

THE COMMUNITY PARSHA SHEET



PARSHAT VAYISHLACH

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RABBI JONATHAN TAWIL
TAL Founder & Director

WHERE WAS DINA?

Yaakov was preparing for his encounter with Esav. He transferred the entire family across the river. Yet the Torah seems to miss out the mention of one person – Dina.

Rashi (32:23) commenting on the transfer, states that Dina was hidden by Yaakov in a box.

Yaakov didn't want Esav to set his eyes on his daughter, he was worried that they might end up together; he therefore hid her so Esav would never see her.

This would seem to be the right thing for Yaakov Hatsadik to have done. Yet our Chachamim fault Yaakov. Rashi mentions – for refusing to allow Dina to marry Esav in a permissible fashion, Dina was eventually taken in a forbidden fashion by Shechem.

We are told that had Yaakov allowed her to marry Esav, then perhaps she would have inspired him or future generations to be close to Hashem.

By not allowing Esav to meet Dina, Yaakov closed the door on his potential return via her influence.

This is an astounding Chazal and has perplexed many commentators.

Even granting the tremendous effect that a righteous wife can have on the most sinful husband, it is difficult to understand the drastic consequences of Yaakov's seemingly innocent act.

Why is it that Yaakov Avinu's actions which seem much warranted, given the situation, are faulted?

Let us first take a look at why specifically Dina could have had the right effect on Esav.

Rav Avraham Yitzchak Barzel, in his *Iyunei Rashi*, sights the Gemara Berachot (60a), which states that Dina was initially conceived as a male foetus.

Leah had prophetically foreseen that there would be 12 sons to Yaakov. She had already given birth to six. Bilha and Zilpa, Yaakov's concubines, already had two sons each, and Rachel only had one. If she were now to have a seventh son, that would mean that Rachel would have less than even the concubines. She therefore prayed to Hashem that He miraculously transform her foetus to a female and she indeed delivered a baby girl instead of another son.

Thus Dina was born through an outright miracle, a Heavenly Intervention. This Rav Barzel suggests, afforded her a degree of spiritual protection upon which Yaakov could have relied in the hope that she could positively influence Esav.

Yet we can still ask, was he really supposed to rely on the fact that maybe Esav would change through marrying his daughter, surely the risk was too high for his daughter.

A further answer is given by the Netziv. He offers an interesting insight suggesting that Yaakov's fault was not the fact that he hid her in a box, but rather the way in which he hid her in the box.

His fault lay in the way in which he banged in the nails so to speak, with happiness. He was happy not to give his daughter to Esav. Rather than looking at the sad side that his brother was such a

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Comic & Quiz

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Rasha, and how sad it was that he was unable to give his daughter to him, he was happy.

I would like to suggest a further reason to this complex situation. The night before Yaakov met Esav, he was attacked by Esav's arch angel. There was a wrestle between them the entire night. Esav's angel eventually yielded to Yaakov, and although Yaakov came out with an injury to his thigh (Shelah Hakadosh and Radak both say this was a hint to the fact that Dina would be abused), he was successful in defeating the angel and even receiving a blessing.

Why is it that Esav's angel came to attack Yaakov now? Surely he had other previous times in Yaakov's life in which he could have attacked. Our sages explain that this fight was a spiritual fight representing the war in the upper worlds. Nothing occurs in this world, unless it is first determined above. Esav was about to meet Yaakov the next day, and the outcome was being determined in heaven. That outcome would depend on this fight. Yaakov won and hence the next day we find that Esav did not try to

attack. In fact when Esav finally meets Yaakov we are told, (33:4) "And Esav ran towards him (Yaakov) and he embraced him and fell upon his neck and he kissed him and they cried." Why did Esav kiss him, why did they weep? Is that what we were all expecting of a seemingly war monger intent on destroying his enemy?

Rashi, noting that above the words (written in our Sefer Torah) "and he kissed him" are dots, gives two differing explanations. The first is to show that Esav didn't kiss him with his whole heart. It was a kiss, but his heart was not fully pro this action. Rabbi Shimon bar Yochai, however explains it otherwise. He states that "it is a given law that Esav hates Yaakov. But at this time his mercy was aroused and he kissed him with all his whole heart". According to Rabbi Shimon Bar Yochai, it is known that Esav hates Yaakov, but there are times including this one, where his love and affection are aroused.

