

Genesis 34 – Dinah and the Disaster that follows

THEME: Dinah defiled by Shechem; Simeon and Levi slay the men of Hamor.

Frankly, Jacob made a mistake by stopping in Shalem, for there is going to be a scandal at this point in the family of this man. Dinah, the daughter of Jacob by Leah, is defiled by Shechem, son of Hamor the Hivite. Then Simeon and Levi, Dinah's full brothers, avenge this act by slaying all the inhabitants of the city of Hamor. This cannot be justified, and it is a dark blot on the family of Jacob. It reveals the fact that Jacob did not get away too soon when he left his Uncle Laban down in the land of Haran. We need to see that God was right in getting him away from that environment.

There are two things that God spends a great deal of time with in Genesis. First of all, there is heredity. God is very much concerned that a believer marry a believer and that a believer not marry an unbeliever. That is important for the sake of heredity. The second thing of concern is the environment of the individual. We see this especially in the life of Jacob. He has a big family. Not only were there twelve sons, but there were also daughters. We are given the record of only this one daughter because she features in this very sad chapter.

There is something else for us to note that is important to the understanding of Genesis, and that is that there is trouble in the families. Have you noticed that? There was strife and trouble in the family of Abraham. There was strife and trouble in the family of Isaac. Esau was Isaac's favorite, and Rebekah's favorite was her son Jacob—and that caused a great deal of trouble in the family. Now we will see that there was a great deal of trouble in the family of Jacob.

Jacob stops and stays in Shalem for awhile, and it is going to cause a great deal of sorrow to him. Very frankly, chapter 34 is a sad, sordid chapter, and this must have been a heartbreak to old Jacob at this time. Jacob (or Israel, as we should call him) has built an altar, and he is now giving a testimony to the living and true God. There is a change in his life, but it is a slow growth, a development. This should be a lesson to us today: Don't expect that, as a Christian, you are going to become full grown overnight. God adopts us as full-grown sons into the family where we are able to understand the divine truth because the Holy Spirit is our Teacher. But our spiritual growth and our progress are very slow. We may learn truths in the Bible, but we will find that in our lives we are very much like Simon Peter, stumbling here and falling down there. Thank God that Simon Peter kept getting up and brushing himself off, and there came a day when he had a very close walk with the Lord. In fact, he walked to a cross even as our Lord did. You and I need to recognize that in our own lives the growth is slow, and therefore the growth in others will also be slow. Sometimes parents of converted children expect too much of them. Let's not expect too much of other folk, but let's also expect a great deal of ourselves.

There are three chapters in the Book of Genesis that are not pretty at all, and they all concern the children of Leah, the elder daughter of Laban who was given to Jacob. I believe that this gives evidence of the fact that God does not approve of plurality of marriages. The very fact that it was forced on Jacob to a certain extent did not make it right, by any means—Jacob at least went along with it. We find in this section that the children of Leah are all involved in sin. She had four boys. In this chapter it is Simeon and Levi. In chapter 35 we come to another of the sons, Reuben, the firstborn. In chapter 38 it will be Judah. Every one of Leah's sons turned out rather badly, and there was flagrant sin in their lives.

We have already noted that there was a great deal of strife in all of these families, but now another element has entered in. There is sordidness and a shoddiness that has seeped into the family of Jacob that was not in the family of Abraham or of Isaac. They had a great deal of difficulty and many problems, but nothing like we see in Jacob's family. Again, God wanted to get this man Jacob and his family out from the home of Laban, out from that atmosphere, because the very atmosphere gave the background for these awful sins that are mentioned here.- McGee

DINAH DEFILED BY SHECHEM

Jacob has stopped here at Shalem and has bought himself a nice little place out in the suburban area of town. He is attempting, as it were, to orient himself to the culture of that day. Well, it wasn't a good place, and God wants to

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separate this man from this area also. And believe me, after you read this chapter you will come to the conclusion that God had better separate him from it! – McGee

Gen 34:1-2 *Now Dinah the daughter of Leah, whom she had borne to Jacob, went out to see the daughters of the land. And when Shechem the son of Hamor the Hivite, prince of the country, saw her, he took her and lay with her, and violated her.*

Trouble normally happens when you are out where you are not supposed to be and with folks you should not be hanging around. Anyone else made this mistake? Out with the wrong crowd?

