GENESIS

Chapter 34

*Dinah and the Shechemites*

**Now Dinah, the daughter Leah had borne to Jacob, went out to visit the women of the land. 2 When Shechem son of Hamor the Hivite, the ruler of that area, saw her, he took her and violated her. 3 His heart was drawn to Dinah daughter of Jacob, and he loved the girl and spoke tenderly to her. 4 And Shechem said to his father Hamor, “Get me this girl as my wife.” When Jacob heard that his daughter Dinah had been defiled, his sons were in the fields with his livestock; so he kept quiet about it until they came home. 6 Then Shechem’s father Hamor went out to talk with Jacob. 7 Now Jacob’s sons had come in from the fields as soon as they heard what had happened. They were filled with grief and fury, because Shechem had done a disgraceful thing in Israel by lying with Jacob’s daughter—a thing that should not be done. 8 But Hamor said to them, “My son Shechem has his heart set on your daughter. Please give her to him as his wife. 9 Intermarry with us; give us your daughters and take our daughters for yourselves. 10 You can settle among us; the land is open to you. Live in it, trade in it, and acquire property in it.” 11 Then Shechem said to Dinah’s father and brothers, “Let me find favor in your eyes, and I will give you whatever you ask. 12 Make the price for the bride and the gift I am to bring as great as you like, and I’ll pay whatever you ask me. Only give me the girl as my wife.” 13 Because their sister Dinah had been defiled, Jacob’s sons replied deceitfully as they spoke to Shechem and his father Hamor. 14 They said to them, “We can’t do such a thing; we can’t give our sister to a man who is not circumcised. That would be a disgrace to us. 15 We will give our consent to you on one condition only: that you become like us by circumcising all your males. 16 Then we will give you our daughters and take your daughters for ourselves. We’ll settle among you and become one people with you. 17 But if you will not agree to be circumcised, we’ll take our sister and go.” 18 Their proposal seemed good to Hamor and his son Shechem. 19 The young man, who was the most honored of all his father’s household, lost no time in doing what they said, because he was delighted with Jacob’s daughter. 20 So Hamor and his son Shechem went to the gate of their city to speak to their fellow townsmen. 21 “These men are friendly toward us,” they said. “Let them live in our land and trade in it; the land has plenty of room for them. We can marry their daughters and they can marry ours. 22 But the men will consent to live with us as one people only on the condition that our males be circumcised, as they themselves are. 23 Won’t their livestock, their property and all their other animals become ours? So let us give our consent to them, and they will settle among us.” 24 All the men who went out of the city gate agreed with Hamor and his son Shechem, and every male in the city was circumcised. 25 Three days later, while all of them were still in pain, two of Jacob’s sons, Simeon and Levi, Dinah’s brothers, took their swords and attacked the unsuspecting city, killing every male. 26 They put Hamor and his son Shechem to the sword and took Dinah from Shechem’s house and left. 27 The sons of Jacob came upon the dead bodies and looted the city where their sister had been defiled. 28 They seized their flocks and herds and donkeys and everything else of theirs in the city and out in the fields. 29 They carried off all their wealth and all their women and children, taking as plunder everything in the houses. 30 Then Jacob said to Simeon and Levi, “You have brought trouble on me by making me a stench to the Canaanites and Perizzites, the people living in this land. We are few in number, and if they join forces against me and attack me, I and my household will be destroyed.” 31 But they replied, “Should he have treated our sister like a prostitute?”**

**34:1–31** The name of God ends ch. 33 and begins ch. 35, but it is completely absent from this sordid chapter (see note on 7:16). (CSB)

**34:2** *Shechem.* See 33:19. He was probably named after the city. (CSB)

*prince*. Master, tribal chief.

*lay with her and humiliated her*. Raped her. (TLSB)

**34:4** *Get me this girl as my wife.* See note on 21:21. (CSB)

God later forbade the Israelites from marrying foreigners (Dt 7:1–5). (TLSB)

**34:7** *Israel.* The clan of Israel. *a thing that should not be done.* Cf. Tamar’s plea to Amnon in a similar situation (2Sa 13:12). (CSB)

**34:9** *Intermarry with us.* The Canaanites wanted to absorb Israel (see v. 16) in order to benefit from the blessings Jacob had received from the Lord (both his offspring and his possessions—vv. 21–23). This was a danger Israel constantly faced from other peoples and nations—either absorption or hostility, both of which are perpetual threats to the people of God. (CSB)

Hamor’s interest was more than in his son’s marriage. He wanted Jacob’s house to be assimilated to the Hivite culture and economy. (TLSB)

**34:12** *the price for the bride and the gift I am to bring.* For a specific example of this marriage custom see 24:53. (CSB)

Hbr *mohar*, compensation for the loss of a daughter. The bride price would be given to Jacob. (TLSB)

*gift*. Given to Dinah as a dowry. (TLSB)

**34:13** *Jacob’s sons replied deceitfully.* Like father, like son (see 27:24; see also note on 25:26). (CSB)

Jacob’s sons probably resorted to deception because they thought themselves outnumbered. Luther: “They made pretense and lied in word and deed … for the destruction and ruin of the Shechemites. This assuredly was a mortal sin” (AE 6:202). (TLSB)

**34:14** *uncircumcised*. The Hivites, like some other Near Eastern groups, did not practice circumcision. (TLSB)

**34:15** Using a sacred ceremony for a sinful purpose (see vv. 24–25). (CSB)

By demanding that the Hivites be circumcised, Jacob’s sons treated this sign of God’s sacred covenant flippantly. They used God’s holy institution for a secular, even sinful, purpose. (TLSB)

**34:17** *we will take our daughter*. The brothers assumed the role of their father when referring to their sister. (TLSB)

**34:20** *gate of their city.* See notes on 19:1; 23:10. (CSB)

Where the political business of many ancient cities was transacted. (TLSB)

**34:23** *Will not their livestock* … *be ours?* Through marriage. (TLSB)

The greed of the men of Shechem led to their destruction. (CSB)

**34:24** The Canaanites were even willing to submit to Israel’s covenant rite in order to attain their purposes. (CSB)

**34:25** *sore*. Pain from a surgery such as circumcision is often most intense on the third day. (TLSB)

*Simeon and Levi.* Because they slaughtered the men of Shechem, their own descendants would be scattered far and wide (see note on 49:7). (CSB)

*Dinah’s brothers.* All three were children of Leah (29:33–34; 30:21). (CSB)

*killing every male.* Shechem’s crime, serious as it was, hardly warranted such brutal and extensive retaliation (see vv. 27–29).

**34:29** In biblical times, conquering armies often enslaved the women and children of captured cities. Sometimes the slaves would later be sold (cf 37:28). (TLSB)

**34:30** *making me stink*. This cruel deed might give Jacob an evil reputation. (TLSB)

*Perizzites.* See note on 13:7. (CSB)

**34:31** Question implies that Jacob did not care how Dinah was treated. (TLSB)

**Ch 34** One sin leads to another. Shechem rapes Dinah, and Jacob’s sons abuse God’s holy institution of circumcision so they could massacre the men of Shechem. Christians, beware! Those who treat God’s holy things carelessly and who nurture vengeance prepare for themselves lasting misery. Zeal for a right cause is good, but moderation and due process are also required. The same Savior who died for us also died for sinners such as Shechem and Jacob’s sons. • Lord Jesus, grant me wisdom and patience. Help me to love others as You have loved me. Amen. (TLSB)