

## Genesis 34

There are three rapes recorded in the Scriptures (Judges 19:22-26; 2 Sam. 13). This is the first. The event illustrates to us that mankind is wicked and needs redemption. We see a weak side of Jacob that offends our Christian sensibilities. It appears that the reason this chapter is in the Bible is because Simeon and Levi subsequently lose their respective right of the firstborn because of their violent reaction to Dinah's rape.

### TRANSLATION - 34:1-17:

**1** Then Dinah went out, the daughter of Leah, whom she bore to Jacob, to see the daughters of the land. **2** Now Shechem saw her, the son of Hamor the Hivite, prince of the land and he took her, lay with her and humiliated her. **3** His soul was attracted to Dinah, daughter of Jacob and he loved the young girl and spoke to the heart of the young girl.

**4** So Shechem said to Hamor, his father, saying, "Take for me this child for a wife." **5** Now Jacob heard that he had defiled Dinah, his daughter, and his sons were with their cattle in the field and Jacob held his peace until they came. **6** Then Hamor went out, the father of Shechem, to Jacob to speak to him. **7** Now the sons of Jacob came from the field when they heard and the men were indignant and they were extremely angry because a disgraceful thing he did in Israel, to sleep with the daughter of Jacob and thus it should not be done.

**8** Then Hamor spoke to them saying, "Shechem, my son, she, his soul loves, your daughter. You all give her, please, to him for a wife. **9** You all marry with us, your daughters you all give to us; even our daughters, take for yourselves. **10** And with us, you all will remain and the land will be before you all. Remain and trade in it and possess in it."

**11** Then Shechem said to her father and to her brothers, "Let me find grace in your eyes and what you have said to me, I will give. **12** You all ask of me much, a dowry and a gift and I will give it just as you have said to me and you all give to me the young woman for a wife."

**13** Then the sons of Jacob answered Shechem and Hamor, his father, in deceit and they spoke when he defiled Dinah, their sister. **14** So they said to them, "We are not able to do this thing, to give our sister for a wife when to him uncircumcised because this [is] a disgrace to us. **15** Only in this we will consent to you, if you all will be like us, to be circumcised, for you every male. **16** Then we will give our daughters to you and your daughters we will take to ourselves and we will dwell with you and we will be for one people. **17** But if you will not listen to us to be circumcised, then we will take our daughter and we will go."

### WORDS:

"Prince" (verse 2; 130 times) is a chief, leader, or prince. It was used in 17:20; 23:6; 25:16. "Humiliated" was seen at 15:13; 16:6, 9; 31:50. Here, the context warrants a strong translation, "rape." Notice that the word is considered a synonym for "defile" in this context (34:5, 13, 27). Also, the verb "lay with," used with a direct object as here, denotes force. It can mean to "be afflicted, humbled, oppressed, or violated." "Attracted" (verse 3; 55 times) means to "cling to, cleave to, stick to, pursue closely." It was used at 2:24; 19:19; and 31:23.

"Defiled" (verse 5; 162 times) is used often in context of sacrifices, especially in Leviticus. It is only used in Genesis in this chapter. It can mean "to be unclean, defiled." "Indignant" (verse 7; 15 times) means to be "hurt, pained, rebuke, or grieve." Interestingly, the noun is translated "idol, god" (17 times). The word described the feelings of Jehovah God at the sin of the world in 6:6. "Disgraceful thing" (13 times) means an "outrage, disgrace, willful sin, stupidity." This word describes sins meriting the death penalty in Deut. 22:21; Josh. 7:15; Judg. 19:23-24; 20:6; 1 Sam. 25:25; 2 Sam. 13:12. "Trade" (verse 10; 21 times) means to "pass through or travel about." When used as a gerund, it can mean a "trader."

"Dowry" (verse 12; 3 times) is only found here and Exo. 22:16; 1 Sam. 18:25. "Gift" (17 times) means gift or present. "Deceit" (verse 13; 39 times) was first seen in 27:35. This is its only other usage in Genesis. It means "deceit or deception." "Disgrace" (verse 14; 73 times)

means “reproach, disgrace, or shame.” It was first seen at 30:23. “Consent” (verse 15) is found three times in this context (34:15, 22-23) and at 2 Kings 12:8.

