaning here is 'to take sexually, as in marriage.' Dinah may have been a reluctant conquest, but we are not told.²¹⁹

Wyatt's translation of Genesis 34.1-3 is much more positive,

- 1 Dinah went out to visit the women of the land.
- 2 And Shechem, the prince of the land, saw her and took her, and lay with her and made love to her.
- 3 And his heart clove to Dinah and he loved the young woman and spoke tenderly to her.²²⁰

Tammi J. Schneider also observes that the Hebrew verb לקח ("to take") is the same verb used in the standard term used for "to take a wife."²²¹ Schneider argues that "standing alone the word does not mean to rape, but when used with a woman as the object the connotation is that a sexual encounter of some sort is involved, even marriage."²²²

Wyatt's and Schneider's argument of לקח ("to take") to denote a marriage can also be supported through a grammatical comparison of Genesis 24, 29, and 34. The verb לקח ("to take") is present in two separate but related occasions in Genesis 24 as both instances refer to Rebekah being taken in marriage. Genesis 24.51 reads: "Look, Rebekah

²¹⁹ Nicolas Wyatt, "The Story of Dinah and Shechem," *Ugarit-Forschungen* 22 (1991), 435.

²²⁰ Wyatt, "The Story of Dinah and Shechem," 436.

²²¹ Tammi J. Schneider, *Mothers of Promise: Women in the Book of Genesis* (Michigan: Baker Academic, 2008), 143.

²²² Schneider, *Mother's of Promise*, 143.

is before you, take (לקח) her and go, and let her be the wife of your master's son, as the Lord has spoken." Genesis 24.67 also reads: "Then Isaac brought her into his mother Sarah's tent. He took (לקח) Rebekah, and she became his wife; and he loved her. So Isaac was comforted after his mother's death." The use of the verb "to take" in Genesis 29 is also used in reference to taking a wife. It is used in reference to Jacob taking Leah as his wife as a result of Laban's trickery. Genesis 29.23 reads: "But in the evening he took (לקח) his daughter Leah and brought her to Jacob; and he went in to her." And, finally, in Genesis 34.2 the verb לקח ("to take") is used when Shechem "takes" Dinah with the intention of marrying her. In each betrothal narrative the verb לקח ("to take") is used in reference to taking a wife and in each instance the verb follows the same grammatical form, Qal 3ms imperfect with the waw consecutive.

Indeed, in the very next verse we read: נפשו בדינה בת־יעקב ויאהב את־הנער על־לב הנער ("and his soul was drawn to Dinah the daughter of Jacob he loved the maiden tenderly"). Here, Shechem is presented as a loving and affectionate individual. The verb דבק ("to desire" or "to cleave") precedes the noun נפש ("soul"),²²³ which indicates Shechem's affection for Dinah. The sexual act and affections of Shechem are very closely related and reveal a genuine affection on Shechem's part as it did with both Isaac and Jacob. Schneider proposes that the verb דבק ("to desire" or "to cleave") is suggestive of Shechem's act of bonding with Dinah.²²⁴

This verb is what the Deity intends men to do to women, as in the explanation why a man leaves his father and mother to cling to his wife,

²²³ Or, "seat of emotions and passion: desire," See Francis Brown, S.R. Driver, Charles Briggs, *Hebrew and English Lexicon of the Old Testament* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1951), 660.

²²⁴ Schneider, *Mothers of Promise*, 145.

according to 2:24. It may not follow in modern cases of rape, but it is what the Deity intends, according to the book where the case appears.²²⁵

Ita Sheres also draws upon Genesis 2.24 and the Garden of Eden as she argues that Shechem's act of speaking to Dinah was indicative of his recognition of Dinah's worth and value as a person.²²⁶

Indeed, speaking to a person, beloved or not, is a sign of recognition as well as a measure of respect and equality. In the Dinah narrative, the combination of "cleaving," "loving," and "speaking" places Shechem in the tradition of the Garden of Eden, where the narrators explicitly maintain that: "This is why a man should leave his father and his mother and cleave to his woman (wife) and they will be one flesh" (2:24).²²⁷

In Genesis 24, Abraham's servant represents Isaac as Isaac remains absent from his betrothal scene. When Isaac does encounter Rebekah, no words are spoken as Isaac leads Rebekah into his mother's tent where she becomes his wife and Isaac shows his love towards her. Love is also illustrated in Genesis 29 as Jacob labored seven years before Laban blessed the marriage between Jacob and his daughter. And, despite being tricked into a marriage with Rachel's sister Leah, Jacob never abandoned his promise to Rachel. At the permitted time, Jacob "went into" Rachel to legalize their marriage, and Jacob "loved" Rachel more than he loved Leah (Genesis 29.30). In all three narratives "love" is written into the text by the narrator and in all instances, "love" takes the same grammatical form: waw consecutive, Qal 3ms imperfect, translating as "and he loved her" (וַיֵּאָהֱבָה). Therefore, when comparing the love of Isaac, Jacob, and Shechem, no grammatical differences arise. Verse three, therefore, is characterized by love. As Sheres writes, "it expresses in tender terms the love that Shechem felt for Dinah. By comparison

²²⁵ Schneider, *Mothers of Promise*, 145.

²²⁶ Sheres, *Dinah's Rebellion*, 85-86.

²²⁷ Sheres, *Dinah's Rebellion*, 86.

with the other stories of “falling in love,” the impression is that this one too was immediate and passionate.”²²⁸ Schneider argues that “there are few instances in the Hebrew Bible where an individual loves another and the love is reciprocated.”²²⁹ Therefore, to deny the act of love between Shechem and Dinah because Dinah does not emotive or verbalize such love, is to deny the Hebrew Bible of love altogether.

Genesis 34.4 concerns Shechem’s meeting with his father. The text reads: לאשה (“So Shechem spoke to Hamor his father saying, ‘Get me this maiden for a wife’”). This is the third element of Alter’s type-scene: the sharing of news with a family member(s). In Genesis 24, Rebekah shares the news with her brother Laban, Genesis 29, Rachel shares news with her father Laban, and in Genesis 34 Shechem shares the news with his father Hamor. Shechem uses the verb לקח (“to take” or “to get”), which takes the Qal 2ms imperative form. In all three type-scenes, there is not only the sharing of the news, but also a certain amount of authority that is exercised by the male characters. The imperative form is used to express a command and exhibits power, authority, or control. The same form of the verb is also used in Genesis 24. In Genesis 24.3-4, Abraham speaks to his servant telling him to go into the country of his kindred and take a wife for his son Isaac. In Genesis 29.21, Jacob uses the 2ms imperative for the verb הבה (“give”), when speaking to Laban saying, “Give me my wife that I may go into her.” The three betrothal narratives again follow the same grammatical construction in which an imperative verb precedes the verb “to love.”

²²⁸ Sheres, *Dinah’s Rebellion*, 85.

²²⁹ Schneider, *Mothers of Promise*, 145.

The verb לקח (“to take” or “to get”) is used again in verse 4 to express the act of “taking a wife” as previously used in Genesis 34.2. Further use of the verb emphasizes Shechem’s genuine desire to enter into a marriage with Dinah.²³⁰ Shechem refers to Dinah as ילדה a “maiden” and as Scholz suggests, this verb is only used in the biblical literature in two other instances and denotes a sexually mature young woman.²³¹ Such designation indicates that Dinah was of an acceptable age and maturation for marriage. Therefore, in terms of the verb construction of Genesis 34.4 and the context surrounding the verbs, Shechem vowed to take Dinah as his legitimate wife and shared the nature of his interest in Dinah with his father, Hamor. The form of the verb לקח used by Shechem takes the form Qal, imperative 2ms. The Hebrew imperative is only found in positive requests. In the case of negative requests the imperative is replaced by the future tense. Therefore, when evaluating the cause of Shechem’s behavior, the positive use of the verb “to get” in Shechem’s request for Dinah suggests an affirmative request.

Genesis 34.5 reveals Jacob hearing the news of his daughter as the text reads: ויעקב שמע כי טמא את־דינה בתו היו את־מקנהו הדשב יעקב והחרש עד־באם (“Now Jacob heard that he had defiled his daughter but his sons were with the cattle in the field. So Jacob held his peace until they came”). Genesis 34.5 also represents the third element of the type-scene: the gesture of hospitality. Jacob heard the news of his daughter but the issue of hospitality is left unresolved on account of the sexual encounter. Jacob does not want revenge for the defilement of his daughter because there was nothing left for him to avenge. Dinah’s

²³⁰ Use of the verb לקח in the context of “taking a wife” is used elsewhere in the Hebrew Bible/Old Testament. See for example, Genesis 24.7; Genesis 12.19; Genesis 28.2; Genesis 28.6; Deuteronomy 21.11; 1 Samuel 24.40; and Hosea 1.2.

²³¹ Scholz, *Rape Plots*, 143.

virginity was lost and that was the only thing of value to Jacob. Davies states “in laws concerning the rape of a virgin who was not engaged to be married, the real victim was considered to be her father, and it was he who received the appropriate monetary compensation.”²³² In Genesis 24, Abraham’s servant is invited into the home of Rebekah’s mother to share in a meal with Rebekah’s family and Jacob is offered food and shelter in the home of Laban and his family. In the betrothals of Rebekah and Rachel, the bride’s family was present at the reception of the guest, however, as Dinah’s complete family was unable to attend, Jacob held his peace until his sons returned. Jacob’s “inactivity” has been heavily criticized by scholars who claim that Jacob emits feminine characteristics including, quiescence, passivity, and dependence.²³³ Lynn Bechtel, however, argues that Jacob’s inactivity was a political strategy:

Jacob is also willing to include outsiders who honor the group values, customs, and ideals. ‘Outsiders’ can become ‘insiders’ on the basis of allegiance. On the surface this attitude appears to threaten the existence of the group, but in the long run it promotes the well-being and longevity of the group.²³⁴

Jacob views the exogamous marriage of Shechem and Dinah as beneficial to his tribe both politically and socially as an allegiance with the Hivites would strengthen the Israelites. Frank Yamada argues that as Jacob “holds his peace” he is “using discernment

²³² Davies, *The Dissenting Reader*, 2.

