

which is in the land of Canaan—having come thus from Paddan-aram—and he encamped before the city. ¹⁹The parcel of land where he pitched his tent he purchased from the children of Hamor, Shechem's father, for a hundred *kesitahs*. ²⁰He set up an altar there, and called it El-elohe-yisrael.

בְּאֶרֶץ כְּנָעַן בָּבְאוּ מִפָּדָן אֲרָם וַיַּחַן אֶת־
פְּנֵי הָעִיר: ¹⁹וַיִּקֶן אֶת־חֶלְקֵת הַשָּׂדֶה
אֲשֶׁר נָטָה שָׁם אֱהֱלוֹ מִיַּד בְּנֵי־חָמוֹר אָבִי
שָׁכֶם בְּמֵאָה קְשִׁיטָה: ²⁰וַיִּצְבֵּה שָׁם מִזְבֵּחַ
וַיִּקְרָא־לוֹ אֵל אֱלֹהֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל: ס

34 Now Dinah, the daughter whom Leah had borne to Jacob, went out to visit the daugh-

לד חמישי וַתֵּצֵא דִינָה בַת־לֵאָה אֲשֶׁר
יָלְדָה לְיַעֲקֹב לְרָאוּת בְּבָנוֹת הָאֶרֶץ:

Gen. 34 make clear that Shechem is here a personal name.

encamped before the city The patriarchs generally would stay at the fringes of cities, entering them only rarely.

19. he purchased Jacob, now Israel, purchases a plot of ground, his first acquisition in the future land of Israel. His purpose is not stated. Perhaps, like Abraham (23:1–20), he wishes to establish a family burial ground.

the children of Hamor Because the sale involves permanent separation from their ancestral holdings, the entire clan needs to be involved in the transaction (see chapter 23).

a hundred kesitahs The exact price is stated, as in the purchase of Machpelah in chapter

23, because the real estate is to be acquired in perpetuity and the sale must be final and incontestable. *K'sitah* (mentioned again only in Job 42:11) is not a coin but an unknown unit of weight; coinage does not appear in the Bible until after the period of the monarchy.

20. He set up an altar Unlike the other altars erected by the patriarchs, this altar is neither in response to a revelation nor for use in worship. Rather, it is a pillar celebrating the safe arrival home after a prolonged absence filled with peril and crises and commemorating the change of name from Jacob to Israel.

El-elohe-yisrael Literally, "God, God of Israel." "Israel" in this name refers to the patriarch, not the people.

THE RAVISHING OF DINAH (34:1–31)

THE ASSAULT (vv. 1–7)

1. Dinah The information about her parentage, known from Gen. 30:21, is repeated here to clarify the role that Simeon and Levi, her full brothers, will play in the ensuing tragic drama.

went out Girls of marriageable age normally would not leave a rural encampment to venture alone into an alien city. The narrative subtly crit-

icizes Dinah's highly unconventional behavior through its use of the Hebrew stem meaning "to go out" (יצא). This has been interpreted by some medieval and modern commentators as a reference to some coquettish or promiscuous conduct.

the daughters of the land This phrase too carries undertones of disapproval, as is clear from 24:3,37.

CHAPTER 34

1. Incidents like the rape of Dinah were probably not uncommon, yet Jacob's family seems unprepared for such an event and does not know how to react. Dinah, an only daughter raised in a family of men, was seeking the company of other young women. Although

some commentators blame her for leaving the security of her home to consort with strangers, the modern reader will likely reject this effort to blame the victim and minimize the responsibility of the assailant. Characteristically, the narrative describes the actions of men, but never tells us what Dinah thought nor how she felt about what happened.

ters of the land. ²Shechem son of Hamor the Hivite, chief of the country, saw her, and took her and lay with her by force. ³Being strongly drawn to Dinah daughter of Jacob, and in love with the maiden, he spoke to the maiden tenderly. ⁴So Shechem said to his father Hamor, "Get me this girl as a wife."

