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Reconciling Apostasy in *Genesis Rabbah* 80: A Rabbinic Response to Intermarriage

Cover Page Footnote

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Genesis 34 contains the account of the rape of Dinah by Shechem, a prince of a neighboring tribe, and the brutal revenge extracted by her brothers Simeon and Levi. It is a story with many implications for the way Jews view women's bodies, intermarriage with Gentiles, pride, and zealous violence. The fate of Dinah was used to justify an absolute ban on intermarriage in the Second Temple Period, and is being used by feminists today to reclaim women's voices in the Bible. A history of Genesis 34's exegesis in Jewish literature would narrate the development of Jewish thought towards intermarriage. In this paper, I will show that in Late Antiquity the rabbis read the story of Dinah in Genesis 34 as exemplary of a softened rhetoric towards intermarriage. This is evident in the 5th-century collection of Jewish biblical exegesis, also known as midrash, on the book of Genesis titled *Genesis Rabbah*. The redactor (henceforth called simply *R*)¹ of *Genesis Rabbah* understands intermarriage as necessary to avoid apostasy, lest Israel be absorbed into the surrounding community. This is called the "moral-religious rationale" for intermarriage.² For *R*, even a Jew who intermarried or apostatized must be allowed back into the community, for a Jew remains a Jew even with the abandonment of Jewish practice. Within the socio-political situation of *R*, as the Jewish people remaining in the land of Israel faced an increasingly Christianized Holy Land, the need to distinguish Jewish identity away from Christianity found its expression in rabbinic literature. *R* fashions a resistant Jewish identity in their reading of Genesis 34 as a community with ties stronger than belief.

The composition of *Genesis Rabbah* comes at the twilight hour of the Roman Empire and the birth of the Christian world. A Christianized empire meant an influx of Christian pilgrims to

¹ Per Franz Rozenweig on the composition of the Torah: "We do not know the author. That it was Moses we cannot believe. Among ourselves we use the same symbol that the critics use for what they consider the final redactor, i.e., *R*. But we complete it to say not 'Redactor,' but Rabbenu – our teacher." Franz Rozenweig, *Briefe* (Berlin, Schocken, 1935), 582 and as encountered in Emil Fackenheim, *The Jewish Bible After the Holocaust: A Re-Reading* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1990), 14.

² Christine Hayes, *Gentile Impurities and Jewish Identities: Intermarriage and Conversion from the Bible to the Talmud* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004), 159.

Palestine and increased Christian control of their biblical land. The subsequent Christianization of Jewish culture occurred with the rise of the synagogue at the same time. The rabbis sought to preserve Jewish identity from a new onslaught of cultural, religious, and political forces at play, warning against intermarriage and emphasizing Jewishness as an identity transcending practice or cultural affiliation. The ability to rise up and slay the rapists of Israel like in Genesis 34 was no longer possible for the rabbis. The reality of intermarriage had to be accepted if the Jews were to survive from under the shadow of empire. It might still be forbidden, in fact the rabbis do explicitly forbid intermarriage, but those who did intermarry were not to be completely cut off from the community. The rabbinic understanding of intermarriage is much less severe than the understanding of the Second Temple Period (516 BCE-70 CE). For instance, the text *Jubilees*, from the 2nd century BCE, uses the rape of Dinah as the basis of an understanding of intermarriage as a base sexual sin, punishable by death.

R draws their philosophy toward intermarriage from the *Yerushalmi*, an encyclopedic Jewish text predating *Genesis Rabbah* by a couple decades and written in Palestine.³ The *Yerushalmi* treats biblical texts that talk about intermarriage, in particular Leviticus 18:21, Deuteronomy 7:3-4, and Ezra 9:1-2. Through this conversation, the *Yerushalmi* shows that the rabbis of the Land of Israel caution against abandoning Jewish practice, but do not prescribe a violent response to apostasy. *R* builds on the argument in the *Yerushalmi* by employing the literary tool of metalepsis in their midrash of the rape of Dinah. Midrash often quotes biblical verses as a means to explain other biblical verses. Sometimes, cited verses are used atomistically, or taken completely out of context. But other times, *R* is intentional in their biblical citation.

³ The writers of *Genesis Rabbah* likely consulted a version of the *Yerushalmi* in the creation of their own text. See Hermann Strack and Günter Stemberger, *Introduction to the Talmud and Midrash* (Edinburgh, Scotland: T & T Clark, 1991), 303.

