

Defilement, Deception, and Death

Genesis 34

The story of Genesis 34 reads more like a sordid Hollywood script, than something from the Bible! It leaves a bad taste in our mouths. Jacob's daughter Dinah is raped; her brothers avenge her violation by plundering a city. What can we learn from this awful account?

A Bad Environment, A Crime of Passion

- Dinah mixes with pagans, and is raped by a local prince
- He proposes marriage; her brothers are angry at this sin

Depravity Spreads in Every Direction

- The Canaanite leader schemes to profit from sin
- Dinah's brothers scheme to exact revenge for sin

Murder and Pillage: Excessive Revenge

- Men of Shechem are slaughtered and their city plundered
- Jacob frets Canaanite response, lacks moral outrage

The Moral of the Story

If spiritual leaders inadequately respond to sin, immature believers may overreact and ruin the testimony.



1. Genesis 34.1-2 provides a 'just the facts' account of Shechem's rape of Dinah. As in any case like this, the crime is obvious, but the astute reader will recognize much more. What deficiencies in Jacob, both as a father to his daughter, and responding to the wickedness of the Canaanites, do you see? What imprudent and dangerous things did Dinah do? Hebrew scholar Bruce Waltke notes: *Girls of a marriageable age would not normally leave a rural encampment to go unchaperoned into an alien city.* Allen Ross writes: *Dinah became intrigued by the 'daughters of the land.'* What may have led to this mingling with Canaanites?
2. Shechem *seems* to do the honorable thing – he wants to marry Dinah. But a) what seems to be his motivation, and b) what is missing in his response to raping her? When his father enters negotiations, what is he focused on (vv10, 23)? Read Genesis 24.3 and 28.1, 8-9; why were Abraham and Isaac so averse to any intermarriage between their sons and Canaanites? What did the Law later enjoin concerning this, and *why* (Deut. 7.1-4)?
3. Let's focus on Dinah's brothers. How do they initially respond to news of Dinah's rape in v7? Contrast their response with the response of Jacob. In vv13-17, their plan to avenge their sister is clear. What's right about their plan? What's wrong about it?
4. What Simeon and Levi do in vv25-26, and all the brothers do in vv27-29, seems brutal and excessive. Was it? Is killing the men of the city justified? What about pillaging the city? What was their motivation (27b, 31)? (Do you think victims of rape might appreciate this kind of 'justice' today?) What do you think of Jacob's response (v30)?
5. What are some applications for Christians today? What attitude should we have toward sin – especially sins that are considered *acceptable* in society? How should we respond? 1 Corinthians 5 provides a church situation: What does it teach us? How can we even strengthen our testimony if we respond rightly to sin?