

NOON BIBLE STUDY: GENESIS 34

GENESIS 34:1-4 - DINAH RAPED BY SHECHEM

WHAT A HORRIBLE STORY. DINAH GOES TO SEE SOME OF THE YOUNG WOMEN OF THE LAND AND GETS SEXUALLY ASSAULTED BY A MAN NAMED SHECHEM, WHO WAS THE SON OF HAMOR THE HITTITE A LOCAL RULER OF THE LAND. SHECHEM RAPES HER AND THEN FALLS IN LOVE WITH HER AND TRIES TO NOW WIN HER HEART. CAN YOU EVEN IMAGINE? SHECHEM THEN DEMANDS HIS FATHER ARRANGE A MARRIAGE BETWEEN HIM AND DINAH.

GENESIS 34:5-7 - JACOB AND DINAH'S BROTHERS HEAR THE TERRIBLE NEWS

JACOB HEARS OF THIS NEWS AND IS SPEECHLESS. HIS SONS RETURN FROM THEIR FIELDS AND ARE RIGHTFULLY ENRAGED THAT THEIR SISTER HAS BEEN SO ABUSED BUT THIS SCOUNDREL, SHECHEM. THEY ALL AGREE THAT THIS IS NOT GOOD OR RIGHT AND CERTAINLY NOT SOMETHING THEY ARE ACCEPTING. THE BROTHERS HAVE A MIX OF SORROW FOR THEIR SISTER AND ANGER TOWARDS SHECHEM. WHAT MUST HAVE IT BEEN LIKE FOR DINAH GROWING UP - HAVING 11 (EVENTUALLY 12) BROTHERS TO WATCH FOR YOU, DEFEND YOU, TEASE YOU AND CARE FOR YOU.

PERHAPS PART OF THE BROTHER'S EMOTIONS INCLUDE A LITTLE BIT OF "HOW COULD WE HAVE LET THIS HAPPEN." THAT SORT OF SENTIMENT IS A GOOD PLACE FOR THOUGHTS OF REVENGE TO BE BORN.

GENESIS 34:8-12 - HAMOR ASKS FOR DINAH'S HAND FOR SHECHEM

ADACIOUSLY, HAMOR DOES HIS SON'S BIDDING AND APPROACHES THE FAMILY AND ASKS FOR DINAH TO MARRY SHECHEM, WHO HE DESCRIBES AS HAVING A SOUL THAT "LONGS FOR YOUR DAUGHTER". HE PROPOSES TO THIS FAMILY FILLED WITH YOUNG MEN TO GIVE SOME OF HIS DAUGHTERS TO BE THEIR WIVES. IT'S A MARRIAGE PROPOSAL BUT ALSO A BUSINESS TRANSACTION - FOR THE FAMILY OF JACOB TO THEN HAVE ACCESS TO THE LAND AND PROPERTY OF HAMOR'S DOMAIN.

WHILE THIS SORT OF WEDDING-BUSINESS TRANSACTION WAS NOT UNCOMMON FOR THIS CULTURE, IT WAS NOT THE WAY OF ABRAHAM'S FAMILY. THEY WERE TO BE SEPERATE - STRANGERS AND PILGRIMS IN THIS LAND - LOOKING FOR AND DEPENDING ON GOD'S PLAN TO GIVE THEM THE LAND, DESCENDANTS AND BLESSING. THIS PROPOSAL BY HAMOR WOULD HAVE GONE AGAINST THEIR COVENANT. BUT HAMOR IS TRYING TO USE MONEY, POSSESSIONS AND SEX TO CALM THE WRATH OF JACOB'S SONS. AND HE'S DOING THIS BECAUSE HIS BRATTY PREDATOR OF A SON HAS ASKED HIM TO.

GENESIS 34:13-18 - JACOB'S SON'S COUNTER-PROPOSAL TO THE PROPOSAL

IT APPEARS THAT JACOB'S SONS INTERCEPT THE PROPOSAL, OR AT LEAST TAKE IT UPON THEMSELVES TO RESPOND TO HAMOR'S OFFER. THEY SAY THAT THEY CAN ONLY AGREE TO THIS DEAL IF ALL OF THE PEOPLE IN HAMOR AND SHECHEM'S COMPANY (FAMILY AND TOWNSPEOPLE IT WOULD SEEM) FIRST ARE CIRCUMCISED. "AFTER ALL", THEY REPLY, "WE ARE A CIRCUMCISED PEOPLE, AND CAN'T INTERMARRY WITH PEOPLE WHO'S MALES ARE NOT."

