

REVENGE

Dinah remained in the palace of Hamor while negotiations for her marriage continued. Shechem made a personal appeal when his father's efforts failed.

SHECHEM'S REQUEST v 11-12 – it is unclear whether Shechem accompanied his father, or if this was another occasion. He pleaded for acceptance with Jacob and her brothers, so that his infatuation with Dinah could be gratified. He promised whatever dowry they asked. Shechem, as prince of the realm would have been surprised at the hesitation of Dinah's family, and thought that if the lure of trade and land was not enough, perhaps they wanted riches too.

DECEITFUL RESPONSE v 13-18 – Jacob's sons however, united in angry outrage at the violation of Dinah, came up with a ghastly plan. They presumably reasoned that they could not overcome Shechem using their own military force, so needed to weaken the city first to gain supremacy. Perhaps the law of circumcision and their belief in the one, true God had already been presented by Jacob as the central obstacle to the union of Shechem and Dinah, and their tribes as a whole. Rather than endorsing it with dignity and prayerful intercession on Dinah's behalf, her brothers suggested to lovesick Shechem, that he, and all his brethren, adopted the law. This they said, would remove the reproach incurred from God upon their family for marrying the uncircumcised. They misrepresented the meaning of circumcision, reducing it to a physical ritual, rather than the outward sign of a deep commitment to God born out of a response to His overruling protection and gracious forgiveness. Instead, they fell back on the family trait of deception.

WILLING COMPLIANCE v 19-24 – to Shechem, this opportunity to remove the deadlock of negotiation was a relief. He genuinely wanted to accommodate the strange beliefs of Dinah's family and, as he held the position of highest honour in the household, went with his father to the gate of the city, where lawful agreements were passed, and asked all the men to comply with Israel's law of circumcision. They did not know Jacob had not suggested this and they had no knowledge of the God of Israel, or His Holy character. Their motivation for compliance was politically and materially driven. They observed Jacob and his sons were peaceful people, blessed with cattle and material wealth. It appeared they would benefit greatly from an alliance. Their argument was convincing and the law passed.

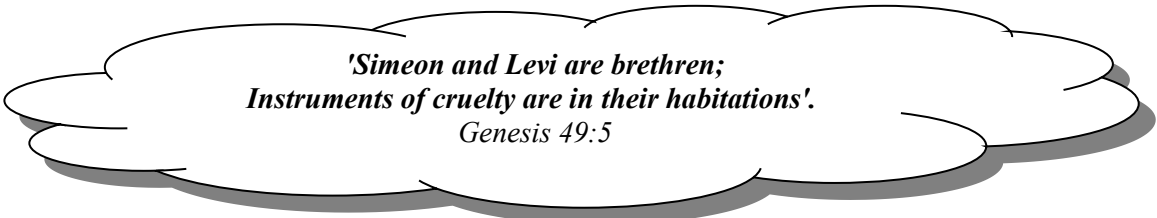
REVENGE v 25-26 – on the third day after their circumcision, knowing they would be in the height of pain, Simeon and Levi took revenge. Storming in upon the unsuspecting tribe they slew all the men within it, including Shechem and Hamor and took Dinah back. There had been no mention of prayerful guidance, no instruction from the God of Israel to take such action. Their deceitful revenge dishonoured the name of God and violated the law of circumcision. They behaved no differently from the nation around them in their cunning deceit.

SPOILING OF THE CITY v 27-31 – joined by their brethren, Jacob's sons then raided the city, taking cattle, animals and goods. In addition, they captured the women and children and destroyed their houses. Hearing of their vengeful actions, Jacob was deeply troubled. He knew their violent reaction was disproportionate and feared retaliation from the country he had lived so peaceably in as a foreigner. He knew he would be held responsible. Whilst his sons had been right to defend Dinah, and the moral uprightness of their family, it had been done in the wrong way, satisfying their own injured pride rather than honouring God's holiness and humbly acknowledging their dependence upon Him for guidance and protection.

Jacob's sons linked defence of their sister with aggressive and murderous behaviour. Do you think that similar wars are still being fought?

Shechem had sinned greatly against Dinah, and Jacob's sons sinned against Shechem in return. Which do you think should have been able to act more wisely? (Gen.12:17-20)

Despite this being the plan of his sons, it is Jacob who God holds responsible. What comment is given in the scriptures about the way Jacob should have behaved? (Hosea 12:2-7)



***'Simeon and Levi are brethren;
Instruments of cruelty are in their habitations'.***
Genesis 49:5