

*Shiur L'Yom Chamishi*¹

[Thursday's Study]

READINGS: ***Torah Vayishlach:*** Genesis 33:18 - 34:31
 Haftarah: Obadiah 15-18
 B'rit Chadasha: Matthew 26:40-41

*"We can't give our sister to a man who is uncircumcised.
That would be a disgrace to us."*

[Genesis 34:14]

Today's Meditation is Psalm 59:14-17;

This Week's Featured Amidah prayer is Petition #5, *Rofei* [Healing]

Twenty years prior to the events of today's aliyah - on the eve of Ya'akov's exile from the Land of Kena'an - the Holy One appeared to the young man He had chosen to carry the torch of the Avrahamic Covenant into the future. The Creator of the Universe appeared to Ya'akov in the form of a mind-blowing dream. In the course of that dream not only did the Holy One show young Ya'akov that the Heavens and earth were much closer and more intimately connected than he had ever imagined; He also spoke prophetically over the young patriarch-in-training the following words:

*"Behold I will be with you,
and I will watch over you everywhere you go,
and I will bring you back to this land ..."*

[Genesis 28:15]

Twenty years later Ya'akov can testify that the Holy One has been faithful to perform every aspect of His Word. The three promises of Beit-El – the promises of *Divine With-ness*, of *Divine Protection*, and of *Divine Guidance* – have indeed become Ya'akov's life story. He now has more than promises – he has proof. He has more than a reason for hope – he has a testimony.

The Holy One has indeed *been with* Ya'akov all through the dark years. He has indeed protected Ya'akov in the course of every one of the difficult encounters and dangerous passages of his life. Had the Holy One not watched over Ya'akov, Ya'akov would have been dead a long time ago. But the Holy One's angels have been all around Ya'akov. They have ascended and descended around and even upon him. Some of the angels he has seen; most, however, he never knew were there until after they had done their work and disappeared. And now, at long last,

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the Holy One has also performed the third promise of Beit-El – He has brought Ya’akov back to the land promised to Avraham and his descendants.

The Holy One has not done this for Ya’akov’s sake. He has done it for the sake of the Covenant He made long ago with Avraham. That Covenant has been proven 100% real, and its promises 100% true.

To the casual observer it might just look like Ya’akov/Yisrael is the epitome of a *survivor*. After all, in his most vulnerable days he somehow survived 9 months of warfare with his twin brother in Rivkah’s womb. He was then subjected to and survived without harm repeated anti-Semitic attacks and harassment by the *Ph’lishtim* [Philistines] during his youth. He then survived 20 years of exile, hard labor, and immersion in an idolatrous culture, in Charan. He survived 10 days of stalking and a dramatic attack by Laban and his sons on the hills of Gilead.

After that Ya’akov survived - albeit with a limp - an all-night no-holds-barred wrestling match with a Divine Wrestler. And most recently, as we read in yesterday’s aliyah, Yisrael/Ya’akov has survived potential extinction at the hands of Esav and a 400-man army. Esav the once-angry assassin has wept, hugged and kissed Yisrael/Ya’akov, accepted his gifts though he had no need of them, and gone back to his home in Seir in peace.

Wherein you may ask lies the secret to Ya’akov’s ability to overcome obstacles and adversity?

The Secret of Overcoming

Ya’akov/Yisrael is more than a survivor – he is an *overcomer*. And I have some news for you - if you are engrafted into the covenant the Holy One made with Ya’akov/Yisrael’s grandfather Avraham, *you are called and empowered to be an overcomer, too!* Do not misunderstand me. The *overcomer characteristic* is not inbred or inherited. Neither is it the product of mental or physical toughness. Its source cannot be found in *training* or *discipline* or *doctrine* or *creed*. Despite what the “Rocky” film series would have you to believe, it has nothing whatever to do with the ‘*Eye of the Tiger*’.