IF EVERYONE GETS CIRCUMCISED, THEN IT'S A DEAL. IF NOT, NO DEAL. HAMOR AND SHECHEM CONSIDER THE COUNTER PROPOSAL AND THEY CONCLUDE THAT IT SEEMS "REASONABLE" OR "GOOD" (V. 18). NOT SURE HOW THEIR BROTHERS AND GUY FRIENDS ARE GOING TO FEEL ABOUT IT WHEN THEY GET HOME, BUT FOR NOW, THERE'S A GENTLEMAN'S AGREEMENT TO MOVE FORWARD. WHAT WOULD ONE BE WILLING TO DO TO COVER UP A RAPE OF AN INNOCENT WOMAN? APPARENTLY CIRCUMCISE THEMSELVES AND ALL THE MEN OF THEIR TOWN.

TO HAMOR AND SHECHEM, THE BROTHERS OF DINAH, SEEM TO BE AS MESSED UP AS THEY ARE. THEY ARE WILLING TO FORGET ABOUT THE RAPE OF THEIR SISTER FOR A DEAL TO MARRY SOME OF THE HITITE WOMEN AND USE HAMOR'S LAND TO GRAZE THEIR FLOCKS. HAMOR IS PROBABLY WALKING BACK HOME WITH A BIT OF RELIEF THAT HIS POWER OF PERSUASION GOT HIS SON OUT OF A JAM. HOWEVER, THE KEY PHRASE TO NOTE IN THIS SECTION IS THIS: "JACOB'S SONS ANSWERED...WITH *DECEIT*..." (V. 13).

GENESIS 34:19-24 - THE MEN OF HAMOR'S CITY ARE ALL CIRCUMCISED

HAMOR AND SHECHEM (WHO WE LEARN WAS BELOVED IN THIS REGION, V. 19) RETURN HOME AND APPEAL TO THE MEN OF THE CITY TO JOIN THEM IN THIS CONTRACT WITH JACOB'S SONS. THEY PROPOSE THIS AS A GOOD AND BENEFICIAL DEAL FOR THEIR PEOPLE.

HAMOR & SHECHEM APPEAL TO THIS WHOLE PROPOSAL AS ULTIMATELY BEING A GOOD DEAL FOR THEM AND THEY POSITION THEMSELVES AS THE WINNER OF THIS ARRANGEMENT - IN SPITE OF THE "COST":

GENESIS 34:23 (NLT) - BUT IF WE DO THIS, ALL THEIR LIVESTOCK AND POSSESSIONS WILL EVENTUALLY BE OURS. COME, LET'S AGREE TO THEIR TERMS AND LET THEM SETTLE HERE AMONG US."

WHAT A WINDOW IN THE HEART OF HUMANITY. EVIL LEADING TO MORE EVIL LEADING TO ATTEMPTS TO COVER EVIL BY MORE EVIL - ALL WITH A HUMAN-CENTRIC FOCUS ABOUT COVERING YOUR OWN ASSETS, MANEUVERING SO THAT YOU CAN GET THE BEST DEAL FOR YOURSELF, AND AVOIDING THE CONSEQUENCES OF ONE'S BEHAVIOR.

THANKFULLY THE WORLD HAS GOTTEN SO MUCH BETTER SINCE THIS PRIMITIVE TIME (*IF ONLY*).

GENESIS 34:25-31 - THE SONS OF JACOB HAVE THEIR REVENGE

THE MEN OF HAMOR ALL GO THROUGH WITH IT. AND THIS IS EXACTLY WHAT JACOB'S BOYS HAD HOPED FOR. KNOWING THE (PAINFUL) PROCESS OF CIRCUMCISION BETTER THAN ANYONE, THEY JUMP ON THEIR CHANCE TO GET REVENGE FOR DINAH'S EXPLOITATION. SIMEON AND LEVI JUMP INTO ACTION ON THE THIRD DAY WHEN THE MEN OF THE CITY "WERE IN PAIN" (V. 25) AND KILL EVERY MAN OF THE CITY. THEY KILLED HAMOR AND SHECHEM AND RESCUED DINAH FROM THEIR HOUSE. THEN THE OTHER SONS OF JACOB COME AND TAKE ALL OF THE VALUABLES OF THE CITY - "BECAUSE THEY HAD DEFILED THEIR SISTER" (V. 27).

