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The Circumcision at Shechem
34: 18-24

The circumcision at Shechem DIG: What does the deception of Jacob's sons say about the spiritual condition of the family? What does it say about Jacob's spiritual leadership?

REFLECT: When we act like the world acts, what does this do to our testimony?

Their plan was to incapacitate the city. Taking the lead in the negotiations, **Simeon** and **Levi** had gambled that **Hamor and his son Shechem** were desperate to join with the Hebrews for commercial advantage, and **they** were right. **They** swallowed the bait, hook, line and sinker! The unsuspecting royal family eagerly agreed to the condition of circumcision, beginning with **Shechem** himself**. The young prince, who was the most honored of all his father's household, lost no time in doing what they said, because he** was greedy for financial gain like **his** father, plus **he** really **was delighted with Jacob's daughter (34:18-19). Shechem** was so respected that the others were sure to follow **his** lead.

So Hamor and his son Shechem went to the gate of their city to speak to their fellow townsmen and lay the whole proposition before **them**. **The city gate** was where official business was always discussed. **They** said: **These men are friendly toward us, let them live in our land and trade in it; the land**

has plenty of room for them. In other words, let **them** become citizens of **our** city-state. **We can marry their daughters and they can marry ours. But the** Hebrews **will consent to live with us as one people only on the condition that our males be circumcised, as they themselves are (34:20-22).**

The fact that **the men** of **the city** agreed to the proposal set before **them** demonstrated how eager they were to reap the economic benefit of intermarriage with the Hebrews even though it would require a certain amount of pain.[526] **They** reasoned that **their** pain would be for **their** gain: **Won't their livestock, their property and all their other animals become ours?** This was not brought up in the negotiations with **the brothers**, and **they** left out the little detail about **Shechem raping Dinah**. But why bother **them** with the details! The motivation was purely financial. **Hamor and Shechem** concentrated entirely on the financial gain intermarriage would provide for **their fellow townsmen** . **So they** asked: **Let us give our consent to them, and they will settle among us (34:23).**

It seems strange that neither Reuben nor Judah took part in this plot. Reuben, especially as **Dinah's** eldest brother, should have taken charge if **Jacob** didn't. Later developments show that both Reuben and Judah were much less willing to kill than the rest of their **brothers (37:21** and **26).** They were not cruel and probably didn't want to participate in the killing after realizing what **Simeon** and **Levi** were really planning, though not to the extent of doing anything to prevent **them** from carrying out **their** plan. **Jacob's** other sons were probably still too young to take an active part in the killing, but all the brothers probably did participate in the looting. In any case, **Simeon** and **Levi** took the lead.

Their treachery was cloaked in honor. I am sure that **they** were partly motivated to honor the good name of **their sister**, and **their** rejection of intermarriage with the Canaanites was admirable, but **they** were completely wrong in taking the law into **their** own hands in such a cruel and violent way.[527]

All the men who went out of the city gate were easily persuaded and readily **agreed with Hamor and his son Shechem.** As a result, **every male in the city was circumcised** and unable to protect **themselves (34:24).** Ready for vengeance, these two hotheads were ready to finish what **they** had started.