#### COMMENTS:

Jacob’s only daughter, Dinah, decided to go out and make some social contacts with the women in the area. We have no reason to believe anything she is doing is improper. In some way, Shechem, after whom the city may be named, saw Dinah, thought she was attractive, and took her and “humbled her.” The word suggests here more than just humiliation since the brothers will call Shechem’s actions “defilement” (34:5, 13, 27). After the rape, Moses records that Shechem was attracted to her, to her soul, and that he loved her. Moses does not comment on the emotions behind the action. But the brothers do not believe his behavior was justified.

Jacob does not respond to the news and we are shocked that he does not respond to the rape in any way. Some suggest it is because Dinah was a daughter of Leah, who was not Jacob’s preferred wife. That is a quite cynical position to hold. In fact, Jacob’s own words in verse 30 more likely explain why he did not do anything. He was afraid of retaliation. Jacob held his peace until the boys came in from the field. We are not told who informed the brothers about the despicable act. They were understandably infuriated. Such a thing should not be done in Israel. Ever. “In Israel” uses the new name for Jacob in reference to Jacob’s whole family and will come to refer to the whole nation of people.

Shechem approaches his father to negotiate with the Israelites on his behalf. Hamor approaches Jacob and his sons and asks for Dinah’s hand in marriage for Shechem and then asks that they all intermarry with one another. Hamor asks that they all live in the land together, peaceably. Shechem steps in and offers to practically give the Israelites anything they ask, if he can marry Dinah.

The sons of Jacob, who were probably led by Simeon and Levi (verse 25; they were full siblings with Leah), responded deceitfully (Moses informs us). We are not told here what they were planning to do; it is seen later in the text. They did decide to use circumcision as a method in which they could take their revenge on the Shechemites. If the Shechemites would consent to be circumcised, then Dinah could marry Shechem and the two families could all intermarry. If not, the brothers will take Dinah, perhaps by force (cf. verse 26), and leave.

#### APPLICATION:

*Contemporaries in the text* - Dinah does not respond in any way, as far as the text is concerned, to the events. Not only is she an innocent bystander relative to Shechem, but she is also a quiet bystander relative to her own brothers who step forward to avenge her honor.

*Contemporaries of Moses* - Rape under the law of Moses will be punishable by death: Deut. 22:25-29. The Law will also explicitly forbid intermarriage with the Canaanites (Deut. 7:3; Josh. 23:12; cf. Ezra 9:14).

*Later Hebrew writers* - There will be another rape recorded in Scripture, that of Amnon and Tamar, children of King David (2 Sam. 13).

#### TRANSLATION - 34:18-24:

**18** Their words were good in the eyes of Hamor and in the eyes of Shechem, the son of Hamor. **19** So the young man did not delay to do the thing because the daughter of Jacob he desired and he was honored above all the house of his father. **20** So Hamor came and Shechem, his son, to the gate of their city and they spoke to the men of the city, saying, **21** “These men [are] complete. They [are] with us and they returned to the land and they traded here and the land, behold, breadth of hands before us. Their daughters we will take to ourselves for wives and our sons we will give to them. **22** Only in this they will consent to us, the men to dwell with us, to be for one people: to be circumcised with us every male just as they are circumcised. **23** Their livestock and their property and all their animals, will they not be ours [?], they only will consent to us and they will dwell with us.”

**24** So they listened to Hamor and to Shechem, his son, all those going out of the gate of their city and they were circumcised, every male, all going out of the gate of their city.

WORDS:

“Were good” (verse 18) translates the verbal form of the adjective “good.” “To delay” (verse 19; 18 times) means to “delay, detain, hesitate, or linger.” The word “complete” (verse 21) is the plural form of the word often translated “peace.” It refers to “peace, wholeness, deliverance.”

COMMENTS:

Hamor and Shechem thought the plans of the Israelites were a good idea. Shechem wasted no time in talking the men of his homeland into being circumcised. They went to the gate of the city and spoke to their compatriots. It sounds from verse 23 that Hamor saw power in the unity that could be achieved in the unity of the two peoples: the Shechemites and the Israelites. The men all listened to Hamor and Shechem and they were all circumcised, every male.

