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The Rape of Dinah

34: 1-7

The rape of Dinah DIG: Where is Jacob's outrage at the rape of his daughter? Why is it left to his sons to be filled with grief and fury? Why doesn't he do something? Anything? Where is his responsibility as a parent? His spiritual leadership?

REFLECT: How do you deal with separation from the world (First John 2:15-17)? Can you be in the world, but not of the world (John 17:6-19)? What are the consequences of ignoring the world (Matthew 28:18-20)? What are the consequences of immersing yourself in the world (First Corinthians 5:1-13)? How can you find a balance between the two?



Now **Dinah**, the daughter Leah had borne to Jacob, went out to visit the young women **of the land (34:1)**. This action loosened the stone that caused a landslide. **Dinah** was probably just a **girl** of fourteen to sixteen years old at the time. **Jacob's sons** could keep themselves company, but **Dinah** needed the company of other girls **her** own age. So it is not surprising that **she** went into **Shechem** to find some girlfriends. This was not unreasonable, but in doing so **she** put herself at risk. The moral condition of **Shechem** was shameful. Not only was promiscuity common, but it was also part of their religious system itself. Young girls traveling alone were considered fair game at that time. Didn't **Ya'akov** and **Leah** know this? Did they warn **Dinah**? Did they try to prevent **her** from going and **she** rebelled? Did **Dinah** feel like **she** could look out for **herself** and resented **her** parent's overprotective attitude? We just don't know. At any rate, **she went** and while visiting some of the girls of **Shechem**, **she** was noticed by **the prince** of the city.

There is much unsaid here. God had commanded **Jacob** to go back to Canaan. But how would **his** children find suitable mates? It seemed impossible to insist that they marry from their own people as Abraham and Isaac had done. And he certainly wasn't going to send any of **his** children back to Laban! How could they stay totally separate from the Canaanites? How could they and their children stay morally clean in the spiritual toilet of **Shechem**? Was this why God wanted **Jacob** to take **his** family to Bethel and avoid these influences?

When Shechem son of Hamor the Hivite, the ruler of that Canaanite area, saw her, he grabbed her and raped her (34:2). I am sure that even as common as **rape** was amongst the godless Canaanites, little was denied **Shechem**, being **the prince** of the city. The word for *raped* is taken from the word **defiled (Psalm 79:1)**. **Defiled** is used in the TaNaKh to describe a person who has contacted impurity through such things as skin diseases, bodily emissions, or touching something dead.⁵²⁰ So **the rape of Dinah** and the defilement of the **Tabernacle** are regarded with the same feelings and described by the same word.⁵²¹

His heart was drawn to Dinah, daughter of Jacob (Hebrew: Ya'akov), and he loved her and spoke tenderly to her trying to appease **his** own guilt. **He** knew what **he** did was wrong. After a woman was raped in this culture, she could not expect to ever have a valid marriage. She was normally relegated to the status of an outcast, so I am sure that **Shechem** thought **he** was doing a noble thing by marrying **Dinah**. **And Shechem said to his father Hamor, "Get me this girl as my wife" (34:3-4).** **He** had no idea of the moral standard that **he** had violated or the moral line **he** had crossed, especially with **her** brothers.

Somehow this message got back to **Jacob** very quickly. **When he heard that his daughter Dinah had been raped, his sons were in the fields with his livestock; so he kept quiet about it until they came home (34:5).** But we never get the feeling that **Jacob** is distraught over **the rape of his daughter**. Later, when hearing of **Joseph's** supposed death, **Jacob tore his clothes, put on sackcloth and mourned for his son many days, he refused to be comforted and wept for him (37:34-35).** We see none of that here. **He** made no attempt to send word to **his sons** about the tragedy. While waiting for **his sons** to come **home**, **Shechem and his father Hamor went out to talk with Ya'akov about Dinah (34:6).**

Word traveled fast and one way or another **Jacob's sons** heard of **the rape** and **they** came **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 Isra'el by lying**

with Jacob's daughter, a thing that should not be done (34:7). **The rabbis teach that people had renounced rape since the Flood.** The phrase, **a thing that should not be done** is similar to Tamar's pleading prior to **her rape** by her half brother Amnon. **She** said to him: **Don't my brother, don't force me. Such a thing should not be done in Isra'el. Don't do this wicked thing (Second Samuel 13:12).** There was no nation of **Isra'el** at the time of **the rape**. Yet Moses is writing **Genesis** for the people of **Isra'el** and, thus, there must be an application to **the nation**. So this defilement was not only against **Dinah**, but against **Ya'akov, her brothers** and, ultimately, against the people of God.⁵²² But **Jacob** was passive and showed no spiritual leadership in this situation. Perhaps if **Dinah** were **his daughter** by Rachel rather than **Leah, he** would have acted differently.⁵²³