

Introduction:

- Who is familiar with the movie The Princess Bride? Does anyone remember the most well-known statement from the picture? (Spoken by the swordsman, Inigo Montoya) “Hello, my name is Inigo Montoya. You killed my father. Prepare to die.” In one word, what is the intent of his statement? **REVENGE.** Now Inigo is a somewhat humorous character in the movie, which softens the intent of his threat as he frequently describes to others what he is going to say to the six-fingered man who killed his father. But at the end of the movie (Spoiler alert!!!) he finds the man, makes his little speech and then kills him by running him through with his sword. For me, it’s the only negative moment in the movie, because it glorifies the satisfaction of the flesh that can come by taking personal revenge on a person who has done you wrong. Revenge can take many forms, and its results will be harmful to both the victim and to the perpetrator. Well, that’s the make-believe magic of Hollywood. Now let’s talk about a real life, modern day revenge situation. **(Call for Killdozer photo on screen.)** Anyone know the name of this machine? It’s “The Killdozer.” Here’s how the story goes.

In 2003, Marvin Heemeyer owned a small muffler shop in Granby, Colorado. At that shop, Marvin was working on a huge project – he was building a makeshift bulldozer-tank, the one you see here in the picture. This seems unusual. Why would he build such a machine? Well, it all started with a dispute between Heemeyer and the city’s zoning commission, involving a concrete company that wanted to build a plant in the town.

In order to build their new facility, the concrete company had purchased a piece of land from Heemeyer, land which was next to his muffler shop. When the city’s zoning commission then approved and rezoned the land for the plant construction, Heemeyer argued that the construction plan blocked him from proper access to his shop.

At first, Marvin took the rational course of action and petitioned the commission to revoke the rezoning. But after multiple rejections — as well as multiple fines against him for various civil violations — he decided to take matters into his own hands. For more than a year, he toiled away in his shop yard building his “killdozer.” It was a customized Komatsu bulldozer outfitted with thick steel plate armor welded in place and a layer of concrete under the steel. It also had three-inch thick bulletproof plastic covers protecting the cameras he needed to navigate the vehicle using video screens inside the cab. His killdozer was also armed with three gun ports housing a .50 caliber rifle, a .308 semi-automatic, and a .22 caliber rifle.

On June 4, 2004, Heemeyer sealed himself inside the killdozer’s cockpit and headed out. He first plowed through the new concrete plant next door to his shop. He then made his way toward town, wrecking a bank, the newspaper office, city hall, the police department, the former mayor’s home, a hardware store, and other properties. With his killdozer on the loose, the town put out an alert to its residents, warning them to stay away from the dangerous area. After two hours and seven minutes, Heemeyer had bulldozed every business or home that had some connection to his case against the zoning committee. The destruction he caused amounted to \$7 million in damages.

The havoc was so great that during the rampage, Colorado's governor considered authorizing the National Guard to attack the killdozer with an Apache helicopter armed with an anti-tank missile. But before that could happen, the rampage ended. He tried to plow through a store that had a small basement, but the dropoff ensnared the treads on one side of the vehicle. Unable to free the machine, Heemeyer's revenge effort was over. He pulled out a handgun and killed himself with a single shot to the head.

Later, investigators found two lists inside the cab of the bulldozer-tank: one was a list of the 13 properties he had destroyed, while another list contained several names, including the town's mayor and some local business owners. They also found that Heemeyer had no way of getting out of the sealed cockpit, which suggests that he wasn't planning on making it out of his rampage alive. No one from the town was hurt during his bulldozing spree, but the memory of the incident still haunts the city's residents.

So, as I said a few minutes ago, revenge can take many forms, and its results will be harmful to both the victim and to the perpetrator.

My title for the message today is **The Horror of Revenge (Genesis 34)**

Theme: The choice to plan and carry out revenge will always result in sin.

