

SELECTIONS
FROM
GENESIS IN POETRY

By
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CREATION

Why just now,
Indeed, why ever,
Infinity's thread
Did God choose to sever?

Whatever possessed him to empower
Those who would morally cower;
Betraying indifference
To their own existence;
Who would lie
And deny,
Seek to dethrone
The One blissfully alone -
And rarely, if ever, truly atone?

The angels of the heavenly host -
Who long had revelled in the boast
That they alone had his attention -
Could not believe this intervention:
What prompted God to set his hand
To a covenant of being with creatures of land,
Whose main pursuit would be pleasure,
While rarely applying a spiritual measure?

'Allow me, Lord, to have my say' -
A cheery cherub from the Milky Way
Interrupted boldly in full flow
The One Above who best must know.

'What sort of plan
Is a son of man?' -
The cherub rather timidly began,
Quaking at his own lack of tact,
To question what was
Manifest fact.

'My will be done! Let there be light!
A measured time for day and night;
Let rain descend from skies above,
To quench the thirst of my man
And his love.

'Let oceans of water the earth embrace,
Let rivers and streams zigzag the space
That I'll create for the human race.

'Let sun and moon and earth rotate,
So human life may generate,
Where cool and cold and warmth and heat
Entice my nature to yield her treat.

'Let there be hills, and dales below,
And fields so green where man might sow
The seeds for fruit and roots to grow;
Where cows and geese and lambs and cats,
Nifty mice and lively rats,
Gaze with envy at the bats
And their flying friends who stop for chats
Out of reach of their land-based cronies,
Like the lofty giraffes and children's ponies.'

'But, Lord,' a senior Seraph called,
Hitherto by God's word enthralled,
'May I, your humble servant say
A word in your ear about the way
Your universe will no longer be
Subject to your royal decree.

'For rumour has it in the heavenly portals,
That you wish to share with mere mortals,
The power and the knowledge, as well as the glory,
For them to create their own story;
For them to strut on the stage of life,
And make a virtue of war and strife.

'For they will plunder and they will kill,
Their voice will thunder and not be still,
Demanding of others
To do their will.

'Chariots of war they'll design,
Missiles with targets they'll align,
Women and children
Who've committed no crime,
Will suffer the most
Every time.

'The earth will be filled with the blood of the just,
Remorseless victims of violence and lust,
Of power-crazed monsters with hearts of lead,
Who spare no thought for how many fall dead;
For the anguish of parents they will not care,
Mourning sons who lie
They know not where.

'So,' said that Seraph,
'Is that what you'd bless?
A world of darkness,
Mankind in distress?
Will you in the future
Have no such regret?
Will you never view
Your man as a threat?'

'Silence, Seraph! Speak not of regret;
Seek not to change my higher mind-set.
Regret is a convenient word for men
Attempting to unravel my mysterious plan.

'But I, by time, am not constrained,
The past by me can be reframed;
It is never gone from my sight,
It cannot darken what I coloured bright.
The future's not a thought unborn,
A sun awaiting a new day's dawn.
I am the present, I am the past;
I'm from the first until the last,
I will,
I act,
I embrace;
All that exists -
I am its place.

'Whatever your view of humankind,
I certainly will not change my mind.
I know his violence and his greed,
But within his heart I'll plant the seed
Of righteousness and of the need
To seek me out and make of earth
A paradise of infinite worth,
Where love and peace and truth abound,
And stilled forever will be strife's sound.'

* * *

ADAM

So Adam appeared at the divine behest,
All innocence and walking undressed;

Head held high,
In his step a spring,
Overwhelmed with wonder
At everything
That caught his eye as he stepped into life -
As yet alone; without a wife.

All goodness,
Bathed in primordial light;
Energy of a meteorite;
But one whose seed –
Through lust or greed,
A parent's over-expectation,
A sibling's dare, a friend's temptation,
A colleague's envied reputation,
A thoughtless word or prevarication -
Would be deaf to his Maker's exhortation.

