

INSIGHTS

Into The Weekly Parsha

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Based on the Torah of our Rosh HaYeshiva HaRav Yochanan Zweig

PARSHAS VAYISHLACH

All I Ever Wanted...

And Eisav said, "I have plenty, my brother; let what is yours remain yours." Yaakov said, "Please, no! If I have gained favor in your eyes then accept my tribute...inasmuch as I have everything." He urged him and (Eisav) accepted it (33:9-11).

This week's *parsha* features the long anticipated showdown between Yaakov Avinu and his brother Eisav. Yaakov expended much time and effort preparing for the encounter with his brother, not knowing if Eisav would receive him as a friend or as a foe. One of the ways that Yaakov approached the upcoming encounter with his brother was to try to appease him with a large gift of animals and servants.

When Yaakov finally came face to face with his brother, Eisav declined the generous gifts from Yaakov and told to him, "I have plenty — you keep what is yours." Yaakov countered that Eisav should accept his gifts because he already had everything that he needed.

Chazal point out the marked difference between the brothers' perspective on their possessions; Eisav saying that he has a lot and Yaakov saying that he has all that he needs.

From the plain reading of the text one would presume that the philosophical difference between Yaakov and Eisav's perspectives is that Yaakov felt that he didn't need anything because he had everything he needed while Eisav felt that he had plenty but was still looking for more. In other words, Yaakov was satisfied with his lot in life while Eisav had an insatiable appetite for more. This is how Yaakov knew that he could entice Eisav to accept his tribute.

But Rashi doesn't interpret Eisav's comment in that manner. Rashi (33:11) contrasts Yaakov's comment with that of Eisav's: "Yaakov said 'I have all that I require' while Eisav retorted in a haughty manner; 'I have plenty' which implies that I have much more than I need." Meaning, Rashi sees Eisav's perspective as being one of conceit. What about Eisav's comment implies that he's arrogant? Furthermore, if Eisav really was saying that he had more than he needed, then why would Yaakov feel that his continued urging would get Eisav to acquiesce?

Rashi is giving us a remarkable insight into how some people view the possessions with which Hashem has blessed them.

When Yaakov Avinu said that Hashem gave him all that he needed, he was really explaining that whatever Hashem had given him had a purpose and his role was to use the money responsibly. Therefore, whatever Hashem gave him was by definition all that he needed. If he were to be given more money, then it would just mean that he had more to accomplish.

By contrast, Eisav said that he had more than he needed and there was no overarching purpose to using whatever he had. Therefore, if he had more than he could utilize in the moment, then he had more than he knew what to do with. His goal wasn't to use what he had for the sake of something outside of himself, rather his goal was to collect more than what he needed because, in his



worldview, having more meant that he was more. Thus, Eisav was in the business of accumulation for his own grandiosity. This insight into Eisav's psyche was exactly what Yaakov seizes upon and was the principle upon which he based his entreaty.

Unfortunately, many individuals fall into this trap and collect assets for the simple purpose of accumulation. When one doesn't live in a theocentric universe everything he collects is about his needs and essentially about himself. People often fool themselves into thinking that they are collecting assets for altruistic reasons. However, the ultimate litmus test is whether or not they begin with a clearly defined vision of what they want to do with the resources or if they merely focus on warehousing resources. Chazal take it a step further saying that collecting money for the sole purpose of leaving it over for your children is also not correct (see *Gittin* 47a) as we find in *Tehillim* (49:11), "That the fool and the stupid alike perish and leave their wealth to others."

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Frum - Not Frumpy

And Dinah, the daughter of Leah, whom she had borne to Yaakov, went out to look over the daughters of the land... (34:1)

After Yaakov Avinu's encounter with his brother Eisav, Yaakov journeyed to Succos. He settled in the area adjacent to the city of Shechem, where he bought a plot of land (interestingly enough, Avraham Avinu's first stop in the land of Israel (12:6) was also there).

