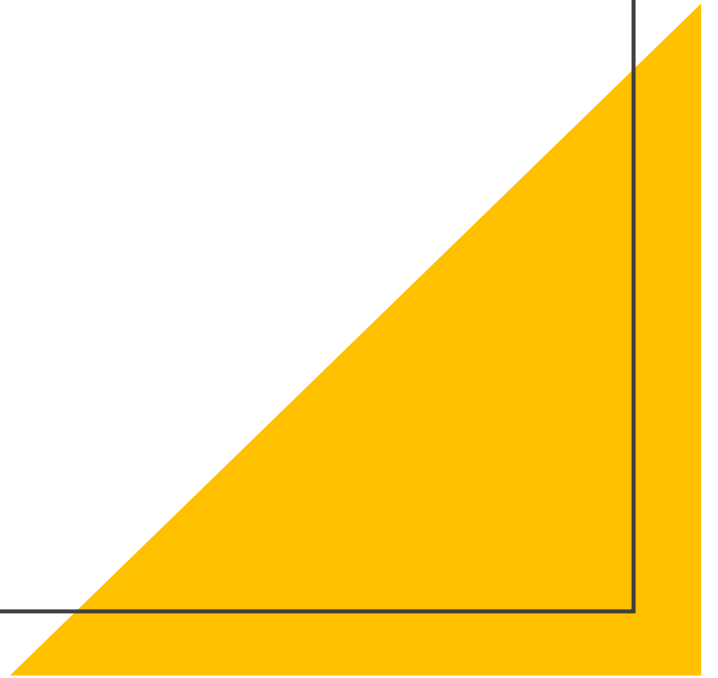


Gender violence in the Bible



Talking about gender violence

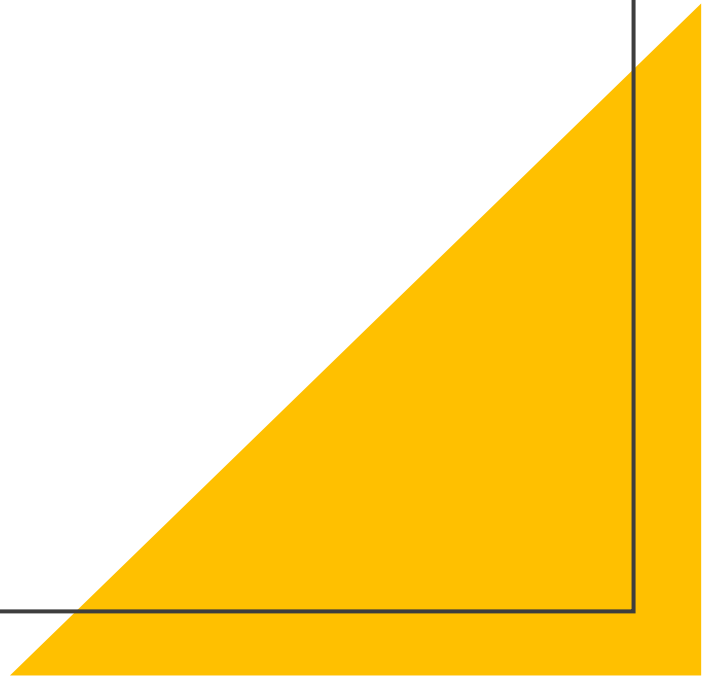
This week's topic can be emotionally challenging to discuss.

We will engage with it sensitively and encourage everyone to consider the tutorial on Friday as a safe space where we can learn about this difficult content empathetically and thoughtfully.

If you find the subject distressing, please feel free to absent yourself from the tutorials.

