

CHAPTER 34

INTRODUCTION TO GENESIS 34

This chapter gives an account of the ravishment of Dinah by Shechem, (^{<0340>}Genesis 34:1-5); of his father Hamor and him treating with Jacob and his sons about the marriage of her, (^{<0340>}Genesis 34:6-12); of the condition proposed by Jacob's sons, circumcision of all the males in Shechem, which was agreed to by Shechem and his father, (^{<0343>}Genesis 34:13-19); of the men of Shechem being persuaded to yield to it, (^{<0340>}Genesis 34:20-24); and of the destruction of them on the third day by Simeon and Levi, and of the plunder of their city and field, and of the captivity of their wives and children by Jacob's sons, which gave Jacob great offence, and in which they justified themselves, (^{<0325>}Genesis 34:25-31).

Ver. 1 *And Dinah the daughter of Leah, which she bare unto Jacob*, etc.]

Who is supposed to be at this time about fourteen or fifteen years of age: for that she was but about nine or ten years old is not to be credited, as some compute it ^{f1558}: she is observed to be the daughter of Leah, partly that the following miscarriage might bring to mind her forwardness to intrude herself into Jacob's bed, and be a rebuke unto her; and partly to account for Simeon and Levi being so active in revenging her abuse, they being Leah's sons: of Dinah it is said, that she

went out to see the daughters of the land; of the land of Canaan, to visit them, and contract an acquaintance with them; and she having no sisters to converse with at home, it might be a temptation to her to go abroad. According to the Targum of Jonathan, she went to see the manners, customs, and fashions of the women of that country, to learn them, as the Septuagint version renders the word; or to see their habit and dress, and how they ornamented themselves, as Josephus ^{f1559} observes; and who also says it was a festival day at Shechem, and therefore very probably many of the young women of the country round about might come thither on that occasion; and who being dressed in their best clothes would give Dinah a good opportunity of seeing and observing their fashions; and which, with the diversions of the season, and shows to be seen, allured Dinah to go out of her mother's tent into the city, to gratify her curiosity. Aben Ezra's note

is, that she went of herself, that is, without the leave of either of her parents: according to other Jewish writers ^{f1560} there was a snare laid for her by Shechem, who observing that Jacob's daughter dwelt in tents, and did not go abroad, he brought damsels out of the city dancing and playing on timbrels; and Dinah went forth to see them playing, and he took her, and lay with her, as follows.

Ver. 2. *And when Shechem the son of Hamor*, etc.] From whom the city had its name, near which Jacob and his family now were:

the Hivite, prince of the country; Hamor was an Hivite, which was one of the nations of the land of Canaan, and this man was the prince or a principal man of that nation, as well as of Shechem. Josephus ^{f1561} calls him a king: when the son of this man

saw her; that is, Dinah, what a beautiful person she was, and was enamoured with her:

he took her: by force, as the Targum of Jonathan:

and lay with her, and defiled her; or “humbled” or “afflicted her” ^{f1562}; and it is a rule with the Jews, that every such act, which is done by force, is called an humiliation and affliction ^{f1563}: the child begotten in this act of fornication is said ^{f1564} by them to be Asenath, who was had into Egypt, and brought up by Potipherah's wife as her daughter, and afterwards married to Joseph, (^{Gen 41:45}Genesis 41:45,50).

Ver. 3. *And his soul clave unto Dinah the daughter of Jacob*, etc.] His inclination was to her, she was always in his thoughts; it was not a mere lustful desire that was suddenly raised, and soon over, but a constant and continued affection he bore to her, as follows:

and he loved the damsel; sincerely and heartily:

and spake kindly unto the damsel; or “to the heart” ^{f1565} of her, such things as tended to comfort her, she being sad and sorrowful; or to soften her mind towards him, and take off the resentment of it to him, because of the injury he had done her, and to gain her good will and affection, and her consent to marry him; professing great love to her, promising her great things, what worldly grandeur and honour she would be advanced to, and how kindly he would behave towards her; which might take with her, and

incline her to yield to his motion, which having obtained, he took the following method.

