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# Day 9 Growing the Family of Israel: Genesis 22-28

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# Jacob receives his own covenantal promises from the Lord



Isaac in Bethel

**28:12-15** And he dreamed, and behold a ladder set up on the earth, and the top of it reached to heaven: and behold the angels of God ascending and descending on it. And, behold, the Lord stood above it, and said, I am the Lord God of Abraham thy father, and the God of Isaac: the land whereon thou liest, to thee will I give it, and to thy seed; And thy seed shall be as the dust of the earth, and thou shalt spread abroad to the west, and to the east, and to the north, and to the south: and in thee and in thy seed shall all the families of the earth be blessed. **And, behold, I am with thee, and will keep thee in all places whither thou goest, and will bring thee again into this land; for I will not leave thee, until I have done that which I have spoken to thee of.**

# What Happens, What is Significant?

- Learns of God for himself
  - Becomes a prophet
  - Is promised his seed would be blessed
  - Is promised God would be with him
  - Learns of the Sanctity of God and Space
  - Receives his endowment (see quote below)
  - Personal part: “I will be with thee & I will bring thee again into this land.” *Why useful?*

“Jacob realized that the covenants he made with the Lord there were the rungs on the ladder that he himself would have to climb in order to obtain the promised blessings — blessings that would entitle him to enter heaven and associate with the Lord. Because he had met the Lord and entered into covenants with him there, Jacob considered the site so sacred that he named the place Bethel, a contraction of Beth-Elohim, which means literally ‘the House of the Lord’.... Temples are to us all what Bethel was to Jacob.” -Elder Marion G. Romney, “Temples — The Gates to Heaven,” Ensign (Mar. 1971): 16.



**Regardless if Isaac was fooled,  
God is not fooled – Jacob received  
the blessing meant for him**

# Jacob meets Rachel-the shepherdess

Genesis 29:9 Rachel came with her father's sheep, for she was a shepherd (NIV).

- Shepherding in the Bible is a powerful and dominant metaphor for leading the people of Israel as a civil (monarch) and religious (prophet) leader and for God's own care of God's people. . . . Suggesting possibly that she is a good match for the new father of Israel?
- Rachel will likewise echo Rebekah: She is found at a well. She hastens back to her father's house just as Rebekah had done.
- The importance of the kindship bond is stressed. 29:12 *Her father's kinsman*—they are related on their father's side (through Abraham & Nahor). *Rebekah's son*—they are also related on his mother's side

29:18 And Jacob loved Rachel; and said, I will serve thee seven years for Rachel thy younger daughter.



29: 20 And Jacob served seven years for Rachel; and they seemed unto him but a few days, for the love he had to her.

- *This is a rare expression of romantic love in the Bible and its intensity will extend to her children, Joseph and Benjamin after Rachel's death.*
- *How does Rachel feel about Jacob? How does she feel about the seven years? How does she feel about her father switching Leah for her?*

# Jacob marries Laban's daughters: Leah & Rachel

How are we to understand Laban's deception of Jacob? Is this poetic justice for Jacob's deception? Laban's resonate reply to Jacob upon his discovery of the deception makes the relationship between the two deceptions clear.

*29:25-26 And it came to pass, that in the morning, behold, it was Leah: and he said to Laban, What is this thou hast done unto me? did not I serve with thee for Rachel? wherefore then hast thou beguiled me? And Laban said, It must not be so done in our country, to give the younger before the firstborn.*

The issue of the rights of the firstborn is introduced by the aside about Laban's daughter with the contrast of the elder and younger.

*29:16-17 And Laban had two daughters: the name of the elder was Leah, and the name of the younger was Rachel. Leah was tender eyed (aka her eyes were lovely or weak); but Rachel was beautiful and well favoured.*



*29:30-31 and [Jacob] loved also Rachel more than Leah . . . And when the Lord saw that Leah was hated, he opened her womb: but Rachel was barren.*

- What was their relationship like before Jacob?
- What can we learn from their story?