This week

- Defining rape culture and rape myths
- Identifying sexual violence in the Bible
- Resistant readings of biblical 'texts of terror'

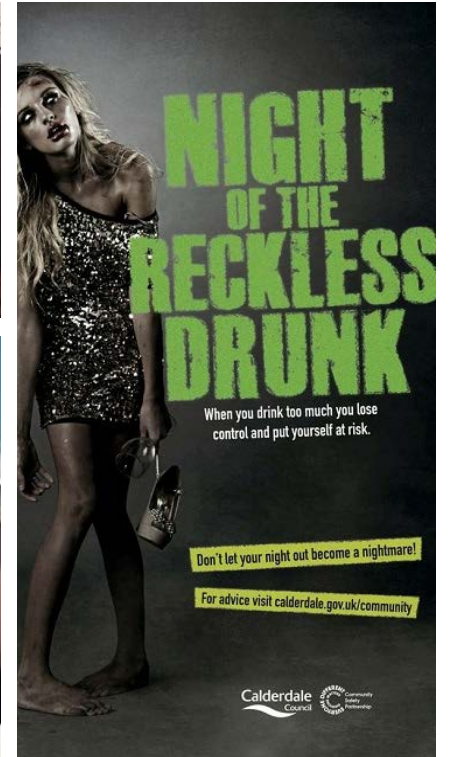


What is rape culture?

- A culture in which rape and other forms of gender violence are pervasive and normalized, legitimized, denied, or trivialized due to societal attitudes about gender and sexuality.
- In rape cultures, we see many, everyday sociocultural practices that excuse or tolerate gender violence:
 - Rape is spoken about trivially (or even celebrated) in pop culture (e.g. film, TV, music)
 - How seriously does the judicial system take sexual violence? In New Zealand, only about **10 out of 100** sexual abuse crimes are reported and **3** of those get to court. Only **one** of those is likely to get a conviction.

Rape myths sustain and scaffold rape culture

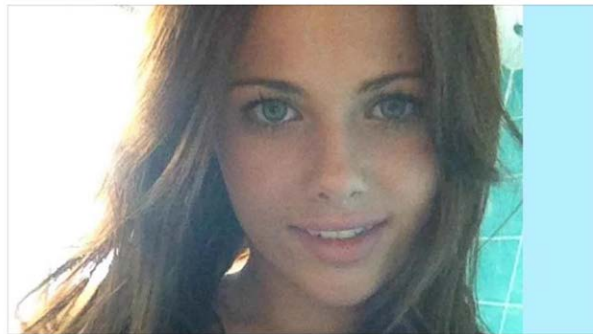
- (S)he was asking for it.
- It is/was the victim's responsibility not to be raped.
- Men can't help themselves.
- 'Good' men are not rapists.
- Women play hard to get – but 'no' means 'yes'.
- Rape is 'just sex'.
- Rape victims are 'defiled' or 'damaged goods'.
- Rapes are committed by strangers.
- Women lie about being raped.
- A person cannot rape their spouse.
- Sex workers cannot be raped.



The Sun @TheSun

2h

Woman 'drank six Jagerbombs in ten minutes on the night she was raped and murdered' thesun.uk/6016BIP0u



105



106



Are drunk girls to blame for sexual assault?

 **The Shiloh Project**
@ProjShiloh

Following

Sexual harassment claims could have sunk Casey Affleck. Instead, he soared



Sexual harassment claims could have sunk Casey Affleck. Instead, he soared
The treatment of Ben Affleck's artsy kid brother – now basking in praise for Manchester by the Sea – stands in striking contrast to other cases. Why?
theguardian.com

 **Vicky Walker**
@vicky_walker

Follow

Hey @Schofe & @hollywills how about 'Are men socialised to feel entitled to women's bodies?' instead of this?
#thismorning



RETWEETS
114

LIKES
169



 **The Shiloh Project**
@ProjShiloh

Following

"This was a couple of daft boys" - defence lawyer drawing on 'boys will be boys' rhetoric to excuse sexual assault



UK woman speaks out after man sexually assaulted her while live-streamin...
A UK teenager was sexually assaulted with a sweeping brush as she slept at a party. Tracie Aldridge, then 19, slept through the attack by Jordan Binnie, but w...
nzherald.co.nz

 **Farrah Khan**
@farrah_khan

Follow

rape culture is when father of convicted rapist
#BrockTurner characterizes the assault as "20 mins of action".



