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Genesis 34

(2019)

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Genesis 34.

Topics.

- Shechem the Hivite, prince of the land, seizes Dinah and lays with her.
- By lying with Dinah Shechem did a thing that must not be done in Israel.
- Hamor proposes his and Jacobs men marry each other's daughters.
- Jacob sons will only give Dinah to Shechem if their men are circumcised.
- The men of Hamor's city agree to be circumcised to be one with Israel.
- Simon and Levi kill Hamor, Shechem and all the males and took Dinah.
- Simon and Levi make Jacob stink before the Canaanites and the Perizzites.

FOR INFORMATION: concerning people, places and the meaning of words see the title: "Map Locations and People of the Bible," and the title: "Bible Dictionary" on Website Menu.

The previous chapter: in chapter thirty-three the focus was upon Jacob, Rachel, Leah, Bilhah, Zillah and their children meeting Esau and Esau's friendly acceptance of his younger brother Jacob. It ended with Esau returning to Seir and Jacob journeying to Succoth and purchasing a parcel of land in Canaan near the city of Shechem.

GENESIS 34:1-4

Shechem the Prince of the Land, Seizes Dinah and Lays with Her.

- **Genesis 34:1-4:** Now Dinah the daughter of Leah, whom she had borne to Jacob, went out to see the women of the land. ²And when Shechem the son of Hamor the Hivite, the prince of the land, saw her, he seized her and lay with her and humiliated her. ³And his soul was drawn to Dinah the daughter of Jacob. He loved the young woman and spoke tenderly to her. ⁴So Shechem spoke to his father Hamor, saying, "Get me this girl for my wife."

The Hivites were descendants of Canaan. Hamor (a Hivite) and the prince (meaning the leading figure, the principal man and chief) of and city of Shechem and one of the nations of the land of Canaan. His son Shechem was of all his sons the most honored son (Gen. 34:19). For further information concerning Shechem being an honourable man see the notes under the title:

- He was the most honored of all his father's house," (following (v18-24) (below).

The previous chapter ended with Jacob buying a parcel of land from Hamor and his sons. It seems that Jacob had intended to set up a permanent place for him and his family to dwell. Now we pick up the story, Dinah is much older now (most suspect somewhere between 13-17 years of age) based upon the fact that during these early ancient years the marriageable age of a female was around thirteen onward.

This would mean that Jacob had spent some years dwelling on the parcel of land he had purchased in Shechem from Hamor (Gen 33:19). It is most likely that during these years Dinah had made friends with some of the

Hivite women and was going out to visit them. As she is walking on her own Shechem sees her and rapes her. Following are two possible scenarios that may have led up to this shameful and horrific hurt Shechem brought upon Dinah:

1. He was cold of heart, cruel felt no empathy toward her and simply took her by force to gratify his lustful passions.
2. There had been certain times and opportunities of acquaintance between Shechem and Dinah during which he had spoken flattering words to her and being the honoured son to the prince and ruler of the land promised her great things and that she would be esteemed to worldly grandeur and honour. Dinah, having mixed with the Hivite women and being a young teenager, herself had been flattered by the attentions of the ruler's son and showed him in return a certain level of friendliness. He sees her walking alone and from an obsessive attraction toward her takes the opportunity to seduce her and in the passion forces himself upon her. Whichever of these two may apply or whatever the circumstance may have been, there is nothing Shechem can do to justify his actions and nothing that can be said that would excuse him of the shame and humiliation he had brought upon Dinah simply to gratify his own selfish lustful passion.

Some commentators teach that some of the blame lies with Dinah because she was mixing with the Hivite women, but that would be like blaming a Christian girl who had been raped by a worldly man, because she had been in the company of secular people. This type of reasoning is foolishness it matters not what the circumstance are or even if Dinah as a teenage girl had an infatuation and attraction toward Shechem or even spent some affectionate time together with him there is absolutely no excuse for his outrageous behaviour toward her, nor is there anything he or his father could do to justify him forcing himself upon Dinah with such shameful and lustful actions. It matters not how short a skirt maybe or how flirtatious a woman is there is no justification for any man to take a woman by force and rape her.

