

## **Genesis 34 – Jacob’s Family is Defiled by Entanglement With the Hivites**

### **Read Genesis 34:1-31**

Jacob had not returned to Bethel, but had settled in Shechem. Trouble ensued, as he and his family became defiled by entanglement with the pagan people of the land, the Hivites. The first interaction between the family and the people of the land was Dinah going out to meet the women. By settling near them, Jacob had invited all sorts of trouble.

Vs. 2: the words used in the original Hebrew make it clear that this was no seduction but a violent rape.

Dinah, Simeon, and Levi are all children of Leah. Although “the sons of Jacob” deceived Hamor and Shechem, it was Simeon and Levi who came upon the city and killed the men. Whether the other sons knew of this plan is unclear, but Jacob later held only Simeon and Levi accountable (Genesis 49:7).

The Canaanites wanted to absorb the Israelites and obtain the blessings Jacob had received from the Lord. This was a constant threat posed by the Canaanites to Israel. The Law would later clearly outlaw such intermarriage (Deut 7:1-6). Intermarriage was never a racial issue, but a religious one. It was allowed if the gentile converted and was circumscribed. Here, the Shechemites did not view it as a sign of conversion. It is troubling that Simeon and Levi used what was for the Israelites a sacred ceremony in this way.

This passage exemplifies two opposing reactions to evil: silent indifference and furious vengeance. The brothers acted on behalf of honor, but their vengeance far exceeded the crime. Jacob was so anxious to maintain the peace that he was silent and indifferent. Jacob is appeased by the offer of money, and silently watches as his sons broker an agreement of intermarriage between his family and the Hivites. Only after they have killed the men of the city and looted it does Jacob speak. And then what are his objections to his sons’ actions? How is their response a legitimate one? What middle course of action could Jacob have taken?

## **Genesis 35 – Jacob Returns to Bethel**

Jacob returns home to Bethel. Twenty years previously he fled from his brother Esau who, furious at the fact that Jacob “stole” his birthright and blessings from him, wanted to kill him. During his years away Jacob built wealth and a large family. He also matured greatly during his time under his employ of his deceitful uncle and father-in-law, Laban.

Jacob’s return was the fulfillment of the promise God had made to Jacob twenty years earlier; the altar was the fulfillment of Jacob’s promise in return. See Genesis 28:13-15 and 20-22. Jacob calls his family to repentance and rededication. He purifies them from foreign gods. God appeared to him and blessed him.

But Jacob also suffers four heartaches.

1. The death of Deborah, Rebekah’s nurse.
2. Rachel’s death
3. The betrayal by Reuben the firstborn, in sleeping with Bilhah
4. Isaac’s death

God’s appearance and blessing marks the culmination of the Abraham-Isaac-Jacob story and blessing to their descendants. Until that point, the blessing was selective, Isaac instead of Ishmael, Jacob instead of Esau. From this point, all the descendants partake in the blessing, and Jacob’s 12 sons are listed as the patriarchs of the twelve tribes of Israel.