

Dinah, a woman victim of sexual and ethnic violence.

Preliminary study of Genesis 34

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We are convinced that studies on the role of women in biblical narrative are still very much at an early stage, and rather than reaching final conclusions, it is necessary to prepare the way for in-depth studies. In this article we will explore, in a preliminary manner, the different aspects of this narrative with the aim of producing input for further research. What makes it even more interesting for those who do research on the text, as well as for its readers, is the combination of sexual and ethnic violence, as it tries to cast light on the origin of human conflicts.

Among the Hebrew roots of the name Dinah we find a semantic universe that introduces us to the fields of judgement and justice. From this root, the verb *dîn* “to judge” is derived, as well as the abstract noun “judgement.” The nouns *dan* and *dāyān* can be translated as “judge.” The proper noun Dan (i.e., judge) is the masculine form of Dinah, from which the combined form Daniel, or “God is my judge,” derives. Is the reference to this semantic universe mere chance or an indication that the story of Dinah expresses judgement on practices and attitudes that are degrading to women, in this case, within the larger framework of ethnic violence? Perhaps one should not overemphasize the linguistic relations, but they should not be dismissed too easily either. Whatever the answer to the question, this play on words is an invitation to dig deeper into the tragic story of a woman named Dinah who is the victim of sexual as well as ethnic violence – an act that increases the spiral-of-violence between neighbouring settlements.

We will not dedicate time to questions of the origin of this text, which have been dealt with extensively and contribute to describing the genesis of the text, but give little attention to its deeper significance. It has been well established that this passage draws upon the Yahwistic and Elohist traditions, though there are some authors who continue to advocate a Priestly origin and others who argue for E¹. The final composition is still matter of discussion, and the diversity of sources renders problematic the dating of the text. Based on similarities by opposition between v. 9 and Dt 7 (specially v.3), Klaus Westermann dates the final text in exilic or post-exilic times.² Even so, the final question over the dating of the sources of this narrative remains open, and it is a matter beyond the scope of this article.

It is remarkable how, after two centuries of intensive biblical research, it is only in the last forty years that we encounter studies that contemplate the perspective of women, including texts such as the one considered here.³

1. Sexual violence and ethnic violence

Dinah sets out to visit the region and when found by Shechem, he “he seized her, lay with her and raped her”. It has been discussed if what is narrated here is a sexual violation or an act of humiliation suffered by Dinah⁴. The verb *'ānāh* refers to humiliation and oppression, but when combined with *shākāb*, “to lie with”, it evokes the sense of sexual humiliation, rape.

¹ Cf a brief presentation on the issue by Franck Crüsemann, *The Torah. Theology and Social History of Old Testament Law* (Minneapolis, Fortress Press, 1996) pp. 68ff.

² *Genesis: A commentary, II.* (Minneapolis, Augsburgs Press, 1984-86) p. 653

³ Cf. A presentation of various readings of this text in Susanne Scholz, *Rape Plots: A Feminist Cultural Study of Genesis 34.* (New York, Lang, 2000). We have not had access to this book at this time.

⁴ Bechtel, Lyn M. “What if Dinah is not raped? (Genesis 34)”, *JSOT* 62 (1994) pp. 19-36- In answer to this article refer to Susanne Scholz “What ‘Really’ happened to Dinah: A feminist Analysis of Genesis 34”.*

The Hebrew word in v. 7 *nebālāh* points to a negative action and is used in various ways to indicate the concept of “madness,” “senseless,” “dishonour,” etc. When applied in the study of this text it refers to a sexual offence related to female sexuality. We find this expression in Dt 22:20-21 and Jer 29:23, and in both these cases it indicates an affront and an offence related to sexuality, though not necessarily a violent act. In Deuteronomy it is the woman, herself, who is accused of such an affront when accused by her new husband of not being a virgin, and her family cannot find proof to the contrary. In this case *nebālāh* indicates illicit sex while unmarried and living in her father’s house. This behaviour leads her family, who had given her in marriage, to lose prestige and credibility for future marriages of the other daughters. The punishment established is death by stoning, though it is difficult to determine with what frequency this punishment was carried out, or if it simply acted to deter such behaviour through fear, and if so, then what less cruel alternatives were implemented.

When in Jer 29:23 it describes the iniquity of the men of Judah, it says “those who perpetrated *infamies* (>*nebālāh*) in Israel, committing adultery with other men’s wives,” where infamy is related to adultery. In this case, the reference is to men. As in Deuteronomy, it does not imply a violent sexual act, but a transgression, breaking the law of sexual behaviour. If adultery is committed against the wives of their friends, it is probably an act of mutual consent, and although the prophet only refers to men, the punishment would befall the entire population anyway.

