

**CALVARY PANDAN BIBLE-  
PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH**  
[Adapted from Bethel Bible-  
Presbyterian Church, 10 Downing St.  
Oakleigh, Vic., 3166]

## **DHW BIBLE CLASS**

### **LESSON 26**

## **THE BOOK OF GENESIS**

### **Chapter 34**

#### **INTRODUCTION**

Jacob's reconciliation with his brother Esau was complete. The scene ended with Esau departing in peace and loving affection. The two brothers were not mentioned together again except for the burial of Isaac (35:29).

Jacob and his family were in the Promised Land at last. They rested in Succoth and then went on to Shechem where Jacob bought a plot of land<sup>1</sup>. After Jacob's wrestling with God, one would expect the remainder of his life story to move from triumph to triumph. However, it was not to be. Jacob reaped his neglect of returning to Bethel without delay. He also reaped the neglect of disciplining his children in the ways of God.

Dinah was raped by a heathen prince. There was deception and treachery on the part of Jacob's sons. This chapter has much to offer in terms

of teaching us the proper way of resolving conflicts and in reminding parents of their responsibility toward their children.

#### **OUTLINE**

##### **A. Shechem, the Hivite Prince, Raped Dinah (34:1-5).**

1. Dinah, Leah's daughter, went out to see the women of the land (v.1).
2. Shechem, the son of Hamor the Hivite, raped Dinah (v.2).
3. Shechem, nevertheless, loved Dinah (v.3).
4. Shechem wanted his father to get Dinah for him as his wife (v.4).
5. Jacob held his peace until his sons returned from their work (v.5).

##### **B. Hamor, Shechem's father approached Jacob for the hand of Dinah for his son (34:6-17).**

1. Hamor approached Jacob to discuss the matter (v.6).
2. Jacob's sons were angry because of what Shechem did to Dinah (v.7).
3. Hamor proposed marriage between Shechem and Dinah (vv.8-10).
  - a. Hamor explained that Shechem was in love with Dinah and would like to marry her (v.8).

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<sup>1</sup> This is the second foothold of Abraham's family in the Promised Land.

- b. Hamor suggested the idea of intermarriages between their people (v.9).
  - c. In return, Jacob and his family will be able to live and trade in the land and prosper (v.10).
4. Shechem personally approached Jacob (vv.11-12).
- a. Shechem asked for grace from Jacob and his sons (v.11a).
  - b. Shechem was prepared to give them whatever dowry they wanted (vv.11b-12a).
  - c. Shechem asked to marry Dinah (v.12b).
5. Jacob's sons deceitfully proposed circumcision as the condition for marriage (vv.13-17).
- a. Jacob's sons remarked that they could not allow Dinah to marry an uncircumcised man (vv.13-14).
  - b. Jacob's sons agreed to the marriage on condition that all the Hivites men submit to circumcision (vv.15-16).
  - c. Jacob's sons threatened to leave with their sister if the condition was not accepted (v.17).

**C. Hamor and Shechem Agreed to the Circumcision (34:18-24).**

- 1. Hamor and Shechem readily accepted the condition of circumcision (vv.18-19).
- 2. Hamor and Shechem convinced all their men to be circumcised (vv.20-24).
  - a. They called their men together and explained to them (v.20).
  - b. They reasoned that the Israelites were peace loving, that their land was big enough to hold them, and that they would be able to inter-marry (v.21).
  - c. They explained that the only condition was circumcision (v.22).
  - d. They explained the benefits of agreeing to this condition (v.23).
  - e. The people were convinced and all the men agreed to be circumcised (v.24).

**D. The Treachery of Jacob's Sons Simeon and Levi (34:25-29).**

- 1. Simeon and Levi attacked and killed Hamor, Shechem and all the Hivites men on the third day after the circumcision when they were incapacitated (vv.25-26).
- 2. Jacob's sons plundered their possessions and livestock (vv.27-28).
- 3. Jacob's sons took the children and wives captive, and looted their houses (v.29).

### E. Jacob's Grief over Simeon's and Levi's treachery (34:30-31).

1. Jacob chided Simeon and Levi (v.30a).
2. Jacob complained that they had brought ill repute to his name (v.30b).
3. Jacob feared that the Canaanites would unite and destroy them (v.30c).
4. Simeon and Levi argued that they had the right to slay them because Shechem had treated Dinah like a harlot (v.31).