Michele Dauber @mldauber

#brockturner father: son not "violent" only got "20 mins of action" shouldn't have to go to prison. @thehuntingground

RETWEETS
272

LIKES
253



 **Caroline Blyth**
@CazBlyth

Following

"Were you saying no but not meaning no?"
Rape culture is alive and well in NZ judiciary



'Were you saying no but not meaning no?': On the tactics of Scott Kuggeleijn...
Regardless of today's verdict, the assumptions made and line of questioning pursued by Kuggeleijn's lawyer Philip Morgan over the course of two trials were e...
thespinoff.co.nz

 **The Shiloh Project**
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Following

Cricketer Scott Kuggeleijn tells court alleged victim was 'provocatively dressed', as if that's an excuse for rape.



Cricket rape trial: Scott Kuggeleijn tells court alleged victim was 'provocati...
An alleged rape victim wearing a skirt and singlet was
nzherald.co.nz

Rape myths in biblical texts

- Some of the same myths and misperceptions about sexual violence are also articulated in biblical texts.
- Others are not mentioned explicitly in biblical texts, but may be imported onto texts by interpreters who are influenced by their own rape culture context (in other words, we see what we expect to see when we look at a text).
- At times, biblical rape narratives are ignored, silenced, trivialized or excused both in biblical scholarship and religious contexts.

Silencing sexual violence is a part of rape culture

‘After rape, there is a terrible silence.’

– Deena Metzger

‘Rape has long been considered a crime so unspeakable, so shameful to its victims, that they are rendered mute and cloaked in anonymity.’

– Nancy Venable Raine

‘Silence and silencing are characteristic of approaches to sexual violence.’

– Ulrike Bail

‘To speak and be heard is to have power over one’s life. To be silenced is to have that power denied.’

– Courtney Ahrens

Sexual violence in the Bible

See reading by Johanna Stiebert (under week 9 module)

- Stranger rape (e.g. Genesis 34)
- Acquaintance rape/incest (e.g. Genesis 19; 2 Samuel 13)
- Gang rape (e.g. Judges 19 – and threatened in Genesis 19)
- Wartime rape (e.g. Deuteronomy 21:10-14; Numbers 25, Judges 21, etc.)
- Coercive sex, or sex with a slave (which = rape; e.g. Genesis 12:10-20; Genesis 16; 2 Samuel 11; Luke 7:1-10)
- Sex trafficking (e.g. Esther 2)
- Metaphorical rape (e.g. Ezekiel 16, 23; Hosea 1-3)
- Sexual violence as punishment (e.g. Matthew 27:28, 35)

How do we read texts of terror?

- Redemptive readings – finding sympathy and compassion *in* the texts for victims of rape (e.g. Phyllis Trible, *Texts of Terror*)
- Hermeneutic of suspicion – the texts are unredeemable and need to be critiqued (e.g. Esther Fuchs, Linda Day)
- Silence – the texts are ancient stories whose socio-cultural context should be respected and left unchallenged (cf. cultural relativism; e.g. Phyllis Day, Meir Steinberg).

Breaking the silence – the responsibility of the biblical reader

‘Interpretation is never objective, never reliable, never free of biases and subjectivity’.

- Mieke Bal, *Death and Dissymmetry*, p. 238.

‘We cannot afford to ignore the activity of reading, for it is here that literature is realized in *praxis*. Literature acts on the world by acting on its readers.’

- Patrocinio Schweickart, ‘Reading Ourselves’, p. 615

The interpreter's own silence

'To accept the value statements of the text in utter passivity, without allowing oneself the freedom to reflect critically upon its claims and to question its assumptions is merely to foster a sense of complacency.'

- Eryl Davies, *The Dissenting Reader*, p. 8

'By ignoring the ideological problem posed by stories of rape and adultery, by ignoring the patriarchal implications of the way in which the woman in the text is silenced, the modern androcentric critic reinscribes biblical sexual politics ... The choral harmony of the authoritative narrators and the "objective" critics reencodes the silence about women's oppression.'