# Creating the Twelve tribes of Israel 29:31-30:24

“The women are the major agents, conceiving, naming the children, and even negotiating over Jacob’s services. The names of the sons—the tribes of Israel—are all motivated by the mother’s state of mind, and the naming speeches spin the elaborate wordplays to anchor the names. . . . The overall movement is determined by God’s agency in opening wombs. . . . As a consequence of Jacob’s preference for Rachel over Leah, God opens Leah’s womb and not Rachel’s. As with Sarah and Rebekah, the wives’ barrenness is a preexisting condition, motivating God’s intervention. . . . Rachel adopts Sarah’s strategy of granting her husband her handmaid as a surrogate wife. Her naming speeches for *Dan* (30:6) and *Naphtali* (30:8) express her thanks to God and her rivalry with Leah.” (NRSV footnote)

30:6-8 Then Rachel said, “God has vindicated me; he has listened to my plea and given me a son.” Because of this she named him *Dan*. Rachel’s servant Bilhah conceived again and bore Jacob a second son. 8 Then Rachel said, “I have had a great struggle with my sister, and I have won.” So she named him *Naphtali*.



“What is compelling here is that God-of-the-Holy-Name cares about Leah when no one else does, and gives her the one thing that will grant her status and standing” (Dr. Gafney).

# The Children of Leah, Bilhah, Zilpah, and Rachel

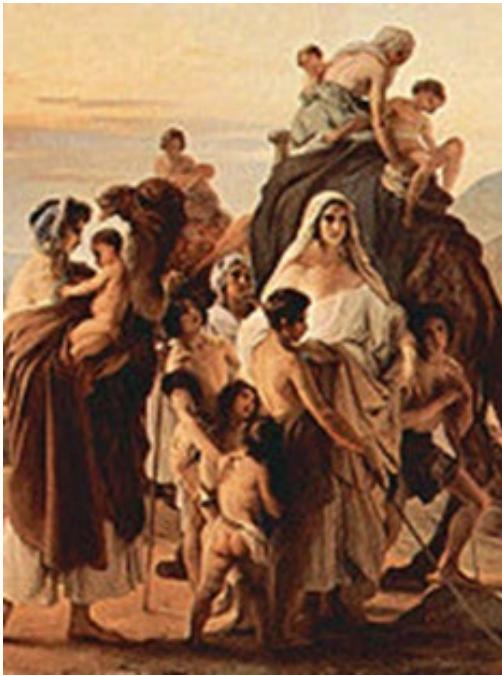
- By **Leah**: Reuben (look, a son), Simeon (hear), Levi (joined), and Judah (praise) (29:31–35)
  - The Lord's mercy is again seen for Leah
  - We can see growth in Leah through what she names her sons.
- By **Bilhah** (Rachel's handmaid/slave): Dan (judged), Naphthali (wrestled) (30:1–8)
- By **Zilpah** (Leah's handmaid/slave): Gad (troop), Asher (blessed) (30:9–13)
- By **Leah again**: Issachar (hired), Zebulon (exalt), Dinah (30:14–21)
  - *Now my husband will honor me* (30:20 NRSV)
- At last, by **Rachel**: **Joseph** (added) (30:22–24)
  - *And she conceived, and bare a son; and said, God hath taken away my reproach: And she called his name Joseph; and said, The Lord shall add to me another son.*



### Larger Ideas:

- Rivalry between sisters: ***How do we take out competition & rivalry in our relationships?***
- Struggle for self-esteem: ***How do we come to recognize our own worth & not look to outside sources for validation?***
- Naming, acknowledging, and taking seriously the deep personal needs that people have, recognizing that they are not all the same. Leah had children and wanted love, Rachel had love and wanted children
- ***How can we look beyond ourselves to recognize and value the real needs of others?***