That the children of Jacob describe the behaviour of Shechem as *nebālāh* places it amongst the most insulting offences for Israel, and according to the laws of the time, the punishment was death. Hamor’s kindly intercession with Jacob, and the indication that all the men of the tribe accept circumcision, simply reinforces the sense of rape and explains the sudden love for Dinah after rape. This way Shechem avoided the death penalty.

Ethnic violence permeates the whole narrative. Shechem rapes Dinah, who belongs to another tribe and tries to minimize his act, arguing that he is in love with her, and in this way he tries to force a marriage. Dinah’s brothers use this offence as a reason to seek revenge on their foreign neighbours with unacceptable and excessive violence. The secret intention of both leaders (Shechem and his father Hamor, and Dinah’s brothers) is to keep the other tribe’s possessions (v 23,27-29). The crime against a woman is, on the one hand, an excuse for marriage and, on the other, a reason to justify a mass murder. In both cases, economic interests are of central concern and placed above the life of a person.

2. Other cases of rape

There are other texts in the Old Testament that refer to cases of sexual violence against women, each with their own characteristics and emphasis. The narrative of Judges 19 is a remarkable example of this combination of sexual and ethnic violence. It refers to a person in Gibeah who offers his daughter and the concubine of guest to be raped so as to protect the life of the Levite stranger who is lodged in his home for the night. In this case, violence against women is preferred to an offence against a man. Finally, it is only the concubine of the Levite who is sexually abused by a crowd of men from the town, such that in the early hours of the morning she dies at the threshold of the house, as a result of the mass rape. The husband takes the body back to his house and there he cuts her into twelve pieces that are scattered throughout the territory of Israel, as evidence of the barbaric act that she suffered. But the victim should have been the man, not his concubine.

We find another case of rape against women in 2 Samuel 13. On this occasion Ammon, the eldest son of David, was obsessed with his stepsister Tamar. With his uncle Jonadab, they plot so that she will come close to his bed, where he pretends to be ill. When she draws near to give him food, he takes hold of her arm and forces her to lie with him. She resists and argues that not only will she suffer dishonour, but that he will lose credibility with the king. Ammon does not listen to her, and she is overpowered and raped. The narrative continues pointing out that as soon as he finishes raping her, he changes his mind about

Tamar, and filled with hatred for her has her forcibly removed from the room. King David hears of this and is furious, but takes no action against Ammon because he is the firstborn. Finally, his brother Absalom waits two years and then has Ammon murdered in revenge for the offence his sister suffered. Then Absalom hides from his father for three years. The rape of the woman is avenged with more violence, but both David's complacency and Jonadab's participation in the dishonour of Tamar is left in complete silence.

In a rather more elliptical manner, and with less detail as a consequence of the poetic literary genre, we are faced with a case of rape in Song of Songs 5:7. This text refers to the case of a young woman who goes out alone at night seeking for her lost love, and the watchmen find her and beat her. We read the text:

...the sentinels found me;
they beat me, they wounded me,
they took away my mantle,
those sentinels of the walls.

For the simple reason of walking alone, she is considered a prostitute and suffers sexual abuse⁵. It may not be socially acceptable for a woman to walk alone at night, but in no way does this justify beating and raping her. As a matter of fact, the watchmen explain their violence against this woman is due to her attitude, so she goes from being the victim to the provoker and, as such, responsible for the crime committed against her.

It is to be noted that the atrocious degree of sexual violence against women (when a man is condemned it is because he has adversely affected the interests of another man, i.e., Father, husband, etc.), with the exception of this last case, relates sexual violence and the death of one of those involved in the scenario.

3. References to Dinah

It is very interesting to examine the references to Dinah in the Hebrew text and try to understand their significance. Beyond the chapter with which we are concerned, there are two references to Jacob's daughter. To begin with, we should feel somewhat surprised that she is even mentioned in these lists, since, normally, women were not included amongst family descendants. In the few cases that daughters are mentioned, it is usually the case that the women relate to an event that the author wishes to highlight. In this case, it is probable that the enmity between Israel and the Shechemites may have been related to the massive crime of Simeon and Levi as revenge for the kidnapping and rape of Dinah, and this could be the reason her name remained in the genealogy of Jacob.