⁵Jacob heard that he had defiled his daughter Dinah; but since his sons were in the field with his cattle, Jacob kept silent until they came home. ⁶Then Shechem's father Hamor came out to Jacob to speak to him. ⁷Meanwhile Jacob's sons, having heard the news, came in from the field. The men were distressed and

וַיִּרְא אֶתְהָ שָׁכֵם בֶּן־חַמּוֹר הַחִוִּי נָשִׂיא
הָאֶרֶץ וַיִּקַּח אֶתְהָ וַיִּשְׁכַּב אִתָּהּ וַיַּעֲנֶה:
³וַחֲדָבֵק נָפְשׁוֹ בְּדִינָה בַת־יַעֲקֹב וַיֵּאָהֵב
אֶת־הַנַּעֲרָה וַיְדַבֵּר עִלְיָב הַנַּעֲרָה
הַנַּעֲרָה: ⁴וַיֹּאמֶר שָׁכֵם אֶל־חַמּוֹר אָבִיו
לֵאמֹר קַח־לִי אֶת־הַיְלִדָּה הַזֹּאת לְאִשָּׁה:
⁵וַיַּעֲקֹב שָׁמַע כִּי טָמְא אֶת־דִּינָה בָתּוֹ
וּבָנָיו הָיוּ אֶת־מִקְנֵהוּ בַשָּׂדֶה וְהַחֲרָשׁ
יַעֲקֹב עַד־בָּאִים: ⁶וַיֵּצֵא חַמּוֹר אָבִי־שָׁכֵם
אֶל־יַעֲקֹב לְדַבֵּר אִתּוֹ: ⁷וּבָנָי יַעֲקֹב בָּאוּ
מִן־הַשָּׂדֶה בְּשִׁמְעֵם וַיִּתְעַצְבוּ הָאֲנָשִׁים

2. Shechem son of Hamor. The city-state of Shechem appears to have had a mixed population and may have been established through a confederacy of various clans.

chief Hamor is called "chief" (*nasi*), whereas the head of a Canaanite city-state generally was called "king." Hamor's unusual title reflects the fact that the ruler of Shechem had dominion over rural—that is, tribal—territory as well as the urban center, in this case a confederacy of various ethnic elements. Such a complex situation did not permit the absolute power of a king.

of the country Not "the city," because the city-state of Shechem in pre-Israelite times extended its control over a vast area. At one time, it governed the central hill country as far as the borders of Jerusalem and Gezer to the south and Megiddo to the north, a domain of about 1,000 square miles.

took . . . lay . . . force Three Hebrew verbs of increasing severity underscore the brutality of Shechem's assault on Dinah.

3. drawn . . . love . . . spoke Three expressions of affection describe Shechem's feelings after the deed. He is hopelessly enamored of Dinah.

4. to his father Marriage arrangements were negotiated by a father on behalf of the son.

Get me Literally, "take for me." The same Hebrew stem, לקח, is used in verse 2 for the ab-

duction. This "taking" is to make amends for the other.

5. that he had defiled The subject is Shechem of verse 4. He was guilty not only of an offense against the dignity of the girl but of an assault on the honor of the family.

Jacob kept silent The need to exercise restraint, pending the arrival of his sons, is understandable, but his passivity throughout the entire incident is noteworthy.

6. Hamor came out Apparently, Hamor arrives before the brothers and is left cooling his heels until they come home. Shechem has accompanied his father, but remains in the background until it is opportune for him to appear.

to speak to him To begin marriage negotiations.

7. having heard the news It seems that Jacob urgently summoned his sons.

an outrage The Hebrew word "n'valah" is a powerful noun describing offenses of such profound abhorrence that they threaten to tear apart the fabric of Israelite society. For society's own self-protection, such atrocities can never be tolerated or left unpunished.

Israel This is an anachronism. The narrator may be saying that the sacred, inviolable norms that constituted the moral underpinnings of the later people of Israel were already prevalent at this time.

HALAKHAH L'MA'ASEH

34:2 by force Jewish law prohibits forcing sexual relations on another (e.g., BT Ket. 39a-b; see also Comments to Deut. 22:23-25, 28-29.)

very angry, because he had committed an outrage in Israel by lying with Jacob's daughter—a thing not to be done.