So from whence does the *overcomer characteristic* come? What exactly is our *secret of overcoming*? Our capacity for overcoming obstacles and adversity – all the way through Holocaust - is bestowed upon us as a *part of the covenant*. Yisrael/Ya’akov’s ultimate overcoming of his genetic and learned flaws, his environmental constraints, dramatic interpersonal conflicts, as well as the ordinary obstacles and adversities of life – and our doing the same – is through the sheer

force of the Will of, and pursuant to the strong right Hand of, the Holy One, the stronger partner [i.e. the *suzerein*] in the covenant Avraham cut *on all our behalves* in Genesis 15 and 17.

For us not to overcome, you see, would mean that the His covenant the Holy One made with Avraham, with Yitzchak and with Ya'akov has not been fulfilled. And that cannot – is not ever going to – happen.

Let the world prattle on all it wants about its beloved so-called scientific principle of 'survival of the *fittest*'. We know that is foolishness. The applicable principle always has never been the 'survival of the fittest'; it has always been - and always will be - the '*overcoming lifestyle of the chosen*'.

You, like our ancestor Ya'akov, have been *chosen* to perpetuate the Covenant. You were *birthed from* and are *destined for* eternity. No matter what happens, therefore, *you will not only survive but overcome*. No matter what traumas you or I experience, what rejections you or I endure, what persecutions you or I suffer, what wounds you or I receive, and even what havoc you or I wreak upon ourselves or [Heaven forbid] others through our own sin, we will emerge as *more than conquerors*. The Holy One will always pick up the tattered fragments of our lives, toss them into His Divine Stew-pot of destiny, stir with love, add just the right spices from His Heavenly Pantry of forgiveness and healing and restoration, and somehow turn even the foulest of ingredients into a sweet-smelling, life giving broth with which He will feed the world. That is *the outworking of the Covenant*. It is what Romans 8:28 – 39 is all about.

A Word of Caution

I suppose I should warn you however that as wonderful as this principle of Covenant life is, it is definitely not without its controversy. The fact is that you will inevitably cross paths in this life with some who lack intimate personal experience and history with Divine Covenant, and who will, not knowing any better, choose to become highly offended at this 'overcoming of the chosen' truth – and with you.

Some – especially those who have come to trust in humanistic things like logic and reason and human ingenuity and effort and human approaches of psychology, sociology and organized religion – will mistake the confidence you as a son or daughter of the Covenant acquire over time in the inevitability of the '*overcoming capacity of the chosen*' principle as *arrogance*. Such people will always misinterpret the unshakeable inner peace which you as a son or daughter of the Covenant radiate as an *attitude of superiority*.

But it is not a matter of arrogance, nor is it by any means a matter of *superiority*. It is simply the understanding that *as to whom much is given, much is required*. We are not, you see, chosen by the Holy One and engrafted into His Covenant with Avraham, Yitzchak, and Ya'akov because we did – or could ever do - anything to deserve it. We are in no regards better than other people. We are simply the humblest of pawns with which He has chosen to lead in the great Chess game of history.

We live for Him and His glory, not for ourselves and ours. Our lives are therefore His to do with as He wills, for His glory. That means we neither *fear their wrath* nor *crave their acceptance*. And that is to them the most offensive thing of all. We do not, therefore, live for a creed or a cause. We do not put our trust in any doctrine or set of doctrines we can conceive with our human minds. We do not live to justify any theology. We do not live to prove the superiority of the ideology, culture, or philosophy of our nation, tribe, or clan. We do not even base our actions on human concepts of fairness, goodness, or morality.

We realize our God is bigger than those things and that our destiny and purpose in life lie light years beyond them. We therefore live by the Words of His Covenant. And it is *those Words* that empower – indeed compel - us to be overcomers. The Words of the Holy One carry all the necessary power for fulfillment in seed form. All we have to do is provide a garden of suitable soil. What does that mean? That means we will not live like the majority of people in the world live. We will not eat what they eat. We will not demean ourselves with their perversions. We will not swoon over what makes them swoon or lust after what makes them lust. We will not want what they want or prioritize what they prioritize. We will not love what they love or hate what they hate. We will not be offended or wounded by what offends or wounds them. We will not be seduced by what seduces them, be deceived by what deceives them, or be outraged by what outrages them. Nor will we ever tremble – much less cower - before that which intimidates them.

