



Genesis 37-41

(Including Gen. 34-35)

Come Follow Me

Genesis 34

Shechem rapes Dinah. The tragic story of Shechem's destruction, as told from the southern author (J).



Two conflicting accounts of Shechem

There are actually two accounts of how Jacob's family came into possession of Shechem. One account is in Genesis 33:18-20, the other account is in Genesis 34. Genesis 34 is the more violent account, and more remembered.

In the Genesis 33 account, Jacob buys the land with money. The Genesis 34 account is much more messy!

Genesis 33 comes from the northern tradition, the Elohist. In this account Simeon & Levi are not blamed of any wrongdoing. In the account we all know, these two tribes are disparaged. This account in Genesis 34 is attributed to the "J" author or the Yahwist.

Butchered or Bought?

There are two accounts in the book of Genesis detailing how the Israelites came to possess Shechem, which became the capital of the northern kingdom of Israel. Butchered or Bought? might make a great title for these chapters!

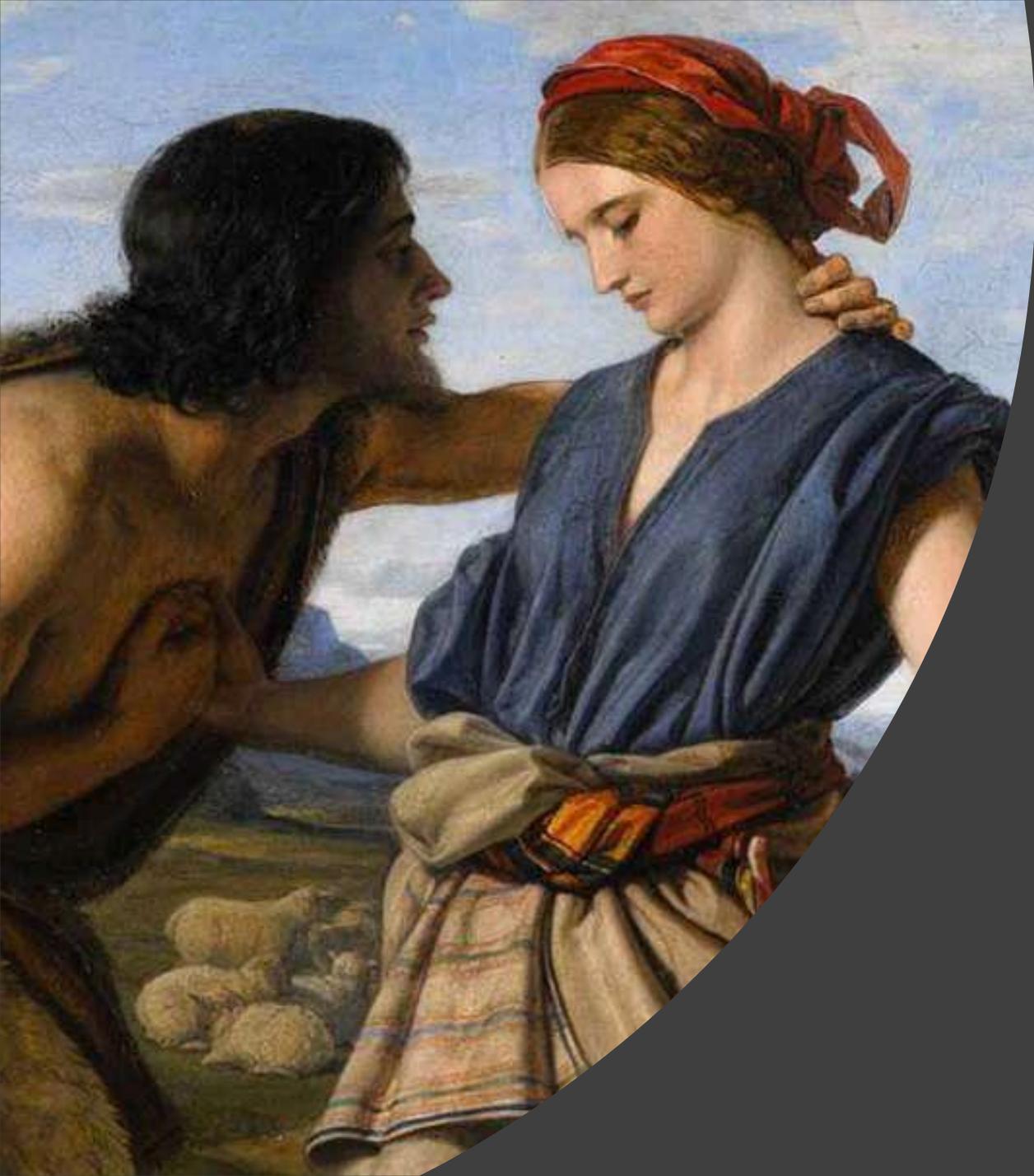
The southern Yahwist account is telling. It reveals how the southern storytellers viewed their northern brethren. For according to this version, the founding of Shechem was achieved through a deceptive, brutal, and bloody affair (Gen 34). It recounts how Dinah gets raped by one of the Shechemites and how her brothers persuaded all the male Shechemites that they had to circumcise themselves in order to marry Dinah. After they had agreed to this, Simeon and Levi decide to kill them for revenge, win their sister back, and gain a city!

