

The Red Tent Study Guide

The Red Tent by Anita Diamant

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Plot Summary

The Red Tent by Anita Diamant tells the story of the biblical character Dinah, Jacob's daughter and Joseph's sister. In the Bible, Dinah's story is only briefly mentioned. The story says that Dinah was raped by an Egyptian prince. Simon and Levi, two of her brothers, avenge Dinah by killing all the men in the city. After that, Dinah is never mentioned again. Diamant wanted to give a voice to the character of Dinah as well as her mothers.

The novel begins with Dinah's mothers' stories. Dinah explains that because her father Jacob had four wives, she had four mothers: Leah, Rachel, Zilpah, and Bilhah. While Leah is Dinah's birth mother, as a child she learned from and loved her mother and "auntie-mothers." Before Dinah's birth, the women fulfilled their duties by bearing sons, but they longed for daughters. To them, daughters listened to their stories and shared them with the next generation of women.

Finally, Dinah is born to Leah. Dinah becomes close with Joseph, Rachel's son, because he was nursed with her. When her family prepares to move to Canaan, Dinah gets her first big adventure. She encounters huge lakes and Inna tells her she will only be happy living near water.

On the way to Canaan, Dinah meets her cousin, Tabea, who is a daughter of Esau. This is the first time she has ever been around another girl her age. They part ways, but plan to meet up again in a part of Canaan called Mamre. There, Dinah meets her grandmother, Rebecca. Finally, she sees Tabea again, who is now a woman. Rebecca is furious to find that Tabea's first blood has been wasted and throws Tabea out of her tents. Dinah hates Rebecca for what she has done.

Dinah is very observant and watches her mothers, family, and surroundings very closely. She learns from Rachel and Inna how to be a midwife. She goes to Shechem with Rachel to attend a birth and falls in love with Shalem. Dinah and Shalem marry, but her family is not happy. Simon and Levi accuse Shalem of raping Dinah. They go to Shechem and murder all the men while they recover from their circumcisions. Dinah is devastated and outraged. Through strength she has never known, she curses Jacob's tribe.

Dinah escapes to Egypt with Shalem's mother, Re-nefer. They discover that Dinah is pregnant and Re-nefer says she wants to raise the baby as a prince of Egypt. Dinah agrees because it is what is best for the child. While she and her son, Re-mose, are close when he is younger, they grow apart. Re-mose wishes to be rich and successful and has no time for his foreign-born mother. Thankfully, Dinah meets a midwife named Meryt, who becomes a close friend and mother-like figure. Dinah also becomes a successful midwife.

Dinah also meets a carpenter named Benia. They are attracted to one another, but Dinah makes no attempt to become his wife right away. Three years later, Meryt decides



to move to the Valley of the Kings and takes Dinah with her. Dinah and Benia meet again. Benia declares his love for Dinah and they are married.

Dinah is called by her son to attend the birth of Zafenat Paneh-ah's son. While there, Dinah finds out that Zafenat Paneh-ah is really Joseph. The reunion is not happy because Re-mose has learned the truth about Joseph, his mother, and his father's death. Re-mose threatens to kill Joseph, but Dinah urges him to leave. It is that last time she ever sees her son.

Dinah returns home. Years with Benia happily pass, then one day Joseph comes to visit. He wants Dinah to go to Canaan with him because Jacob is dying. At first Dinah refuses, but then agrees. While there, no one notices Dinah. To them, Dinah is dead. But then she speaks to one of Jacob's grandchildren. The girl, Gera tells Dinah the story of Dinah. Dinah is happy to learn that her story has not been forgotten. She becomes certain that her story and the legacy of her mothers will live on.



Prologue

Prologue Summary

The Red Tent by Anita Diamant tells the story of the biblical character Dinah, Jacob's daughter and Joseph's sister. In the Bible, Dinah's story is only briefly mentioned. The story says that Dinah was raped by an Egyptian prince. Simon and Levi, two of her brothers, avenge Dinah by killing all the men in the city. After that, Dinah is never mentioned again. Diamant wanted to give a voice to the character of Dinah as well as her mothers.

The story begins with Dinah accusing the reader of forgetting her story. She is sad to learn that she is only an afterthought to those who have read the Bible. She explains the happiness of women having babies, both boys and girls. She insists that to women there is something very special about having a girl baby. It is the girls who will carry on their mother's stories, not little boys.

She wishes she had more to tell about her grandmother. She is angry that she kept the story of her mothers bottled up inside her for so long. But Dinah is happy that the reader is interested in her story and she is ready to speak.

Prologue Analysis

The Prologue's gripping words catch the reader's attention right away. Dinah's words are mystical to some readers who do not know about her story in the Bible. Because she talks right to the reader, it makes the text more interesting.

Right away, Dinah introduces one of the main themes of the book. History has been written by men, not women. It is up to other women to pass down their own stories and history in order to create their own legacy. For the memory of a woman to stay alive it is not written down, but instead is whispered from woman to woman.



My Mother's Stories, Chapter 1

My Mother's Stories, Chapter 1 Summary

In the first chapter, Dinah's mother and aunts and grandfather are introduced. Alban is Dinah's spiteful, unkind grandfather. He has four daughters from different wives: Leah, Zilpah, Rachel, and Bilhah. They live in Haran. Leah, Dinah's mother, was born with different colored eyes. One eye is blue and the other is green. While many people are scared to look her in the eyes, they admire her ability to cook and tend to Laban's household. Laban's second daughter, born of a slave, is Zilpah. She is best friends with Leah. While Zilpah wishes to be an oracle, she only has one great vision: that of Leah birthing eight children.

The third daughter, Rachel, is the most beautiful of all the sisters. Her beauty is startling and breathtaking, and amazes her family, neighbors, and most importantly, Jacob. Laban's youngest daughter is Bilhah, who is also born of a slave. Bilhah is not talented, quick, or beautiful, but she has the ability to do well and care for others.

Dinah's mothers' stories begin with the arrival of Jacob at their home. Rachel runs back to her father Laban's camp, claiming she has just met a stranger at a nearby well. The stranger, later revealed as Jacob, kisses Rachel and promises to marry her. As Rachel speaks of the encounter, her father and sisters insist that she is not yet marriageable. She has not yet had her first menstrual cycle. Before Rachel can fully tell of her and Jacob's meeting, Jacob approaches their camp. He introduces himself as the son of Rebecca, who has also fled from his brother Esau. He asks Laban if he can stay in his camp. While Laban wants to decline, he is bound by family duties to accept his nephew as a guest.

Many changes take place after Jacob's arrival. Before then, Laban has no bondsmen to help tend the herds or land. He only has daughters and a sick wife. Due to Jacob's hard work, Laban's crops become more prosperous and his animals become stronger and healthier. After a month of working for Laban, Jacob asks for Rachel's hand in marriage. At first Laban demands seven year's service from Jacob, but Jacob refuses. They finally agree on one year of service. In the deal, Jacob also gets Bilhah as a concubine. After nine months of Jacob's service, Rachel has still not had her first menstrual cycle, and due to custom, Laban refuses to begin wedding arrangements.

Finally Rachel has her first period and is permitted to join her sisters in the red tent. The red tent is where the women spend the three days of their cycle resting, eating, and talking. To celebrate, the sisters sing songs, praise the goddesses Innana and Lady Asherah of the Sea, bathe Rachel in oils, and feed her chocolate and wine. When Rachel emerges from the tent, she demands that a wedding date be set. But as to custom, they must wait seven months after the first period to have the wedding.

My Mother's Stories, Chapter 1 Analysis

Four of the main characters are introduced in this chapter. It is important to know the difference between Leah, Rachel, Zilpah, and Bilhah. Their different gifts contribute greatly to how Dinah forms as a woman later in the story. Also, it is interesting to note that Dinah's story begins with the arrival of Jacob. The flurry of activity that occurs is all around a man. The reader does not know much of the relationship of the sisters. It is only known that Zilpah and Leah are close.

The red tent is also introduced in the chapter. This place remains important for the rest of the book. It is the place where women go to relax and be together during their periods. It is the only time that women are allowed to relax during a month. Instead of being shunned and sent away like other women of the times, relatives of Rebecca celebrate their blood in the red tent. The red tent is a sign of rebirth, power, and mystery. Men do not know what happens in the red tent and do not wish to know. There the women worship their goddesses, eat, talk, and celebrate.



My Mothers' Stories, Chapter 2

My Mothers' Stories, Chapter 2 Summary

Rachel is furious for having to wait to marry Jacob. She takes out her fury on the household, causing a lot of distress for the other sisters. To bide their time until the marriage, Rachel and Jacob go to the hills to spend time with one another. There, Jacob tells Rachel of his family and further declares his love for her. While Rachel is lost in her happiness, Leah suffers. She secretly has feelings for Jacob. Although it seems as though Jacob has set his sights on Rachel, he notices Leah and her ability to handle Laban's camp. Unlike other people, he is never afraid to stare into Leah's eyes and address her. Jacob also finds an excuse to talk to Leah every day, thereby increasing his interest in her.

Zilpah sees the attraction between Leah and Jacob. She also sees an opportunity to hurt Rachel, of whom she has never been fond. Zilpah senses that Rachel is nervous about her wedding night and convinces Rachel to confess her fears. Rachel has heard of only the pain a wife endures on her wedding night and nothing of pleasure. Like a frightened child, Rachel begs Leah to take her place as Jacob's bride. At first, Leah refuses, but then accepts. She secretly longs to be Jacob's bride.

Dressed in a veil that covers her face, Leah attends the wedding banquet and ceremonies. When she and Jacob are finally alone in the wedding tent, he unveils her. Jacob does not seem surprised or angry that it is Leah and not Rachel who lies with him. Instead, Jacob takes Leah into his arms and consummates their marriage. He also secures Leah's place as first wife. For seven days, Jacob teaches Leah about making love and the two talk of many things except for Rachel. They also decide that at the end of the seven days, Jacob will leave the tent first and demand that Laban give him Rachel and Bilhah as Rachel's dowry. In return, Jacob will work seven more months for Leah's bride price.

