

DIVINE PLAN

by Rabbi Pinchas Winston

Dinah, the daughter of Leah, to whom she had given birth for Ya'akov, went out to see the daughters of the land. (Bereishis 34:1)

When Ya'akov Avinu was questioned by his father-in-law, Lavan, regarding his hasty departure from Lavan's home at the end of last week's parsha, Ya'akov answered him:

Unless the God of my father, the God of Avraham and the Dread of Yitzchak had been with me, you would have sent me away empty-handed. (Bereishis 31:42)

Apparently, Ya'akov Avinu fled from Lavan because of his concern about poor treatment. However, on his way home, did he fare much better? After surviving his fight with the Angel of Eisav, and his actual confrontation with Eisav himself, he lost the "battle" with Shechem ben Chamor, who violated his holy daughter, Dinah. And, in Eretz Yisroel of all places! Even more remarkable is Rashi's explanation as to why it happened:

He got up that night and took his two wives, his two handmaids, and his 11 children, and crossed the Yabok passageway. (Bereishis 32:22)

But where was Dinah? He placed her in a chest and locked her in so that Eisav should not gaze upon her. For this, Ya'akov was punished, since he had kept her from his brother when she might have returned him to good, and she fell into the hands of Shechem. (Rashi) Indeed, not only did Ya'akov lose Dinah to a person who was worst than Eisav, but it was the result of Dinah herself, as the verse states:

And Dinah went out ... (Bereishis 34:1)

After all, why did Ya'akov even lock the chest in the first place? Being exact in Rashi's words, it says that Ya'akov locked it "before her," not "before him," implying that locking the chest was more a matter of keeping Dinah in than keeping Eisav out. After all, if Eisav didn't know she was in there, or what she looked like, why lock it? And, if he did know she was in the chest, then what would locking it help? Wouldn't he have asked to see her anyhow?

Hence, measure-for-measure, for unduly keeping Dinah in, she unduly went out. For unduly keeping Dinah from Eisav, who was at least circumcised, she was unduly taken by Shechem, who was uncircumcised (Bereishis Rabbah 76:8). And, for unduly being a protective father, by keeping Dinah away from one of the vilest people in history, Ya'akov was unduly ...? Unduly what? Exactly: how

could Ya'akov Avinu have been punished for doing what any good Jewish father would do for his own daughter, without even thinking twice?

Well, as Rashi later points out, and the Midrash states, there was the matter of Ya'akov's delay as well (Bereishis Rabbah 81:1). He had vowed, some 34 years earlier and on his way to Lavan's house, to give one tenth of his earnings to God if he returned safely to Eretz Yisroel. As of Shechem, he had yet to do so, and was, apparently, held accountable—even though we are told that Ya'akov Avinu never wasted a moment!

The only question is, what was the measure-for-measure there? In each case, even if Ya'akov had indeed been guilty of the "sin" mentioned, why was Dinah made to suffer as well? The rule is: children only suffer for the sins of the parents if they continue the sin of the parents. If not, and the child still suffers, then there is another matter at hand.

And, indeed, there was. In fact, this entire episode has more to do with the concept of *alilus*—when our actions become the pretext for an inevitable Divine act—than any mistake Ya'akov might have made, *per se*. In fact, if there is anything to learn from any of this, it is not about taking chances with *shidduchim* for your children, but about how bad things happen in history for the sake of positive outcomes that we can't possibly know about in advance, or without the help of God.

For example, recall a previous Rashi (Bereishis 30:21), which is really the Talmud speaking, that Dinah had almost been Yosef (Brochos 60a). For, when Leah had been pregnant the seventh time, she worried that she might give birth to a son, giving her seven of the 12 Tribes, and Zilpah and Bilhah two each. That would have meant that Rachel could only give birth to one of the 12 Tribes, less than her own handmaid.

Therefore, to save her sister the pain of such an outcome, she prayed that she give birth to a girl instead, and miraculously, the fetus became Dinah instead of Yosef. After all, it was Rachel who had first saved Leah the embarrassment of not being married off first, by allowing Leah to go into Ya'akov before her. Now, Leah, with the help of Heaven, repaid that favor by letting Yosef to be born from Rachel instead.

However, as Rashi points out, Yosef has a special relationship to Eisav, being his very antithesis (Bereishis 30:25). Therefore, Dinah also shared some of those characteristics as well, and therefore, like Yosef, she possessed the ability to "conquer" Eisav. However, unlike Yosef, perhaps she could have conquered Eisav by winning him over, as opposed to winning over him, as Yosef is destined to do.

Then, there is the matter of Shechem ben Chamor himself. His ridiculous name aside (Shechem, son of donkey), as the Arizal points out, he possessed a holy spark from the soul of Adam HaRishon himself. For whatever reason he became the carrier of it, the point is, it had become time to redeem it, and that happened through Dinah. She, of course, subsequently gave birth to Osnas, the future

wife of none other than Yosef himself.

Obviously, such a holy spark had to make its way back into the Jewish people at some point in time, one way or another. Indeed, Avraham had rectified the Nefesh of Adam HaRishon, Yitzchak, the Ruach of Adam HaRishon, and Ya'akov, through his own life, was destined to rectify the Neshamah. If Shechem ben Chamor had one of those sparks, it had to be rectified outside of Ya'akov Avinu, by Yosef, or a Yosef-life descendant, more than likely.

That had been the main event of history at that time, and everything else had just been a pretext to make it happen, as the Midrash reveals:

"Go and see the works of God, awesome in deed (Hebrew: alilla) toward mankind" (Tehillim 66:5) ... Rav Yudan said, "The Holy One, Blessed is He, wanted to carry out the decree of, 'Know that you shall surely be (strangers)' (Bereishis 15:13), and therefore set it up in such a way that Ya'akov would love Yosef and that the brothers would hate him and sell him to the Arabs, and that they would all go down to Egypt ..." This is what is meant by "awesome in deed." (Tanchuma, Vayaishev 4)

Awesome in deed, indeed. There are undercurrents to history that we can't always detect, causing us to perceive reality in specific ways so that we will make decisions that allow history to run its planned course. We make errors in judgment, but sometimes because there is no way not to, and even though it may result in certain consequences down here, we may not be held responsible up there.

Sometimes, our mistaken judgment is the result of our own failure to be clear about what to do. This will still result in the fulfillment of the Divine plan for Creation, but also make us responsible in Heaven for our mistake. We should have known better, but didn't, regardless of how well our error "helped" God to complete His will.

This is not the end of the discussion, just the beginning of it. But, it at least serves to remind us that when it comes to God's running of the world, Divine logic runs far deeper than human logic. Indeed, often they only dovetail at the end, when the good that resulted can be seen and appreciated by all.

May the merit that comes from the writing and reading of this week's parsha sheet be for the refuah shlaimah of, Leah bas Rivka, a warm and compassionate young woman, an "apple" that has not fallen far from its "tree."

Text

Copyright © by [Rabbi Pinchas Winston](#) and Project Genesis, Inc.

Rabbi Winston has authored many books on Jewish philosophy (Hashkofa). If you enjoy Rabbi Winston's Perceptions on the Parsha, you may enjoy his books. Visit Rabbi Winston's [online book store](#) for more details! www.thirtysix.org