- Esther Fuchs, "Contemporary Biblical Literary Criticism," p. 138.

Our role as interpreters

‘In order to deconstruct the abuses of the present, we must dismantle the oppressive texts, interpretations, and practices of the past.’

Carole Fontaine, *With Eyes of Flesh*, p. 218.

‘We need to know the writing of the past, and know it differently than we have ever known it; not to pass on a tradition but to break its hold over us.’

Adrienne Rich, “When we dead awaken,” p. 35.

“Because the Bible continues to exert influence into the present, erasure of rape from the Bible can enable the easier perpetuation of rape myths ... [which] have bearing and a damaging impact on real lives’.

Johanna Stiebert, p.7).

But what about anachronism?

- What do ancient texts have to say to modern concepts of sexual violence?
- Biblical understandings of sexual violence are very different from contemporary definitions.
- Can we make comparisons between biblical and contemporary rape?
- See Susanne Scholz (2005) in reading list

Genesis 34

Interpreters have identified various rape myths in this text:

- She was asking for it
- It is/was the victim's responsibility not to be raped.
- Rape is 'just sex'
- Men can't help themselves.
- 'Good' men are not rapists.
- Rape victims are 'defiled' or 'damaged goods'.

GENESIS 34:28
on his way to Seir. ¹⁷ But Jacob journeyed to Succoth, and built himself a house
and booths for his livestock. Therefore the name of the place is called Succoth.
Jacob came safely ² to the city of Shechem, which is in the land of Canaan,
from Paddan-arum, and he camped before the city. ¹⁸ And from the sons of
Shechem's father, he bought for a hundred pieces of money ³ the piece of land on
which he had pitched his tent. ²⁰ There he erected an altar and called it El-Elohe-Israel.

Slaying of Dinah

Now Dinah the daughter of Leah, whom she had borne to Jacob, went out to
see the women of the land. ² And when Shechem the son of Hamor the Hivite,
chief of the land, saw her, he seized her and lay with her and humiliated her.
His soul was drawn to Dinah the daughter of Jacob. He loved the young woman
and spoke tenderly to her. ⁴ So Shechem spoke to his father Hamor, saying, "Get me
this woman for my wife."

Now Jacob heard that he had defiled his daughter Dinah. But his sons were with
stock in the field, so Jacob held his sons until they came. ⁶ And Hamor the
son of Shechem went out to Jacob to speak with him. ⁷ The sons of Jacob had come in
the field as soon as they heard of it, and the men were indignant and very angry,
because he had done an outrageous thing in Israel by lying with Jacob's daughter, for
this thing must not be done.

Then Hamor spoke with them, saying, "The soul of my son Shechem longs for your
daughter. Please give her to him to be his wife. ⁹ Make marriages with us; give your
daughters to us, and take our daughters for yourselves. ¹⁰ You shall dwell with us, and
our land shall be open to you. Dwell and trade in it, and get property in it. ¹¹ Shechem
has said to her father and to her brothers, 'Let me find favor in your eyes, and whatever
you say to me I will give. ¹² Ask me for as great a bride price as you will, and
I will give it to you. Only give me the young woman to be my wife.'"

The sons of Jacob answered Shechem and his father Hamor deceitfully, because he
had defiled their sister Dinah. ¹³ They said to them, "We cannot do this thing, to give
our sister to one who is uncircumcised, for that would be a disgrace to us. ¹⁴ Only on
this condition will we agree with you—that you will become as we are by every male
being circumcised. ¹⁵ Then we will give our daughters to you, and we will
give you our daughters to ourselves, and we will dwell with you and become one people.
If you will not listen to us and be circumcised, then we will take our daughter,
and we will be gone."

