

# CHAPTER 34

At this chapter begins the story of Jacob's afflictions in his children, which were very great, and are recorded to show,

**1.** The vanity of this world. That which is dearest to us may prove our greatest vexation, and we may meet with the greatest crosses in those things of which we said, "This same shall comfort us."

**2.** The common griefs of good people. Jacob's children were circumcised, were well taught, and prayed for, and had very good examples set them; yet some of them proved very untoward. "The race is not to the swift, nor the battle to the strong." Grace does not run in the blood, and yet the interrupting of the entail of grace does not cut off the entail of profession and visible church-privileges: nay, Jacob's sons, though they were his grief in some things, yet were all taken into covenant with God. In this chapter we have,

**I.** Dinah debauched (v. 1-5).

**II.** A treaty of marriage between her and Shechem who had defiled her (v. 6-19).

**III.** The circumcision of the Shechemites, pursuant to that treaty (v. 20-24).

**IV.** The perfidious and bloody revenge which Simeon and Levi took upon them (v. 25-31).

## GENESIS 34:1-5

### DINAH DISHONoured

Dinah was, for aught that appears, Jacob's only daughter, and we may suppose her therefore the mother's fondling and the darling of the family, and yet she proves neither a joy nor a credit to them; for those children seldom prove either the best or the happiest that are most indulged. She is reckoned now but fifteen or sixteen years of age when she here occasioned so much mischief. Observe,

**1.** Her vain curiosity, which exposed her. She went out, perhaps unknown to her father, but by the connivance of her mother, *to see the daughters of the land* (v. 1); probably it was at a ball, or on some public day. Being an only daughter, she thought herself solitary at home, having none of her own age and sex to converse with; and therefore she must needs go abroad to divert herself, to keep off melancholy, and to accomplish herself by conversation better than she could in her father's tents. Note, It is a very good thing for children to love home; it is parents' wisdom to make it easy to them, and children's duty then to be easy in it. Her pretence was *to see the daughters of the land*, to see how they dressed, and how they danced, and what was fashionable among them. She went to *see*, yet that was not all, she went to be *seen* too; she went to see the daughters of the land, but, it may be, with some thoughts of the sons of the land too. I doubt she went to get an acquaintance with those Canaanites, and to learn their way. Note, The pride and vanity of young people betray them into many snares.

**2.** The loss of her honour by this means (v. 2): *Shechem, the prince of the country*, but a slave to his own lusts, took her, and lay with her, it should seem, not so much by force as by surprise. Note, Great men think they may do any thing; and what more mischievous than untaught and ungoverned youth? See what came of Dinah's gadding: young women must learn to be *chaste, keepers at home*; these properties are put together, <sup><1015></sup>Titus 2:5, for those that are not keepers at home expose their chastity. Dinah went abroad to look about her; but, if she had looked about her as she ought, she would not have fallen into this snare. Note, The beginning of sin is as the letting forth of water. How great a matter does a little fire kindle! We should therefore carefully avoid all occasions of sin and approaches to it.

**3.** The court Shechem made to her, after he had defiled her. This was fair and commendable, and made the best of what was bad; he loved her (not as Amnon, <sup><1015></sup>2 Samuel 13:15), and he engaged his father to make a match for him with her, v. 4. 4. The tidings brought to poor Jacob, v. 5. As soon as his children grew up they began to be a grief to him. Let not godly parents, that are lamenting the miscarriages of their children, think their case singular or unprecedented. The good man *held his peace*, as one astonished, that knows not what to say: or he said nothing, for fear of saying amiss, as David (<sup><1011></sup>Psalm 39:1, 2); he smothered his resentments, lest, if he had suffered them to break out, they should have transported him into any decencies. Or, it should seem, he had left the management of

his affairs very much (too much I doubt) to his sons, and he would do nothing without them: or, at least, he knew they would make him uneasy if he did, they having shown themselves, of late, upon all occasions, bold, forward, and assuming. Note, Things never go well when the authority of a parent runs low in a family. Let every man *bear rule in his own house, and have his children in subjection with all gravity.*

## ~~1806~~ GENESIS 34:6-17

### TREACHERY OF DINAH'S BRETHREN

Jacob's sons, when they heard of the injury done to Dinah, showed a very great resentment of it, influenced perhaps rather by jealousy for the honour of their family than by a sense of virtue. Many are concerned at the shamefulness of sin that never lay to heart the sinfulness of it. It is here called *folly in Israel* (v. 7), according to the language of after-times; for Israel was not yet a people, but a family only. Note,

- 1.** Uncleanness is folly; for it sacrifices the favour of God, peace of conscience, and all the soul can pretend to that is sacred and honourable, to a base and brutish lust.
- 2.** This folly is most shameful in *Israel*, in a family of Israel, where God is known and worshipped, as he was in Jacob's tents, by the name of *the God of Israel*. Folly in Israel is scandalous indeed.
- 3.** It is a good thing to have sin stamped with a bad name: uncleanness is here proverbially called *folly in Israel*, ~~1802~~ 2 Samuel 13:12. Dinah is here called *Jacob's daughter*, for warning to all the daughters of Israel, that they betray not themselves to this folly.