²³³ Bechtel, “What if Dinah is Not Raped?,” 35.

²³⁴ Bechtel, “What if Dinah is Not Raped?,” 35.

and a level head in order to make the best possible decision.”²³⁵ Jacob could see how a marriage between Dinah and Shechem would create a bridge between two nations.²³⁶

Alter argues that in the betrothal narrative of Ruth and Boaz the type-scene element of the “gesture of hospitality” does not occur according to conventional terms. Ruth is not identified as a young girl who is dependent upon her paternal household, therefore, the news of her encounter is not shared with her family, just as her family is not invited to share in a meal with Boaz. The marriage of Ruth and Boaz is also a marriage between an Israelite and a non-Israelite. With respect to Alter’s position on the betrothal narrative of Ruth and Boaz and the omission of certain betrothal elements, Genesis 34.5 may also be a “technical manipulation of a literary convention for the sheer pleasure of play with the convention.”²³⁷ Genesis 34.1-5 then provides the necessary structure for a betrothal type-scene and sets the framework for the formal state of engagement.

Genesis 34.6-7 describes the events which follow Jacob hearing the news of his daughter as the text reads: ויחר להם מאד כי־נבלה עשה בישראל לשכב את־בת־יעקב וכן לא יעשה, ויצא חמור אבי־שכם אל־יעקב לדבר אתו ובני יעקב באו מן־השדה כשמעם ויתעצבו האנשים “and Hamor went out the father of Shechem to Jacob to speak with him, the sons of Jacob came in from the field when they heard of it and the men were indignant and were very angry because he had wrought folly in Israel in lying with Jacob’s daughter such a thing ought not to be done.”

²³⁵ Frank Yamada, “Dealing With Rape (In) Narrative (Genesis 34): Ethics of the Other and a Text in Conflict” *The Meanings We Choose: Hermeneutical Ethics, Indeterminacy and the Conflict of Interpretations*, 152.

²³⁶ For further analysis on this important point see chapter four below.

²³⁷ Alter, *The Art of Biblical Narrative*, 59.

Here the reader, for the first time, sees that the sharing of news with the family takes a new twist, a violation of the convention as it were, and sets up the atrocity, which takes place later in the chapter. These verses in particular are important to Genesis 34 as a whole as they set forth the massacre of the Hivites by Simeon and Levi. The issue of hospitality, therefore, is clouded by the actions of Simeon and Levi.

Verses 6 and 7 are also to be considered the verses which bring two conflicting families together for the forthcoming betrothal negotiations (element 4). Parry proposes that verses 5, 6, and 7 are “setting the Scene for the negotiations. All the characters have been maneuvered into place and the tension has been ratcheted up as a potentially explosive encounter is about to commence.”²³⁸ As the representative of Isaac’s family, Abraham’s servant and Rebekah’s family came together before discussing the terms of the betrothal arrangement and, in a similar manner, Jacob and Rachel’s family came together to discuss the terms of their betrothal arrangement.

Genesis 34.8-9 reads: נא אתה לו לאשה והתחתנו אתנו בנתיכם תתנו-לנו ואת-בנותינו תקחו לכם (“but Hamor spoke with them saying Shechem my son his soul longs for your daughter I pray you, give her to him in marriage make marriages with us your daughters give to us and our daughters take for yourselves”). Bechtel argues that the betrothal negotiation between Jacob and Hamor is presented in such a way to suggest the desire of attaining peace between the two tribes. “Dinah and Jacob, Hamor and Shechem are mediating figures between the inside group (the Jacobites) and the outside group (the Shechemites). . . Hamor and Jacob negotiate

²³⁸ Parry, *Old Testament Story and Christian Ethics*, 158.

and compromise, trying to settle things honorably; their aim is to bond, cooperate and live together.”²³⁹ Jacob and Hamor understand that a marriage between their families could offer each tribe security in the land and security in the growth of their tribes through exogamous marriage.

The narrator reports on the betrothal as Hamor makes the request for Dinah on behalf of his son just as Abraham’s servant makes a request for Rebekah (Genesis 24.58) and Jacob makes a request for Rachel (Genesis 29.21). In the betrothal arrangement between Rebekah and Isaac, Abraham’s servant adorns Rebekah with a nose ring and bracelets for her arms before discussing the terms of the betrothal with Rebekah’s family (Genesis 24.47). Following the betrothal negotiations, Abraham’s servant provides Rebekah, Laban, and their mother with gifts of jewelry made of silver and gold (Genesis 24.53). Discussing the conditions of the betrothal arrangement between Rachel and Jacob, Laban requests that Jacob serve him for a total of fourteen years before taking Rachel as his wife as Jacob held no possessions suitable for a betrothal negotiation (Genesis 29.18, 27). Esther Fuchs argues that the bride is regarded as more than a mere object. She writes:

The bride is not merely shown as a transferable object; she is often characterized as a prized object whose acquisition exacts a price from the bridegroom. The value of the biblical bride is determined in purely androcentric terms, for instance, according to her virginity and good looks (Gen. 24:16 and 29:17). While the betrothal type-scene makes no reference to the groom’s looks or virginity, these qualities are ascribed to the bride as signifiers of her special value.²⁴⁰

²³⁹ Bechtel, “What if Dinah is Not Raped?,” 35.

²⁴⁰ Fuchs, “Structure and Patriarchal Functions,” 49.

As in the preceding scenes, Hamor, on behalf of Shechem, makes a request for Dinah.

Hamor offered Dinah's family the opportunity to intermarry and also the prospect of trading in and owning the land inhabited by the Hivites (Genesis 34.9, 10). Commenting of the nature of Hamor's offering Parry notes:

He broadens out the discussion from one particular marriage to an alliance between the two peoples, in which the Israelites give their daughters to Hivite men and the Hivites give their daughters to Israelite men. . . The two groups will live together and the land will accommodate them both. Hamor urges the Israelites to dwell, to travel and to trade in the land. . . Hamor sees his son's love for Dinah as an opportunity to create an alliance between the two groups which will be mutually beneficial.²⁴¹

In each betrothal negotiation the family of the bride profited from the marriage in some manner. Genesis 34.8-9, therefore, functions according to the normative betrothal customs in which two families come together in a union and form relations which benefit each individual group. At this point, all the elements of the betrothal type-scene other than the marriage itself (which will not take place) are established.

3.5 Conclusion

If, therefore, one applies Alter's structural argument to the betrothal scene in Genesis 34, the narrative suggests a more positive interpretation, offering a kind of redemption for Dinah as a prospective wife and mother. In the literary study of biblical texts, betrothal type-scenes have been analyzed and interpreted by biblical scholars who claim that the biblical text is a work of literary art. Alter notes that in any artwork a "grid

²⁴¹ Parry, *Old Testament Story and Christian Ethics*, 158-159.

of conventions” is at the centre of the artistic communication. James Williams comments extensively on the nature of the creativity of literary conventions. He writes,

Conventions provide a stylized set of expectations that an audience can anticipate. A complex of information is presented compactly “at a glance” or “in a word” through the use of formal scenes, images and symbols. However, when the convention becomes highly predictable it ceases to give information that seems important and we cease to look or listen. There is therefore a dialectical tension between conventions, which maintain continuity with the past, and those elaborations and variations that present a new dramatic emphasis or new insight. It is important, then, to note not only formal patterns but also reworkings of these patterns that contribute to new plays of words, personages, images and symbols without complete departure from ancient forms.²⁴²

Genesis 34, therefore, functions according to Williams’ ideology of literary construction that suggests a reworking of the convention. Alter identifies five “requisite elements” of betrothal type-scenes, however, Martin suggests that the elements identified by Alter require augmentation and, therefore, offers supplements and additional elements to the betrothal type-scene convention.²⁴³ Martin concludes that by reworking the conventional elements of the type-scene, additional narratives can be identified with such literary techniques.²⁴⁴

Feminist biblical scholars have made the point that Genesis 34 has identifiable betrothal type-scene elements, however, these scholars have not fully committed to applying Alter’s type-scene conventions to the text. Robin Parry has identified Genesis 34 as a “Twisted ‘Betrothal Type-Scene’” and argues that “Genesis 34 may possibly be

²⁴² James G. Williams, “The Beautiful and the Barren: Conventions in Biblical Type-Scenes,” *Journal for the Study of the Old Testament* 17 (1980), 111-112.

²⁴³ Martin, “Betrothal Journey Narratives,” 508.

