

Genesis Chapter 34 - Commentary By Mike Wells

Chapter 34 Overview:

We see more details of Jacob's life. His daughter is molested and we then see His sons get revenge. The chapter can be divided into two parts: (1) Dinah (his daughter) is defiled by Shechem in verses 1-19. And, (2) the Shechemites are murdered by Simeon and Levi (his sons) in verses 20-31.

Genesis 34 : 1-4 – *1 And Dinah the daughter of Leah, which she bare unto Jacob, went out to see the daughters of the land. 2 And when Shechem the son of Hamor the Hivite, prince of the country, saw her, he took her, and lay with her, and defiled her. 3 And his soul clave unto Dinah the daughter of Jacob, and he loved the damsel, and spake kindly unto the damsel. 4 And Shechem spake unto his father Hamor, saying, Get me this damsel to wife.*

- Dinah is Jacob's daughter through Leah
- She heads out into the world and bad things happen to her.
- One of the dangers of interacting with the world is the it can have on you and I.
- Dinah had gone "*out to see the daughters of the land.*"
- While getting to know the girls of Canaan, "*Shechem the son of Hamor the Hivite, prince of the country, saw her, he took her, and lay with her, and defiled her.*"
- It doesn't appear that this was a mutual coming together.
- The word translated as **defiled** (*anah*) basically means to 'humble' or 'humiliate.'
- That would seem to indicate he raped her.
- Either way, Shechem definitely took advantage of her.
- Though he did claim to love her, he certainly had acted wrongfully.
- He tried to make a wrong right, by asking his father to get her as his wife.
- Remember it was oriental custom of parents arrange their kids marriages.

Genesis 34 : 5-7 – *5 And Jacob heard that he had defiled Dinah his daughter: now his sons were with his cattle in the field: and Jacob held his peace until they were come. 6 And Hamor the father of Shechem went out unto Jacob to commune with him. 7 And the sons of Jacob came out of the field when they heard it: and the men were grieved, and they were very wroth, because he had wrought folly in Israel in lying with Jacob's daughter; which thing ought not to be done.*

- Jacob heard of the incident and withheld judgment until his sons had returned from their flocks.
- Shechem's father therefore "*went out unto Jacob to commune with him.*"
- The word translated as **commune** (*dabar*) is most commonly translated as 'speak.'
- Trouble was brewing and Shechem's father was trying to defuse it.
- When Jacob's sons heard what had happened they "*were grieved, and they were very wroth.*"
- The idea is they were enraged, ticked off, and wanted revenge.

- The word translated as **folly** (*nebalah*) has the idea of ‘disgrace’ in regard to moral matters.

Genesis 34 : 8-12 - *8 And Hamor communed with them, saying, The soul of my son Shechem longeth for your daughter: I pray you give her him to wife. 9 And make ye marriages with us, and give your daughters unto us, and take our daughters unto you. 10 And ye shall dwell with us: and the land shall be before you; dwell and trade ye therein, and get you possessions therein. 11 And Shechem said unto her father and unto her brethren, Let me find grace in your eyes, and what ye shall say unto me I will give. 12 Ask me never so much dowry and gift, and I will give according as ye shall say unto me: but give me the damsel to wife.*

- Hamor requested from Jacob that he grant his daughter Dinah in marriage to his son.
- He also proposed that they as a people intermarry, live together, do business together, etc
- He also offered to pay whatever Jacob would so require.
- Hamor for his part was probably sincere.
- From his ungodly perspective, marriage would make the matter right.

Genesis 34 : 13-17 - *13 And the sons of Jacob answered Shechem and Hamor his father deceitfully, and said, because he had defiled Dinah their sister: 14 And they said unto them, We cannot do this thing, to give our sister to one that is uncircumcised; for that were a reproach unto us: 15 But in this will we consent unto you: If ye will be as we be, that every male of you be circumcised; 16 Then will we give our daughters unto you, and we will take your daughters to us, and we will dwell with you, and we will become one people. 17 But if ye will not hearken unto us, to be circumcised; then will we take our daughter, and we will be gone.*

- Jacob’s sons apparently took control of the negotiations.
- However, in their desire for revenge, they dealt deceitfully.
- They wanted them to get circumcised not because of some theological stand they were making, but because they had were planning to trick them.
- They proposed that if Hamor, Shechem, and all their males would submit to be circumcised, then they would agree to intermarry and join together with them.