Laban agrees, but Rachel is furious she has lost her place as first wife. She also realized how childish she had behaved. Soon thereafter, she and Jacob are married. Leah also finds out that she is pregnant. Rachel is enraged to learn that Leah is pregnant. She curses at Leah. Leah slaps her in return. The two sisters refuse to speak to each other for months and a permanent rift develops in their relationship.

Leah bears Jacob's first son, Reuben, and shortly after has Simon, and then Levi. After a miscarriage, she then has Judah. Laban's last wife, Ruti, also births two sons. Rachel, on the other hand, has miscarriage after miscarriage. Rachel begins to assist the local midwife, Inna, to relieve some of the pain of not having a baby.



My Mothers' Stories, Chapter 2 Analysis

Diamant takes time to describe the relationship of Leah and Joseph. In the Bible, only Jacob's anger at being given Leah is discussed. But the two go on to have eight children. Diamant embellishes the relationship and assumes that Jacob must have been somewhat fond of Leah. He chooses to lay with her many times, even when there are women are about that he could have.

The relationship of Leah and Rachel is finally defined in this chapter. The sisters now hate one another and are unable to share a husband. They are mean and spiteful towards each other because they both love the same man and will never know how to share him. The rift between them grows as Leah becomes repeatedly pregnant, and as Rachel fails to have a baby. Rachel chooses to become a midwife and help other would-be mothers so that she can ease her own pain.



My Mothers' Stories, Chapter 3

My Mothers' Stories, Chapter 3 Summary

Rachel grows very sad because she has had so many miscarriages. Bilhah asks Rachel if she can have a child with Jacob in Rachel's name. Although at first reluctant, Rachel finally agrees. When Bilhah goes to lay with Jacob, there is no celebration or stay in the nuptial tent. Bilhah is simply a third bride with no bride price. Bilhah becomes pregnant and gives birth to Dan. Although by law he is Rachel's son, Rachel again becomes sad because she is barren. Jacob sees how sad she is and comforts her. The two reignite their relationship.

Zilpah finally becomes Jacob's last wife when Leah commands that she go and lie with him. Zilpah conceives and has a difficult time giving birth to Gad and Asher. She tells Jacob she will never lie with him again.

Jacob is very prosperous, with four wives and ten sons. Many of the surrounding land owners respect Jacob's success. But his success is actually owned by Laban. His wives hate their father and their relationship is very strained. Laban has become more crude and cruel, especially to his wife Ruti, who is pregnant with her third child. Ruti begs the four sisters to help her get rid of the baby. Although the women do not like Ruti, they hate their father more, and decide to help her. When all the women go to the red tent, they give Ruti herbs and drinks to rid her body of the baby. Ruti loses the baby.

Leah becomes pregnant again, but does not want to have the baby. Although she and Rachel's relationship is still strained, she asks for Rachel's advice. Rachel tells her that she is pregnant with a girl. Each of the four sisters has dreams about Dinah. They are all excited about a baby girl who will carry on their stories. Finally, Dinah is born.

Rachel is happy for Leah, but also finds that she is finally pregnant. The end of the pregnancy is hard and Rachel almost loses the baby. Joseph is born. Rachel is too sickly to breast feed, so Leah nurses Dinah and Joseph at the same time.

My Mothers' Stories, Chapter 3 Analysis

Throughout the novel, women assert their own sexual agency. While some, like Ruti, are forced to have sex, many women go to their husbands freely. In the case with Leah, Rachel, and now in this chapter, Bilhah, the women make their own decisions about sex. Zilpah, on the other hand, does not wish to sleep with Jacob again. She asserts her own sexual agency by telling him she will no longer lay with him. The other women also take their own lives and sexual choices into their own hands when pregnancy will become a burden or be life threatening. They either deny Jacob or take special potions to stop birth.



My Story, Chapter 1

My Story, Chapter 1 Summary

While Dinah spends most of her younger years with her mothers in the red tent, she also spent a lot of time with Joseph. Dinah and Joseph are closer than the other siblings because of their age. Dinah also finds that, although Leah is her birth mother, her aunts look upon her as their daughter. The sisters tell Dinah all their stories and she shares them with Joseph. Joseph in turn tells Dinah of Jacob's god and family.

The relationship between Jacob and Laban completely deteriorates. Jacob's wages from Laban were meager, even though he was the source of Laban's success. Jacob hates Laban's laziness and cruelty. Laban sells Ruti into slavery for payment of gaming debts. Ruti begs Leah to save her. Leah goes to Jacob and asks that he pay Laban's debt. Leah appeals to Jacob as her husband and leader of the family. Jacob is not happy to pay Laban's debt, but is happy that Leah recognizes him as the head of the family. For the first time, Dinah recognizes how Jacob makes Leah feel. She sees the feelings that Jacob arouses in Leah and is jealous. She does not want to have to share her mother's love.

All the women are thankful that Jacob saved Ruti, but Laban never acknowledges what has happened. He becomes more cruel and mean to Ruti. Ruti is thankful for Leah's help and kindness. She insists on serving and praising Leah.

My Story, Chapter 1 Analysis

The story of Dinah begins in this chapter. The reader already feels as though he knows Dinah because she has been the voice of the story thus far. Dinah's birth is a gift to her mother and aunts. It ties into the novel's theme of remembering women's history and legacy. Their stories, rituals, and ways will not be remembered by their sons or other men. Men only remember their fathers' stories, as does Joseph. The sisters believe their history will be told by Dinah.

The novel often deals with the separate lives of men and women in this biblical time. Women are either cooking, cleaning, or in the red tent together. Men work, travel, and eat together. Once sons are old enough, they leave their mothers to join their fathers' social circles. But this is the first time Dinah truly realizes that her father is a man. She is angry that someone else can make her mother just as happy. Dinah realizes that their relationship is different than that of Leah and Jacob's, but does not yet understand how it is different. This is because Dinah is mostly involved in relationships with other women.



My Story, Chapter 2

My Story, Chapter 2 Summary

After rescuing Ruti from slavery, Jacob begins to plan his family's departure from Laban's land. Jacob speaks to each wife about yearning to leave. His recent dreams are calling him back to Canaan, the land of Jacob's father.

When the women retire for their three days in the red tent they discuss their pending departure, Rachel is thrilled to leave. She longs to see new things. The other sisters are not thrilled about the move. Leah wishes to leave Laban's lands, but loves her home. Bilhah does not want to leave where her only son was born. Zilpah is terrified to leave the home of her goddesses.

The sisters develop a plan to take their own goddess statues, but also decide to take all of Laban's beloved household gods. By taking Laban's gods, they will make him suffer as he has made others suffer. Jacob begins to negotiate with Laban for his departure. The men finally settle on Jacob taking sixty goats and sixty sheep, all of Leah and Rachel's possessions, Bilhah and Zilpah's clothing and jewelry, as well as his son's possessions. The clever sisters also begin hiding extra food, herbs, plants and jewelry in their baskets.

Ruti is devastated that the sisters will be leaving. A few days before the departure, Ruti fails to enter the red tent. Leah sends Dinah and Joseph to find her. The two children find Ruti's bloody body. She had killed herself. Joseph goes to find an adult, while Dinah waits with the body. As Dinah waits with Ruti's body, she begins to hate Ruti for her weakness. She does not understand how Ruti could kill herself, but not stand up for herself. One of Ruti's horrible sons finally comes to relieve Dinah of her watch.

During preparations for the move, Dinah begins to follow Rachel around. One night, she witnesses Rachel stealing Laban's idols from the household altar. The next day, all the tents are packed and Jacob's family leaves.

My Story, Chapter 2 Analysis

Jacob only worships one god, and he does not demand that his wives follow suit. The fact that the women are able to worship their own gods empowers them. They are allowed to put other women in a high place. This also aids in Dinah's hate for Ruti. Dinah is surrounded by strong, powerful women who speak their minds and worship their own gods. Ruti whimpers in the shadows. Dinah holds her mother in very high regard. She is not used to seeing a weak, groveling woman. She cannot bear to stare at Ruti's helpless, sad body because it is the worst fate she can imagine. For Dinah, this fear turns into hate.



My Story, Chapter 3

My Story, Chapter 3 Summary

During their journey out, the camp sees Inna, the midwife. She begs them to let her join their camp, and Jacob allows it. Inna had been attending a birth. The young mother died and her husband called Inna a witch and threatened Inna's life. She needs a safe place. The women were happy to have a healer among them.

As the camp walks, both men and women begin to sing together. Whenever they stop for meals, the women and men separate. As they continue to travel, Dinah encounters a great river. She is fascinated by the water. As the camp enters the water she is almost completely submerged until Judah carries her through the water. Inna later declares that Dinah is a water child and will only be happy near the water.

Laban eventually catches up with the camp, accusing Jacob of stealing his idols. Jacob allows Laban to search the entire camp. After searching all other tents, he prepares himself to go into the red tent, where men never go. As he begins his search, Rachel tells him that she stole the idols. They have been under her mat. She also tells him that she has spilled her monthly blood on the idols and he may take them if he wishes. Laban says nothing and leaves the tent. Jacob still believes that Laban found none of Laban's idols. The two men then lay out ten stones to mark the boundary between them. No one in the camp ever sees Laban again.

Jacob is bothered by memories and dreams of his brother, the vengeful Esau. He tells his wives and sons about his dreams. The entire camp is affected by Jacob's mood. When the camp again reaches water, Jacob tells everyone that he will go ahead and come back for them. The following morning, Jacob does not return. Reuben finds him beaten and naked in a bush near the river. He carries him back to the camp.