Let me put it in the language of the news media today: He raped her. If they can say it in print and on radio and television, certainly this poor preacher can say it. Sin needs to be spelled out. There was a time when sin was sin, but now they've taken the "s" off of it, and you're in the "in" group if you're a sinner. But that's not the way God spells sin. He still spells it S-I-N. And you will notice that "I" is right in the middle of the word—that's where all of us are. – McGee

Gen 34:3-4 *His soul was strongly attracted to Dinah the daughter of Jacob, and he loved the young woman and spoke kindly to the young woman. So Shechem spoke to his father Hamor, saying, "Get me this young woman as a wife."*

The very interesting thing is that the boy Shechem was apparently in love with the girl and really wanted to marry her. - McGee

Gen 34:5-7 *And Jacob heard that he had defiled Dinah his daughter. Now his sons were with his livestock in the field; so Jacob held his peace until they came. Then Hamor the father of Shechem went out to Jacob to speak with him. And the sons of Jacob came in from the field when they heard it; and the men were grieved and very angry, because he had done a disgraceful thing in Israel by lying with Jacob's daughter, a thing which ought not to be done.*

We certainly agree that it should not have been done, but it had been, and now the fellow wants to marry her. When Jacob heard it, he waited for his boys to come in, and they had a war counsel. I am of the opinion that Jacob probably should not have made as much of it as he did. When Hamor, the father of Shechem, came out to him, it is obvious that he wanted to get the girl for his son's wife. Jacob probably should have yielded to that, because that was, shall I say, the best way out at the time. Certainly, the way it was handled was not the best by any means, and God did not approve of it. – McGee

Did Jacob agree to it and the boys settled the score anyway, or was there trickery on both sides?

Gen 34:8-9 *But Hamor spoke with them, saying, "The soul of my son Shechem longs for your daughter. Please give her to him as a wife. And make marriages with us; give your daughters to us, and take our daughters to yourselves.*

Although intermarriage would have been wrong, it seems that Dinah should have been given to Shechem because that would have prevented a worse sin. This, of course, is hindsight, and "Monday morning quarterbacks" are not always right. – McGee

Gen 34:10-13 *So you shall dwell with us, and the land shall be before you. Dwell and trade in it, and acquire possessions for yourselves in it." Then Shechem said to her father and her brothers, "Let me find favor in your eyes, and whatever you say to me I will give. Ask me ever so much dowry and gift, and I will give according to what you say to me; but give me the young woman as a wife." But the sons of Jacob answered Shechem and Hamor his father, and spoke deceitfully, because he had defiled Dinah their sister.*

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All of this reveals that Jacob is going to have to move on. This is no place for him, mixing with these people in this land. I feel that Jacob should certainly have taken the leadership in his family. First of all, he should have prevented his sons from deceiving Shechem and Hamor. – McGee

Gen 34:14 *And they said to them, "We cannot do this thing, to give our sister to one who is uncircumcised, for that would be a reproach to us.*

The thing that disturbs me about this incident is that the real reproach—the sin of rape—is ignored, and they make the reproach on the basis of the rule which God had given them regarding intermarriage with the uncircumcised.- McGee

Gen 34:15-17 *But on this condition we will consent to you: If you will become as we are, if every male of you is circumcised, then we will give our daughters to you, and we will take your daughters to us; and we will dwell with you, and we will become one people. But if you will not heed us and be circumcised, then we will take our daughter and be gone."*

The thing that Jacob's sons ask them to do is to go through the ritual of circumcision. **Do we do that today? Go through something that we don't mean for other reasons.**

Mark Twain was not a Christian, and he was in love with a very beautiful, wonderful Christian girl. She would not marry him until he became a Christian. He professed to have accepted Christ as his Savior, and they started out their marriage that way. Well, Mark Twain became very famous, and he was entertained by many famous people in the world. One day when he came back to his home in Missouri and she wanted to go to church, he said, "Look, I can't keep up the front any longer. You go on to church. I know now that I'm not a Christian." May I say that made a very unhappy home, and it absolutely spoiled the life of this lovely Christian girl.

Here the sons of Jacob are saying, "If you'll go through the rite of circumcision, it will make everything all right." A great many people think that if you join the church, nod your head, and are able to use the right vocabulary and quote the right verse, that means you are a Christian. My friend, that does not mean you are a Christian. If you have trusted in Christ, something has happened, and you are a different person. – McGee

Gen 34:18-19 *And their words pleased Hamor and Shechem, Hamor's son. So the young man did not delay to do the thing, because he delighted in Jacob's daughter. He was more honorable than all the household of his father.*

I agree that this boy is doing the honorable thing at this point. – McGee

Ironically, at this point in the story, this young man is the most honorable out of all of them.

Gen 34:20-23 *And Hamor and Shechem his son came to the gate of their city, and spoke with the men of their city, saying: "These men are at peace with us. Therefore let them dwell in the land and trade in it. For indeed the land is large enough for them. Let us take their daughters to us as wives, and let us give them our daughters. Only on this condition will the men consent to dwell with us, to be one people: if every male among us is circumcised as they are circumcised. Will not their livestock, their property, and every animal of theirs be ours? Only let us consent to them, and they will dwell with us."*

The sons of Jacob had no intention of giving Dinah to Shechem, but they lied that they would do so if the men of the city would be circumcised. The sacred sign of God's covenant was to be used wickedly. In good faith, Hamor, Shechem, and all the men of their city met the condition. – Believers Bible Commentary

In other words, through intermarriage these men expected to eventually own everything that Jacob had. – McGee

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A religious ceremony performed on the basis of deceit and greed, but that would never happen today, right?