Ver. 4. *And Shechem spake unto his father Hamor*, etc.] And told him the whole affair, at least what a strong affection he had for Dinah:

saying, get me this damsel to wife; by which he meant not only that he would give his consent that he might marry her, but that he would get her parents' consent unto it, and settle the matter with them; by which it appears how early, and that even among Heathen nations, consent of parents on both sides was judged necessary to marriage. It seems by this as if Dinah was now detained in the house of Hamor or Shechem, and was upon the spot, or near at hand, when Shechem addressed his father about her, (see ⁰³²⁶Genesis 34:26).

Ver. 5. *And Jacob heard that he had defiled Dinah his daughter*, etc.] That is, that Shechem had defiled her; the report of this was brought him very probably by one of the maids which attended her to the city; for it was hardly to be thought that she should go thither alone, and which must be very distressing to Jacob to hear of: this was his first affliction in his own family, but it was not the only one, nor the last, others quickly followed:

now his sons were with his cattle in the field; he had bought, or in some other hired by him for his cattle, feeding and keeping them, being arrived to an age fit for such service; here they were when the above report was brought to Jacob:

and Jacob held his peace until they were come; neither murmuring at the providence, but patiently bearing the chastisement; nor reflecting upon Leah for letting Dinah go out, or not keeping a proper watch over her; nor saying anything of it to any in the family; nor expressing his displeasure at Shechem, nor vowing revenge on him for it, nor taking any step towards it until his sons were come home from the field; with whom he chose to advise, and whose assistance he would want, if it was judged necessary to use force to get Dinah out of the hands of Shechem, or to avenge the injury done her.

Ver. 6. *And Hamor, the father of Shechem, went out unto Jacob*, etc.] Unto the tent of Jacob without the city:

to commune with him; to talk with him about the affair of Dinah, to pacify him, and endeavour to gain his consent, that his son might marry her, and to settle the, terms and conditions of the marriage.

Ver. 7. *And the sons of Jacob came out of the field, when they heard [it],* etc.]. Either by a messenger Jacob sent to them, to acquaint them with it, or by some other hand: however, be it as it will, as soon as they heard of the abuse of their sister, they immediately left their flocks to the care of their servants, and came to their father's tent:

and the men were grieved and were very wroth; they were grieved for the sin committed against God, very probably, as well as for the injury done to their sister, and they were wroth against Shechem the author of it:

because he had wrought folly in Israel, in lying with Jacob's daughter; all sin is folly, being a transgression of the law of God founded in the highest wisdom, and particularly uncleanness, and that branch of it, deflowering a virgin; and this action being committed on Jacob's daughter, whose name was Israel, is said to be "in", or rather "against" Israel^{f1566}, to his grief, and to the reproach of him and his family: though these words may be rather the words of Moses, than of the sons of Jacob; or however are expressed not in the language used by them, but in what was in use in the times of Moses, when Israel was the name of a nation and church, whereas it was now but a personal name, and at most but the name of a family; and though this was done to one of the family, yet not in it, but in the house of Hamor or Shechem:

which thing ought not to be done; being against the law and light of nature to do such an action by force and violence, and against the law of nations to suffer it to go with impunity.

Ver. 8. *And Hamor communed with them,* etc.] With Jacob and his sons, who came in just at that time:

saying, the soul of my son Shechem longeth for your daughter: the daughter of the family, and the only daughter in it; for her Shechem had a vehement affection, a strong desire to marry her, and could not be satisfied without her:

I pray you, give her him to wife; he not only requests the consent of the parents of the damsel, but of her brothers also, which in those times and

countries seems to have been usual to ask and have, (see ^{<0261>}Genesis 24:50,51,55,59).