They stay by the river for two months while Jacob recovers. Dinah grows bored and angry with her mothers. The sisters continue to obsess about the meaning of Jacob's dreams. Dinah and Joseph start to explore the area. They find the place where their father had been wounded. A black boar runs toward them. At first they are too scared to move. Then, Dinah pulls Joseph with her as she begins to run. Joseph slips and cuts his foot. They never tell any one about what happened. Joseph begins having powerful dreams. He shares these with Dinah, but soon begins sharing them with everyone.

My Story, Chapter 3 Analysis

Laban's entrance into the red tent is very important. Only sick men ever enter the tent. For Laban to see women in such a state is offensive to men. When he learns that Rachel has bled on his household gods for a month, he is outraged, but powerless. Women's blood is still a mystery to men and it holds a power over them. They fear it. Laban cannot take his idols back and is lost without them.



Inna makes an important revelation. She sees how happy Dinah is to play in the water. Inna says that Dinah will only be happy living by a river. This foreshadows Dinah's future in Egypt, where she finally finds happiness with Benia and Meryt, and a successful midwife career.

Again, the theme of separate lives for women and men is explored. This chapter is important because it marks the end of Dinah and Joseph's close friendship. Dinah will soon become a young woman and Joseph a man, so they will have to separate into different sex divided groups. Joseph also had no wish to only stay close to Dinah. He wants to explore and tell others of his thoughts and feelings. Others will surely listen because he is a man.



My Story, Chapter 4

My Story, Chapter 4 Summary

The same day as Dinah and Jacob's adventure, Eliphaz, Esau's oldest son, arrives at the camp to let them know that Esau will be arriving before dusk. Jacob decides to take his family to welcome Esau. When the two brothers meet, Esau throws his arms around Jacob. Jacob's sons are worried at first, but then realize that Esau has moved to kiss Jacob. The rest of the camp is shocked because Esau is not angry or vengeful. The two brothers then introduce their sons and wives to one another.

Dinah meets her cousin, Tabea. Dinah admires her bracelets and the two girls exchange stories of their mothers. Tabea tells Dinah that the wives do not gather in the red tent for their periods as Dinah's mother and aunts do. Rebecca, their grandmother, hates Esau's wives because of this.

Both families prepare a large meal for everyone to share. Jacob and Esau tell everyone stories of their past. Esau's wives then sing a song that is new to Dinah's ear. Everyone listens and is touched deeply. The camp stays up late and Dinah and Tabea spend time together until Leah pulls Dinah away.

The next day Esau's camp leaves. Jacob tells his brother he cannot travel with him. Esau's success is too great and if Jacob follows him, he will be at a disadvantage. Dinah is sad because she is losing her new friend, Tabea. Both families promise to meet in Canaan, the home of Isaac and Rebecca. The next day, the family moves on. They pass through Succoth where three brothers marry. Of all the older sons, Reuben is the only son that does not marry. He remains at Bilhah's side constantly.

As the camp approaches Canaan, they are met by Werenro, a messenger of Jacob's mother, Rebecca. Rebecca wishes for her son and his family to come to her for the barley festival in Mamre. Dinah tries to get a good view of Werenro. She sees that she is dressed in fine silk. She also had striking red hair. The messenger joins the camp for dinner and entertains them with stories.

My Story, Chapter 4 Analysis

In this chapter, Esau and his family are introduced. The reader begins to wonder why Jacob was so frightened because Esau welcomes Jacob into his arms. Dinah also meets Tabea, her cousin. This meeting is important because Dinah learns the difference in how different tribes behave. She learns that Esau's wives do not celebrate in the red tent and for that Rebecca hates them. Dinah is shocked at the news.

This chapter is also important because Werenro is introduced. Her powerful voice, beautiful clothes, and looks are a prelude for what Rebecca's home will be like. Werenro's presence makes Dinah all the more curious of her grandmother.



My Story, Chapter 5

My Story, Chapter 5 Summary

Jacob decides to take all of his wives and most of his sons to Mamre in Canaan to see his mother and father. Dinah is dressed with her finest jewelry. She is so besotted with her new jewelry that she trips and stumbles as everyone walks. She cuts her chin and is disappointed to have a scab when she meets Rebecca.

Three days into the journey to Mamre, they spot Rebecca's tents. As they get closer, Dinah sees the largest, most beautiful tents she has ever seen. When Dinah finally sees Rebecca, she cannot take her eyes off of her grandmother. Rebecca is the oldest person Dinah has ever seen. She wears purple robes, paints her eyes in an Egyptian pattern, and wears a head piece with gold threads of material. Dinah is fascinated.

Jacob's camp goes to set up their tents to the west of Rebecca's tents. No men are allowed in Rebecca's tents and she is waited on by ten women, who dress the same as Werenro. The women all dress exactly the same. Dinah cannot tell them apart, so she calls them the Deborahs.

Everyone begins to prepare for dinner when Isaac arrives. Dinah quickly understands that Isaac is blind. Jacob calls his father's name and Isaac opens his arms. Isaac runs his hands over Jacob and all his sons' faces. Everyone sits to enjoy the meal, but it is somber because Rebecca says nothing.

Rebecca has an interview with each of Jacob's wives. She approves of Leah because of her bravery and Rachel because of her beauty. She tells Zilpah the time and place of her death. Bilhah is so frightened to visit Rebecca that she remains quite the entire time. Eventually, Rebecca leaves her. Dinah takes little notice of the meetings because she is too busy waiting for Tabea's return.

Finally Esau's camp arrives. Dinah sees her cousin and notices that she now wears a belt, which means she has had her first period. Rebecca learns what has happened and approaches Tabea's mother Adath. Rebecca begins to scream when she learns that Adath wasted Tabea's blood. Instead of celebrating, Esau's wives shun women during their periods. Rebecca is furious. She condemns Tabea and her mother and tells them they may never come to her tent again. Tabea begs Rebecca not to cast her off, to let her become a servant, but Rebecca ignores her pleas. Dinah hates Rebecca for her friend's mistreatment.

Leah tries to explain to Dinah that Rebecca is protecting the ways of her mothers. She also tells Dinah not to tell her grandmother what she already knows of the red tent. Dinah promises that she will not. When it is time for Jacob's family to depart, Rebecca mandates that Dinah stay with her for three months time. Dinah does not cry, but is not happy that she will stay with Rebecca.



While Dinah stays with Rebecca, she learns a lot about her grandmother. Her grandmother detests Esau's wives and criticizes Dinah's mother and aunts in Dinah's presence. She also speaks ill of Isaac. Dinah does not love her grandmother, but instead learns to respect her. Rebecca is also an oracle and experienced healer. Many people come to her for help. She eases a small child's pain and helps women who are barren.

While with Rebecca, word comes that Werenro has been murdered. Her body is returned to Rebecca with its tongue cut out. Dinah is saddened by the news. When Dinah goes to Rebecca's tent, Rebecca tells her that she knows Dinah hates her for what she did to Tabea. But she insists that it had to be done. She also tells her that some unhappiness awaits Dinah in her future. As for Mamre, Dinah is not the heir to Rebecca. She then forgives Dinah for hating her.

My Story, Chapter 5 Analysis

Again, in this chapter the theme of telling women's history and stories is examined. Rebecca is angry with Tabea and her mother because Rebecca's rituals must be defended. If she allows Esau's wives to act however they please without reprimand, the ways of the red tent and Mamre will be forgotten. Dinah does not understand this now, and may never understand. Rebecca also foreshadows Dinah's sadness and ruin and the fall of the rituals of Mamre and the red tent.

Because Dinah is not the heir, no one will keep the rituals alive. This also happens later in the novel. When Dinah begins her new life in Egypt, she does not perform any of her rituals for fear of being connected to Canaan, her fathers, and her mothers. She does not want to be discovered to be a part of the tribe of Jacob, the murderers who slaughtered Shechem.



My Story, Chapter 6

My Story, Chapter 6 Summary

Finally, when Reuben comes to get Dinah she is able to leave Rebecca. When Dinah returns to the camp she finds it dirty, noisy, and unrefined. Dinah does not get along with her mother when she returns and avoids her whenever possible. Dinah is changing. She is longing to become a woman. She hears the noises of Judah and his wife making love and longs to do the same.

Finally, Dinah gets her period. She tells her mothers and aunts and they are thrilled. They take her into the red tent and begin the ceremony. They paint her in red, put kohl on her eyes, and spray her with perfume. They give her wine and dress her in a special robe. Dinah feels drunk and happy. She does not notice when her mothers take her outside. They lay her on the ground and sing praises to their goddesses as they massage her with oil. As a part of ritual, they break Dinah's hymen with one of their goddess idols that is shaped like a triangle. Dinah passes out. When she awakes, Inna is standing over her. She tells Inna she dreamed of a big black animal in water.

Leah goes to tell her husband that Dinah has become a woman. Jacob has already heard some of what went on last night from Levi's Canaanite wives. They did not understand the ceremony. Jacob is angry with his wives and takes their idols. He smashes all of them. The next week one of the brother's wives miscarries and Zilpah declares it is punishment from the gods. Leah tries to teach the Canaanite wives the ways of Rebecca and Mamre, but they will not have it. This causes a rift between the wives.

Dinah begins to take an interest in the midwife work that Rachel and Inna do. She learns about herbs, and songs to ease deliveries. Inna becomes too old to travel to deliver babies. Now, only Dinah assists Rachel in birthing babies.

My Story, Chapter 6 Analysis

The ceremony performed by Dinah's mothers again shows women exploring their own sexual agency. By breaking Dinah's hymen, they have given her the choice to sleep with a man other than her husband without consequences if she chooses. She can explore her sexual options if she wishes without being thought of as ruined. To the mothers, the hymen's blood should be shared with the earth, not given to a man to prove his wife is a virgin.