Of course the northerners told the story differently. It was after all a story about them. The Elohist professes, in opposition to J, that Jacob (i.e., Israel) bought the land from its inhabitants for a hundred pieces of money (Gen 33:19).

Genesis 35

Rachel dies giving birth to Benjamin



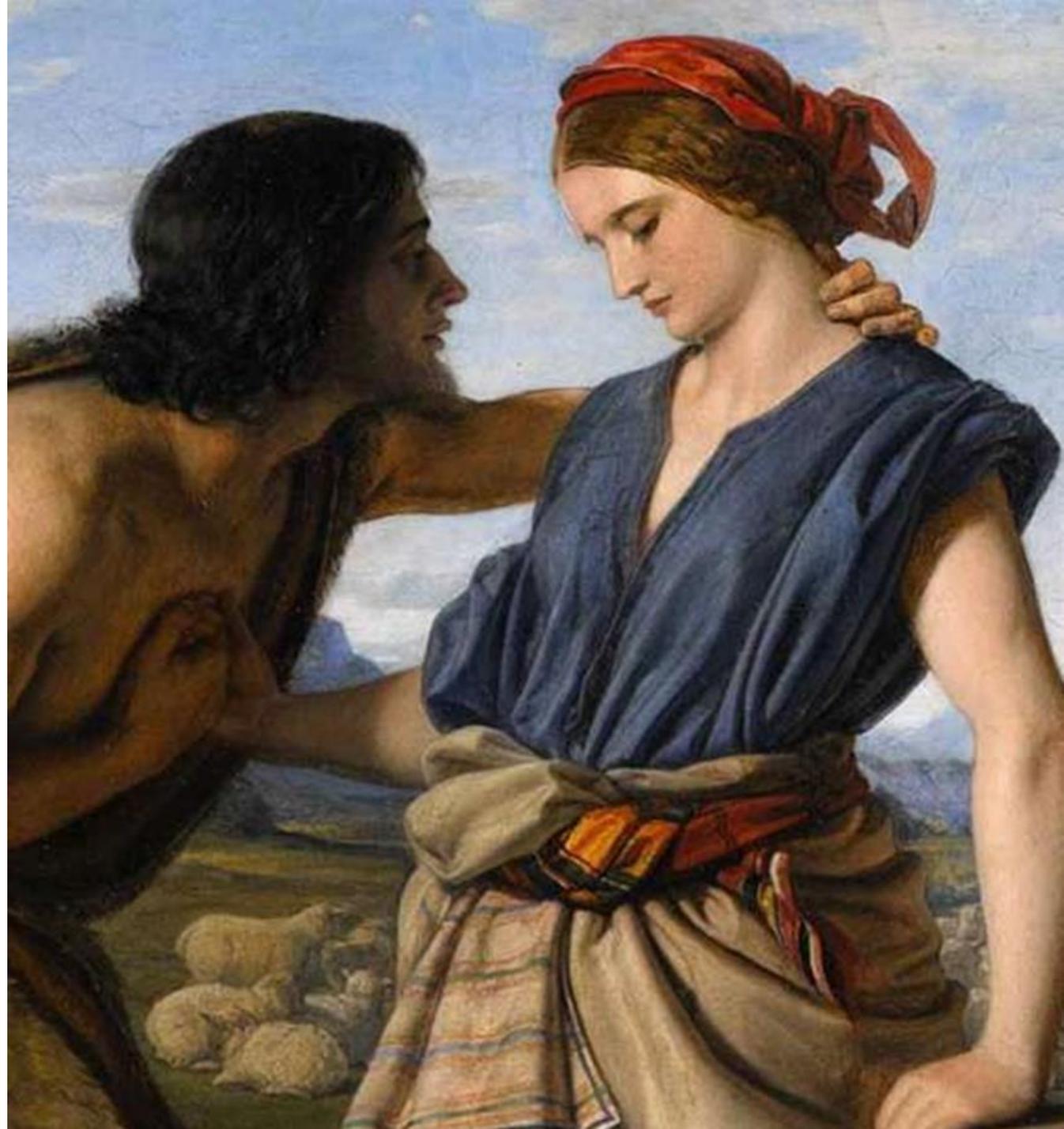


Genesis 35

Reuben loses his birthright – Genesis 35.22, 1 Chronicles 5.1, Genesis 49.3-4

What about Reuben?