'I've called you Adam -
I like that name -
Conflicting connotations
It sets out to proclaim:
From *adamah*, the earth below,
Or from *demut*, divinity's glow.

'If you are anchored in physicality,
And have no truck with spirituality,
Then you'll be *adamah* in reality,
And your life will be a vague vacuity.

'But if your sights are set on high,
And you have faith when others deny,
And if your deeds are good and true,
And acts of kindness you accrue,
Then my *demut* you'll share with pride,
And you'll always find me by your side.'

'Oh, heaven-bound I'll surely be,'
Said Adam with alacrity.
'Of course you will,' was God's reply -
Without conviction and with a sigh!

'Of course you will; you'll pray and sing,
Read my Scriptures and make bells ring;
You'll initiate those who've just been born –
And massacre those who don't conform!

'Be not perplexed, my little man,
That is not part of my eternal plan;

But I grant freedom to your kith and kin,
To opt for good, or to sin.
For they are neither puppets on a string,
Nor celestial angels on the wing;
They are men and women I've designed,
With a complex, independent mind.

'With justice they'll reward or harm,
To wounds apply a soothing balm;
The harassed in spirit they will calm,
And the gullible they'll cheerfully charm!
But they will also cause alarm
When they threateningly raise a muscled arm,
And strike the weak without a qualm,
Pillaging the victor's palm.'

'So what's the point, Lord, of my life
If wickedness is so rife,
If attaining good is such a struggle,
As ephemeral as a bubble?

'And where will you be when the weak
In fear cry out – or fear to speak;
When mothers cradle to their breast
The erstwhile glory of their nest,
Lifeless victims of a violent quest
By men to re-order at their own behest
The world -
As they think best?'

'Enough of your questions, Adam, my friend,
Now let your ear to me attend:
Through *adamah*'s prism you are viewing man's fate,
But I, at the end of time, await
A mankind exhausted from its dark deeds,
A coming together of disparate creeds,
A true empowerment of the weak,
A banishment of the evil streak.'

'But just how long, Lord, will all that take,
For a human-kind with so much at stake?'

'Although I've said enough of "why?"
I'll offer you this, my last reply:
There have been other worlds before this one,
Which I've dispatched to oblivion,
When man left me no other choice,
When he suppressed his moral voice,

When nations passed beyond redemption,
And kindness merited no mention.
Those worlds then vanished without a trace,
And with them went their human race.

'But a time will come – I have no doubt -
When a world will be born to take up the shout:
“Praise the Lord from the heights!”
When a new Adam will raise his sights
Heavenward,
And, pure of heart,
Seek its guidance from the start;
And without so much as a trace of guile,
Be filled with love and a ready smile,
For fellow man in far off isle,
Whom he will greet with “Shalom, brother!”
And never think of as just “another;”
Moulding all his generations
Into a family of bonded nations,
Attentive to all of my orations.'

'Will mine be that world, Lord?
Will it seek to promote accord?
Will my offspring earn your eternal grace,
And be the first to behold your face?'

Adam stood waiting for a reply,
Till the sun went down in the sky;
Desperate to hear of his children's fate,
He scanned the heavens to locate
The One who, mysteriously,
Was making him wait.

'Why, Lord, this long delay?' -
He bellowed loudly till the break of day,
His face awash with his tears -
But with no response to allay his fears.

'I will not move from my place,
Till you tell me the future of my human race,'
Cried Adam weakly as he fell to the ground,
Closed his eyes, and, without a sound,
Slipped into an induced sleep -
And dreamt of deer, gazelles and sheep.

EVE

He felt a pressure on his thigh,
And sensed the presence of God close by;
A sudden surge of strange elation,
Followed by a vague sensation,
Of being opened up and sewn -
Then he awoke,
No more alone.

Before him stood a vision unique,
Beauty encased in a slight physique;
Lustrous hair, rounded hips,
Star-like eyes and full red lips.

His gaze she met with a smile of joy,
Coy and demure - that feminine ploy -
Was how she chose to be revealed
To the one with whom her fate was sealed.

