

Sent: Saturday, March 30, 2019 6:09 PM  
Subject: March 26 MOB Study on Genesis 33:18-34:31

"Do not be unequally yoked together with unbelievers; for what partnership has righteousness and lawlessness? Or what fellowship has light with darkness? What accord has Christ with Beliel? Or what portion does a believer share with an unbeliever? What agreement has the temple of God with idols? For we are the temple of the living God; as God said: "I will make My dwelling among them and walk among them; and I will be their God, and they shall be My people!" (2 Corinthians 6:14-15)

Bill Arnold notes that it's "sometimes difficult to understand why certain episodes are recorded in the Bible"! And this text (Genesis 33:18-34:31), recording the "defilement" of Jacob's daughter, Dinah, and the resulting "vengeance" exhibited by her brothers (Jacob's sons) may be one such episode! And yet, it's part of the inspired Word of God and warrants our attention!

After the reconciliation between Jacob and his brother Esau, and Jacob's sojourn in Succoth (Genesis 33:19), he and his family (and the rest of his entourage) arrived "safely" in the city of Shechem, in the land of Canaan, on the way to his ultimate destination in Bethel! In Shechem he bought a "piece of land" (from Hamor, the Hivite, who was also "king" of Shechem), and then built an altar to God, which he called "El-Elohe-Israel," which means "God, the God of Israel" (reminiscent of what Abraham had done many years earlier, when he first entered Canaan)! Things were looking up for Jacob and Co. at this point, or so it seemed!

We're not told how long Jacob lived in Shechem, but long enough for his daughter, Dinah, as a young teenager, "to go out to visit with the daughters of the land." And, somewhere along the line, through that association, to be seduced by Shechem (same name as the city) who was the son of Hamor, the "prince of the land" (Genesis 34:1-2).

Verse 3 says that Shechem, the young prince, "was deeply attracted to Dinah...loved her and spoke tenderly to her..." and asked his father, Hamor, to "get this young girl for his wife"! (Fie, fi, fiddly, Io!)

When Jacob first learned that Shechem "defiled" his daughter, he apparently remained silent about it, until his sons, who had been out in the fields tending livestock, heard about it, and came back totally outraged that "he (Shechem) had done such a disgraceful thing in Israel (first recorded usage of the term "Israel")!

Hamor meanwhile had come to speak with Jacob and his sons saying how much Shechem "longed for Dinah" and begged Jacob to "give her to him in marriage"! In fact, he asked Jacob "to intermarry with them... to give his daughters (note the plural) to them, and take their daughters (Hivite girls) for yourselves"! And further, to "live with them, in a land open before you...Live and trade in it and acquire property in it"! He obviously saw economic gain, among other things, through this alliance! (Remember that this was land already promised by God, exclusively, to the descendants of Abraham!)

Then Shechem spoke up! "If I find favor in your sight, then I will give whatever you say to me! 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!"

Jacob apparently kept his silence, but his sons answered Shechem and his father Hamor with deceit (seems to run in the family). And so, in their deceitful way, they set up a deceitful plan! Basically, denying giving their sister to one who is "uncircumcised"! On the other hand, they said that "if they would become like us, and every male became circumcised, then "we will give our daughters (again, plural) to you, and we will take your daughters for ourselves, and we will live with you and become one people!" (Arnold notes that it's a pitiable illustration of the entire episode that God's great sign of His covenant with Abraham (and Israel) became a "ploy" on the part of the blood-thirsty sons of Jacob to take revenge against the Shechemites!)

Again, Jacob is silent! But Hamor and Shechem respond favorably! "Sounds reasonable to us!" And so, next we see Hamor and Shechem in the "gate of the city" (where business is conducted) espousing Jacob's sons' proposal to the people of the city, indicating apparently how beneficial it would be for everyone! Like a political thing! Establish good will with these "new-comers" and everything will be great!