Those spiritual realities will not make us particularly easy for the world to love. But that is perfectly okay. It really does not matter if the world loves *us* – what matters is that they are brought face-to-Face with our Stronger Covenant Partner, and get a chance to deal with Him and be dealt with by Him as He wills.

One Last Stop Before Making Aliyah

Remember that after meeting Esav Ya'akov/Yisrael had wisely struck out in the other direction from Seir and Edom. He had the discernment to know that there could be no peaceful coexistence with one so radically different from himself in values and priorities, whose destiny was so at odds with his own. And then

Ya'akov made sojourn of unspecified duration in a mysterious place near the border of the Land of Promise. As Torah describes it:

v'yiven lo bayit

And he built himself a house,

ul'miknehu asah sukot

and made shelters for his livestock.

al-ken kara shem ha-makom Sukot

He therefore named the place Sukkot (Shelters/Tabernacles).

[Genesis 33:17]

The exact ***makom*** [place] Ya'akov called 'Sukkot' is unknown, although it is believed to have been a few miles East of the Yarden River, in the territory of the nation that is now called *the Hashemite² Kingdom of Jordan*. The sages of Israel say it was just a place along the road, near the Yabbok crossing, where the Holy One healed Ya'akov/Yisrael from the wounds he sustained when struck in the ***yarech*** [soft, tender area] by the mystery wrestler who blessed him and changed his name.

We are not told how long Yisrael/Ya'akov and his family stayed in the place called Sukkot. The point is that it was only a temporary stopping-off place. Yisrael/Ya'akov's destiny lies, as does ours, on *the other side of the Yarden*. And thus, every place other than the place of our destiny – every place of exile or sojourn – can for a child of Yisrael/Ya'akov rightly be called 'Sukkot'.

Aliyah at Last!

Since the Holy One has been so faithful to His prophetic words/promises to Yisrael/Ya'akov thus far, it should come as no surprise to Yisrael/Ya'akov, or to us, that the Holy One will 'make good' on the final aspect of His prophetic message – by bringing Yisrael/Ya'akov in *shalom* back into the land He promised to give to the descendants of Avraham and the descendants of Yitzchak. Let us at least pause a moment and consider the joy that came to Ya'akov as he crossed the Yarden, and walked again – for the first time in over 20 years – on the *sacred soil* of Eretz Yisrael. With this crossing Yisrael/Ya'akov will finally be able to begin the process of retracing not only his grandfather Avraham's steps, but also reliving *his ancestor's God-encounters*, and thereby making them his own.

Today, persons on airplanes flying into Israel still shout and clap hands in glee as they catch their first glimpse of the holy soil. Many still fall on their faces on the

² 'Hashemite' refers to the founder of an Arabian dynasty, *Hashim Ibn Abd al-Minaf*, believed to have been Mohammed's great-grandfather. In Arabic, Hashim means 'pulverizer'.

tarmac of Ben Gurion airport and kiss the ground. There is, you see, something that elicits *simchah rav* [great joy] and a sense of imminent fulfillment of destiny about every entry into this land the Holy One has blessed.

And so Yisrael/Ya'akov *avinu* is entitled, I believe, upon crossing the Yarden, to kick up his heels - like *a calf released from the stall*. May we all one day soon know the joy and fulfillment of making *aliyah*!

The Thin Line Between Faith And Presumptuousness

Before the Holy One had promised Yisrael Divine Accompaniment and Divine Protection He gave him one other prophetic word – He told him that the land of Kena'an, where he was born and raised, would be given to him and to his descendants forever. And now, having miraculously survived so many life- and destiny-threatening situations, and having crossed the Yarden [Jordan River] back into Kena'an once again after a 22 year absence, Yisrael/Ya'akov was – he thought – ready to 'cash in' on the Holy One's promise.