'You,' said God,
'Are the first man of all;
I'll bless and preserve you,
And let you walk tall.
Eve is the one you'll love and hold,
She'll raise your spirits and warm you when cold;
She'll add to the beauty of all I've created,
And bear your children
When you both have mated.

'Call her Eve, meaning "mother of life,"
For she is your partner as well as your wife;
She'll share all your joys, as well as your pain,
And clip your feathers when you get too vain!

'She'll make of your house
A home to enjoy,
And bless you in time
With a girl or a boy;
She'll open her door to those in need,
And help even before they plead.
She'll let you think that you are master,
And she fragile as alabaster;
But in truth she's made from bone so tough,
That she can cope with smooth and rough;
And though she may neither hunt nor build -
But knead the flour that she's milled,
And feed her family the choicest fare,
And offer to it her love and care -
She's a lioness in her lair,

And the ill-disposed should best beware,
And camouflage their hostile stare,
And think again if they appear
To threaten those that she holds dear.
And though her mate may despair,
She remains well aware,
That chances oft are offered late,
To restore man's fortune and estate.

'So listen well to her advice,
For if you don't, you'll pay a price;
And regard her caution as a chance,
To attain your goal and to advance.'

GARDEN OF EDEN

To Adam and Eve came the Lord's word,
'To you both it may sound absurd,
But you must work to earn your keep,
And only when you sow
You'll reap.

'This Garden, called Eden, in which you stand,
Is not the only piece of land
Where I could have housed the human race,
But I preferred to choose this place,
For it to thrive and have its space;
Because it is uniquely lush,
And every tree and plant and bush,
Is specially crafted by my hand,
As is every grain of sand,
Washed by rivers undulated,
Tossing treasures unabated.

'River Pishon flows with gold,
Pearls and onyx, wealth untold,
River Gihon circles Cush,
Yielding little but bulrush;
The Tigris and Euphrates long,
Embrace Ashur like a thong;
Its banks a home to swamp and lake,
Migrating bird and poisonous snake.

'A vast store of living treasure,
Have I created for your pleasure.

Look around you for a while,
See there lies a crocodile,
Chewing on a rattlesnake,
Without a sign that he's awake.
'But when the unwary display no fear,
He suddenly strikes from front or rear;
In the blinking of an eye,
He will pounce on those nearby.

'My Garden is home to countless beast,
Bulls and cows and calves and geese,
Billy goats and buffalo,
And ibex that won't say, 'hello!'
Sheep and pigs, and dogs that bark,
Owls that see well in the dark;
Stag and hart and buck and doe -
Some are friends, and others foe.

'Birds that soar high in the sky,
And those that prefer to glide close by;
Blackbird, vulture, dove and thrush,
Alighting briefly on tree and bush.

'Eagle and kestrel, falcon and hawk,
Birds that sing, and some that squawk,
Those, like the parrot, that try to talk,
The peacock that struts and others that walk;
Songbirds, warblers, lapwing and rook,
That pity you, Adam, when they take a look
At you walking, eyes to the ground,
Missing so much of nature's sound,
But wishing you too could be heaven-bound.

'We've now arrived at Eden's centre,
A gated Garden that you may enter;
Look around in each direction,
Fields and fruit ripe to perfection.

'Turf and grass and papyrus,
Luscious umbelliferous,
Boughs and plants of every hue,
Bathing in the morning dew.

'Lofty trees, so tall, so proud,
Bidding "good day!" to the passing cloud;
Showing their age through nature's etching,
Branches, like man's arms, outstretching,
Inviting the artist, skilled at sketching;
Birds, their nesting foliage fetching.

'Acacia, elm and cedar,

Olive, plane and box;
Fruit trees to be enjoyed,
And hedge to make woodblocks.

'Every tree and plant and seed,
Fruit and green and herb and weed,
I've created for your need -
With just one rule to which you'll accede:

'The trees of knowledge and of life,
Are neither for you nor for your wife,
Their properties are not for mortals,
But for those who inhabit heavenly portals.