⁸And Hamor spoke with them, saying, "My son Shechem longs for your daughter. Please give her to him in marriage. ⁹Intermarry with us: give your daughters to us, and take our daughters for yourselves: ¹⁰You will dwell among us, and the land will be open before you; settle, move about, and acquire holdings in it." ¹¹Then Shechem said to her father and brothers, "Do me this favor, and I will pay whatever you tell me. ¹²Ask of me a bride-price ever so high, as well as gifts, and I will pay what you tell me; only give me the maiden for a wife."

¹³Jacob's sons answered Shechem and his father Hamor—speaking with guile because he had defiled their sister Dinah—¹⁴and said to them, "We cannot do this thing, to give our sister to a man who is uncircumcised, for that is a disgrace among us. ¹⁵Only on this condition will we agree with you; that you will become

ויחר להם מאד פי-נבלה עשה בישראל
 לשכב את-בת-יעקב וכן לא יעשה:
⁸ וידבר חמור אתם לאמר שכם בני
 חשקה נפשו בבתכם תנו נא אתה לו
 לאשה: ⁹ והתחתנו אתנו בנותיכם
 ותתנו לנו ואת-בנותינו תקחו לכם:
¹⁰ ואתנו תשבו והארץ תהיה לפניכם
 שבו וסחריה והאחוזה בה: ¹¹ ויאמר
 שכם אל-אביה ואל-אחיה אמצא-חן
 בעיניכם ואשר תאמרו אלי אתן:
¹² הרבו עלי מאד מהר ומתן ואתנה
 כאשר תאמרו אלי ותנו-לי את-הנער
 הנערה לאשה:
¹³ ויענו בני-יעקב את-שכם ואת-חמור
 אביו במרמה וידברו אשר טמא את
 דינה אחתם: ¹⁴ ויאמרו אליהם לא
 נוכל לעשות הדבר הזה לתת את-
 אחתנו לאיש אשר-לו ערלה כי-חרפה
 הוא לנו: ¹⁵ אך-בזאת נאות לכם אם

a thing not to be done Not among the people Israel, not in any civilized society.

THE SPEECHES OF HAMOR AND SHECHEM (vv. 8–12)

Jacob, an alien seminomad, probably cannot claim redress against the ruler of the city. Hamor deals with the family only because his son wishes to marry Dinah. The terms he offers are intended to induce Jacob and his sons to let the incident be forgotten.

10. move about To trade and barter and to have unlimited grazing rights.

acquire holdings Certainly the most valuable of the privileges offered and also a pointed reminder to Jacob of his disadvantaged position as an alien.

12. bride-price The Hebrew word *mohar* refers to the payment made by the prospective husband in return for the bride. The amount is usually fixed by custom. Shechem's readiness to pay far beyond that is a tacit recognition of the need to make reparations.

gifts The ceremonial gifts made to the bride's family.

THE BROTHERS' RESPONSE (vv. 13–17)

Although outwardly polite, Hamor, in effect, has attributed to Jacob and his sons a sordid, mercenary concern that adds insult to injury.

13. with guile The narrator informs us that the brothers' acceptance of intermarriage with the Shechemites is a ruse. Dinah, who is still being held by the perpetrator (vv. 17, 26), cannot be liberated by a tiny minority in the face of overwhelming odds—except by cunning.

he had defiled This reminder of the enormity of the offense places the brothers' "guile" in its proper perspective.

their sister In verses 1 and 5 Dinah is described as the daughter of Jacob. Here and in verse 27 she is linked to her brothers. The phrase serves to dissociate the patriarch from their plans and to stress the obligation that falls on brothers in this type of society.

14. uncircumcised Circumcision is the essential precondition for admittance into the community of Israel; see 17:9–14 and Exod. 12:43–49.

like us in that every male among you is circumcised. ¹⁶Then we will give our daughters to you and take your daughters to ourselves; and we will dwell among you and become as one kindred. ¹⁷But if you will not listen to us and become circumcised, we will take our daughter and go.”