Not so fast Yisrael/Ya'akov. The Holy One has a *timetable*, and it cannot be rushed. There is a very, very thin line, sometimes, between 'faith' and 'presumptuousness'. It all boils down to this, you see: ***Who is running this 'show' – is the Holy One? Or are you?*** We will see.

First Stop: Shechem

The first place Ya'akov sojourned in Eretz Kena'an was *Shechem*³. This ancient city of the Kena'ani is located 34 miles (54 km) north of Jerusalem and 7 miles (10.5 km) southeast of Samaria. It would eventually become part of the tribal allotment of Menashe, near present-day Nablus. As you will recall, Shechem was the first place Avraham [then still known as *Avram*] set up camp upon arrival in Eretz Kena'an. **Genesis 12:6**. Yisrael/Ya'akov has begun the process of retracing his grandfather's steps. As we will find out today, it will not be either an easy or a painless task.

Shechem is also the place between Mount Ebal and Mount Gerizim where Y'hoshua would, centuries later, bury the bones of Yosef. **Joshua 24:32**. It is also the place where Messiah Y'shua would encounter and converse with the 'woman at the well'. **John 4**.

Torah tells us that Ya'akov arrived "***shalem***" [in peace, with wholeness, security, and

³ *Shechem* is *shin, chet, mem sofit*, Strong's Hebrew word #7927, pronounced *shek-em'*. Strong's translates this word as **back** or **shoulder**.

fully restored] at Shechem. Here is how Torah records the event:

V'yavo Ya'akov shalem ir Shchem asher b'erezt Kena'an
Ya'akov entered the boundaries of Kena'an safely in the vicinity of Shechem,

B'vo'o miPadan Aram
having come from Padan Aram

v'yichan et-penei ha-ir
He set up camp in view of the city.

Ya'akov/Yisrael has been empowered to overcome. He is a new creation. He naturally thinks therefore that he is ready to shine and be an atmosphere-changer. He thinks he is ready to live out the Holy One's righteousness *in full view of the people of the land*.

Notice how Ya'akov/Yisrael dealt with the pagans of Shechem. He did not *attack* them. But he also did not *join* them. He did not *hide from* them. He *came in peace* – and made his presence known. Everything he and his sons did was '*in view of the city*'. That kind of life – *in view of* but not *part of* the pagan culture - is *challenging* to say the least. The fainthearted need not apply.

An Instance of Impulse Buying?

Ya'akov/Yisrael does not wait for the Holy One to give him and his descendants the land. He decides to acquire by purchase – with money - a part of that which is – or will one day, in the Holy One's timing, be – his by PROMISE. He chose a field – perhaps the field where Avram had dwelt under the oaks of Moreh, and built an altar to the Holy One [see Genesis 12], and negotiated its purchase.

The Holy One *did not intervene*. Ya'akov was **a steward** of all the Holy One had given him. He could spend the money and property he had acquired *as he wished*. And if he wanted to spend it on something that the Holy One was going to give him anyway – well, that might not be wise, but that was his business. He would learn to live by the **sh'ma** principle – doing only what the Holy One directed him to do, instead of 'impulse shopping' – soon enough.

Here is how Torah describes Ya'akov's purchase of a field near Shechem.

V'yiken et-chelkat ha-sadeh asher natah-sham aholo
And he bought the piece of open land upon which he set up his tent

m'yad b'nei-Chamor avi Sh'chem b'me'ah ksitah
from the sons of Chamor, chief of Shechem for 100 ksitahs.

100 ksitahs . . . for what?

If you will note, every piece of ground in Israel which the patriarchs purchased – the cave of Machpelah at Chevron, the field of Ya’akov at Shechem/Nablus, and the threshing floor of Onan [Temple Mount, Jerusalem] - has been destined to be the source of horrible fighting, bloodshed, and grief for our people.

