

Genesis (2011) 34A

- Jacob has returned to the land and settled near Shechem, a place his father and grandfather often occupied
 - The first act in the story of his life revolved around his relationship with his brother Esau
 - It began with the conflict over the birthright and Jacob's deception of his father and brother, leading to a division in the family
 - God used Jacob's sin to divide the two brothers, so that the child of the seed promise and the child of flesh would be separated
 - Just as God did between Isaac and Ishmael
 - Then it became a story of Jacob's struggle outside the land, which was the consequence for his sin
 - During that struggle he gains wives and children
 - And he contends with Laban
 - Finally, the story ended with a reconciliation of sorts with Esau
 - They depart on good terms, so that the threat of Esau against Jacob no longer exists
 - Thus allowing Jacob to reenter the land
 - Through this first act, the key messages were that God was patient and faithful while working to grow Jacob's faith and dependence on the Lord
 - Meanwhile, Jacob was self-centered and deceptive
 - Leading God to wrestle with Jacob to bring him a new understanding of God's power and authority in his life
- With the first act coming to conclusion and Jacob settled in the land again, the next part of his life story begins
 - This second part still centers on Jacob's weaknesses, but the focus in the story shifts slightly

- Instead of learning about Jacob's failings, now we begin to understand the consequences of Jacob's sin
- In particular, we come to understand that his sins of deception, impatience, and self-centeredness have combined to yield a family of sons who share his weaknesses
 - So that the consequences of Jacob's sin begin to play out in the sin of his children
 - Reminding us that sometimes the consequences for sin wait many years to blossom

[Gen. 34:1](#) Now Dinah the daughter of Leah, whom she had borne to Jacob, went out to visit the daughters of the land.

[Gen. 34:2](#) When Shechem the son of Hamor the Hivite, the prince of the land, saw her, he took her and lay with her by force.

[Gen. 34:3](#) He was deeply attracted to Dinah the daughter of Jacob, and he loved the girl and spoke tenderly to her.

[Gen. 34:4](#) So Shechem spoke to his father Hamor, saying, "Get me this young girl for a wife."

- But in Genesis 30:21 we learned that one of the children born to Leah was a daughter Dinah
 - In the Bible, women rarely receive mention in the genealogies of the Bible
 - This pattern does not mean women are valued less to God
 - It merely reflects the Biblical and cultural emphasis on men determining family identities
 - The story of Genesis, and the Bible as a whole, is a story ultimately about the Messiah
 - About where and when He comes to save us from sin
 - And the line of Messiah is traced through the seed of men, according to Scripture
 - Though it ultimately ends with the seed of woman - a virgin birth
 - Therefore, it serves little purpose for the writers of scripture to note all the women born along this path to Messiah unless they play a role in determining the line of the Messiah

- Like Ruth
 - So the mention of Dinah in Genesis 30 was an early indication that she would play a role in determining the line of the Messiah, and she does
 - Genesis 34 tells us how Dinah made that contribution
- In v.1 we're told that Dinah went to visit the daughters of the land
 - The land is Canaan, of course, and the occupants of the land are the ungodly Canaanite people
 - Jacob, like his fathers before him, had chosen to settle outside the cities of Canaan because he understood that he was to remain apart from these cursed people
 - Jacob was looking into the future in faith for the inheritance God promised him
 - But he has not been effective in teaching that viewpoint among his children
 - Here we see evidence of that weakness
 - Dinah goes out to make friends with the daughters of the land
 - She is a young girl, probably 14-16 yrs, seeking friendship with the locals living in the nearby town of Shechem
 - We haven't heard much about Shechem up to this point, except in Genesis 12 when we learned how Abraham first came into the land
 - At that time we learned that Shechem was a place of the Canaanites
 - The Canaanites were a dreadfully sinful and wicked people
 - They were idolators, of course, who practiced child sacrifice, ritual prostitution and sodomy
 - They showed little regard for human life and virtue
- Clearly, this is the kind of culture that Jacob should have warned his children to avoid at all costs, especially since God had declared they were cursed and were to be displaced by Abraham's descendants

