

Jacob's Rebuke of Simeon and Levi

34: 30-31

DIG: How does Jacob rebuke his sons? How do Jacob's sons rebuke him? How does the slaughter and plunder of Shechem affect the birthright in Jacob's family? Who ends up with the birthright?

REFLECT: Jacob got to a point in his life where he was spiritually dull. He was a passive father. How can you guard against that in your own life?

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' (34:30). It seems that his concern wasn't for Dinah but for his own reputation. His outburst suggests more concern for public relations than his daughters honor.

Jacob was a passive father, and a passive father is destructive to the development of his children. Passive fathers destroy their children by refusing to discipline them and change their course of direction. Passive fathers produce insecure and angry children. Without a game plan for life, teenagers perish. **God** killed Eli the High Priest because he would not discipline his sons (**First Samuel 2:22** and **4:4-11**). David was a passive father. While Absalom was trying to get his attention, David was chasing Bathsheba and plotting to kill her husband. Where did Absalom learn to lie, cheat and murder? He did exactly what his father taught him to do. However, **God** is not a passive Father. He says: **Have you forgotten the counsel that speaks with you as sons: My son, don't despise the discipline of ADONAI or become despondent when He corrects you. For ADONAI disciplines those He loves and whips everyone He accepts as a son (Hebrews 12:5-6 CJB).**

But Jacob's sons seemed to have the last word. They said: **Should he have treated our sister like a prostitute (34:31)?** They believed that Jacob's concern is misplaced and they were offended by it. When Shechem offered to pay for Dinah, in their eyes that turned Dinah into a prostitute and these hot heads couldn't tolerate that. They felt that their father had been too willing to compromise, and they believed that their actions of avenging their sister were justified.⁵²⁹ But they did evil in the name of good.

Their instincts were correct for not wanting to assimilate with the **Canaanites**. The fact is that if **they** would have intermarried with **them**, Israel's distinctive identity would have been destroyed and **God's** covenant with Abraham would have been negated. Later, the nation of Israel was instructed by **God** to avoid defilement with the **Canaanites** and Israel's foreign policy was to destroy **them** completely before **they** could defile the Israelites. **God** would say: **Do not leave alive anything that breathes. Completely destroy them, the Hittites, Amorites, Canaanites, Perizzites, Hivites and Jebusites, as the LORD your God has commanded you. Otherwise they will teach you to follow all the detestable things they do in worshiping their gods, and you will sin against the LORD your God (Deut 20:16-18).** But even though **their** instincts were correct in this matter, **their** actions were evil. **They** lied and acted carelessly in carrying out vengeance because **God** hadn't told **them** to do anything. On **his** deathbed when **Ya'akov** was giving the patriarchal blessing, **Simeon and Levi** were cursed by not receiving **their** own territory in the Promised Land (**49:5-7**).

In addition, the slaughter of Shechem would have far reaching implications with the birthright of **Jacob's** family. As the birthright had been an issue between Abraham's children Ishmael and Isaac, and as it had been an issue in Isaac's family between Esau and **Jacob**, it would also be an issue in **Jacob's** family. **Reuben**, who was actually the firstborn, would forfeit his birthright by sleeping with **Jacob's** concubine **Bilhah (35:21)**. Then **Simeon and Levi**, who were next in line for the birthright, would also lose it over this incident. The next in line would be **Judah**, and **he** would become **the Seed son**, the one through whom **the Messiah** would be born.

When **Jacob's** evil sons, justifying **their** own treachery, asked: "**Should he have treated our sister like a prostitute?**" **Ya'akov** had no reply. **He** had indeed failed. **He** had opened the door to this, and now **he** was in desperate need of revival in **his** own soul, as well as a fresh word of guidance from **Elohim**. Though Scripture does not clearly say so, it seems most likely that **Jacob** went to **his** altar and cried out to **God** for forgiveness and for instruction. And **God**, who is gracious and long-suffering, answered **him** once again.⁵³⁰