Perhaps we should have *kept our money*. Perhaps we should have let the Holy One give us that which He promised in His own way, in His own time. By trying to acquire the land on our own, perhaps we unknowingly gave the sellers a colorable right of redemption – a claim of right to reclaim the land – which would not have been theirs had title been taken from the Holy One instead of the Kena’ani.

Yisrael’s First Mizbe’ach Experience

Ya’akov’s first recorded act on the land he purchased from the sons of Chamor near Shechem is to build an altar [Hebrew, *mizbeach*] there. Torah tells us:

V’yatzev-sham mizbeach

And he erected an altar there,

vayikra-lo El Elohei Yisra'el

and named it God-is-Israel's-Lord

The word our English Bibles translate as *altar* in this verse is *mizbeach*⁴. A *mizbeach* is *not just any altar*. Pagan peoples build altars wherever they go. But they do not build *mizbeachs*. A *mizbeach*, you see, is a place of intimate communion with the Holy One, through union with Messiah. It is not a place of animal sacrifice after the manner of pagans, intended to ‘buy off’ the gods, and keep them from interfering in pagan lives. There is a vast difference between a pagan altar and a *mizbeach*.

The verb root of the Hebrew word *mizbeach* is *zabach*⁵. The Hebrew spelling of this word - *zayin, beit, chet* - explains its true meaning. The *zayin* is the Hebraic symbol of *a sword or threshing implement* – particularly referencing the flaming sword brandished by the angel assigned by the Holy One to guard the pathway to the tree of life⁶. The *beit* is a Hebraic symbol of a house, or household. The *chet* is the Hebraic symbol of the *chuppah* [bridal canopy] of Messiah. Adding a *mem* [the Hebrew consonant which makes the *m* sound, and which pictures a flowing wave of water] to this verb places it into continual, flowing motion.

⁴ *Mizbeach* is *mem, zayin, beit, chet*. Strong’s Hebrew word #4196, it is pronounced *miz-bay’-akh*.

⁵ *Zabach* is *zayin, beit, chet*. It is Strong’s Hebrew word #2076, pronounced *zaw-bakh’*.

⁶ See Genesis 3:24

A *mizbeach*, therefore, is a place where the household of the Holy One desiring to partake of the fruit of the tree of life repeatedly submits to the flaming sword, dies symbolically [through a surrogate] and through the blood spilled in connection with that surrogate's death passes into the *chuppah* of Messiah. At that *chuppah*, of course, the fruit of the tree of life is the main course, made freely available to all.

The *mizbeach* Ya'akov built at Shechem is not the first *mizbeach* ever built by man, of course. Noach built one immediately after exiting the Teivah [Ark]. **Genesis 8:20**. Avram, as we have previously discussed, built one in this same location, two generations previously, immediately upon entering Eretz Yisrael. **Genesis 12:7**. Avram had also built a *mizbeach* at Hebron [Genesis 13:18] and Moriyah⁷. **Genesis 22:9**. Ya'akov's father Yitzchak had built a *mizbeach* at Be'er-sheva. **Genesis 26:25**. But this was Ya'akov's first *mizbeach*⁸.

Ya'akov had of course previously set up a single stone, at *Beit-El* - the location where he had his first God-encounter⁹. He had, when he set up that stone, promised to return to that spot one day and build 'the house of the Holy One' on the site. That was to be one of the essential aspects of the covenant. It is incumbent upon everyone who enters into covenant with the Holy One to build his "house", upon the rock of the revelation inherent in the *mizbeach*.

That does not mean we are each to pick a site and build a temple [or church, or synagogue]. It means we are to make our hearts, our homes, and our lives, lives characterized by free-flowing *zabach*.

A *mizbeach* is an eye-catching structure. Ya'akov did not do this deed behind closed doors. In full view of the *Chivi* [Hivites] of Shechem, Ya'akov made a *mizbeach* to the Holy One, and declared to everyone that the Holy One was – and would always be – *his God*.

