

THE JUG MAY BE ONLY HALF FULL, BUT IT WILL NEVER BE EMPTY

by Rabbi Yissocher Frand

Parshas Vayishlach

The Jug May Be Only Half Full, But It Will Never Be Empty

These divrei Torah were adapted from the hashkafa portion of Rabbi Yissocher Frand's Commuter Chavrusah Tapes on the weekly portion: Tape # 791 - Flattery Revisited. Good Shabbos!

After Yaakov crossed the river Yabok with his entire family, he re-crossed the river and returned to the other side by himself. There, he wrestled with "a man" until morning. Tosfos teaches that he went back for small jugs that he left behind (al tikra levado ela l'kado). What was in those jugs?

The Sefer Sifsei Kohen writes that in Parshas Vayeitzei, the Medrash Rabbah says that when Yaakov took "from the rocks of the place and placed them around his head," he took a small jug of oil and anointed those rocks with the oil from the jug. Miraculously, the Medrash says, the jug did not empty. It was still full of oil. Yaakov recognized that this was a very special jug - it was a sign of great blessing. It was this little jug that accompanied him all the years in Charan and it is this little jug that he returned for when he noticed that he left it behind when crossing the Yabok Brook.

It was this very jug which would in future years be used to anoint the keylim of the Mishkan and also the Kohen Gadol and the Kings. It was this very jug that Eliyahu instructed the woman to use to fill her pitchers when she had no food for her children [Melachim I Chapter 17]. Yaakov prophetically saw all the miracles and historic events that were to be associated with this jug and that is what prompted him to go back across the brook to retrieve it.

The author of Sefer Sifsei Kohen suggests that "without a doubt" it was this same miraculous jug which was found by the Chashmonaim in the Chanuka miracle, involving the one day supply of oil which lasted for 8 days.

A Deeper Look At The Dialog Between Yaakov and His Son's Shimon And Levi

This week's parsha contains the troubling incident of Dena's capture and violation by Shechem son of Chamor. Shechem fell in love with Dena and wanted to marry her. Yaakov's sons negotiated a deal whereby they would let him marry their sister if he - and all the people of his city - agreed to circumcise themselves first. When the townspeople were weak on the third day following the circumcision, Shimon and Levi wiped out the entire city and rescued their sister.

There are several troubling points in this story. The pasuk states: "Now Yaakov heard that he had defiled this daughter Dinah, while his sons were with his livestock in the field, so Yaakov kept silent until their arrival." [Bereishis 34:5]

First of all, why was there no immediate action on Yaakov's part? Why did he have to wait for his sons to return?

Second of all, after Shimon and Levi carried out their plan of wiping out the city, Yaakov curses them. He blames them for destroying his reputation amongst the local population. This, too, is very strange. Yaakov heard the plan ahead of time. He certainly had to be aware that the proposal to have the people of Shechem circumcised was all a ruse. Yaakov knew that his sons never had any intention of letting their sister marry this person.

Third of all, after Yaakov chastises his sons and they respond "Shall our sister be treated like a harlot?" the parsha ends. We are left wondering: What was Yaakov's reaction to his sons' response? Did he hear what they said? Did he agree? Did he disagree? The Torah leaves us hanging.

The Ramban explains something very important and Rav Yaakov Kaminetsky adds context to this Ramban. The Ramban writes that the plan Yaakov agreed to was to convince the people of Shechem that they would allow Dena to marry Shechem if they all circumcised themselves and then to march in when everyone was in pain on the third day following the surgery, rescue Dinah, and escape with her - leaving all the townspeople alive and well. Yaakov never agreed to the subsequent action of Shimon and Levi to wipe out the entire city.

This approach solves some problems, but it does not explain why Yaakov did not himself act initially and why he left the negotiations and the development of the plan of action to his sons. Rav Yaakov Kaminetsky explains that Yaakov Avinu was the symbol of truth in the world (Ish haEmes). There are two types of behavior. The first approach is straight, honest, 100% above board. What you see is what you get. The second approach (Plan B) is that when dealing with a bunch of liars, thieves and terrorists, you cannot negotiate with the same level of integrity as when dealing with an honest individual.

These "terrorists" had to be dealt with surreptitiously and dishonestly. Yaakov Avinu could not do

that. As the "Ish HaEmes," he had to protect his reputation and the reputation of the Almighty (concern for Chillul HaShem). Therefore when Yaakov heard about what happened with Dinah, he knew instinctively that he could not handle the situation based on his mode of operation. He knew that these people had to be dealt with based on a level of integrity that was appropriate to their actions. Such action fell outside of his range of operation. He therefore delegated the handling of the situation to his sons.

He did go along with their plan which involved a degree of dishonesty - but he never signed onto the massacre that took place. He chastised them for carrying out such action. They responded "Shall our sister be treated as a harlot?" Did Yaakov accept that? Rav Yaakov Kamenetsky states that Yaakov did not fully accept this argument. He does not respond now, but he responds later in Parshas Vayechi.

While on his death bed after calling all his sons in to give them a blessing before he died, Yaakov tells Shimon and Levi: "Stolen tools are their weapons. Into their design may my soul not enter! With their congregation do not unite, O my honor... Accursed is their rage for it is mighty, and their wrath for it is harsh; I will divide them in Jacob and I will disperse them in Israel." [Bereishis 49:5-6]. The simple reading of this curse is that "the combination of you two is so terrible I have to separate you from one another". Rashi other there has a different reading of this "curse". Yaakov sees their nature and decrees that they should be the school teachers in Israel, the Rabbis, and the scribes. "This is your just reward for doing this."

Incredible! Yaakov is upset with these brothers. They cannot be trusted. So what does he do with them? They are going to be the educators of the Jewish people. Everyone will entrust their children into the hands of the Tribes of Shimon and Levi. The validity of the Sefer Torah will be placed in their hands.

Rav Yaakov explains that Yaakov Avinu saw a tremendous attribute in Shimon and Levi - the attribute of "Shall our sister be treated as a harlot?" 'If someone in our family is hurt, it bothers me.' The other brothers had the same thing happen to their sister as well, but they were able to live with it. Shimon and Levi were not willing to live with it, because it was not right. It was a travesty. They felt that their sister's travesty was their travesty. Her hurt was their hurt. People like that - who are selfless, who are willing to sacrifice their lives for the good of somebody else - can handle the job of teaching better than anyone else in Klal Yisrael. Being in a classroom all day, getting paid less than everybody else, not having great job security, not having the respect of people who make a lot of money... Only one type of personality is good for that - the "Shimon and Levi personality".

When Yaakov saw their reaction -- how much it bothered them that their sister should be treated like a harlot - he said "I have the right job for you. The right job for you is to be the teachers of school children in Israel."

This write-up was adapted from the hashkafa portion of Rabbi Yissocher Frand's Commuter Chavrusah Torah Tape series on the weekly Torah portion. The complete list of halachic topics covered in this series for Parshas Vayishlach are provided below:

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