¹⁸Their words pleased Hamor and Hamor's son Shechem. ¹⁹And the youth lost no time in doing the thing, for he wanted Jacob's daughter. Now he was the most respected in his father's house. ²⁰So Hamor and his son Shechem went to the public place of their town and spoke to their fellow townsmen, saying, ²¹“These people are our friends; let them settle in the land and move about in it, for the land is large enough for them; we will take their daughters to ourselves as wives and give our daughters to them. ²²But only on this condition will the men agree with us to dwell among us and be as one kindred: that all our males become circumcised as they are circumcised. ²³Their cattle and substance and all their beasts will be ours, if we only agree to their terms, so

תהיו כִּמְנוּ לְהַמּוֹל לָכֶם כְּלִזְכָּר: ¹⁶ וְנָתַנּוּ אֶת־בָּנֹתֵינוּ לָכֶם וְאֶת־בָּנוֹתֵיכֶם נִקְחָלֵנוּ וְיֹשְׁבוּ אִתְּכֶם וְהָיוּ לָעַם אֶחָד: ¹⁷ וְאִם־לֹא תִשְׁמָעוּ אֵלֵינוּ לְהַמּוֹל וְלִקְחוּ אֶת־בָּתְּנוּ וְהִלְכְנוּ:

¹⁸ וַיִּטְבוּ דְבָרֵיהֶם בְּעֵינֵי חָמוֹר וּבְעֵינֵי שָׁכֵם בֶּן־חָמוֹר: ¹⁹ וְלֹא־אַחַר הַזֶּעַר לַעֲשׂוֹת הַדָּבָר כִּי חָפֵץ בָּבַת־יַעֲקֹב הוּא נִכְבָּד מִכָּל בֵּית אָבִיו: ²⁰ וַיָּבֹא חָמוֹר וּשְׁכָם בְּנוֹ אֶל־שַׁעַר עִירָם וַיְדַבְּרוּ אֶל־אֲנָשֵׁי עִירָם לֵאמֹר: ²¹ הֲאֲנָשִׁים הָאֵלֶּה שְׁלָמִים הֵם אִתָּנוּ וַיֹּשְׁבוּ בָאָרֶץ וַיִּסְחָרוּ אִתָּהּ וְהָאָרֶץ הַזֹּאת רַחֲבַת־יָדַיִם לִפְנֵיהֶם אֶת־בָּנֹתֵם נִקְחָלֵנוּ לְנָשִׁים וְאֶת־בָּנֹתֵינוּ נָתַן לָהֶם: ²² אֲךָ־בְּזֹאת יֵאָדָּו לָנוּ הָאֲנָשִׁים לְשֶׁבֶת אִתָּנוּ לִהְיוֹת לָעַם אֶחָד בְּהַמּוֹל לָנוּ כְּלִזְכָּר כַּאֲשֶׁר הֵם נִמְלִיִּים: ²³ מִקְנֵיהֶם וּקְנֵינָם וְכָל־בְּהֵמָתָם הֲלוֹא

RESPONSE OF THE SHECHEMITES (vv. 18–24)

19. lost no time The narrative is anticipating developments to indicate Shechem's furious ardor. He hardly could have appeared at the public assembly had he just been circumcised.

the most respected As a role model for others, who were soon influenced by his initiative.

20. public place Literally, “the gate,” which served as the civic center.

their fellow townsmen Literally, “the men of their city,” the popular assembly of free citizens who must rule on major items of public business, such as granting special privileges to

an alien group. Such assemblies are well documented in ancient Near Eastern texts.

21. our friends The reference may be to some existing treaty arrangement between the city of Shechem and the clan of Jacob. City-states that dominated a wide area usually regulated their relationships with the nomadic groups within their domain by means of formal treaties.

23. will be ours Hamor here has omitted the promise of landed property rights for the newcomers and has inserted the assurance of dispossessing them of their belongings. As the occasion is a public ratification of the agreement, he is clearly guilty of double-dealing.

HALAKHAH L'MA'ASEH

34:15 circumcised This is the earliest source stating that non-Jewish males require circumcision for conversion to Judaism. According to traditional Jewish standards affirmed in the Conservative Movement, all converts to Judaism must undergo immersion and males must undergo circumcision (*bris milah*) prior to immersion. In addition, males who have been circumcised medically must complete the requirements of the ritual by having a drop of blood drawn from the same site (*hatafat dam brit*).

that they will settle among us.”²⁴ All who went out of the gate of his town heeded Hamor and his son Shechem, and all males, all those who went out of the gate of his town, were circumcised.