Ya'akov's declaration was a powerful one. He was declaring that although he is living in proximity to the Kena'ani, and trades with them, *he is not one of them*. He was declaring he will *never* be one of them. He was making the declaration "***As for me and my house, we will serve the Holy One!***" He was establishing what was known in Eastern Europe as a *shetl* – a village within a village – a self-contained Hebraic community located physically in, but not 'of', a village of *goyim* [gentiles].

⁷ The sages teach that Moriyah and the place Ya'akov called *Beit-El* are the same place.

⁸ Ya'akov had, of course, previously set up a single stone, at Beit-El, in Genesis 28, and had promised to return to that spot and build '*the house of the Holy One*'.

⁹ See Genesis 28:10 ff.

We will soon see how firm Ya'akov is in his resolution. Just about the time Ya'akov and his family get comfortable *shtetling* alongside the Kena'anim in the area of Shechem, a major disaster strikes. Ya'akov and his family is about to see the 'other side' of Kena'ani culture at its very worst.

Ya'akov has both survived and overcome 20 years in Laban's world, a night of wrestling with an angelic being, and a confrontation with Esav and his 400-man army. Can he survive what is coming next? And if the answer to that question is yes, can he go *beyond surviving*, and actually overcome that challenge as well?

Remember, the operative principle is not survival of the *fittest*, as the world believes – it is overcoming by the *chosen*.

Do You Know Where Your Daughters Are?

Do you remember the daughter Leah bore to Ya'akov – the last of Leah's children? Her name was **Dinah**, *dalet, yod, nun, hey*, Strong's Hebrew word #1783, pronounced *dee-naw'*. Torah does not specifically tell us her age at the time of the events about which we will read in today's aliyah, but she certainly cannot have been more than ten or twelve. Chapter 34 of the book of Genesis is about her darkest moment – the day she left the safety of the *shtetl*, and drastically changed the world.

Dinah is the feminine form of the word *dan*, meaning *he judges*. What she, a mere little girl, *thought* she was going to do on the fateful day about which we read was to skip merrily out of the *shtetl* and have a fine time, as little girls do, exploring the Kena'ani side of Shechem, seeing new things, meeting new people, and maybe finding someone new and exciting to play with.

This simple, innocent act of a little girl was, however, destined to change the course of history. What she was about to do was to live out her name – she was going to bring judgment on Shechem. She was going to prove the city and its inhabitants were ripe for judgment – that its perversion was so pervasive that it could not continue to exist.

In fostering her personal tragedy, you see, Shechem was about to condemn itself, and bring about its own destruction. If this seems a little far-fetched to you, let's pause a few moments to put everything back into perspective. First of all, remember what the Holy One has been in the process of doing since Genesis 12. He is preparing to bring judgment on the Kena'ani, and cause the land they occupy – including the area around Shechem - to '*vomit*' *them out*, because of their perverse lifestyles – especially in the area of sexuality. He has warned them

repeatedly [Torah records these warnings in the form of two famines, the invasion of the kings of the north, and the awesome events surrounding the destruction of S'dom and G'morrah], has placed righteous men whose lives shone as a 'light to the goyim' in their midst [i.e. Melki-tzedek, Avraham, and Yitzchak], and has given them every opportunity to turn to Him – all to no avail.

The Holy One is now preparing, through Ya'akov, a nation who will dispossess the Kena'ani, and will live out in this most-important and visible crossroads of the ancient world - the Holy One's *righteousness* [Torah] instead of Kena'ani *perversion*. All nations will thereby see the drastic difference between the Holy One's ways and the ways of the world, and will be able to choose – life and peace, or death and destruction.