- Instead Dinah tries to make friends with them
 - One of the sons of the king of Shechem takes notice of Dinah
 - He takes her by force and rapes her
 - There were few offenses in the ancient east more egregious than rape
 - It defiled the woman, stole her honor and brought shame to her family
 - Rape was punishable by death in virtually every culture until the past century
- After raping the girl, the prince of Shechem keeps Dinah prisoner in his home for a time
 - He becomes attracted to her and begins to desire her as his wife
 - Perhaps his first interest in her was merely as a sexual conquest
 - But now he wants her
 - Since the prince couldn't keep her forever, he decides he can make her a legitimate wife
 - This is the kind of hubris common to rich and powerful people
 - When someone has unchecked power, sinful flesh has no natural constraints
 - In one moment, the prince could commit a terrible crime against this woman and her family
 - And the next moment, he assumes he can cause this family to bow to his will and consent to a wedding
 - Remember this, should you ever wish for great power or wealth
 - Should God chose to grant your desire, it might be a sign that God wishes to curse you rather than bless you

- Now word reaches Jacob

[Gen. 34:5](#) Now Jacob heard that he had defiled Dinah his daughter; but his sons were with his livestock in the field, so Jacob kept silent until they came in.

[Gen. 34:6](#) Then Hamor the father of Shechem went out to Jacob to speak with him.

[Gen. 34:7](#) Now the sons of Jacob came in from the field when they heard it; and the men were grieved, and they were very angry because he had done a disgraceful thing in Israel by lying with Jacob's daughter, for such a thing ought not to be done.

- Jacob hears about the prince and his daughter
 - Jacob hears she had been defiled
 - The word for defiled is "unclean" indicating that Dinah was no longer suitable for marriage
 - At the time Jacob hears this, his sons were in the field
 - Jacob stays silent initially
 - By "silent" the Bible means he made no decision concerning how to respond
 - He wanted to have the counsel of his sons, which would have been customary
 - We remember already we've seen brothers negotiating marriage arrangements for sisters
 - The king of Shechem has come to Jacob to negotiate for the marriage of the prince with Dinah
 - Meanwhile, the brothers hear of their sister's plight, and they rush in from the field
 - The brothers are incensed over their sister's treatment
 - They declare this is a disgraceful thing in Israel
 - This is the first time in the Bible that the family of Jacob is collectively called Israel
 - The family has taken on a national identity under the new name of their father
 - The national identity is partly the reason for their strong reaction

- It was bad enough that their sister was defiled
 - But the action is an act of war
- Canaan was populated by city states
 - Each settlement was its own power, ruled by a king
 - We've already seen the king of Gerar
 - Now we see the king of Shechem
 - Israel was a nomadic group of people living among the city states
 - Israel was large and powerful, probably as powerful as many city states themselves
 - In that regard, Jacob would have been considered a king of his family
 - Therefore, the actions of the prince amounted to an act of war of one city state against another
 - So the brothers are intent on defending their sister's honor and in defending the family name of Israel
 - To do otherwise would be a sign of weakness and a risk of greater conflict

[Gen. 34:8](#) But Hamor spoke with them, saying, "The soul of my son Shechem longs for your daughter; please give her to him in marriage.

[Gen. 34:9](#) "Intermarry with us; give your daughters to us and take our daughters for yourselves.

[Gen. 34:10](#) "Thus you shall live with us, and the land shall be open before you; live and trade in it and acquire property in it."

[Gen. 34:11](#) Shechem also said to her father and to her brothers, "If I find favor in your sight, then I will give whatever you say to me.

[Gen. 34:12](#) "Ask me ever so much bridal payment and gift, and I will give according as you say to me; but give me the girl in marriage."

- Hamor approaches the marriage negotiation as if there was nothing amiss
 - He says my son wants to marry your daughter
 - In fact, let's intermarry in general
 - He proposes that the two cultures should become one

- Why does the king make this offer?
- Besides trying to win Dinah for his son, the king see economic advantage to this deal
- Jacob's family wealth would be a great boost to the city's stature and power
- Obviously this arrangement would be a serious departure from God's plan for Israel
 - The land will one day belong to Israel, but they were not to obtain it through compromise with the cursed Canaanites
 - Instead, Israel was to remain a separate people wandering in the land until God gave them an inheritance
 - There is simply no way Jacob could consider this offer
- Notice Hamor doesn't directly acknowledge the rape or his son's defiling of Dinah
 - But in a tacit admission of guilt, he offers unusually generous terms
 - First, he waives the right for a dowry that usually accompanied with the bride
 - You see that in the first half of v.12
 - The English reads incorrectly in my version
 - It should read "ask me never so much..."
 - It means he wouldn't ask for a dowry
 - Secondly, Hamor offers to pay whatever bride price Jacob wanted
 - Name your price, he says
- While these terms sound good, in reality they are increasing Dinah's shame