Hamor came to treat with Jacob himself, but he turns him over to his sons; and here we have a particular account of the treaty, in which, it is a shame to say, the Canaanites were more honest than the Israelites.

**I.** Hamor and Shechem fairly propose this match, in order to a coalition in trade. Shechem is deeply in love with Dinah; he will have her upon any terms, v. 11, 12. His father not only consents, but solicits for him, and gravely insists upon the advantages that would follow from the union of the families, v. 9, 10. He shows no jealousy of Jacob, though he was a

stranger, but rather an earnest desire to settle a correspondence with him and his family, making him that generous offer, *The land shall be before you, trade you therein.*

**II.** Jacob's sons basely pretend to insist upon a coalition in religion, when really they designed nothing less. If Jacob had taken the management of this affair into his own hands, it is probable that he and Hamor would soon have concluded it; but Jacob's sons meditate only revenge, and a strange project they have for the compassing of it — the Shechemites must be circumcised; not to make them holy (they never intended that), but to make them sore, that they might become an easier prey to their sword.

**1.** The pretence was specious. “It is the honour of Jacob's family that they carry about with them the token of God's covenant with them; and it will be a reproach to those that are thus dignified and distinguished to enter into such a strict alliance with those that are *uncircumcised* (v. 14); and therefore, *if you will be circumcised, then we will become one people with you,*” v. 15, 16. Had they been sincere herein their proposal of these terms would have had in it something commendable; for Israelites should not intermarry with Canaanites, professors with profane; it is a great sin, or at least the cause and inlet of a great deal, and has often been of pernicious consequence. The interest we have in any persons, and the hold we have of them, should be wisely improved by us, to bring them to the love and practice of religion (*He that winneth souls is wise*); but then we must not, like Jacob's sons, think it enough to persuade them to submit to the external rites of religion, but must endeavour to convince them of its reasonableness, and to bring them acquainted with the power of it.

**2.** The intention was malicious, as appears by the sequel of the story; all they aimed at was to prepare them for the day of slaughter. Note, Bloody designs have often been covered, and carried on, with a pretence of religion; thus they have been accomplished most plausibly and most securely: but this dissembled piety is, doubtless, double iniquity. Religion is never more injured, nor are God's sacraments more profaned, than when they are thus used for a cloak of maliciousness. Nay, if Jacob's sons had not had this bloody design, I do not see how they could justify their offering the sacred sign of circumcision, the seal of God's covenant, to these devoted Canaanites, who had no part nor lot in the matter. Those had no right to the seal that had no right to the promise. *It is not meet to take*

*the children's bread, and cast it to dogs:* but Jacob's sons valued not this, while they could make it serve their turn.

## GENESIS 34:18-24

### TREACHERY OF DINAH'S BRETHREN

Here,

**1.** Hamor and Shechem gave consent themselves to be circumcised, v. 18, 19. To this perhaps they were moved, not only by the strong desire they had to bring about this match, but by what they might have heard of the sacred and honourable intentions of this sign, in the family of Abraham, which, it is probable, they had some confused notions of, and of the promises confirmed by it, which made them the more desirous to incorporate with the family of Jacob, <sup>3023</sup>Zechariah 8:23. Note, Many who know little of religion, yet know so much of it as makes them willing to join themselves with those that are religious. Again, If a man would take upon him a form of religion to gain a good wife, much more should we embrace the power of it to gain the favour of a good God, even circumcise our hearts to love him, and, as Shechem here, *not defer to do the thing.*

**2.** They gained the consent of the men of their city, Jacob's sons requiring that they also should be circumcised.

**(1.)** They themselves had great influences upon them by their command and example. Note, Religion would greatly prevail if those in authority, who, like Shechem, are more honourable than their neighbours, would appear forward and zealous for it.

**(2.)** They urged an argument which was very cogent (v. 23), *Shall not their cattle and their substance be ours?* They observed that Jacob's sons were industrious thriving people, and promised themselves and their neighbours advantage by an alliance with them; it would improve ground and trade, and bring money into their country. Now,

**[1.]** It was bad enough to marry upon this principle: yet we see covetousness the greatest matchmaker in the world, and nothing designed so much, with many, as the laying of house to house, and field to field, without regard had to any other consideration.

[2.] It was worse to be circumcised upon this principle. The Shechemites will embrace the religion of Jacob's family only in hopes of interesting themselves thereby in the riches of that family. Thus there are many with whom gain is godliness, and who are more governed and influenced by their secular interest than by any principle of their religion.

## GENESIS 34:25-31

### MURDER OF THE SHECHEMITES

Here, we have Simeon and Levi, two of Jacob's sons, young men not much above twenty years old, cutting the throats of the Shechemites, and thereby breaking the heart of their good father.

