



General Topics :: Religious vigilante

Religious vigilante - posted by ChrisJD (), on: 2007/11/19 6:22

vigilante (vɪˈdʒɪlənt) n. 1. One who takes or advocates the taking of law enforcement into one's own hands.

- from the American Heritage Dictionary

A word of Introduction

Not too long ago I was at the public library when some children next to me became very disruptive. I said something to one of them and they quieted down some. I remember feeling conflicted about the whole thing. This was not the first time over several months that I had said something to children who were being obnoxious around me. Later on that day, when I was home and outside cutting the grass and meditating upon these and other things I had the thought, a question really: is there such a thing as a religious vigilante? After reading something tonight in another thread, I thought that now might be an appropriate time to share with you all some things I noticed in the Word of God respecting this question.

Is there such a thing as a *Religious Vigilante*?

My thoughts or observations, come from the story of Jacob and his sons, when his daughter Dinah was taken and violated by Shechem, the son of Hamor, the Hivite. This story is found in the 34th chapter of the book of Genesis.

Verse 6

And Hamor the father of Shechem went out unto Jacob to commune with him.

We read here, that after Shechem had done this thing, he desired to take Dinah unto himself because he loved her. And so he asked his father to get her for him, to be his wife. And Hamor is coming now to meet with Jacob - to **commune** with him. And I think that is something to take note of in this story, and as we consider this question of : is there such a thing as a religious vigilante.

Going on here we see that Jacob's sons, having heard of this thing that was done to their sister, they were, the scripture says *very wroth*. And so we imagine they might be. You can easily imagine how angry these brothers might have been, to hear that someone had violated their sister. Because this Shechem, an Hivite, had *wrought folly in Israel*, something which *ought not to be done*. So we can see that these men, though they might not have been all that pious themselves, remember what Judah did with Tamar his daughter-in-law, and what all of them did to their younger brother Joseph; no they probably were not so pure, not really all that concerned about the religious virtue of being called by the God of Abraham, Isaac, and their father Jacob, but you can easily imagine how they would have been angry over such a thing.

And here we have Hamor coming out to commune with Jacob, two fathers meeting to discuss this terrible thing that has happened, and perhaps come to some sort of resolution of it, or at least try to make things right about it, and instead of meeting together, just the two of them, it would appear that Hamor was, perhaps, I can not be certain, cut off from meeting with Jacob directly, for in verse 6 it says he came to commune with him, that is Jacob, but in verse 8 we read *And Hamor communed with them*, as though he was intercepted if you will, by Jacob's sons.

You know, if you are really angry about something, and you want to see justice done, it can cloud your judgment. And even though you know you may not be the best one to deal with the situation, or even that you have the right authority to deal with it, because you are so angry about it, and all you want is to see justice served, you might be overpowered by that and want to take matters into your own hands.

And I think I can see something of that here. Now, in verse 11, we do read that Shechem, the one who had violated Dinah, that he does speak to Jacob in this meeting, and the details of all this are somewhat vague. We don't know for instance, if Jacob's son's had went out and all of a group met Hamor before he could talk directly with Jacob, or perhaps, in the course of the meeting, they were so forceful in asserting themselves in the conversation that Jacob could hardly get a word in, we do not know, but what is clear about this, whatever Jacob may have said or not, is that the **will** of these men his sons prevailed. I think that is something also to take note of here, that is, their **will** in all this. And I'll say why later.

Now what happens next is not a high spot in the history of the children of Israel. I remember reading this story for the first time and just being struck by the cruelty of it all. It is one of those stories which reinforces that saying you hear used to support the Bible's veracity from time to time, that is, the proposition that the Bible portrays its heroes in a very honest way, warts and all, as they saying goes. And I believe that is true and that it is certainly true here. These men, these *Israelites*, these chosen men, they go and do something that you would expect the heathen people to do - certainly not men that knew and called upon God, or were called by His name anyway.