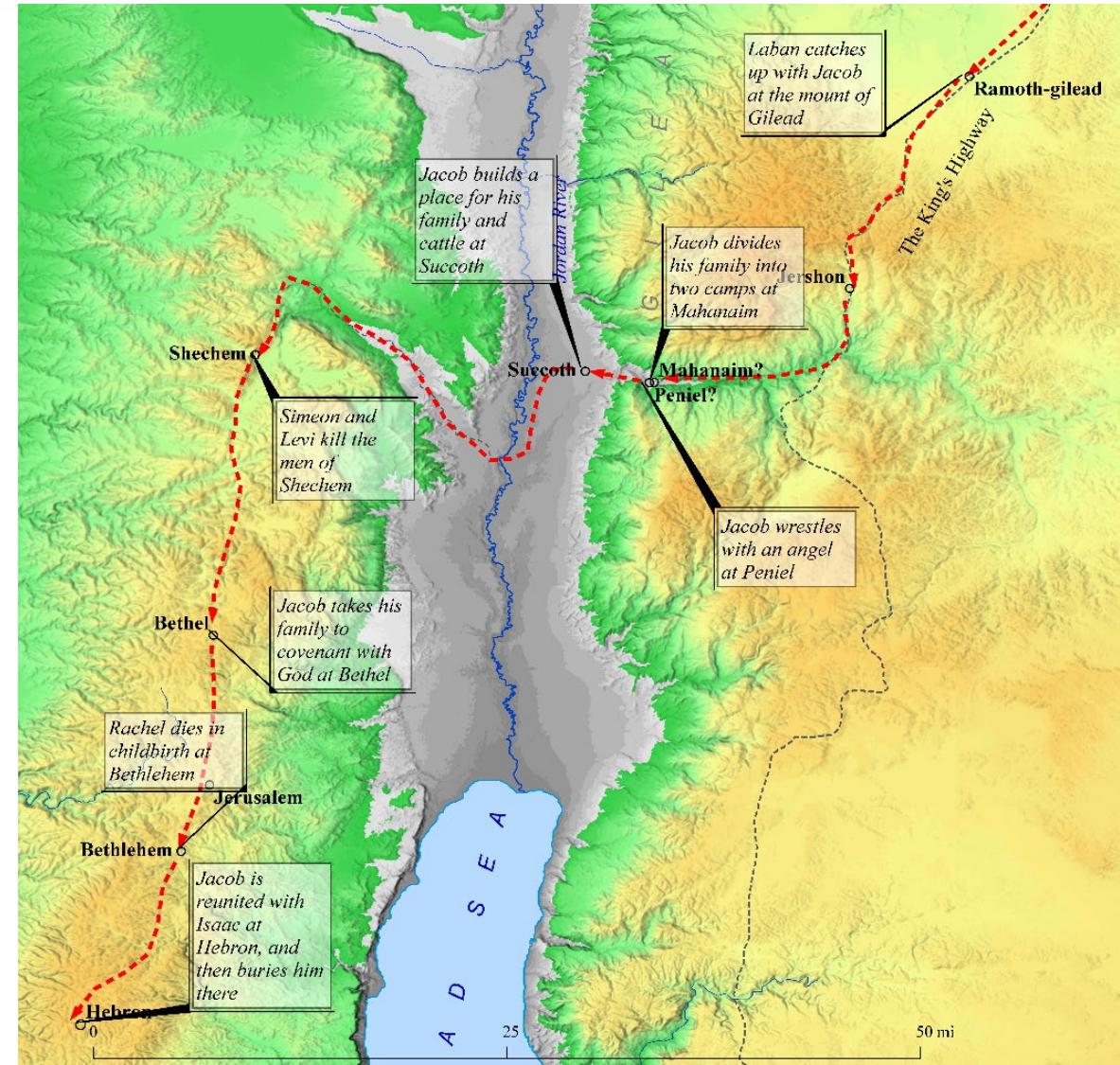
“From a liberation standpoint, in this text, God notices the pain of those marginalized in society and works with them to remedy the situation within the constraints of the social structures of the time” (Dr. Bailey 51).



