

## GENESIS

### Lesson 31 - Chapters 33 and 34

#### READ GEN 33 all

The dizzying events of the night before had prepared Jacob, in a nick of time, for what was coming next.

The question of Jacob's (and his family line's) survival was about to be answered as he spotted Esau leading his band of 400 men. He placed his family in a specified order, that may have some kind of meaning; but the only apparent thing I can draw from it is that he put the LEAST important people to his way of thinking, up front, and the most important to rear. That is, his concubines and THEIR children were placed up front in immediate harms way, and his most beloved wife, Rachel, and her child, his favorite, Joseph, at the rear, who might have a better chance of escape should Esau attack. Then, Jacob ran to the front of them all and prostrated himself, bowed low, to his brother...actually, he lay completely prostrate on the ground and bowed SEVEN times.....and waited for the shoe to fall. This was absolute capitulation. By Middle Eastern standards, Jacob presented himself and his entire clan to Esau as subject to Esau's mercy or wrath. The irony of this situation is hard-hitting; the blessing of Isaac upon his two sons was, at this moment in history, exactly reversed. For, Jacob's blessing was that Jacob would be master over his brothers (meaning his tribe), and Esau's was that he would be under the yoke of his kin. Instead, Jacob has laid his life at his brother's feet.

Esau has forgiven him, and the two brothers reconcile. The years had softened Esau's anger.....just as Rebecca, the twins mother had said would happen. And, the unbelievably generous gift offering to Esau by Jacob showed Esau the complete sincerity and repentance of Jacob for his misdeeds. In Mid-Eastern style greeting, with the greatest respect, Jacob offers gifts to his brother and introduces his family. Esau at first refuses the gifts, but eventually accepts. Jacob is wise, though, and even after Esau has been gracious, Jacob continues to talk with Esau as an inferior speaking to his superior. By the way, Middle Eastern custom demands that all gifts be initially refused, before they're accepted. This little Kabuki dance we see with Jacob offering, Esau refusing and then finally accepting could have gone no other way; there is no special spiritual meaning to it.

Esau now figures that Jacob and his clan will come and join his own in the land of Edom, and offers to accompany his kin along the way. Jacob says that's not workable, because these hardened Bedouin desert dwellers would move at a pace far too much for the herds and flocks that Jacob must drive in front of him. So, Esau offers an armed escort. Jacob refuses that as well, and says he will trust God to protect him. Esau agrees, and leaves for home, journeying south, back into Edom.

Jacob had no intention of following Esau into Edom unless he had been forced to.....which had been a distinct possibility. In fact, the cunning that had always been Jacob's....now called Israel..... earmark, is evident as he implies to Esau that he and his family indeed are going to join Esau in Edom; a deception to be sure. Rather, once Esau and his troops leave, Jacob turns and heads northwest, back to quite near the area where the wrestling match with the angel took place; into land that will eventually become the territory of his son Gad. He stops, apparently for a couple of years, and he names the place Succoth.....meaning booths or huts .....because he built these shelters for his family and some of the animals on a temporary basis; this was not where he intended on settling down.

In some amount of time for which we aren't privy (Hebrew tradition is that it was 18 months), Jacob moves on to Shechem, the same place his grandfather Abraham had come to when he first entered Canaan (notice that, once again, we see history repeat itself). But, this was quite a changed place from the time when Abraham and Sarah camped on its lovely grounds. There was no city, not even a village; at that time it was just a "place". It would not even have been called Shechem at the time Abraham was there. Let me explain and give you a little tip about understanding the Bible. If you and I were to talk about the Chumash Indians that inhabited the Los Angeles basin, long before the Mexicans even arrived, you would have no trouble with me referring to it as Los Angeles, as I just did. It certainly was NOT called Los Angeles in those days.....and I'm sure you're well aware of that..... but it is simply a way for me to communicate to you the area I'm talking about. It is the same in the Bible. Since it was in Moses' era that the Scripture we are reading was first written down as a comprehensive document, it was looking back to a time some 500 – 600 years earlier. So, in Moses' era, Shechem was a well-established and widely known city. Therefore, when we're told in Genesis that Abraham arrived at Shechem, it was simply an easy and common way of identifying the place using contemporary terms. In fact, because the various books of the Old Testament were written over a span of about 1000 years, city and place names came and went. Places and cities may have been called one thing in the earliest books, but several hundred years later, they were called something else. Therefore, we'll find the same place given two or more different names in the Bible, because at times they're talking about the current name, and other times they're talking about an earlier name.

But, now, in Jacob's time, a walled city had been built. There he purchased some land from the sons of Shechem's King, King Hamor. King Hamor was from one of the many tribes of Canaan, and his particular tribe was the Hivites. We also find out, here, that the city was named after one of King Hamor's sons, Shechem.