Ver. 9. *And make ye marriages with us*, etc.] There was no objection on their side, it lay on the other; Abraham's servant was charged by him not to take a wife of the Canaanites to his son Isaac; and the same charge was given Jacob by Isaac, (^{<0248>}Genesis 24:3 28:1); and therefore Jacob would never agree that his children should marry any of that nation; and marriages with them were afterwards forbidden by the law of Moses, (^{<0261>}Deuteronomy 7:3);

[and] give your daughters unto us, and take our daughters unto you; for though at present there were no other daughters in Jacob's family, yet there might be hereafter; and the request is, that for the future there might be intermarriages between them, as would be practicable in a course of time.

Ver. 10. *And ye shall dwell with us*, etc.]. Peaceably and quietly, not as sojourners only, but as inhabitants:

and the land shall be before you; to choose what part of it they pleased to dwell in, and which they should have in their own power and possession:

dwell and trade you therein; in any sort of traffic and commerce the land would admit of, and they should best choose:

and get you possessions therein; buy houses and land, and enjoy them, they and their posterity; these are the arguments used by Hamor to gain the consent of Jacob and his family that his son might marry Dinah; and the proposals are honourable and generous.

Ver. 11. *And Shechem said unto her father and unto her brethren*, etc.] To the father and brethren of Dinah; he addressed them after his father Hamor had done speaking:

let me find grace in your eyes; forgive the offence committed, the injury done to Dinah, and grant the request of her marriage, and it will be considered as a great favour:

and what ye shall say unto me, I will give; to her, to her parents, to her brethren and relations; let what will be fixed, shall be given; which showed great affection for her, and that he was willing to do any thing to make

amends for the injury done; he cared not what it was that might be demanded of him, so be it that she became his wife.

Ver. 12. *Ask me never so much dowry and gift*, etc.] Or “multiply [them] exceedingly”^{f1567}, fix them at as high a rate as may be thought fit; the “dowry” was what a man gave to a woman at her marriage; for in those times and countries, instead of a man having a portion with his wife, as with us in our times, he gave one to his wife, or to her parents for her; and especially in after times this was used, and became a law in Israel, in the case of a vitiated virgin, (see ^{<0216}Exodus 22:16,17); and “the gift” was either of jewels and clothes to the women, or of such like precious things to her brethren and friends, (see ^{<0253}Genesis 24:53);

and I will give according as ye shall say unto me; determine among yourselves whatever shall be the dowry and gift, and it shall be punctually observed:

but give me the damsel to wife; only agree to that, and I care not what is required of me.

Ver. 13. *And the sons of Jacob answered Shechem and Hamor deceitfully*, etc.] Proposing the marriage of their sister on terms after mentioned, when they never intended it should ever be: Onkelos, Jonathan, and Jarchi interpret it, “with wisdom”, as if they answered wisely and prudently, but the word is never used in a good sense; and if it was wisdom, it was carnal wisdom and wicked cunning, and was disapproved of by plain hearted Jacob:

and said: or spoke in this deceitful manner:

because he had defiled Dinah their sister; and therefore were filled with indignation at him, and fired with resentment against him, and vowed within themselves revenge upon him.

Ver. 14. *And they said unto them*, etc.] Levi and Simeon, to Hamor and Shechem:

we cannot do this thing, to give our sister to one that is uncircumcised; not that there was any law against it at that time; and there were, on the other hand, precedents for it both in Isaac and Jacob, who had married the daughters of uncircumcised persons; nor indeed do they plead any law,

only that it was not becoming their character, nor agreeably to their religion, nor honourable in their esteem:

for that [were] a reproach unto us; and they should be reflected upon for slighting the institution of circumcision, which was of God: so they pretend it might be interpreted, should they enter into affinity with uncircumcised persons.

Ver. 15. *But in this will we consent unto you,* etc.] Upon the following condition, that Dinah should be given in marriage:

if ye will be as we [be], that every male of you be circumcised; as the sons of Jacob were, according to the command given to Abraham their great grandfather, (⁰¹⁷⁰Genesis 17:10).