- By not following the normal process of expecting a dowry and negotiating in earnest to obtain a bride price, he is treating her like a prostitute
- He is diminishing her even further
- So now Jacob faces a decision of how to respond to this situation
 - On the one hand, he has an opportunity to put the episode behind him through compromise
 - He could name a high price for Dinah, which would have helped restore some sense of honor to his daughter
 - The higher the bride price, the greater the honor for the bride
 - Still, no price can erase the shame suffered by the family
 - Plus he would have had a serious increase in wealth
 - And if Jacob agrees, he would gain access to the city's wealth and the opportunity to own land and settle down in the region
 - On the other hand, a Canaanite nation has committed a terrible act against his family
 - His daughter has been shamed and expects her family to come to her defense
 - Secondly, they want to go a step further and corrupt the entire family by intermarriage
 - But if Jacob takes up arms against the king, he risks his entire family being wiped out
 - Plus, any conflict would put his peaceful existence in the land at risk
- As was customary, Jacob leaves it to his sons to take the lead in the negotiations

[Gen. 34:13](#) But Jacob's sons answered Shechem and his father Hamor with deceit, because he had defiled Dinah their sister.

[Gen. 34:14](#) They said to them, "We cannot do this thing, to give our sister to one who is uncircumcised, for that would be a disgrace to us.

[Gen. 34:15](#) "Only on this condition will we consent to you: if you will become like us, in that every male of you be circumcised,

[Gen. 34:16](#) then we will give our daughters to you, and we will take your daughters for ourselves, and we will live with you and become one people.

[Gen. 34:17](#) "But if you will not listen to us to be circumcised, then we will take our daughter and go."

- In v.13, Moses tells us that Jacob's sons intended to deceive Hamor and revenge their sister's treatment
 - While their desire to defend their sister and the family honor is justified, everything they do after this point is wrong
 - Notice where it begins...they deceive
 - This is the Jacob family tradition
 - You can bet these sons live and think much like their father
 - And Jacob's penchant for relying on deception to solve his problems is reflected in his boys' thinking
 - In fact, it's likely that Jacob himself doesn't even realize that they intend to deceive Hamor
 - This itself tells us something about Jacob
 - He appears satisfied with the possibility of his sons marrying Dinah off to this family
 - It's a sad commentary on Jacob that he is willing to overlook his daughter in this time of need
 - And he was willing to stand by and permit such a serious compromise with the local Canaanites
 - Jacob has raised a family that is marked by his own nature and weakness of character
 - The most common lie our sin feeds us is either that no one will get hurt or at worst, it only hurts us

- The reality is that sin often has far-reaching and long-lasting consequences
 - We are too limited in our ability to see the power of sin so we underestimate its power in our life and in others'
 - Jacob could never have imagined how his tendency to deceive would become an influence on how his sons think
- It's appropriate that this chapter makes absolutely no mention of God, one of the few in Genesis without such a reference
 - Clearly, God's presence is simply not a factor in this family's decision-making
 - The Lord has promised to bless and keep this family
 - He has assured Jacob of an inheritance
 - He has shown Himself ready and willing to protect Jacob in the face of greater enemies
 - Yet neither Jacob nor his sons give even a moment's thought to the Lord
 - Yet God is certainly present in this story, despite the family's unwillingness to acknowledge His presence
 - God is working to turn the sin of this family to good for His purpose, in keeping with His covenants
 - As a result of this deception, God will bring judgment against those who pursue justice beyond what was proper
 - Meanwhile, He will vindicate Dinah's honor and bring about her freedom
 - And the Lord will use these circumstances to ensure Jacob's protection for the rest of his life in Canaan
 - Once again the Lord will remain faithful despite Israel's shameless faithfulness and the sin of the family
 - How often do you think the nation of Israel took encouragement in reading these accounts knowing their collective unfaithfulness?

- If God could take Jacob and his family and still make a nation out of their sinfulness, then certainly Gould would remain faithful against later periods of Israel's sin
- We can say much the same thing about our life in faith with Christ
 - We aren't perfect either
 - Some of us are better than Jacob but some are worse
 - Just as Chapter 34 is absent God, we have periods of life that is absent God
 - He's not found in our thoughts or actions
 - He fades into the background as our flesh takes center stage
 - Still, God doesn't disappear and He continues to work things to good for those who love Him
 - But in the meantime, remember that sin has a long reach
 - It taints our future as much as it stains our past
 - Our children will mirror our weaknesses
 - Our daily choices to sin will eventually accumulate a wealth of consequences we can't even anticipate
 - Consequences to our health, our emotional well-being
 - Our reputation, our relationships
 - God will remain faithful to His promises for our eternal destiny
 - But turning things to good doesn't mean taking away consequences to sin
 - The best way for us to avoid the consequences of our sin is simply to turn from that sin in the first place