Subsequent Jewish tradition is similarly ambivalent about Reuben's status and punishment. *Jubilees* and *The Testament of Reuben* are two works of the Pseudepigrapha, which expand upon the story in Genesis; both of them seek to simultaneously condemn and excuse Reuben, as they "fill in gaps" in the biblical text.



The Testament of Reuben

Give ear to Reuben your father in the commands which I give unto you. And behold I call to witness against you this day the God of heaven, that ye walk not in the sins of youth and fornication, wherein I was poured out, and defiled the bed of my father Jacob. And I tell you that he smote me with a sore plague in my loins for seven months; and had not my father Jacob prayed for me to the Lord, the Lord would have destroyed me. ...after this I repented with set purpose of my soul for seven years before the Lord. And wine and strong drink I drank not, and flesh entered not into my mouth, and I ate no pleasant food; but I mourned over my sin, for it was great, such as had not been in Israel. Pay no heed to the face of a woman, nor associate with another man's wife, nor meddle with affairs of womankind. For had I not seen Bilhah bathing in a covered place, I had not fallen into this great iniquity. For my mind taking in the thought of the woman's nakedness, suffered me not to sleep until I had wrought the abominable thing. For while Jacob our father had gone to Isaac his father, when we were in Eder, near to Ephrath in Bethlehem, Bilhah became drunk and was asleep uncovered in her chamber. Having therefore gone in and beheld nakedness, I wrought the impiety without her perceiving it, and leaving her sleeping I departed. And forthwith an angel of God revealed to my father concerning my impiety, and he came and mourned over me, and touched her no more... For until my father's death I had not boldness to look in his face, or to speak to any of my brethren, because of the reproach. Even until now my conscience causeth me anguish on account of my impiety. And yet my father comforted me much and prayed for me unto the Lord, that the anger of the Lord might pass from me, even as the Lord showed. And thenceforth until now I have been on my guard and sinned not.

(Transl. of R. H. Charles, *The Apocrypha and Pseudepigrapha of the Old Testament*. See also the classic two volume set edited by James Charlesworth, *The Old Testament Pseudepigrapha* (Yale University Press) and the brand new Outside the Bible volumes: *Ancient Jewish Writings Related to Scripture*, edited by Louis H. Feldman, James L. Kugel and Lawrence H. Schiffman. See also *The Testament of Reuben*, chapter 1: <http://www.sacred-texts.com/bib/fbe/fbe267.htm>)

The Book of Jubilees

And Jacob went and dwelt to the south of Magdaladra'ef. And he went to his father Isaac, he and Leah his wife, on the new moon of the tenth month. And Reuben saw Bilhah, Rachel's maid, the concubine of his father, bathing in water in a secret place, and he loved her. And he hid himself at night, and he entered the house of Bilhah [at night], and he found her sleeping alone on a bed in her house. And he lay with her, and she awoke and saw, and behold Reuben was lying with her in the bed, and she uncovered the border of her covering and seized him, and (she) cried out, and discovered that it was Reuben. And she was ashamed because of him, and released her hand from him, and he fled. And she lamented because of this thing exceedingly, and did not tell it to any one. And when Jacob returned and sought her, she said unto him: 'I am not clean for thee, for I have been defiled as regards thee; for Reuben has defiled me, and has lain with me in the night, and I was asleep, and did not discover until he uncovered my skirt and slept with me.' And Jacob was exceedingly wroth with Reuben because he had lain with Bilhah, because he had uncovered his father's skirt.

(*The Book of Jubilees*, chapter 33. See: <http://www.pseudepigrapha.com/jubilees/33.htm>)

The Book of Jubilees tackles tough issues

And let them not say: to Reuben was granted life and forgiveness after he had lain with his father's concubine, and to her also though she had a husband, and her husband Jacob, his father, was still alive.

For until that time there had not been revealed the ordinance and judgment and law in its completeness for all, but in thy days (it has been revealed) as a law of seasons and of days, and an everlasting law for the everlasting generations.