Ver. 16. *Then will we give our daughters unto you,* etc.] Meaning Dinah, whom they call their daughter, (⁰³⁴⁷Genesis 34:17); because she was the daughter of their family, and because they were entreating in the name of their father, and in conformity to the language used by those they were treating with, (⁰³⁴⁹Genesis 34:9);

and we will take your daughters to us; in marriage for wives:

and we will dwell with you; not as sojourners but as fellow citizens:

and we will become one people; being so nearly related by marriage, and professing one religion, alike submitting to circumcision, which was the distinguished badge of Abraham's seed.

Ver. 17. *But if ye will not hearken to us to be circumcised,* etc.] Will not agree to this condition, circumcision:

then will we take our daughter; by force, as the Targum of Jonathan adds:

and we will be gone: depart from this part of the country, and go elsewhere.

Ver. 18. *And their words pleased Hamor, and Shechem Hamor's son.]* The condition proposed was acceptable to them both, and they agreed to comply with it; Hamor, because of the great love he had for his son; Shechem, because of the great love he had for Dinah.

Ver. 19. *And the young man deferred not to do the thing,* etc.] To be circumcised himself, and to get all the males of the city circumcised; he

delayed not a moment, but made all the haste he could to get it accomplished:

because he had delight in Jacob's daughter; he really loved her, and delighted in her person and company: it was not the effect of a brutish lust, but a true affection he bore to her, that he desired her in marriage:

and he [was] more honourable than all the house of his father; for though he had done a base thing in defiling Jacob's daughter, yet in this he was honourable, that he sought to marry her, and to do any thing that was in his power to recompence the injury; and he was honourable in keeping covenant and compact with men; and was honest, upright, and sincere, to fulfil the condition imposed on him, and he had agreed to, as well as he was in greater esteem among the citizens than any of his father's house, which made it the more easy to him to get their consent to be circumcised; they having a very high and honourable opinion of him, and ready to oblige him in anything they could.

Ver. 20. *And Hamor and Shechem his son went unto the gate of their city*, etc.] Where courts of judicature were held, and all public affairs respecting the common interest of the city were transacted: here, no doubt, Hamor their prince summoned them to come, by the usual method in which the citizens were convened on certain occasions:

and communed with the men of their city; upon the subject of entering into an alliance with Jacob's family, of admitting them to be fellow citizens with them, and of their being incorporated among them, and becoming one people with them, taking no notice of the true reason of this motion:

saying, as follows.

Ver. 21. *These men [are] peaceable with us*, etc.] Meaning Jacob and his sons, pointing to their tents which were near their city; and no doubt more was said than is here expressed, and that these words were introduced with a preface, in which notice was taken of Jacob and his family, and their names mentioned, as here their character is given; that they were men of peaceable dispositions, harmless and inoffensive, as appeared they had been ever since they came into these parts; and there was a great deal of reason to believe they still would be, and which was an argument in their favour, to admit them to a residence among them:

therefore let them dwell in the land, and trade therein; give them leave to dwell where they please, and carry on what trade and traffic in the land they think fit; since they are not likely to be quarrelsome and troublesome, but will deal honestly and honourably, and pay duly for what they agree for or merchandise in:

for the land, behold, [it is] large enough for them; there is room enough for them to dwell in, and pasturage enough for their cattle, and land enough to manure and till, without in the least incommoding the inhabitants: yea, it is likely to be to their advantage, since they would pay for what they should purchase or hire, and would improve the land which lay uncultivated:

let us take their daughters to us for wives, and let us give them our daughters; this was the thing principally aimed at; and the rest, both what goes before, and what follows after, were in order to this.

Ver. 22. *Only herein will the men consent unto us*, etc.] The only term or condition insisted upon, to come into an alliance and affinity with us, and *for to dwell with us, to be one people*, to become one body politic, is the following one:

if every male among us be circumcised, as they [are] circumcised; submitting to this rite, they agree to take up their residence with us, and be incorporated among us, and become one people.