²⁴⁴ Through Martin’s reworking of Alter’s betrothal type-scene elements, Martin has expanded the type-scene schema to include a total of twelve betrothal type-scene elements. Martin’s betrothal elements are detailed and extend beyond the betrothal itself to include begetting children. Martin expansion leads to the inclusion of Genesis 24; Genesis 29; Exodus 2; Ruth; 1 Samuel 9; 1 Samuel 19; Tobit; and John 4 as betrothal journey narratives.

seen as a major distortion of a Betrothal Type-Scene. It is a story about the negotiations over a marriage: the very kind of story where one would expect to find such a Type-Scene.”²⁴⁵ Parry is reluctant to attribute Genesis 34 with the designation of a type-scene for three specific reasons: 1) the potential bridegroom “sees” a girl which is followed by a sexual act and the profession of love. There is no well present and it is the female who travels to a foreign land; 2) Shechem and Hamor hurry to negotiate with Jacob and his family; Dinah does not run to tell her family; and 3) there is no welcoming meal.²⁴⁶ Parry states that the narrative “gets some of its power by its *not* following the Type-Scene pattern at key places.”²⁴⁷ However, through a detailed reading and analysis of Genesis 34 as presented in this chapter, the issues which Parry identifies as “problematic” are easily understood as literary features. As Alter purposes, the type-scene does not need to be followed in all conventional elements, therefore, a “reworking” of the text offers Genesis 34 a distinctive literary construction.

Suzanne Scholz also makes a literary observation concerning Genesis 34 and suggests that Genesis 34 may be identified as a betrothal type-scene. “Although this study isolates Genesis 34 from its surrounding context, the narrative belongs to a larger body of texts. They constitute the genre of betrothal type-scenes.”²⁴⁸ Scholz also cites favorably Alter and his “fixed type-scene pattern.” Alter’s list of betrothal type-scenes includes Rebekah and Isaac (Genesis 24); Rachel and Jacob (Genesis 29); the daughters of Reuel and Moses (Exodus 2); Ruth and Boaz (book of Ruth); the young women and Saul (1

²⁴⁵ Parry, *Old Testament Story and Christian Ethics*, 154.

²⁴⁶ Parry, *Old Testament Story and Christian Ethics*, 154.

²⁴⁷ Parry, *Old Testament Story and Christian Ethics*, 154.

²⁴⁸ Scholz, *Rape Plots*, 131.

Samuel 9); and the Philistine daughter and Samson (Judges 14). However, Scholz notes that these type-scenes identified by Alter do not function according to a fixed pattern. Scholz states, "As these examples demonstrate variations can occur within the basic pattern. For instance, not every element is always present and the sequence can be changed."²⁴⁹

Scholz's inclusion of Genesis 34 as a betrothal type-scene is heavily influenced by the events present in the betrothal narratives identified by Alter. "Like Ruth (Ruth 2:22), Dinah goes out (יצא). Like Rebekah (Genesis 24:24, 26), Dinah is called a "young woman" (נערה). Similar to the scene in Samson (Judges 14:5-6), Genesis 34 omits the ritual at the well."²⁵⁰ These similarities identified by Scholz, she claims, "support the claim that Genesis 34 belongs to the genre of the betrothal scene."²⁵¹ Scholz remains reluctant to wholeheartedly designate Genesis 34 as a betrothal narrative as she claims it is a betrothal narrative "gone awry" as Dinah's rape is problematic for Scholz.

While Fuchs does not identify Genesis 34 as a betrothal type-scene, her understanding of betrothal narratives can be applied to Genesis 34. Fuchs' understanding of betrothal narratives is formulated upon the meaning it has for each individual as she suggests that the betrothal scene does not function the same way for the groom and for the bride. "For the groom" writes Fuchs, "the betrothal scene signals his initiation into adult independence and autonomy."²⁵² Shechem proves himself worthy of the transition from youth into adulthood through his agreement to become circumcised and, therefore,

²⁴⁹ Scholz, *Rape Plots*, 131.

²⁵⁰ Scholz, *Rape Plots*, 131. Scholz has identified further similarities between Genesis 34 and betrothal narratives identified by Alter. For a complete reading of these similarities see pp. 131-132.

²⁵¹ Scholz, *Rape Plots*, 132.

²⁵² Fuchs, "Structure and Patriarchal Functions," 49.

be recognized as an Israelite. For the bride, the betrothal narrative functions as a means of transfer from her father's custody to her husband's custody.²⁵³ Initially, Dinah is in the custody of her father and it was he who had authority over her. Transferring Dinah over to Shechem, Jacob would relinquish his custody of Dinah to Shechem and Dinah would then function according to his dominion. In respect to Fuchs' argument of the function of betrothal narratives, Genesis 34 does appropriately fit such categorization as Shechem advanced in his position while Dinah's status greatly diminished.

While attempts have been made to identify Genesis 34 as a betrothal narrative, scholars have remained unsuccessful in their efforts. However, if Alter's betrothal type-scene convention is applied to Genesis 34 and a reworking of the structure of the elements is demonstrated, Genesis 34 can be understood as a recurrent block of narrative with an identifiable structure. Therefore, Genesis 34 can be interpreted as a betrothal type-scene as purposed by Alter. The betrothal type-scene begins with (1) Dinah's emergence to a foreign land. (2) Dinah is seen by Shechem in a meeting scene and a bond is established between. Following that, (3) Shechem shares the news of his encounter with his father, Hamor, and a gesture of hospitality is exhibited on Jacob's behalf. The final element of Alter's type-scene is the betrothal itself. Here, (4) Shechem makes a request that Dinah be taken in marriage and Hamor and Jacob enter into betrothal negotiations. Reading Genesis 34 in light of Genesis 24 and 29, it is clearly evident that Genesis 34 fits the criteria of a betrothal type-scene. Therefore, through the application of

²⁵³ Fuchs, "Structure and Patriarchal Functions," 49.

Alter's structural arrangement to Genesis 34, Dinah can be redeemed as a potential wife and mother.

Chapter Four: Feminist Analysis

4.1 Introduction

The previous chapter provided a discussion of Robert Alter's structural arrangement of a betrothal type-scene. Applying the literary structure of a betrothal type-scene to Genesis 34 offers a positive interpretation of the text and helps to reclaim Dinah's position with the narrative. Such a positive interpretation offers redemption for Dinah as a prospective wife and mother. In order to understand why identifying Dinah in terms of a betrothal narrative is relevant, an analysis of marital unions in ancient Israel is necessary. Understanding Dinah in the positive female role of wife and mother will offer clarification as to why identifying Dinah in these terms is necessary for her redemption.

The following chapter will, therefore, discuss the advantages of identifying Dinah as a potential wife and mother from a feminist-literary approach. A feminist analysis of the text is necessary in order that Dinah be reclaimed from the overwhelming amount of misogynist interpretations. In this chapter I will discuss three themes to show how Dinah can be redeemed: (1) *potential redemption*; (2) *matrilineal descent vs. patrilineal descent*; and (3) *ritual purity vs. ethnic purity*. The role of the Israelite woman as wife and mother will be discussed under the theme *potential redemption*. An analysis of Carol Meyers' book, *Discovering Eve: Ancient Israelite Women in Context*, will offer a positive interpretation of the female role in ancient Israel and applied to Dinah. Under the theme *matrilineal descent vs. patrilineal descent*, the advantages of matrilineal descent will be

discussed and applied to Genesis 34. As we shall see, identifying Dinah through a matrilineal descent offers Dinah and Shechem many advantages not offered through patrilineal descent. Under the theme *ritual purity vs. ethnic purity*, the issue of exogamous marriage in ancient Israel will be discussed. The ban on exogamous marriage is one that is only formulated in the book of Ezra and implies an ethnic ideology concerned only with race. In Genesis 34, however, the narrator suggests that Dinah's brothers, Simeon and Levi, are also concerned with the idea of ethnic purity and not of ritual purity. Exploring these themes will offer an understanding of Dinah's redemption in terms of her marital status and will help to reclaim Dinah's position within Genesis 34.

4.2 Potential Redemption

An Israelite woman's honour is closely tied to her potential for motherhood as her social status in ancient Israel is identified in terms of her reproductive ability. As Exum states, "Mother (legitimate wife) was the only positive role available to most women in ancient Israelite society."²⁵⁴ In order for Dinah to gain social standing she needed to find a husband and have children. In some sense, therefore, Dinah finds "liberation" in the tent of Shechem insofar as she can, potentially at least, seek to attain status through having children, something that a legitimate marriage to Shechem would help to ensure. But while Shechem's offer of marriage would help to reclaim Dinah to a certain degree, the Israelite response in the form of Simeon's and Levi's actions, is to leave her vulnerable and with no status.

²⁵⁴ Exum, *Fragmented Women*, 69.

Dinah's 'going out' (יצא) suggests an act of independence and self-reliance, an act not common among ancient Israelite women. As the betrothal narrative of an independent woman, Genesis 34 sets precedence for future Israelite women to take ownership over their status, or at least that such ownership is a possibility.²⁵⁵ If Dinah's going out is, as I have argued in chapter three, a way to achieve societal measure through marriage, the narrator suggests that Simeon and Levi are to blame for precluding that possibility. Simeon and Levi's anger towards the Hivites stems from an attitude which reflects men's control and ownership over women, and by their desire to take back what belonged to them, i.e., Dinah's virginity. The narrator, like Jacob, condemns the actions of Simeon and Levi. Genesis 34.30 reads:

Then Jacob said to Simeon and Levi, "You have brought trouble on me by making me odious to the inhabitants of the land, the Canaanites and the Perizzites; my numbers are few, and if they gather themselves against me and attack me, I shall be destroyed, both I and my household."

Jacob's fear on account of Simeon and Levi's injustice is based on Jacob's fear that his business ties will be severed. If Jacob cannot maintain a business relationship with Hamor, the Hivites, and other tribes in the land of Canaan, his working relationships will be jeopardized.