²⁵On the third day, when they were in pain, Simeon and Levi, two of Jacob’s sons, brothers of Dinah, took each his sword, came upon the city unmolested, and slew all the males.²⁶ They put Hamor and his son Shechem to the sword, took Dinah out of Shechem’s house, and went away.²⁷ The other sons of Jacob came upon the slain and plundered the town, because their sister had been defiled.²⁸ They seized their flocks and herds and asses, all that was inside the town and outside; ²⁹all their wealth, all their children, and their wives, all that was in the houses, they took as captives and booty.

לָנוּ הֵם אֶךְ נֹאֲוֹתָהּ לָהֶם וַיֵּשְׁבוּ אִתָּנוּ: ²⁴וַיִּשְׁמְעוּ אֶל-חַמּוֹר וְאֶל-שָׁכֶם בְּנוֹ כָּל-יֹצְאֵי שַׁעַר עִירוֹ וַיִּמְלֹךְ כָּל-יֹצְאֵי שַׁעַר עִירוֹ:

²⁵וַיְהִי בַיּוֹם הַשְּׁלִישִׁי בְהִיּוֹתָם כְּאֲבִים וַיִּקְחוּ שְׁנֵי-בְנֵי-יַעֲקֹב שְׁמֵעוֹן וְלֵוִי אֶחָיו דִּינָה אִישׁ חָרְבּוֹ וַיָּבֹאוּ עַל-הָעִיר בְּטַח וַיַּהַרְגוּ כָּל-זָכָר: ²⁶וְאֶת-חַמּוֹר וְאֶת-שָׁכֶם בְּנוֹ הָרְגוּ לְפִי-חָרֶב וַיִּקְחוּ אֶת-דִּינָה מִבֵּית שָׁכֶם וַיֵּצְאוּ: ²⁷בְּנֵי יַעֲקֹב בָּאוּ עַל-הַחֲלָלִים וַיָּבֹזוּ הָעִיר אֲשֶׁר טָמְאוּ אֲחוֹתָם: ²⁸אֶת-צֹאֲנֵם וְאֶת-בְּקָרָם וְאֶת-חֲמֹרֵיהֶם וְאֶת אֲשֶׁר-בְּעִיר וְאֶת-אֲשֶׁר בַּשָּׂדֶה לָקְחוּ: ²⁹וְאֶת-כָּל-חֵילָם וְאֶת-כָּל-טָפָם וְאֶת-נְשֵׁיהֶם שָׁבוּ וַיָּבֹזוּ וְאֶת-כָּל-אֲשֶׁר בַּבַּיִת:

24. All who went out of the gate The phrase might refer to all the free citizens of the city or, in this instance, the males of military age—the group available for intermarriage with Jacob’s clan.

THE RETRIBUTION (vv. 25–29)

25. On the third day By now all the males have been circumcised.

Simeon and Levi Dinah’s full brothers, who would feel most keenly her brutal humiliation.

took each his sword To avenge the violence of Shechem, who “took” Dinah (Gen. 34:2).

unmolested The Hebrew word translated as “unmolested” (*betah*) may here have the sense of “meeting no resistance” or “confidently.” Or it

may refer to the city as “unsuspecting, caught off guard.”

26. took Dinah . . . went away The entire affair began with Dinah “going out” and being “taken” (vv. 1,2). It concludes with the same two Hebrew verbs, but in reverse order. As far as Simeon and Levi are concerned, their account with Shechem is settled. They take no part in the plunder of the city.

27. The other sons The other brothers seize the opportunity to pillage, but they do not destroy the city.

because The narrator stresses the point that the brothers were stirred to action because of the defilement of their sister, not for the sake of booty. See, however, 49:5 where Jacob denounces them for this act.

25. This unsavory episode, coming after Jacob’s struggle with the angel and his reconciliation with Esau, might warn us that although Jacob may have outgrown his tendency to deceive, his children were shaped by the person he had been during their formative years. Maimonides justifies the slaughter of the men of Shechem on the grounds that they became implicated in the serious crime of the rapist by

not punishing him (MT Kings 9:14). Others posit that the Shechemites were all guilty of similar behavior and deserving of death. Hirsch calls the behavior of Simeon and Levi “acts which are deserving of censure and for which we are under no obligation to find an excuse.” We can understand the wish for revenge against a numerically superior people without having to justify the tactics of Jacob’s sons.