'Now you have dominion over all I've made,
Attend to none who would dissuade
You in any single, minute matter -
By bribe, threat or deceptive chatter -
From keeping my charge to the letter.
Be a custodial trend-setter.

Know that I'll be looking down at you,
At all times for any clue
That you're remiss in any way.
Beware, my children,
That you do not stray!'

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LILITH AND THE SERPENT

The temptress, Lilith, a spirit of the night,
Was desperate to put Eve to flight,
So that, with Adam, she herself might unite,
And he be banished from the Lord's sight;
That his brave new world might be aborted,
And his maker's dream once more be thwarted.

'Eve, my beauty,' she cooed with a smile,
To cover her incorrigible guile,
'I've been sent to advise you on affairs of the heart,
Because, in such matters, I'm incomparably smart.

'The first rule a woman must know,
Is a man needs time and space to grow,
To think and plan, to dream and pray -

If he is not to walk away.

'He'll miss you more when you're not there,
And never doubt your love and care;
He'll respect you knowing you've explored
The entire Garden -
And be assured,
That your advice
Won't go ignored.'

So Eve set off to see the sights,
And to sample all the delights
Of the Garden that was now her home,
Where she and Adam would be free to roam,
Either together or alone.

But no sooner had she left
When Lilith - in the occult deft -
Fashioned herself into another Eve,
With the intention to deceive
Adam -
And with him to cleave!

Lustrous hair, rounded hips,
Star-like eyes and full red lips -
Every subtle intonation,
Every cute gesticulation,
Even to the imprint of Eve's feet,
With the heel appearing
Incomplete.

'Adam, my new husband, the time has surely come
For you to show your love for me before the day is done.
The Lord has made me from the hard bone of your thigh,
But when I look into your eyes, I melt into a sigh.

'Hold me in your arms so strong,
And put your lips to mine,
For this you'll find more pleasurable
Than the choicest wine.'

Adam enclosed her in his arms,
And put his lips to hers;
Surrendering to her charms,
Delighting in her purrs.

Just at that moment there came a flash
Of lightning so bright,
That struck Lilith on her face,
And sealed her lips quite tight.

'Lilith,' thundered the divine voice,
'You have no part to play
In Adam's fall from heavenly grace -
Let Eve lead him astray!'

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EATING OF THE FORBIDDEN FRUIT

On Eve's return from her lengthy tour
She passed the forbidden trees;
By contrast all the rest seemed poor -
By desire she was strongly seized.

A hidden force propelled her
To approach as close as she might;
She struggled to avert her eyes,
To shut out the rapturous sight.

But Lilith's wiles, ever strong,
Sought to divert Eve from right to wrong;
Still intent on her original plan,
And her strong desire to claim Eve's man.

A serpent, conjured up by Lilith's occult power,
Lurked in the shadow of a fragrant bower,
Close by where Eve stood, quite mute,
Overcome with desire to eat the fruit.

'Eve,' spoke the serpent, in a voice so soft,
Holding the forbidden fruit aloft,
'Is this not the object of your heart's desire?
Now, have *I* incurred the good Lord's ire?'

'But he commanded *us*,
Not you,' said Eve,
'Those two trees alone to leave,
Without so much as the slightest touch,
Or even the very barest brush
Against its trunk or branch or root -
Let alone to eat of its fruit!
And if his word we defy,
The sentence is that we must die.'

'Oh, Eve,' said the serpent, 'you foolish child,
How little you fathom the Lord's mind;

He was simply giving you a test,
To see how determined you were to wrest
The choicest blessing from his treasure chest.

‘For one of the trees whose fruit you’ve desired,
Will impart to you knowledge that, once acquired,
Will make you, in all things, as wise as the Lord –
And that, be sure, he can ill afford
If he wishes to remain
Praised and adored.’

With that, the wily serpent unfurled
His slithery body and suddenly hurled
Eve roughly against that choice tree,
Gashing her shoulder and grazing her knee,

‘See you’ve touched the taboo tree,’
Said the serpent, exuding glee,
‘And if he warned you that you’d die,
Now you see it was a lie.
So if in touching all was well,
To desist from eating he can’t compel.’

