

## Adam Clarke:

### Introduction

Dinah, the daughter of Jacob and Leah, going out to see the daughters of the land, is ravished by Shechem, the son of Hamor, Genesis 34:1, Genesis 34:2. He entreats his father to get her for him to wife, Genesis 34:3. Jacob and his sons hear of the indignity offered to Dinah, Genesis 34:5-7. Hamor proposes the suit of Shechem to Jacob and his sons, and offers them a variety of advantages, Genesis 34:8-10. Shechem himself comes forward, begs to have Dinah to wife, and offers dowry to any extent, Genesis 34:11, Genesis 34:12. The sons of Jacob pretend scruples of conscience to give their sister to one who was uncircumcised; and require, as a condition of this marriage, and of intermarriages in general, that all the Shechemites should be circumcised, Genesis 34:13-17. Hamor and Shechem consent, Genesis 34:18, Genesis 34:19. They lay the business before the elders of their city, dwell on the advantages of a connection with Jacob and his family, and propose to them the condition required by the sons of Jacob, Genesis 34:20-23. The elders consent, and all the males are circumcised, Genesis 34:24. While the Shechemites are incapable of defending themselves, on the third day after their circumcision, Simeon and Levi, the brothers of Dinah, came upon the city, slew all the males, sacked the city, took the women and children captives, and seized on all the cattle belonging to the Shechemites, Genesis 34:25-29. Jacob is greatly displeased and alarmed at this treachery and cruelty of his sons, and lays before them the probable consequences, Genesis 34:30. They endeavor to vindicate their conduct, Genesis 34:31.

### Verse 1

And Dinah - went out to see the daughters of the land - It is supposed that Jacob had been now about seven or eight years in the land, and that Dinah, who was about seven years of age when Jacob came to Canaan, was now about fourteen or fifteen. Why or on what occasion she went out we know not, but the reason given by Josephus is very probable, viz., that it was on one of their festivals.

### Verse 2

Prince of the country - i.e., Hamor was prince; Shechem was the son of the prince or chief. Our version appears to represent Shechem as prince, but his father was the chief of the country. See Genesis 34:6, Genesis 34:8, etc.

### Verse 3

Spake kindly unto the damsel - Literally, he spake to the heart of the damsel - endeavored to gain her affections, and to reconcile her to her disgrace. It appears sufficiently evident from this and the preceding verse that there had been no consent on the part of Dinah, that the whole was an act of violence, and that she was now detained by force in the house of Shechem. Here she was found when Simeon and Levi sacked the city, Genesis 34:26.

### Verse 7

He had wrought folly in Israel - The land, afterwards generally called Israel, was not as yet so named; and the sons of Jacob were neither called Israel, Israelites nor Jews, till long after this. How then can it be said that Shechem had wrought folly in Israel? The words are capable of a more literal translation:  $\text{x'x}^{\text{TM}}\text{x}\text{©x''x}\text{x}\text{œ}$  (beyisrael), may be translated, against Israel. The angel had said, Thy name shall be called no more Jacob - not only Jacob, but Israel. It was this that aggravated the offense of Shechem; he wrought folly against Israel, the prince of God, in lying with the daughter of Jacob. Here both the names are given; Jacob, whose daughter was defiled, and Israel, the prince of God, against whom the offense was committed.

### Verse 12

Ask me never so much dowry - See Clarke on Genesis 29:20 (note), etc. See the law relative to this, Exodus 22:16, Exodus 22:17.

### Verse 13

Answered - deceitfully - Which nothing could excuse; yet, to show that they had had much provocation, it is immediately subjoined  $\text{x}\text{x}^{\text{TM}}\text{x''x'x''x}\text{x}$  (vaidabberu), they spoke thus because he had defiled Dinah their sister; for so this parenthesis should be read.