Bilhah & Zilpah: We should remember & honor them as Matriarchs

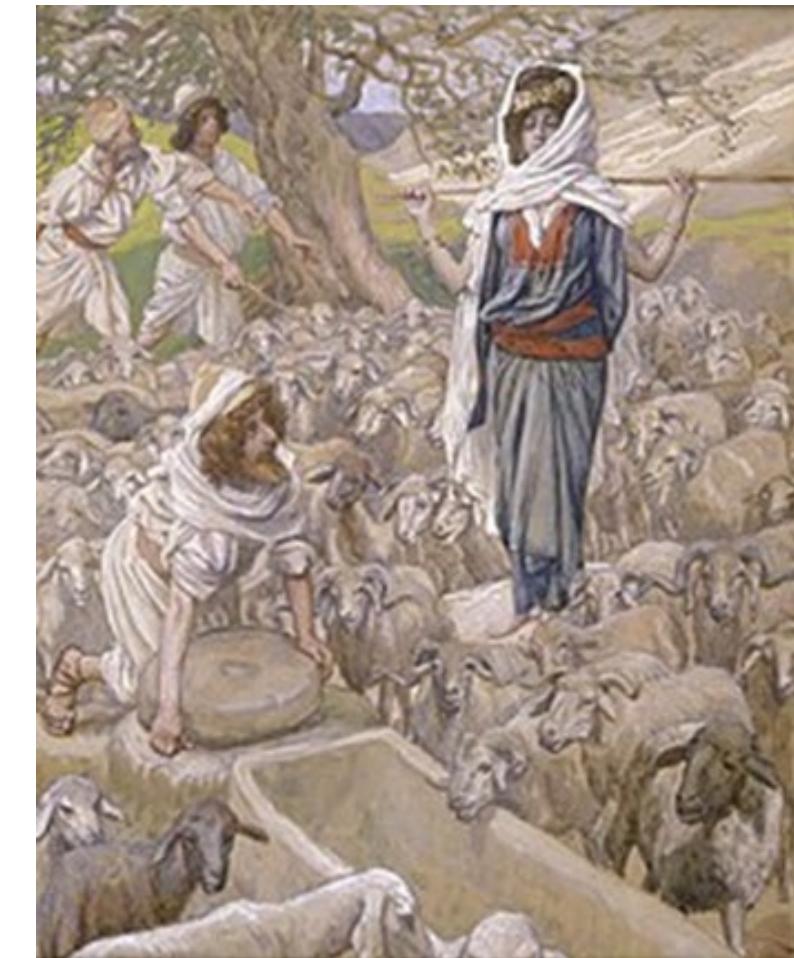
# Jacob's Return to Canaan

- Jacob Flees with Family and Flocks (31:1–21)
  - Explained to his wives that his stock-breeding plan was actually a vision
    - *Typical of OT narrative to omit critical information until the moment is ripe*
  - Rachel steals Laban's *teraphim* or images—why?
- Laban Overtakes Jacob (31:22–42)
- Laban and Jacob Covenant (31:43–55)
- Jacob Sends Presents to Appear Esau (32:1–21)
- **Jacob Wrestles at Peniel (32:22–32)**
- Jacob and Esau Meet (33:1–17)
- Jacob Reaches Shechem (33:18–20)
  - Erects an altar; explains the sacred origins of this later Israelite holy city



# The Lord blesses Jacob to be able to circumvent Laban's deception (30:32-31:13)

- Explains to his wives that his stock-breeding plan was actually a vision
- *31:7-13 And your father hath deceived me, and changed my wages ten times; but God suffered him not to hurt me. If he said thus, The speckled shall be thy wages; then all the cattle bare speckled: and if he said thus, The ringstraked shall be thy hire; then bare all the cattle ringstraked. Thus God hath taken away the cattle of your father, and given them to me.*
- **The Lord often uses what we know and understand to bless us**





31:14 Then Rachel and Leah replied, “Do we still have any share in the inheritance of our father’s estate? 15 Does he not regard us as foreigners? **Not only has he sold us**, but he has used up what was paid for us. 16 Surely all the wealth that God took away from our father belongs to us and our children. So do whatever God has told you.”

“Though men are said to acquire wives with the verb that often means ‘to buy,’ nowhere else in the Hebrew Scriptures is a proper marriage described as a father’s selling (makar) his daughters... Thus, bitterly and poignantly, the daughters of Laban describe themselves in their relationship to their father as exploited and dispossessed slaves, treated as foreign women unrelated to him.”

“The legitimacy of the women’s anger is reinforced by two other elements as well. First, Rachel and Leah almost never agree on anything, but here they speak as one; they are united in a very strong accusation against their father. Secondly, his neglect is supported by his own hypocrisy: he claims that he has been deprived of the opportunity to kiss his daughters good-bye, yet his real focus throughout what follows is on retrieving his teraphim” (Dr. Niditch 235-36).



## 31:19 Rachel's Resistance: She takes her father's idols

Why did she take them?

- Religiously meaningful to her,
- to prevent Laban from divining the party's location,
- did she understand them as assuring inheritance rights for her family and/or herself.
- Was the theft Rachel's way of settling Laban's debt to her and Leah

*"Let not my lord be angry that I cannot rise before you, for I have the way of women" (31:35).*

Laban and Jacob reconcile and create a covenant 31:43-55,  
but what can Rachel and Leah do?

# Jacob's intense fear of Esau in returning & his great faith and trust in the Lord

- 31:13 arise, get thee out from this land, and return unto the land of thy kindred.
- 32:6-8 And the messengers returned to Jacob, saying, We came to thy brother Esau, and also he cometh to meet thee, and four hundred men with him. Then Jacob was greatly afraid and distressed: and he divided the people that was with him, and the flocks, and herds, and the camels, into two bands; And said, If Esau come to the one company, and smite it, then the other company which is left shall escape.
- The text mentions repetitively that he sends ahead of him to Esau an abundance of gifts to try and appease Esau's wrath



# Esau teaches forgiveness



**33:4 And Esau ran to meet him, and embraced him, and fell on his neck, and kissed him: and they wept.**

**33:8-10** And he said, What meanest thou by all this drove which I met? And he said, These are to find grace in the sight of my lord. And Esau said, I have enough, my brother; keep that thou hast unto thyself. And Jacob said, Nay, I pray thee, if now I have found grace in thy sight, then receive my present at my hand: for therefore I have seen thy face, as though I had seen the face of God, and thou wast pleased with me.