³⁰Jacob said to Simeon and Levi, "You have brought trouble on me, making me odious among the inhabitants of the land, the Canaanites and the Perizzites; my men are few in number, so that if they unite against me and attack me, I and my house will be destroyed."

³¹But they answered, "Should our sister be treated like a whore?"

35 God said to Jacob, "Arise, go up to Bethel and remain there; and build an altar there to the God who appeared to you when you were fleeing from your brother Esau." ²So Jacob said to his household and to all who were with him, "Rid yourselves of the alien gods in

30 וַיֹּאמֶר יַעֲקֹב אֶל-שִׁמְעוֹן וְאֶל-לֵוִי עֲכַרְתֶּם אֹתִי לְהַבְאִישְׁנִי בִישָׁב הָאָרֶץ בְּכַנְעֲנִי וּבְפְרִזִּי וְאֲנִי מְתִי מִסְּפָר וְנֶאֱסָפוּ עָלַי וְהִכּוּנִי וְנִשְׁמַדְתִּי אֲנִי וּבֵיתִי: ³¹וַיֹּאמְרוּ הַכּוֹזְנֵה יַעֲשֶׂה אֶת-אַחֲוַתְּנוּ: פ

לה וַיֹּאמֶר אֱלֹהִים אֶל-יַעֲקֹב קוּם עֲלֵה בֵּית-אֵל וְשָׁב-שָׁם וַעֲשֵׂה-שָׁם מִזְבֵּחַ לְאֵל הַנִּרְאֶה אֵלֶיךָ בְּבָרְחֶךָ מִפְּנֵי עֵשָׂו אַחֲיֶיךָ: ²וַיֹּאמֶר יַעֲקֹב אֶל-בֵּיתוֹ וְאֵל כָּל-אֲשֶׁר עִמּוֹ הִסְרוּ אֶת-אֱלֹהֵי הַנִּכְר אֲשֶׁר

v. 31. ז' רבתי לפי מהדרות לעטעריס

JACOB'S REACTION (vv. 30-31)

Jacob intervenes for the first time, berating Simeon and Levi.

30. brought trouble Literally, "muddied (the waters)."

making me odious Literally, "making my breath to stink."

31. But they answered The two brothers have the last word. The women of the Israelites are not to be dishonored.

THE BETHEL TRADITION (35:1-15)

The narratives with Jacob at the center come to a close with this chapter. From now on his life will be intertwined with that of Joseph.

THE PILGRIMAGE TO BETHEL (vv. 1-7)

Jacob, seized with panic after his sons' massacre of the Shechemites, fears reprisals from the neighboring peoples, who may have been bound to Shechem by treaty obligations. God's intervention transforms the patriarch's flight into a dignified pilgrimage to Bethel.

1. Arise, go up The words befit the dignified pace of a pilgrimage and the fact that Bethel lies about 1,000 feet (300 m) higher than Shechem.

remain there For as long as he chooses. Jacob does not remain long in Bethel, though. He soon continues to journey southward.

build an altar The construction of altars by the Patriarchs is an act of homage and loyalty to God. Building an altar at a site known as sacred to pagans indicates that the patriarch is dissociating the sanctity of the site from its pagan antecedents. Bethel had a long Canaanite prehistory.

the God The Hebrew name *el*, and not the regular *elohim*, is deliberately used here because it evokes Bethel, as in 31:13. Jacob is reminded that he has not yet fulfilled the vow made at Bethel (28:20-22).

2. all who were with him Including the captives taken at Shechem.

Rid yourselves Jacob vowed at Bethel that if he returned safely from his exile, "the LORD shall be my God." Thus, before embarking on the pilgrimage to that city, he formally renounces

CHAPTER 35

2. Alien gods in your midst Jacob's directive

comes after his sons' massacre at Shechem (34:25-29). Might he be referring here to his sons' taste for extrajudicial vengeance?