‘Thank you, serpent, for your wise advice’ -
She tasted the fruit – ‘That was really nice!’
Rushed to Adam to bestow a kiss,
And noting the rapture of his bliss,
With eyes closed and lips open wide -
A slice of the fruit Eve slipped inside.

But no sooner had Adam ceased to chew,
When a foreboding they hitherto never knew
Gripped them as they became aware
That their God was also standing there.

Then, when they looked at each other,
They sensed a powerful need to cover
Parts of their bodies hitherto shown,
Whose shame for them had been unknown.

‘Oh, Adam,’ God boomed, ‘you foolish sinner!
You, who could have been an eternal winner!
Why have you so betrayed my trust?
Why did you not control your lust?’

‘It wasn’t me, Lord’ Adam whimpered,
‘I would never have been so blinkered
As to think of disobeying your will,
Just for the sake of a passing thrill.

'It's the woman you gave me who is to blame,
She's the one devoid of shame;
She deceived me into eating,
She desired the pleasures fleeting.'

'Eve,' said God, 'that's Adam's defence.
Should I now proceed to pass sentence?
Were you not indeed the source of his lust?
Defend yourself if you must!'

'God, I beg you, don't judge me in haste.
Indeed, I enjoyed the fruit's taste,
But I was a victim of a cruel ruse,
On the part of a serpent with a plan to seduce.'

'I hear you,' said God. 'The serpent I'll question.
No doubt he'll have a cogent suggestion
As to whom I should punish, Adam or Eve,
And why him alone I should mercifully leave.'

'One more thing – and I don't wish to be crude -
But since you're unhappy in the nude,
I've brought you fig leaves attached with laces,
To cover those mysterious places,
Whose display was never taboo,
But is now considered so by you.'

'Among their tasks is to kindle the fire
Of what will be known as sexual desire,
Which will lead to procreation,
And the birth of earth's founding nation.'

'Serpent,' said God, 'what have you done now?
Did I not insist that you take a vow
To live in peace with the man I had made,
And do nothing at all to make him afraid?'

'Now, through you, Eve has sinned,
While you just stood there and inanelly grinned;
At your door I must lay the blame -
Your friendship with man will never be the same.'

'Lord,' said the serpent, 'you know me better than that!
Would I behave like a boorish brat?
Eve wasn't misled by me;
It was entirely Lilith's trickery.'

'She envied woman the man she'd wed,
For Lilith desired to take him to bed.
She programmed me to bring Eve down,
So she could don her bridal gown.'

'Enough!' cried the Lord, 'I've heard it all:
Because it's truly a very close call,
The blame shall be spread among all of you three,
For eating the fruit of my precious tree.

'Adam will now from this Garden be sent
Into a world where his strength will be all but spent
In sowing, planting, and harvesting grain,
In clearing, weeding, pruning – and pain,
As thorns and thistles tear at his skin,
And as seasons pass when the yield is so thin
That he can barely feed the little mouths at his table -
Those he will name Seth, Cain and Abel.

'Eve, because you diminished your Adam's worth,
Your pain will be great when you give birth.
He'll be the one to give the commands,
And you will be putty in his hands.

'Serpent, I'll pull you down a peg,
To crawl on your belly, instead of your leg;
Man will forever be your foe,
He'll strike your head; you'll bite his toe.

'I'll deal with you, Lilith, in my own good time,
Till then be confined to hot quicklime;
You were meant to tempt man as I require,
Not to satisfy your own desire.

'In case he attempts to return to the Garden,
I'll provide it with a cherubic warden,
Wielding a sword constantly turning -
Man's every intention from the outset discerning.

'Too much freedom I have dispensed,
Now a new era has commenced,
When man shall be judged on account of his deeds,
And have to provide for his own needs.'

CAIN & ABEL

Some time later Eve felt sick,
And noticed her stomach getting thick;
She couldn't do the household chores,

Or eat the food in her stores.