Their words pleased Hamor and Hamor's son Shechem. ¹⁶ And the young man
did not delay to do the thing, because he delighted in Jacob's daughter. Now he was
the most honored of all his father's house. ¹⁷ So Hamor and his son Shechem came
to the gate of their city and spoke to the men of their city, saying, ¹⁸ "These men are
peace with us; let them dwell in the land and trade in it, for behold, the land is
enough for them. Let us take their daughters as wives, and let us give them our
daughters. ²² Only on this condition will the men agree to dwell with us to become one
people—when every male among us is circumcised as they are circumcised. ²³ Will
not our livestock, their property and all their beasts be ours? Only let us agree with them.
They will dwell with us." ²⁴ And all who went out of the gate of his city listened
to Hamor and his son Shechem, and every male was circumcised, all who went out of
the gate of his city.

On the third day, when they were sore, two of the sons of Jacob, Simeon and
Levi, Dinah's brothers, took their swords and came against the city while it felt secure and
killed all the males. ²⁶ They killed Hamor and his son Shechem with the sword and
took Dinah out of Shechem's house and went away. ²⁷ The sons of Jacob came upon
the slain and plundered the city, because they had defiled their sister. ²⁸ They took
their flocks and their herds, their donkeys, and whatever was in the city and in the
land.

¹ Succoth means booths. ² Or peacefully. ³ Hebrew a hundred shekels; a unit of money of unknown value. ⁴ El-Elohe-Israel means
the God of Israel. ⁵ The Hebrew for your is plural here. ⁶ Or engagement present.

dinah
defiled

Gen 34:2

The sons
of Jacob
came upon
the slain &
plundered the
city, because
they had
defiled their
sisters.

‘Asking for it’

“Now Dinah the daughter of Leah, whom she had borne to Jacob, went out to visit the women of the region.”

Interpreters over the centuries have interpreted Dinah’s ‘going out’ as a sign that she had the ‘sexual intention of luring a man’ or was at least ‘at fault’ for letting herself be ‘seen’ by Shechem.

She is described as ‘sexually aggressive’, ‘unconventional’, ‘looking to be raped’, ‘asking for it’; she is accused of ‘imprudence’ and ‘transgression’ (going out by herself).

What does the Bible say about women who “go out”?

- Not much, to be honest.
- Women go out all the time – to work, to celebrate, to attend religious festivals, etc.
- Deuteronomy 22:25-26 makes clear that a woman who is raped when out in the countryside is completely innocent.
- The only biblical woman chastised for ‘going out’ is a married woman looking for a lover when her husband is away.
- The threat of sexual harm to women who go out is mentioned from time to time, but is not associated with any sense of blame on the woman’s part.

Rape is 'just sex'

- The biblical text strongly suggests a coercive act of rape, followed by abduction:
 - “When Shechem son of Hamor the Hivite, prince of the region, saw her, he seized her and lay with her by force” (v.2; NRSV – NIV has ‘he raped her’).
 - “[Dinah’s brothers] killed Hamor and his son Shechem with the sword, and **took Dinah out of Shechem’s house**, and went away” (v.26).
- Dinah’s rape is sometimes described in biblical scholarship as a ‘seduction’, a ‘liaison’, an ‘affair’, an ‘act of passion’, an ‘amorous folly’, and a source of Shechem’s ‘desire’ or ‘pleasure’.
- Interpretations such as these completely elide the violence in this text and equates rape with ‘just sex’, diminishing its harmfulness.

Rape is an offence against the victim's male kin

- Issue of dishonour to male relatives, rather than the welfare of the victim.
 - '[Dinah's brothers] were shocked and furious, because Shechem had done an outrageous thing in Israel by sleeping with Jacob's daughter—a thing that should not be done' (v.7).
 - 'Then Jacob said to Simeon and Levi, "You have brought trouble on me by making me obnoxious to the Canaanites and Perizzites, the people living in this land. We are few in number, and if they join forces against me and attack me, I and my household will be destroyed." But they replied, "Should he have treated our sister like a whore?"' (vv.30-31)
- Do Dinah's brothers even recognize this event as rape, or are they more concerned that 'their' family's sexual property (Dinah's virginity) has been stolen (particularly by a non-Israelite man)?