Metalepsis requires the reader to look past the quoted passage to its context and draw thematic or intertextual ties between the current and cited texts.⁴ Through metalepsis, the ethnic component of the Deuteronomic covenant is underscored in *R*'s reading of Genesis 34. Dinah is transformed into a typical Jewish apostate, defying her family by becoming attached to the Gentile Shechem. When Dinah's brothers kill Shechem and his family, an act that *R* thoroughly denounces, Dinah is brought back to rejoin the Jacobite tribe. For *R*, this biblical story is evidence that Jews who have been seduced away from Jewish practice do not abandon all stake in the covenant. If this were true, then Dinah would have been left to die with the Shechemites. Instead, Dinah retained something essentially Jewish in her being.

Jews and Gentiles in Late Antiquity

After the conversion of Constantine in the first half of the 4th century CE, the Roman Empire became increasingly Christianized.⁵ The province of Palestine witnessed a rapid transformation “from an undeveloped backwater to one of the most important provinces in the Roman world.”⁶ A flood of pilgrims came pouring in to visit holy sites, and imperial patrons from Rome funded the construction of new churches and monasteries in the area. According to Seth Schwartz, as a result of Christianization, much of Jewish culture in Late Antiquity became “repackaged Christianity,” and Jews became “fragmented politically, socially, and economically.”⁷

⁴ Nicholas Schaser, “Midrash and Metalepsis in Genesis Rabbah: A Reappraisal of Rabbinic Atomism,” *From Creation to Redemption: Progressive Approaches to Midrash: Proceedings of the Midrash Section, Society of Biblical Literature* 7 (2017), 116-117.

⁵ Jacob Neusner, *The Midrash: An Introduction*. (Northvale, NJ: J. Aronson, 1990), 144.

⁶ Jodi Magness, *The Archeology of the Holy Land: From the Destruction of Solomon's Temple to the Muslim Conquest* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2012), 333.

⁷ Seth Schwartz, *Imperialism and Jewish Society, 200 B.C.E. to 640 C.E.* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 2001), 179-180.

As a result of increased Christian involvement in Palestine, 5th-century CE rabbis were compelled to define themselves on their own terms. During this time, a “distinctive religious culture” began to emerge autonomously throughout the Galilee in the form of newly constructed synagogues and rabbinic literary compositions, including the *Yerushalmi* and *Genesis Rabbah*.⁸ At the same time, a transition in the rabbis’ role in the newly formed Jewish world began to take place. Starting the 3rd century CE, rabbis started taking a more active role in the everyday affairs of Jews.⁹ The rabbis occupied posts as local judges and teachers and began to take on leadership roles as expositors of Scripture in synagogues.¹⁰ Rachel Anisfeld attributes this shift in rabbinic involvement partly to the external changes occurring during the Christianization of the Roman Empire: “Persuasion and conversion were in the air, as was the feeling of competition, as masses of people shifted alliances to the Christian camp.”¹¹ The rabbis felt the need to keep Jewishness perpetually salient in an increasingly Christian world.

At the same time the rabbis were working to define themselves as a group, the early Church Fathers were undertaking the project of defining Christianity against what they deemed as heresies.¹² For the first few centuries of the Christian movement, the borderline between Christianity and Judaism was nebulous at best.¹³ Christian “heresiologists” solidified the theological parameters of orthodoxy in and against Jews and other groups worshipping Jesus.

⁸ Schwartz, *Imperialism and Jewish Society*, 179-180.

⁹ See Rachel Anisfeld, *Sustain Me with Raisin-Cakes: Pesikta Derav Kahana and the Popularization of Rabbinic Judaism* (Boston: Brill, 2009), 149.

¹⁰ Anisfeld, *Sustain Me with Raisin-Cakes*, 149.

¹¹ Anisfeld, *Sustain Me with Raisin-Cakes*, 153.

¹² By Church Fathers I am referring to the likes of Justin Martyr (100-165 CE), Jerome (347-420 CE) and Athanasius (c. 296-373 CE). The rabbis are the writers and compilers of the Tannaitic (c. 10-220 CE) and Amoraic (c. 200-500 CE) periods who produced the Mishnah, Midrash Rabbah, and Talmuds.

¹³ Daniel Boyarin, *Dying for God: Martyrdom and the Making of Christianity and Judaism* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1999), 8.