APPLICATION:

*Contemporaries in the text* - Circumcision was discussed in chapter 17 (especially verses 10, 12), when it was first introduced into the biblical text. Israel was not the only nation which practiced it (the Philistines notably did not) so it was probably not a completely novel idea to the Shechemites.

TRANSLATION - 34:25-31:

**25** Then it was on the third day, when they were hurting that two sons of Jacob, Simeon and Levi, brothers of Dinah, took a man his sword and they went to the city in security and they killed every male. **26** And Hamor and Shechem, his son, they killed with the edge of the sword and they took Dinah from the house of Shechem and they went out. **27** The sons of Jacob came to the slain and plundered the city which defiled their sister: **28** their flock and their cattle and their donkeys and what [was] in the city and what [was] in the field they took, **29** and all their wealth and all their little ones and their wives and they returned and they plundered even all which [was] in the house.

**30** Then Jacob said to Simeon and to Levi, “You have troubled me to make me odious among the inhabitants of the land, among the Canaanites, and the Perizzites, and I myself, a few in number and [if] they gather against me and attack me then I will be destroyed, myself and my house.”

**31** But they said, “Like a prostitute will he make our sister?”

WORDS:

“To hurt” (verse 25) means to “be in pain, anguish, or ruin.” It is only used eight times. “Security” is found only here in Genesis. The noun is used 42 times in the sense of security or safety. The verb is used 118 times and “confidence, security” is found 15 times. “To plunder” (verse 27; 43 times) means to “plunder, spoil.” It is also only used in this chapter in Genesis (34:27, 29). “Wealth” (verse 29; 246 times) is a word with a broad range of meanings: strength, wealth, army. “To trouble” (verse 30; 14 times) means to “disturb, trouble, confuse.” “To make odious” (18 times) means to “stink, make a bad smell.” “Prostitute” (verse 31) is only used here and at 38:15. The verb means to commit fornication or to act as a prostitute. The verb is used 60 times.

COMMENTS:

Three days after all the men of Shechem allowed themselves to be circumcised, while still in pain and recovering, the two sons of Jacob, Simeon and Levi, probably with the assistance of their brothers, went into the city of Shechem with their swords and slaughtered

all the men. Moses reminds us in verse 25 that this event was motivated by the rape of Dinah. Hamor and Shechem were both killed. Verse 26 sounds like Dinah was still in the home of Shechem. Perhaps he was holding her hostage in anticipation of the ability to marry her. Regardless, he paid for his actions with his life. Not only did Simeon and Levi slaughter all the males, but they also extended their vengeance by plundering the city as well, the city which had defiled their sister. In fact, verses 27-29 emphasize how much Simeon and Levi took, plundering the city of the man who raped their sister.

Jacob was not pleased with their behavior. Whether he would have been pleased with a mitigated revenge, perhaps only killing Shechem and maybe Hamor, we do not know. Yet, Jacob accused Simeon and Levi with causing trouble for Jacob in the land of Canaan, making him “odious” to his neighbors. Jacob feared the surrounding nations might take revenge on Jacob and his family for the actions of his sons.

The boys had a simple reply and with that, the whole incident is brought to a conclusion, rarely to be referenced again in Scripture. Their response was: “Should we do nothing and allow these men to treat our sister like a prostitute?” Jacob gives no reply and Moses makes no further comment on the actions.

#### APPLICATION:

*Contemporaries in the text* - While we believe this event was real and historical, we also believe it was inserted into the text, left to remain in the word of God, to show Israel why the right of the first born passed by both Simeon and Levi (cf. Gen. 49:5-7). We could understand Simeon and Levi taking vengeance on Shechem and perhaps Hamor, but not on the whole city. Nor was the rape sufficient grounds for plundering the whole city.

*Contemporaries of Moses* - Moses will later describe the Levites’ execution of God’s justice on Israel in Exo. 32:25-29; cf. Num. 25:7-8, 11-13.

*NT writers* - The NT writers will warn against uncontrolled anger (Gal. 5:20; Eph. 4:26-27). The NT does not proscribe penalties for sins such as rape, but it does leave the decision in the hands of the civil government (Rom. 13:1-4). Just prior to this passage, Paul warns Christians to leave vengeance in the hands of God (Rom. 12:19), which God might execute through the civil authorities.