

The Gospel Unashamed

"From the cowardice that shrinks from new truth, from the laziness that is content with half-truths, from the arrogance that thinks it knows all truth, O, God of Truth, deliver us."

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~ All articles are written by Terry Carter unless otherwise stated ~

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Was Dinah a Virgin After she was Raped?

Let's begin by giving a little background information here. In **Genesis Chapter 34**, we read about one of the ugliest incidents during the time of the patriarchs. Dinah, the daughter of Jacob, went out to see the daughters of the land. When she did that, Shechem raped her but then wanted to marry her.

Her brothers were very upset about this whole thing but agreed to let her marry Shechem on the condition that all their males were circumcised.

On the third day, when all the men of Shechem were sore from circumcision, Simeon and Levi went in and slaughtered all the males including Shechem and his father, Hamor. They took all their livestock, plundered all their wealth and took the women and children captive.

When Jacob heard about what they had done, he was afraid that they would be attacked by their neighbors. He feared that he and his household would be destroyed. His sons answered that Shechem should not have treated their sister like a harlot.

There is plenty of blame to be laid on multiple parties in this incident. However, it clearly all came about because of Shechem's reprehensible actions towards Dinah. The account makes it clear that he "defiled" and "violated" her.

"2 And when Shechem the son of Hamor the Hivite, prince of the country, saw her, he took her and lay with her, and **violated her**...5 And Jacob heard that **he had defiled Dinah** his daughter. Now his sons were with his livestock in the field; so Jacob held his peace until they came." **Genesis 34:2, 5 (NKJV)**

The question as to whether Dinah was called a virgin **after** she was raped comes from verse 3. However, it does not come from any of the English translations that I am familiar with.

For comparison, I've given a few notable English translations below with the relevant words in bold:

"His soul was strongly attracted to Dinah the daughter of Jacob, and he loved the **young woman** and spoke kindly to the **young woman**." (NKJV)

"And his soul clave unto Dinah the daughter of Jacob, and he loved the **damsel**, and spake kindly unto the **damsel**." (KJV)

"But [a] he was deeply attracted to Dinah the daughter of Jacob, and he loved the girl and [b] spoke tenderly to her." (NASB)

"And his soul was drawn to Dinah the daughter of Jacob. He loved the young woman and spoke tenderly to her." (ESV)

"His heart was drawn to Dinah daughter of Jacob; he loved the young woman and spoke tenderly to her." (NIV)

The key Hebrew word here is "*naarah*". The above translations render it as "damsel", "young woman", and "girl".

This word occurs 62 times in the Old Testament. It is translated "damsel" 34 times in the KJV, "maiden" 16 times, "maid" 7 times, "young" 4 times, and "young woman" once. Strong's says the word means "a girl, damsel, female servant, young woman", etc. Genesius says it means "a girl, handmaid, or servant".

There is nothing about the Hebrew word itself, or the way it is translated into English by most popular translations, to indicate that Dinah is called a virgin in this verse.

The question arises from the Septuagint which is a translation from the Hebrew into Greek. There, the Hebrew word "*naarah*" is translated as the Greek word "*parthenos*" which means "virgin".

The only time I have ever heard this issue raised is when somebody is trying to discredit the Septuagint translation. This whole discussion is usually motivated by a desire to discredit the Septuagint's translation of **Isaiah 7:14**. In that verse, the Septuagint translates the Hebrew word "*almah*" as the Greek "*parthenos*" meaning "virgin". This question is not really about **Genesis 34:3**, but about **Isaiah 7:14**.

The argument goes like this. It is pointed out that Dinah is called a "*parthenos*" by the Septuagint after she was raped. The intention is to

put a defender of the virgin birth on the horns of a dilemma. Either it must be conceded that the Septuagint is in error here or it must be admitted that “*parthenos*” does not really mean “virgin” and the translators of the Septuagint knew it.

If the first alternative is chosen, it will be argued that the Septuagint is an untrustworthy translation and thus cannot be trusted in its translation of **Isaiah 7:14**.

If the second option is taken, it follows that the Septuagint translators did not believe that **Isaiah 7:14** was predicting a virgin birth. Thus, no matter which alternative is chosen, serious doubt is cast upon the prediction of a virgin birth in **Isaiah 7:14**.

However, there are several flaws in this reasoning.

First, let’s assume, for the sake of argument, that the Septuagint translators were simply in error in their translation of **Genesis 34:3**. This certainly does not prove that they were in error in their translation of **Isaiah 7:14**. It is certainly possible to make an error in one place but not in another.

Further, to take the position that an error was made in the Septuagint in **Genesis 34:3** is an admission that “*parthenos*” means “virgin”.

Proposing an error in the Septuagint’s translation of the **Genesis** passage does nothing to help the opponents of the virgin birth as predicted in **Isaiah 7:14**. It actually hurts them as it concedes that the Septuagint predicts the virgin birth in the **Isaiah** passage.