The Church Fathers conceived of Judaism as a heretical diatribe against Christianity, and thus they birthed the category of religion by holding Judaism and Christianity in comparison.¹⁴

Daniel Boyarin argues convincingly that the rabbis initially engaged with the Church Fathers' construction of religion, but ultimately chose to reject the Christian category and "re-ethnicize their distinction from the Christians."¹⁵ The rabbis attempted to reclassify themselves as an ethnic group, rather than as mere subscribers to a religious tradition. The extent to which an actual dialogue existed between the two groups is uncertain, but vestiges of an ideological and theological conflict emerge in their writings.¹⁶ In *Genesis Rabbah*, for instance, Jacob (also called Israel, cf. Gen. 32:29) and Esau represent the people of Israel and Christian Rome, respectively.¹⁷ The metaphorical use of Jacob and Esau aligns with historical reality of Late Antiquity insofar as the biblical brothers are members of the same family of Abraham, just as Judaism and Christianity emerged from a shared Abrahamic tradition. The more powerful Esau (Rome) holds power over the Western world, and Jacob (Israel) lives quietly, preserving its tradition by any means necessary.¹⁸

The socio-political context of *R* in Late Antiquity shows a need to ensure the preservation of Jewish identity. To appeal to a wider audience, the rabbis began to deemphasize ritual purity

¹⁴ Daniel Boyarin, *Border Lines: The Partition of Judaeo-Christianity* (Philadelphia, PA: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2007), 13.

¹⁵ Boyarin, *Border Lines*, 33. I don't entirely agree with Boyarin's thesis here. The rabbis do attempt to re-ethnicize themselves as a group, but as a result they turn rabbinic Judaism into an ethno-religion. The rabbis had brought themselves too far along in the process of distinguishing groups as religions by the time they decide they want to push back on religion as a category.

¹⁶ Marc Hirshman, *A Rivalry of Genius: Jewish and Christian Biblical Interpretation in Late Antiquity*. SUNY Series in Judaica (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1995), 53-54.

¹⁷ Neusner, *The Midrash*, 149.

¹⁸ There is something of a paradox in this comparison; Esau is the older brother while Jacob comes out second, clinging onto Esau's heel. Traditionally, Judaism has been thought of as the older tradition, but in modernity, the comparison continues to hold true, as we now see in retrospect that Rabbinic Judaism arrived clinging onto the heel of the Christian movement in Late Antiquity; see Boyarin, *Dying for God*, 3-6. For an example of Esau and Jacob in *Gen. R.*, see *Gen. R.* 63:6.

in favor of civil law and “issues of broader application and interest.”¹⁹ Thus, the reemphasis on Jewishness as an ethnic identity that is not erased by apostasy or intermarriage. Neither of these sins were acceptable by any means, but they would not change a person’s status as a Jew belonging to the Jewish community. The development of rabbinic rhetoric towards intermarriage is reflected in the historical reality of Late Antiquity.

Intermarriage in Biblical and Second Temple Texts

R’s treatment of the rape of Dinah in *Genesis Rabbah* is influenced by writings on intermarriage and Genesis 34 elsewhere in the Bible and in the Second Temple period. The ban on intermarriage explicitly appears first in Deuteronomy 7:3-4, where it is forbidden to intermarry with the seven Canaanite nations: “You shall not intermarry with them: do not give your daughters to their sons or take their daughters for your sons. For they will turn your children away from me to worship other gods” (Deut. 7:3-4). This law is given because the seven Canaanite nations are an immediate threat to Israelite religious identity.²⁰ By associating with the Canaanites, Israelites run the risk of being persuaded to abandon their devotion to the God of Israel. Ezra invokes the prohibition of intermarriage with the Canaanites from Deuteronomy and expands the ban to include all Gentiles (Ezra 9:1-2):

When this was over, the officers approached me, saying, “The people of Israel and the priests and Levites have not separated themselves from the peoples of the land whose abhorrent practices are like those of the Canaanites, the Hittites, the Perizzites, the Jebusites, the Ammonites, the Moabites, the Egyptians, and the Amorites. They have taken their daughters as wives for themselves and for their sons, so that the holy seed has become intermingled with the peoples of the land.

¹⁹ Anisfield, *Sustain Me with Raisin-Cakes*, 150.

²⁰ Shaye Cohen, *The Beginnings of Jewishness: Boundaries, Varieties, Uncertainties* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1999), 243.