Into this Divine Plan skips an innocent but somewhat precocious little girl – a little girl named Dinah. Let's pick up the Torah account:

V'tetze Dinah bat-Leah asher yaldah l'Ya'akov
Leah's daughter Dinah, whom she had borne to Jacob.

lir'ot bivnot ha-aretz
went out to visit some of the local girls

Vayar otah Sh'chem ben-Chamor ha-Chivi nesi ha-aretz
She was seen by Shechem, son of the chief of the region, Chamor the Hivite

V'yikach otah vayishkav otah vaye'aneha
He seduced her, slept with her, and [then] raped her.

Torah does not sugarcoat it for us. There it is, *in black and white*. Stuff happens. Stuff happens even to members of the Covenant household. Stuff happens even to innocent children.

What has Shechem Done?

What did Shechem do? He just did *what perverse men do*. He saw a little girl of another nationality skipping along innocently, and something inside his soul malfunctioned and short-circuited his conscience. Was he driven to this despicable act by demons? I don't know. Was he acting out subconsciously because he himself was abused as a child? Torah does not say one way or another. I doubt we will ever know. Was he angry at the female gender because of rejections and ridicule and bullying? Your guess is as good as mine. Was he just a spoiled, arrogant, little prince who had never been held accountable for anything? Perhaps – not that it matters now.

Shechem was apparently not busy enough. He was idle and bored. He was looking for entertainment. He was looking for excitement. He let his eyes wander – and that is always a prelude to trouble. Indeed, Shechem’s first improper invasion of Dinah was with his natural eyes. She was young. She was different. She was beautiful in a way and at a level he did not see every day. She was vulnerable. She was defenseless. She was easy prey. He could take her easily if he wanted. His fallen nature insisted she was his for the taking. His culture said he should want her. His Kena’ani upbringing said he should do whatever he wanted her – that he deserved to have her, and she deserved any pain or humiliation his pleasure-taking might inflict upon her. But it was his decision. He could shake it off. He could walk away. He had not reached the point of no return. But then he crossed the threshold. He let his thoughts wander one step – then two, then several – beyond what his eyes could see of Dinah. As the self-centered, perverse side of his imagination ran rampant he let his fleshly desires, curiosity, and appetite for a momentary thrill ravage Dinah in places and ways no little girl should be touched. And then the dark energy of lust consumed Shechem completely. His feet and hands, his capacities for speech, and all his other members rushed in to gratify his curiosity and indulge his ravenous appetite. He surrendered completely to the basest desires and perversions of a fallen man’s heart. Alas, the heart is deceitful above all things, Dear Reader.

I imagine Shechem initially disguising his intentions toward Dinah by putting on a pleasant mask of friendliness and genuine interest. I suspect he seduced this little girl who was of most 12 years old (and she was probably significantly younger) rather easily. She was, after all, innocent and unsuspecting. She was the perfect prey.

Once Shechem got the helpless little girl alone he forced himself on her in the most despicable ways imaginable. Giving in totally to wonder lust and to blood lust as much as sexual lust he proceeded to inflict wave after wave of horrible pain, terror, and shame on a precious covenant daughter of the Most High. He used her as an inanimate object. He robbed her of the most elemental aspect of her humanity – her free will. He polluted her soul with his uncleanness. He violated not only her body and soul but her identity. She had not been put on the earth for this. She had a unique purpose and mission and destiny. He totally disregarded – indeed never even considered – any of these. He treated the little girl who caught his eye not as some fellow man’s precious daughter, the apple of her father’s and mother’s and kinsman’s eye, but as a piece of meat. In so doing Shechem committed not only a crime but an act of war. He declared war on Dinah, on her father and mother, on each of her brothers, and most importantly, on the Holy One. Shechem thereby *sealed his own fate*. The only questions left to be answered after Shechem took Dinah for a conquest and ravaged her to his heart’s delight were [1] *from what*

source his judgment would come, and [2] who all would share in it.

What Did You Think Would Be the Fruit of This, Shechem?