A spirit of forgiveness and an attitude of love and compassion toward those who may have wronged us is of the very essence of the gospel of Jesus Christ. Each of us has need of this spirit. The whole world has need of it. The Lord taught it. He exemplified it as none other has exemplified it. . . . “To err is human, to forgive divine.” (Alexander Pope, *An Essay on Criticism*, 2:1711.) There is no peace in reflecting on the pain of old wounds. There is peace only in repentance and forgiveness. —President Gordon B. Hinckley, *Ensign* 1991

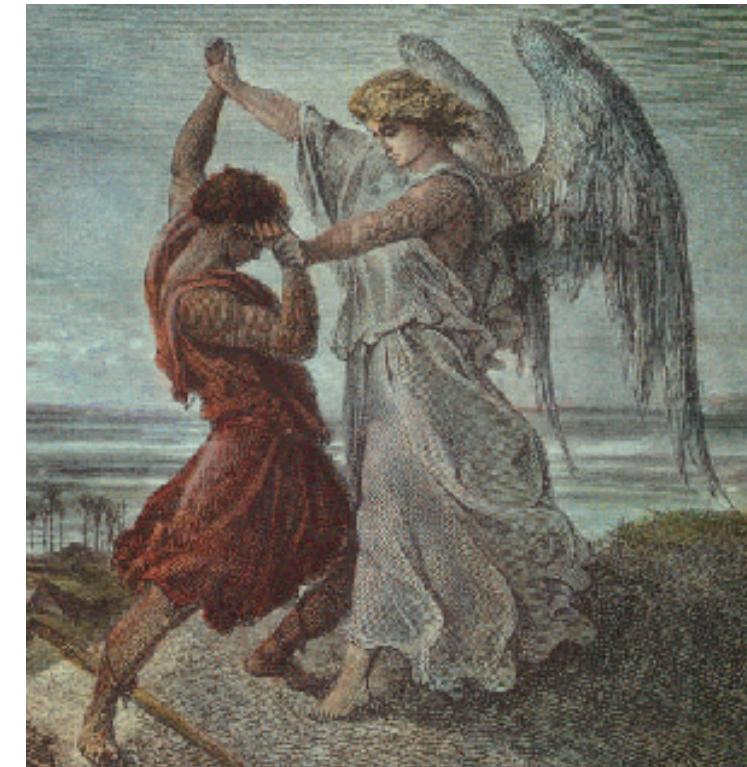


# Jacob Wrestles at Peniel (32:22–32)

- Jacob was anxious about meeting Esau, preoccupied about the whole blessing deception of ch. 27
- Meets who—a man? An angel? The Lord?
- **Symbolism of “wrestling”**
  - (cf. Enos 1:12) “I will tell you of the wrestle which I had before God, before I received a remission of my sins.”
  - Will not give up until he gets a blessing
  - The angle blessed him with power
- “And he said, Thy name shall be called no more Jacob, but Israel: for as a prince hast thou power with God and with men, and hast prevailed.” (32:38)
  - Jacob’s name change to *Yīsrā’ēl*, “one who prevails with God”
- Etiology (explanation): Jacob walked away from the experience changed (limping) → *explains why Jews did not eat “the sinew that shrank”*

# What is this wrestling business?

- Used figuratively many times in scripture
- Bible goes through effort to show it is literal
  - (translated being?)
- Reminiscent of his birth
- “Unlike Jacob, we do not need to wrestle physically much of the night for blessings to strengthen and magnify us. In the Church, blessings are available to all who are worthy through those authorized and even appointed to give priesthood blessings... Such individual blessings are part of the continuous revelation that we claim as members of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.” -James E. Faust, “Priesthood Blessings,” Ensign (Nov. 1995), p. 62.



# The Tragedy of Dinah

“Genesis 34 dramatically illustrates the relationship between ‘domestic affairs,’ control over household members and ‘external affairs,’ boundary definition and the relationship with other groups. It involves the intricate connection between the relationship of a girl in her birth family and the relationship of the family to the outside, and between the relationships of individual families to each other and the destiny of the nation as a whole” (Dr. Frymer-Kensky 179).

## Possible rape of Dinah (34:1–24)

- Shechem seeks to marry her afterwards and agrees along with all the men of his community to be circumcised.