By suggesting intermarriage with the “peoples of the land” will lead to “abhorrent practices,” as was the case with the Canaanites in Israel’s earlier history, Ezra attempts to conflate Israelite-Canaanite intermarriage with intermarriage in general.²¹ In her discussion of Ezra 9:1, Christine Hayes notes that “the ‘uncleanness’ or ‘impurity’ of aliens refers to their abhorrent and immoral practices rather than to an intrinsic or derived ritual impurity.”²² The writers of Deuteronomy and Ezra fear the loss of Israelite tradition and practice as a result of intermingling with foreign nations, but the Gentiles themselves are not considered impure. This, again, is the moral-religious rationale against intermarriage.

In addition to these texts in Deuteronomy and Ezra, Leviticus 18:21 is interpreted as forbidding intermarriage. Leviticus 18 contains prohibitions against forbidden sexual relationships lest the transgressor “be cut off from the people” (Lev 18:29). Leviticus 18:21 appears to be unrelated to any sexual offense, instead forbidding any of the children of Israel to worship the foreign god Molech: “Do not allow any of your offspring to be offered up to Molech, and do not profane the name of your God: I am the Lord” (Lev 18:21). As Shaye Cohen notes, “since the chapter otherwise omits intermarriage, the obvious conclusion was that Leviticus 18:21 prohibits sexual intercourse with idolaters.”²³

Jubilees, a 2nd-century BCE text, understands Leviticus 18:21 to mean that intermarriage is a sin comparable to the desecration of the name of God, an offense punishable by death.²⁴ *Jubilees* 30 retells the events of the rape of Dinah in order to justify a harsher decree against those who intermarry. A man who marries their daughter to a Gentile will be stoned, and the daughter will be burned alive:

²¹ Cohen, *The Beginnings of Jewishness*, 243-244.

²² Hayes, *Gentile Impurities*, 56.

²³ Cohen, *The Beginnings of Jewishness*, 253, see also Hayes, *Gentile Impurities*, 76.

²⁴ Leviticus 24:14-16.

And if there is any man in Israel who wishes to give his daughter or his sister to any man who is from the seed of the Gentiles, let him surely die, and let him be stoned because he has caused shame in Israel. And also the woman will be burned with fire, because she has defiled the name of her father's house and so she shall be uprooted from Israel.²⁵

Jubilees makes intermarriage punishable by death--a legal development unique to the Second Temple Period. Additionally, intermarriage with Gentiles is a base sexual sin, implying there is something naturally impure about Gentile bodies. Although *Jubilees* is extreme among Second Temple period texts, it reflects a strain of thought in which intermarriage is banned due to the purity of the Israelite lineage and the impurity of Gentiles. This is what Hayes calls the "Holy-Seed rationale" for intermarriage.²⁶ *Jubilees* leaves no room for conversion in this text; Gentiles are inherently unfit for marriage or breeding, given their unfit seed.²⁷

Intermarriage in the Yerushalmi

R would reject *Jubilees*' understand of intermarriage as a base sexual sin. *Genesis Rabbah* is in fact a refutation of *Jubilees*, condemning zealous violence and understanding intermarriage as inessential to the status of the individual. The rabbis would develop comprehensive legal theories surrounding proper marriages and statuses of each individual within Jewish society. Many of them are rabbinic inventions, like the matrilineal principle of Jewishness. If an Israelite man bears a child with a Gentile woman, then the child retains the ethnic status of the mother. If an Israelite woman bears a child with a Gentile man, the child is considered an Israelite. This principle is embedded within the ban on intermarriage in Deuteronomy 7:3-4 (y. Kidd. 64d):

²⁵ Jubilees 30:11-12.

²⁶ Hayes, *Gentile Impurities*, 68.

²⁷ Hayes, *Gentile Impurities*, 77.

R. Yohanan said in the name of R. Shimeon b. Yohai: It is written, ‘You shall not intermarry with them [do not give your daughters to their sons or take their daughters for your sons]’ (Deut. 7:3) and it is written, ‘for he will turn away your son from following Me [to worship other gods]’ (Deut. 7:4) [This means that] your son from an Israelite is called your son, but your son from a Gentile is not called your son, but rather her son.