## COMMENTARY

### A Private Outrageous Act

After their reconciliation, Jacob went west, crossed the Jordan, and settled in Shalem, a city in Shechem, which means "peace" (33:18). The LORD had told him to return to Bethel, but he stopped short and settled in Shechem.

In Shechem, Dinah *went out to see the daughters of the land* (v.1). Dinah must have been about twelve to fourteen years of age.<sup>2</sup> No reason was given for Dinah being alone and unprotected. It was also not stated whether her parents gave her permission to visit with the heathen daughters of Canaan. On this occasion, she caught the attention of Shechem<sup>3</sup>, a tribal prince. Shechem raped her. After that, we are told that he wanted to marry

Dinah. He told his father to get Dinah for him as his wife. His loving attitude after outraging the modesty of Dinah does not excuse him of the sinful act. In the following transactions with the family, neither Hamor nor Shechem felt the need to apologise or offer some excuses. The incident illustrated that the Canaanites accepted such capricious action on the part of members of the royal family. The ways of the Shechemites were different from the ways of Jacob and his people.

What Shechem did to Dinah was clearly wrong according to God's law—*which thing ought not to be done* (v.7). The moral standard among the Hebrews does not permit sexual intimacy outside the bond of marriage<sup>4</sup>. The standard upheld during Moses' time was already practised during Jacob's time.<sup>5</sup> Shechem's act clearly violated the dignity of Dinah. It triggered a series of events that culminated in many deaths. When the standards of moral conduct are different, problems abound.

### Response and Restitution

Shechem's intention of marrying Dinah, however, was genuine. He told his father to speak to Jacob on his behalf and ask for the hand of Dinah. Jacob waited until his sons returned from the fields. There is some controversy over Jacob's response towards the bad news. Some criticised him for not taking the matter up immediately with Hamor and Shechem. Others commended him for waiting until his sons returned and discussing with

<sup>2</sup> Leupold, 897.

<sup>3</sup> The city was named Shechem. It probably was named after him.

<sup>4</sup>D. Stuart Briscoe, *Genesis*, 287. God had ordained that sex for conjugal love must be practised within holy matrimony.

<sup>5</sup> Baldwin, 144.

them. Jacob's sons were hurt and furious that such folly was committed against their family. They were the ones who negotiated the terms of the proposal with Hamor. We are left to wonder whether Jacob had relinquished his patriarchal leadership or that he was indecisive because Dinah was Leah's daughter and not Rachel's.<sup>6</sup>

In the marriage proposal, Hamor generously and diplomatically offered Jacob and his family the right to live and trade in the land. He suggested that the two peoples intermarry (vv.8-10). If this were allowed to happen, God's revelation to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, and his standards of moral behaviour would soon be merged with the heathen customs of the Shechemites. Israel would have been swallowed up. It would no longer be the nation intended by God.

Shechem also spoke to Jacob and Dinah's brothers. He was prepared to pay any dowry (the purchase price for a wife) for Dinah's hand (vv.11, 12). But the "sons of Jacob" replied that such an arrangement was not possible unless the male Shechemites were circumcised (v.16). They threatened to leave with Dinah. Hamor and Shechem were agreeable to the condition. Jacob's sons, however, had no intention of honouring the proposal. They had answered Shechem and Hamor deceitfully. Their action was also a demeaning of the rite of circumcision, which was only meant for those who have the desire and intent to be part of God's people. It was ordained of God for a set purpose as revealed and instructed by God in Genesis 17. While their outrage over the rape of their sister

is justified, their action of seeking revenge and their use of the means of circumcision were wrong.

Hamor convinced his people to be circumcised. He told them quite a different story from the one he used on Jacob's sons. He said that circumcision was a small price to pay for the cattle, substance and beast that belonged to Jacob's entourage (v.23). Hamor's sincerity was in doubt. He had revealed his true intention and ulterior motive. He had not given the issue of Dinah's rape due regard. Instead he had shown a careless attitude. He viewed his proposal of marriage as a means of making his people rich. He was persuasive and his people agreed to be circumcised.