UNDERSTANDABLE, YES. ADMIRABLE, NO. JACOB HIMSELF LEARNS OF THEIR ACTIONS AND IS NOT HAPPY. HE FEARS THAT THIS ACTION WILL LEAD TO A REPUTATION FOR THEIR FAMILY - AND INSPIRE REVENGE FROM OTHER CANAANITE TRIBES. THE BROTHERS RESPOND WITH A CLASSIC BROTHER RESPONSE "WELL WHAT DID YOU EXPECT US TO DO?" AND WITH THAT THIS SAD AND ALMOST RANDOM RECORD IN THE LARGER CONTEXT OF OUR STORY ENDS.

JACOBS RESPONSE ISN'T EVEN ABOUT THEIR SON'S BEHAVIOR...IT'S ABOUT HOW IT WILL AFFECT HIS REPUTATION

THIS CHAPTER IS ONE OF THOSE CHAPTERS IN THE BIBLE THAT REALLY MAKES YOU THINK ABOUT "WHAT WOULD YOU DO?" IT IS A CHAPTER WHICH CHALLENGES OUR ETHICS AND DEMANDS WE WRESTLE WITH DIFFERENT VERSES AND REAL LIFE SITUATIONS OF EVIL IN THIS FALLEN WORLD. THIS CHAPTER IS NOT A GOOD CHAPTER, BUT IT IS GOOD FOR US TO BE CHALLENGED LIKE THIS.

WHAT WE SEE YET AGAIN IN THE FAMILY OF ABRAHAM IS THAT THE GENERATIONAL SINS CONTINUE TO BE PASSED ON - NOW WE SEE THEM ALIVE IN JACOB'S SONS - THE MEN WHO WILL GROW TO GIVE NAME THE 12 TRIBES OF ISRAEL. ABRAHAM WAS A DECEIVER, SO WAS ISAAC, AND WE KNOW JACOB WAS - AND NOW JACOB'S SONS "ANSWER WITH DECEIT" (V. 13) JUST LIKE THEIR DADDY'S DID. THERE WAS SEXUAL AND RELATIONAL PROBLEMS WITH ABRAHAM, AND ISAAC, AND DEFINITELY WITH JACOB (REMEMBER THE EPIC BABY-BATTLE BETWEEN HIS WIVES?) - AND NOW DINAH IS RAPED, AND THE SONS PRETEND TO WANT TO INTERMINGLE WITH THE HITTITE WOMEN. THERE ARE LIFE-LONG CONSEQUENCES IN THE LIFE OF ABRAHAM, ISAAC AND JACOB WHERE THEY WENT THEIR OWN WAY AND DIDN'T TRUST GOD - AND THERE WILL BE SIMILAR CONSEQUENCES IN JACOB'S SON'S LIVES - NOTABLY SIMEON AND LEVI FOR THEIR ROLE IN THIS CHAPTER.

UNLESS YOU MAKE INTENTIONAL CHANGE TO CHANGE THE BEHAVIOR PATTERNS OF YOUR EARTHLY FAMILY, THERE IS A GOOD CHANCE YOU AND I WILL REPEAT SOME OF THESE SAME BEHAVIORS - AND OFTEN TIMES NOT EVEN KNOW WE'RE DOING IT. THIS IS HARMLESS WHERE WE MODEL THEIR GOOD BEHAVIORS, AND DEVASTATING WHERE WE MODEL THEIR BAD ONES. ANOTHER REMINDER TO WATCH OUT FOR THIS, PRAY ABOUT THIS AND PLEAD WITH HEAVEN TO MODEL THE BEHAVIORS OF YOUR FATHER WHO DWELLS THERE INSTEAD.

BACK TO REFLECTIONS ON GENESIS 34, MAKE NO MISTAKE - WHAT SHECHEM DID WAS SO WRONG. NONE OF THIS WAS DINAH'S FAULT (DO NOT GIVE ME THIS, "SHE SHOULD HAVE NOT BEEN TRAVELING TO VISIT THE WOMEN ALONE" LINE). SHECHEM WAS WRONG. AND IN THE OLD TESTAMENT, EVEN PRE-MOSAIC LAW SYSTEM OF JUSTICE, ONE COULD ARGUE FROM THE REASONING OF "AN EYE FOR AN EYE" THAT SOMETHING SHOULD HAVE BEEN DONE TO SHECHEM. HOWEVER, THE WAY THE SONS OF JACOB RESPOND, SPECIFICALLY SIMEON AND LEVI, THE OLDEST SONS, WAS NOT WISE OR, IT THINK WE COULD ARGUE, JUSTIFIABLE.