²⁵⁵ See for example, the book of Ruth. Following the death of her husband, Ruth, understanding the importance of attaining social status in ancient Israel, vows to remarry. Ruth and Naomi travel to Bethlehem at the beginning of the barley harvest in an effort to attract a man. Ruth took the opportunity to glean in the fields behind the working men, hoping to catch the eye of a man. Ruth finds herself gathering barley behind Boaz, who was immediately drawn to the young woman. Boaz treated Ruth with kindness after learning of the death of her husband. Naomi was pleased to hear that Ruth had found favor in the eyes of Boaz as he was a distant relative. Even more determined to win over the heart of Boaz, Naomi devised a plan for Ruth to seduce Boaz after a night of eating and drinking. Ruth, however, did not seduce Boaz but he did become convinced that he needed to help the young woman. After conversing with a friend, Boaz decided to purchase land from Naomi and at the same time, acquire Ruth. Ruth and Boaz wed and Ruth bore a son named Obed, who would become a progenitor of David. In some sense, therefore, exogamy is built into the Messianic line, as the story of Judah and Tamar also indicates.

That motherhood is so important to Israelite society is indicated in other narratives in Genesis. In the narrative of Abraham and Sarah, the narrator immediately relays to the reader that Sarah is sterile in Genesis 11.29-30. The narrator, therefore, causes a tension in the narrative that is only resolved with the birth of Isaac in Genesis 21. A similar, but briefer tension is evoked in Rebekah and Isaac's narrative insofar as Rebekah is also said to be barren. Similarly, Rachel must also overcome her barrenness and offers Jacob her maidservant in her place before bearing a son for Jacob. Though there is no indication that Dinah is barren, she must follow in the footsteps of Genesis' matriarchs and have children to achieve social status. Exum states: "woman as mother is on a pedestal; in her non-sexual role she is idealized."²⁵⁶ That Simeon and Levi foreclose this possibility may indicate, at a deeper level, that the narrative of Genesis 34 may have more to do with a condemnation of Simeon and Levi than it was with the blaming of the victim Dinah.

Those who are concerned with the relationship between men and women in the Hebrew Bible will acknowledge the unequal representation between the sexes. Carol Meyers has recognized that the misrepresentation of Israelite woman and has done much to foreground the status of the Israelite woman in her text *Discovering Eve: Ancient Israelite Women in Context*. She points out that,

The Israelite woman is largely unseen in the pages of the Hebrew Bible. To presume to locate her in biblical narrative would be to commit a fundamental methodological error. To assume we can see nameless

²⁵⁶ Exum, *Fragmented Women*, 68.

women in the activities of the named ones is to believe we can see an entire structure when only a fragment of it is visible.²⁵⁷

Meyers' study of Israelite women from an anthropological and sociological perspective has done much to construct a positive representation, with which all Israelite women including Dinah can identify. A brief summary of Meyers' argument is now appropriate.

The society of ancient Israel was characterized by two different levels of operation, the public and the private. Meyers suggests that much of the feminist discussion of male dominance or patriarchal patterns draws upon the recognition of societal structure.²⁵⁸ The public and private spheres are separated by two kinds of activity. The private sphere, also known as the domestic sphere, is characterized by activity which surrounds the home and the reproductive processes that originate there. The public sphere includes that which is outside the home. These activities include: collective behaviour, legal or judicial regulation of supradomestic matters, and responses to conditions that transcend the needs or problems of individual families.²⁵⁹ The private/domestic and public spheres are also easily divided and identify with a particular biological gender. The private/domestic sphere is identified with females, and the public with males. Meyers simplifies the gender division according to the "natural" and the "cultural." Meyers states, "Females are said to be closer to the 'natural' functions taking place in the domestic contexts; males are then more closely identified with supradomestic

²⁵⁷ Carol Meyers, *Discovering Eve: Ancient Israelite Women in Context* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1988), 4-5.

²⁵⁸ Meyers, *Discovering Eve*, 32.

²⁵⁹ Meyers, *Discovering Eve*, 32.

‘cultural’ life.”²⁶⁰ A closer examination of the private/domestic sphere will enable an understanding of the liberation Dinah would have acquired had Simeon and Levi not prohibited such an opportunity.

The ancient Israelite household was the basic economic unit in traditional and agricultural societies. As such, “the economic activities of a household are at the very heart of its functional identity as a unit of social organization.”²⁶¹ Each household was responsible and provided for its individual needs. According to Meyers, archaeological evidence supports the self-sufficiency of Israelite households. These responsibilities included those commodities which were essential for their existence. “The Israelites depended on no outside markets for any of their essentials; and the relative coarseness of their own wares and the modesty in the size of their buildings further suggests a no-frills subsistence economy.”²⁶² Archaeological discoveries which support a self-sufficient existence include harvest tools, bread ovens and cooking utensils, pottery, and storage materials. As the activities of the private/domestic sphere are identified in terms of females it is, therefore, acceptable to attribute women with involvement of all economical aspects of Israelite life, which included, “producing materials, allocating them, and transforming them into consumables.”²⁶³ Israelite women, therefore, were in charge of food activities, namely food preparation. Meyers cites 1 Samuel 8.11-13 as providing evidence for the daunting task women had of preparing food.

These will be the ways of the king who will reign over you: he will take your sons and appoint them to his chariots and to be his horsemen, and to

²⁶⁰ Meyers, *Discovering Eve*, 32.

²⁶¹ Meyers, *Discovering Eve*, 142.

²⁶² Meyers, *Discovering Eve*, 144.

²⁶³ Meyers, *Discovering Eve*, 145.

run before his chariots. . . , and some to plow his ground and to reap his harvest, and to make his implements of war and the equipment of his chariots. He will take your daughters to be perfumers and cooks and bakers.

It is passages like this from 1 Samuel that provide evidence as to the duties and responsibilities of women. In addition to being responsible for food preparation women would have also been responsible for the allocation of resources. Such a responsibility would have required great knowledge and skill of food consumption for traditional and agricultural households. Women would also have attained technological skills necessary to process foods and other goods including: soap, brew beer, process grain, dry vegetables, and transform raw produce into cooked foods. It is skills such as these which greatly contribute to the Israelite woman's domestic power and status.²⁶⁴ Meyers suggests that the division of labour in ancient Israel is representative of a "complementary pattern."

[C]ertain sets of essential tasks were the responsibility of one gender or the other. (These were also probably age-specific tasks.) Because these tasks were essential for survival, the viability of the household unity rested on the specific contributions of its members according to gender, creating a situation of interdependence. Also, the flexibility of gender identification with other sets of subsistence tasks would have created another kind of complementarity, with various household members contributing according to their availability.²⁶⁵

The ancient Israelite household is, therefore, indicative of a balanced arrangement in which both women and men contribute to the economic existence and prosperity.

²⁶⁴ Meyers, *Discovering Eve*, 147.

²⁶⁵ Meyers, *Discovering Eve*, 148.

In addition to the economic functioning of the ancient Israelite household, Israelite women also contributed significantly to the social organization and education of the household. As the primary caretakers of young children, Israelite women were in charge of the social rearing of her young, therefore, introducing her children to a sizeable proportion of the household tasks, modes of behaviour, cultural forms, and norms and values of their society.²⁶⁶ Both mother and father were responsible for what Meyers categorizes as “wisdom—the technical and social skills, and values—of daily life.” Meyers writes, “The dissemination of wisdom within the household would belong to the category of socialization and pragmatic education. Certainly both parents shared in this responsibility.”²⁶⁷ Proverbs 1.8 attests to the shared responsibility of socializing and educating Israelite children, “Hear, my son [child], your father’s instruction, and reject not your mother’s teaching.” Furthermore, Proverbs 6.20 reads, “My son, keep your father’s commandment, and forsake not your mother’s teaching.”

While many tasks were shared responsibilities, shared by both mother and father, there were responsibilities which were strictly the woman’s domain. These responsibilities include the rearing of infants and young children. As children of young ages required much paternal attention, it was the mother that took on this paternal responsibility. Israelite children were generally weaned until the age of three, and, therefore, completely dependent upon their mother for their survival. A father would not have been able to provide for young children in the same manner as the mother; however, as children grew in age, interaction with their father would have increased. Female

²⁶⁶ Meyers, *Discovering Eve*, 149.

²⁶⁷ Meyers, *Discovering Eve*, 150.

children would have aligned themselves with their mother and learned the domestic female role; similarly, male children would have aligned themselves with their father and learned the tasks which were part of the public sphere.

The traditional and agricultural society of ancient Israel also functioned according to judicial laws. These laws saw prominence given to filial piety and lifelong loyalty and respect, of both young and adult children.²⁶⁸ “Obedience of offspring to parents” writes Meyers, “is critical in the functioning of even simple farm households and especially in complex ones. It also assures that the surviving elderly, who are unable to contribute to the livelihood of the household, will be properly cared for.”²⁶⁹ As such, the jural functioning of the Israelite family was dependent upon the recognition of its senior family members, a hierarchy of sorts which was not dependent upon biological gender. Therefore, female family members held positions of prominence and considerable informal power and legal authority.²⁷⁰ Meyers states,

When the household occupies the preeminent place in a society, women have a strong role in decision making and consequently exercise considerable power in the household. . . . Women, particularly in the older generation, gain authority—the recognized right to control—by virtue of having more people with whom to interact and control.²⁷¹

The role of women was significant in the ancient Israelite household. A woman’s participation and expertise in matters relating to the domestic realm gave her the right to control and have authority over particular family matters.

