

Episode: Other Letters Series No. 03

Narrator: Dinah

Primary Scriptures: Genesis 34

Story Summary: Dinah discusses her dysfunctional family

Location: Canaan

Time: circa 1800 BC

Suggested Memory Scriptures: Genesis 34:31

Dinah was part of a very dysfunctional family. Her father Jacob, had two wives who were sisters. Jacob loved the younger wife, Rachel, but didn't love the older wife, Leah. In an effort to give Jacob more sons, the wives had Jacob impregnate their servants, Bilhah and Zilpah. Altogether they birthed twelve sons and one daughter, Dinah.

Leah gave birth to Reuben, Simeon, Levi, Judah, Issachar, Zebulun, and Dinah. Notably, Reuben was the firstborn of Jacob, Levi was the ancestor of the Jewish priests, and Judah was the ancestor of David and Jesus.

The sons of Jacob became the founders of the twelve tribes of Israel. The good and bad stories about the family dominate the books of the Old Testament. All we know about Dinah is found in Genesis 34.

Shechem was a city in the mountains which lay on the main north-south road through the mountains of Israel. It is first mentioned in the Bible as a place where Abraham built an altar and where God confirmed his covenant. Many decades later, Abraham's grandson, Jacob, led his family through the area. They bought some land near the city and built an altar to God.

When the prince of Shechem saw Dinah, he raped her. Then he asked his father to get her for his wife. Eventually, Simeon and Levi (natural brothers of Dinah) take their revenge by killing the men of the area and looting everything. This sets up tension between Jacob's family and the resident tribes of the region.

As illustrated by the many stories about Jacob's family, a main theme of the Bible is reconciliation...the restoration of friendly relations. Jacob was reconciled with Esau, and Joseph was reconciled with his brothers and father.

The overarching story of the Old Testament is how God's people rebel against him, he disciplines them for their own good, and then he forgives them and is reconciled with them. God desires to have relationship with his people and that requires him to discipline and forgive them. Jesus pointed to the theme of reconciliation and forgiveness in the Lord's Prayer: "And forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those who trespass

against us.”¹ And the best news of all is that God sent his Son so that through him we might be reconciled to God.²

¹ Luke 11:2-4

² 2 Corinthians 5:18-19