### **One Evil Deed Provokes Another**

The male Shechemites were circumcised, *all that went out of the gate of his city* (v.24). The phrase refers to "those who had reached puberty and were therefore full citizens."<sup>7</sup> The city gate was the "customary council chamber or courthouse." Those that went out there were those who were entitled to sit there.<sup>8</sup> On the third day after the circumcision, when they were still in pain and temporarily incapacitated, Simeon and Levi slew all the males, including Hamor and Shechem. Then they plundered the city, taking their livestock and all their wealth. They also took the women and the children captive. Their attack was premeditated. It was ironical that Hamor had told his people that the Israelites were peaceable (v.21). Jacob was terribly grieved by their evil act of

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<sup>6</sup> Allen, 573.

<sup>7</sup> Baldwin, 145.

<sup>8</sup> Leupold, 907.

revenge. He feared that the surrounding peoples would unite and attack them. He strongly rebuked Simeon and Levi. Their reply is typical of that of many people today. They implied that Shechem had forced them to commit sin. This is never true. God says in Romans 12:19 "*Vengeance is mine: I will repay*".

### PRACTICAL VALUE

The people of God took vengeance into their own hands and profaned the name of the LORD. This retaliation was not commanded nor sanctioned by the LORD. Simeon and Levi had committed premeditated murder. Their outrage can be understood and appreciated, but their evil plan to kill is wrong. They exercised a terrible vengeance not only upon the man who had wronged Dinah but also against all the people of Shechem. Surely there is a better way – God’s way. This is a sad incident but such are the deeds of people when they act out of anger. God, in his infinite wisdom, says that man is always inclined towards evil and not good (Genesis 6:5; Jeremiah 17:9).<sup>9</sup>

Another lesson is the responsibility of parents toward their children. As head of the family, Jacob should have directed his children to keep the way of the Lord by doing what is right and just. Social interaction with the surrounding pagans led to a rapid degeneration of Jacob’s family. Dinah got into trouble

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<sup>9</sup>Genesis 6:5 And GOD saw that the wickedness of man *was* great in the earth, and *that* every imagination of the thoughts of his heart *was* only evil continually.

Jeremiah 17:9 The heart *is* deceitful above all *things*, and desperately wicked: who can know it?

because she went to “visit the women of the land.” One wonders whether the incident could have been avoided -- If Jacob had not settled at Shechem but had moved on to Bethel (35:1) without delay -- If Dinah had not been alone but had been chaperoned.

Often times, we are too busy to care until something happens. By then, it is usually too late. Parents should take the time to discipline their children and bring them up in the fear the LORD. The evil deeds of Jacob’s children smacked of deception, brutality, cruelty, deep-seated anger and spiritual barrenness. It has the make-up of a nightmare for any parent. Therein lies a lesson for all parents --let us invest in our children lest we reap the horror of our neglect. AMEN

## DHW BIBLE CLASS

### LESSON 26

## THE BOOK OF GENESIS

### Chapter 34

## DAILY READINGS & DISCUSSION

### QUESTIONS

#### Daily Readings

Monday: Genesis 34:1-5; Psalms 1:1-6; 1 John 2:15-17.

Tuesday: Genesis 34:6-12; Matthew 5:1-16.

Wednesday: Genesis 34:13-17;  
Deuteronomy 7:1-6; 2Corinthians 6:14-18.

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Thursday: Genesis 34:18-24;  
1Thessalonians 2:1-12.

Friday: Genesis 34:25-31; Romans  
15:1-4; 1 Corinthians 10:11-13.

**Discussion Questions**

1. Answer the following in the context  
of verses 1-12.

a. Was it alright for Dinah to visit the  
women of the land?

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b. What wrong did Shechem commit?

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c. How did Jacob respond?

d. How did Jacob's sons respond?

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e. What was Hamor's proposition?

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f. How much dowry was Shechem  
willing to give?

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2. What are the possible explanations for Jacob's inaction?

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3. Hamor and Shechem tried to redress the wrong Shechem had done to Dinah. What do you think of their attempt to solve the problem?

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4. Is it proper for the brothers to use the rite of circumcision to trick and incapacitate the Shechemites?

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5. How did Hamor convince his people to consent to the circumcision?

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6. Compare what Hamor said to his people and what he had earlier said to the sons of Jacob. What do you detect?

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7. What should be our attitude towards our loved ones who had let us down and caused us pain?

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8. How do family members maintain their respect for one another?

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