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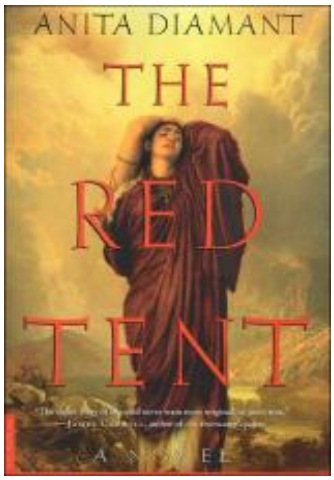
The Red Tent

by Anita Diamant



About the Book

THE RED TENT tells the little-known Biblical story of Dinah, daughter of the patriarch Jacob and his wife, Leah. In Chapter 34 of the Book of Genesis, Dinah?s tale is a short, horrific detour in the familiar narrative of Jacob and Joseph.

Anita Diamant imaginatively tells the story from the fresh perspective of its women. In the Biblical tale Dinah is given no voice; she is the narrator of THE RED TENT, which reveals the life of ancient womanhood -- the world of the red tent.

Reader of THE RED TENT will view the Book of Genesis in a new light. This guide can help spur creative discussions of the timeless story.

Discussion Guide

1. Read Genesis 34 and discuss how THE RED TENT changes your perspective on Dinah?s story and also on the story of Joseph that follows. Does THE RED TENT raise questions about other women in the Bible? Does it make you want to re-read the Bible and imagine other untold stories that lay hidden between the lines?

2. Discuss the marital dynamics of Jacob?s family. He has four wives; compare his relationship with each woman?

3. What do you make of the relationships among the four wives?

4. Dinah is rich in "mothers." Discuss the differences or similarities in her relationship with each woman.

5. Childbearing and childbirth are central to THE RED TENT How do the firtility childbearing and birthing practices differ from contemporary life? How are they similar? How do they compare with your own experiences as a mother or

father?

6. Discuss Jacob?s role as a father. Does he treat Dinah differently from his sons? Does he feel differently about her? If so, how?

7. Discuss Dinah?s twelve brothers. Discuss their relationships with each other, with Dinah, and with Jacob and his four wives. Are they a close family?

8. Female relationships figure largely in THE RED TENT Discuss the importance of Inna, Tabea, Werenro, and Meryt.

9. In the novel, Rebecca is presented as an Oracle. Goddesses are venerated along with gods. What do you think of this culture, in which the Feminine has not yet been totally divorced from the Divine? How does El, the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, fit into this?

10. Dinah?s point of view is often one of an outsider, an observer. What effect does this have on the narrative? What effect does this have on the reader?

11. The book travels from Haran (contemporary Iraq/Syria), through Canaan and into Shechem (Israel), and into Egypt. What strikes you about the cultural differences Dinah encounters vis-à-vis food, clothing, work, and male-female relationships.

12. In THE RED TENT, we see Dinah grow from childhood to old age. Discuss how she changes and matures. What lessons does she learn from life? If you had to pick a single word to describe the sum of her life, what word would you choose? How would Dinah describe her own life experience?

Author Bio

Anita Diamant is the bestselling author of the novels THE RED TENT, GOOD HARBOR, THE LAST DAYS OF DOGTOWN and DAY AFTER NIGHT, and the collection of essays, PITCHING MY TENT. An award-winning journalist whose work appeared in *The Boston Globe Magazine* and *Parenting*, she is the author of six nonfiction guides to contemporary Jewish life. She lives in Massachusetts.

Critical Praise

" It is tempting to say that **THE RED TENT** is what the Bible would be like if it had been written by women, but only Diamant could have given it such sweep and grace. "

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