He loved the young woman and spoke tenderly to her: (v3) after having robbed Dinah of her honour, he believes he loves her and speaks flattering and kind words to her things to comfort her and soften her mind towards him to gain her good will and affection and her consent to marry him. Being the honoured son of the prince of the land he no doubt promised her riches and exalted glory in his father's house.

Shechem asks his father to Get Dinah for his wife: (v3) Shechem's motivation to speak kindly to Dinah and his reason to marry her may have stemmed from any of the following:

- He realised the wickedness he had done and the embarrassment and shame he had brought upon Dinah and therefore desired to comfort and soothe her mind hoping to heal as much as possible her hurt and humiliation in the hope she would consent to marry him.
- Perceiving her to be exceedingly enraged and stunned at his horrid violence, he endeavours to appease and soothe her to get her to consent to marry him.
- His attraction toward her was always in his thoughts; it was not a mere lustful desire that was suddenly raised, and soon over, but a constant and continued affection he had for her.
- His heart and mind was obsessed with Dinah's beauty and therefore he had an obsessive attraction toward her.

Though Shechem may have had emotional feelings toward Dinah, we know he never had a true love for her since the Bible states:

- Love does no wrong to a neighbor; therefore, love is the fulfilling of the law. (Romans 13:10).

- The fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, ²³gentleness, self-control; against such things there is no law. (Galatians 5:20-23).

The following verses show us that Shechem was not acting from love, but from the flesh:

- The works of the flesh are evident: sexual immorality, impurity, sensuality. (Gal. 5:19).

GENESIS 34:5-7

By Lying with Dinah Shechem did a thing that Must Not Be Done.

- **Genesis 34:5-7:** Now Jacob heard that he had defiled his daughter Dinah. But his sons were with his livestock in the field, so Jacob held his peace until they came. ⁶And Hamor the father of Shechem went out to Jacob to speak with him. ⁷The sons of Jacob had come in from the field as soon as they heard of it, and the men were indignant and very angry, because he had done an outrageous thing in Israel (he had wrought folly in Israel in KJV) by lying with Jacob's daughter, for such a thing must not be done.

Jacob was no doubt enraged himself when he heard what Shechem had done, but being fully aware that he would be talking to the most powerful men of the land that he had set up his dwelling place in and where his wives and children were he waited until his sons arrived before responding. His sons either by a messenger that Jacob had sent to them or by a neighbour who had heard about what Shechem had done hears of the abuse that Shechem had afflicted upon their sister. They naturally leave their livestock in the hands of other shepherds and with great grief, anger and fury go to join their father.

Such a thing must not be done in Israel: (v7) the outrageous sin Shechem committed against Dinah was not just a sin against her, but also against her family, against the nation of Israel and against God.

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NOTE: the expression, "He had done an outrageous thing in Israel," is spoken or written sometime after the event since it is only in the last chapter that Jacob's name was changed to Israel (Gen. 32:28) so at this time Israel was not yet a nation of people, but a small family only. The expression, "he had wrought folly in Israel," is a common expression throughout the Bible from this time forward for any deed that was contrary to the will and holiness of God and the character and behaviour His people were called to display. The title, "Israel," is used here to designate the descendants of Israel, God's special and chosen people.

GENESIS 34:8-12

Hamor Proposes His and Jacob's Men Marry their Daughters.

- **Genesis 34:8-12:** But Hamor spoke with them, saying, "The soul of my son Shechem longs for your daughter. Please give her to him to be his wife. ⁹Make marriages with us. Give your daughters to us, and take our daughters for yourselves. ¹⁰You shall dwell with us, and the land shall be open to you. Dwell and trade in it, and get property in it." ¹¹Shechem also said to her father and to her brothers, "Let me find favor in your eyes, and whatever you say to me I will give. ¹²Ask me for as great a bride price and gift as you will, and I will give whatever you say to me. Only give me the young woman to be my wife."

According to the custom of the time Hamor the father of Shechem and Jacob the father of Dinah with the sons of Hamor and the sons of Jacob being present enter into negotiations. Hamor begins the negotiations:

- He tells Jacob Shechem earnestly desires Dinah.
- He pleads with Jacob to give Dinah to his son to be his wife.

