

**Thank you to those who continue to support CSH's High Holy Days Appeal**

Kim & Arthur Birnbaum

Maia Michaelson

Judy Peck

Philip and Mary Ann Hobel

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**Chanukah / Shabbat Dinner**

**Friday Night December 11<sup>th</sup> 6:30pm**

at my home in East Hampton

RSVP by Tuesday Dec. 8<sup>th</sup>

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**December Shabbat Service Schedule**

December 5th Parashat Vayishlach

December 12th Parashat Vayeshev

Birchat Chodesh Tevet

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CSH is joining with CHABAD of East Hampton

and other East End synagogues for

**CHANORAH**

to help benefit the Local Food Pantries

at the **VERED Gallery in East Hampton, on Saturday, December 12<sup>th</sup> at 6:00 – 7:30 pm**

If it is your tradition to donate to the local food pantry at this time of year,  
please send a check to CSH earmarked "Canorah Project" and we will include the food in the  
CSH Canorah

**Friday December 4th Candle Lighting 4:05pm**

**This week's Torah reading: Vayishlach**

Annual (Gen. 32:4-36:43): (Etz Hayim, p. 198; Hertz p. 122)

Triennial (Gen. 35:16-36:43): (Etz Hayim, p. 214)

Haftarah: Etz Hayim, p. 222

**Dinah's Birth**

The Rabbis state that Leah was actually pregnant with a son; when Rachel saw that her sister was pregnant, she prayed, resulting in a change of the embryo's gender (JT *Berakhot* 9:3, 14a). Another tradition relates that Leah, and not Rachel, was responsible for this change: Leah knew that Jacob would be the father of twelve tribes. When she realized that she was with child and that Jacob already had ten sons (she had borne him six sons, Bilhah and Zilpah had each given birth to two sons), she said: Shall my sister Rachel not even be as one of the handmaidens? Leah therefore prayed to God on behalf of her sister, entreating Him: "Turn what is in my womb into a female, and do not prevent my sister from bearing a son." God accepted her prayer and the fetus in her womb was transformed into a girl. Gen. 30:21 therefore states: "Afterwards she bore

him a daughter,"—that is, after Leah's prayer. Since Leah had rendered judgment [*danah din*] on herself, the newborn was named Dinah (BT *Berakhot* 60a; *Tanhuma* [ed. Buber], *Vayeze* 19). According to another midrashic etymology, each of Jacob's children was born together with his future spouse, except for Dinah, who was born alone. It therefore was said of her: This girl is with justice [*din*] and judgment (*Pirkei de-Rabbi Eliezer* [ed. Higger], chap. 35).

In an attempt to resolve the discrepancy between the list of those who went down to Egypt with Jacob and the total number of seventy given in the [Torah](#), the Rabbis assert that a twin was born together with Dinah, and she was one of the seventy souls who came with Jacob (BT *Bava Batra* 123a). <http://jwa.org/encyclopedia/article/dinah-midrash-and-aggadah>

While Leah subtly triggers a course of events that threatens the goals and values in Genesis, Dina, in contrast, directly challenges her society by her unconventional behavior and troublesome predicament. Firstly, as has been noted, a woman's worth in Genesis is measured by her subservience to her husband and her fertility. "Dina acts contrary to the role expected of her" (Graetz 306). She is neither a wife nor a mother, only a daughter and a sister. In patriarchal societies, like the society of Abraham and his descendants, "daughters have value primarily on the marriage market and in their potential to bear children" (Graetz 306). Therefore, Dina, a defiled and unmarried daughter, is not only an affront to the greater divine plan, based on female subordination and fertility, but also a burden to her family because she subverts societal expectations. She is reduced to being damaged goods and brings shame to her entire clan. The behavioral codes and mores in Genesis continually reinforce the patriarchal nature of the society and the carefully defined parameters designated for a female's contribution. Dina represents still another model of a woman who threatens the Genesis community by her deviant actions. All the women encountered in Genesis are either dwelling or journeying under their father's or husband's jurisdiction. They never travel or venture out by themselves under any condition. By going out "to look over the land" (34:1), Dina, like Rebecca, violates the female role by taking independent action. She transgresses the norm of total subjugation to male dominance. This is threatening to the patriarchal structure, wherein women are restricted to a role of complete subservience. [http://www.utoronto.ca/wjudaism/contemporary/contemp\\_index1.html](http://www.utoronto.ca/wjudaism/contemporary/contemp_index1.html)

**V'ykach otah, va'yeshkav otah, vaya'neha** The JPS Tanach translates this as "he took her and lay with her by force." The URJ Women's Torah renders the verse as "he took her and lay her down and raped her." In the ArtScroll Tikkun, the translation is "he took her, lay with her and violated her."

