

Genesis

Creation, Covenants, All Grace — study 25



SCHOOL of SHAME & SORROW

SHECHEM: SIN'S SHAME (33:18-34:31)

33:18-34:12 *Trace the genesis of the Shechem massacre. (Hos. 8:7 -- do we get EXACTLY what we deserve?)*

(1) This tarrying at Shechem was undoubtedly a mistake. The word spoken to him by Jehovah in Paddan-Aram, commanding him to return, had been quite explicit, "Return unto the land of thy fathers, and to thy kindred"; and there can be no doubt that he ought at once to have continued his journey at least to Bethel, the place where God had first appeared to him, and made His covenant with him; and in all probability the full terms of the command intended that he should have passed immediately to Hebron, where Isaac was still living. There is nothing more perilous than to stop short of the place to which God is calling, and the story which follows is that of a sad and tragic reaping from this halt. -- **G. Campbell Morgan**, *The Analysed Bible: Genesis* p.210

(2) Dinah had the traits of her mother (as does your daughter) and she reaped the harvest of her parent's sin. Leah connived with her father to impersonate Rachel, ... Jacob had perpetrated a similar impersonation upon his blind father. Dinah, their daughter, brought shame and humiliation upon them and caused the massacre of many men. ... It is the duty of parents to see that their young people are in proper surroundings and under competent chaperonage. All normal young people wish to see and be seen, and Dinah was no exception. She was 13. Living in a tent and seeing a town nearby, she naturally wanted to go where there was life and movement ... -- **D.G. Barnhouse**, *Genesis Vol.2* pp.136,137

34:13-24 *Shechem's JUST desserts for their generosity/greed?*

(3) ... the first and supreme factor of choice of a new home should be, 'What will it do for our spiritual life?' ... And apart from any consideration of personal advantage urged as one of the reasons for acquiescence, it is impossible not to see the peaceful and trustful attitude of the Canaanites ... The 'heathen' show up well by contrast with those who were professedly the people of God. -- **W.H. Griffith Thomas**, *Genesis 25-36* pp.136,141

(4) Simeon and Levi have the last word, but Jacob speaks the last of all in his testamentary sayings. The most sinful part of it was, their degrading the sacred sign of the covenant to so base a means of malice. And yet it was a noble germ which exploded so sinfully. The Divine righteousness, which fashioned the subsequent history, turned this also to account. The energetic moral purity, which the two tribes display in these their beginnings, was sanctified by grace and profited all Israel. -- **Franz Delitzsch**, *New Commentary on Genesis* p.225

34:25-31 *What is the real root of the Shechem massacre? (33:17-19)*

(5) The complaint of Jacob was utterly unworthy of a man of faith. ... There was no word of jealousy for the honour of God, and no word of rebuke at this point for the cruelty of his sons. He came to the consciousness of that later, as his final words concerning them will reveal. At the moment he was simply filled with cowardly fear. ... How often, alas! children have been harmed incalculably, because parents, while believing in God, have yet tarried at some Shechem of worldly advantage, instead of centring all their interests around Beth-el and the altar. -- **G. Campbell Morgan**, *op. cit.*, pp. 212-213

(6) Shechem offered Jacob the attractions of a compromise. His summons was to Beth-el; but Shechem, about a day's journey short of it, stood attractively at the crossroads of trade. He was called to be a stranger and pilgrim; but while buying his own plot of land there (33:19) he could argue that it was within his promised borders. It was disobedience none the less, and his pious act of rearing an altar and claiming his new name of Israel (20) could not disguise the fact. Chapter 34 shows the cost of it, paid in rape, treachery and massacre, a chain of evil that proceeded logically enough from the unequal partnership with the Canaanite community. -- **Derek Kidner**, *Genesis* p.172

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(7) When Dinah was ravished, Jacob "held his peace." Now that a village had been exterminated, he spoke, out of fear for his own safety. ... There was sin in Jacob's silence, abandoning his authority as patriarch and failing to impose discipline. He now sinned in speech as he chided his wilful sons, aged 18 and 17 ... Jacob! you brought that trouble on yourself. You passed your own deceitful nature into your boys. You set them a constant example of guile. They heard you lie to Esau at Peniel ... They saw your interest in fat pastures when you pitched your tent in Shechem. You said nothing when Dinah was violated. Now that they have taken things into their own hands, do you think they will be moved by your whimpering? Talk to God about your own sin before talking to these boys about theirs. How can they take you seriously when you think only of danger to yourself! -- **D. G. Barnhouse**, *op. cit.*, pp.139,140

(8) Jacob did not content himself with a temporary stay at Succoth. He 'built him a house and made booths for his cattle.' Hitherto he had lived the pilgrim life, as his father and grandfather before him; but now he seeks for something

more permanent, and builds a house. A tent was no longer sufficient for him. But it may be asked, Was this wrong? Not *per se*, perhaps, and yet pretty certainly wrong for him. There are many things not essentially sinful which become sinful under particular circumstances. Jacob had forgotten his vow at Bethel (xxviii. 21), and by making Succoth so evidently his home he was showing himself to be on a very low spiritual level in his forgetfulness of the claim of God upon him. -- **W.H. Griffith Thomas**, *op. cit.*, p.126

