


KING JAMES VERSION

Women of Color

S  U D Y B I B L E

*Special notes and features – created to strengthen the spirit
and encourage the hearts of women of African descent*

The Women of Color

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yet desire to know which way to turn.

"Leah girl" came to my church last Sunday with her six children. She was tall and lanky built. Pretty eyes, but no other feature distinguishes her from most "sistas."

A member invited "Leah girl" because "Leah girl" had been drawn by her testimony. While on her post as a security guard, "Leah girl" overheard the lament of another young woman. This young woman had been "dis'd" by her man again. Their relationship was a series of unkept promises. "Leah girl" walked up and said, "Excuse me, it sounds like you're where I just left."

"Leah girl" had just found the courage to break free from the married man with whom she'd been involved. I bet the first five of her children are named, "This time he'll love me." I get the feeling, however, the youngest is named, "Now I will praise the Lord."

"Leah girl" came to my church last Sunday. She was hungry, thirsty, and looking for a relationship with the Lord. She had come to terms with the fact that validation, affirmation, and confirmation are gifts from the Lord and not empty promises from immoral brothers, "Leah girl" lifted her face to praise God.

"Leah girl" represents thousands of women looking for love in all the wrong places. The biblical Leah spent many years competing for Jacob's love, but one day she decided to look to the Lord instead. The story doesn't tell us what she did then, but it does tell us that she did not have any more children in an attempt to gain Jacob's affection. If your name is "Leah girl," take the first step today to develop a relationship with Christ. Let the Lord create in you that which will bring eternal satisfaction.

Read Genesis 29:16-17, 31-35; 35:23; Ruth 4:11.

—E. Walters

DINAH: THE STORY OF AN ABUSED WOMAN

Dinah is a forgotten woman of the Bible. Although she is a child of Jacob, there is no tribe named after her. There's no book in the Bible dedicated to her ministry or her prophetic words. In Genesis 34, we have an opportunity to read Dinah's story.

Very little is known about Dinah, the daughter of Jacob and Leah, outside of Genesis 34. Although Genesis 29:31—30:26 describes in detail the sons born to Jacob's wives, Leah and Rachel, and their concubines, as far as we know, Dinah is the only daughter of Jacob. Dinah's birth is mentioned in Genesis 30:21, almost as an afterthought.

In Genesis 34 we meet Dinah, the youngest of Jacob and Leah's children. Dinah left the Hebrew campsite to visit the women in the land. Scripture does not tell us why Dinah left the safety of her family.

While she was visiting with the women, Dinah was raped by Shechem. After raping her, Shechem declared his love for her. Unfortunately, this was not the first or last time a woman is abused in the name of love. When Jacob learned of his daughter's rape, he was silent. He didn't do anything, and then proceeded to bargain with Dinah's rapist in the interest of political harmony between the Hebrews and the Hivites. While Jacob tried to bargain, Dinah's brothers were plotting against the Hivites, and Dinah was noticeably absent from the proceedings. No one

noticed Dinah's absence. Instead, everyone ignored her tears. No one asked her whereabouts. And not until verse 26 does the reader learn that Dinah had been in Shechem's house all along.

As women of color, we may be able to relate to Dinah's story. We may know the experience of being devalued simply for being born female in a culture where male children are granted more prestige and promise. Sometimes we are abused in the name of love in so-called loving relationships, and those around us ignore our pain. Sometimes family members and friends are fully aware of the abuse, but choose to turn away in silence.

Is there any hope in this story? We can find hope in Simeon and Levi, Dinah's brothers. Although we cannot endorse their vengeful behavior, we can understand their anger after learning that their sister had been raped. It was these two brothers who declared that that "thing ought not to be done" (Gen. 34:7). They declared that a violation of one woman was an affront to the entire community. They were the ones who removed Dinah from her place of violation. Simeon and Levi took family seriously, truly acting as their sister's keeper. We can be Simeon and Levi to our abused sisters, declaring that physical and mental abuse are unacceptable and offend the entire community. We, too, can rescue our abused sisters from their place of violation.

Read Genesis 34.

See also the insight essay on Date Rape.

—M. Coleman

TAMAR: THE LINK BETWEEN JUDAH AND JESUS

Tamar's story is about the loss of two husbands, Er and Onan (Gen. 38:6-10), both sons of Judah. Childless, her future was questionable. She had two choices: 1) she could accept her lot in life; or 2) she could do something about it. Tamar made the second choice and became her own advocate.

Bound by law to marry another son of Judah or to be liberated by Judah to marry another man, she used her femininity and played on his manliness, dressing as a temple prostitute (Gen. 38:14-15). Her goal was security by any means necessary, even pregnancy out of wedlock. And, though she risked death if found guilty of adultery, she stole Judah's personal pledge by obtaining his seal, cord, and staff as proof of his participation in this sexually immoral act. Not only did Judah's personal items implicate him, they forced him to fulfill his responsibility to her as the father of her child.

When Judah realized that he had denied her justice under levirate law, he could only say, "She hath been more righteous than I" (Gen. 38:26). Tamar gave birth to twins, Pharez and Zarah (Gen. 38:29-30).

Critics will ask: "Why is this story found in the middle of Joseph's story?" One reason is that it prepares us for Genesis 49, in which Jacob blessed Judah, his fourth son, with his scepter, a symbol of birthright and kingship traditionally given to the firstborn. However, the immoral behavior of his three older brothers (Reuben, Simeon, and Levi) set the stage for this blessing to be passed to Judah. Thus, it is through the "Lion of