## Dinah's Brothers Avenge Their Sister & Their Honor (34:25–31)

- Violent brothers take advantage of the disability of Hamor's men
- May explain why Simeon and Levi later do not have tribal holdings (Simeon is absorbed by Judah, Levi scattered among the tribes)



# “Out Went Dinah”

“when a woman in the patriarchal world goes out, she leaves her family vulnerable. If something bad happens to her, it not only causes her kin sorrow and loss, it also reflects poorly on the patriarch’s ability to protect his family” (180).

“But one who left the house without a specific chore was viewed with suspicion and condemnation” (181)



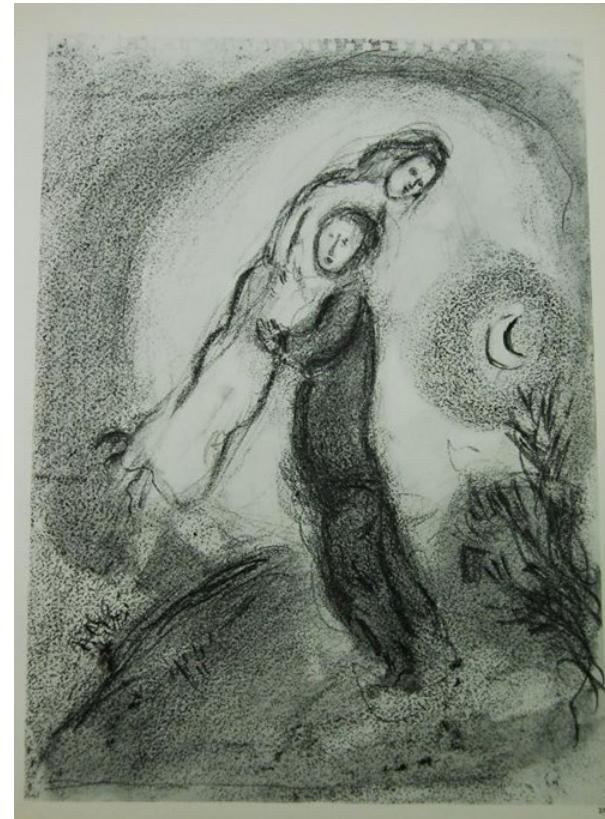
What does it imply and what does it not imply?

# What evidence in the text indicates that Shechem did not rape Dinah?

The word rape is not in the text; different word ordering from that of the story of Tamar, which is clearly forcible rape (183)

Shechem's love assured by the narrator (188). Rape usually does not lead to love

"Shall our sister become a whore?"  
"By saying that Dinah has become like a harlot, Simeon and Levi show that Dinah has not been raped. Instead, she has crossed the tribal boundary and acted like a harlot without bonding or responsibility to the family or the community" (Bellis HHH 76)



2 And when Shechem the son of Hamor the Hivite, prince of the country, saw her, he took her, and lay with her, and defiled her.

3 And his soul clave unto Dinah the daughter of Jacob, and he loved the damsel, and spake kindly unto the damsel.

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

8 And Hamor communed with them, saying, The soul of my son Shechem longeth for your daughter: I pray you give her him to wife.

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

How does this change the story if this was a mutual act of love?



# Dinah & Dishonor to the Family



The family's honor can be restored by the girls' lover paying a very large bride price or by the girl's kinsmen conducting a reprisal raid to show that the men can protect their boundaries and that outsiders encroach upon their territory, property, or personnel at the risk of their own lives.

Both methods are represented in Dinah's story.

Questions of Dinah's consent do not matter within Ancient Near Eastern culture. She does not have the right to consent—that right is her father's. Only widows, divorcees, and prostitutes had control over their own sexuality. Thus Dinah's brothers' statement: "Shall our sister become a whore?"

Her brothers are obviously worried about the shame this act has brought upon the family and how it will impact their ability to safeguard their territory and obtain wives themselves.

# How do you regard Dinah's brothers actions if she was raped? If she wasn't? How does knowing that Jacob condemns their actions affect your reading?

34:30 And Jacob said to Simeon and Levi, Ye have troubled me to make me to stink among the inhabitants of the land, among the Canaanites and the Perizzites: and I being few in number, they shall gather themselves together against me, and slay me; and I shall be destroyed, I and my house.