Second, it does not follow from the use of “*parthenos*” in reference to Dinah that it does not mean “virgin”. Nor does it follow that the translators of the Septuagint believed that “*parthenos*” does not mean “virgin”. The Septuagint translators could have intentionally used a Greek word here that they knew to mean “virgin” for any number of reasons.

Let’s look more carefully at the passage in question.

“1 Now Dinah the daughter of Leah, whom she had borne to Jacob, went out to see the daughters of the land. 2 And when Shechem the son of Hamor the Hivite, prince of the country, saw her, he took her and lay with her, and violated her. 3 His soul was strongly attracted to Dinah the daughter of Jacob, and he loved the **young woman** and spoke kindly to the **young woman**.” **Genesis 34:1-3 (NKJV)**

Suppose the words “young woman” in verse 3 are properly translated “virgin” instead. What would that mean? Would it follow that Dinah was called a virgin after she was raped? I maintain that it does not.

Rather, it would follow that she was a virgin at the time she was raped. The emphasis would be on the fact that he had not only raped a woman, but that he had raped a virgin. It is entirely possible that the translators of the Septuagint were trying to impress this very thing upon the reader.

Notice that the narrative in verses 1-3 are presented as a single event in time. That is, he saw her, he took her, he lay with her, he violated her, was attracted to her, loved her, and spoke kindly to her all at the same time. To read this as a progression of events each happening after the other is likely a mistake.

Was he only attracted to her **after** he violated her? That is absurd. Why would he take her, lay with her, and violate her if he was not attracted to her? When exactly did he love her and speak kindly to her? Was it only after he had violated her? It is possible that the account is telling us that he loved her and spoke kindly to her before, during, and after he violated her. That in no way minimizes his guilt. In fact, it makes it that much worse. He raped a girl that he loved, spoke kindly to, and later wanted to marry. That is very twisted behavior.

The original Hebrew structure of these verses also indicates that the

events of verses 2 and 3 happened simultaneously. These verses contain a series of what is called vav-consecutives. Essentially, that is a list of actions strung together by conjunctions to indicate a quick series of events or events occurring simultaneously. It can be illustrated in English as follows:

And he saw her...
And he took her...
And he lay with her...
And he violated her...
And he was attracted to her...
And he loved her...
And he spoke kindly to her.

As you can see below, the King James version comes close to capturing this construction.

“2 And when Shechem the son of Hamor the Hivite, prince of the country, saw her, he took her, **and** lay with her, **and** defiled her. 3 **And** his soul clave unto Dinah the daughter of Jacob, **and** he loved the damsel, **and** spake kindly unto the damsel.” **Genesis 34:2-3 (KJV)**

The Septuagint translators evidently recognized this Hebrew construction as they used the Greek conjunction “*ka*” meaning “and” to begin each of the phrases in these verses. This is as close as you can come to mimicking the Hebrew vav-consecutives in Greek.

This indicates that the translators were not saying that she was a virgin **after** he raped her, but **when** he raped her.

This is further indicated by the fact that when the same Hebrew word “*naarah*” occurs in reference to Dinah in verse 12, the Septuagint translates it with the Greek word “*pais*” which means “child”. What happens in verse 12 is some time after she was raped. It is not part of the rape event like what happened in verses 2-3. Thus, the Septuagint translators do not refer to her in verse 12 as a “*parthenos*”, or “virgin”.

The idea is that she was a virgin when she was raped, but she was no longer a virgin after she was raped.

There is no need to conclude that the Septuagint translators made an error in translating **Genesis 34:3** or that their translation of that verse indicates that “*parthenos*” does not mean “virgin”. Nor does their translation indicate that Dinah was a virgin **after** she was raped. It simply indicates that she was a virgin **when** she was raped.

Finally, it needs to be pointed out that the proper translation of **Isaiah 7:14** does not depend upon the Septuagint in the first place. Nor does the virgin birth depend on the Septuagint. The proper translation depends on the Hebrew text itself. I have addressed that issue in a separate article which was published in *The Gospel Unashamed* in October of 2022.

The Septuagint’s translation of **Isaiah 7:14** does indicate that the men who made that translation believed that it was predicting a virgin birth. That is useful evidence for the virgin birth, but the virgin birth does not depend upon that alone. There are many other reasons for believing in the virgin birth.

In the end, this whole discussion about the Septuagint’s translation of **Genesis 34:3** really has no bearing on the virgin birth. The virgin birth stands regardless of whether the Septuagint is credible. It stands whether it’s translation in **Genesis 34:3** is an error. It has plenty of support with or without the Septuagint.

Was Dinah still a virgin after she was raped? Obviously not, but I’m not convinced that anybody ever said she was.

The Septuagint does say that she was a virgin at the time she was raped, but that is very different than what this question assumes.