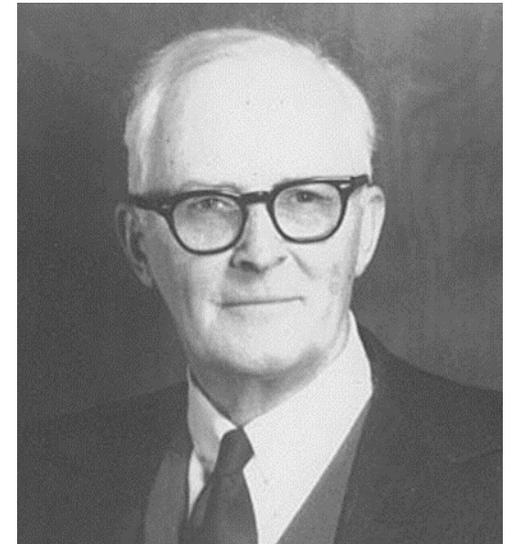
And for this law there is no consummation of days, and no atonement for it, but they must both be rooted out in the midst of the nation: on the day whereon they committed it they shall slay them.



Genesis 37 –
Joseph is
betrayed

The many colored coat

There is no mention in any ancient source of a garment of many colors. That's an invention of modern editors trying to explain it. But here it was the garment he gave him. It was the garment of the priesthood. No wonder they were jealous of him, they being the elder brothers and he the younger in the patriarchal line coming down from Abraham. This garment had belonged to Abraham and had come down to Joseph instead of to the other brethren. (Hugh Nibley, Teachings of the Book of Mormon, vol. 3, 51-52. See also: Brian Hauglid, Garment of Joseph: An Update)





Genesis 38

Judah and Tamar

MESSIANIC GENEALOGY

FROM ADAM TO CHRIST





Genesis 39

She's not mine!

Joseph's answer to the advances of Potiphar's wife shows his great personal righteousness. King Benjamin taught the Nephites that "when ye are in the service of your fellow beings ye are only in the service of your God" (Mosiah 2:17). If that principle were to be stated negatively, it would read, "When ye are exploiting or sinning against your fellow beings, you are only sinning against God." Joseph understood this principle perfectly and answered Potiphar's wife by pointing out that it would be a terrible thing to take advantage of his master in this way. He took the next logical step when he added, "How then can I do this great wickedness, and sin against God?" (Genesis 39:9).

Joseph: A type of Jesus Christ

1. Joseph was the avored son of his father; so was Jesus (see Genesis 37:3; Matthew 3:17).
2. Joseph was rejected by his brothers, the Israelites, as was Jesus (see Genesis 37:4; John 1:11; Isaiah 53:3; 1 Nephi 19:13–14).
3. Joseph was sold by his brothers into the hands of the Gentiles, just as Jesus was (see Genesis 37:25–27; Matthew 20:19).
4. Judah, the head of the tribe of Judah, proposed the sale of Joseph. Certain leaders of the Jews in Jesus' day turned Jesus over to the Romans. Judas (the Greek spelling of Judah) was the one who sold Jesus. (See Genesis 37:26; Matthew 27:3.)



Joseph: A type of Jesus Christ

5. Joseph was sold for twenty pieces of silver, the price of a slave his age. Christ was sold for thirty pieces of silver, the price of a slave His age. (See Genesis 37:28; Matthew 27:3; Exodus 21:32; Leviticus 27:5.)

6. In their very attempt to destroy Joseph, his brothers actually set up the conditions that would bring about their eventual temporal salvation—that is, Joseph, by virtue of being sold, would become their deliverer. Jesus, by His being given into the hands of the Gentiles, was crucified and completed the atoning sacrifice, becoming the Deliverer for all mankind.

Joseph: A type of Jesus Christ

7. Joseph began his mission of preparing salvation for Israel at age thirty, just as Jesus began His ministry of preparing salvation for the world at age thirty (see Genesis 41:46; Luke 3:23).

8. When Joseph was finally raised to his exalted position in Egypt, all bowed the knee to him. All will eventually bow the knee to Jesus. (See Genesis 41:43; D&C 88:104.)

9. Joseph provided bread for Israel and saved them from death, all without cost. Jesus, the Bread of Life, did the same for all men. (See Genesis 42:35; John 6:48–57; 2 Nephi 9:50.)

10. Joseph preserved the seeds (Gen. 41.56-57). Jesus, the preserver of the heavenly seed, "shall see his seed" (Mosiah 15.10-13), those who are "his people," whose "sins he has borne." Joseph and Jesus are tied to this motif: the preservation of the seeds.

This idea is directly related to the temple and the גֶרֶן, (*goren*) threshing floor, the rock that was directly under the Holy of Holies. Hence, the preservation of the seeds is connected to coming into God's presence, receiving the blessings, and standing on "holy ground." King David, by establishing the altar upon the threshingfloor, made this the permanent center of worship.

(See: 2 Samuel 24.15-25; 3 Nephi 20.18; see also Moshe Aaranov, *The Biblical Threshing-floor in the light of Ancient Near Eastern Evidence*, New York University, 1977, p. 228-229.)