‘Not your typical rapist’

- Shechem wants to marry Dinah after he rapes her – he falls in love with her:
 - “[Shechem’s] heart was drawn to Dinah daughter of Jacob; he loved the young woman and spoke tenderly to her. And Shechem said to his father Hamor, ‘Get me this girl as my wife’.
- Biblical interpreters take this as a sign of Shechem’s redemption – he’s an ‘affectionate young man’, who deserves our ‘sympathy’, and whose ‘commitment’ to Dinah is laudable.
- The ‘good bloke’ trope – undermining the violence of the rape, diminishing blame, perpetuating myths that ‘good blokes’ don’t rape.

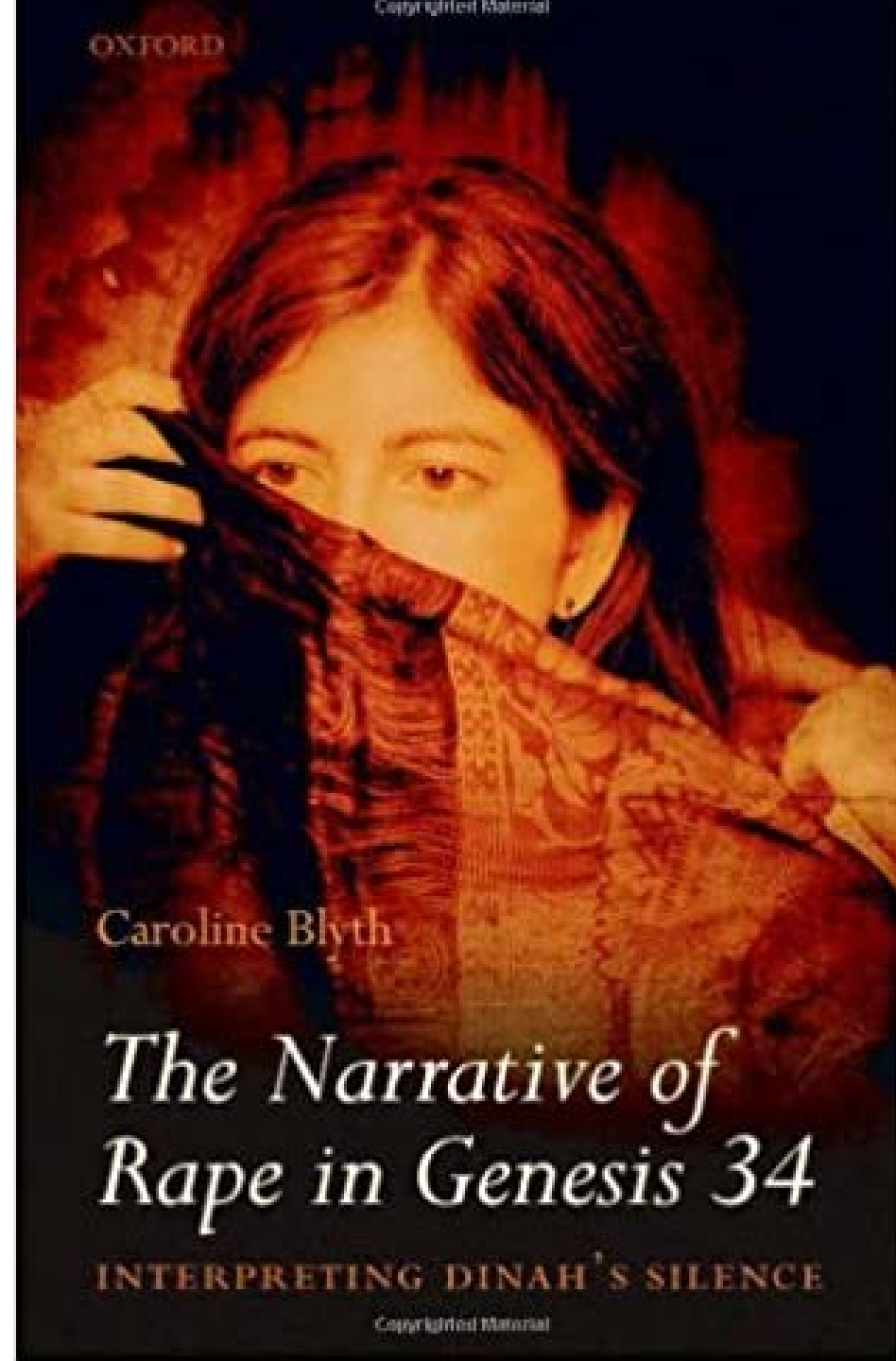
'Damaged goods'

