

Genesis 33:18 – 34:31

^{33:18} Now Jacob came safely to the city of Shechem, which is in the land of Canaan, when he came from Paddan-aram, and camped before the city. ¹⁹ He bought the piece of land where he had pitched his tent from the hand of the sons of Hamor, Shechem's father, for one hundred pieces of money. ²⁰ Then he erected there an altar and called it El-Elohe-Israel. ^{34:1} Now Dinah the daughter of Leah, whom she had borne to Jacob, went out to visit the daughters of the land. ² When Shechem the son of Hamor the Hivite, the prince of the land, saw her, he took her and lay with her by force. ³ He was deeply attracted to Dinah the daughter of Jacob, and he loved the girl and spoke tenderly to her. ⁴ So Shechem spoke to his father Hamor, saying, 'Get me this young girl for a wife.' ⁵ Now Jacob heard that he had defiled Dinah his daughter; but his sons were with his livestock in the field, so Jacob kept silent until they came in. ⁶ Then Hamor the father of Shechem went out to Jacob to speak with him. ⁷ Now the sons of Jacob came in from the field when they heard it; and the men were grieved, and they were very angry because he had done a disgraceful thing in Israel by lying with Jacob's daughter, for such a thing ought not to be done. ⁸ But Hamor spoke with them, saying, 'The soul of my son Shechem longs for your daughter; please give her to him in marriage. ⁹ Intermarry with us; give your daughters to us and take our daughters for yourselves. ¹⁰ Thus you shall live with us, and the land shall be open before you; live and trade in it and acquire property in it.' ¹¹ Shechem also said to her father and to her brothers, 'If I find favor in your sight, then I will give whatever you say to me. ¹² Ask me ever so much bridal payment and gift, and I will give according as you say to me; but give me the girl in marriage.' ¹³ But Jacob's sons answered Shechem and his father Hamor with deceit, because he had defiled Dinah their sister. ¹⁴ They 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. ¹⁵ Only on this condition will we consent to you: if you will become like us, in that every male of you be circumcised, ¹⁶ then we will give our daughters to you, and we will take your daughters for ourselves, and we will live with you and become one people. ¹⁷ But if you will not listen to us to be circumcised, then we will take our daughter and go.' ¹⁸ Now their words seemed reasonable to Hamor and Shechem, Hamor's son. ¹⁹ The young man did not delay to do the thing, because he was delighted with Jacob's daughter. Now he was more respected than all the household of his father. ²⁰ So 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 friendly with us; therefore let them live in the land and trade in it, for behold, the land is large enough for them. Let us take their daughters in marriage, and give our daughters to them. ²² Only on this condition will the men consent to us to live with us, to become one people: that every male among us be circumcised as they are circumcised. ²³ Will not their livestock and their property and all their animals be ours? Only let us consent to them, and they will live with us.' ²⁴ All who went out of the gate of his city listened to Hamor and to his son Shechem, and every male was circumcised, all who went out of the gate of his city. ²⁵ Now it came about on the third day, when they were in pain, that two of Jacob's sons, Simeon and Levi, Dinah's brothers, each took his sword and came upon the city unawares, and killed every male. ²⁶ They killed Hamor and his son Shechem with the edge of the sword, and took Dinah from Shechem's house, and went forth. ²⁷ Jacob's sons came upon the slain and looted the city, because they had defiled their sister. ²⁸ They took their flocks and their herds and their donkeys, and that which was in the city and that which was in the field; ²⁹ and they captured and looted all their wealth and all their little ones and their wives, even all that was in the houses. ³⁰ Then Jacob said to Simeon and

Levi, 'You have brought trouble on me by making me odious among the inhabitants of the land, among the Canaanites and the Perizzites; and my men being few in number, they will gather together against me and attack me and I will be destroyed, I and my household.' ³¹ But they said, 'Should he treat our sister as a harlot?'

Historical and Cultural Background

- Jacob was married to both Leah and Rachel, favoring Rachel. Dinah was the daughter of Leah. How will he love his daughter Dinah?
- Shechem was still north of Bethel. Abraham had first stopped at Shechem, by the oak of Moreh, built an altar there, then went to the mountain between Bethel and Ai, and built another altar there (Gen.12:6 – 8).
- While Jacob was still in Paddam-Aram, God had spoken to Jacob in a dream to come back to *Bethel*: 'I am the God of Bethel, where you anointed a pillar, where you made a vow to Me; now arise, leave this land, and return to the land of your birth.' (Gen.31:13) Jacob's birthplace was near Beer-lahai-roi (Gen.25:11) and the family lived in Beersheba (Gen.26:23). God called Jacob to go to Bethel again in Gen.35:1.
- Circumcision was a Jewish covenant rite, which God commanded Abraham, and all males who followed Abraham, to do (Gen.17). Jews circumcised male converts to Judaism. For a male, it symbolized giving one's future to God. Implicitly, it was a cleansing of one's self, especially of certain attitudes of control over one's future.