49:5-7 Jacob speaking: Simeon and Levi are brethren; **instruments of cruelty are in their habitations**. O my soul, come not thou into their secret; unto their assembly, mine honour, be not thou united: for in their anger they slew a man, and in their selfwill they digged down a wall. **Cursed be their anger, for it was fierce; and their wrath, for it was cruel: I will divide them in Jacob and scatter them in Israel.**



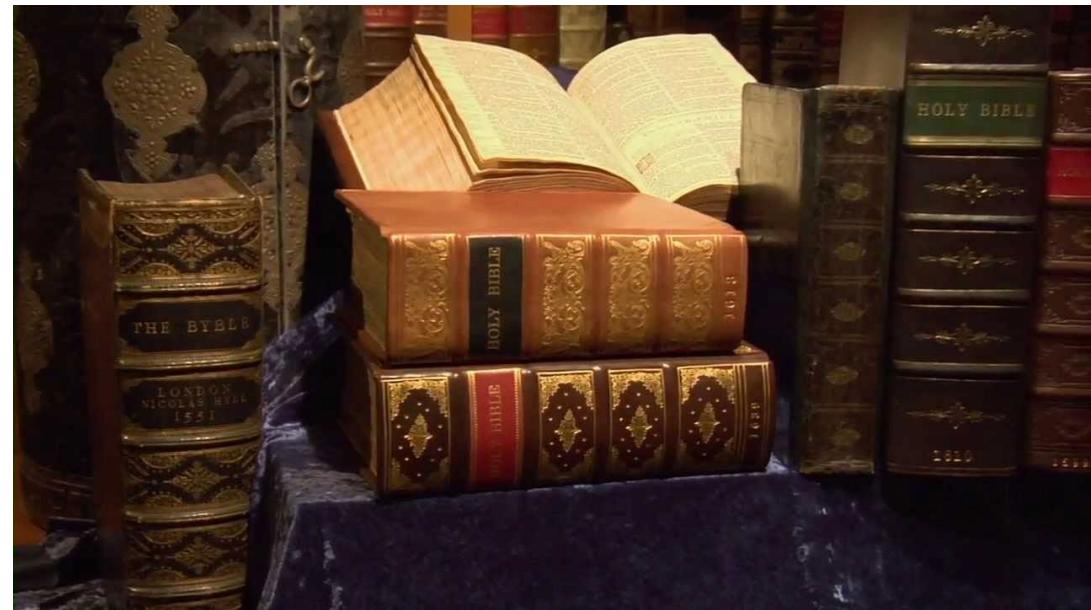
The editors of the book of Genesis also disapprove, placing the story in a line of stories that show the inability of first Reuben and then Simeon and Levi to be the prime heirs of Jacob, leaving only Judah and Joseph to contest for that position.



What are the  
useful takeaways?  
Why should we  
study Dinah's  
story?

*Despite the text and Jacob not supporting the brothers' actions, why have so many readers? What might this suggest?*

“What does it mean to say that the text is the Word of the Lord? Some people claim that all parts of Scripture are inspired and infallible, but some biblical stories are horrible examples of human sinfulness. The ‘Word of the Lord’ in this case is ‘Do not do it this way!’ These stories are not meant to be imitated but rather challenged and critiqued. I believe that all the stories of the Bible, even the ugliest should be taken seriously. They deserve our attention, our conversation, and our criticism. We can challenge and critique the stories without fear, because we care about the texts and respect them, even if we cannot agree with or affirm them. Wrestling with the texts shows that we trust them and God enough to talk back” (Dr. Lynn Japinga, *Preaching the Women of the Old Testament*, 5-6).



# Covenant Renewal Genesis 35:9-12

9-12 And God appeared unto Jacob again, when he came out of Padanaram, and blessed him. And God said unto him, Thy name is Jacob: thy name shall not be called any more Jacob, but Israel shall be thy name: and he called his name Israel. And God said unto him, I am God Almighty: be fruitful and multiply; a nation and a company of nations shall be of thee, and kings shall come out of thy loins; And the land which I gave Abraham and Isaac, to thee I will give it, and to thy seed after thee will I give the land.

