

Points to Ponder
Vayishlach 5775

I lived with Lavan (32:5) – Rashi adds the famous comment that while at Lavan's Yaakov also kept the Taryag Mitzvos and did not learn from Lavan's actions. What does Rashi add by noting that Yaakov did not learn from Lavan's evil ways? **Rav Don Segal Shlita** explains that we learn that one can keep the Taryag mitzvos and still be a Rasha. By declaring that he went in the right direction of observing mitzvos and still remained on course for living an ideal lifestyle within the boundaries of Torah but also focused on Torah Avoda and Gemillas Chessed.

Eisav is coming and 400 men with him (Imo) (32:-7) – Later with Yaakov it notes that he divided the camp that was with him (Ito). Why in one case does it note Imo while with Yaakov it was Ito? **Rav Aizik Ausband Shlita** quoted the **Gra** who explained that Imo denotes a coming together in action as well as in mind. Ito denotes merely action. Rav Ausband explains that when Eisav's 400 men were coming they came in like mind and action. They all wanted to plunder and murder Yaakov. Yaakov, on the other hand was in like action with his camp --- his sons – but not in thought. For while Yaakov was afraid, his children believed that they would be saved from Eisav.

And Yaakov was afraid and he was distressed (32:8) – In last week's Parsha, we learned how strong and smart Yaakov Aveinu truly was. Why was he afraid of the approaching army? **Rav Ovadiah Yosef ztl.** explained that Yaakov knew and believed in Rivka's Nevuah that both children would die the same day. He knew that he could defeat Eisav but was afraid that the cost would be too much to bear as it would ultimately cost him his own life. He was not sure that this was worth it.

He took his 11 sons and crossed Maavar Yabok (32:23) - Rashi notes that Yaakov hid Dinah in the box. He should have had her dress shabbily but to put her in the box was an act of being over cautious and hence he was punished with the episode in Sechem. **Rav Schachter Shlita** used to cite this as proof that parents should develop some degree of openness with their children. If we are too strong with them, then they will rebel. He added that a similar style is found at the beginning of the Parsha where the Midrash condemns Yaakov for confronting Eisav with a gift. He did not need to give a gift for this alerted Eisav to Yaakov's presence. He should have just come back and not been overly cautious. He should have just ignored him and the same is true with Medinas Yisrael today. We need to strike a balance between reaching out to our neighbors and bowing down to them (See Haamek Davar here as well) .

And he kissed him and they cried (33:4) – Rashi cites the **Sifri** that notes that it is a well documented Halacha that Eisav hates Yaakov but that at that moment his mercy was aroused and he kissed him fully. The **Netziv** adds that Yaakov too, had his love aroused at that time. **Rav Moshe Tzvi Neriah ztl.** learns a critical lesson here: He notes that there are moments in history that there is love between the individual descendants of Eisav and Yaakov. At those moments there are tears between them. But do not mistake the tears for a change in the relationship because the relationship is as clear as Halacha – Eisav ultimately hates Yaakov. Yaakov does not live with Eisav in the end – he moves on to Sukkot because that is the natural next stage in his life's mission.

The men were sad and angry because a disgrace was done in Yisrael...and this shall not be done (34:7) – What is gained by the added words V'Chin Lo YeiAseh? Isn't that obvious? Moreover, calling something a Nevala makes it quite serious, minimizing it with the statement V'Chein Lo YeiAseh seems to mitigate its severity? **Rav Yosef Chaim of Baghdad** explains that had another injustice been done,

then it could have been repaid eye for eye and this would mitigate the anger somewhat. However, in this case, the same action cannot be done back to Shechem which leaves the anger burning.

They plundered the city because they had raped their sister (34:27) – Since they did not destroy the women and children why were they allowed to take the spoils of the city? Why didn't the women and children inherit that? **The Or Hachaim** explains that they took the spoils as a result of the Boshes money due Dinah. However, that money only could come from the coffers of Shechem? **Rav Dovid Soloveitchik Shlita** explains that when they killed Shechem, the people went to take up arms to defend him. Instantly the matter turned to war and in that case, the victor is entitled to the spoils.

Haftorah: Chazon Ovadiah – The Gemara (Sanhedrin 39b) questions why Ovadiah was able to merit Nevuah. **The Iyun Yaakov** explains that Shechina only rests on a person who has wealth (See Nedarim 38) and we know that Ovadiah had to borrow money with interest in order to feed the Neviim in the time of Elisha. The Iyun Yaakov explains that there is a difference between being a repeat Novi who has more than one Nevuah who must meet all prophesy requirements including money and a single reward of Prophecy like that given to Ovadiah for his defense of the 100 Neviim -- a one time event that didn't need all the requirements.