I. Here is the barbarous murder of the Shechemites. Jacob himself was used to the sheep-hook, but his sons had got swords by their sides, as if they had been the seed of Esau, who was to live by his sword; we have them here,

1. Slaying the inhabitants of Shechem — *all the males*, Hamor and Shechem particularly, with whom they had been treating in a friendly manner but the other day, yet with a design upon their lives. Some think that all Jacob's sons, when they wheedled the Shechemites to be circumcised, designed to take advantage of their soreness, and to rescue Dinah from among them; but that Simeon and Levi, not content with that, would themselves avenge the injury — and they did it with a witness. Now,

(1.) It cannot be denied but that God was righteous in it. Had the Shechemites been circumcised in obedience to any command of God, their circumcision would have been their protection; but when they submitted to that sacred rite only to serve a turn, to please their prince and to enrich themselves, it was just with God to bring this upon them. Note, As nothing secures us better than true religion, so nothing exposes us more than religion only pretended to.

(2.) But Simeon and Levi were most unrighteous.

[1.] It was true that Shechem had *wrought folly against Israel*, in defiling Dinah; but it ought to have been considered how far Dinah herself had

been accessory to it. Had Shechem abused her in her own mother's tent, it would have been another matter; but she went upon his ground, and perhaps by her indecent carriage had struck the spark which began the fire: when we are severe upon the sinner we ought to consider who was the tempter.

[2.] It was true that Shechem had done ill; but he was endeavouring to atone for it, and was as honest and honourable, *ex post facto* — *after the deed*, as the case would admit: it was not the case of the Levite's concubine that was abused to death; nor does he justify what he has done, but courts a reconciliation upon any terms.

[3.] It was true that Shechem had done ill; but what was that to all the Shechemites? Does one man sin, and will they be wroth with all the town? Must the innocent fall with the guilty? This was barbarous indeed.

[4.] But that which above all aggravated the cruelty was the most perfidious treachery that was in it. The Shechemites had submitted to their conditions, and had done that upon which they had promised to become one people with them (v. 16); yet they act as sworn enemies to those to whom they had lately become sworn friends, making as light of their covenant as they did of the laws of humanity. And are these the sons of Israel? *Cursed be their anger, for it was fierce.*

[5.] This also added to the crime, that they made a holy ordinance of God subservient to their wicked design, so making that odious; as if it were not enough for them to shame themselves and their family, they bring a reproach upon that honourable badge of their religion; justly would it be called a bloody ordinance.

**2.** Seizing the prey of Shechem, and plundering the town. They rescued Dinah (v. 26), and, if that was all they came for, they might have done that without blood, as appears by their own showing (v. 17); but they aimed at the spoil; and, though Simeon and Levi only were the murderers, yet it is intimated that others of the sons of Jacob *came upon the slain and spoiled the city* (v. 27), and so became accessory to the murder. In them it was manifest injustice; yet here we may observe the righteousness of God. The Shechemites were willing to gratify the sons of Jacob by submitting to the penance of circumcision, upon this principle, *Shall not their cattle and their substance be ours?* (v. 23), and see what was the issue; instead of making themselves masters of the wealth of Jacob's family, Jacob's family

become masters of their wealth. Note, Those who unjustly grasp at that which is another's justly lose that which is their own.

**II.** Here is Jacob's resentment of this bloody deed of Simeon and Levi, v. 30. Two things he bitterly complains of: —

**1.** The reproach they had brought upon him thereby: *You have troubled me*, put me into a disorder, for you have made me *to stink among the inhabitants of the land*, that is, “You have rendered me and my family odious among them. What will they say of us and our religion? We shall be looked upon as the most perfidious barbarous people in the world.” Note, The gross misconduct of wicked children is the grief and shame of their godly parents. Children should be the joy of their parents; but wicked children are their trouble, sadden their hearts, break their spirits, and make them go mourning from day to day. Children should be an ornament to their parents; but wicked children are their reproach, and are as dead flies in the pot of ointment: but let such children know that, if they repent not, the grief they have caused to their parents, and the damage religion has sustained in its reputation through them, will come into the account and be reckoned for.

**2.** The ruin they had exposed him to. What could be expected, but that the Canaanites, who were numerous and formidable, would confederate against him, and he and his little family would become an easy prey to them? *I shall be destroyed, I and my house*. If all the Shechemites must be destroyed for the offence of one, why not all the Israelites for the offence of two? Jacob knew indeed that God had promised to preserve and perpetuate his house; but he might justly fear that these vile practices of his children would amount to a forfeiture, and cut off the entail. Note, When sin is in the house, there is reason to fear ruin at the door. The tender parents foresee those bad consequences of sin which the wicked children have no dread of. One would think this should have made them to relent, and they should have humbled themselves to their good father, and begged his pardon; but, instead of this, they justify themselves, and give him this insolent reply, *Should he deal with our sister as with a harlot?* No, he should not; but, if he do, must they be their own avengers? Will nothing less than so many lives, and the ruin of a whole city, serve to atone for an abuse done to one foolish girl? By their question they tacitly reflect upon their father, as if he would have been content to let them deal with his daughter as with a harlot. Note, It is common for those who run



into one extreme to reproach and censure those who keep the mean as if they ran into the other. Those who condemn the rigour of revenge shall be misrepresented, as if they countenanced and justified the offence.