This passage dissects Deuteronomy 7:3-4 to relate it to the status of a child of intermarriage. The child always retains the status of the mother. The fear of apostasy that fuels the ruling in Deuteronomy informs the *Yerushalmi* in this case.²⁸ The talmudic passage engenders the fear of the loss of tradition through intermarriage--a fear that was prevalent in the socio-historical context of the *Yerushalmi* and *Genesis Rabbah*. This passage also serves the purpose of finding a biblical source for the matrilineal principle,²⁹ which is now inextricably tied to the ban on intermarriage in rabbinic thought.³⁰

With the matrilineal principle, the rabbis soften their rhetoric towards intermarriage, although there are many opinions on the subject. There are a great deal of answers to the question of the status of the child of an Israelite woman and a Gentile man.³¹ Some think that the child is a *mamzer*, a member of the community restricted from entering into certain marriages, particularly with the priestly class. Others think the child should not be allowed into the community at all, and some believe they should be full members of the community. The

²⁸ Helena Zlotnick, *Dinah's Daughters: Gender and Judaism from the Hebrew Bible to Late Antiquity* (Philadelphia, University of Pennsylvania Press, 2002), 144.

²⁹ Cohen identifies this and Exodus 21:4 as “excellent scriptural hooks upon which to hang the matrilineal principle after it exists, but neither is the source of the idea that the offspring of all Gentile women, free as well as slave, follow the status of the mother.” See Cohen, *The Beginnings of Jewishness*, 289.

³⁰ The rabbinic ban on intermarriage originally appears in the Mishnah. See: M. Kiddushin 3:12 and M. Yevamot 7:5.

³¹ Michael Satlow, *Tasting the Dish: Rabbinic Rhetorics of Sexuality*. Brown Judaic Studies, No. 303 (Atlanta, Ga.: Scholars Press, 1995), 88.

Yerushalmi gives no final ruling on the status of the child, but any conversation about the eligibility of a child of intermarriage is a far cry from the harsh rhetoric of *Jubilees*.

The *Yerushalmi* decries the sort of violent zealotry that *Jubilees* promotes in the face of intermarriage. The rabbis are averse to Jews taking the law into their own hands and enacting righteous justice onto transgressors of the law. This is shown in the rabbis' criticism of the actions of Phinehas in Numbers 25. Phinehas murders Zimri in anger for sleeping with a Moabite woman. The rabbis even go as far to suggest that Phinehas transgressed rabbinic law:

R. Yishmael taught, "This refers to one who marries a Gentile woman and produces children. He thereby brings up from her enemies of the Maqom." It is written, 'When Phinehas the son of Eleazar, son of Aaron, saw' (Num. 25:7). What did he see? He saw the incident and remembered the law: 'He who has intercourse with a Gentile woman, zealots may attack him.' It was taught: This is not with the approval of the sages. Is it possible that Phinehas acted without the approval of the sages? Said R. Judah ba Pazzi, "They wanted to place him under a ban were it not that the holy spirit rested on him and said, 'And it shall be to him and to his descendants after him, the covenant of a perpetual priesthood, because he was jealous for his God and made atonement for the people of Israel (Num. 25:13).'³²

Rabbi Yishmael suggests that Phineas acted contrary to the rulings of the rabbis. A divine exception was made for his zealotry, given that Phinehas was in the priestly line, otherwise Phinehas would have been ostracized for his actions.³³ This Talmudic discussion opposes zealotry in general, but it also offers an alternative understanding of Leviticus 18:21, the text which inspired *Jubilees*' understanding of intermarriage as a base sexual sin: The Palestinian amoraim would suppress the sexual understanding of Lev. 18:21 with its attempt to base a universal prohibition of interethnic sexual unions on the highest divine authority, Torah law, and to include such unions among sexual crimes that generate moral impurity and are deserving of

³² Y. Sanhedrin 27b.

³³ Hayes, *Gentile Impurities*, 155.

death.³⁴ The rabbis were working on multiple fronts to reverse the rulings of the Second Temple Period.

