



Parshas Vayishlach 2019, never too far

This week's Parsha Perspective is dedicated in memory of Shlomo Ben Edward, and Yosef Ben Zev Wolf. May their souls be uplifted and their memories a blessing.

Our Parsha begins with Yaakov Avinu returning home to Canaan after over twenty years of absence. Still fearful of Esav, Ya'akov sent messengers to him a message of reconciliation, however, they returned with an ominous report that Esav was preparing to **“greet him”** with 400 men.

In response, Ya'akov sent him an extravagant gift of hundreds of cattle, donkeys, and camels. He split his family into two camps, so if one was attacked the other could escape, and then he turned to G-d to pray.

The night before he met with Esav, he moved his family and belongings across the Jacob River. After everyone had crossed except for him, Ya'akov met Esav's angel, and they started to wrestle and fight until dawn. At that point, the angel needed to pray and asked Ya'akov to let him go. But Ya'akov refused to let him go until the angel blessed him, so the angel gave Ya'akov a new name, Yisrael, the prince of G-d.

One of the other stories in this week's Torah portion is a drama involving Leah's daughter, Dinah. The story begins with Dinah leaving her camp and venturing out into the city of Shechem. As she entered the city, she met the crown prince, Shechem, who abducted and violated her and kept her hostage.

His father, the city governor, approached Ya'akov and told him that his son was infatuated with Dinah and wished to marry her. Ya'akov's sons slyly agreed to his

proposal, provided that all the men of the city would agree to circumcise themselves.

So, at the urging of Shechem and his father, the people of Shechem agreed to this strange request. However, on the third day following their circumcision, Dinah's two brothers, Shimon and Levi, went to the defenseless city and killed all men who were recovering from the circumcision, and then liberated Dinah from Shechem's camp.

When Ya'akov heard what his sons did, he was unhappy because he feared revenge from the surrounding cities. However, the fear of G-d was on the rest of the nations of Canaan, so they left Ya'akov alone as he was traveling to Beis E-l.

A question comes to mind: The Pasuk at the beginning of the story of Dina writes, (34:1) *"Dina, the daughter of Leah went out to look about among the daughters of the land."* Rashi explains that the Pasuk says, **"Dinah, the daughter of Leah,"** to tell us that Dina learned the habit of going out from her mother, Leah.

Seemingly, Rashi is saying that Leah's behavior led to this unfortunate incident. Why does Rashi add an apparent negative connotation and meaning to the Pasuk about Leah, one of the matriarchs of the Jewish people?

One of the explanations that is given is that Rashi is just trying to mitigate Dina's fault in this unfortunate situation. It was not Dina's nature to go out, but rather, her mother Leah's; therefore, the mistake of going out alone is not entirely Dina's fault.

However, the Lubavitcher Rebbe gives a deeper and more profound explanation. He explains that the blame for this regrettable incident lies in fact on Ya'akov. Because when Ya'akov was preparing to meet with Esav, the Pasuk says (32:23), *"Ya'akov woke up during the night and took his wives and eleven children and moved them across the Yabok River."* Rashi on that Pasuk asks Ya'akov moved his eleven children, but there were twelve, including Dina; where was Dina?

He answers that when Ya'akov was preparing to meet Esav, he hid Dina in a box so that Esav should not see her and want to marry her because of her beauty.

Rashi continues that Ya'akov was punished for withholding Dina from his brother because perhaps if Dina had married Esav, she could have changed him for the better.

The Lubavitcher Rebbe explains that when Rashi wrote that Dina got the habit of going from her mother, Leah, it was not written with a negative connotation, but rather, a positive one. Because the example that Rashi brings of Leah **“going out,”** was in fact a good thing.

The story is from last week's Parsha (30:16); one day during the spring season, Reuven picked flowers from the field and brought them to his mother, Leah, her sister Rochel saw them and asked if she could have some of them, Leah agreed, provided that Rochel relinquishes her turn with Ya'akov that night.

So the **“going out”** that Rashi uses as the example was only to be with her husband and create the Jewish people. Therefore, when Rashi wrote that Dina got the habit of “going out” from her mother, Leah, he did not mean it in a demeaning way, but rather, in a way of admiration. Because Leah brought up a child whose holiness was strong enough to change people, even the likes of Esav.

One of the lessons that the Lubavitcher Rebbe brings down is that we must never give up hope on a person's spirituality, no matter how far they seem to have gone. This is why the Lubavitcher Rebbe sent emissaries worldwide to revive and strengthen every Jewish person's connection and relationship with G-d.

In our daily lives, it is imperative that we understand that we must never give up hope for each other. This is true in our spiritual and physical lives, as it takes a small deed, a listening ear, or even a smile to immensely impact a person's life.

“Always judge others favorably.”

The Ethics of our Fathers

*Have an inspirational Shabbos,
Rabbi Sholom Yemini*