This chapter is also important because of Jacob's reaction to the ceremony that the women perform in the tent. As Esau's wives do not understand the ritual, neither do the Canaanite wives. Because Jacob has been told about the ceremony by his sons, he must do something. Jacob feels that if he is to retain his power, he must threaten the power and mystery of the red tent. He smashes the goddesses out of fear. If his sons

and kinsmen see him as weak he will not be seen as in control of his tribe. The event also marks a turn in the luck and success of the tribe of Jacob.



My Story, Chapter 7

My Story, Chapter 7 Summary

Rachel is often called to deliver babies in the city of Shechem. King Hamor's wife hears of Rachel's skills and calls for Rachel. Rachel decides to take Dinah to aid in the birth. When they arrive at the palace, they are taken to Hamor's queen, Re-nefer. Dinah admires the queen's beautiful clothing and good looks. Re-nefer takes Rachel and Dinah to where Ashnan, Hamor's concubine, is giving birth.

Dinah is left to look after the soon-to-be mother. She hears a male's voice in the next room. She goes into the room and encounters Shalem, Hamor's firstborn son. Dinah thinks he is the most handsome, perfect man she has ever seen. They both stare at one another and feel the same kind of longing for one another. The next instant Rachel and Re-nefer return because Ashnan's water has broken. They deliver the baby and return back to Jacob's camp.

Dinah is surprised that no one can tell that she has changed. She constantly thinks of Shalem. Dinah wonders if he will come for her. When she gives up hope, a messenger from the palace comes to the camp. Hamor has requested Dinah's presence as Ashnan's assistant while she is recovering from the birth. Leah and Jacob agree to let Dinah go.

Dinah goes to the palace to wait on Ashnan, but becomes very bored. Finally, Re-nefer seeks her out. She asks Dinah to go to the market with her maid. There, Dinah sees Shalem and they meet again. This is all Re-nefer's doing. She sees the way Shalem yearns for Dinah, and therefore designs a plan for the two to get together. When Dinah and Shalem return to the palace, no one is around. Shalem takes Dinah to his bedroom and claims Dinah as his wife by making love to her. The two are completely in love with one another.

While they continue on their honeymoon, Dinah's brother, Levi, visits the king. He is not treated well and goes home angrily. A few days later Shalem and the king go to visit Jacob to talk about a bride price. Jacob is angry and does not give an answer right away. He claims he must speak to his sons about the matter. Leah is furious. She believes her daughter has been taken advantage of. Rachel, on the other hand, is happy. She thinks it is a wonderful match. Shalem returns to Dinah in Shechem.

Bilhah goes to visit Dinah. Dinah is concerned that Leah is mad with her. But Bilhah assured her that Leah is concerned for Dinah's welfare. She asks if Dinah is happy and Dinah tells her how much she loves Shalem.

Finally Simon and Levi return to Jacob. When Jacob asks for their opinion, Simon and Levi are furious. They think that an alliance with royalty will ruin their chances to improve their status. They call Shalem a dog and accuse him of raping their sister.



Reuben and Judah stand up for Dinah, but are not heard. As a joke, Joseph suggests that Jacob ask that Shalem, Hamor, and all the other people of Shechem be circumcised. Jacob decides to go with this suggestion because it came from Joseph and will also make everyone remember the tribe of Jacob. Hamor and Shalem agree to the circumstances. Three days later, all the men and boys in Shechem are circumcised.

Dinah wakes to the sound of screaming. She realizes she is covered in blood and sees that Shalem's throat has been cut. The next thing Dinah knows, she is being carried off by Levi. Her brothers continue to kill the men of Shechem until dawn.

My Story, Chapter 7 Analysis

Many events happen in this important chapter. Dinah follows in her mothers' footsteps and chooses who she will make her partner. She freely enters into a sexual relationship with Shalem. Dinah embraces her sexual desires and experiments with Shalem. This is important for her as a woman. She is discovering herself, as well as what it is like to be with a man. By taking desire and wanting pleasure, Dinah is exerting sexual agency.

In the Bible it is said that Shalem rapes Dinah. Interestingly in Diamant's tale, while Dinah is accused of being Shalem's whore, Shalem is also accused of raping her. Usually, only the woman is found at fault for sleeping with a man out of wedlock. Here, both Dinah and Shalem are blamed. Blame is placed on him because Simon and Levi want to avenge the treatment of their family and end the alliance between Shalem and Dinah. They need an excuse to do so. Thus, the circumcision of the men of Shechem becomes a weapon. It is no longer a sacred symbol of Jacob's family. It becomes a symbol of weakness and destruction to people who survived the massacre at Shechem.

Obviously, to the reader, Rebecca's prediction concerning Dinah's great sorrow is the slaughter of Shalem. But Dinah's sadness is also connected to the fact that members of her own family have betrayed her.

My Story, Chapter 8

My Story, Chapter 8 Summary

When Dinah arrives back at Jacob's camp, Bilhah unties her. Dinah tries to go back to Shechem, but her mother and aunts stop her. They try to calm her, but cannot. When Simon and Levi return, Dinah leaves her tent to confront Jacob and her brothers. She calls out to Jacob and he exits his tent. She accuses Jacob and his sons of murdering all the men. She also curses the entire tribe of Jacob. Dinah then walks away.

No one goes after her and Jacob's tribe does fall apart. Jacob's tribe flees to avoid the avengers of Shechem. Simon and Levi sell Joseph into slavery. Rachel dies after giving birth to Benjamin on a highway. Jacob does not give her a proper burial. Jacob catches Bilhah and Reuben in bed together. He strikes Bilhah and disowns Reuben. One day, Bilhah disappears. Zilpah dies of fever when Jacob finds and breaks the very last of Rachel's idols. Leah loses the use of her hands and legs. She dies in pain.

My Story, Chapter 8 Analysis

Dinah's curse foreshadows the complete demise of Jacob's tribe. Because of her words, the worst happens to her family. Although throughout the novel the family forgives one another for past digressions, Dinah is clear that she will never forgive her family.

Dinah's curse also fulfills Rebecca's predictions about the fate of the house of Mamre. Dinah will not share with many the ways of her mothers and the red tent. She tries to forget them because they are tied to the men who have ruined her life.



Egypt, Chapter 1

Egypt, Chapter 1 Summary

Nehesi, Re-nefer's guard, finds Dinah and brings her back to Re-nefer, who is at the palace. Re-nefer does not blame Dinah for her family's hate; instead, she blames herself because she arranged the marriage. Re-nefer also hoped that Dinah would be pregnant with a grandchild. It turns out that Dinah is indeed pregnant.

Nehesi, Re-nefer, and Dinah leave for Egypt, Re-nefer's homeland. She tells Dinah that she will refer to her as her daughter-in-law. She also says that Dinah will have the child on Re-nefer's behalf; if it is a son, it will be a prince of Egypt. The two women have never cried over Shalem, which bothers Dinah. She wants to grieve over her loss.

The three arrive in Egypt at the house of Nakht-re, Re-nefer's brother. Re-nefer tells her brother a short version of what happened. Dinah feels like an outsider because Egypt is not her land, and this family is not hers. She has lost everything.

Dinah's pregnancy soon comes to an end. The delivery is very hard because the baby is feet first. The local midwife, Meryt, does not know what to do. Dinah demands that Meryt use a knife to cut her open, so Meryt can turn the baby. Dinah knows this because she assisted Rachel for all those years. Finally the baby is born.

The baby is placed in Dinah's arms and she calls him Bar-Shalem. When Dinah is awake she asks for her baby. Meryt tells her the baby is with its mother. At first Dinah does not understand, but it becomes clear when Re-nefer enters the room with the baby. Re-nefer is his Egyptian mother, while Dinah is birth mother. Furthermore, if the baby is to be a prince, he must be named Re-mose, a child of Re. As Re-nefer leaves, Dinah whispers Bar-Shalem into his ear. Re-nefer hears and threatens to throw Dinah out if she ever calls him that name again.

After eight days, a ceremony is held to celebrate the baby's birth. Dinah is sad. This reminds her of her father and the death of Shalem. At the celebration she feels even more like a stranger because she sits alone. As Re-mose grows, he spend less and less time with his mother and more time in the big house learning from his uncle Nakht-re. At nine, Re-mose is sent by his uncle and grandmother to school in Memphis. Dinah is sad that he will leave, but his happy for the opportunity her son is being given. Again, Dinah feels deserted and alone.

Egypt, Chapter 1 Analysis

Re-nefer's refusal to talk about Shalem confuses Dinah as well as the reader. Why does she wish to keep the true story of her son's death a secret? Shouldn't the two women grieve together to get through the pain? This is a question that is never answered in the

novel. This also leads to Dinah's hate and resentment of Re-nefer. This later comes back to haunt Dinah when Re-mose meets Joseph.

Dinah's new friend, Meryt, basically becomes her new mother. Although Dinah feels she has lost all her mothers, she quickly acquires Meryt as a friend and confidant. Dinah is so bereaved from her loss that she cannot immediately see the true friend she has found in Meryt.

With Re-mose, Dinah experiences the same type of relationship that Leah has with her sons. While she is proud of him, they do not become close. Not only does the difference in their sex keep them apart, but now the difference in class separates them. Dinah is only a foreign midwife, while Re-mose is a prince of Egypt. This greatly affects their relationship.



Egypt, Chapter 2

Egypt, Chapter 2 Summary

After Re-mose's departure, Dinah does not know what to do with herself. She attempts to busy herself with working in the gardens, but cannot help but think of Re-mose. Nakht-re visits Re-mose while he is away and brings back news of Re-mose's education. Dinah becomes afraid that she will not recognize her grown son when he returns.

Meryt and Dinah become good friends. Meryt visits Dinah every day. She respects Dinah's knowledge of herbs, healing, and delivering babies. Dinah only tells Meryt that her mother and grandmother were midwives. Meryt begins to tell people she knows of the wonderful, foreign, gifted midwife. Meryt loves to talk and tells Dinah of her life, husband, and grown son. Dinah will not travel with her to attend births, so Meryt constantly asks for advice.

