

Dinah

The Woman Whose Sightseeing Had Fatal Results

Scripture Reference: Genesis 34

Name Meaning: Dinah means "justice" or "one who judges," and was doubtless given her as a token of her parents' belief in divine justice.

Family Connections: She was a daughter of Jacob and Leah, and as a member of a family under covenant blessing should have been more careful regarding her personal obligation in maintaining the honor of her home and nation.

Dinah's love for sight-seeing set off a train of tragic consequences. Young and daring, and curious to know something of the world outside, she stole away one day from the drab tents of her father, to see how the girls in their gorgeous Oriental trappings fared in nearby Shechem. Roaming around, the eyes of Prince Shechem, son of Hamor lighted upon her. He saw her means he lusted after her (see Job 31:1), and then as the record puts it, "he took her, lay with her, and defiled her" (Genesis 34:2). Although Dinah's vanity was flattered at Shechem's attention so that she went to his palace, she never meant to go so far. Took her implies he forced her, and although she may have resisted his advances, resistance was futile and she was seduced. Had Dinah been content to remain a "keeper at home" (Titus 2:5), a terrible massacre would have been averted, but her desire for novelty and forbidden company spelled disaster. Josephus tells us that Dinah went to the Canaanite annual festival of nature worship (Numbers 25:2) - a forbidden association for an Israelite. Sin, shame and death came to Dinah and Shechem through the windows of their eyes and ears (see Genesis 39:7). The young prince offered the usual reparation for his seduction of Dinah - marriage and a payment to her father which was sufficient according to Hebrew law (Deuteronomy 22:28-29). Evidently there was more than lustful desire on the part of Shechem, for we read - "His soul clave unto Dinah the daughter of Jacob, and he loved the damsel, and spake kindly unto her." When Hamor went to Jacob and his sons to discuss the matter of marriage between his son and Dinah, he said, "The soul of my son Shechem longeth for your daughter. I pray you give her him to wife."

The sons of Jacob, angry over the shame brought to their sister and nation, said that such a thing "ought not to be done." By what Dinah had become - a seduced woman - she caused her father to be a "stink among the inhabitants of the land." Seeming to acquiesce in Hamor's suggestion that his son and Dinah should marry and that there should be established a friendlier association between the Israelites and Shechemites, the sons of Jacob, particularly Simeon and Levi, said that they would agree to Hamor's proposition on one condition. The condition was that all the male Shechemites submit to the rite of circumcision - an act of priestly consecration. When the pain of the operation was at its height and movement was difficult, on the third day, Simeon and Levi attacked and slew all the males in the city, including young Shechem himself. For centuries, among the Arabs, seduction was punishable by death, the judgment being generally inflicted by the brothers of the one seduced. For their crime, Simeon and Levi received a curse instead of a blessing from Jacob their father, as he came to die. One salutary effect of this tragedy was the reconsecration of Jacob who had lapsed somewhat as the result of his settlement near Shechem (Genesis 33:17-20). Remembering his vow to make an altar at Bethel to God who had appeared to him while fleeing from Esau years before, his family surrendered their strange gods and purified themselves, and at Bethel the forgotten covenant was fulfilled. In this way God overruled evil for good (Genesis 35:1-5). How many young Dinahs there are today captivated by the glitter and glamor of the world, and, tired of life at home, leave without warning, and become lost in the whirl of a large city. There is an alarming increase in the numbers of girls who, anxious for change and wanting to see something of the world, turn aside from the shelter of a good home and are never heard of again. Many of them end up in sin, crime and degradation. May we never cease to pray for those who try to seek out and restore the lost, young womanhood of our day!