I. **A Sin by Shechem Starts the Process**

A. **Dinah is Sexually Assaulted (vv. 1-5)**

- You may remember from two weeks ago that by the end of chapter 33, Jacob and his retinue had finally made it into the northern area of the Promised Land, and had settled down on some purchased land near the town of Shechem. Scholars estimate that Jacob's daughter Dinah would have been 15 or 16 years old by this time. So now, verses 1-5.

¹ Now Dinah the daughter of Leah, whom she had borne to Jacob, went out to visit the daughters of the land. ² When Shechem the son of Hamor the Hivite, the prince of the land, saw her, he took her and lay with her by force. ³ He was deeply attracted to Dinah the daughter of Jacob, and he loved the girl and spoke tenderly to her. ⁴ So Shechem spoke to his father Hamor, saying, "Get me this young girl for a wife." ⁵ Now Jacob heard that he had defiled Dinah his daughter; but his sons were with his livestock in the field, so Jacob kept silent until they came in.

- So in verse 1, Dinah goes on a little expedition, a "visit" to town. The word "visit" is actually "see" in the literal Hebrew, so we don't know if she was actually visiting some girls she already knew, or just "seeing what she could see" regarding the women and girls of Shechem. There is no mention of any companions with Dinah – none of her 10 older brothers, no dad, no servants. In most cultures, fathers are strongly protective of their young unmarried daughters, so this situation seems unusual and dangerous.
- **But** – there is very little detail given, so before I cast too many aspersions, teenagers have been known, on very rare occasions, to do foolish things without asking permission or even mentioning it to their parents beforehand. So Dinah may have played her own part in becoming an at-risk teenage girl.

- In verse 2, the dangers of a pagan culture overtake Dinah, she is raped by a man named Shechem, who pounced on her unprotected innocence. (The man and the town shared the same name. But the town is mentioned with Abram in Genesis 12:6, so evidently Shechem the man was named after Shechem the town.)

Implications: Dads and moms, please make sure you are practicing active awareness in every life situation your children experience. Teach them how to respond in danger, make their safety a priority, and pray often for the Lord to protect them and bless them.

- But Shechem, having committed this crime, evidently didn't run away. Some form of interaction must have taken place which resulted in Shechem thinking "This is the girl for me!" He told Dinah how he felt and he told his father that he wanted to marry her. (Verses 3 and 4.) Bible translators have struggled with expressing the Hebrew as it applies to Shechem's condition. He was "deeply attracted" here in the NASB95. Other translations have "his soul was drawn to her", or "he became infatuated with her", or "his heart was drawn to her", or "he fell in love with her", etc. In any case, we can assume, given the sparse details of their meeting, that the "deep attraction" he experienced was primarily to her body and physical appearance, not to who Dinah was as a person. And John MacArthur commented that, in spite of Shechem's follow-on expressions of love and a desire for marriage, the language of verse 2 still describes the sexual assault of rape.
- Lastly in this section, notice Jacob's response to the news of Dinah's assault. He "kept silent". There are mixed views among commentators about this. Some see it as a sign of good leadership because such a major family problem needed deeper, face-to-face discussion with his adult sons. Another view, mine included, is that his inaction showed weak leadership, especially since the grapevine got the news about Dinah to the brothers while they were still away with the livestock. That gave their anger an opportunity to ramp up apart from Jacob's perspective. But his real reason for silence isn't known to us.

B. A Proposal, an Opportunity, and a Bribe (vv. 6-12)

⁶ Then Hamor the father of Shechem went out to Jacob to speak with him. ⁷ Now the sons of Jacob came in from the field when they heard it; and the men were grieved, and they were very angry because he had done a disgraceful thing in Israel by lying with Jacob's daughter, for such a thing ought not to be done. ⁸ But Hamor spoke with them, saying, "The soul of my son Shechem longs for your daughter; please give her to him in marriage.

- The word "proposal" in the letter B line has a kind of dual meaning. It really was a marriage proposal even though it came through Hamor, the groom's father, asking the bride's father for her hand on behalf of his son. Arranged marriages were the normal practice in that culture, and the parents were the ones who had the authority to make such decisions, not the young couple. But the second proposal aspect was the opportunity that was being promised should the marriage take place. Look at verses 9 and 10.