²⁶⁸ Meyers, *Discovering Eve*, 157.

²⁶⁹ Meyers, *Discovering Eve*, 157.

²⁷⁰ Meyers, *Discovering Eve*, 157.

²⁷¹ Meyers, *Discovering Eve*, 174-175.

Israelite women preformed manifold tasks every day, and these tasks involved decisions about economic resources. . . the technical skills of these women made them "wise women" and thus instructors to those less skilled.²⁷²

Female power was considerable in ancient Israel. If, therefore, one applies Carol Meyers' understanding of ancient Israelite women to Genesis 34, Dinah can be redeemed from the clutches of patriarchy.

A marriage to Shechem would have ensured Dinah a prominent position in Israelite society. Dinah would have had dominion over the private/domestic sphere in which her authority would have reigned supreme. Dinah's role as a wife and mother would have given her prominence in the economic functioning of her household and a highly regarded position in the socialization, education, and rearing of her offspring. Legally, Dinah would have great influence over her family and would have entered into an equal partnership in her marriage to Shechem. Simeon and Levi took Dinah's chance of prosperity away from her when they murdered Shechem. Furthermore, Dinah would not have been given the opportunity to enter into a marriage with another man as she was no longer a virgin and, therefore, no longer desired. Dinah would have been subject to remain in the house of her father and continue a socially unsatisfying existence as an unwed, childless Israelite woman.

²⁷² Meyers, *Discovering Eve*, 175.

4.3 Matrilineal Descent vs. Patrilineal Descent

Eryl Davies argues that “by defining women in terms of their affiliation with the men of their lives, the biblical narrators imply that they were of interest only in relation to the male protagonist, and that they were in effect, merely the possession of their husband or father.”²⁷³ Interesting enough when Dinah is first mentioned in the narrative, she is identified in terms of her affiliation with her mother Leah. Dinah is called a בת־לאה “daughter of Leah” in Genesis 34.1. When Dinah is next mentioned in Genesis 34.3, she is identified as a “daughter of Jacob” (בת־יעקב). The identification of Dinah with both Leah and Jacob suggests that the narrator may favour both the female and male presence within the narrative.

In Genesis 24.25-26, Rebekah is identified in patrilineal terms. The text reads,

Before he had finished praying, Rebekah came out with her jar on her shoulder. She was the daughter of Bethuel son of Milcah, who was the wife of Abraham’s brother Nahor. The girl was very beautiful, a virgin, no man had ever lain with her. She went down to the spring, filled her jar and came up again.

In a similar manner, Rachel is identified in patrilineal terms. Genesis 29.9-10 reads,

While he was still talking to them, Rachel came with her father’s sheep, for she was a shepherdess. When Jacob, daughter of Laban, his mother’s brother, and Laban’s sheep, he went over and rolled the stone away from the mouth of the well and watered his uncle’s sheep.

In addition to the patrilineal identification, each betrothal narrative exhibits traditional feminine and masculine roles ascribed by ancient Israelite culture. Rebekah and Rachel encounter their potential mates while performing the task of gathering water, a traditional

²⁷³ Davies, *The Dissenting Reader*, 64.

female role. Abraham's servant and Jacob, upon meeting Rebekah and Rachel, exhibit traditional dominant masculine behaviours. Abraham's servant demanded a drink of water from Rebekah while Jacob's display of his masculinity is shown through his physical strength as Jacob removes the rock covering the well. However, Dinah, identified through matrilineal lineage, does not act according to traditional female roles. Dinah goes out from her father's household to betroth a husband and secure her societal position in ancient Israel. Dinah's actions hardly resemble those of a submissive Israelite female but of an independent young woman, free of male bondage. Therefore, it may be argued that Dinah was identified matrilineally because of her self-reliance and her refusal to submit to male dominance. Rebekah and Rachel did not exhibit the same powerful characteristics as Dinah and their patrilineal lineage is a testament to their identification.

While Rebekah and Rachel are identified patrilineally, they both endure hardship in conceiving children. As a result, Rebekah and Rachel both experience difficulty in their efforts to maintain social status. The inability to conceive and bear children would ultimately jeopardize their positions in society. In Genesis 25.21-22, Rebekah struggled to bear a child for Isaac and Isaac pleads to the Lord to intervene. Also, in Genesis 35.16-21, Rachel endured difficulty conceiving and eventually died during childbirth. Another such wife in Genesis who is a model for such hardship is Sarah, wife of Abraham, as she was unable to conceive a son for her husband. Sarah was left with limited options and resorted to giving her maidservant, Hagar, to Abraham to bear him a son. Therefore, patrilineal identification does not necessarily result in a blissful marriage free of hardship and, therefore, not necessarily advantageous for the men or women of Israel.

Dinah's matrilineal identification is suggestive of her independence as Dinah does not follow the conventional role of female. Dinah goes out of her father's house without permission and with the intention of socializing with local women. Had Dinah abided by traditional roles ascribed for Israelite women, Dinah would have remained in her father's house. And although she may not have experienced her "humbling" (ענה) she may also have remained an unwed, childless woman without social status.

Cheryl Exum argues that matrilineage is important to the recognition of woman's position in the Hebrew Bible.

[A]cknowledging descent through mothers not only makes mothers extremely important—in itself problematic for patriarchy—it also competes with the recognition of descent from fathers; for whereas motherhood is biologically verifiable, fatherhood must be established.²⁷⁴

One method by which Genesis narrators establish patrilineage is by omitting women's names from the texts.²⁷⁵ The direct reference and acknowledgement of Leah as the mother of Dinah suggests the narrator's deliberate inclusion of matrilocal identity. In Genesis 24 and 29, matrilocal identification is not as easily recognized but still present through the text's symbolism.

"On the symbolic level" Exum writes, "Canaan, as the residence of the patriarchs, and Haran, as the home of the matriarchs, function in the story as metonyms for the father's place and the mother's place respectively."²⁷⁶ In Genesis 24.28, the narrator includes a subtle matrilineal reference. In Haran, Rebekah's "mother's household," Rebekah is betrothed on behalf of Isaac. Exum also suggests that the blessing she

²⁷⁴ Exum, *Fragmented Women*, 111.

²⁷⁵ Exum, *Fragmented Women*, 111.

²⁷⁶ Exum, *Fragmented Women*, 114.

receives as she leaves mother-identified Haran for father-identified Canaan “affirms descent through mothers.”²⁷⁷ Genesis 24.60 reads, “May your descendants possess the gate of those who hate them,” the descendants of Rebekah would, in fact, one day dominate those who hated her seed. In Genesis 29, matrilineal references on behalf of the narrator are also subtle. Jacob flees father-identified Canaan for mother-identified Haran. Jacob “settles in Haran, the mother’s place, with his mother’s brother, Laban. He marries his mother’s brother’s daughters and lives and serves in his maternal uncle’s household for twenty years.”²⁷⁸ Only when Jacob returns to Canaan does he reclaim his patrilineage. Identifying with the wife’s lineage is problematic for Genesis’ patriarchs as “lineage plays a crucial role in determining the inheritance of property and the proper lines of authority as well as for structuring relationships between groups.”²⁷⁹ However, Shechem and the whole of the Hivite tribe relinquished their Hivite nationality and were willing to identify as Israelites. Therefore, an uxori-local marriage²⁸⁰ did not deter Shechem from wanting to marry Dinah, in fact, becoming an Israelite was appealing to Shechem.

Matrilineal identification in Genesis 24, 29 and 34 suggests that women held prominent positions in ancient Israel. Narrators in Genesis, therefore, reflect egalitarian ideologies as well as reflecting Meyers’ understanding of ancient Israelite society. The subtle reference to matrilineage in Genesis 24, 29, and 34 may suggest that the Genesis

²⁷⁷ Exum, *Fragmented Women*, 115.

²⁷⁸ Exum, *Fragmented Women*, 115.

²⁷⁹ Exum, *Fragmented Women*, 113-114.

²⁸⁰ Uxori-local marriage is a marriage in which the husband lives with his wife’s family. See Exum, *Fragmented Women*, 114.

betrothal narratives are the product of the same narrator and, therefore, follow a similar literary technique.

Shayne Cohen has studied matrilineal lineage within a historical context and has developed an argument favouring a matrilineal identification. He argues that

according to Rabbinic law, from the second century of our era to the present, the offspring of a gentile mother and a Jewish father is a gentile, while the offspring of a Jewish mother and a gentile father is a Jew.²⁸¹

This, Cohen has identified as the *matrilineal principle*. In biblical times, the offspring of intermarriage was judged patrilineally. If an Israelite woman married a non-Israelite she thereby joined his family and his people and was lost to the people of Israel.²⁸² However, the offspring of an Israelite woman and foreign man were judged matrilineally only if the marriage was matrilocal, that is, only if the foreign husband joined the wife's domicile or clan. If the marriage was not matrilocal, that is, if the Israelite woman joined the house of her foreign husband, the children would be the same nationality as their father.²⁸³

Therefore, through the rite of circumcision in Genesis 34, Shechem was willing to enter into Dinah's family and the nation of Israel. Shechem would have no longer identified with the Hivite nation upon entering into the Israelite tribe, Shechem and his tribesmen would have severed all ties with the greater Hivite nation. Dinah and Shechem's offspring would, therefore, also be identified matrilineally as Israelites.

If, therefore, Genesis 34 is read through matrilineal lineage, Dinah becomes a prominent character with considerable power within the narrative. However, as the

²⁸¹ Shayne J.D. Cohen, "The Matrilineal Principle in Historical Perspective," *Judaism* 34 (1985): 5.