- Abraham's and Isaac's righteousness could not transfer to Jacob.
- He needed to keep the covenant himself.
- “They are made known unto me by the Holy Spirit of God. Behold, I have fasted and prayed many days that I might know these things of myself. And now I do know of myself that they are true; for the Lord God hath made them manifest unto me by his Holy Spirit.” (Alma 5:46)

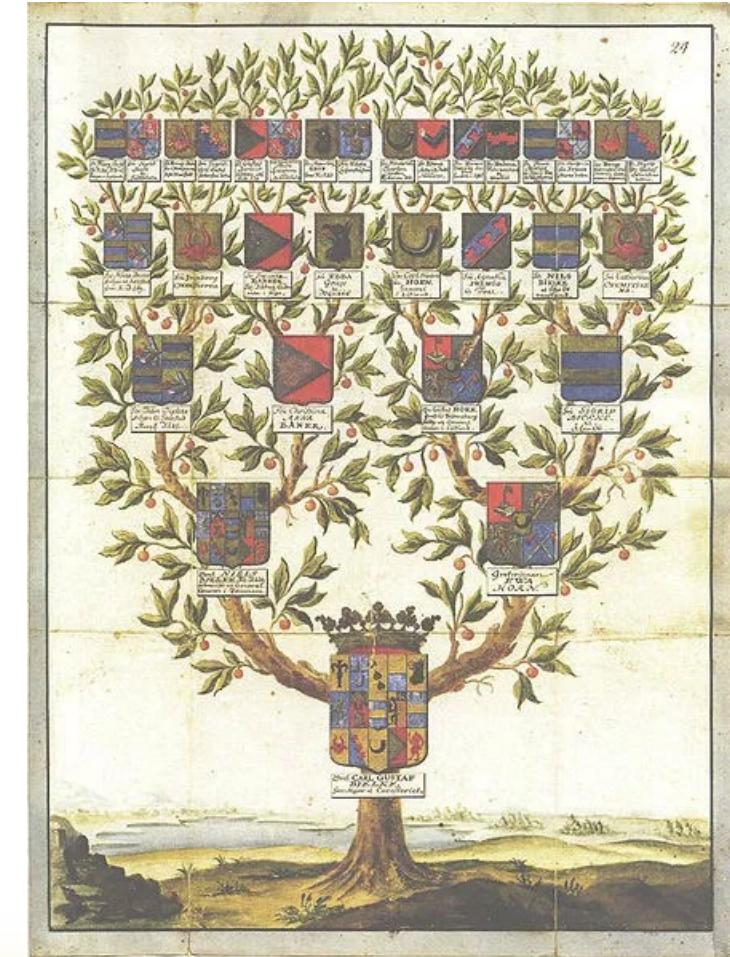


# What should we understand about the House of Israel?

Why is it important? Is it exclusive or inclusive?

Ye are the children of the prophets; and ye are of the house of Israel; and ye are of the covenant which the Father made with your fathers, saying unto Abraham: And in thy seed shall all the kindreds of the earth be blessed. (3 Nephi 20:25)

We of modern Israel are among the covenant people of the Lord. And, most remarkably, the Abrahamic covenant will be fulfilled only in these latter days. The Lord bestowed this Abrahamic covenant upon the Prophet Joseph for the blessing of him and posterity after him. Did you know that Abraham is mentioned in more verses of modern revelation than in all the verses of the Old Testament? Abraham – this great patriarch of the Old Testament – is inextricably linked to all who join the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. . . . Ancient Israel and Modern Israel are linked arm in arm. -President Russell M Nelson





“In this gospel view there is no room for a contracted, narrow, or prejudicial view.... There is no underlying excuse for smugness, arrogance, or pride.... Latter-day Saints have a positive and inclusive approach toward others who are not of our faith. We believe they are literally our brothers and sisters, that we are sons and daughters of the same Heavenly Father.... But more than that, we also seek the true and the beautiful wherever it may be found. And we know that God has blessed all his children with goodness and light, in accordance with the conditions in which they find themselves.”

President Howard W. Hunter, “The Gospel—A Global Faith,” *Ensign*, Nov. 1991, 18–19

# Final Phases of the Jacob Story

- **Jacob Returns to Bethel (35:1–15)**
  - Has his family sanctify itself to go up to “**the House of God**”
    - As with Abraham returning to Canaan after Egypt, Jacob enters to “Promised Land” (sc. heaven) through the house of God!
  - Deborah, “Rebekah’s nurse,” dies (35:8)
    - **What about Rebekah?** Why is her death not mentioned?
      - Perhaps a cover-up to disguise the fact that Esau was present for her death but Jacob was not
  - **Covenant of 28:10–22 renewed**
    - Cf. Abraham’s 15:1–21 covenant renewed 17:1–27
- **Birth of Benjamin and the Death of Rachel (35:16–26)**
  - “son of my sorrow” changed to “son at the right hand”
- **Death of Isaac (35:27–29)**
  - Continuing theme of Death throughout Genesis – perhaps emphasis on the fallen state of man
- Descendants of Esau (36:1–40) another *tôlētot* or “generations list”