Questions

1. Why is this story here?
 - a. To show how Jacob and his family are going spiritually downhill again
 - b. Jacob didn't go to Bethel as God commanded. Instead, Jacob bought land next to Shechem, like Lot camped next to Sodom
2. What should Jacob have done when he hears the news that Dinah was raped?
 - a. Been emotionally outraged at how Dinah was raped!
 - i. No reaction from Jacob is given by the narrator except that he kept silent. How must Dinah have felt if her father Jacob was really indifferent and silent??? This is truly uncaring.
 - ii. Now a wide emotional chasm opens up between Jacob and two of his sons Simeon and Levi. The men are grieved and angry, appropriately.
 - b. The narrator's use of the term 'defiled' further raises the stakes. This is more than an individual crime with moral guilt, for the act has rendered Dinah 'unclean.' 'Ricoeur has shown that an elemental notion of ritual uncleanness is more powerful, more compelling, and more dangerous than a judgment of moral guilt. That is, the woman is not simply taken. She is made ritually unacceptable...The shift of images from guilt to defilement makes the issue much more outrageous in the perception of Israel.'¹
 - c. Jacob should have immediately moved away, back to Bethel, where he was supposed to go
 - d. He should have refused Shechem's offer!
 - i. Why do you think Jacob agreed to the marriage? He's still fearful? He just wants money? He doesn't really care about Dinah?
 - ii. Why does Jacob allow Simeon and Levi to negotiate the marriage? He seems to have checked out...
 - e. As a result of the moral vacuum that Jacob leaves, Simeon and Levi plot revenge.
3. Shechem offers to make them 'one people': Where have we heard that before?
 - a. The Tower of Babel, where humanity was 'one people.' This is not a positive thing!
4. How do Hamor and Shechem 'sell' the idea of circumcision to the other men of the city?
 - a. Shechem is respected
 - b. Economic wealth and trade with Jacob's clan
5. How do the brothers respond in the absence of Jacob's spiritual leadership?
 - a. Simeon and Levi use deception and murder for revenge
 - b. They use Jewish ethics (circumcision) as a trick
 - c. Application: Are there ways that we don't appropriately separate ourselves from the world, especially when we are just coming back to the Lord in a fresh way?
 - d. Illus: There was once a woman who used Christian ethics as a trick. She broke up with her boyfriend, and within a week's time, began to date another guy, who was not a Christian. She should have relationally and to a significant degree physically removed herself from the presence of this second guy who liked her and was pursuing her. But she hid the truth from her friends under the guise of 'care for them,' i.e. not wanting to 'make them upset.' She even told me that she thought this second guy was being totally inconsiderate and selfish for pursuing her and telling her that he loved her when she clearly needed to grieve her breakup, become content with herself before the Lord, and not rebound. But she hid the truth from me as well: She actually was self-medicating and numbing the pain by enjoying this second guy. She then started to lie about this whole thing, and sow seeds of distrust among her friends, by suggesting that her friends' opinions of her were unreliable. When confronted about this (and her friends did this fairly well, in my opinion, following Matthew 5:21 – 26; 7:1 – 6; and 18:15 – 18), she claimed the Christian ethic of 'you're being judgmental.' The damage she did was significant. She damaged herself, the non-Christian guy pursuing her, and her friends.
6. What is the cost of spiritual compromise, exemplified by Jacob here?
 - a. Other people are endangered, spiritually, emotionally, and physically
 - b. Relationships are strained because our responses to people are imbalanced

¹ Walter Brueggemann, *Genesis* (Atlanta: John Knox, 1982), p.275 – 276

- c. Our witness is tarnished. Remember how Abraham built an altar on the top of a hill and worshiped God, so that everyone could see him worship? Jacob is now reversing Abraham's integrity and failing to live up to his grandfather.
- d. Application: Once again, we must not overestimate our strength. Our weaknesses can sneak up on us, especially relationally. It's not to say that we should just cut people off, but that our relationship with God needs to come first, and we need to seek the best of help from God's people. This is one reason why Paul said: ¹⁴Do not be bound together with unbelievers; for what partnership have righteousness and lawlessness, or what fellowship has light with darkness? ¹⁵Or what harmony has Christ with Belial, or what has a believer in common with an unbeliever? ¹⁶Or what agreement has the temple of God with idols? For we are the temple of the living God; just as God said, 'I will dwell in them and walk among them; and I will be their God, and they shall be My people. ¹⁷Therefore, come out from their midst and be separate,' says the Lord. 'And do not touch what is unclean; and I will welcome you. ¹⁸And I will be a father to you, and you shall be sons and daughters to Me,' says the Lord Almighty.' (2 Corinthians 6:14 – 18)