- He suggests his men and the men of Israel take each other's daughters for wives.
- He tells Jacob that his people will not only be free to roam the land but will also be free to trade in it and buy property for themselves as his people are.
- He tells Jacob no matter what bride price and gift he asks he will give it to him.
- He then humbles himself and pleads for Jacob and his sons to show him favour and give Shechem Dinah to be his wife.

Even though Hamor the prince would have known his son had done wrong it appears that he and his son Shechem expressed no repentance for the shame and hurt Shechem had bought upon Dinah. Hamor is far more powerful than Jacob and his sons, yet he humbles himself before them. He understood that the art of salesmanship is to firstly, exalt (or flatter) those you want to sell to, secondly, offer them as many benefits and advantages as you are able to and thirdly, make the sale, though in this context the request. This is exactly the pattern Hamor is following. The prince of the land is proposing a political alliance between his tribe and the tribe of Jacob to be sealed by the marriage of Dinah to his son. There was nothing that could now be done to make the wrong done to Dinah right so both Hamor and his son focus on doing whatever they could to obtain Dinah to be Shechem's wife, but Jacob's sons (especially Simeon and Levi) remained inwardly burning with resentment and anger at the wrong that had been done against their sister. Being in the presence of a superior force they keep their anger to themselves and instead spoke words of deceit.

Though they spoke words of deceit what they are saying is right in that they cannot intermarry with the uncircumcised, except on the condition that every male be circumcised. It is only on these conditions that they will consent to give their sister in marriage and become one people with them otherwise they will take their sister and depart. Shechem had done an outrageous thing against Dinah, against her family, against Israel and against God. It is natural for a person that is in a covenant with God and has great faith toward Him and are dear to His heart for them to react to the harm done to God's people in the same way that they would if the same harm was done to themselves. This same principle applies to earthly families, when a member of a family is mocked, scorned or physically hurt all the family feels it and react as if they were the ones themselves that were injured. But no injury, hurt or harm can justify revenge especially the deceitful and murderous revenge Jacob's two sons Simeon and Levi kept secret in their minds until they had the best opportunity of accomplishing it.

In the book of Deuteronomy, it is written:

- Vengeance is mine, and recompense, for the time when their foot shall slip; for the day of their calamity is at hand, and their doom comes swiftly. (Deut. 32:35)

Paul in his letter wrote:

- Beloved, never avenge yourselves, but leave it to the wrath of God, for it is written, "Vengeance is mine, I will repay, says the Lord." (Rom. 12:19).

In the book of Hebrews', we read:

- We know him who said, "Vengeance is mine; I will repay." And again, "The Lord will judge his people." (Heb. 10:30).

Leaving revenge and vengeance to God does not mean we forsake justice and punishment accordingly. Justice comes not from a spirit of hatred and a lust for revenge, but from a spirit of doing what is right for the victim of the crime and punishing the criminal according to the law and according to their crime.

God's judgment is not random: it has its own appointed time. At the moment we are living in the long day of death and the long day of God's grace, judgment is delayed until the right time. No one should think that just because God's judgment cannot be seen in the world at this present moment in that that many of the ungodly and wicked prosper while many of the innocent and righteous suffer that they can do as they please and act corruptly and wickedly and escape God's judgment.

Make you marriages with us: (v9) at this time Jacob had eleven sons and only one daughter which means that Hamor is not thinking short term, but sees future generations of Canaanites and Israelites marrying each other from this time forward. In the following chapter we read of God telling Jacob to arise up and go to Bethel after which Jacob tells all those in his household to put away their foreign gods and purify themselves they obey and give to Jacob all their foreign gods and the rings that were in their ears. (Gen. 35:2-4). This shows that even now some in the household of Jacob had added foreign gods to their faith and embraced the jewelry and fancy clothing of the Canaanite women (symbolized by the earrings). With this in mind it is not difficult to see why Hamor would think it was possible for his tribe and Jacobs tribe to embrace each other. Hamor's side of the family had no objection to the marriage, all objections to such a marriage were on the side of Jacob's family. Following are the two reasons for this, the first is obvious, Shechem had abused and shamed their sister and no marriage could make this right. The second concerns mixed marriages. When Abraham sent his servant to find a wife for his son Isaac, he was strictly told not to take a wife from the Canaanites.