Meryt goes to attend a birth at which the mother faints. She goes to get Dinah, who agrees to help. Dinah brings her special herbs she learned about from Rachel. They deliver the baby, but it is dead. Quickly, Meryt realizes that there is a twin. Luckily, the second baby is born a big, healthy boy. After the ordeal, Meryt tells more people of the foreign midwife. Soon, people seek out the Canaanite woman Dinah to attend births.

Although Dinah begins to venture out for births, she is still scared to go out. Meryt finally convinces Dinah to go to the market. There, they meet a carpenter named Benia. Immediately, there is a connection between Benia and Dinah. While Benia talks to Meryt about his past, he stares at Dinah. Meryt tells him that Dinah is a skilled midwife. Benia offers to make something special for her. He also tells them that he will soon be taking a post in the Valley of the Kings. He does not have a wife, but wishes to leave his sister's house. He sees Dinah's interest in a treasure box and promises to deliver it to her house tomorrow morning.

Dinah is confused by her feelings. This is not how she felt when she met Shalem. She feels calmer, but still knows that he has touched her. When they arrive home Dinah discovers that Re-mose has returned. He is in his chambers recovering from his circumcision. Dinah can barely recognize her son. They attempt to catch up, but he does not tell her of how schoolmates taunt him for not having a father. Dinah does not tell Re-mose of her loneliness.

Two nights later, Nakht-re has a celebration for Re-mose's return. At the banquet, Dinah notices one of the musicians looks familiar. She later finds that it is Werenro. She was not murdered. Werenro tells Dinah that three Canaanite men robbed, raped, and beat her. She was found and nursed by a shepherd's wife and son. She did not want to return to Rebecca. So they cut her hair and wrapped her clothes in sheep's bones and sent it to Mamre. Dinah, in turn, tells Werenro of her ruin thanks to her brothers. She



falls asleep in Werenro's bed. When she wakes, Werenro is gone. A week later, Remose leaves to go study with Kar in Kush.

Egypt, Chapter 2 Analysis

In this chapter, Dinah finally fights against her fear to venture out more frequently. She is in fear of being linked to the Canaanites who massacred Shechem; her fear is so great that it binds her in one place. Dinah, who had been so fond of new experiences and traveling, can no longer go anywhere on her own without fear. It is interesting to note that Dinah is acting like Ruti, who was so fearful of those around her that she feared living life. It is ironic that Dinah lets her fear get the best of her, as it did to Ruti.

The different feelings that Dinah has when she meets Benia shows how mature she has become. She does not wish to jump into bed with him immediately as she did with Shalem. While there is physical attraction, they also have a different kind of connection, one on a mental plane.

This chapter also marks the return of Werenro, who was not murdered. Werenro represents a part of Dinah's life that she wants to forget. Seeing Werenro brings back the raw feelings of her mothers, Rebecca, brothers, and father. That is why she trusts Werenro enough to tell her what happened in Shechem. They both hate Canaanites for the pain the people have caused them.



Egypt, Chapter 3

Egypt, Chapter 3 Summary

Benia delivered the gift, but Dinah does not send word to thank Benia. Time begins to pass quickly. Meryt and Dinah attend a birth where the wife was too young to be pregnant. Both the wife and baby died. The husband calls Dinah a killer for using a knife during the pregnancy. He tried to attack Dinah, but Meryt stops him. Dinah begins to yell at him in her native tongue, which sounds like a curse to the Egyptians.

Soon after, Re-nefer dies. Dinah is still very mad with Re-nefer because she has taken her son away from her and also has stolen the memory of her husband. After Re-nefer's death, Nakht-re dies.

Meryt's son, Menna, comes to visit his mother. He offers her a place in his new home in the Valley of the Kings. Meryt wants to go, but does not want to leave Dinah. Menna and his wife, Shif-re, agree to let Dinah come and live with them also. When they arrive, Meryt introduces Dinah as a famous midwife. Dinah also meets Kiya, one of Meryt's grandchildren.

After a few months, a stranger comes looking for Dinah. It happens to be Benia, the carpenter she had met three years ago. She agrees to go with him to his house. There, he gives her a gift a box he made for her midwife's kit. She has nothing to give him in return. He wants her to be his wife. They eat together and then sleep together.

As they begin to adjust to life together, Benia tells Dinah of his life. He had a wife and two sons that died from river fever. He tells Dinah that when he saw her in the market place, he knew she was his beloved. Benia was furious when she had not returned his attentions. He tried marrying a slave girl, but their difference in ages was too great to work out.

Dinah also tells Benia of her past, but it is only very brief. She leaves out the exact details of her first husband's death. They are very happy with one another. Even though Dinah is now barren, she is happy with her new life with Benia and her friendship with Meryt.

Egypt, Chapter 3 Analysis

Dinah's move to the Valley of the Kings refreshes Dinah's life. In her new home with Meryt, she is finally content and feels needed as a midwife. The relationship of Benia and Dinah is very unlike any of the relationships that Dinah witnessed as a child. While Jacob did listen to his wives, he did not always seek out their council when a problem would arise. Instead, he turned to his sons. Benia treats Dinah more as an equal. They love each other tenderly. They share their hearts and minds with one another. While

Jacob also did share himself this way with Rachel and Leah, he never treated them as equals.



Egypt, Chapter 4

Egypt, Chapter 4 Summary

Re-mose comes to visit his mother. His master, Zafenat Paneh-ah, wishes for Dinah to come attend his wife's delivery. Re-mose hates Zafenat Panef-ah because he cannot read or write. He is resentful to be of service to such an uneducated man. She agrees to go to Thebes. Benia is not happy about this news. He hopes that Dinah will hurry home.

When Dinah arrives in Thebes, she is introduced to As-naat, Zafenat Paneh-ah's wife. She comforts her and lets her know that this baby will survive. The baby is successfully delivered.

Dinah is resting when a servant named Sherry is sent to her. She constantly speaks. Sherry tells Dinah of Zafenat Paneh-ah's story. He was sold into slavery. He began sleeping with his master's daughter and was sent to jail. He had powerful dreams that the king heard of and was made a vizier to the king. Zafenat Paneh-ah also asked for the young baby boy to be circumcised. Dinah hears this, and immediately thinks that Zafenat Paneh-ah is Joseph. She passes out from her exhaustion and mutters the name Joseph.

Re-mose hears Dinah utter the word. He then goes to find Zafenat Paneh-ah and calls him Joseph. He asks him if he knows a Dinah. Jacob reveals that he once had a sister named Dinah whom he was very close to as a child. He believes that Dinah is dead. Re-mose asks how Dinah died. Jacob explains how Dinah was taken as a bride by Prince Shalem. He also tells Re-mose of how his brothers slaughtered all the men in the city that night. Joseph says that he blamed Dinah's curse for his misfortune for a long time, but no longer does. He reveals that Joseph is the name his birth mother gave him.

Re-mose is furious. He tells Joseph that Dinah is not dead and that he is her son. He hates Joseph for taking away his future and betraying his mother. He sees the guilt in Joseph's eyes. Re-mose then threatens to kill Joseph and storms from the room.

When Dinah wakes, she is informed that Re-mose is under watch because he has threatened the vizier. She requests an audience with Joseph. He tells Dinah that Re-mose knows that story of his father's death and must be sent away. Dinah does not think she can persuade him, but will try anyway. She tells Joseph that if her mothers are dead, she is an orphan. Her brothers are dead to her. She has no wish to see or hear from them again.

Dinah goes to Re-mose. He is pretending to be asleep. She begs him to forgive her for never telling him about his father. Re-nefer made her keep silent. She tells him she dearly loved his father and named him Bar-Shalem when he was born. She also forgives him for hating her. Dinah leaves and it is the last time she ever sees her son.



Egypt, Chapter 4 Analysis

This chapter reveals Re-mose to be very self-centered. This is the last time that Re-mose will ever see his mother and he refuses to address her. In his heart he knows that Re-nefer made Dinah keep the secret. He knows he is hurting his mother, just as Dinah used to hide from Leah to hurt her feelings also. It is sad that Re-mose will not understand the sacrifice that Dinah has made for him until he is older. She basically lived in Egypt as a stranger for many years so her son would have the best of everything.

Dinah's meeting with Joseph rattles her. She does not seem prepared to meet with Joseph. The pairs' lives have always been intertwined, so it makes sense that as Dinah is finding happiness, her brother is also. But now there is a rift between the two. Although Dinah is comforted that Joseph is alive, his presence brings back horrible memories.



Egypt, Chapter 5

Egypt, Chapter 5 Summary

Dinah returns home to Benia's loving arms. Dinah looks very thin because she has been ill. Meryt comes to see her, and Dinah finally tells Meryt of her mothers and the sad story of her past. Joseph sends Dinah expensive cloth as a gift. Dinah explains why by telling Benia her entire story also. He is very understanding.

Time passes and Meryt dies. She is mourned by Dinah as well as many other people in the Valley of the Kings. Now, Dinah is the great grandmother everyone looks to for help.

Many more years pass and one day Joseph shows up at Dinah's door. Jacob is dying and wishes to see Joseph and his grandsons before he dies. Joseph has no wish to go see Jacob. He has already forgiven him after taking out his revenge. He made Levi and Simon grovel when they visited him. He made sure Jacob paid for choosing favorites. Joseph wants Dinah to come with him. She does not want to, but he tells that he should see the legacy of her mothers. Dinah finally agrees, and Benia agrees to come with her.

When they reach Jacob's tribe, they are met by Judah and the rest of Jacob's tribe. He tells Joseph that Jacob is very sick. He calls out to Rachel as well as Joseph. None of her brothers recognize Dinah and she is at first furious. Later that night Joseph tells Dinah of their father's condition. Jacob blesses Joseph's sons and continues to cry for Rachel and calls for all his sons. He does not mention Dinah, Shalem, or Shechem. Joseph says "Dinah is forgotten in the house of Jacob."