The first reference is in Gen 30:21 "Afterwards she bore a daughter, and named her Dinah". This refers to Leah the less-loved wife of Jacob, but whom in her second stage of fertility gave birth to two sons and Dinah. The mention is so brief that it has been suggested that it is a later addition to the larger text. This is quite probable, but far from weakening the text. In this case it is an added value, as it indicates that it was necessary to incorporate it so as to preserve such a significant story for Israelite history. It may have a double sense as a story, because in the list of Jacob's descendants included in Gen 29:31-30:24 Dinah is needed to reach number of twelve descendants. At this time of the narrative Benjamin had not been born (but by Gen 35: 16-20 he will be), though by then the structure of the twelve tribes would seem to have been acknowledged and justified. One can suspect that the inclusion of a woman would permit that in the future she could be eliminated from the list and replaced by Benjamin or some other male. But that does not seem to be the case, as it would have meant the substitution of Levi once they became a priestly tribe, and as such, with no land to their name; this will happen with the opening up of the tribes of Manasseh and Ephraim.

⁵ Pablo Andiñach, *El fuego y la ternura*. (Buenos Aires, Lumen, 1997) pp. 122-124.

There is a second list of Jacob's descendants where Dinah's name is mentioned. In Genesis 46:8-27, which is a Priestly list, not only the names of the sons are included, but also of the descendants of those who had arrived in Egypt. When mentioning the children born by Leah in Paddan-aram, the text adds "together with his daughter Dinah". In the whole list of descendants only two women are mentioned: Dinah and Serah, daughter of Asher. She is named here and then disappears from the text. Curiously enough, Serah is named in 1 Chronicles 7:30 when reference is made to the list of descendants included at the time of distribution of the land amongst the tribes. We do not hear of Dinah in the Old Testament outside this chapter 34 and the two other texts.

In spite of the fact that in this narration her presence lies behind all that is said, she is not mentioned very often. At the beginning of the text we read she "went out to visit the women of the region", but what does this expression really mean? There is not much information to help us reach conclusions. It has been mentioned that it expresses certain curiosity for what goes on outside the closed family circle,⁶ and even though this is consistent it does not explain why she went to visit the *women* and not the country in its totality. The profuse commercial exchanges meant that her life, which had previously been limited to the family and tribe environment, now began to open toward other horizons, and this generated larger expectations. The contact with diverse cultures and the exchange of merchandise and goods enabled her to know more about the people who were behind those interactions and transactions. For Jacob's family it was no different, and that it all began with a woman who wanted to know more about other women is something we should not dismiss. It is true that leaving one's place exposes one to dangers such as the one she finally suffered, but the narration also points us to the inner strength of this woman who risked danger in the search for new cultural openings, new relations and new friendships. Dinah goes out from her home to meet other women, learn their stories, and know about their plans and projects.

4. The voice of Dinah is not heard

Few are the women in the Old Testament whom we hear through their own voices, and Dinah's voice is silent. In Genesis 3:2, Eve is the first female voice we hear, though there are others where we are told that they have said this or that. It is always the narrator who grants voice to the characters, and the narrator is usually believed to be male. In the whole of the Old Testament, only in Song of Songs do women speak in the first person and constitute the one who narrates.⁷ This fact leads me, personally, to believe in a woman author of these poems, rather than a man. In the case of Genesis 34, Dinah's voice is not even mentioned or referred to by another person.

The narrative with which we are concerned does not have any etiological sense, it does not pretend to found any new customs; rather, it is interested in *strengthening the enmity* between two tribes.⁸ This enmity in the first place is not constructed on the rape suffered by Dinah, but rather on the revenge of the brothers who murder a complete town as punishment for violence exercised by one of them on the woman and property of the other. This is what remains in the memory and mind of those who read the text. Following this consideration, some have tried to establish that the sense of the story is based on the violence that Dinah's

⁶ Gerard von Rad, *El libro de Génesis*. (Salamanca, Sígueme, 1977) p. 408

⁷ Observations made by Susan Niditch, *The Women's Bible Commentary*. (Louisville, Westminster/John Knox Press, 1992) p.23

⁸ It has been suggested that there could be an etiological sense if we consider the text as an explanation of what happens to the tribes of Simeon and Levi. Though this relation is not made definitively clear, what it refers to is the enmity with the Canaanites and the failure to establish any sort of friendship with them. This has been established in the text that follows (Gen 35, 1-7) where the expelling of idols from amongst the Israelites is announced.

brothers brought down on Shechem and his people, rather than the dishonour and rape suffered by a woman.⁹