Furthermore our Sages ask why was Esav crying? The Chatam Sofer notes that when Esav saw the righteous Yaakov, his entire family and the wealth he

amassed he came to a realisation that perhaps his ways were wrong. After all a man can be righteous, fulfil Hashem's will and live a good life. He wondered if all the years that had passed had been to waste – it is for this reason that he cried?

Perhaps our sages fault Yaakov for not allowing Esav to see Dina, for the setting was ripe. Esav's emotions were moved, he was crying at the lack of fulfilling his potential. He kissed his brother, (according to Rashbi) full heartedly. This was the time to act. Had he have seen Dina and wanted to marry her, then she would have had the perfect stand to build on, she could have built on these emotions and taken off from there.

Life is full of trials and tribulations, yet we are all blessed at some time in our history in this world to see the spark of Hashem. The question is do we initiate and eternalise that spark, do we work from there, or do we let it float by us and continue our lives as if nothing happened.

Let us work to build on the positive energies we receive, on the good times, on the times we clearly see Hashem in our lives and build a strong foundation and future Amen.



RABBI DAVID BAADANI
Director - TAL Chazanut Program

SEEING THE GOOD

This week's Parasha recounts the tense reunion between Yaakov and Esav. The Torah describes Yaakov's feelings:

"וַיִּירָא יַעֲקֹב מְאֹד וַיִּצְרֵ לוֹ"
"And Yaakov was very frightened, and it distressed him" (Bereshit 32:8). Yaakov feared for his life, despite Hashem's explicit promise to protect him: "כִּי לֹא יִהְיֶה אִתְּכֶם עֶמְקָד... כִּי לֹא יִשְׁאַרְךָ"
"Behold, I am with you... I will not abandon you" (Bereshit 28:15).

Why, then, was Yaakov so afraid? The Da'at Zekeinim explains that when Yaakov saw Esav, he was struck by one thing: Esav's extraordinary devotion to the mitzvah of Kibbud Av Va'em - honouring one's parents. Esav's commitment to this mitzvah, unparalleled in its sincerity, worried Yaakov.

This is puzzling. After all, Yaakov had spent years in Lavan's home keeping all 613 mitzvot, as he said:

"עִם לָבָן גֵּרְתִּי וְתָרַגְתִּי מִצְוֹת שְׁמֵרָתִי"
"I lived with Lavan, yet I observed all 613 mitzvot."

How could one mitzvah from Esav outweigh Yaakov's lifetime of Torah

observance? The answer is profound. Yaakov didn't focus on Esav's flaws or negative actions. Instead, he saw only the shining light of Esav's mitzvah of Kibbud Av. This teaches us a tremendous lesson: when we look at others, do we see their faults, or do we focus on their virtues? Yaakov's humility and recognition of Esav's strength remind us to seek out the good in others. By concentrating on people's positive traits, we uplift them and ourselves, fostering compassion and unity. Let us strive to emulate Yaakov's perspective and appreciate the divine spark in everyone.



HALACHOT BY RABBI ELI MANSOUR

If One Recited the Wrong Beracha Over a Fruit or Vegetable

The Shulhan Aruch rules (Orah Haim 206) that if a person recited the Beracha of "Boreh Peri Ha'etz" over a food that requires the Beracha of "Boreh Peri Ha'adama," he has not fulfilled his obligation, and he must then recite "Ha'adama." Something that grows directly from the ground – such as lettuce or other vegetables – cannot be said to have grown on an Etz ("tree"), and thus even after the fact, the recitation of "Ha'etz" does not fulfill the obligation, and the correct Beracha must be recited.

In the reverse case, if one recited "Ha'adama" over a fruit which requires "Ha'etz," he has fulfilled his obligation Be'di'abad (after the fact). Since fruits grow on trees which grow from the ground, the Beracha of "Ha'adama" is appropriate for fruits, even though of course one is supposed to recite "Ha'etz" over fruits. Therefore, after the fact, one has fulfilled his obligation if he recited "Ha'adama" over a product requiring "Ha'etz."

It is unclear whether a person who recited "Ha'adama" in such a case and then immediately realized his mistake should correct himself, or just eat the fruit. Some contend that

since the Beracha of "Ha'adama" suffices after the fact, there is no need for the person in this case to correct himself. Others, however, argue that the person should correct himself in order to recite the Beracha that is supposed to be recited. This question has not been definitively resolved one way or the other.