On the second day, a little girl named Gera, daughter of Benjamin, seeks out Dinah. She is curious about who Dinah is. Dinah only says that she works for Joseph. The girl tells Dinah about the family. The oldest three uncles, Reuben, Simon, and Levi, are dead. She speaks of what she knows of Dinah's mothers. Dinah learns of her mothers' legacies. Gera says she learns the best gossip from her mothers. She even knows the story of Leah's only living daughter. She says no one knows what happened to the daughter, but her name is remembered. Gera says she may name her daughter Dinah.

The next day, they prepare to leave. Judah gives Joseph a hug and then turns to Dinah. He holds out his hand to Dinah and gives her Rachel's lapis ring. Judah cannot look Dinah in the eye. He says that Leah begged him to give it to Dinah because she foresaw the two meeting again.

When they return to the Valley of the Kings, Joseph and Dinah say goodbye and know it is the last time they will ever see one another. Dinah and Benia begin to grow old together. As Dinah's time comes to an end, she sees Leah, Rachel, Zilpah, and Bilhah on her death bed. They all welcome her. After, she says her soul still lingers. She sees Re-mose have children and is thankful for the mother that gave him a chance at life.



Gera names her baby Dinah. Kiya uses Dinah's motions. Dinah realizes that her memory will not be forgotten. She hands her Rachel's Lapis ring.

Egypt, Chapter 5 Analysis

The last chapter concentrates on the memory of Dinah. These tie into the overall theme of passing down women's histories. While Dinah is sure she is forgotten to Jacob's tribe, the women know of her story and struggle. Every time one woman tells another of Dinah, they preserve her memory and legacy. She knows that she is truly remembered when Judah recognizes her.

Dinah often feels guilty about forgetting the ways of her mothers. As she dies, she realizes that she could never forget what her mothers taught her because it is ingrained into her every being. She, in turn, unknowingly, taught their mannerisms and ways to others, thus furthering the legacy of Leah, Rachel, Zilpah, and Bilhah. While the ways of the red tent may have been lost, the need to preserve a woman's story lives on in not only the tribe of Jacob, but in the lives of other people that Dinah has helped.

Diamant really wants to make the point that Dinah will be remembered. Even if her story was small in the Bible, it is now a full novel. Even if the story is fiction, it gives the characters of Dinah, Leah, Rachel, Zilpah, and Bilhah voices among the women overwhelming male voices in the Bible.



Characters

Dinah

Dinah is the main character of the novel. The book is written from her point of view. She tells of her mothers' stories and then her own stories. Dinah is born to mothers who have been waiting for a girl. They want someone to pass down their ways, stories, and rituals. Dinah learns about these as well as the red tent. They whisper in her ears and shape her as a woman. From her travels to Canaan, Mamre, Shechem, Egypt, and finally the Valley of the Kings, Dinah grows into a strong-minded beautiful woman. Although she feels that she has left her mothers and their ways after she flees to Egypt, she carries them in her heart.

Dinah's character shows that women can experience love in many different ways, including the way a mother loves a daughter, and sisters love one another. Each of her mothers loves her differently, and each forms a different relationship. Dinah loves her brother Joseph, but is torn away from him because they are of different sexes. Dinah also shows that women can assert their sexual agency. Women have the power to seek their own sexual pleasure. This is seen through Dinah's longing for Shalem and Benia. She is not married off by her father, but instead chooses her lovers and husbands.

Dinah also fears that her memory has been lost. In reality, it is seen in her son, as well as the women in Jacob's tribe. Re-mose knows of the mother who sacrificed everything for him. The women of Jacob's tribe pass down the story of Dinah, who met a prince and married him. Her brothers then slaughtered her husbands' people, but no one knows where Dinah is.

Leah

Leah is Jacob's first wife and Dinah's mother. She was not supposed to marry Jacob, but when Rachel refuses, Zilpah suggests that Leah marry Jacob in her place. Leah is excited because she had secret feelings for Jacob. Together they have eight sons and one daughter. Dinah is the last child that Leah has. She is happy because she feels that Dinah will carry on her and her sisters' memories. Leah teaches Dinah the ways of the red tent. Leah dearly loves her daughter, although they sometimes do not get along. Leah cannot understand Dinah's lack of ability in cooking or spinning. This drives Dinah to seek out Rachel, which hurts Leah's feelings.

Leah is a smart, motivated woman. Her character comes from her ability to be strong when others would not talk to her because she has two different colored eyes. Many people called her a witch. She is talented in cooking, weaving, and other household activities. Leah thinks clearly and knows how to appeal to Jacob in order to get what she wants. She is never manipulative, but instead does whatever she can to help others such as Ruti.



Rachel

Rachel is the beautiful second wife of Jacob and the love of his life. She is who Jacob was supposed to marry first, but she becomes frightened and refuses to be the first to marry Jacob. Rachel never forgives Leah for marrying Jacob. The two sisters never learn how to share a husband. The rift grows even more when Rachel continually has miscarriages and Leah has babies. She starts to attend births with the local midwife, Inna, so that she may help others have babies. Finally she has Joseph. Rachel also cares for Dinah as her own daughter. She invites Dinah to begin attending births as well. It is Rachel that brings Dinah to the city of Shechem.

As a young girl, Rachel has a wild temper. Rachel's fiery spirit is what allows her to bravely steal Laban's idols. Her beauty also never fades. Her beauty is respected as much as her skills as a midwife. Rachel passes down all her knowledge to Dinah, showing how mothers pass their stories through each generation of women. Rachel's beauty and place as Jacob's most beloved wife live on in the memories of the house of Jacob.

Bilhah

Bilhah is Jacob's third wife. She does not have the same place in the household as Leah and Rachel because she was given to Jacob as a part of Rachel's bride price. Bilhah decides to sleep with Jacob so that she can have a baby on behalf of Rachel. She also longs to sleep with a man. Bilhah has only one son, Dan. She loses the rest of her babies in child birth. Bilhah always offers a listening ear to Dinah. When she learns that Dinah is happy with Shalem, she returns to tell the rest of the family.

Bilhah is loving, kind, and sweet. She never wants to see any of her family suffer and often takes their pain on herself. This is one of the reasons why she offers to have a baby for Rachel. The only time Bilhah does anything for herself is when she acts on her love for Reuben. She is then punished for this by Jacob.

Zilpah

Zilpah is the last of Jacob's wives. She is also given as a bride price for Leah. Zilpah only sleeps with Jacob. She only goes to him because Leah says that it is time. Of all the sisters, Leah and Zilpah are the closest to each other because they are close in age. Zilpah devises the switching of brides because she sees how much Leah and Jacob like one another. Zilpah also always hated Rachel and wanted to make her unhappy, but Zilpah is not a vindictive person.

Zilpah thinks of herself as an oracle, but she only makes one correct prediction. She predicts that Leah will have eight children. Of all the sisters, Zilpah is most reliant and observant of the sisters' goddesses. When pressed to leave Haran, Zilpah refuses



because she does not want to leave a tree that is one of her goddesses. This further ties in to the use of goddess worship to the story.

Jacob

Jacob is Dinah's father. He is married to her mother as well as her three sisters. Jacob comes to Laban's camp because he is fleeing from his brother Esau. He encounters Rachel at the well and instantly falls in love with her. Jacob becomes very successful due to his hard work. He has over ten sons and one daughter.

Dinah never really interacts with her father. He talks to her on occasions, but she is not a priority like his sons. Dinah resents Jacob's ability to make Leah happy. She feels she should be the only person to do this. Dinah's feelings for Jacob never warm. While Jacob never admits to orchestrating the massacre at Shechem, she knows he is guilty for allowing Simon and Levi to behave as they did. After Dinah curses Jacob, it causes the downfall of his tribe. Dinah is dead to him and his house.

Joseph

Joseph is the son of Rachel and Jacob. Because Joseph is Rachel's son, Joseph is Jacob's favorite. The other sons, especially Simon and Levi, are angry about this. As children, Dinah and Joseph are very close because Leah breast feeds both of them. The two exchange stories. Dinah tells him stories of her mothers and Joseph tells her stories of Jacob's family. Joseph and Dinah's relationship changes as the two grow older. Dinah spends more time with the women and Joseph with the men.

After Dinah leave for Egypt, Joseph's brothers sell him into slavery. Joseph works his way up to becoming a vizier to the Egyptian king. His Egyptian name is Zafenat Paneh-ah. Dinah and Joseph meet again when he learns she is the midwife who is attending his wife.

Joseph and Dinah's early and late relationship shows how society separates women from men at this time. While it was okay for the two to be together as children, as young adults they are separated to learn the way of the sexes and no longer know one another.

Laban

Laban is the brother of Rebecca and father of Rachel, Leah, Bilhah, and Zilpah. He is cruel, rude, and ruthless. He has tried to push himself on his daughters, but is unsuccessful. When Jacob comes to ask for Laban's help, Laban is angry. He beats his last wife, Ruti, even though she gives him two sons. Laban is resentful of Jacob's success, but does everything he can to keep Jacob working for him.



Shalem

Shalem is a prince of Shechem. He falls in love with Dinah when she first visits the palace with Rachel. Shalem's mother, Re-nefer, notices his feelings and has Hamor send for Dinah. When Dinah returns, Shalem takes Dinah and makes love to her, thus making her his bride. Shalem will do anything to be with Dinah. When Jacob demands that Shalem, his father, and all the men of Shechem get circumcised, Shalem eagerly agrees because he wants Dinah. He is instead murdered in his bed as he lay next to Dinah while Simon and Levi kill all the men in the city.

