



The Red Tent (1997)

By Anita Diamant

(Winner, Indies' Choice Book Awards:
Adult Fiction)



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Discussion questions taken from *ReadingGroupGuides.com*

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 fertility 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.

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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:



- Birth—June 27, 1951
- Where—New York, New York, USA
- Education—B.A., Washington University; M.A., State University of New York, Binghamton
- Currently—lives in Newton, Massachusetts

Anita Diamant is an American author of fiction and non-fiction books. She is best known for her novel, *The Red Tent*, a New York Times best seller. She has also written several guides for Jewish people, including *The New Jewish Wedding* and *Living a Jewish Life*.

Diamant spent her early childhood in Newark, New Jersey, and moved to Denver, Colorado, when she was 12 years old. She attended the University of Colorado Boulder and transferred to Washington University in St. Louis, Missouri, where she earned a bachelor's degree in Comparative Literature in 1973. She then went on to receive a master's degree in English from State University of New York at Binghamton in 1975.

Diamant began her writing career in 1975 as a freelance journalist. Her articles have been published in the *Boston Globe* magazine, *Parenting*, *New England Monthly*, *Yankee*, *Self*, *Parents*, *McCalls*, and *Ms.* She branched out into books with the release of *The New Jewish Wedding*, published in 1985, and has since published seven other books about contemporary Jewish practice.

Her debut as a fiction writer came in 1997 with *The Red Tent*, followed by the novels, *Good Harbor* and *The Last Days of Dogtown*, an account of life in a dying Cape Ann, Massachusetts village, *Dogtown*, in the early 19th century. *Day After Night*, is a novel about four women who survived the Holocaust, and find themselves detained in a British displaced persons camp. *The Boston Girl*, published in 2014, is the story of a young Jewish woman growing up in early 20th century Boston.

Diamant is the founding president of *Mayyim Hayyim: Living Waters Community Mikveh and Education Center*, a community-based ritual bath in Newton, Massachusetts. She lives in Newton, is married, and has one daughter. (Adapted from Wikipedia. Retrieved 12/9/2014.)

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