- I (Abraham) may make you (his servant) swear by the LORD, the God of heaven and God of the earth, that you will not take a wife for my son from the daughters of the Canaanites, among whom I dwell (Gen. 24:1-3).

Isaac gave the same order to his son Jacob:

- Then Isaac called Jacob and blessed him and directed him, "You must not take a wife from the Canaanite women. (Gen. 28:1).

Therefore, Jacob would never agree that his sons should marry any Canaanite woman especially since marriages with them were later forbidden by the law of Moses:

- You shall not intermarry with them, giving your daughters to their sons or taking their daughters for your sons (Deut. 7:3).

Like any religious custom and tradition circumcision was not to be used as a means for obtaining one's own gain or advantage. God does not want those who act wickedly and make an outward pretence of religion in His Kingdom. Those who are pretenders and hypocrites are at the top of the list of being enemies of the truth and enemies of God.

GENESIS 34:13-17

Sons of Jacob Only Give Dinah to Shechem if His Men are Circumcised.

- **Genesis 34:13-17:** The sons of Jacob answered Shechem and his father Hamor deceitfully, because he had defiled their sister Dinah. ¹⁴They said to them, "We cannot do this thing, to give our sister to one who is uncircumcised, for that would be a disgrace to us. ¹⁵Only on this condition will we agree with you—that you will become as we are by every male among you being circumcised. ¹⁶Then we will give our daughters to you, and we will take your daughters to ourselves, and we will dwell with you and become one people. ¹⁷But if you will not listen to us and be circumcised, then we will take our daughter, and we will be gone."

The covenant of circumcision refers to God's covenant spoken of in the following verses:

- This is my covenant, which you shall keep, between me and you and your offspring after you: Every male among you shall be circumcised. ¹¹You shall be circumcised in the flesh of your foreskins, and it shall be a sign of the covenant between me and you. ¹²He who is eight days old among you shall be circumcised. Every male throughout your generations, whether born in your house or bought with your money from any foreigner who is not of your offspring, ¹³both he who is born in your house and he who is bought with your money, shall surely be circumcised. So shall my covenant be in your flesh an everlasting covenant. ¹⁴Any uncircumcised male who is not circumcised in the flesh of his foreskin shall be cut off from his people; he has broken my covenant." (Genesis 17:10-14).

For Jacob and his sons to accept such a marriage proposal they required Hamor and Shechem and all the men of the city (v20) to be circumcised. It appears that there was no requirement for them to adopt any of the laws of Israel's God or even the worship of Him. This was simply an external outward tradition to be performed so that Hamor's household would have the outward appearance of Israel's religion so that the marriage could go ahead. The apostle Paul wrote:

- Not all who are descended from Israel belong to Israel, ⁷and not all are children of Abraham because they are his offspring, but "Through Isaac shall your offspring be named." ⁸This means that it is not the children of the flesh who are the children of God, but the children of the promise are counted as offspring. (Rom. 9:6-7).
- Just as Abraham "believed God, and it was counted to him as righteousness"? ⁷Know then that it is those of faith who are the sons of Abraham. (Gal. 3:6-7).

These verses clearly show that being outwardly circumcised does not make a person a true Israelite. It is true that a person not born of Hebrew or Jewish descent could only be adopted into house of Israel by being circumcised, but this provision applies to those who desired to worshipped the God of Israel with a true heart and follow His laws and His will. Without the heart being involved in the worship of God circumcision is only an outward show of religion that in many cases simply acts as a religious cloak to cover hypocrisy and deceit. However, though everything just mentioned is true, there is a valid reason the sons of Jacob (especially Simeon and Levi) placed no demands upon Hamor and his household to worship their God or embrace His ways. They had no intention of embracing them into their faith, but simply demanded that they be circumcised for the purpose of injuring them so that they could later slaughter them while they were at their weakest.

