



Making an Impact

(Genesis 34:1-31)

“Sin will take you further than you want to go. It will keep you longer than you want to stay, and it will cost you more than you want to pay.”

Genesis 34 is truly one of the great tragedies of the entire Bible. Interestingly, “God” is never mentioned in this chapter – perhaps because He had nothing to do with what actually happened in this chapter. The main idea has nothing to do with Dinah, Shechem, Levi or Simeon – it has to do with Jacob, and his insistence of doing things his own way, and according to his own plan rather than being obedient to God.

1) **The Unwise Compromise** (Genesis 33:18-19)

From the previous chapter we see that when Jacob parted from Esau he should have gone directly to Bethel. Chapter 33 shows how Jacob did not do that but instead went to live at Shechem, one of the cities of Canaan. Jacob put his entire family into a terrible place of temptation.

“When Jacob parted from Esau he should have gone directly to Bethel. The previous chapter shows that he did not do so but tarried at Shechem. Unquestionably, this was a mistake.”¹

2) **The Unspeakable Catastrophe** (Genesis 34:1-7)

“Dinah must have been some fourteen years of age (she was born after Leah’s sixth son in 30:21, but the intervening chapters 30–33 would have taken at least eight years), and she was not more than five or six when the family left Haran. Joseph was about a year older than Dinah, and he was only seventeen at a later occasion in 37:2.”²

“Girls of marriageable age were not permitted to leave the tents of their people to go about visiting without a chaperone. In fact, the Hebrew term ‘went out’ bears a sense of impropriety. Likely she went out behind Leah’s back. And the worst happened!”³

¹ G. Campbell Morgan, *An Exposition of the Whole Bible* (Westwood: Revell, 1959), 26.

² Ed Hindson and Woodrow Kroll, *King James Version Bible Commentary* (Nashville: Nelson Reference, 2005), 86.

³ Gordon Wenham, *Genesis 16–50*, Vol. 2, *Word Biblical Commentary* (Dallas: Word, 1994), p. 310. As quoted in R. Kent Hughes, *Genesis: Beginning and Blessing*, Preaching the Word (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books, 2004), 412.

Dinah began to mingle with the women in that area, and found herself being sexually assaulted by Shechem, the son of Hamor. Shechem then wanted to marry her.

This heinous act may be acceptable among Canaanites but should not be practiced in Israel ([Genesis 34:7, 31](#)). This sounds similar to [2 Samuel 13:12](#), with the rape of Tamar.

3) **The Uninformed Consent** ([Genesis 34:8-23](#))

"[T]hey were careful not to mention two things: first, what Shechem had done to Dinah; and second, that they had Dinah in Shechem's house (cf. [vv. 17, 26](#))."⁴

4) **The Unexpected Carnage** ([Genesis 34:24-29](#))

When the blood-brothers of Dinah, Levi and Simeon, found out, they tricked all the men of that town, including the man who raped their sister, to be circumcised so they could slaughter them when they were too weak to defend themselves.

5) **The Unbelievable Condemnation** ([Genesis 34:30-3:18-19](#))

After pillaging the area, Jacob complains to the two sons about his reputation and his own welfare. The chapter ends with Levi and Simeon answering their father, "[Should he be able to treat our sister as a harlot \(or, prostitute\)?](#)" ([Genesis 34:31](#))

The reader must not become distracted with all of the other evil acts within this chapter – they are merely the outcome of what this story is really about – Jacob's disobedience and selfishness. "**Jacob seemed to be more concerned about his own welfare** than the horrible injustice that had been done to the men of Shechem. Notice his eight uses of the first-person pronoun in verse 30."⁵

APPLICATIONS FOR TODAY:

- 1) Never underestimate the impact of **the downward spiral of one man's sin and disobedience**. On the other hand, never underestimate the impact of **the upward trajectory of one man's righteousness and obedience**.
- 2) Commit to staying in the will of God. "There is nothing more perilous than to stay anywhere short of the place to which God is calling, and here we have the account of the sad and tragic reaping from this halt."⁶
- 3) God's love can be displayed through His commandments. **God was trying to protect Jacob and his family from these pagan cultures who lived as though they had no conscience**. Nothing good can come from disregarding the commands of God. Finally, the application should become personal, acknowledging the love of God displayed in His commands, endeavoring to protect His precious creation.

⁴ Hughes, 413.

⁵ William MacDonald, *Believer's Bible Commentary* (Nashville: Nelson Reference, 1995), Ge 34:1.

⁶ Morgan, 26.