In a case where one mistakenly recited "Ha'adama" over a fruit, the Beracha covers all foods on the table that require "Ha'adama." Thus, for example, if a person recited "Ha'adama" over an apple, and there are vegetables on the table, then he does not have to recite "Ha'adama" a second time over the vegetables. Although his Beracha of "Ha'adama" was recited by mistake, nevertheless, it covers all the vegetables in front of him.

This applies also to one who mistakenly recited "She'ha'kol" over a food requiring a different Beracha. The Beracha of "She'ha'kol," after the fact, covers all foods. And so if one mistakenly recited "She'ha'kol" over a fruit, for example, his Beracha covers the fruit as well as any other foods in front of him, such as water. This is mentioned by Yalkut Yosef, citing his father, Hacham Ovadia Yosef.

Finally, the Radbaz (Rav David Ben Zimra, Egypt, 1479-1573) ruled that if

one mistakenly recited "Ha'adama" over a fruit, and other people at the table listened to his Beracha with the intention of fulfilling their obligation, they fulfill their obligation even though the Beracha was recited mistakenly. This can happen on the night of Rosh Hashanah, when the head of the household customarily recites "Ha'etz" over an apple or date for everyone at the table, who fulfill their obligation by listening to his Beracha. If he mistakenly recited "Ha'adama" over the fruit, both he and they have fulfilled the obligation. This is the Radbaz's ruling, and it was accepted by later Poskim.

Summary:

One who mistakenly recited "Ha'etz" over a food requiring "Ha'adama" has not fulfilled his obligation, and must then recite "Ha'adama." However, if a person mistakenly recited "Ha'adama" over a food requiring "Ha'etz," he has fulfilled his obligation. (If he realized his mistake immediately after reciting "Ha'adama," it is uncertain whether he should correct himself.) This recitation of "Ha'adama" covers all foods on the table requiring "Ha'adama," and if others intended to fulfill their obligation by listening to this Beracha, they, too, fulfill their requirement, even though the Beracha was not the proper Beracha.



WEEKLY PARSHA OVERVIEW

Parshat Vayishlach

Returning home, Yaakov sends angelic messengers to appease his brother Esav. The messengers return, telling Yaakov that Esav is approaching with an army of 400. Yaakov takes the

strategic precautions of dividing the camps, praying for assistance, and sending tribute to mollify Esav.

That night, Yaakov is left alone and wrestles with the angel of Esav. Yaakov emerges victorious but is left

with an injured sinew in his thigh (which is the reason that it is forbidden to eat the sciatic nerve of a kosher animal). The angel tells him that his name in the future will be Yisrael, signifying that he has

prevailed against man (Lavan) and the supernatural (the angel). Yaakov and Esav meet and are reconciled, but Yaakov, still fearful of his brother, rejects Esav's offer that they should dwell together.

Shechem, a Caananite prince, abducts and violates Dina, Yaakov's daughter. In return for Dina's hand in marriage, the prince and his father suggest that Yaakov and his family intermarry and enjoy the fruits of Caananite prosperity. Yaakov's sons' trick Shechem and his father by

feigning agreement. However, they stipulate that all the males of the city must undergo brit milah. Shimon and Levi, two of Dina's brothers, enter the town and execute all the males who were weakened by the circumcision. This action is justified by the city's tacit complicity in the abduction of their sister.

G-d commands Yaakov to go to Beit-El and build an altar. His mother Rivka's nurse, Devorah, dies and is buried below Beit-El. G-d appears again to Yaakov, blesses him and

changes his name to Yisrael. While traveling, Rachel goes into labor and gives birth to Binyamin, the twelfth of the tribes of Israel. She dies in childbirth and is buried on the Beit Lechem Road. Yaakov builds a monument to her. Yitzchak passes away at the age of 180 and is buried by his sons. The Torah portion concludes by listing Esav's descendants.

Rabbi Sinclair,
Seasonsofthemoon.com

Q

1. What sort of messengers did Yaakov send to Esav?
2. Why was Yaakov both "afraid" and "distressed"?
3. In what three ways did Yaakov prepare for his encounter with Esav?
4. Where did Dina hide and why?
5. After helping his family across the river, Yaakov remained alone on the other side. Why?

A

1. 32:4 - Angels.
2. 32:8 - He was afraid he would be killed. He was distressed that he would have to kill.
3. 32:9 - He sent gifts, he prayed, and he prepared for war.
4. 32:23 - Yaakov hid her in a chest so that Esav wouldn't see her and want to marry her.
5. 32:25 - He went back to get some small containers he had forgotten.



« **And Yaakov said, "... I have everything ..."**
(Bereishis 33:10-11)

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