²⁸² Cohen, "The Matrilineal Principle in Historical Perspective," 7.

²⁸³ Cohen, "The Matrilineal Principle in Historical Perspective," 7.

narrator of Genesis 34 does not offer a discussion of advocate Dinah's matrilineal lineage, readers remain unaware of her prominent position within the narrative.

4.4 Ritual Purity vs. Ethnic Purity

According to betrothal narratives in Genesis, foreign women and foreign men intermarried into ancient Israel. Few patriarchal narratives in Genesis, however, suggest that a foreign wife is inferior to and less desirable than a woman of a man's own clan or ethnic-national clan.²⁸⁴ As Athalya Brenner suggests, exogamous marriage presents many advantages. She states,

Once the self-confidence of migrants grows, they begin to explore the benefits of intermarriage as a device for their cultural and political acceptance into their new environment. Prominent families set the trend, for they are more susceptible to fresh cultural influence and ethnic assimilation than other families. . . Intermarriage is a perfectly natural and political expedient.²⁸⁵

Genesis 34, therefore, represents the emergence of exogamous betrothal narratives which sets a precedent for future inter-ethnic martial unions including Judah and Tamar, Moses and Zipporah, and Ruth and Boaz. A marriage between an Israelite and a Gentile would ensure both cultural and political benefits. To suggest that a marriage between an Israelite and a Gentile is unwarranted on the basis of ethnicity minimizes the importance and advantages of exogamous relationships. Therefore, a discussion on the issue of marriage

²⁸⁴ Athalya Brenner, *The Israelite Woman: Social Role and Literary Type in Biblical Narrative* (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1994), 116.

²⁸⁵ Brenner, *The Israelite Woman*, 116-117.

between tribes will offer a deeper understanding of the underlying issues present in the narrative.

The overt narrative interest in the tale clearly lies with the male characters. The story of Dinah is not told from the perspective of a victimized woman, but from the point of view of what effect the rape has on the male characters. As Davies writes, the story concerns “the effect which the incident had upon the male participants in the story.”²⁸⁶ Dinah’s brothers, Simeon and Levi are so deeply affected by Shechem’s actions that they plot revenge: “When they heard of it, the men were indignant and very angry, because he had committed an outrage in Israel by lying with Jacob’s daughter, for such a thing ought not to be done in Israel” (Genesis 34.7). Jacob’s sons negotiate with Hamor and get the Hivites to agree to circumcision (Genesis 34.15). During circumcision, however, Simeon and Levi massacre Shechem, Hamor, and their tribe.

On the third day, when they were still in pain, two of the sons of Jacob, Simeon and Levi, Dinah’s brothers, took their swords and came against the city unawares, and killed all the males. They killed Hamor and his son Shechem with the sword, and took Dinah out of Shechem’s house, and went away (Genesis 34.25-26).

Simeon and Levi were aggrieved by their sister’s “humbling” (עֲנִיָּה) and, unlike their father Jacob, pursued a course of vengeance. Although Jacob reprimanded his sons for killing the Hivites, they justified their action by rhetorically asking Jacob, “Should our sister be treated like a whore?” Davies points out that from the patriarchal point of view, Simeon and Levi were the ones who did the actual suffering, not Dinah.

²⁸⁶ Davies, *The Dissenting Reader*, 56.

Although it was Dinah who had been raped, it was their rights which had been violated, their honour which had been impugned and their integrity which had been threatened. The concern of the brothers was not with the physical or emotional harm which had been inflicted upon their sister but with the damage that would be caused to their own reputation should she marry an uncircumcised man.²⁸⁷

Therefore, from the male point of view, the indignity suffered by the family was more important than the abuse suffered by Dinah. From a feminist perspective, however, it is legitimate to ask whether the narrative would have any force without the presence of the female character. One may well ask, what is the point of including Dinah in the narrative? What role does she play?

The inclusion of Dinah in the narrative on behalf of the narrator suggests the presence of an issue which extends beyond familial honour. Both the narrator and Jacob understood that it was not good for Israelites to be totally exclusive; Israel must live with other nations in the promised land.²⁸⁸ As a daughter of Jacob, a marriage between Dinah and Shechem would have acted as a means to bridge relations between nations; Simeon and Levi however, foreclosed this possibility.

In order to sharpen our understanding of the issues at stake in Genesis 34, it is important to make a distinction between ritual and ethnic purity. Ritual purity in the

²⁸⁷ Davies, *The Dissenting Reader*, 56.

²⁸⁸ King David had created friendly relations with King Hiram of Tyre and, therefore, when Solomon took over kingship from his father, Hiram wanted to continue that friendly relationship with Solomon. In 1 Kings 5, Hiram offered Solomon assistance in the construction of the temple. "So Hiram sent word to Solomon: I have received the message you sent me and will do all you want in providing cedar and pin longs. My men will haul them down from Lebanon to the sea, and I will float them' in rafts by sea to the place you specify. There I will separate them and you can take them away. And you are to grant my wish by providing food for my royal household" (1 Kings 5 8-9). A peaceful treaty was established between Hiram and Solomon and God blessed the arrangements between Israel and Sidonians. Israel was not completely independent or self-sufficient and God recognized the importance of Israel creating and maintaining relations with other nations.

context of Genesis 34 refers to the ritual act of circumcision and constitutes a marriage or fertility rite.²⁸⁹ Ethnic purity is concerned with purity of blood and, in this sense, a marital union between a Jew and a Gentile profanes (renders non-holy) the holy seed that is, the holy seed of Israel (Ezra 9.1-2). Readers in the past have blurred the distinctions between the two types of “purity” and have, therefore, participated in the condemnation of Dinah rather than Simeon and Levi, as I will show below.

For Simeon and Levi, the issue in Genesis 34 is one of ethnicity. Their speech to Hamor suggests that the issue is one of ritual purity, i.e. Shechem’s uncircumcised impure state, but, in fact, the narrator tells the reader that ritual purity is not the real issue for Simeon and Levi. In Genesis 34.13-15 Simeon and Levi use ritual purity only as a pretext to trick Hamor and Jacob. The text reads,

Because their sister Dinah had been defiled, *Jacob’s sons replied deceitfully* as they spoke to Shechem and his father Hamor. They said to them, “we can’t do such a thing; we can’t give our sister to a man who is not circumcised. That would be a disgrace to us we will give our consent to you on one condition only: that you become like us by circumcising all your males.” (Italics mine)

A similar desire on the part of Simeon and Levi to blur the distinction between an ethnic issue and a ritual one occurs towards the end of the chapter, in Genesis 34.31. Here Simeon and Levi maintain the fiction that the issue is one of ritual purity, something that the narrator had already called deceitful. Simeon and Levi rhetorically ask their father, Jacob, “Should our sister be treated like a whore?” Had Simeon and Levi been concerned with the Hivite’s state of purity, they would have allowed Shechem, Hamor, and their

²⁸⁹ Robert G. Hall, “Circumcision,” *The Anchor Bible Dictionary Volume 1 A-C*, David Noel Freedman, ed (New York: Doubleday, 1992), 1025.

tribesmen to enter into the covenant relationship with the Israelites, rendering them ritually pure. Simeon and Levi's vengeful act of a mass slaughter of the Hivites suggests they have adopted an ethnic ideology which receives its fullest expression in the book of Ezra.

Louis Epstein suggests that the prohibition on intermarriage developed in three stages of Hebrew history. In the primitive tribes of ancient Israel, endogamy was the norm. Marriages within the family offered security to both the bride and groom's immediate families as well as making possible advantageous business negotiations. However, the standard of endogamy never led to a law prohibiting marriage with non-relatives.²⁹⁰ During the Deuteronomic period, intermarriage was no longer a matter of social standards but a matter of law, motivated a desire for political and religious solidarity.²⁹¹ The final stage in the development of the ban on intermarriage is derived from the Ezra Reformation and is characterized by ethnicity. Epstein notes,

The Jewish community was 'holy seed,' the heathens belonged to the 'uncleanness of the nations.' Hence, intermarriage was defilement. The racialism expressed in the term holy seed will be understood, of course, to express a religious racialism, for to Ezra purity of blood and purity of the Hebrew monotheistic religion were inseparably bound together.²⁹²

While Epstein's interest is in the historical stages of Israel's marriage prohibitions, it is interesting to note the collapse of the distinction between a ritual prohibition and ethnic one occurs in Genesis 34 through the words of Simeon and Levi, who answer

"deceitfully." The early patriarchs were of the understanding that marriage was a means

²⁹⁰ Louis Epstein, *Marriage Laws in the Bible and the Talmud* (Cambridge, Harvard University Press, 1942), 145-146.

²⁹¹ Epstein, *Marriage Laws in the Bible and the Talmud*, 153.

²⁹² Epstein, *Marriage Laws in the Bible and the Talmud*, 162-163.

to strengthen the tribe and create business relationships. As Epstein states these early marriages were often endogamous, however, not by matter of law. Jacob and Hamor, therefore, saw a marriage between Dinah and Shechem as a means to strengthen tribal relations and secure business ties.

