

Thirtysix.org  
**Vayishlach**

Perceptions • Kislev 16, 5786 • December 6, 2025 • Issue #2125

**ONE OF** the most disturbing episodes in Avos history remains the violation of Dinah by Shechem. This is especially true in light of all the good that just happened for Ya'akov Avinu, surviving twenty years of an extremely corrupt father-in-law, defeating the angel and having his name changed to "Yisroel," and leaving his "meeting" with Eisav in peace and not in pieces. It's such a black stain on early Jewish history.

True, there was a positive outcome. Shechem, according to the Arizal, possessed a spark of Adam HaRishon's soul that had to be redeemed and brought back to the side of *kedushah*. Dinah was that "vehicle," and when Shechem fulfilled his heart's desire, he also, obviously unbeknownst to him, gave up his reason to exist. Once pregnant with Shechem's child, Shechem was killed together with the rest of the men of his city.

That child, the Midrash says, grew to become Osnas, the wife of Yosef HaTzaddik. In a somewhat bizarre way, baby Osnas was brought down to Egypt and adopted by Potiphar and his wife, who were childless. They raised her as their own, and when Yosef was eventually vindicated and made viceroy of Egypt, Potiphar gave Osnas to Yosef as his wife.

Nice ending to a troubling story, and maybe not the last time in Jewish history either. But that doesn't necessarily mitigate the suffering Dinah underwent, as well as her whole family. We see in the Torah how disturbed everyone was by the gross violation of Jewish sanctity, some enough to take revenge against the entire town.

It all goes back to a single, simple question that Avraham Avinu asked back in *Parashas Lech Lecha*. After God promised him and his descendants *Eretz Yisroel*, he asked God, “*Be-mah aida irashenah—how can I know that I will inherit it?*” (*Bereishis* 15:8). Hadn't God just told him that he would?

The Gemora explains the question to mean, “Fine, so I'll inherit it. But how can I know that my descendants will also keep the land, especially if they sin?” (*Megillah* 29b). God answered him, “Because they will atone for their sins with sacrifices.” Avraham countered, “That's fine when there is a temple, but what about after it is destroyed?” to which God answered, “Saying the sacrifices will be in place of that.”

That's all in the Gemora. The Torah itself takes a different path. God's response to Avraham was the *Bris Ben HaBesarim* and a prophecy of four hundred years of exile, a good part of it spent in oppression. Through suffering and difficulty, Avraham and his descendants are supposed to know that they will continue to inherit the land.

At this late stage of history, there is no denying the accuracy of that prophecy. We have been suffering as a people for millennia, and we are once again living on our land, thank God. What might be a question is, why suffering, and why didn't Avraham ask God the same question?

At the risk of oversimplifying the answer, we experience something similar in everyday life. How do you feel when you get

something of value for free from someone who doesn't have reason to give it to you for free? Don't people wonder right away, "What's the catch? Is it fake? Stolen? Something else not in my best interest?"

As much as we may not like to spend money, paying for something we value is somewhat reassuring. It validates the sale and makes us feel confident that we're getting what we want. "There are no free lunches" didn't become an expression for no reason.

That was God's answer to Avraham. "If I didn't care about you inheriting the land, or any other good I have promised you," He told him, "then I wouldn't take the time to make you worthy of any of it. You and your descendants are going to experience hardship, some of it making sense and some of it defying your logic, but all of it will be to refine you and perfect you over time. In those who are not destined for great things, I don't invest much at all."

So, as much as Ya'akov Avinu didn't enjoy any of the downturns in his life, he understood that they are for the ultimate good of the Jewish People, if not today, then tomorrow, and if not tomorrow, then the day after, etc. That's why he didn't go along with Shimon and Levi in their plan for revenge. Instead, he worked on fitting it into his life and the development of the Jewish People.

This Wednesday is Session Two of "Enlightened: The True Light of the Holiday of Light," b"H. Go here to register: <https://www.shaarnunproductions.org/seminars.html>.

Books: Twenty-Four Days, The Light of 36, and The Equation of Life, all available through Amazon and Thirtysix.org. Podcasts: "Bridging the Gap" and "Twenty-Four Days" at Shaarnun Productions.

Good Shabbos,  
Pinchas Winston