GENESIS 34:18-24

To be One with Israel Men of Hamor's city agree to be Circumcised

- **Genesis 34:18-24:** Their words pleased Hamor and Hamor's son Shechem. ¹⁹And the young man did not delay to do the thing, because he delighted in Jacob's daughter. Now he was the most honored of all his father's house. ²⁰So Hamor and his son Shechem came to the gate of their city and spoke to the men of their city, saying, ²¹"These men are at peace with us; let them dwell in the land and trade in it, for behold, the land is large enough for them. Let us take their daughters as wives, and let us give them our daughters. ²²Only on this condition will the men agree to dwell with us to become one people—when every male among us is circumcised as they are circumcised. ²³Will not their livestock, their property and all their beasts be ours? Only let us agree with them, and they will dwell with us." ²⁴And all who went out of the gate of his city listened to Hamor and his son Shechem, and every male was circumcised, all who went out of the gate of his city.

He was the most honored of all his father's house: (v19) the word honorable in this verse comes from the Hebrew word (*kabad*) it can be taken in a good sense or a bad sense since it can refer to either of the following two persons:

1. A person who has great authority; who is rich and powerful; who grievously lays heavy burdens on people; who boasts in their own self-grandeur and who is looked up to by their followers as being noble, not because they are by character, but because of their abundant wealth, authority and power.
2. A person who is actually honorable in character, meaning they are moral, decent, righteous and ethical in their behavior and actions. They may have great authority and be rich and powerful, but these things (or the lack of them) have no bearing on why they are referred to as being honorable and noble.

It is clear Shechem fits into the first group of so called honorable men since no man that sexually forces himself upon a woman to gratify his own lustful passions can be called an honorable man in the true sense of the word.

Hamor and Shechem came to the gate of their city: (v20) it was not just Hamor's family the sons of Israel required to be circumcised, but all the males of the city. The gate of the city was the common place for public communication it is very likely messengers would be sent through the streets of the city announcing that there would be a public meeting and the inhabitants hearing the call would come out of their homes and gather at the gate. Simeon and Levi's purpose for making this demand had nothing to do with converting them to the faith of Israel, but simply so they being the smaller group could later overpower and slaughter them. The men of the city unaware of Simeon's and Levi's diabolical plan consented to be circumcised not because they had any desire to adopt the faith of Israel or their God, but to please Hamor their prince and his son Shechem (or because they feared them) and to enrich themselves by becoming one people with Jacob who himself was a very rich man especially in, servants, sheep, goats, donkeys, cattle and camels which things were considered the greatest wealth amongst the Arab nations. Since all males agreed to be circumcised it most likely means that the city and the population of it was relatively small, but their territory was large enough for a much larger number of people than their present population.

GENESIS 34:25-29

Simeon and Levi Kill Hamor and Shechem and Take Dinah.

- **Genesis 34:25-29:** On the third day, when they were sore, two of the sons of Jacob, Simeon and Levi, Dinah's brothers, took their swords and came against the city while it felt secure and killed all the males. ²⁶They killed Hamor and his son Shechem with the sword and took Dinah out of Shechem's house and went away. ²⁷The sons of Jacob came upon the slain and plundered the city, because they had defiled their sister. ²⁸They took their flocks and their herds, their donkeys, and whatever was in the city and in the field. ²⁹All their wealth, all their little ones and their wives, all that was in the houses, they captured and plundered.

Simeon and Levi were the sons of Leah, and therefore, full brothers of Dinah. After they had slaughtered Hamor and Shechem and all the males of the city they took Dinah and left the city. It appears that Simeon and Levi were the only sons involved in the actual slaughtering of the men of the city (they may have had other mercenaries with them), but when the other sons saw Simeon and Levi returning with Dinah and heard what they had done they returned to the city and seized all their livestock and goods and took their wives and children captive.

NOTE: Reuben was the oldest of the twelve sons of Jacob and after him was Simeon and Levi (their mother was Leah who was also the mother of Dinah).

GENESIS 34:30-31

Jacob Stinks before the Canaanites and the Perizzites.