In this narration we are shown how Jacob tries to negotiate with Hamor to reach a peaceful resolution of an already irreversible situation. The brothers develop a strategy with the intention to revenge the injury suffered by their sister, and at the same time to be able to keep the possessions of the offending people. On the other hand, the Shechemites also see the agreement as a way to take possession of the goods of Jacob and his sons. The narrative makes it quite evident that, from the rape of Dinah and as consequence of it, a series of plots, schemes and intrigues develop which have nothing to do with Dinah, but do have a great deal to do with power and leadership of the two neighbouring tribes. It is remarkable that although Dinah is the central character because her rape is the background of the whole narrative, including the final verse where Simeon and Levi justify before their father what they have done, her active presence in the events is totally secondary.

After she goes out for a walk and is kidnapped, she is talked about, even the event of her possible marriage is considered, and during the murder of the Shechemites she is taken from Shechem's home and taken back once again to her tribe. Even though she has been transformed into a symbol of the family dignity, for her brothers she has nothing whatsoever to say. If we take into account that after the kidnapping and rape we hear that Shechem falls in love with her to the point of begging his father to negotiate her marriage, and even though they suspect a plot, would it not be possible to ask Dinah what her opinion is, or what she would wish in this new situation?

Bearing in mind the existing male concept of women as property, what drives the brothers insane is the fact that Shechem had taken a woman from her male "owner" without permission.¹⁰ This violation of woman-property is what leads to the terrible violence that follows, which is not justified by Dinah's wishes, but rather is attributed to the humiliation the brothers feel. Dinah's rape then is seen as an excuse for violence, while her voice is never heard in the narration.

The custom in ancient Israel was that a woman should reach marriage as a virgin. Legislation established that, if a man had sexual relations with a virgin, he should pay her father a compensation and then marry the woman (Dt 22:28-30). This law is understood within the framework of mutually consenting relations. At least it did not consider that sexual violence was involved. When this actually took place the penalty suffered by males was death (Dt 22: 25), though it is not altogether clear if this was strictly applied in all cases. In the context of this case, Hamor tried to hide the rape behind the mask of mutually consensual sex; thus, the solution would have been the marriage of his son and not his death. That Shechem mentions that he has fallen in love would seem to be a strategy to save his life rather than a confession of genuine love. And it is quite probable that Dinah's brothers understood both Hamor's negotiation and the sudden falling in love, in such terms. Their indignation is also related to the lies with which they try to cover the crime.

5. Other characters

Even though the events take place in very ancient times, the final composition reflects a later period (exilic or post-exilic) where the social reality is not the one of the first context. From a careful reading it is clear that the tribes of Simeon and Levi no longer live in the central region of Canaan, that is to say, in the area of Shechem. Simeon will become established in the South, and the tribe of Levi – at the time of the final writing – possesses its own land. The narrative then contributes to sustaining this absence or elimination of a tribe

⁹ Cf. The views of George W. Coats, *Genesis with an Introduction to Narrative Literature*. (Grand Rapids, Eerdmans, 1987) p. 234

¹⁰ Bechtel, L. "What if Dinah..." p. 33-34

from a place where later on the tribes of Ephraim and Manasseh will be established. As usually happens in legendary narratives, the social actors represent and act as individuals. In this case Shechem is not a city, but rather the offending son of Hamor. Simeon and Levi are not tribes but offended brothers whose actions are motivated by personal decisions.¹¹ This more complex personification of social actors does not exempt us from analysing their presence in light of the present day composition. Bearing this in mind, it becomes extremely important to analyse the role that each character play in this story.

A. Shechem

Besides Dinah, there are other characters whom we should consider. We are told Shechem is a Hivite (v.2). This tribe is mentioned as one of the group of nations that lived in the mountainous area of Canaan before and after the conquest (Ex 3:8; 23:23; Jos 11:3). These were people that lived in the same region but with whom they had no relations and to whom they applied all the regulations limiting any sort of dealings. The prohibition to marry Canaanites (Dt 7:2) was clear and final, and the Hivites were part of this group.