Re-nefer

Re-nefer is Shalem's mother. She is responsible for bringing Dinah to the palace. She sees that her son has feelings for her and asks Hamor to send for Dinah. Re-nefer does not blame Dinah for what her brothers have done; instead, she blames herself. She wishes for Dinah to come with her to Egypt because she senses the girl is pregnant. Re-nefer wants to raise the baby as a prince of Egypt. She does not allow Dinah to speak of Shalem and will not grieve over his death. Dinah grows to hate Re-nefer for the suppression of Shalem's memories.

Re-mose

Re-mose, also called Bar-Shalem by Dinah, is Dinah's son. He is raised by Dinah as well as Re-nefer and her brother Nakht-re. As he gets older, Re-mose distances himself from his mother. He is ashamed of her. He wants to be successful, so he is often away from home furthering his education. Re-mose does not learn his father and mother's story until he becomes an assistant to Zafenat Paneh-ah (Joseph). He learns that Zafenat Paneh-ah is his uncle and is enraged by his mother's family's actions.

Hamor

Hamor is the king of Shechem and Shalem's father. He agrees to Jacob's bride price and has all the men in Shechem circumcised. He is murdered when Simon and Levi massacre the city.

Meryt

Meryt helps with Dinah's delivery. Dinah instructs Meryt to cut her in order to ease the delivery of the baby. She then continues to check up on Dinah every day. She forges a friendship with Dinah, even though Dinah is at first unresponsive. Meryt is a skilled midwife, but wants to learn more from Dinah. The two become great friends and move to the Valley of the Kings together to live with Meryt's son. Dinah is with Meryt when she dies a happy old age.



Benia

Benia is Dinah's second husband. They meet in the marketplace in Thebes. Benia falls instantly in love with Dinah. He knows that she is the only woman for him, but is angry when she first turns down his affections. They meet again in the Valley of the Kings and become husband and wife. Benia is kind, gentle, and understanding. Their love is mature and caring. Benia is with Dinah until she dies in his arms.

Inna

Inna is a midwife and healer in Haran. She is good friends with Rachel. When Jacob's tribe leaves for Canaan, she begs to join them because she has been threatened by men in her village. Inna also foresees that Dinah will always live near water.

Tabea

Tabea is one of Esau's daughters. Dinah becomes very attached to Tabea because they are close in age. Rebecca had high hopes for Tabea. She thought the girl would be the heir to Mamre, until her mother wastes her first month's blood. Rebecca is outraged and banishes Tabea from her tents.

Rebecca

Rebecca is Jacob's mother. She sent him to Laban when her husband banished him. Rebecca is also a well-known oracle as well as a healer. Rebecca is the most regal and oldest woman Dinah has ever met. Dinah does not like Rebecca because of what she has done to Tabea. Dinah learns that even though Rebecca can be very harsh, she also helps people. Rebecca hopes that Dinah will be her heir at Mamre, but foresees a different future for Dinah. She predicts that Dinah will experience much sorrow and that the ways of the red tent will be forgotten.

Isaac

Isaac is Jacob's father. Many years ago he had a fight with Jacob, causing Jacob to flee. When Jacob and Isaac are reunited, Isaac is blind. He is very happy to have his son with him and to meet Jacob's wives and children.

Esau

Esau is Jacob's brother. He was the one who chased Jacob from their home. When they reunite many years later, Esau has forgiven Jacob. He embraces him because he has missed his brother.



Werenro

Werenro is one of Rebecca's messengers. She goes to inform Jacob's camp that Rebecca will be expecting them for the barley fest. She often delivers messages, but one time she does not return. It is thought that she has been murdered because her remains and hair are sent back to Rebecca. Dinah discovers that Werenro was beaten and raped, but faked her own death. She no longer wanted to serve Rebecca.

Nehesi

Nehesi is Re-nefer's guard. After the massacre at Shechem, he finds Dinah unconscious and brings her to Re-nefer.

Reuben

Reuben is the eldest son of Jacob. Leah is his mother. Reuben is kind and smart as well as a hard worker. Of the older brothers, he treats Dinah the best. He never marries because he is in love with Jacob's wife Bilhah. Jacob finds him lying with Bilhah and disowns him.

Simon and Levi

Simon and Levi are Leah's second and third sons. They are never nice to Dinah and the younger children. As they grow older they become more and more greedy. When Dinah marries Shalem, they see it as an attack against their opportunities. They feel they will be viewed as poor, compared with Shalem's riches. When Jacob asks for their advice, they demand revenge and convince Jacob that Dinah was raped and savaged by Shalem.

After the Shechem men have been circumcised, Simon and Levi enter the city and murder the men. They carry a gagged and bound Dinah away from the city.

Judah

Judah is Leah's fourth son. He is always kind to Dinah when she is a child. He helps Dinah to pass the river on the journey to Canaan. Many years later, he, Joseph, and Dinah are reunited, and he gives Dinah a gift from Leah, who had foreseen their meeting.

Kiya

Kiya is one of Meryt's grandchildren. When Meryt dies, Dinah becomes her grandmother. They become very close in Dinah's final years.



Gera

Gera is the daughter of Benjamin. Dinah meets her when she and Joseph return to Jacob's tribe. Gera tells Dinah of the family. She also speaks of the tale of Dinah. When Gera has her own daughter, she names her Dinah.



Objects/Places

The Red Tent

The red tent is where women of Rebecca's family spend the three days of their periods. Here, they rest, eat, and celebrate their fertility. No men are allowed in the red tent.

Canaan

Canaan is the name of Jacob's childhood home. Rebecca and Isaac still live there.

Mamre

Mamre is where Rebecca lives in Canaan.

Haran

Haran is the name of Leah, Rachel, Bilhah, and Zilpah's homeland. They live there with their father, Laban, until Jacob arrives.

Valley of the Kings

Valley of the Kings is the city where Dinah and Meryt move to live with Meryt's son. There, Dinah meets Benia again.

Thebes

Thebes is the city in Egypt that Re-nefer and Dinah flee to after the slaughter at Shechem.

Memphis

Memphis is the city where Re-mose goes to study.

Teraphim

Teraphim refer to small statues that represent gods. They are essentially small idols.



Shechem

Shechem is the city where Hamor's palace is located. It is here that Dinah meets Shalem.

Rachel's lapis ring

Leah gives Judah Rachel's lapis ring. She foresees his meeting with Dinah again and wants him to give Dinah the gift when they meet.



Themes

Creating women's history

In the very first pages of the novel, Dinah introduces the theme of creating a woman's history. Throughout the book, Dinah is reminded that she, as the only daughter, is supposed to carry on the ways of Leah, Rachel, Bilhah, Zilpah, and her grandmother Rebecca. Dinah says that from the minute she was born, her mothers passed on their stories. None of their sons will listen, but their daughter will. Dinah also notes that a man's history is written down, while a woman's is carried in the hearts of her daughters. Rebecca also foresees the downfall of the ways of Mamre because for so long Dinah does not share their ways.

Diamant makes this a theme in her book because so little is written in the Bible about Dinah. Her story is lost in the Bible because it does not compare to her father or Jacob's story. In the Bible, Dinah's story is somewhat of an afterthought. As with much of today's history, women have been forgotten. Dinah also stresses the importance of creating a women's history because she knows she almost failed at remembering her mothers' tales. If husbands and sons will not remember their wives and daughters, then women must take on the burden with pride.

Diamant wants the reader to question the fairness of only having a his-story. The voices of mothers are also important. They are the caregivers and the givers of life. Had women not whispered to one another about the women before them, then the next generations would not have the courage to stand up for themselves and change society.

Separate worlds of men and women

Dinah is constantly amazed by the differences between men and women as well as their separate worlds. As the only daughter she is constantly around her mothers. While she plays with her brothers when she is younger, their duties separate them. Mothers feel as though they can never hold on to their sons because they must "become men" through the guidance of other men. Does Dinah choose to be with her mothers or is she forced to be with them because society demands it? Do her mothers demand her attention as a result of society's demands? Dinah often explains that the men eat, sleep, and work together, while the women do the same. She notes that she is shocked to hear her men's and women's voices sing together as they depart from Haran.

Relationships between sexes, as well as same sex relationships, are greatly affected by the separate spheres. Rachel and Leah grow to hate one another for a period of time because they must share the same husband. In the novel, their relationship is never defined until Jacob comes to Haran. Resentment between the two women is only fueled by the fact that they must always spend time together in the same sphere. They are also always in competition with one another to be the best wife to Jacob. How come the



reader never knows the true relationship of Rachel and Leah before Jacob? If they were not always bound together, could they mend their relationship?

The power of the red tent

The red tent is a symbol of rebirth and creation. When a woman first gets her period, it means she is able to give life to another. In Dinah's family, she enters the red tent to celebrate her new status as a woman. This was especially important in early times where every pregnancy was not guaranteed. Women had the power to give life so that humans can continue to populate the world. This is why Rebecca and her family celebrate in the red tent every month.

Women's menstrual cycles have always been somewhat off-putting to men. In the Bible it is often said that women were sent away by their fathers or husbands during their periods. They were considered to be dirty and unwanted. This is why no man wishes to know what goes on inside of the red tent. Laban is defeated when he learns that Rachel has been sitting on his household idols. Instead of taking the objects back, he is too terrified to touch the bloody objects. He and other men do not understand the power women have by being the givers of life. For the women, the tent becomes a symbol of power. The mystery keeps men away. Normally they have control of their wives and daughter's lives. In the tent the women can talk, laugh, and behave however they choose. The tent also allows them to embrace their own goddesses, rituals, and rites of passage.

The power of the red tent is further proven when Jacob hears of the happenings of Dinah's celebration in the red tent. By reacting to what happens, he affirms the strength of the mystery. He feels he must confront the power of the red tent, or be considered weak by other men. If he does not threaten the ways of the red tent, he will lose respect from his sons and kinsmen.