⁹ Intermarry with us; give your daughters to us and take our daughters for yourselves. ¹⁰ Thus you shall live with us, and the land shall be *open* before you; live and trade in it and acquire property in it."

- Jacob was being promised full acceptance into their culture – with the social integration of marriage and family, new business opportunities, and the ownership of property. They could become real Shechemites – or Shechemonians – enjoying economic prosperity! Owning more land and livestock!. But Jacob's mind could have been thrown deep into thought with the first thing Hamor said in verse 9. "Intermarry with us!" "Hey! Didn't the Lord promise that my descendants would be as the sand of the sea, which cannot be numbered? Perhaps this is His provision for that to seriously begin, with my children marrying men and women of Shechem!" But then – there were Isaac's words to him 20 plus years ago when he sent him to Laban, "You must not take a wife from the Canaanite women." "At least Laban and his family knew about Yahweh, even if they didn't seem to be truly devoted to Him." "But now I am back in Canaan. Who knows what these people believe?" But then, suddenly, there was a new distraction. (Verses 11 and 12.)

¹¹ Shechem also said to her father and to her brothers, "If I find favor in your sight, then I will give whatever you say to me. ¹² Ask me ever so much bridal payment and gift, and I will give according as you say to me; but give me the girl in marriage."

- Here is the bribe from Shechem. "You give me Dinah to be my wife and I'll pay you however much you want." The more modern understanding of the word "dowry" has been the money or estate a woman brings into the marriage. But in antiquity it worked the other way around, the dowry was a gift made by a man or his family to his bride-to-be or to her parents. Shechem and his father are prominent citizens, likely with some wealth, so this could have been very tempting for Jacob and his sons.

II. Sin by Jacob's Sons Continues the Process

A. Deceit and Dishonor (vv. 13-17)

¹³ But Jacob's sons answered Shechem and his father Hamor with deceit, because he had defiled Dinah their sister. ¹⁴ They said to them, "We cannot do this thing, to give our sister to one who is uncircumcised, for that would be a disgrace to us. ¹⁵ Only on this *condition* will we consent to you: if you will become like us, in that every male of you be circumcised, ¹⁶ then we will give our daughters to you, and we will take your daughters for ourselves, and we will live with you and become one people. ¹⁷ But if you will not listen to us to be circumcised, then we will take our daughter and go."

- Now all the brothers were angry (see verse 7), but we don't know who all joined in on a plan to get revenge for this crime against Dinah. Their response, starting in verse 13, was voiced by "Jacob's sons". Notice the serpent lurking in their words – "deceit" is shaping everything they say. They intended to deceive Shechem and Hamor because ... because ...

because of what Shechem did to Dinah. The sin they were planning to commit was being justified because of his sin against their sister. This is the very heart of revenge. Bad things were about to take place.

Implications: If you find yourself thinking about ways you could pay someone back for something bad they did to you, you are on the dangerous path of Jacob's sons. What the Lord expects of His people in these situations is clearly stated in Romans 12:17-19.

Never pay back evil for evil to anyone. Respect what is right in the sight of all men. If possible, so far as it depends on you, be at peace with all men. Never take your own revenge, beloved, but leave room for the wrath of God, for it is written, "Vengeance is Mine, I will repay," says the Lord.

Then verse 21 says that we are to overcome evil with good, not to be overcome by the evil done against us. Dinah's brothers were overcome by the evil done to her.

