

# Genesis 34: Trouble in Shechem

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Some time has passed since Jacob left Haran—about 7 to 10 years. Dinah was only about **six** years old when Jacob left Haran, and she is now a young woman (marriageable).

Jacob's older sons would be in their late teens—old enough to have responsibility for the **flocks**. (Gen 34:5)

Dinah was **Leah's** daughter, full sister to Reuben, Simeon, Levi, Judah, Issachar, and Zebulun. (Gen 30:21)

This passage is so shocking that even some **commentators** refuse to talk about it.

*Nowhere in the Bible does the corruption of the progenitors of the Jewish people show forth stronger than in this chapter. . . . Human writers would have suppressed these events, just as commentators sometimes seem compelled to suppress them today.* —J.M. Boice

*Grace does not run in the blood.* —Matthew Henry

This chapter illustrates the principle: **three** wrongs don't make a **right**.

**God** is conspicuously absent in this chapter.

After living in Succoth, Jacob moves west to Shechem—a distance of about **twenty** miles.

Shechem would have been the oldest of Hamor's sons, and the one to **inherit** the throne. He was likely the **namesake** of the city.

By purchasing land, Jacob has the appearance of **settling** near Shechem even though he knew he was to return to Canaan through **Bethel**. (Gen 28:15; 31:13; 35:1)

Dinah's desire to consort with the women of Shechem may lend weight to the supposition that she was the only **daughter** of Jacob. (Gen 34:1)

Dinah not only placed herself in the path of danger, but she may have played a part in Shechem's **temptation**.

*When we are severe upon the sinner we ought to consider who was the tempter.*  
—Matthew Henry

Though Shechem took advantage of Dinah, his attraction to her appears to be **heartfelt**. (Gen 34:3)

In this account, Jacob comes across as **weak** and **whiny**. His sons take the initiative in dealing with Hamor and Shechem.

Jacob knew that he mustn't **intermarry** his children with the Canaanites. That was the reason his mother was brought from Haran—and why he was sent there to take a wife.

By the time Jacob's sons reach early adulthood, they already show a remarkable comfort level with **deception** and **violence**.

The anger displayed by Jacob's sons appears to be driven more by **personal pride** than a desire for **justice**.

Jacob's sons had no intention of making peace—they merely used the sign of circumcision to **weaken** the men of Shechem against an attack.

*Religion is never more injured, nor are God's sacraments more profaned, than when they are thus used for a cloak of maliciousness. . . . Those had no right to the seal that had no right to the promise.* —Matthew Henry

Jacob's sons proved to be **schemers**. Had they acted purely out of raw passion, they might have killed Shechem and Hamor on the spot.

The Shechemites saw their own reward in the act of circumcision: to gain **wealth** (either by legitimate or illegitimate designs).

*The Shechemites will embrace the religion of Jacob's family only in hopes of interesting themselves thereby in the riches of that family.* —Matthew Henry

The Shechemites received what they **deserved** for profaning the covenant sign in hopes of gaining the wealth of Jacob. In the end, they lost their **lives** and their **property**.

Jacob's sons expressed concern about the family **reputation** in regard to Shechem's sin, and yet they brought greater shame upon the family because of their scandalous response.

Simeon and Levi appear to be the only murderers, yet their brothers became **accessories** by virtue of plundering the city.

Jacob seems to be far more concerned about his own **safety** than God's **honor**. (Gen 34:30)

Jacob's sons express no **remorse** for their actions. (Gen 34:31)

Once again Jacob is faced with an **angry enemy**. He is now up against the Canaanites. God protects Jacob by sending **terror** upon the inhabitants of the land. (Gen 35:5)

Jacob finds himself back in a familiar role: **fugitive**.

The sins of Simeon and Levi have negative consequences for **generations** to come. They received no inheritance in the land of Canaan. (Gen 49:5-7)

The greatest scandal of this chapter is **God's grace**.