Interpretation of Genesis Rabbah 80

The understanding of intermarriage that develops during *R*'s midrash on the rape of Dinah builds on the principles seen in the *Yerushalmi*. The *Yerushalmi* is the most recent and local Jewish legal text to *Genesis Rabbah*, and thus is similarly influenced by the socio-historical context of Late Antiquity. The transformation of the Jewish world in light of the Christianization of the Roman Empire required the rabbis, who were taking more and more responsibility in the day-to-day life of Jews in Palestine, to rethink Jewish rhetoric towards intermarriage. The midrash on Genesis serves as a fertile ground to polemicize against Christians and other Gentile forces by applying the context of Genesis to their own day. *Genesis Rabbah* 80:7 compares the love of God for Israel to the love of Shechem for Dinah:

And Hamor spoke with them saying (Gen. 34:8) Resh Lakish said “In three expressions of love, the Holy One, blessed is He, cherished Israel: in cleaving, in desire, and in delight. In cleaving: And you are the cleaving ones... (Deut. 4:4). In desire: You, not being more than all the people, He loved... (Deut. 7:7). And in delight: And all the nations will consider you happy etc... (Mal. 3:12). And we learn them from the parshah of this guilty one. In cleaving: and his soul clung (Gen. 34:3). In desire: Shechem, my son, his soul desires your daughter (Gen. 34:9). In delight: Because he delighted in the daughter of Jacob (Gen. 34:19).” Rabbi Abba bar Elisha added another two: in love and speech. In love: I loved you... (Mal. 1:2). In speaking: Speak upon the heart of Jerusalem (Isaiah 40:2). And we learn from this parshah of this wicked one, in love: And he loved the maiden (Gen. 34:3). In speech: And he spoke upon the heart of the maiden (Gen. 34:3). And is it so you have a man that speaks upon the heart? But there are words that calm the heart. He said to her: “Look how much your father squandered for one field and how much he paid for it. I am able to give to you so many plantings and so many fields of seed, an incalculable amount.”³⁵

³⁴ Hayes, *Gentile Impurities*, 154.

³⁵ Gen. R. 80:7. My translation.

In this passage's usage of metalepsis, it becomes apparent that God's love for Israel extends beyond Jewish practice, and even beyond the ban on intermarriage. Rabbi Simeon b. Lakish identifies three different forms of God's love: cleaving, desire, and delight. The midrash quotes verses from Deuteronomy and Malachi that use these roots to express Israel "cleaving" to God (Deut. 4:4), God's "desire" for Israel (Deut. 7:7), and Israel's delight in God's love (Mal. 3:12). All of these terms appear in Genesis 34 in the context of Shechem's feelings for Dinah. The rabbis analogize God's love for Israel and Shechem's love for Dinah. Rabbi Abba b. Eliashia contributes two more terms to the list: love and speaking. The midrash quotes these roots expressing God's love for Israel (Mal. 1:2) and God speaking to the heart of Israel (Isa. 40:2). Again, the redactors cite these words in the context of Shechem and Genesis 34. The midrash cites an extra-biblical tradition of Shechem speaking words of comfort to Dinah, attempting to satisfy her by promising riches if she marries him.

Reading metaleptically into the cited verses, one can find a moral-religious argument against Shechem's rape of Dinah. Starting with the use of the root "cleaving" in Deuteronomy 4:4, we find the preceding verse condemning idolatry (Deut. 4:3-4):

You saw with your own eyes what the Lord did in the matter of Baal-peor, that the Lord your God wiped out from among you every person who followed Baal-peor; while you, who cleaved to the Lord your God, are all alive today.

Deut 4:3 refers to the events of Numbers 25, where Phinehas exacts righteous revenge on Zimri for sleeping with a Moabite in the tent of meeting. In addition to this zealous act, God also sends a plague to punish others who slept with Moabite women and sacrificed to the Moabite god (Numbers 25:9). Those who cling to the Israelite god are spared. Deuteronomy stokes the fears behind the moral-religious rationale for the ban on intermarriage: mixing with foreign women will cause the abandonment of Israelite tradition and thus lead to apostasy. Given the context of

this verse in relation to the events of Genesis 34, themes of intermarriage and apostasy are clearly at stake for *R* in this midrash.

The second verse cited in *Genesis Rabbah* 80:7 is Deuteronomy 7:7, which underscores the ethnic nature of the covenant. Recall, Deuteronomy 7:3-4 contains one of the biblical bans on intermarriage. Deuteronomy 7:7 recognizes the special place Israel holds for God (Deut. 7:6-7):

For you are a people consecrated to the Lord your God: of all the peoples on earth the Lord your God chose you to be His treasured people. It is not because you are the most numerous of peoples that the Lord set His desire on you and chose you—indeed, you are the smallest of peoples.