- One of the wrong things they did through their plan was to dishonor their great-grandfather Abraham and also Yahweh through their corrupt attitude toward circumcision. What was God's purpose in requiring circumcision of Abraham and his male descendants? To help God's people commit sin? Never!! It was a sign of the Lord's amazing covenant with Abraham and the Jewish people. If a man was marked in this way, he and his family were considered to be part of the holy people of God – the people God had chosen from all people on earth to be His own and to represent Him. And there was deeper meaning yet to be revealed through Moses in the Law. Their hearts were to be circumcised -- spiritually modified so that they could truly love God and live as He would enable them to live. (See Deut chapter 6 and chapter 30) But Jacob's sons were planning to plunge much deeper into sin by using the very sign of God's blessing to help them deceive and then pay Shechem back for his sin against Dinah. They corrupted that symbol from God for their own violent purposes.
- I appreciate Matthew Henry's perspective on this, though I paraphrase his words from the early 1700's. "Malicious plans have often been concealed and carried out with a pretense of religion If Jacob's sons had not had the intent of revenge, I don't see how they could justify the offer of the sacred sign of circumcision, the seal of God's covenant, to these Canaanites, who had no right to such privilege. They had no right to the seal and no right to the promise of becoming "one people" (verse 16) with Jacob's family in the sight of God."
- At this point, I bring Jacob's leadership failure into view. Jacob! "Where are you? Your boys are way out of line here!" Perhaps he had left the room. Was the emotional pain of this crime against Dinah too much for him to bear? A godly man is called to stand up and lead in doing the right thing, no matter how difficult the situation. Then Jacob's sons close the meeting with an ultimatum: accept the offer or we are leaving, and Dinah goes with us.

B. Agreement is Reached and Acted Upon (vv. 18-24)

¹⁸ Now their words seemed reasonable to Hamor and Shechem, Hamor's son. ¹⁹ The young man did not delay to do the thing, because he was delighted with Jacob's daughter. Now he was more respected than all the household of his father. ²⁰ So Hamor and his son Shechem came to the gate of their city and spoke to the men of their city, saying, ²¹ "These men are friendly with us; therefore let them live in the land and trade in it, for behold, the land is large enough for them. Let us take their daughters in marriage, and give our daughters to them. ²² Only on this *condition* will the men consent to us to live with us, to become one people: that every male among us be circumcised as they are circumcised. ²³ Will not their livestock and their property and all their animals be ours? Only let us consent to them, and they will live with us." ²⁴ All who went out of the gate of his city listened to Hamor and to his son Shechem, and every male was circumcised, all who went out of the gate of his city.

- Certainly the offer by Jacob's sons seemed reasonable to Hamor and Shechem. Yes, what they had to do was weird and might be painful for a few days. But the bribe Shechem had offered was rejected, so that removed the financial obligation for obtaining Dinah. And look again at verse 23. **(READ)** Hamor is the leader of the city of Shechem, and his vision is that all that Jacob owns will someday belong to him and to the men he is addressing. He uses greed as a motivating factor in his sales pitch. Hamor's son Shechem also had favorable influence over the men of the town, so the men were likely open to their ideas. There was possibly some lively discussion about the proposal. As the men listened, there may have been a point where they interrupted Hamor. A new expression might have been invented at the mention of their circumcision – "Wait!!! What??? But at some point, agreement was reached and the surgeries took place (verse 24). (The result was temporary disablement, but oh, well. It was promised to be a wise investment for their future.)

III. The Sinful Plan is Successfully Completed

A. Slaughter and Plunder are Carried Out (vv. 25-29)

²⁵ Now it came about on the third day, when they were in pain, that two of Jacob's sons, Simeon and Levi, Dinah's brothers, each took his sword and came upon the city unawares, and killed every male. ²⁶ They killed Hamor and his son Shechem with the edge of the sword, and took Dinah from Shechem's house, and went forth. ²⁷ Jacob's sons came upon the slain and looted the city, because they had defiled their sister. ²⁸ They took their flocks and their herds and their donkeys, and that which was in the city and that which was in the field; ²⁹ and they captured and looted all their wealth and all their little ones and their wives, even all that *was* in the houses.

- Simeon and Levi, sons #2 and #3, go into Shechem and kill all the men. The oldest, Reuben, is missing, as are the other seven brothers. They were either ignorant of the full plan or they chose not to participate in the actual murders, or were too young (Joseph). But verse 27 seems to implicate them in the “cleanup” – “Jacob’s sons came ... and looted the city”. With Dinah’s rescue from Shechem’s house, the horrible deed of revenge was complete. The final tally? All the men of Shechem were brutally slaughtered, and all of their livestock, money, possessions, women and children came into Jacob’s ownership.