But now there's another thing to take note of in this: that those who are only superficially a part of something, but that don't really share the values of what it is they are a part of, they might be willing to cut corners, to break the rules, to do whatever it takes to get their goals accomplished, even if the means do not square with the values they are supposed to uphold. And even in sincere men, anger or lust to see anger fulfilled may cause them to do the same thing.

And so what happens here is that, these son's of Jacob trick Hamor and Shechem into thinking that they are going to join their families together and make one big happy family, so to speak. Oh what an evil it is to deceive, but even worse to deceive under the guise of love! Here they have these men thinking that they are going to live at peace with each other, that all this that happened to Dinah is going to be put behind them and they are going to all live together as one!

And what is worse about all this...are you ready... what is worse about this is that they use the sign and seal of their supposed religious devotion, the covenant of circumcision, to do it. They convince these heathen men to be circumcised, to take upon them that outward sign of their devotion to the God of Abraham, in order that they might execute their revenge upon them. Oh the cruelty of it!

You know, here again, I think we should pause and consider this. Here are men who, in their anger, are willing to use the sacred sign of their devotion and consecration to God, to take revenge. Now that says something doesn't it. It says something about those who are willing to use the things of God, the holy things of God, as a means to their own ends, as a means, in this case, to get evil and cruel revenge. Or even how sincere men may do the same thing, in anger.

And so what happens as a result of all this is a tragedy. After the men of their city were all circumcised, and were there recovering from it, that is, they were probably incapacitated mostly, that is not able to move around much, in such a state as that, we read that Simeon and Levi, the brothers of Dinah, took their swords and came upon these men, and as they

were in such a helpless state as they were, they killed them all.

Now that is a sad thing to read. And then they took all their things.

Sad indeed.

Well, we have to get beyond that and what about our initial question? Is there such a thing as a religious vigilante? I think there could be. I think this story shows us that such a thing could be and gives us some warnings and some things to look at as we consider why we do what we do, in the name of God and religion.

Something which stands out perhaps more than anything, is that in all these meetings where we read that such and such **communed**, we never read that Jacob's sons communed with him. Hamor came out to commune with Jacob and met with Jacob's sons. And then later we read that Hamor and Shechem communed with the men of their city, but why do we not read of Jacob's sons communing with him? Why did they not seek to know the will and mind of their father before they sought to take revenge? Did their rage and their anger blind them to wisdom and what was right?

Jacob says to them as a result of all this

"Ye have troubled me to make me to stink among the inhabitants of the land"

And I think, how might we bring shame and do damage to the name and cause of God in our land, if we go about taking justice into our own hands, without consulting God? Oh, our cause might be just, but is this the Lord's way, and is it His timing?

And then even more troubling than all of that, is what is perhaps the divine commentary on all of this as we have it when Jacob, in his old age, is standing to bless his sons. And when he comes to Simeon and Levi, the two who actually put all of this into action, he says

"Simeon and Levi are brethren; instruments of cruelty are in their habitations. O my soul, come not thou into their secret; unto their assembly, mine honor, be not thou united: for in their anger they slew a man, and in their self-will they digged down a wall. Cursed be their anger, for it was fierce; and their wrath, for it was cruel: I will divide them in Jacob, and scatter them in Israel."

- Genesis chapter 49 verses 5-7

Ohh friends, what a terrible, an awful summary of these things. I said before how I would come back to this point I made earlier, how the will of these men prevailed in this. And here it is, here I think we have the whole summation of this question that is before us, of what it might be and mean, to be a religious vigilante:

...for in their anger they slew a man, and in their self-will they digged down a wall.

Isn't that it then, those two things. If something would characterize taking matters into our own hands, and not seeking to do the will of God, wouldn't it be these two evil twins, **self-will** and **anger**.

Re: Religious vigilante, on: 2007/11/19 7:20

Very interesting facts.

Re: - posted by ChrisJD (), on: 2009/1/24 16:34

"Hatred stirreth up strifes: but love covereth all sins."

- Proverbs 10:12(KJV)