### Verse 14

That were a reproach unto us - Because the uncircumcised were not in the covenant of God; and to have given an heiress of the promise to one who had no kind of right to its spiritual blessings, from whom might spring children who would naturally walk in the way of their father would have been absurd, reproachful and wicked. Thus far they were perfectly right; but to make this holy principle a cloak for their deceitful and murderous

purposes, was the full sum of all wickedness

#### Verse 17

Then will we take our daughter, and we will be gone - It is natural to suppose that the tribe of Hamor was very inconsiderable, else they would not have sought an alliance with the family of Jacob, and have come so readily into a painful, disgraceful measure, without having either the sanction of Divine authority or reason; for it does not appear that the sons of Jacob urged either. And they are threatened here that if they do not agree to be circumcised, Dinah shall be taken from them, and restored to her family; and this is probably what the Shechemites saw they had not power at present to prevent.

#### Verse 23

Shall not their cattle and their substance - be ours? - This was a bait held out for the poor unsuspecting people of Hamor by their prince and his son, who were not much less deceived than the people themselves.

#### Verse 24

Every male was circumcised - These simple people must have had very great affection for their chief and his son, or have been under the influence of the most passive obedience, to have come so readily into this measure, and to have submitted to this rite. But the petty princes in Asiatic countries have ever been absolute and despotic, their subjects paying them the most prompt and blind obedience. I shall give a few examples from Mr. Richardson's Dissertations -

“Abu Thaher, chief of the Carmathians, about the year nine hundred and thirty, ravaged the territory of Mecca, defiled the temple, and destroyed nearly 40,000 people. With only 500 horse he went to lay siege to Bagdad: the caliph's general, at the head of 30,000 men, marched out to seize him, but before he attacked him he sent an officer to summon him to surrender. ‘How many men has the caliph's general?’ said Abu Thaher. ‘Thirty thousand,’ replied the officer. ‘Among them all,’ says the Carmathian chief, ‘has he got three like mine?’ Then, ordering his followers to approach, he commanded one to stab himself, another to throw himself from a precipice, and a third to plunge into the Tigris; all three instantly obeyed, and perished. Then turning to the officer, he said, ‘He who has such troops needs not value the number of his enemies!’

“Hassan Sabat, one of those petty princes formerly known in Asia and Europe by the title Sheekh-ul-jibel, or old man of the mountain, being required by an ambassador to do homage to his master, the Sultan Malekshah Jeleddin, without giving any answer, ordered one of his attendants to poniard himself, and another to leap from the battlements of the tower; and he was instantly obeyed! Then turning to the ambassador, he said, ‘Seventy thousand are thus attentive to my commands. Let this be my answer. On a principle of this kind we may account for the prompt obedience of the people of Hamor.’

#### Verse 25

On the third day, when they were sore - When the inflammation was at the height, and a fever ensued which rendered the person utterly helpless, and his state critical, Simeon and Levi, the half brothers of Dinah, took each man his sword, probably assisted by that portion of the servants which helped them to take care of the flock, came on the city boldly, בְּטָחָם (betach), securely - without being suspected, and being in no danger of meeting with resistance, and slew all the males. Great as the provocation was, and it certainly was very great, this was an act or unparalleled treachery and cruelty.

#### Verse 27

The sons of Jacob - The rest of Jacob's sons, the remaining brothers of Simeon and Levi, spoiled the city. Though the others could slay the defenceless males, it was not likely that they could have carried away all the booty, with the women, children, and cattle; it is therefore most natural to suppose that the rest of the sons of Jacob assisted at last in the business.

#### Verse 30

Ye have troubled me - Brought my mind into great distress, and endangered my personal safety; to make me to stink - to render me odious to the surrounding tribes, so that there is every reason to suspect that when this deed is come abroad they will join in a confederacy against me, and extirpate my whole family. And had he not been under the peculiar protection of God, this in all human probability would have been the case; but he had prevailed with God, and he was also to prevail with men. That Jacob's resentment was not dissembled we have the fullest proof in his depriving these two sons of the birthright, which otherwise they had doubtless enjoyed. See Genesis 49:5, Genesis 49:7, where some additional circumstances are related.