- **Genesis 34:30-31:** Then Jacob said to Simeon and Levi, "You have brought trouble on me by making me stink to the inhabitants of the land, the Canaanites and the Perizzites. My numbers are few, and if they gather themselves against me and attack me, I shall be destroyed, both I and my household." ³¹But they said, "Should he treat our sister like a prostitute?"

The Canaanites and the Perizzites: were the principal inhabitants of the land, the most numerous, and the most barbarous and perhaps nearest to the city of Hamor.

My numbers are few: (v30) meaning unlike the Canaanites and the Perizzites they could easily be counted.

You have brought trouble on me to make me to stink: (30) meaning they have made him to be looked upon and treated as a cruel, bloodthirsty, deceitful and treacherous man who made no difference between the innocent and the guilty. A man who had no regard to his word, to covenants and agreements made by him and who would stop at nothing to gratify his craving for revenge. Though strangers in the country Abraham, Isaac and Jacob had been respected, but now Jacob was for good reason apprehensive that these murderous and extremely shameful acts of his sons would cause him and his religion to be seen as an abomination amongst the Canaanites, especially since this atrocious crime Simeon and Levi had committed on the defenceless citizens and their families far exceeded any crime the Canaanites had committed.

At this time Joseph was still a boy, Benjamin was not yet born and the other eight were not involved in the slaughter only Simeon and Levi were guilty of the bloody massacre, but should the Canaanites attack they would not discriminate in their vengeance, but put to death all the family of Jacob to wipe the land clean from a people who in their eyes had no hesitation in breaking their word and slaughtering innocent men and taking their woman and their children captive. Jacob had good reason to fear since nothing justifies the cruelty and treacherousness of Simeon and Levi's murderous deed, by avenging the wrong done to their sister they had committed a far greater act of wickedness and evil. In the following chapter God tells Jacob to flee from the parcel of land that he had bought from Hamor as he had fled from his brother Esau and go to Bethel. Then we read that as they travelled a terror from God fell upon the cities that were around them so that they did not pursue the sons of Jacob. (Gen. 35:1-5).

This shines a brilliant spotlight upon the fact that the nations surrounding Jacob and his family had gathered together with the intention of wiping the family of Jacob from the face of the earth and would have succeeded had God not intervened. Nothing but the restraining power of God saved Jacob and his family from the united vengeance of the surrounding people. Jacob knew that God had promised to preserve his house; but being a godly man and aware of the horror his sons had committed he had good reason to think that the vile and evil act that Simeon and Levi had committed would bring about an annulment of the promise and if not an annulment certainly a punishment of some kind. Some observant commentators point out the fact that Jacob did not rebuke his sons for committing such a heinous sin especially since it was such a clear violation of the laws of God. Following are two possible reasons for this silence:

1. Jacob would have been fully aware that they would be easy prey should the surrounding nations gather together against them so his sole focus was on the very real present consequences and dangers,
2. The Scripture only focuses upon the main message of the story, there is no doubt that Jacob being the godly man he was would have been enormously grieved and upset when he heard of the horror his sons had committed and it is almost certain he would have rebuked them. Just because the Scripture is silent on something does not mean it

never happened. Consider how long the chapter is and imagine how long it would be if every detail of the story was told. Some details have to be left to the reader's imagination and common sense and understanding of the characters involved.

It seems Jacob did keep Simeon and Levi's evil conduct in remembrance even to his death-bed. When he called his twelve sons together to tell them what shall happen to them in days to come he said of Simeon and Levi:

- Simeon and Levi are brothers; weapons of violence are their swords. ⁶Let my soul come not into their council; O my glory, be not joined to their company. For in their anger they killed men, and in their willfulness they hamstrung oxen. ⁷Cursed be their anger, for it is fierce, and their wrath, for it is cruel! I will divide them in Jacob and scatter them in Israel. (Gen. 49:5-7).

Nothing other than what they had done could be more deceitful, treacherous and cruel, these words Jacob spoke upon his dying bed were a fitting rebuke.

As the founder of Bible House of Grace, I would like to thank the many Christian scholars, commentators and theologians who have gone before me, and the many today, who have freely made available their works to enhance the knowledge of the Bible to all people worldwide. It is only with the help of these faithful writers that much of Bible House of Grace exists as it does today.

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