

Instead of returning to Bethel, “the house of God,” distrusting and fearful of Esau, Jacob entered the land near a city of Shechem. This was the area where Abram had first entered the land 180 years before. Jacob pitched his tent there by Shalem and purchased a field outside the city. Up until then Abraham and Isaac had conscientiously avoided purchasing land in Canaan except for a burial site. As called of God they had habitually maintained a healthy separation from the Canaanites. (Though the iniquity of the Amorites was not yet full it was substantial!) But perhaps after his years in more civilized PadanAram, Jacob wasn’t so careful as his fathers. He set up an altar there named with the new name (Israel) God had given him when wrestling. But he didn’t maintain a safe separation from the world. Like Lot who had pitched near Sodom, Jacob was soon enveloped in the influence of a sinful city. Believers call this “world bordering”—getting as close as we can without becoming enmeshed. When out and about do we go as close as we can to signs warning of danger? Or do we keep our little ones as far from danger as possible? Physical danger? Moral danger? Spiritual danger? Are we personally maintaining the separation to Him the Lord desires of us? Is our local assembly? It can’t if we don’t personally. The Lord desires we avoid involvement in the affairs and attractions of the secular world. From the affairs of the “Christian world” as well. Think of every thing one can add the term “world” to. For example, the entertainment world, political world, sports world, cultural world, religious world, business world, etc., etc. Listen.

*John 17:14 I have given them thy word; and the world hath hated them, because they are not of the world, even as I am not of the world. 15 I pray not that thou shouldest take them out of the world, but that thou shouldest keep them from the evil. 16 They are not of the world, even as I am not of the world. 17 Sanctify them through thy truth: thy word is truth. 18 As thou hast sent me into the world, even so have I also sent them into the world. 19 And for their sakes I sanctify myself, that they also might be sanctified through the truth.*

*1John 2:14 I have written unto you, young men, because ye are strong, and the word of God abideth in you, and ye have overcome the wicked one. 15 Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world. If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him. 16 For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, is not of the Father, but is of the world. 17 And the world passeth away, and the lust thereof: but he that doeth the will of God abideth for ever.*

Jacob reaped the consequences of his decision to settle near a city of the Canaanites. He let his one and only daughter go out alone and she was brazenly raped (not seduced) by a “prince” of the land. The Canaanite sheik then claimed to love her and requested his father she be given him in marriage. A rather odd approach to courting a woman in any culture. Cave man? Spoiled brat?

Why did she go to see the daughters of the land? Why was she alone? Out from under her father’s or brothers’ protective care. What was she seeking for among these

iniquitous people in their city? Friends? Fun? Fashions? Independence? What are we seeking today?

*James 4:4 Ye adulterers and adulteresses, know ye not that the friendship of the world is enmity with God? whosoever therefore will be a friend of the world is the enemy of God.*

Jacob, apparently fearful of his neighbors, did nothing. Being in a place God had not put him he had lost the moral perception and courage he would have had if he had been walking with God. (Ever been there, done that? Scripture has many examples of it.) But his sons took over. They contrived an elaborate, deceptive scheme to avenge their sister’s dishonor at the hands of the Canaanite. (How like their father.) They did so, but with violence and cruelty that was far beyond their father’s will and character. Jacob was devious and grasping but not violent or cruel.

*1Corinthians 10:11 Now all these things happened unto them for ensamples: and they are written for our admonition, upon whom the ends of the world are come.*

*Romans 15:4 For whatsoever things were written aforetime were written for our learning, that we through patience and comfort of the scriptures might have hope.*

But note the underlying scheme of Satan. This was no ordinary trap he had set. What if Jacob had accepted the tempting alliance with these Canaanites? What if indeed! Marriages like these were not just a wedding of a man and a woman from two families but a process to establish an alliance between the two families, representing two nations. God had promised Abram the Canaanites were scheduled for His Judgement when “iniquity was full,” Genesis 15:16. Abraham’s descendants were to return to the land and do this. They wouldn’t if they were allied though this proposed intermarriage with the Canaanites.

Furthermore the promised Seed of Abraham was to come through Isaac, then Jacob and his sons. Satan’s head was to be bruised by the woman’s Seed, Genesis 3:15. If Satan could have compromised the continual lineage of Abraham’s descendants before the Seed was born he would have escaped; he would have won in his battle for dominance over the universe. The Old Testament is the story of Satan’s repeated attempts to defeat God’s purpose to head up all things in His Son, in Christ, in the Seed of the woman (Ephesians 1:10). What a crucial trial for a mere man like Jacob with his insecure feelings. Be aware!

And note how Jacob’s anxious sidetrack to Shalem, endangered not only his own family’s future but all the momentous promises that hung upon the survival of his family here in Canaan. If all the Canaanites of the land had been united in some mutual protection treaty, Jacob’s family “was toast” **and the promises too**. Jacob quickly realized the danger (verse 30) though his impulsive young sons seemed oblivious to it, not to mention the momentous battle that was being played out then and there.

But God stepped in at this point. Some lessons were yet to be learned. Learned by them and now by us.

By Ronald Canner, November 17, 2010