The key word in this debate is *vaya neha* from the root word *innah*. In Deuteronomy 22 which outlines laws about sexual offenses, the expression used for rape is "he took hold of her" an expression that is also found in other passages describing forced sexual relations. On the other hand, the use of *innah* in Deuteronomy 22 clearly means "violate" and not rape.

This view is echoed by Jonathan Kirsch In his book *The Harlot by the Side of the Road*. Kirsch writes that the word "innah" indicates a "degrading and debasing experience by which a girl loses the expectancy of a fully valid marriage, mostly because she is no longer a virgin."

According to the mores of the tribe of Israel the interaction between Shechem and Dinah was a defilement or dishonoring -- she did after all have sexual relations with a man who was not circumcised. This is even acknowledged in the parsha itself. Verse 34:7 states that what really angered Jacob's sons was that Shechem had "committed an outrage in Israel by lying with a daughter of Jacob". Nowhere is there any indication that force was involved. And the very next line goes on to say that Shechem is madly in love with Dinah and wants to marry her. So there is more to this story than initially meets the eye.

What really occurred here was not the rape of a woman but a violation of the rights of property. What we are witnessing is a juridical and social status negotiation. Dinah is no longer virgin, and there must be compensation; whether she was forced to have sex with Shechem or whether this was consensual, is really immaterial from the viewpoint of Dinah's father and brothers. Dinah

becomes a pawn in Israel's negotiations with their Canaanite neighbors.  
<http://www.orchadash.org/documents/dvrei/SJ%202008-12-12%20Rape%20of%20Dinah.pdf>

### **A rape or a secretive courtship?**

Ita Sheres says that Shechem "recognizes Dinah as a person of value". In addition an ancient rabbi believed that Simeon and Levi had to drag Dinah from Shechem's home. We may "be tempted to speculate that the two of them -young, unwed, and crucially, each from a different tribe-have fallen so deeply in love with each other they dare to engage in some kind of sexual encounter." ( 81)

It is possible, also, to look at this angle from a critical, not just a romantic, eye. Because of the implications of both-rape and love-that the texts are from two different sources. We can argue that the rape of Dinah was inserted later, to castigate any who would wish to marry a non-Israelite, and to denigrate the name of Shechem, he is reduced to rapist. In other words, the lore that was passed down of the depth of Shechem's love for Dinah, was turned into a story of "star-crossed lovers", whose story must be changed to ensure that intermarriage, and belief in others gods, did not continue. (82)

Anita Diamant writes, too, of the boundless love that Dinah had for Shechem, and the pain she suffered when her brothers killed him and forced her home again. Anita Diamant uses the long silent voice of Dinah to tell the story not only of Dinah, but of the other women in her life as well, effectively, emotionally, giving voice to many women. As she writes, in Dinah's lilting voice, ". . . But the other reason women wanted daughters was to keep their memories alive" (3)

<http://www.beth-elsa.org/abv121203.htm>

### **Additional readings**

<http://www.phyllis-chesler.com/126/the-rape-of-dina>

<http://songeveryday.wordpress.com/2009/11/20/vayishlach-language-and-translation/>

[http://www.lectio.unibe.ch/01\\_2/s.htm](http://www.lectio.unibe.ch/01_2/s.htm)

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### **Yom Huledet Sameach**

Henry Block

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### **Quote of the Week**

Character cannot be developed  
in ease and quiet.

Only through experience  
of trial and suffering  
can the soul be strengthened,  
vision cleared,  
ambition inspired  
and success achieved.

Helen Keller

Shabbat shalom.

Stacy

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