And (he) lay
Since he disarranged his couch, the text charges him as if he had lain with her.
And why did he (Reuben) disarrange and desecrate his couch?
Because when Rachel died

Jacob took his bed which was placed regularly in the tent of Rachel, and not in the other tents, and placed it in the tent of Bilhah. (Then) Reuben came and resented the insult (to) his mother, (and) said, “If my mother’s sister was a rival wife to my mother, shall (also) the maid-servant of my mother’s sister be a rival wife to my mother?”
Therefore he disarranged (the bed) (Shab. 55).

The Torah considered Reuben’s action so heinous that it was tantamount to Reuben actually having relations with Bilhah. From the perspective of the deed itself, Reuben’s infraction was minor. However, the consequence of his action was devastating. Reuben undermined Jacob’s authority in his own household. The ensuing loss of respect for Jacob by Reuben’s brothers ultimately resulted in the sale of Joseph. (Boston, undated; see following commentary, and see commentary on 37:29)

Rashi — ויב surgeons 29

29. And Reuben returned
When he (Joseph) was sold he (Reuben) was not there, for his day had come to go and minister to his father.

Another interpretation: he was occupied with his sackcloth and his fasting

because he had disarranged the couch of his father.

29. And Reuben returned unto the pit; and, behold, Joseph (was) not in the pit; and he rent his clothes.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Verse</th>
<th>Text</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>4.</td>
<td>Unstable as water, have thou not the excellency; Because thou wentest up to thy father’s bed; Then defiledst thou (it) — (to) my couch he went up.</td>
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<td>3.</td>
<td>Reuben, thou (art) my first-born, My might and the first-fruits of my strength; The excellence of dignity, and the excellence of power.</td>
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<td>28.</td>
<td>And at even he divideth (the spoil). All these (are) the twelve tribes of Israel, and this (is it) that their father spoke unto them and blessed them; every one according to his blessing he blessed them.</td>
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<td>5.</td>
<td>And He was a king in Jeshurun, When the heads of the people were gathered, the tribes of Israel together.</td>
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<tr>
<td>6.</td>
<td>Let Reuben live, and not die, And let his men be numbered.</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
רלד

(1) כרד

(2) ככ לזריאו שימראל ודריה

(3) ככ צינן