#### Verse 31

Should he deal with our sister as with a harlot? - On this outrage alone they vindicated their flagitious conduct. The word harlot first occurs here: the original is not פְּדִישָׁה (pilegish), which we render concubine, (see

its explanation Genesis 22:24 (note)), but זונה (zonah), which ordinarily signifies one who prostitutes herself to any person for hire. Our word harlot is said to have been derived from a very odd circumstance: Robert, duke of Normandy, seeing a fine-looking country girl dancing with her companions on the green, took her to his bed. She was the daughter of a skinner, and her name was Arlotta; and of her William, surnamed The Conqueror, was born. Hence it is said all such women were from her called harlots, as William himself was usually termed the Bastard. But horelet, the diminutive of whore, is not a less likely derivation.

Solomon has very properly said, My son, enter not into the path of the wicked, and go not in the way of evil men; avoid it, pass not by it, turn from it, and pass away, Proverbs 4:14, Proverbs 4:15. Had not Dinah gone out to see the daughters of the land, and very possibly at one of their idolatrous festivals, she had not suffered the foul disgrace mentioned in this chapter. Not only prudence dictates that young women should keep at home, but God expressly commands it, Titus 2:5. Dinah got among idolaters, and thus partook of their iniquities; and this led to the most base and cruel transaction upon record. How true is the saying, Those who wander out of the way of understanding shall abide in the congregation of the dead! In the case before us blame seems to attach to all parties.

1. It was wrong in Jacob to suffer his daughter, alone and unprotected, to visit the daughters of the land.

2. It was excessively wicked in Shechem to take this advantage of the daughter of a respectable stranger, who had sought his friendship, and came to sojourn among his people, and whose righteous dealing they must have witnessed for at least seven years past. In his behalf we may say, and it would be unjust not to say it, that having done the mischief, and sinned deeply against the laws of hospitality, he wished to make all the reparation in his power; and therefore in the most frank and liberal manner he not only offered, but most pressing entreated, permission to take Dinah to wife. This was the utmost he could do in such a case. And in this he is a saint of the first order when compared with the noble and ignoble profligates who, while blaspheming the Christian name by continuing to assume it, commit all kinds of breaches on the virtue of simple females, and the peace of respectable families, and not only make no reparation, but glory in their shame.

3. It was diabolical in Jacob's sons to slay a whole tribe for the offense of one man, and especially as that one had offered to make all the restitution in his power. They required that Hamor, Shechem, and all their subjects should be circumcised before they could conscientiously consent to give their sister to Shechem in marriage. This required conformity was made the cloak of the most base and infamous designs. The simple unsuspecting Shechemites agreed to the proposal; and when rendered by this religious rite incapable of defending themselves, they were basely murdered by Simeon and Levi, and their city destroyed. Jacob, to his great honor, remonstrated against this barbarous and bloody act, committed apparently under the sanction of religion; and God showed his abhorrence of it by directing the patriarch, in his dying moments, to proscribe them from the blessings of the covenant, so that they barely retained a name among the tribes of Israel, being in general small, and ever disreputable, except merely in the service of the sanctuary, in which Levi was employed. How often since, notwithstanding this solemn warning, has the pure and benevolent religion of God been made, by wicked and designing men, a political stalking-horse to serve the basest purposes, and a covert to the worst of crimes! But shall we find fault with the holy religion of the blessed God because wicked men have abused it? God forbid! Were it not so good as it really is, it would be incapable of such abuse. An evil cannot be abused, a good may; and the greater and the more acknowledged the good, the more liable to abuse. As every good is so capable of being abused, does he act wisely who argues against the use of the thing on this account? Shall we say that various kinds of grain, fruits, and aliments are a curse, because wicked men abuse them to the purposes of drunkenness and gluttony? This would argue an utter perversion of all reason: and is it not on such a pretext as this that many persons have ventured to call in question even the truths of Christianity?

Whatever such men may be determined to think on the subject of this chapter, with the unprejudiced reader the ample and detailed relation which we have here of this barbarous transaction will appear an additional proof of the veracity and impartiality of the sacred historian.