Well, you know the rest of the story! Every male in the city was circumcised! (vs. 24) And "on the third day, when they were in pain, Jacob's sons, Simeon and Levi ("blood" brothers of Dinah and children of Leah) "took their swords...and came upon the city unawares, and killed every male...including Hamor and Shechem" Wow! Can you believe it?

But the terror was not complete! Then Simeon and Levi, apparently accompanied by the other brothers, "looted the city...and took their flocks and their herds and their donkeys, and that which was in the field, and they captured and looted all their wealth and their little ones and their wives, even all that was in the houses!"

Then, finally, we get the reaction from Jacob (in vs. 30): "You have brought trouble on me, making me odious among the inhabitants of the land (beyond Shechem), 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!" (Arnold notes that Jacob "seemed more concerned about the potentially negative repercussions on him than about the deception of his sons or their abuse of the sacred rite of circumcision!" Wilmington adds that he expresses no sorrow for the defilement of his daughter and no regrets about the whole city being exterminated, or concerns about the reactions from God!)

By contrast, Simeon and Levi asked their father: "Should we treat our sister as a harlot?" (Genesis 24:31) Again, Jacob apparently offered no response! (But, as "Shepherd's Notes" notes, he now "knew how difficult it was, and would be, to live peaceably among people who were not under God's covenant"! ) And that's where our story ends!

Arnold notes that "the possibilities and hazards of intermarriage with the pagan Canaanites (and Hivites too) are never far from the surface in the narratives of Genesis! Most notably, Abraham's

concern that Isaac might marry outside the patriarchal family, like Ishmael had done (Genesis 21:21; 24:3-4) and Esau disappointing his parents by marrying Hittites (26:34-35)

These are the words of Moses many years later (in Deuteronomy 7:1-4) when the children of Israel were returning to the promised land: "When the Lord brings you into the land where you are entering to possess it, and clears away many nations before you, the Hittites and the Girgashites and the Amorites and the Canaanites and the Perizzites and the Hivites and the Jebusites, seven nations greater and stronger than you, and when the Lord your God delivers them before you and you defeat them, then you shall utterly destroy them! You shall make no covenant with them and show no favor to them! Furthermore, you shall not intermarry with them; you shall not give your daughters to their sons, nor shall you take their daughters for your sons!" Wow! It couldn't be clearer!

And the same principle is applicable to God's people today! As clearly stated in 2 Corinthians 6:14-16 (our memory verse given above)!

But what about "revenge"? Romans 12:19 says: "Never take our own revenge, beloved, but leave room for the wrath of God! For it is written, "Vengeance is Mine, I will repay," says the Lord!" And in verse 21, "Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good!"

Interestingly, though not speaking out and standing up for righteousness and justice at the time of this malady, the cruelty and wrongful acts of Simeon and Levi were not forgotten by Jacob and would have consequences! Genesis 49:5-7 shows Jacob's repute for Simeon when, at the end of his life, he summoned his sons and talked to them about their destinies. Simeon would become the smallest tribe of the children of Israel, and be omitted from the blessing of Moses (in Deuteronomy 33); and Levi's descendants would be scattered in Israel, living in "cities of refuge," but ironically, become the priestly line of Israel (all of which is another story)!

And so, we get back to the original question, "Why was this sordid story recorded in Scripture?"

John MacArthur writes that, "the tawdry details of the abuse of Dinah and the revenge of Simeon and Levi are recounted in detail, perhaps in order to highlight for the readers about to enter Canaan, how easily Abraham's descendants might intermingle and marry with Canaanites, contrary to God's will! And, as "Shepherd's Note's" notes, how difficult it is for God's people (children, in particular) to live in a sinful culture!

And the caution applies as well to us, today, as we too face and become involved in deeply troubling family issues relating to our culture and its influence on our lives and on the lives of our children! May God grant us the wisdom, through His Word, to be able to deal with them with godly wisdom and rightful action, without concerns about how they might reflect on us personally!

Well, walk with the Lord this week, men, as "people of God" and be a blessing to your family, and to your world!

Lowell