Ver. 23. *Shall not their cattle, and their substance, and every beast of theirs, [be] ours?* etc.] Which would in course come into their families in process of time, by intermarrying with them, or, being more numerous and powerful than they, could seize upon them when they pleased, and take all they had: thus they argue from the profit and advantage that would accrue to them by admitting them among them, upon their terms; and this argument, taken from worldly interest, they knew would have great influence upon them:

only let us consent unto them; in the affair of circumcision:

and they will dwell with us; and what by trading with them, and marrying among them, all their wealth and riches will come into our hands.

Ver. 24. *And unto Hamor and unto Shechem his son hearkened all that went out of the gate of his city*, etc.] That is, all the inhabitants of the city

who came to the gate of it, upon the summons given them, and departed from thence to their habitations, having a great opinion of their prince and his son; and moved either with awe of them or love to them, and influenced both by their arguments and example, they agreed to what was proposed to them:

and every male was circumcised, all that went out of the gate of his city; all the men citizens; and not only the adult, and who now went out by the gate of the city, but all their male children likewise were circumcised.

Ver. 25. *And it came to pass on the third day, when they were sore,* etc.] Or in “pain”^{f1568}, when their pains were strong upon them, as the Targum of Onkelos; or when they were weak through the pain of circumcision, as the Targum of Jonathan; for it seems that the pain of circumcision was more intense on the third day^{f1569}, and the part the more inflamed, and the person more feverish, and which is observed by physicians of other wounds; and therefore Hippocrates^{f1570} advised not to meddle with wounds on the third or fourth days, or do anything that might irritate them, for on those days they were apt to rankle or be inflamed, and bring on fevers; and in this case, not only the wound was sore in itself and distressing, but being in such a part of the body, motion must give great uneasiness: nor could persons in such circumstances easily arise and walk, and go forth to defend themselves; and of this Jacob’s sons availed themselves: so

that two of the sons of Jacob, Simeon and Levi, Dinah’s brethren; by the mother’s side as well as the father’s, being Leah’s children, and so most provoked at this indignity and abuse of their sister:

took each man his sword, and came upon the city boldly; not fearing the inhabitants of it, and their rising up against them to defend themselves, knowing in what circumstances they were: or “upon the city that dwelt securely”; as the Targums of Onkelos and Jonathan; for the men of the city had no suspicion of any such attempt that would be made upon them, and therefore were quite easy and secure, not expecting nor fearing anything of this kind:

and slew all the males; the males that were grown up, for the little ones are after said to be carried captive, (⁽¹³²⁹⁾Genesis 34:29); Josephus^{f1571} takes no notice of this circumstance of their being circumcised, but represents them as surprised in the night of their festival, overcharged with feasting, and

their watch asleep, who were first killed. Though only two of Jacob's sons were mentioned, they might be assisted by the rest; at least, no doubt, they were attended with servants, who were aiding: in accomplishing this cruel and bloody attempt.

Ver. 26. *And they slew Hamor and Shechem his son with the edge of the sword*, etc.] Whom they had been just treating with in a seeming friendly manner: Shechem was the chief aggressor, and his crime was very heinous; but considering that he did all he could, after the fact was committed, to make recompence for the injury done, he deserved other treatment, at least mercy should have been shown him. Hamor, perhaps, was too indulgent to his son, connived at his sin, and did not punish him for it; and, it may be, approved of it, and now dies for it:

and took Dinah out of Shechem's house, and went out; where she was kept from the time of her being ravished by Shechem, with an intention to marry her, could the consent of her parents and relations be obtained; for it does not appear that he kept her to carry on a criminal conversation with her, but a courtship in order to marriage.

Ver. 27. *The sons of Jacob came upon the slain*, etc.] That is, the rest of them, as the Targum of Jonathan paraphrases it; understanding what their two brothers had done, they came and joined them, and partook of stripping the slain of their clothes, or from them what they found of any worth about them:

and spoiled the city; plundered it of all its goods and substance, spoiled all the inhabitants of it of their wealth:

because they had defiled their sister; one of them had done it, which is imputed to them all, they not restraining him from it, when it was in their power; and perhaps approving of it, and made a laugh of and jest at it; or however did not punish him for it.