The Torah goes on to relate how Yaakov's daughter Dinah went out to explore the women of the area and in the process was abducted and subsequently violated by Shechem, the son of the chief of the city. This led to a violent confrontation when the children of Yaakov went to retrieve their sister and avenge the wrong, which resulted in the total annihilation of the city's adult male population.

Rashi (ad loc) is bothered by the Torah's description of Dinah as the daughter of Leah (as opposed to the daughter of Yaakov as well). Rashi explains that Dinah had the attribute of "יצאנית" — a woman that goes out," which she inherited from her mother Leah who also had this attribute as we find, "*Leah went out to meet him*" (30:16). Thus, concludes Rashi, "like mother like daughter."

Rashi's implies that this is a negative character trait that somehow, at least in part, factored into the circumstances surrounding Dinah's abduction. Many commentaries criticize Rashi's implication and characterization of Leah as being immodest (see Abarbanel and others ad loc) and actually cite proofs that Leah was in fact quite modest.

In fact, the Gemara (*Eruvin* 100a) quotes the above incident referring to Leah being "forward" with her husband Yaakov as being the reason that she gave birth to their son Yissochar — father to some of the greatest people in Moshe Rabbeinu's generation. Moshe had instructed Bnei Yisroel to appoint qualified men to serve alongside him as judges. He stipulated

that they must find men with three qualities: 1) wisdom 2) intuitive understanding 3) men of known prominence. Men with two of the qualities were easily identified, but they were unable to find men with intuitive understanding outside of the tribe of Yissochar. Thus, Leah's attribute of being "forward" with Yaakov led to the remarkable outcome of having descendants with intuitive understanding. What is the connection?

Rashi (*Devarim* 1:13) explains the difference between having wisdom and having intuitive understanding with a "real life" illustration: A wise person is like a rich money changer who competently conducts his business and when he doesn't have any business he sits and waits for customers. By contrast, a person who has intuitive understanding is like an enterprising money changer; if he doesn't have any business, he goes out and brings it in. In other words, a person of intuitive understanding has an inborn initiative. This clarifies how Leah's forwardness (taking initiative) translated to having children with intuitive understanding. Yet, we must reconcile this attribute of being forward with her attribute of modesty.

Man was created with an inner drive to connect to something outside of himself. This connection is a path to growing beyond one's own limitations and allows man to feel fulfilled and accomplished, which is a large aspect in the purpose of creation. This inner drive is what compels man to find a mate and build a life from that coupling. There are two components to this drive: the physical and the emotional. In a perfect union, these two components merge and fulfill the entirety of man's inner drive.

A woman's role in this process is to appeal to both aspects of man's desires and truly

guide the man to a better life together. A woman's intuitive understanding in this process of building the man's home and life (not to mention his fragile psyche) is beyond the grasp of ordinary men, whose focus is on accomplishments in the outside world beyond the home. Thus, it is only with the woman's validation of the man that he can confidently go out and conquer the world.

In order to create this perfect union, a woman needs to attract a man by connecting on an emotional level while also reassuring him that the accomplished, insightful, refined woman before him actually desires him. This is a delicate balancing act. Unfortunately, many insecure women try to short circuit this process by merely appealing to a man's most base physical desire by advertising themselves as available in a physical manner. The unhappy consequences of this is that a proper respect for the woman is never fully realized and this leads to a most imperfect union.

This is the Jewish value of modesty: A woman develops herself into an incredible human being who dresses with class and elegance, as befits a woman of stature. In terms of dress think royal family instead of Kardashian family. When a woman of such respectability makes herself "available" to her husband, she is actually building him up, expressing that such an impressive person wants to be with him only. This validates and empowers him to achieve in the world outside the home.

Undoubtedly, this attribute of real modesty, which Jewish mothers have been modeling for thousands of years, has led to the remarkable accomplishments of the Jewish people throughout history.



4000 Alton Road
Miami Beach, FL 33140

To dedicate an issue of Insights please email:
info@talmudicu.edu
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