

## DEEP END - HIGHLIGHTS (text not audio)

### Judges 3:15-30 - Why does God stay silent?

In the OT the author rarely makes a moral evaluation of the narrative that he is writing. So, for instance, Jacob deceives his father but the author of the story doesn't pass a moral judgment on Jacob.

This is seen throughout the OT. For instance, the judge Ehud's actions in assassinating the king of Moab don't seem very commendable but there is no moral evaluation passed on him by the writer of Judges.

This is because the author is expecting us to bring a moral perspective to bear on the story as we read it. This draws us into the narrative and sharpens our moral judgment as we are automatically to make a moral evaluation on the event we are reading (we do this, even if it is unconscious, whenever we read narrative).

When Reuben, Jacob's firstborn sleeps with Jacob's concubine, we have to wait all the way until Gen 49:3 for a judgment to be given on that action (and we know, of course, that his punishment was losing his firstborn rights).

Then we read of Levi & Simeon organizing the slaughter of the inhabitants of Shechem (this was because of the incident with their sister Diana), but again there is no moral judgment given on the action of Levi and Simeon in the text.

However (and this is how it normally works) we discover that God takes it extremely seriously and because of what they did to the Shechemites they both lose their firstborn rights, but we don't read about this until Gen 49:5 - 7.

By the way, in Gen 49:5-7, speaking of Simeon & Levi, the Lord says "I will disperse and scatter them in Israel". When we get to Sinai we discover that Levi redeemed himself in the incident of the golden calf as they were the tribe who stood with Moses for righteous (and for this reason they were given the priesthood) but they were never given a portion in the land, just some cities and the pasture land that surrounded them. (They were prophetic - in the NT we are a royal priesthood but have no land).

The verse that I quoted "I will disperse and scatter them in Israel" is further fulfilled when we discover that it seems like that Simeon never had a defined territory like the other tribes (Joshua 19). He was only given towns to dwell in, and it seems that Simeon was eventually somewhat absorbed into Judah, again demonstrating how seriously God took the slaughter of the inhabitants of Shechem (even though when we read the story in Genesis one could get the impression that God is somewhat disinterested in what

happened to these gentile unbelievers). But again, this is because we are supposed to be making moral judgments as we read the text. (But later on, in Gen 49, an evaluation is given by the Lord himself - which, as I said, is often what happens in the text).

Another example would be Aaron's actions on Sinai in making the golden calves. We read of the anger of both Moses and Yahweh, but it is not until Deuteronomy 9 that we are told that the Lord would have destroyed Aaron there and then if it was not for the intercession of Moses on his behalf.

God does eventually speak, but not necessarily immediately. Which, to conclude, reminds me of Job. The greatest tragedy he experienced was the death on a single day of all his children (seven sons and three daughters) when a whirlwind hit their house killing them all. However, what we need to ponder is that when eventually God does speak, he speaks out of the whirlwind - the very thing that killed his children (Job 38:1 - perhaps to reassure him that even in death his loving kindness was not withdrawn from his children?).

Perhaps what we can take away from all this is that while God does not always speak immediately, eventually he does and in this we can rest. Paul speaks of a peace that "passes understanding" (Philippians 4:7). A peace that is not dependent on understanding. And it is in this peace that we have until we do - or even if we don't - receive any "understanding".