Ver. 28. *They took their sheep, their oxen, and their asses*, etc.] The Shechemites hoped to have the cattle and substance of Jacob's family, and in a hypocritical manner submitted to circumcision, for the sake of worldly advantage; for that, and pleasing their prince, seem to be the only views they had in it; wherefore, in this there is a just retaliation of them in Providence:

and that which [was] in the city, and that which [was] in the field; the cattle that were kept at home, and those that were brought up in the field, all became a prey.

Ver. 29. *And all their wealth,* etc.] Or “power”^{f1572} or “strength”; every thing that made them mighty and powerful; their gold and silver, their jewels, and rich furniture of their houses, their arms and weapons of war, their goods and substance, in which they trafficked:

and all their little ones and their wives took theft captive: they spared the women and children, as was usual war, and in the plunder of towns and cities:

and spoiled even all that [was] in the house; of Shechem or Hamor, or in any of the houses of the inhabitants; they rifled and plundered everyone, and took away whatsoever they found in them; but as Jacob disapproved of this unjust, cruel, bloody, and perfidious action, so no doubt, as he set the captives at liberty, he restored to them their cattle and substance.

Ver. 30. *And Jacob said to Simeon and Levi,* etc.] who were the principals concerned in this affair:

ye have troubled me; because of the sin they had committed, because of the dishonour brought upon religion, and because of the danger he and his family were hereby exposed unto; it greatly disquieted him, made him very uneasy, he was at his wit’s end almost, knew not what to do, what course to take to wipe off the scandal, and to defend himself and family; since it served, he says,

to make me to stink among the inhabitants of the land; to make him odious and abominable, to be hated and abhorred by all the people round about, and to be looked upon and treated as a deceitful, treacherous, and perfidious man, that had no regard to his word, to covenants and agreements made by him; as a cruel and bloodthirsty man that spared none, made no difference between the innocent and the guilty; and as a robber and plunderer, that stopped at nothing, committing the greatest outrages to get possession of the substance of others:

amongst the Canaanites and the Perizzites: who were the principal inhabitants of the land, the most numerous, and the most rustic and barbarous, and perhaps nearest, and from whom Jacob had most to fear:

and I [being] few in number; or men of number^{f1573}; he and his sons and servants, in all, making but a small number in comparison of the nations about him:

they shall gather themselves together against me, and slay me; and I shall be destroyed, I and my house; not that Jacob was afraid that this would be really the case, for he knew and believed the promises of God to him, of the multiplication of his seed, and of their inheriting the land of Canaan, and of the Messiah springing from him; but this he said to aggravate the sin and folly of his sons, in exposing him and themselves to so much danger, which not only on the face of things appeared probable, but even certain and inevitable, without the interposition of divine power and Providence.

Ver. 31. *And they said*, etc.] Simeon and Levi, in a very pert and unseemly manner:

should he deal with our sister as with an harlot? make a whore of her, and then keep her in his house as such? is this to be borne with? or should we take no more notice of his behaviour to our sister, or show no more regard to her than if she was a common prostitute, whom no man will defend or protect? so say the Targums of Jonathan and Jerusalem,

“nor let Shechem the son of Hamor mock at us, or boast and say, as an harlot whom no man seeks after, or no man seeks to avenge her; so it is done by Dinah the daughter of Jacob:”

they tacitly insinuate as if Jacob had not that regard for the honour of his daughter and family, and showed his resentment at the wicked behaviour of Shechem, as he ought to have done. It is observed that there is a letter in the word for “harlot” greater than usual, which may either denote the greatness of the sin of Shechem in dealing with Dinah as an harlot, or the great impudence and boldness of Jacob’s sons, in their answer to him, and their audaciousness in justifying such baseness and cruelty they had been guilty of. The whole of this history, as related in this chapter, is given by Polyhistor out of Theodotus the poet^{f1574}.