Adam feared that Eve would die,
And he thought he knew the reason why,

(Cont.)

* * *

LIFE IN THE ARK

That surviving family
Had to sacrifice their rest,
Feeding all the animals
And cleaning up their mess;
Around the clock they laboured
Without an hour's sleep,
As each and every animal
Had its routine to keep.

The lions called for their food at dawn,
The giraffes dined at seven;
The tigers and the cockatoo,
Ate at eleven.
The partridge and the pheasant
Ate salad with the mousse,
At eight every morning
They were joined by the goose.

The goats and the lambs
Preferred the noonday sun,
Though they didn't like the leopard
Grabbing their veggie bun.

Early in the afternoon
The elephants would arrive,
Trumpeting their choice of food,
Vine branches dipped in chive.

The lazy crocodiles
Arrived there around three,
Expecting their favourite eating spot
Always to be free.

Twelve pails of water
Noah dragged in around four,
To be downed by the camels

Before they ate their straw.

Between five and six in the evening
The asses trotted by,
To savour their barley soufflé,
And sweet apple pie.

Seven in the evening,
When the sun had gone down,
The paw-sucking bear would arrive,
Invariably with a frown;
For he greatly missed the hunt,
The chase and the kill,
And the juicy flesh of his victims –
Ah, he could taste it still!

Noah was an old man,
Six hundred years of age;
This way of life was challenging
For such a retiring sage.

But God had kept him
And his family alive,
And promised him that one day
They would all greatly thrive.

And he knew that the animals
Had their allotted space,
In the brave new world where they would live,
Each with his own place.
Meanwhile, outside the ark
God's words all came true:
Animals, reptiles and insects
All perished in the brew.

One hundred and fifty days elapsed,
And the waters began to subside;
The tops of mountains came into view,
And Noah's family cried.

A further forty days they sat
Inside the ark entombed,
Until Noah released a raven
When he thought dry land had loomed.

The raven flew back and forth,
But found no stick or grain
With which to build a cosy nest
And lay its eggs again.

Another seven days ensued,

And Noah dispatched a dove,
But finding no place for the sole of its foot,
It returned in a huff.

Seven days on, and Noah called,
'Out you go again!'
So the dove flew off, reluctantly –
And found subsiding rain.

With a chirp and a whoop,
And a graceful swoop,
It plucked an olive leaf,
And took it back to the ark
To show at his debrief.

Seven days on, it was again dispatched,
To seek out the dry ground;
No further thought of the ark –
To the future wholly bound.

God called out to Noah,
One clear and sun-drenched morn,
'You've kept my charge,
Preserving life,
As to the manner born.

'You and your wife I will bless
With everything you wish;
Shem, Ham and Japhet
Will multiply like fish.
When you dandle on your knees
Their newborn girls and boys,
None shall compare to you,
In the abundance of your joys.

'The longed-for day has now come
To bid farewell to the ark;
To the foot of Mount Ararat,
It will slowly drift and park.

'Now, when you see a rainbow,
Following the rain,
Let that be my special sign
That in future I'll refrain
From sending a flood
To inundate the earth;
And I'll forgive man his shortcoming,
And recognise his worth.'

* * *

DINAH

Dinah was the talk of the young men of Shechem,
From the curve of her figure to the length of her hem.
While all the other girls took a chaperone,
She preferred to wander around town alone.

A free spirit, she was warned by her dad
That among the young men there were some who were bad,
And that, if a girl cherished her reputation,
She had to be wary of association,
And maintain, at all times, discrimination.

But Dinah just smiled and kissed her dad's forehead,
Saying, 'You should worry more about the boys instead;
I can't just cook, and feed the sheep,
Or chat to my brothers and then go to sleep!'

Dinah became accepted by the Shechemite girls,
And at their dances she was famed for her twirls.
Shechem, son of Hamor, the chief of that city,
Tried flirting with Dinah, the new girl so pretty.
But Dinah demurred, knowing that her father's clan
Would accept no liaison with a Shechemite man.