The argument raise by the brothers that they could not allow their sister to marry into an uncircumcised people was true, though it is used with malice and hides secondary intentions. The idea that, by undergoing circumcision they became a people with whom relations could be established, is not totally recognized, and it is somewhat difficult to accept. What seems to prevail is an *economic* interest on both sides, which see in this union the possibility to enhance their property. Circumcision is the only way to achieve this accord. This fact, again, only proves that the use of religious practices to attain economic gains is not an invention of modern times. It should be noted that there is no mention whatsoever of God or the gods of the Hivite people nor any declaration from them that recognizes Yahweh. Even more, when reading 35:1-7, we discover that the relation of Jacob's family with the Shechemites resulted in the introduction of idols and foreign gods to the community. There follows the need to "*move away and get rid of the foreign gods*", which is a clear indication that this relation was not without consequences and that establishing family links with other peoples was no easy task. Another reading of this text shows that the presence of idols indicates the underlying deceit when both sides had the intention of establishing some sort of link between these two people. Their real intentions of economic and territorial interests were never announced.

Shechem has a leading role in this story, and at a point, he even surpasses his father. He offers the brothers an important dowry, even more than what could be usually expected or his father would be willing to offer: "Let me find favor with you, and whatever you say to me I will give" (v. 11). This claim impresses the reader – and even perhaps the brothers – but also raises the suspicion that prevails throughout the narrative. This offer seems to be in accordance with the laws of the time, as can be read in Ex 22:15ff, yet there is no reference to rape in this case, rather, it refers to sleeping with a virgin.¹² Deuteronomy 22:28ff., which does refer to rape and stipulates a payment to the father and compulsory marriage with no right to repudiation, is never considered by Dinah's brothers. The father has no opportunity to discuss such an offer.

The central role reaches its climax in verse 14 when the brothers address him and leave Hamor out of the conversation. According to the text, Shechem will be murdered by Dinah's brothers in his city together with his father and all other inhabitants.

B. Simeon and Levi

¹¹ G. von Rad, *Genesis*, p. 413

¹² As interpreted by F. Crüsemann, *The Torah. Theology and Social History of Old Testament Law*. (Minneapolis, Fortress Press, 1996) pp. 69ff.

Of all Jacob's children who express their indignation over what Dinah went through (v 7), Simeon and Levi are the ones who directed the actions to avenge their sister. They felt especially the grief of both their father and their mother (Gen 30:21). Of Leah's registered children, Dinah was the seventh and last. The ill-feeling felt by the brothers is expressed by the verb *'atsab*, which is used in only one other occasion in the whole Bible, Genesis 6:6, where it applies to God before the flood and refers to the evil of human beings, indicating that "*his heart grieved*"¹³. This supports the claim that the brothers are filled with rage.

In spite of this, the tribes derived from these two brothers will not receive congratulations but will suffer the consequences of this brutal action, as is expressed in the "Words of Jacob to his sons" (Gen 49:2-27), what is mistakenly called the "Jacob's blessing." In verses 5-6 it reads:

"Simeon and Levi are brothers; weapons of violence are *their swords*. May I never come into their council; may I not be joined to their company, for in their anger they killed men, and at their whim they hamstringed oxen".

The expression "*are their swords*" *mekērotêhem* is a *hapax legomenon* translated in a tentative way. The general sense of the words addressed to these tribes is far from being a blessing and should be understood as Jacob's curse over their destiny and future. Strangely, there is no mention of the religious character that will later be granted to Levi, and in this sense, it is strange to recall an event that is a stain on the prestige of the tribe. It is clear, on the other hand, that posterity neither recognized nor rewarded them for the way they carried out their revenge. It was probably expected that action would have been taken out on Shechem personally and not on the whole tribe. Jacob's rebuke in verse 30 expresses the awareness of the disproportionate reaction of both brothers and provides evidence that they had reached an agreement with the Shechemites, which was broken once they were weakened by circumcision.

There is a structural relation between the closing of the narrative and verse 7.¹⁴ The brothers justify their action before Jacob by saying, "Should our sister be treated like a whore?". At the beginning of the text when they heard what had happened, they said, "for such a thing ought not to be done." To the first statement is added, in the conclusion, a statement of what she suffered. Though Shechem did not treat Dinah as a prostitute, he had forced her to have sexual relations, which is exactly the opposite of prostitution. As in so many ethnic and racial conflicts, arguments enhance the actions of the other party so as to justify the excessive reaction and violence of the brothers.

It is necessary, then, to ask about the reason for such violence. Our understanding leads us to search for an answer, not so much in the narrative, but rather in the intention of dramatizing the enmity and the memory of the expulsion from the land. If a legitimate revenge results in genocide and ethnic or racial hatred, it then loses all legitimacy, is open to condemnation from contemporaries, and justifies a secondary destiny. It is a fact that Shechem will disappear very early from the political map of the tribes, being absorbed by Judah, and Levi will survive with no land, though this is imbued with holiness due to its priestly functions. It cannot be overestimated that, in the case of Levi, both in this narrative as in 49:5-6, the editor's intention is to relativise the holiness of this tribe by mentioning the dark moments of its past. This will allow it to be placed within the secular reality and the sphere of human imperfections, as are all the tribes, and so certain privileges as a priestly tribe could be questioned by the others.