God desires Israel, not because they are the most numerous, but because they are the most willing to cling to the Lord. The relationship is reciprocal, and God is not keen to cut off any member of Israel given their small size. *R* uses these two verses in Deuteronomy to show that intermarriage is banned based on a fear of apostasy, but that the relationship between God and Israel is more complicated than a simple violation of law when someone intermarries. An Israelite who intermarries is still desired by God, even if they do not continue to cling to the Lord.

Genesis Rabbah 80:7 shows *R*'s understanding of intermarriage: it is banned, but even when it occurs God's love for Israel endures. In *Genesis Rabbah* 80:10, *R* shows how their father Jacob frowns upon the zealous actions of Simeon and Levi in response to the rape of Dinah by Shechem:

“And the two sons of Jacob, Simeon and Levi, took [each his sword...and slew all the males]” (Gen. 34:25). From proving that it is said “Simeon and Levi” we know that they are the sons of Jacob. But the sons of Jacob who did not receive counsel from Jacob. Simeon and Levi, who did not take counsel one from the other.

Here, the tradition is preserved that Simeon and Levi acted without the permission of their father, Jacob, and did not even consult each other before impulsively slaughtering the city of Shechem. This is reminiscent of the critique of Phinehas in *y. Sanhedrin 27b*, in which Phinehas acted without approval of the sages. Phinehas, Simeon, and Levi can be conflated as enactors of zealous violence, and thus are condemned both in *Genesis Rabbah* and the *Yerushalmi*.

In the end, the fate of Dinah in *Genesis Rabbah* 80 is decided by her status as a daughter of Israel. In *Genesis Rabbah* 80:11, Dinah is ultimately welcomed back to her family, and even married to her brother Simeon:

And they took Dinah... (Gen. 34:26). Rabbi Judah said: they were dragging her and they went out. Rabbi Huna said: "The one who had intercourse with an uncircumcised one has difficulty separating from him. R. Huna said: "She said: "And to where shall I bring my shame?" (II Sam. 13:13) until Simeon swore to her that he would take her in marriage. That which is written: "And Shaul son of the Canaanite woman..." (Gen. 46:10) is the son of Dinah that she had intercourse with a Canaanite. With regard to Rabbi Judah, Rabbi Nehemiah and the Rabbis, Rabbi Judah said that she did as the custom of the Canaanites. Rabbi Nehemiah says that she had intercourse with a Hivite who is among all the Canaanites. And the Rabbis say Simeon took her in marriage and he buried her in the land of Canaan.

Dinah cannot bring herself to be parted from Shechem because of her lust for him. Additionally, she fears being shunned from the community, as she is virtually not marriageable having lost her maidenhood. The redactors put the words of Tamar from 2 Samuel 13 on Dinah's lips in order to express her anguish. Tamar is in a similar position as Dinah in 2 Samuel, having just been raped by her half-brother Amnon. Both Dinah and Tamar experience a loss in social status as a result of their loss of virginity. Dinah begs to be married to her brother Simeon to ensure her own future. She has strayed from Israelite practice, but for the good of the community and for her good, she is allowed back.

Conclusion

In the beginning of the 5th century, Palestine saw an economic boom and an extensive cultural shift. As the process of Christianization progressed, the synagogue and the rabbis found a more prominent place in the lives of Palestinian Jews. The rabbis' task was to reorganize their Jewish community by the legal codes of the Mishnah as their socio-economical surroundings were changing. Intermingling between Jews and Gentiles must have been at an all-time high in the prospering cities of Palestine, so to cordon off the Jew from the Christianized world, the Palestinian rabbis turned towards the polemical tools of intermarriage and ethnicity. The legal restriction of intermarriage with Gentiles on the grounds of their abhorrent, yet enticing, sacrilegious practices served as a concrete barrier to apostasy codified in Jewish practice. This legal thought has a long tradition, from Deuteronomy 7 to the Second Temple Period. The *Yerushalmi* subverts the Second Temple period text *Jubilees*' understanding of intermarriage to present a view on intermarriage that is synonymous with the one found in *Gen. R.* 80, in which intermarriage is banned on moral-religious grounds and zealotry is frowned upon. The rabbis choose to classify themselves as an ethno-religious group complicates the nature of identification with Judaism in Late Antiquity. A Jew would remain a Jew even if that Jew intermarried and apostatized: Judaism is marked not just by practice, but also by ethnicity.

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