

The Shame of Taking Revenge
Genesis 34:1-31

“The chapter does indeed give ‘an invaluable sidelight on the lives of the patriarchs.’ But it does more than this. It gives lessons and warning on how and how not to live our lives.

There is this too. Whenever the Bible contains material that reflects so badly not merely upon the sins of humanity in general but also upon the particular wickedness in the hearts and lives of God’s people, this is evidence of the divine and not merely the human origin of the Scriptures. Nowhere in the Bible does the corruption of the progenitors of the Jewish people show forth stronger than in this chapter. Yet in spite of the fact that Genesis is Israel’s first great religious book—which the Jews rightly love and prize—this chapter is still here, with all its evil and ugliness. How could this chapter get included in Genesis if Genesis were merely a human composition. Human writers would have suppressed these events, just as commentators sometimes seem compelled to suppress them today. The only way these events could have come to be included is that the ultimate author of the book (and all other canonical books) is God, who speaks the truth regardless of how it reflects on people.

As we study this chapter we find the words of 2 Timothy 3:16-17 to be true: “All Scripture is [indeed] God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness, so that the man of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work.” Boice

- I. The general context of this tragic story, which occurred years after Jacob bought land and settled in Shechem, is Jacob being in a place where he should not have been in the first place. Just because he built an altar there to worship the Lord doesn’t mean that that’s where God wanted Him. He was to be in Bethel not Shechem. Bethel was only 25 miles south of Shechem, so what’s the big deal? The big deal is that he wasn’t where God wanted him to be. After all God put him through to mature him, deepen his faith and toughen him up to follow and obey him without question, he still had, I don’t know, a pride problem or something of some sort going on in how he viewed life and even in how he viewed being in a relationship with the Lord. Maybe he thought it no big deal to do what he considered best for him and his family. After all, I built an altar to worship the Lord, he’s protected me, saved me from Esau, prospered me and has shown me great things. So surely, he’ll bless what I do. I’m good, no biggy. Maybe his reasoning was, we’re tired of not having a place of our own. I want to settle down, raise my family, so what’s the harm of settling in Shechem. Sadly, his reasoning left out the importance of living in the safety of God’s will. I don’t know if we fully grasp what it means to live in the will of God. It’s not a guessing game as some might think, but an important part of what it means to know and follow Christ.

Gen. 33:18-19

Gal. 5:17

Rom. 7:14-8:1

Rom. 12:1-2

II. The Lord doesn't want us to be naïve to the ways of the world. Therefore, it's our responsibility to keep ourselves from buying into its conditioning influence and deception. His grace provides us with His indwelling guidance and wisdom to enable us stay true to him, so there's no excuse. Jacob was without excuse in making sure his daughter was protected from being defiled in a culture that looked at promiscuous and unrestrained sex as a right. Morris states, *"Unattached young women were considered fair game in cities of the time, in which promiscuity was not only common but, in fact, a part of the very religious system itself."* We've been given the mind of Christ, and we are expected to use it lest we too fall prey to the harm Satan desires to inflict on Christian dupes who easily fall prey to his deceptive, godless and ruthless ways. We are in serious warfare, which requires that we *"Stand firm then, with the belt of truth buckled around our waist, with the breastplate of righteousness in place, 15 and with our feet fitted with the readiness that comes from the gospel of peace. 16 In addition to all this, take up the shield of faith, with which you can extinguish all the flaming arrows of the evil one. 17 Take the helmet of salvation and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God. 18 And pray in the Spirit on all occasions with all kinds of prayers and requests. With this in mind, be alert and always keep on praying for all the Lord's people"* (Eph. 6:14-18).

Gen. 34:1-23

1 Cor. 6:14-18

2 Cor. 2:11-16

"There was only one girl among Jacob's children, Dinah, the daughter of unloved Leah. Leah's children, as compared to Rachel's, were less favored by Jacob, and Dinah appeared to have been of little interest at all to Jacob. This coupled with the fact that Jacob was not where God wanted him to be geographically or spiritually left her particularly vulnerable. And so here in Shechem young Dinah was pushing at the edges when she 'went out to see the women of the land' (v. 1). Girls of marriageable age were not permitted to leave the tents of their people to go about visiting without a chaperone. In fact, the Hebrew term 'went out' bears a sense of impropriety. Likely she went out behind Leah's back. And the worst happened! Dinah became a victim of violent rape. 'And 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' (v.2). The three verbs ('seized...lay...humiliated') describe a progression of brutality—aggravated rape. Poor Dinah." Kent Hughes

III. The way Simeon and Levi retaliated was both shameful and cruel. The Lord says, *Beloved, never avenge yourselves, but leave it to the wrath of God, for it is written, "Vengeance is mine, I will repay, ... (Rom. 12:19)."* God's vengeance will be meted out in perfect justice, that's why we are to leave it to Him. Barnhouse summed it up this way, *"Jacob! You brought that trouble on yourself. You passed your own deceitful nature into your boys. You set them a constant example of guile. They heard you lie to Esau at Peniel and start northwest after he went southeast. They saw your interest in the fat pastures when you pitched your tent in Shechem. You said nothing when Dinah was violated... Talk to God about your own sin before talking to these boys about theirs."* That said, not all is lost. God's undeserving grace will prevail once again in Chapter 34. As a warning to us, we must be careful, for the time is short and the deception of the evil one is increasing at an accelerated rate. Maranatha!

Gen. 34:18-31

Gen. 49:5-7



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EDOM

Esau's homeland

SOUTH

Petra

Mt. Seir

EGYPT

Beersheba
Leah's camp

ISRAEL

Hebron

Bethlehem
Ephrath

Jerusalem

Bethel

JORDAN

10 miles (16 km)

Dead Sea

EAST

Jericho

CANAAN

WEST

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JORDAN RIVER VALLEY

Shechem

Nabulus

25 Miles (40 km) to Bethel
on meandering caravan route

Peniel

Jabbok River
Zarga

Succoth
Tell Deir Alla

Shechem's prince rapes Jacob's daughter Diana.
Her brothers kill all the men and enslave the survivors.

GET OUT OF SHECHEM

"God told Jacob, 'It's time to move on. Go to Bethel and live there.'" Genesis 35:1