B. Final Discussion with Jacob, Simeon, and Levi (vv. 30-31)

³⁰ Then Jacob said to Simeon and Levi, “You have brought trouble on me by making me odious among the inhabitants of the land, among the Canaanites and the Perizzites; and my men being few in number, they will gather together against me and attack me and I will be destroyed, I and my household.” ³¹ But they said, “Should he treat our sister as a harlot?”

- Henry Morris commented that there is no break in time described between verses 29 and 30. But it was during that period when the brothers and probably the male servants of the family would have brought the city’s women, children, animals, and property to Jacob’s home site. That moment in between the verses may have been shocking to Jacob as he perceived the enormity of what had happened, thus putting their very lives in great danger.
- He then vented his frustration on his two sons. But commentator David Guzik notes that “When God-appointed heads do not take appropriate leadership, it creates a void which is often filled sinfully.” He shows absolutely no concern about the moral and spiritual failure of his sons, not to mention the overwhelming harm done to their neighbors.
- Jacob reveals his fearful mindset pretty quickly. In one sentence, verse 30, he uses the words “I” or “me” seven times. He has great fear that other Canaanites will hear of this massacre and come to destroy him and everyone and everything that belongs to him. Never mind about Yahweh’s covenant which was promised to be fulfilled through Jacob and his descendants, guaranteeing their future. Remember the oil and water illustration from a previous Equip session? About faith and fear? Faith and fear **cannot** mix and then function together.

Implications: As believers, we are to walk by faith, not by sight. Sometimes what we can see or think we can see as possible situations stir up our imagination. All kinds of difficult problem scenarios can be imagined to add to the ones that already actually exist. That mindset stirs up fear and suppresses faith. We should be encouraging one another and praying for one another as we know of each other’s difficulties. And we should seek encouragement and prayer from brothers and sisters in Christ when we sense that our faith is weakening under the load of life’s problems. We must help each other remember the truth and power of our God and His Word!

- In verse 31 (**READ AGAIN**), Simeon and Levi continue to claim self-justification for their thinking and their actions. Most current English translations update the word “harlot” to the word commonly used today – prostitute. They saw Shechem’s offer of money for Dinah as a payment by him for his sexual access to her. To them, personal and family dishonor caused by anyone justified any response, even the most violent response possible.
- The two sons seem to have had the last word on this unfortunate matter. But that’s because we’re only in chapter 34. There are 16 chapters left in Genesis, and they are all connected to Jacob and his immediate family. Be sure to look at chapter 49, verses 1-2 and 5-7. It is there that Jacob gave his final word to Simeon and Levi regarding their role in the Shechem incident that left a dark stain on their family’s history. (Reuben’s problem in Gen 35:22 is the focus here in verses 3 and 4. Even though he saved Joseph’s life from his hateful brothers in Gen 37, Jacob had no commendation or blessing for Reuben in regard to that.)

¹ Then Jacob summoned his sons and said, “Assemble yourselves that I may tell you what will befall you in the days to come.

**² “Gather together and hear, O sons of Jacob;
And listen to Israel your father.**

**³ “Reuben, you are my firstborn;
My might and the beginning of my strength,
Preeminent in dignity and preeminent in power.**

**⁴ “Uncontrolled as water, you shall not have preeminence,
Because you went up to your father’s bed;
Then you defiled *it*—he went up to my couch.**

**⁵ “Simeon and Levi are brothers;
Their swords are implements of violence.**

**⁶ “Let my soul not enter into their council;
Let not my glory be united with their assembly;
Because in their anger they slew men,
And in their self-will they lamed oxen.**

**⁷ “Cursed be their anger, for it is fierce;
And their wrath, for it is cruel.
I will disperse them in Jacob,
And scatter them in Israel.**