Christine Hayes suggests that there was a clear distinction between ritual purity and ethnic purity in an earlier stage in Israel's history, and that the later ban on exogamous marriage during the time of Ezra was in fact "innovative." For Hayes, this innovation occurred "in two ways: in its universal scope (all inter-ethnic unions were banned) and in its rationale (fear of profanation of the holy seed)."²⁹³ The ban on exogamous marriage is formulated in the Second Temple and occurs, in the narrative at issue, well after the book of Genesis. Hayes further argues that ritual impurity is not sufficient cause for the implementation of a ban on exogamous marriage. She writes, "an alleged Gentile ritual impurity communicated by physical contact to the Israelite partner is not the rationale for restrictions on intermarriage in biblical, Second Temple, and rabbinic periods."²⁹⁴

There is, however, a prohibition against exogamous marriage with Gentiles in the Torah and applies to the seven Canaanite nations. Deuteronomy 7.3-4 reads, "Do not intermarry with them. Do not give your daughters to their sons or take their daughters for your sons, for they will burn against you and will quickly destroy you." Deuteronomy thus puts forth a ban on intermarriage with certain, but not all, Gentiles.²⁹⁵ Hayes argues

²⁹³ Christine Hayes, "Intermarriage and Impurity in Ancient Jewish Sources," *Harvard Theological Review* 92 (1999): 6.

²⁹⁴ Hayes, "Intermarriage and Impurity in Ancient Jewish Sources," 5.

²⁹⁵ Hayes, "Intermarriage and Impurity in Ancient Jewish Sources," 9.

that there are good “moral-religious and sociopolitical” reasons for allowing exogamous marriages, by which she means during wartime.²⁹⁶ These moral-religious and sociopolitical reasons for endogamous marriage are characterized by the Israelites’ physical strength, tribal relations both personal and business, and the desire to sustain from the adulterous and immoral practices of foreign tribes. However, since the Hivites were willing to enter into a covenant relationship with the Israelites and, therefore, adopt their religious practices there is no problem with exogamy in this instance. As the marital practices of the early patriarchs was not strictly endogamous, a marriage between Dinah and Shechem would have been permitted. Only in Ezra is an all-encompassing ban on intermarriage expressed. For Ezra, “Israel’s holy status is conferred by God, who separated the Israelites from the other nations,”²⁹⁷ the holy seed of Israel becomes intermingled with unconsecrated, or profane seed. Intermarriage thus profanes that which God has consecrated to himself.²⁹⁸ However, as the events in the book of Genesis take place much earlier in the Bible’s account of the future of the Israelites, the Ezran laws of marriage that Simeon and Levi have adopted are not applicable to Genesis 34 and do not have anything necessarily in common with it.

Exogamous unions resonate throughout the book of Genesis. Esau, brother of Jacob, betroths a distant relative in Genesis 28.6-9. Even though Isaac disapproved of the exogamous marriage, it did not deter Esau from marrying Canaanite women in Genesis 36.2-3, “Esau took his wives from the women of Canaan: Adah daughter of Elon the Hittite, and Ohokibamah daughter of Anah and granddaughter of Zibeon the Hivite—also

²⁹⁶ Hayes, “Intermarriage and Impurity in Ancient Jewish Sources,” 8.

²⁹⁷ Hayes, “Intermarriage and Impurity in Ancient Jewish Sources,” 9.

²⁹⁸ Hayes, “Intermarriage and Impurity in Ancient Jewish Sources,” 10.

Basemath daughter of Ishmael and sister of Nebaioth.” Judah also marries a woman of Canaanite descent in Genesis 38.2 and in Genesis 41.45, Joseph, Dinah’s brother, marries an Egyptian woman named Asenath, the daughter of Pharaoh. Abraham also marries an Egyptian woman named Hagar after his first wife Sarah endured difficulty conceiving a child (Genesis 16.1-3). These accounts of exogamous marriages in the book of Genesis were not prohibited for impurity and ethnic differences, i.e., the desire to keep blood pure or free from adulteration²⁹⁹ and, in fact, help strengthen the tribe. Therefore, Simeon and Levi’s actions had no legal basis.

In contrast, however, to the betrothal narratives discussed in chapter three, Dinah was not betrothed to a family relative, but by a former business partner. Jacob purchased a plot of land from Hamor to settle on in Genesis 33.18-19,

After Jacob came from Paddan Aram, he arrived safely at the city of Shechem in Canaan and camped within sight of the city. For a hundred pieces of silver, he bought from the sons of Hamor, the father of Shechem, the plot of ground where he pitched his tent.

Helena Zoltnick suggests this first interaction between the Israelites and the Hivites is, then, “an ordinary commercial transaction conducted and completed, as one would expect, between two patriarchs, Jacob, and the elder of the clan, and Hamor, the ruler of the land.”³⁰⁰ The relationship between Jacob and Hamor, therefore, becomes rooted in Jacob’s willingness to respect the laws of the land and Hamor’s readiness to accommodate the needs of Jacob, his guest-friend.³⁰¹ Through the economical transaction

²⁹⁹ Hayes, “Intermarriage and Impurity in Ancient Jewish Sources,” 4.

³⁰⁰ Helana Zoltnick, *Dinah’s Daughters: Gender and Judaism from the Hebrew Bible to Late Antiquity* (Pennsylvania: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2002), 35.

³⁰¹ Zoltnick, *Dinah’s Daughters*, 36.

between Hamor and Jacob, Zoltnick suggests that "Jacob effectively initiated a set of friendships between members of two households."³⁰² It was through the creation of this friendship that an opportunity was formed for the Jacobites and the Hivites to become further united through a marriage between their children. When Dinah went out to see the women of the land, (women that she would possibly have been familiar with through her father's interaction with Hamor), she entered into a relationship with Shechem, a young man with whom she too may have been previously associated. Therefore, Dinah and Shechem's relationship may not have been only founded upon their sexual union as reported in Genesis 34.1-2, but upon a transaction made between their fathers in Genesis 33.18-19. Zoltnick has commented upon the prospect of an exogamous union between Dinah and Shechem. She writes,

By extending the negotiations from two individuals involved in a specific marital strategy to include the whole of the Israelites and the Hivites, Genesis 34 presents intermarriage as an instrument of peace and prosperity, going so far as to suggest that it can pave the way to the creation of "one people" (Genesis 34.16). Hamor's proposal appears generous. He even outlines the economic advantages that would accrue to the Israelites as a result of the wholesale marriage with local men and women.³⁰³

Simeon and Levi's deceitful act of trickery after hearing of their sister's involvement with Shechem, displays their need to control their family's affairs. Dinah's brothers lied to Hamor, Shechem, and their tribesmen, using the ritual act of circumcision as a pretext to enter into the tribe of Jacob and all Israelites. In the eyes of the Hivites, entering into the covenant with the Israelite people was extremely beneficial and, from

³⁰² Zoltnick, *Dinah's Daughters*, 36.

³⁰³ Zoltnick, *Dinah's Daughters*, 42-43.

the Israelite point of view, as the act of circumcision would have rendered the Hivite people ritually clean and, therefore, potential marital partners for Israelite women.

Genesis 34 begins with the story of Dinah, a young Israelite woman, but, she is quickly written out of the text as the focus of the narrative shifts towards the dominating male presence. Genesis 34 is, therefore, told from a patriarchal perspective, from the point of view of what effect the rape has on Dinah's brothers, Simeon and Levi. Simeon and Levi feature prominently throughout the narrative and it is their ideological views that result in the mass circumcision of the Hivites. Unlike Hamor and Jacob, who understand the importance of inclusiveness, Simeon and Levi want the Israelite nation to be one exclusive ethnicity. Such exclusivity acts as a foreshadow of the prohibition of intermarriage to arise in the book of Ezra.

4.5 Conclusion

The underlying presupposition of feminist interpretation is that women and men are equal and, therefore, deserve similar insights and privileges. Reading Genesis 34 in light of feminist theory I have offered Dinah redemption through the narrative's themes and symbolic imagery. These themes are liberating to Genesis 34 as they unmask the text's egalitarian ideologies.

A woman's honour in ancient Israel is closely tied to her marital status. Dinah's role as a wife and mother would have ensured her a prominent position in Israelite society. As such, a married-with-children Dinah would have held control over the domestic/private sphere while Shechem's control would have included the public sphere.

Together, Dinah and Shechem would have shared the responsibilities to ensure the economic existence and prosperity of their household. As a mother, Dinah's responsibilities would have included the social organization and education of her children. Shechem would have also contributed to instilling the social skills and values necessary for growth and success. Furthermore, according to Israelite law, Dinah's position in the family would have been quite secure and she would have been treated with loyalty and respect. Dinah's participation and expertise in matters relating to the domestic sphere would have given her certain control and authority. As such, Dinah's power would have been considerable in ancient Israel. Therefore, a marriage to Shechem would have ensured Dinah a prominent position in ancient Israelite society.

Dinah is identified in terms of her affiliation with her mother Leah. Dinah's matrilineal identification is suggestive of her independence as she does not follow the conventional female role, like that of Rebekah and Rachel and goes out on her own. Dinah's matrilineal identification in the Hebrew Bible is favourable as the offspring of an Israelite woman and a Gentile would have identified with their mother's lineage. Also, Shechem's willingness to become circumcised would render him and his tribesmen ritually clean and, therefore, potential marriage candidates for Israelite women.