Rather than live inside the city walls, Jacob pitches his tents well outside the city walls. He is a shepherd; living inside a city is not anything he would choose. On the other hand, living next to a city gave him an opportunity to make a mutual security treaty for his family's protection, and to have nearby the staples of life. The amount he pays for the land outside the city walls, is important: because a) it records that he DID purchase land, and b) he paid a proper price for it so he could not be accused of cheating of the king. In principle, it operates in the same way as Abraham's purchase of the Cave of Machpelah as a burial place; every element for proof of permanent ownership, without dispute, is provided. This would prove to be important at a later time. For, we are told in Genesis 48 that this particular piece of land Jacob willed to his son

Joseph. Further, Joseph was initially buried there after the Exodus.....for the Israelites brought his remains with them.....although apparently his bones were later moved to another spot.

What is even more interesting is that in the future, at this very spot (that little piece of land just outside the walls of Shechem), Yeshua would demonstrate a principle that most of us in this room should be thankful for. We're going to pause and read a portion of that story, though not all of it. Turn your Bibles to John 4:1.

### **READ JOHN 4:1-14**

Notice that at this moment in history, Shechem is now going by the name Sychar but they are one in the same place. And, here, at the very well Jacob dug to provide water for his family and his animals, we find Jesus encounter with the Samaritan woman. It is interesting, is it not, that the FIRST non-Jewish person to be offered a drink of the living water that brings everlasting life was a) a woman, and b) a hated Samaritan. And, it occurred at the very first place Jacob, Israel, settled when he came back into the Promised Land from Mesopotamia.

By the way: today Shechem is in the West Bank, goes by the Arab name of Nablus, and the Palestinians claim that they had always held this land.

Feeling he has come to a place that is likely his clan's new and permanent home, Jacob, now called Israel, erects an altar and calls it El-Elohe-Israel. Those Hebrew words mean...El, the God of Israel. They won't be staying long, though.

### **GENESIS CHAPTER 34**

#### **READ GEN 34 all**

Now, Dinah, Jacob's daughter by Leah, was about 15 years old according to most Bible historians. And, we are told that one day she went into the city to "see" or to "visit" some of the local girls. The Hebrew word here for "see" is ra-ah, which carries with it the sense of wanting to participate, or explore, or to learn something intellectually. Josephus says she went to join in with one of the many pagan feasts celebrated by the Hivites. Shechem, son of the King, sees Dinah and likes what he sees, and rapes her. This whole story carries with it a tone of a naïve, foolish, young girl getting in over her head, and then a series of events unfolding that is beyond her youthful capability to recognize as dangerous, let alone be able to control. We must understand that Dinah was now a girl of marriageable age, a virgin, and would NEVER have been allowed to go, unchaperoned, into a city. That she did this was a blatant act of rebellion, and it led to horrible things.

Now, apparently, the King's son was in lust with Dinah. The Bible says he loved her, but at the same time, the scripture is really just stating his side of the story. A man in love with a woman would not take her by force! But, as prince, he felt he could do as he pleased. And certainly, no woman would dare refuse his advances.

In any case, the prince now wants to marry Dinah, so his father, the King, goes to speak with Jacob, who had already received word of the violation of his daughter. About the same time, Jacob's sons who were out in the fields got word of it, and they came back to the tents together, furious. The King addresses Jacob and his sons and explains that he and his son would like to make things right by his son marrying Dinah, and then their two peoples intermarrying and eventually becoming as one.

There is so much we could stop and talk about here, but I'd like to make just a couple of points. **First:** that the King of Shechem would quickly try to repair matters showed both wisdom and that this King was not a typical monarch of that day. It has long been suspected that the city of Shechem was not occupied only by Hivites, but by several different tribes. Hamor ruled over a confederation of tribes, and so much diplomacy was called for in order for him to keep his power. **Second:** we need to grasp that the kingdom of Shechem was large. The city was, at the time of Jacob, basically the seat of government over a very widespread area. The city itself wasn't particularly large; but the landmass it ruled over, was. Ancient Akkadian and Egyptian records tell of a kingdom of Shechem that comprised an area of about 1000 square miles that started a little south of Jerusalem and went as far north as Megiddo. There can be no mistake that the king and kingdom we are currently dealing with is the same one as those ancient records describe. Hamor was more a chieftain than a king, and he had to be politically adept to run his diverse kingdom.

In verse 7, the last few words say that this thing....this rape.....was "a thing not to be done". What had occurred here was illegal in the Middle East. And, it required that the male compensate the family of the girl, because now she was ruined. To try and find a husband for a girl, who had lost her virginity, was near to impossible. And, in a few more verses we're going to see the King offer a great deal more than the normal bride-price for Dinah, not out of a sense of responsibility, but because he was legally obligated.

