

THE ORIGINS OF IT ALL!: A STUDY OF GENESIS XXXVII.) GREED, DEFILEMENT, DECEPTION GENESIS 34:1-31

A.) THE DANGER OF **PROXIMITY** (v. 1)

Q: What do we know about Dinah?

- She is Jacob's daughter via Leah (who is 'not Rachel')
- She is, to this point, the only girl in the brood in the midst of eleven brothers.

Q: What, if anything, is the problem here?

- Dinah is finding her peer influence among those who don't know or worship the One True God.
- She is immersing herself in a godless, immoral, pagan culture.
- Her family doesn't seem to mind or see any problems with it, at least not until after she is scarred and shamed by it for life.

Q: What can we learn about the dangers of geographical proximity to the ungodly?

- Can seem natural, normal and therefore acceptable and relatively harmless, but it is not.
- Geographical proximity will always be interconnected with moral influence.

Q: Are there parallels of this for us, our children & grandchildren today?

- Home environment
- Neighborhood.
- School.
- Hang-outs.
- Work environment
- Vacation destinations

Q: Are the dangers of proximity for us and our children today only geographical?

- No! Media – TV, movies, games, internet, radio, books

B.) **GREED** LEADS TO **DEFILEMENT** (v. 2)

Q: What can we learn from this brief description about Shechem's heart, values and motivation?

- “*saw*”: Focus is superficial, physical, emotional, and what is personally pleasing to the flesh.
- “*took*”: Eyes-heart-impulsive action. If it is physically available and I like, I can take.

- “*raped*”: Taking & receiving what I want is my right and therefore any necessary or desired means are justifiable. Force, violence, control.
- Women are objects to serve men's impulsive desires. Power = right.

C.) DEFILEMENT LEADS TO **DESIRE** (vv. 3-4)

- I find it sadly interesting that Shechem becomes infatuated with Dinah *after* he rapes her.
- Only then does he feel love, express tenderness, and seek an otherwise appropriate relationship.
- But this really shouldn't surprise us. It is a core part of human nature and is not restricted to men or sexual sins (though that is the example here and a common one today).
- **The greater lesson principle is to realize and wake up to the reality that sin feeds the flesh. Defilement (to pollute or violate in any way) hardens our hearts and intensifies our ungodly desires.** Too often, we justify and deceive ourselves otherwise. We think it can just be a one-time experience. *“If I just experience it this once, it will remove or weaken the temptation of the mysterious unknown.” “I just need to try it for myself and personally experience the revulsion during/after the act to strengthen my resolve in the future.”* etc.
- INSTEAD, we learn that even what we know started the wrong way, is something that we MUST have and keep at our own convenient disposal.

D.) A LEADER'S **FAILURE** (vv. 5-8a, 13)

- In this case, the leader was Jacob and his failure was that of silence and inaction in the face of immorality and threat to God's Promise.
- Before we are too harsh with Jacob, however, let's be careful to reflect upon how we often handle controversy and conflict and/or what we insist from our leaders. Is not delay, distraction and avoidance the most common strategy of our day?
- I know I have and will continue to make my share of legitimate mistakes, but not everything I am criticized for is a mistake. *Do you know what is the #1 most common and persistent criticism I heard in the church today?*
- NOT that what was said or done was wrong in itself, BUT that instead I/we should have “ignored, waited, kept silent, done less (nothing) or just tolerated” something that was in one way or another defiling the ministry, the name of PBC and ultimately the name of God.
- This may be the wisdom of our world and the desires of our flesh, but it is not the wisdom or Word of God! **Romans 1:22; 1 Corinthians 1:20.**
- Yes, there are times to be slow to act and/or silent. But being confronted by defilement – esp. in relation to a chosen one of God – is never one of those times. **Defilement must always be dealt with swiftly and directly!**
- Otherwise, as we will soon see, the price is far too broad and high. If leaders do not confront and appropriately deal with such situations, then others will insist in dealing with it in their own inappropriate ways that just spread and increase the damage and defilement.

E.) THE DEFENDERS' DECEPTION (vv. 7-17)

- In the absence of godly leadership and initiative from Jacob, his sons took the situation into their own hands and sought to settle according to their lack of maturity, experience, and intimate walk with the LORD.

Q: Considering the heinous crime and Jacob's inaction, is there anything wrong with the brothers' plan? If so, what? If not, why not?

- Still did not deal with the situation directly and immediately.
- Used misdirection and deception, within which they imply there is no real wrong done. Leave impression all is good, when it is not.
- They use the 'form' of their religion as an excuse for deception. Communicate that the issue of a religious rite is of great importance while an actual violation of a person's self and spirit is easily overlooked. They express only concern about the keeping of God's physical law but none for God's moral laws.
- **Their greatest sin, however, was using the sign of circumcision to fulfill their own need for vengeance with no concern for its true meaning or purpose as a visual representation of a personal turning to the covenant God in faith.**

F.) THE OFFENDERS' GREED & DECEPTION (vv. 18-24)

- Full circle. Once again, we see greed and the promise of personal advantage over-ride wisdom or clarity and lead to justification for deception.

G.) THE DEFENDERS' VENGEANCE (vv. 25-29)

Q: Why do you think the brothers went so far, why wasn't the mass circumcision enough?

- Dinah would have remained with Shechem.
- The clans would then have to intermarry and become one as promised.
- Vengeance acted is never constrained.

Q: Why kill ALL of the men for one man's crime?

- They were all seen as guilty, as none of them seemed to see or have any problem with what Shechem did. Through consent and disregard they participated to the crime.
- Prevent an endless back-and-forth of tit-for-tat vengeance and killing.

H.) THE IMPENDING DISASTER (v. 30)

- Jacob left it up to the brothers to determine how to handle the situation and then to do so. But, now that they have, he is appalled at how and what they have done!

Q: What was Jacob's real concern?

- Not his sons' immorality, losing self-control in the face of vengeance, or the heinousness of their own crime.
- His real concern was how this would hurt his reputation in the region and incite the other peoples against them.
- True, this in turn would endanger the Promise. But, that does not seem to be on Jacob's mind here. His concern seems to be that he thought the way to live out the Promise was to just stay put in this comfortable place, living in tolerance and accommodation with the people around them that would not lead to any real offense or confrontation. He wanted the easy way, he wanted to be liked and respected by others (even, perhaps especially, the unbelievers), and personal peace at any cost.

I.) THE STINGING CHALLENGE (v. 31)

Q: What were the brothers really challenging here and why?

- Their father's inaction and failure!
- They're saying, “*Don't complain about what we did, when you weren't willing to do anything yourself.*”