Patriarchal commentators of Genesis 34 have often sympathized with the male characters as the story is discussed from the point of view of what effect Dinah's rape has on the male characters. In the context of Genesis 34, ritual purity refers to the ritual act of circumcision. Simeon and Levi used the ritual act of circumcision as a ruse to deceive the Hivites into entering into the covenant with the Israelites. Simeon and Levi, therefore,

deceitfully led Jacob, the Hivites, and readers into believing that the issue in Genesis 34 is one of ritual purity. However, for Simeon and Levi, the issue in Genesis 34 is ethnicity. Ethnic purity is concerned with purity of blood and, in this sense, a marital union between an Israelite and a Gentile. Therefore, Dinah's brothers did not want the pure bloodline of the Israelites to be tainted with the impurity of Hivite blood. Exogamy, however, was encouraged by the narrator in Genesis 34 as it allowed for the strengthening of tribal relations. Jacob and Hamor understood the physical, cultural, and political benefits of an exogamous marriage and, encouraged a marriage between Dinah and Shechem. In offering Dinah an escape through an exogamous marriage with Shechem, the narrator is in fact condemning the ethnic ideology of Simeon and Levi.

Through discussing the advantages of attaining marital status in ancient Israel from a feminist perspective, Dinah's position within Genesis 34 can be redeemed. Dinah no longer need be identified as a victim of rape but as a potential wife and mother. Considering Genesis 34 from a feminist interpretation, Dinah and Shechem are considered equals in the partnership of marriage.

Conclusion

Chapter one offered a discussion of several traditional androcentric readings whose net effect is to blame Dinah for her own misfortune. Early Christian and Jewish readings are highly misogynistic and hold Dinah responsible for her defilement. This kind of “blame-the-victim” interpretation is most evident in rabbinical literature and *Ancrene Wisse*. The rabbinical writer’s misogynist attitude toward women leaves Dinah subject to ridicule and the byproduct of derogatory language. Furthermore, *Ancrene Wisse* used Genesis 34 as a text to illustrate the dangers which women face. The example of Dinah was used to teach women to avoid going out and, thus, avoid seeking independence and self-reliance.

Early-modern interpretations of Genesis 34 also blamed Dinah for her defilement. Martin Luther focused on Dinah’s age and blamed her going out on her adolescent curiosity. Luther also concerned himself with what effect Dinah’s going out had on Jacob and Simeon and Levi. And, Matthew Henry scorned Dinah for her going out and used the threat of sexual violence to keep women in their place, that is, in the home.

Nineteenth-century womens’ interpretations who have discussed Genesis 34 concerned themselves with the actions of Dinah and further relegated Dinah to the margins of interpretation. These women writers blamed Dinah for her defilement and condemned Simeon and Levi for their rage against the Hivites. As a result, these women writers aligned themselves with Shechem and relinquished him of any wrongdoing. In

blaming Dinah, these nineteenth-century women identified themselves as patriarchal writers and thinkers.

Modern historical-critical interpretations of Genesis 34 are not as blatantly misogynist as the ones of the preceding era, the sexism is more subtle and, therefore, potentially more dangerous. Many modern historical-critical interpretations reify misogynistic interpretations of Genesis 34 by seeking to redeem Shechem and, therefore, implied that Dinah is still to blame. John Skinner and Gerhard von Rad emphasized the fact that Shechem loved Dinah and, therefore, the rape is excusable. Claus Westermann and John C.L Gibson also focused on Shechem's love for Dinah suggesting that it was Dinah's fault for going out on her own and attracting Shechem's attention. And, Jione Havea raises the question of who the victim of the narrative is, Dinah or Shechem. In offering his sympathy for both the Israelites and the Hivites Havea seemingly makes a case for the Hivites. Therefore, in a subtle way, many modern historical-critical interpretations of Genesis 34 continued to hold Dinah accountable for her rape as commentators sought to redeem Shechem and the Hivites.

Modern literary analyses of Genesis 34 focused on the literary features and grammatical construction of the text. Meir Sternberg argued that Genesis 34 is the story of a literary balance as Shechem's rape of Dinah is balanced by Simeon and Levi's mass slaughter of the Hivites. Fewell and Gunn questioned Sternberg's theory of "to love is to rape" as morally demeaning and do not acknowledge the presence of any literary balance in Genesis 34. Fewell and Gunn suggest that Dinah deserved the rite to be married and, therefore, worthy of Shechem. However, their position minimizes Shechem as the rapist

of Dinah. And, finally, through Robert Alter's analysis of the grammatical construction of the text Alter suggests that Dinah was a ready target for rape as she was a foreigner of the land. Alter also states that Simeon and Levi are condemned for their revenge on the Hivites as he suggests that the mass slaughter was not warranted for the defilement of their sister. Modern historical-critical interpretations and modern literary analyses of Genesis 34 have sought to redeem Shechem for raping Dinah and although they do not blatantly hold Dinah responsible for her defilement they do not offer Dinah a kind of redemption that they offer Shechem. Failing to offer Dinah redemption suggests that Dinah is still to blame for the events that unfold in Genesis 34. These traditional androcentric readings provided ample fodder for feminist re-interpretations of Genesis 34.

Chapter two, therefore, offered a discussion of a feminist approach which allowed for space for the redemption of Dinah. Adopting a feminist hermeneutic allowed for the interpretation of Genesis 34 from a feminist perspective and in a liberating way. Interpreting Genesis 34 from a feminist perspective challenged the patriarchal presuppositions embedded in the text and redefined the narrative to meet the demands of feminist theory. Through the adoption of feminist-literary criticism an evaluation of the formation of sentences, literary structure, and the portrayal of characters in Genesis 34 was possible. Feminist-literary criticism, therefore, allowed for the interpretation of Genesis 34 as a betrothal type-scene narrative.

In chapter three, a detailed discussion of the structure of betrothal type-scenes as proposed by Robert Alter was offered. In applying Alter's literary structure of a betrothal

type-scene to Genesis 34 Dinah has been redeemed as a potential wife and mother. The betrothal type-scene begins with Dinah's emergence to a foreign land (1). Dinah is seen by Shechem in a meeting scene and a bond is established between the two (2). Following that, Shechem shares the news of his encounter with his father, Hamor, and a gesture of hospitality is exhibited on Jacob's behalf (3). The final element of Alter's type-scene is the betrothal itself. Here Shechem makes a request that Dinah be taken in marriage and Hamor and Jacob enter into betrothal negotiations (4).

Reading Genesis 34 in light of the betrothal narratives of Genesis 24 and Genesis 29, it is evident that Genesis 34 fits the criteria of a betrothal type-scene. The purpose of outlining the betrothal narratives of Rebekah and Isaac and Rachel and Jacob set up for the interpretation of Dinah and Shechem as a betrothal narrative. Isolating these three narratives for a detailed literary comparison, it is evident that these narratives follow the literary structure of a betrothal type-scene. Such a positive interpretation of Genesis 34 offered redemption for Dinah as a potential wife and mother and redemption for Shechem as the betrother of Dinah.

In the fourth and final chapter a discussion was offered outlining the advantages of identifying Dinah as a potential wife and mother from a feminist-literary analysis. Under the theme *potential redemption* the role of the Israelite woman as a wife and mother was discussed. An analysis of Carol Meyers text, *Discovering Eve: Ancient Israelite Women in Context*, offered a positive interpretation of the female role in ancient Israel. Applying this positive role to Dinah, Dinah is no longer identified as a rape victim, but, as the potential wife of Shechem and mother of his children. As the only positive role

for ancient Israelite women, identifying as a legitimate wife and mother redeems Dinah from the clutches of patriarchal interpretation.

Under the theme *matrilineal descent vs. patrilineal descent* the advantages of identifying through matrilineal descent are outlined. Dinah is first identified as the daughter of Leah in Genesis 34.1 and through the exploration of this matrilineage it is advantageous for Dinah and Shechem to identify through Leah's lineage as members of an exogamous marriage. Reading Genesis 34 through Leah's lineage, Dinah becomes a prominent character with considerable power within the narrative. Subtle matrilineal identification in Genesis 24, 29, and 34 further unites these three narratives and suggests the possibility of a single narrator.

Under the theme *ritual purity vs. ethnic purity* the issue of exogamous marriage in ancient Israel was discussed. The ban on exogamous marriage is one that formulated in the book of Ezra and implies an ethnic ideology concerned with race. The narrator in Genesis 34 however, suggests that Simeon and Levi are only concerned with ethnic purity and not ritual purity as often presumed. Simeon and Levi were not concerned with the circumcision of Shechem but with his ethnicity. Therefore, reading Genesis 34 in light of these themes, it is possible that Dinah be reclaimed from patriarchal interpretations and a more positive reading of the narrative offered.

A re-interpretation of Genesis 34 is necessary as traditional interpretations undermine the position of women. Misogynist interpretations of Genesis 34 have held Dinah responsible for her going out and Shechem's act of defilement. A re-interpretation of the text is, therefore, necessary. Interpreting the text as a betrothal narrative offers a

positive interpretation of the narrative as it offers redemption for Dinah as a potential wife and mother and a redemption for Shechem as the betrother of Dinah. This egalitarian interpretation of Genesis 34 is beneficial for both male and female conscious readers.

Interpreting Genesis 34 as a betrothal narrative in light of Genesis 24 and Genesis 29 allows for the opportunity for further analysis of the text with betrothal narratives which are present beyond the book of Genesis. For example, an analysis and comparison of Genesis 34 with Exodus 2 and the book of Ruth may offer the possibility for a further redemption of Dinah and Shechem. Furthermore, re-reading a narrative which has traditionally been interpreted as a rape story for a more positive interpretation demands a re-reading of other biblical rape stories as women who have long been interpreted as victims of male supremacy deserve the opportunity to see if a more positive interpretation can be discerned. For example, a re-reading of 2 Samuel 13.8; 2 Samuel 11; and Genesis 38 may offer a positive interpretation of the text and, therefore, it is necessary that other traditionally read rape stores be offered the same opportunity for re-interpretation as Genesis 34.

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