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Jacob's Rebuke of Simeon and Levi

34: 30-31

Jacob's rebuke of Simeon and Levi DIG: Why was this account included in the Bible? 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**, **Isra’el’s** distinctive identity would have been destroyed and **God’s** covenant with Abraham would have been negated. Later, the nation of **Isra’el** was instructed by **God** to avoid defilement with the **Canaanites** and **Isra’el’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 (Deuteronomy 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

One of the biggest questions we can ask about this account is, "Why was it told to us?" On the one hand, it does not seem to have much to do with the continuously progressive revelation of the history of redemption. We could leave this account out of the Bible and we would never seem to miss it. On the other hand, the knowledge of this account is extremely critical for our understanding of **Jacob's blessing** and **cursing** which **he** uttered on his deathbed (**to see link click [Ld](#) - The Blessing and Cursing of Jacob's Sons**). Knowing the actions of **Levi** and **Simeon** helps us to know why **they** not granted a geographical inheritance among **the tribes of Isra'el** (see **[Lf](#) - Simeon and Levi are Brothers, Their Swords are Weapons of Violence**). Unless we had realized the sin which **they** committed, we would not have been able to understand **Jacob's** rebuke.