THINK ABOUT HOW THEY RESPONDED - THEY KILLED ALL OF THE MEN OF THE CITY. *ALL OF THEM*. NOT JUST SHECHEM, NOT JUST SHECHEM AND HIS FATHER, BUT ALL OF THE MEN OF THE CITY. THAT IS NEITHER A PROPORTIONAL RESPONSE NOR AN ADHERENCE TO THE PRIMITIVE CODE OF "AN EYE FOR AN EYE."

THE PAIN AND ANGER THAT DINAH'S BROTHERS FELT WOULD HAVE BEEN PAIN AND ANGER OF THE HIGHEST LEVEL. THEY WOULD HAVE BEEN FILLED WITH WRATH AND WOULD HAVE CRAVED RETRIBUTION AND VENGEANCE. SOME MIGHT ARGUE THAT WHAT THEY DID WAS REASONABLE, AFTER ALL THE REAL VILLAIN HERE IS SHECHEM! HE DID THIS UNJUSTLY AND THE BROTHERS WERE JUSTIFIED. BUT LET'S PUT THE BRAKES ON THE EMOTIONAL RIDE FOR A SECOND - WE ARE AFFORDED THIS LUXURY SINCE WE'RE NOT LIVING THE STORY OURSELVES.

DO YOU SEE WHAT IS COMPLETELY MISSING FROM THIS STORY? CAN ANYONE CITE THE VERSE FROM GENESIS 34 WHERE THE BROTHERS OR JACOB HIMSELF SEEK THE LORD FOR WISDOM IN HOW TO DEAL WITH THIS HORRIFIC EVENT? **THERE IS NONE**. IF YOU DO A WORD SEARCH IN THIS CHAPTER FOR THE WORD "GOD" OR "THE LORD" YOU WILL FIND THAT YOU COME UP WITH ZERO RESULTS.

BEFORE WE ARGUE ABOUT WHAT WE THINK MIGHT BE BLACK AND WHITE TO DO OR NOT DO IN SITUATIONS LIKE THIS - WE HAVE TO ACKNOWLEDGE THAT WITHOUT INVOLVING GOD, WITHOUT CONSULTING HIS WORD OR BEING LED BY HIS SPIRIT WE'RE PROBABLY ALREADY OFF TO A BAD START. NOWHERE IN THIS CHAPTER DO WE SEE THE "FATHERS OF FAITH" MAKING DECISIONS THAT REFLECTED THAT NAME.

THIS IS NOT A TEXTBOOK CHAPTER ON HOW TO DEAL WITH PROBLEMS THAT COME IN OUR LIVES BECAUSE OF OTHER PEOPLE'S SIN. HERE ARE SOME VERSES INSTEAD WE SHOULD REMEMBER AT A TIME LIKE THIS:

JAMES 1:19-20 - UNDERSTAND THIS, MY DEAR BROTHERS AND SISTERS: YOU MUST ALL BE QUICK TO LISTEN, SLOW TO SPEAK, AND SLOW TO GET ANGRY. 20 HUMAN ANGER DOES NOT PRODUCE THE RIGHTEOUSNESS GOD DESIRES.

GALATIANS 6:7 - DO NOT BE DECEIVED: GOD IS NOT MOCKED, FOR WHATEVER ONE SOWS, THAT WILL HE ALSO REAP.

ROMANS 12:17-19 - NEVER PAY BACK EVIL FOR EVIL TO ANYONE. RESPECT WHAT IS RIGHT IN THE SIGHT OF ALL MEN. 18 IF POSSIBLE, SO FAR AS IT DEPENDS ON YOU, BE AT PEACE WITH ALL MEN. 19 NEVER TAKE YOUR OWN REVENGE, BELOVED, BUT LEAVE ROOM FOR THE WRATH OF GOD, FOR IT IS WRITTEN, "VENGEANCE IS MINE, I WILL REPAY," SAYS THE LORD.

ROMANS 12:21 - DO NOT BE OVERCOME BY EVIL, BUT OVERCOME EVIL WITH GOOD.

TAKING MATTERS INTO OUR OWN HANDS, TAKING VENGEANCE FOR OURSELVES, RETURNING EVIL FOR EVIL - NEVER - MAKES THINGS BETTER. TWO WRONGS MIGHT MAKE YOU *FEEL BETTER* FOR THE MOMENT, BUT TWO WRONGS DON'T MAKE A RIGHT. WHO KNEW OUR KINDERGARTEN TEACHERS WERE SO WISE AFTERALL.