Gen 34:24 And all who went out of the gate of his city heeded Hamor and Shechem his son; every male was circumcised, all who went out of the gate of his city.

Performing the rite of circumcision on unbelievers was as phony as it could be. It is like joining a church when you are unconverted.-McGee

Gen 34:25 Now it came to pass on the third day, when they were in pain, that two of the sons of Jacob, Simeon and Levi, Dinah's brothers, each took his sword and came boldly upon the city and killed all the males.

This was real trickery. Simeon and Levi were Dinah's full brothers, and they wanted to get revenge. In their revenge, they go too far. Neither the rape nor the fact that Hamor intended to dispossess Jacob and his sons of the great wealth which Jacob had accumulated in Haran can in any way justify the brutal act of Simeon and Levi, but it does reveal the impossible situation of dealing with the inhabitants of that land. The thing they have done is a very terrible thing. – McGee

Gen 34:26-27 And they killed Hamor and Shechem his son with the edge of the sword, and took Dinah from Shechem's house, and went out. The sons of Jacob came upon the slain, and plundered the city, because their sister had been defiled.

The other sons joined in on this. This reveals greed in the family of Jacob that is not right and which they had learned in the home of Laban. – McGee

But while the Shechemites were recovering from the surgery, Simeon and Levi treacherously murdered them and plundered their wealth – Believer's Bible Commentary

Gen 34:28-30 They took their sheep, their oxen, and their donkeys, what was in the city and what was in the field, and all their wealth. All their little ones and their wives they took captive; and they plundered even all that was in the houses. Then Jacob said to Simeon and Levi, "You have troubled me by making me obnoxious among the inhabitants of the land, among the Canaanites and the Perizzites; and since I am few in number, they will gather themselves together against me and kill me. I shall be destroyed, my household and I."

Notice something that is obviously wrong here in the life of Jacob. Jacob rebukes Simeon and Levi for giving him a bad name, but he doesn't rebuke them for the sin that they have committed. We sometimes get a wrong perspective of sin and of our actions. We think only of the effect that it is going to have. There are many men and women in our churches who will not take a stand on certain issues. Why? Well, the little crowd they run with may not accept them. They are with a little clique, and they don't dare stand for anything that the little clique wouldn't stand for. It is never a question of whether it is right or wrong; it's a question of whether it ingratiates them to the crowd. God have mercy on Christians who shape their lives by those who are around them and who are constantly looking for the effect their conduct is going to have on others. They do not look on whether this is the right thing or the Christian thing or whether as a child of God this is something they should or should not do. This is the reason our churches are filled with those who compromise, and it is little wonder that we have so many frustrated, unhappy Christians today. It is a wonderful thing to stand for the truth, and when you stand for it, then you don't have to compromise. How wonderful it is when we will do that. Poor old Jacob is growing, but he hasn't grown that far.

Then these boys, of course, attempt to defend themselves: - McGee

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When Jacob administered a mild rebuke, Simeon and Levi answered that their sister should not have been treated like a harlot. Actually Jacob seemed to be more concerned about his own welfare than the horrible injustice that had been done to the men of Shechem. Notice his eight uses of the first-person pronoun in verse 30. – Believers' Bible Commentary

Gen 34:31 *But they said, "Should he treat our sister like a harlot?"*

That's a good question. I would say that if they wanted to take the judgment into their own hands, they first of all should have heard this boy out and let him marry their sister. It would have been the best thing to do under the circumstances, but it is not the right thing, by any means. Certainly that would have been better than to go to the extreme of murdering the inhabitants of that land. There is no excuse that can be offered, and I have no defense to offer for them at all. They should not have done the thing that they did, but we must understand that they were not living in the light of Rom_12:19-21 which says: "Dearly beloved, avenge not yourselves, but rather give place unto wrath: for it is written, Vengeance is mine; I will repay, saith the Lord. Therefore if thine enemy hunger, feed him; if he thirst, give him drink: for in so doing thou shalt heap coals of fire on his head. Be not overcome of evil, but overcome evil with good." For a Christian today Romans 12 is the policy that he should follow. The very minute we attempt to take revenge or get vengeance, it means that we are no longer walking by faith. We are saying that we cannot trust God to work it out. However, I am not sure that you could bring Jacob—and certainly not his sons—up to such a spiritual level at that particular time. But you cannot justify this terrible deed which they have committed. You can well understand that they acted because of their feeling for their sister and the shame which had been brought upon the family. Jacob was beginning to see that a whole lot of chickens—not just a few—were coming home to roost.