BACK to BETHEL: COVENANT RENEWAL (35:1-15)

35:1-7 *What does Jacob's resolve show he had learned?*

(9) But one, though undesigned, consequence of the crime proved a further blessing to Jacob. It was quite clear that he and his family must remove from the scene of Simeon's and Levi's treachery and cruelty. Then it was that God directed Jacob to return to Bethel, and fulfil the promise which he had there made on fleeing from the face of Esau his brother. About ten years must have elapsed since the return of Jacob from Mesopotamia, and yet he had not paid his vows unto the Lord! From what follows, we infer that, in all probability, the reason of this delay had been that the family of Jacob had not been purged from idolatry, and that hitherto Jacob had been too weak to remove from his household what must have rendered his appearance at Beth-el morally impossible. -- **A. Edersheim**, *Bible History OT Vol.1* p.139

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(10) Jacob's experiences after Peniel are a solemn reminder that Conversion (Bethel) and Consecration (Peniel) are no guarantees of abiding faithfulness. They need to be followed by Concentration and Continuanace. -- **W.H. Griffith Thomas**, *op. cit.*, p.128

(11) The love of God was calling Jacob back to Himself. Through the waywardness of the past years, culminating in the massacre at Shechem, Jacob was pursued by this never-changing love. ... Their spiritual declension and years of wandering are permitted to wear down their resistance and to bring irresistible grace to triumph. It was thirty years since Jacob had vowed to return; he had been living in Shechem for ten years, and Bethel was only thirty miles away. -- **D.G. Barnhouse**, *op. cit.*, p.142

35:8-15 *Is this portion merely a reiteration of chapter 28?*

(12) Chapter 34 does not mention God, and is full of lust, murder, deceit, and wretchedness -- but this chapter is filled with God. His name appears ten times, plus once as God Almighty, *El Shaddai*, plus eleven times in the names *Bethel* and *Israel*. The contrast is striking, as it always must be in the life of a believer living out the will of God, and again when he returns to the will of God. There was no change in relationship -- Jacob was as much a child of God in Shechem as at Bethel. But fellowship was restored. Relationship can never be destroyed; fellowship can. -- **D.G. Barnhouse**, *op.cit.*, p. 142

SIN'S SORROWS: DEATH, BETRAYAL, & the SEED of UNDYING ENMITY (35:16-36:43)

"Of Esau is Edom"

35:16-29 *Why dwell on misery?* (cf. chapter 5)

(13) Although [Rachel] was greatly loved and could have been fully satisfied, she went through harrowing experiences. First, on her own wedding night, her lover was given to another. She lived in a passionately jealous household, envied by an ill-favored older sister. Moreover, not knowing the true God, she was filled with superstition (30:14), and cherished the idols of her father (31:19) even to stealing and lying (31:32,35). Only recently had she given up these gods (35:2,4). She longed inordinately for another son (30:1,24), but died when he was born. *Lord, keep us from the path of self-will.* --**Barnhouse**, *op. cit.*, p.149

(14) The death of Deborah came when Jacob had put himself right with God. The death of Rachel and the sin of Reuben do not appear to be traceable to any wrong-doing of Jacob. So is it to-day. Sorrow is not necessarily punishment. It may be just the opposite. ... Every affliction may be viewed in two aspects; and what from one view-point may be thought a Benoni, may from another be seen as a Benjamin. ... As the Son of God was made 'perfect through suffering,' so the sons of God are brought to glory in the same way. Just as the pattern of the china vase is made permanent by being put into the fire, so the impressions of God's truth and grace become part of our character by our being passed through the furnace of affliction. -- **W.H. Griffith Thomas**, *op.cit.*, pp.170-172

36:1-43 *What is the point of this extensive tracing of the descendants of Esau?* (vv. 1,8,9,19,43; also v. 12,31)

(15) After the usual pattern in Genesis, where a new stage of the story is to be introduced, the record of the collateral branch of the family is first completed, before the main thread of events is picked up again. This chapter clears the ground for the final section of the book. -- **Derek Kidner**, *op. cit.*, p.177

(16) The warfare between Esau -- the Arab world -- and Israel, is the touchstone of Near and Middle East politics ... -- **D.G. Barnhouse**, *op. cit.* p.154

(17) The most interesting aspect is, of course, that of the relation to Israel. One brief and pregnant sentence in the chapter flashes its light along the coming centuries. "Of Esau is Edom." What Edom meant to Israel the subsequent history reveals. Though personally Jacob escaped the anger of his brother, the great harvests resulting from his deceit were reaped in the after-years. Oh these harvests of the centuries! When will men learn the awful and stupendous greatness of life? The deed of good or evil, of truth or falsehood, done to-day, is not ended, though it is done. There is indeed, nothing small. This sense of infinite values touching minutest details is lost to men generally, and is only restored with the bestowment of age-abiding life, which, among other things, is the consciousness of this very fact that the things of the passing moment are irrevocably linked to the undying ages. -- **G. C. Morgan**, *op. cit.*, pp.224-225