What really turned Jacob's sons to rage, however, was that the King didn't even make mention of the crime his son had committed against Dinah.....it was as though it had never happened. Even more, Dinah was being held hostage inside the city, which is no doubt why the King felt brave enough to confront Jacob in such a flippant manner.

In the narrative that follows, we do not hear Jacob reply to the King, but, instead, its Jacob's sons that give their conditions to the King's request: the King, his sons, all his family, and all of the city's males must be circumcised before Dinah can marry Shechem. Why did all the men have to be circumcised? Because it was forbidden for anyone to be a member of Israel (which is what the King, in essence, said would result.....that is, the two peoples, his and Jacobs, would be joined), without submitting to the terms of the Abrahamic Covenant. And, to be a member of that covenant required circumcision. But, this was a ruse, for they had blood on their minds. They were employing what they had learned from their father, Jacob, now called Israel: deceit. They knew full well what the adult males of ancient times experienced after being circumcised: much pain and infection, and a resulting weakness and malaise.

King Hamor is no better. He calls a public meeting, and he speaks to the city's males and tells them he wants them to be circumcised so that these two peoples can unite. They could not

have been too thrilled about this, for in those days circumcision of an adult was a pretty grueling process. So, he makes it sound like it's a good thing for them. But, primarily, it's for the purpose of wealth accumulation for himself. For, in V23, the King says to the men of his city, "Will not their livestock and their property and all their animals become **ours**?" Hardly. It will become HIS!

The Chieftain argues eloquently for his point of view. He says these people are our friends. A term that would indicate a treaty between Shechem and the Israelites already existed, and so to turn down Jacob's terms would be an affront.

In verse 24, we're told that all the males of Shechem are circumcised and 3 days later, at the height of their discomfort and with infection setting in, the brothers Simeon and Levi went around the city killing every male, all of whom were currently disabled; this included killing the King and his sons. They also rescued Dinah, and then, after Simeon and Levi had finished murdering, Jacob's other sons joined in by looting the now defenseless city. They took not only possessions, they took people. This was the common mode of operation in those days; the taking of people added to the strength and power of one's own tribe.

Understand that it was the TRIBES of Simeon and Levi that went around killing every male. The men, Simeon and Levi, led them, but they had, by now, several male servants and probably a son or two who participated. I suspect that some men from other tribes participated as well, because it would have taken more than a just a few men to kill all those townspeople. And, I suspect that it was done guerilla-style, house-to-house, so that no one was the wiser until his or her own demise came.

When Jacob finds out what his sons have done, he is heartbroken and furious, and tells them that he has become a "stench" to the Canaanites and the Perizzites as a result of their action. It is thought that Perizzites are not a specific tribe, but just a general name for a group of unnamed tribes that live in the hill country of Canaan but they most certainly ARE of Canaanite origin. Let's remember, here, that the Hivites (who were the ruling tribe of Shechem) were one of the many tribes that emanated from Canaan, son of Ham, grandson of Noah. That is, they were all inter-related, and probably also had a mutual protection treaty among themselves. Jacob tells his sons that now that they've done this, many tribes are going to come against them, and they will have no chance of victory because they'll be so outmanned. His boys are still unrepentant about their dirty deed.

Later on, Simeon and Levi are going to be further publicly shamed for their bloodlust and violence. In Genesis 49, when Jacob was on his deathbed and dishing out blessings..... what would prove to be PROPHETIC blessings..... to each of his sons, Simeon and Levi heard this: **NAS Genesis 49:5 "Simeon and Levi are brothers; Their swords are implements of violence. 6 "Let my soul not enter into their council; Let not my glory be united with their assembly; Because in their anger they slew men, And in their self-will they lamed oxen. 7 "Cursed be their anger, for it is fierce; And their wrath, for it is cruel. I will disperse them in Jacob, And scatter them in Israel.**

It is interesting that Levi became priests and Temple tenders. The two primary jobs of Levi

would be as butchers of sacrificial animals, and as armed guards of the Temple and its grounds..... bloody and violent jobs.

The Levites would receive NO land in the allotment of territory in the Promised Land. Rather they would be scattered about each of the 12 tribal territories.

Simeon would be given a small piece of territory surrounded by Judah, and was one of the first tribes to become absorbed by another Israelite tribe.....Judah.

Before we move on to Chapter 35, let me bring up one important issue: God was NOT going to let a marriage between Dinah and Shechem occur. He was NOT going to allow a mixing of the Hebrews with these pagans. There is no indication that Jacob was for it, either. In fact, no indication that his sons thought it was a good idea.....for their only goal in appearing to agree to the proposal was finding a way to extract their revenge. The effect of the joining of Jacob, Israel's, family with that of the Hivites (King Hamor and his family) would have been to re-unite that which God had divided and separated; it would have united the blessed line of Shem (Jacob's line) with the accursed line of Ham (King Hamor's line). Satan would have liked nothing better.