Genesis 34 : 18-19 - *18 And their words pleased Hamor, and Shechem Hamor’s son. 19 And the young man deferred not to do the thing, because he had delight in Jacob’s daughter: and he was more honourable than all the house of his father.*

- The proposition sounded good to Shechem and Hamor.
- In fact, Shechem “*deferred not to do the thing, because he had delight in Jacob’s daughter.*”
- In other words, he was ready to do it right away.
- The reference to him being more honorable than his father’s house may have to do with the fact he was willing to marry Dinah in light of what he had done.

Genesis 34 : 20-24 - *20 And Hamor and Shechem his son came unto the gate of their city, and communed with the men of their city, saying, 21 These men are peaceable with us; therefore let them dwell in the land, and trade therein; for the land, behold, it is large enough for them; let us take their daughters to us for wives, and let us give them our daughters. 22 Only herein will the men consent unto us for to dwell with us, to be one people, if every male among us be circumcised, as they are circumcised. 23 Shall not their cattle and their substance and every beast of theirs be ours? only let us consent unto them, and they will dwell with us. 24 And unto Hamor and unto Shechem his son hearkened all that went out of the gate of his city; and every male was circumcised, all that went out of the gate of his city.*

- Hamor and Shechem then returned and proceeded to ‘sell’ the men of the city on the idea.
- All that was required was for every male to be circumcised.
- They evidently also had an ulterior motive.
- In entering into an alliance with Jacob, they thought they would in one way or the other acquire his wealth.
- It seems they also had less than forthright motives and plans.
- Therefore, “*every male was circumcised which went out of the gate of this city.*”
- Every male old enough to go out of the gate of their city was circumcised.
- Remember though that Jacob and his brethren were not sincere in their proposition to begin with.
- It should be noted that just being circumcised did not make these Hivites the people of God.
- The parallel is similar to those who today think baptism makes one a child of God.
- Getting saved and trusting in Jesus is still the only way to become a child of God.

Genesis 34 : 25-29 - *25 And it came to pass on the third day, when they were sore, that two of the sons of Jacob, Simeon and Levi, Dinah’s brethren, took each man his sword, and came upon the city boldly, and slew all the males. 26 And they slew Hamor and Shechem his son with the edge of the sword, and took Dinah out of Shechem’s house, and went out. 27 The sons of Jacob came upon the slain, and spoiled the city, because they had defiled their sister. 28 They took their sheep, and their oxen, and their asses, and that which was in the city, and that which was in the field, 29 And all their wealth, and all their little ones, and their wives took they captive, and spoiled even all that was in the house.*

- Three days later, Simeon and Levi (two of her full brothers) came to Shechem and killed every male.
- They hit them while the men were still healing and sore from their circumcision, that is when Simeon and Levi retaliated.
- Implied is that Dinah meanwhile had become Shechem’s wife in that they took her out of his house.
- The rest of their brethren came and raided the city taking their livestock along with all their wealth, and taking captives the wives and children.
- They had presumably made a wrong right.
- However, in so doing, they had dealt cruelly, and unjustly.

- The two wrongs did not make anything right.
- Vengeance often breeds a worse wrong than was originally done.
- That certainly was the case here.
- Jacob would later condemn his own two sons on his death bed. (Genesis 49:5-7)

Genesis 34 : 30-31 - 30 And Jacob said to Simeon and Levi, Ye have troubled me to make me to stink among the inhabitants of the land, among the Canaanites and the Perizzites: and I being few in number, they shall gather themselves together against me, and slay me; and I shall be destroyed, I and my house. 31 And they said, Should he deal with our sister as with an harlot?

- Jacob's 10 sons had acted in vengeance (Joseph was probably too young to have participated).
- And Jacob understood the potential ramifications.
- He realized how small he and his clan were in distinction to the Canaanites around him.
- The word translated as **stink** (*bawash*) has the idea 'to become an abomination.'
- He feared the Canaanites and Perizzites would come in retaliation and destroy them.
- His young sons still continued to justify what they did.
- They were sticking up for their sister.
- They would not allow her to be treated as a harlot.
- Their error lied in taking matters into their own hands instead of letting God deal with the offenders.
- They also did not seek the counsel of their father.