Women asserting their sexual agency

Throughout the novel, the main characters assert their sexual agency. While Diamant wants it to be clear that, in her interpretation, Dinah has not been raped, she also wants to show that Dinah's mothers believe in their own sexual pleasure and desire. When both Leah and Rachel go to lay with Jacob, they are willing and excited about their first sexual encounters. Even though Zilpah tells Jacob she never wishes to sleep with him again, this is still an example of her exerting her sexual agency. This is also a part of owning one's sexuality.

The sisters also share their experiences with their daughter because they do not want her to be surprised when her time comes. They want her to embrace her experiences. Dinah finds that when it is her time to lay with a man, she is ready and unafraid. Dinah's celebration in the red tent is another example of sexual agency. Her mothers break her hymen so that if Dinah wishes, she will be able to experience other men before her

husband. They are giving Dinah a choice to explore her sexual desires without punishment from her husband. If they take her hymen, her husband has no claim to it.



Style

Point of View

The story is told from Dinah's point of view. At times it is in first person, and other times in third person. In the section titled "My Mothers' Stories," the author frequently shifts from telling her mother's stories in the third person to inserting her own personal feelings about what her mothers have said in first person. This is not confusing for the reader because Diamant makes the shifts very clearly. The rest of the book is in first person, told from Dinah's memories.

Dinah weaves her stories by using rich descriptive language as well as dialogue. Dinah's memories are very detailed and tell the viewer that she is an astute observer. She rarely leaves out any details concerning someone's actions, facial expressions, or dress. The novel also includes a good amount of dialogue. Even though it is Dinah's telling of her mothers' stories as well as her own, the dialogue given from each character helps to understand an individual character's motives and actions. It is also important to note that because the entire novel is from Dinah's point of view, the characters are somewhat tainted with how Dinah observes them. An example of this is Ruti. As a character, Ruti has just had an unfortunate life with a horrible husband that society demands she stay with. In Dinah's eyes, however, Ruti is worthless and weak. Had Dinah took pity on Ruti instead, her character might have been cast in a different light.

Setting

The novel takes place in Biblical times. Many people argue whether or not the people of the Bible existed; however, whether or not these people did exist, the stories of Isaac, Jacob, and their families are written in The Book of Genesis. Diamant uses the Bible as a guide for the settings of the novel.

The book begins in Haran, which is the childhood home of Leah, Rachel, Bilhah, and Zilpah. The four sisters live with their father in his camp. When Jacob flees from his brother, Esau, he joins them in Haran. Jacob stays with his wives and children for years in Haran, until they can break away from Laban. Dinah's mothers are very fond of their homeland. While Dinah loves the land of her childhood, she seems excited when the camp prepares to leave for Canaan.

The tribe next travels to Canaan, the home of Isaac and Rebecca. Jacob has longed to return to his beloved home for a very long time. It is interesting to note that not many people like the Canaanites. Jacob is the only one who speaks of the greatness of the city and the people. In the novel, they are often described as ruthless, heartless people. Jacob is a Canaanite, and that fact therefore makes his sons Canaanites. These are the sons who also destroy the city of Shechem.



In Canaan, the family travels to Mamre, where Rebecca lives. Rebecca demands that Dinah stay with her for three months. While there, Dinah sees the many visitors that come for Rebecca's help, although she does not like staying at Mamre. She is constantly surrounded by the Debrahs, who dress exactly the same, and the beauty of Rebecca's tents. None of this can make Dinah love Mamre or Rebecca.

Next, the family moves on to settle outside of Shechem. The family finds the city of Shechem dirty and repulsive. They would much rather stay in their country dwellings. Dinah, on the other hand, finds the sites and sounds incredibly amusing and new. She cannot wait to explore. Hamor's palace is beautiful. Comparing herself to the people in the city, Dinah feels unsophisticated, dirty, and ugly. It is the first time she has encountered a real city life. It is also here that Dinah meets her first husband, Shalem. After the circumcisions are done for Dinah's bride price, her brothers Simon and Levi kill the men of Shechem.

Dinah then flees with Re-nefer to Thebes. Here, Dinah feels like a complete stranger because she does not know the language or customs. She also feels like she cannot share her old ways for fear of being found out. Dinah's time in Thebes marks a happy and yet dark period. Even though Dinah is happy to have a son, she feels so lonely that she cannot even go out. If it was not for Meryt, Dinah would have never ventured out and met Benia.

The final setting of the novel takes place in the Valley of the Kings in northern Egypt. Dinah moves to the Valley of the Kings with Meryt and her family. There she marries Benia. Northern Egypt is where the last of Jacob's tribe has set up camp. Dinah and Joseph venture to their camp so Joseph can please their dying father. This is the very last time Dinah sees Joseph and what is left of her family. Dinah returns to the Valley of the Kings where she dies.

Language and Meaning

The language of this book seems to be very descriptive. Overall, it is very easy to understand and clear. Diamant does her best to explain certain words that are particular to the biblical era in which the characters live. Even though Diamant tackles issues that are still prevalent in society today, she is careful not to write in a modern tone. The tone of the text matches how people of the time would have spoken. When Dinah describes her sexual experiences, she is not overly obvious with what she and Shalem or Benia do. The language is flowery, but not overly feminine. It is not vulgar, but describes the sensuous feelings Dinah has. Throughout the novel, the language remains informal and free flowing. Dinah's descriptions are full of detail.

Although this novel was never meant to be added to the Bible, it does embellish on a biblical story and should be compared to its predecessor. Often with stories in the Bible, they are very straight to the point, with little description and sometimes vague. The entire reason why little is known about Dinah's story is because the meaning of the language is unclear. It is not certain whether she was raped or if she gave herself freely



to Shalem. Although Diamant uses words and phrases to describe sex and lust that would never be written in the Bible, she makes sure that there is no mistake in her interpretation of Dinah's story. The language has to be clear so that Diamant can clearly deliver her meaning of Dinah's stories.

Structure

The book is separated into three sections: My Mothers' Stories, My Stories, and Egypt. Each section deals with a different part of Dinah's life. In the first, Dinah is not yet born, but the information revealed lets the reader know a lot about the type of woman Dinah becomes. In "My Stories", Dinah is finally able to think her own thoughts and present them to the reader. They are no longer only the feelings of her mothers, but also hers. In "Egypt", Dinah is completely alone. She feels as though she is no longer a part of her mothers. This notion is disregarded in the final chapter of the book when Dinah realizes that she will always carry the memory of her mothers.

The way Diamant structures the book is helpful to the reader. It helps to define the period of Dinah's life. Because a lot of characters come and go in the book, it helps the reader organize where the character fits into Dinah's life. The plot is not necessarily that complicated, but a lot of significant things happen in each chapter. Diamant also achieves a very nice flow in the book. She melds the past and present together very nicely so that the reader can follow.



Quotes

"During my sixty days, I whispered every name my sisters suggested into your little ear. Every name I had ever heard, and even some I invented myself. But when I said 'Dinah,' you let the nipple fall from your mouth and looked up at me. So you are Dinah, my last-born. My daughter. My memory." My Mothers' Stories, Chap. 3, p. 69

"Dinah is not the heir, either. I see now that there will be none. Mamre will be forgotten. The tent will not stand after me." My Story, Chap. 5, p. 166

"He said nothing of you. Dinah is forgotten in the house of David." Egypt, Chap. 5, p. 312

"You must live by a river someday, Dinah. Only by a river will you be happy." My Story, Chap. 3, p. 112

"In the red tent, the truth is known. In the red tent, where days pass like a gentle stream, as the gift of Innana courses through us, cleansing the body of last month's death, preparing the body to receive the new month's life, women give thanks-for repose and restoration, for the knowledge that comes from between our legs, and that life costs blood." My Story, Chap. 5, p. 158

"We have been lost to each other for so long. My name means nothing to you. My memory is dust." Prologue, p. 1

"I wish I had more to tell of my grandmothers. It is terrible how much has been forgotten, which is why, I suppose, remembering is a holy thing." Prologue, p. 3

"I will remember you in the morning and in the evening, everyday until I close my eyes forever. I forgive your every harsh thought of me and the curses you may hurl at my name. And when at last you do forgive me, I forbid you to suffer a moment's guilt in my name. I ask that you remember only my blessing upon you, Bar-Shalem Re-mose." Egypt, Chap. 4, p. 294

"You are not like me. Your grief shines from your heart. The flame of love is strong. Your story is not finished, Dinah." Egypt, Chap. 2, p. 256

"You don't have to give me anything. If you take this from my hands freely, your choice will be your token." Egypt, Chap. 3, p. 271

"If you sit on the bank of a river, you see only a small part of its surface. And yet, the water before your eyes is proof of unknowable depths. My heart brims with thanks for the kindness you have shown me by sitting on the bank of this river, by visiting the echoes of my name." Egypt, Chap. 5, p. 321

"I am no longer of that world. If my mothers are dead, then I am an orphan. My brothers are no more to me than the livestock of our youth. You and I were kin as children, when

we knew each other well another to share our hearts. But that was in another life."
Egypt, Chap. 4, p. 294



Topics for Discussion

Why do you think Jacob does not ask Leah and Rachel for their advice when he is deciding if he will accept Shalem's offer for Dinah? Use the themes of the book to discuss your answer.

If Diamant had not provided the first three chapters of the book, would the reader still understand Dinah's story? Why or why not?

Compare and contrast the characters of Dinah and Jacob. What are the differences between the two? Are there many similarities?

Diamant does not include a reference to Dinah's story in the Bible. Discuss why or why not it may have been a good idea to include the biblical story.

Describe three main relationships that Dinah has with males in the book. How do these relationships differ from one another? How are they the same?

Discuss the theme of sexual agency in women. In today's society, do women have the power to express their sexual desires and passions? Does Diamant make the story too modern in her assertions that Dinah and her mothers have a voice in matters when it comes to sex?

Why do you think the practices of the red tent no longer exist? Do women in our society believe in the importance and power of their ability to bear children? Do they celebrate the arrival of their menstrual cycle or is it considered a burden?