- “When Jacob heard that his daughter Dinah had been defiled, his sons were in the fields with his livestock; so he did nothing about it until they came home” (v.5).
- “Because their sister Dinah had been defiled, Jacob’s sons replied deceitfully as they spoke to Shechem and his father Hamor” (v.13).
- “The sons of Jacob came upon the dead bodies and looted the city where their sister had been defiled” (v.27).

Victims may feel ‘defiled’ themselves after their rape. But this can be amplified by others’ responses to them (and this ties into purity culture).


Where is Dinah in all of this?

- Dinah is central to this story, yet her voice is the only voice that is never heard. All male characters are given a voice and point of view.
- Reinforcing the silence that surrounds sexual violence.
- How can we give Dinah her voice back?
- *Should* we give Dinah her voice back?

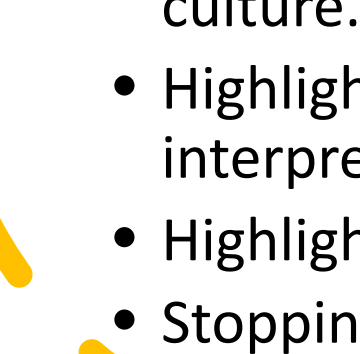


‘Yes, but it’s complicated’

- Genesis 34 ends with the annihilation of an entire Canaanite community by Dinah’s brothers.
- Do their actions impact on our reading of this text?
- Should the fact that Jacob and his descendants go onto colonize Canaan impact our interpretation of Shechem’s actions?
- Should we be concerned about reinforcing colonial discourses about ‘foreign’ men posing a threat to colonizers’ women?
- And if so, what happens to Dinah?



Where to take the text from here: Biblical interpretation as activism

- Reading biblical rape texts critically, pointing out the rape myths present in both text and interpretation, can serve to highlight and challenge rape myths and rape culture in our own contemporary cultures.
 - E.g. see Jessica Keady's chapter on Genesis 34.
 - Drawing connections between biblical rape texts and contemporary rape culture.
 - Highlighting the problematic nature of these biblical texts and their interpretations – their influence on readers.
 - Highlighting the current crisis of rape culture and all forms of gender violence.
 - Stopping the cycle of perpetuating rape myths through sacred texts.
- 

Other examples for you to check out

- The [Shiloh Project](#): an interdisciplinary research network exploring the various connections between rape culture, religion and the Bible.
 - Breaking out of the echo chamber – speaking to audiences within and beyond the University, engaging with activists and practitioners as well as academics.
- [Bible and Critical Theory](#) journal issue (2019) focuses on resistant readings of biblical texts depicting gender violence.
- [Rape Culture, Gender Violence, and Religion: Biblical Perspectives](#) (2018) – this volume explores biblical ‘texts of terror’, reading them alongside contemporary popular culture.

Tutorial: Tamar Campaign

- Tamar Campaign involves community-based, contextual biblical study to understand gender-based violence.
 - Start with the theme affecting community
 - Look behind the text (original context)
 - In the text (the message in its own right)
 - Beyond the text (how it speaks potentially to us today).
- Read 2 Samuel 13:1-22 and also the notes and questions on this text (pp.26-28) in the Tamar Campaign booklet (linked to in the Reading List and under the week 9 module). Be prepared to discuss this in your tutorial this week.