But the more she refused Shechem's advances,
The more he ogled her at the dances.
One night he lay in wait without a sound,
And, on her way home, pushed her to the ground.

He had his way with Dinah,
Who cried to no avail;
He told her that he loved her
And begged her not to wail;
For she was an adult, no longer a child,
And must not feel, in any way,
That she had been defiled.

'My love for you is greater now
Than ever it was before;
Don't imagine for a moment
That I regard you as a whore.
The very opposite is the truth –
I'd lay down for you my life,
And pay the highest bride-price
To claim you as my wife.

Dinah was so confused
By what Shechem had said;
Conflicting thoughts about him

Jostled in her head.
She knew that her father,
And her grandpa too,
Had been warned most sternly
Against attempting to woo
Any citizen of Canaan -
However worthy in their view.

But then she had another thought:
No suitor now would ever be sought
By her father from Laban's kin,
So would it really be a sin
If she wed Shechem, a local man,
And future leader of his clan?

So she acceded to Shechem's request
That she return to his home and take a rest
While an approach to her father was formally framed,
And a convenient date for the wedding named.

Unknown to Shechem, one of his foes,
Seeing Dinah dishevelled, ran to disclose
To Jacob and sons her most unfortunate plight,
And that the poor girl had looked such a sight!
He wasn't slow to proclaim his view
That their poor Dinah had lost her virtue!

The family was shocked by what it heard,
That to their Dinah such a thing had occurred;
And when Hamor came to present his petition,
They noted the absence of any contrition.

His intention was clearly to gloss over the deed,
As if these Hebrews were an inferior breed
That could be bought off with some sheep or ewes,
Or some larger inducement they couldn't refuse.

'Jacob, dear friend,' Hamor began,
'With joy in my heart and a matrimonial plan,
I come to help you integrate
Into this, my land, and initiate
An enterprise of mutual gain,
Enhancing our distinguished name.

'Your Dinah has won the heart of my son,
And when these negotiations are done,
We'll escort her back in princely style -
Forgive us that we've detained her awhile!

'Let this be the start of a deepening bond
Between two clans who will become so fond

Of each other as the years unfold,
With marriages yielding kindred untold.
But, for now, let us both share much joy
From Dinah, your daughter, and Shechem our boy.'

A pregnant silence hung in the air;
On Jacob's face a look of despair.
The brothers retired to consider the matter,
Leaving father Jacob idly to chatter.

Simeon and Levi presented the case:
'They are too numerous for us to face
In conventional battle, man against man;
So listen carefully to our ingenious plan.

'We will appear to accept the marriage deal,
But on condition that they agree to seal
Within their flesh the circumcision -
Sign of great grandpa Abraham's mission.

'Then, when they're weak from the knife,
We'll fall on them and take their life;
Revenge for Shechem's insensitivity
In presuming to steal Dinah's virginity.'

They returned and gave Hamor the news
That they saw much merit in his stated views;
Subject to that one stipulation,
That they be circumcised like the Hebrew nation.

On the third day,
As the Shechemites lay
Weak on their beds
And unfit for a fray,
Simeon and Levi each drew their sword,
And, making common accord,
They went through every Shechemite tent,
Slaying each male as they vent
Their intense outrage on them all,
For the rape of their sister,
After the ball.

The other brothers followed behind,
Seizing booty of every kind:
Flocks, herds, weapons and flagons,
Wives and children, asses and wagons.
They found Dinah, in shock and grief
At all the violence, and in disbelief
That she, God-fearing Jacob's daughter,
Could have been the cause of all that slaughter.

They took her back to her father in tears,
But he was preoccupied with other fears:
'Simeon and Levi, you deserve a curse.
You've blackened my name –
But even worse,
When the Canaanite clans hear of your deed,
They'll determine to annihilate us and our seed.
We are so very few in number,
Now *we'll* be the victims of violence and plunder.'

'Father,' the two brothers replied,
'What the future will bring, God will decide;
But he must surely have retribution in store,
For those who have made of our sister a whore.'

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