¹³ Cf. The interpretation of this text in Nahum M. Sarna, *Genesis, The Traditional Hebrew text with New JPS Translation*. (JPS Torah Commentary, Philadelphia, Jewish Publication Society, 1986) p. 47

¹⁴ G.W. Coats, *Genesis...*, p. 235

C. Hamor

Hamor governed in Shechem. Yet certain events were carried out by his sons, as can be seen when Jacob buys a plot of land close to Shechem "...from the sons of Hamor" (33:19). All seems to indicate that these sons were extremely active and were in charge of buying and selling land. Their father reserved his participation for somewhat more complex situations. When he hears of the rape of one of Jacob's daughters, he takes the initiative and goes out to meet the woman's father. Jacob and his family had only recently settled in the area. They were neighbours with whom it was important to establish good relations and the offence committed by the son put the social stability in danger. As was the custom, it was the parents who negotiated and tried to make amends for their children's mistakes. In this case, there seems to be a displacement of roles, because Jacob's sons hear of the situation and feel indignation, and we read that Hamor – and later Shechem – turned directly to them (v 8ff) leaving Jacob to one side. Jacob does not reappear till verse 30 when the whole situation has come to an end.

Hamor uses all possible arguments to persuade Dinah's brothers to give their sister in marriage to his son. It is he who is in charge of the negotiations, yet at a certain moment Jacob's sons abandon all dialogue with the father and address the aggressor directly (v 13). In the case of both family, the elders seem to take a secondary role, leaving their sons to play the lead role. When the time comes for the Shechemites to explain their proposal, it is Hamor, once again, who takes the initiative upheld by his son (v 20).

D. Jacob

Jacob plays a relatively secondary role in the whole event. He seems rather indifferent to the kidnapping and rape of his daughter Dinah. He does not name her or even inquire about her welfare. He seems to be more concerned about the sense of tragedy that could affect the family if they fall out with the neighbouring peoples, than with what Dinah has suffered. His strategy seems to be to solve the situation quietly and on his own, reaching an agreement with Hamor which would benefit them both and, thus, forgetting the offence. This plan fails due to the unexpected intervention of his sons who "came in from the field" (v. 7) and heard what had happened.

In verse 5 we read that Jacob gets to know what Dinah has suffered, but not his sons "...who were with his cattle in the field." Jacob remains silent, probably because he knew of his sons impetuosity, and how they would react once they heard of the dishonour suffered by Dinah. So Jacob tries to carry out the negotiations with the other tribe personally. His concerns are real, and he does not take long to justify what he has done. It is when the sons take charge of the whole situation and carry out the negotiations, that the idea of revenge, murder and plunder begins to emerge.

As we saw at the beginning Jacob is the one who initiates negotiations with Shechem's father, but soon enough he is displaced from the central scene by his sons who take charge. At the end of the narrative Jacob blames Simeon and Levi for the massacre that has taken place and holds them responsible for the fact that the neighbouring tribes, who have more men, could turn against them, and if they should unite, Jacob's family would be at a disadvantage. The message is that while the father's negotiations had been guided by prudence toward a peaceful agreement, the sons were carried away by indignation and committed a crime that would have grave consequences for all the people.

History preserves Jacob's action and lays the blame for the crime on Simeon and Levi, even though all the rest of the brothers took advantage of the pillage (v. 27-29). In this narrative, Jacob is seen as the one who tried to find a solution through peaceful negotiation, and ended up being a victim of the excess of his sons. The spiral of violence had begun its ascending movement.

6. Final words

We have covered the main aspects of the narrative to demonstrate the silence of the victim's voice. In this case, it is the voice of a woman, but it could have been a child, a poor person, a marginalized person. Today as it was yesterday, those who suffer personal or social violence are not heard. In the same way, we can see how genuine ethical, religious or nationalistic arguments are distorted and used against the same people who sustain them. Hatred is created and violence is nurtured, and behind all this lies the benefit of only small groups of the powerful. The reading of this text leads us to a closing question: Can we see in this narrative a plea for justice (in the name of Dinah!) which originates in the silenced voice of the victim?