Would Shechem's judgment come *from his own father and his own people*, who had the chance to prosecute and punish him as a kidnapper, rapist and child molester? No, his father sought to perpetuate and legitimate his son's abuse of Dinah by arranging to call their forced union a 'marriage'. The people of Shechem apparently saw nothing wrong with what Shechem did. They wanted only to acquire little Hebrew girls of their own with whom to do the same thing – as well as to acquire all Ya'akov's possessions. As Chamor told the men of Shechem who came to the gate of the city to discuss how to handle the situation:

*These men are friendly toward us,' they said.
'They live on the land and support themselves profitably from it.
The land has more than ample room for them.
We will marry their daughters, and give them ours.*

* * *

***Won't their livestock, their possessions, and all their animals
eventually be ours?***

Just let us agree to their condition and live with them.'

Note that not one of the men of Shechem *voiced a protest*. Not one of them noted or pointed out *the absurdity of it all*. Not one Shechemite considered it in the least unnatural that a man would surrender his daughter willingly to a known rapist. No, Dear Reader, the people of Shechem do not do any of these things. They chose to see no evil, hear no evil, and speak no evil. They chose to *embrace* evil in their bosoms. And so, predictably, they bought into the plan to acquire *girls and goods* from the father and brothers of the rape victim hook, line and sinker.

In so doing they *earned for themselves the right to share in the judgment which Shechem deserves*. They all became *co-conspirators* and *accomplices after the fact*. How, I wonder, did they think this was going to turn out?

Meet the Prototypical Vigilante Vengeance-Takers Among Us!

This will not, however, be another S'dom and G'morrah judgment from on High. There will be no lengthy outcry. There will be no patient modeling of righteous ways. There will be no opportunity given to make *t'shuvah* and restitution. There will be no intercession for the righteous. There will be no waiting for angelic visitation. There will be no fire from Heaven. There will be no brimstone. The executioner of Shechem will come in human form, in the name of the 'avenger of blood'. He is a most unworthy, unholy, indiscriminating judge, jury, and executioner all wrapped up in one. He is self-righteous and hypocritical. He is an idol-worshipper, because he idolizes and choseth the blood lust of human

vengeance. He is a rebel, choosing the ways of the human mind and the desires of human flesh over the spiritual ways and the will of the Holy One. Beware the vengeance-preacher and the vengeance-taker. Both are every bit as polluted and perverted by the powers of darkness as Shechem was.

In this case the vengeance-takers will, to our shame, come from the Covenant household. Sh'mon and Levi – full-blood brothers of Dinah along with Reuven, Yehudah will concoct a plan to *take the vengeance that belongs only to the Holy One into their own hands*. They will put on the dark garb of vigilantes. Here is how Torah records their actions:

V'yehi v'yom ha-sh'lishi biheyotam ko'avim

On the third day, when [the people] were in agony,

vayikchu shnei-v'nei Ya'akov Shimon v'Levi achei Dinah

two of Ya'akov's sons, Sh'mon and Levi, Dinah's brothers,

ish charbo v'yavo'u al ha-ir

took up their swords and they went to the city

b'tach vayahargu kol-zachar

without arousing suspicion, and they killed every male.

V'et Chamor v'et Sh'chem beno hargu lefi-charev

They also killed Chamor and his son Shechem by the sword,

vayikchu et-Dinah mibeyt Sh'chem vayetze'u

and took Dinah from Shechem's house. Then they left.

B'nei Ya'akov ba'u al ha-chalalim

Ya'akov's sons came upon the dead,

v'yavozu ha-ir asher time'u ahotam

and plundered the city that had defiled their sister.

* * *

Vayomeru ha-chezonah ya'aseh et-achotenu

And they said: 'Should he have been allowed to treat our sister like a prostitute?'

Ya'akov was now eating of the fruit of the tree of life. Though wounded deeply on a personal level, he had grown enough that he wanted to talk about things like forgiveness, conflict resolution, appropriate boundaries of future interaction, and finding a way to make some good come out of a situation that had happened and thus could not be undone.

Ya'akov's sons on the other hand had eaten the fruit of *the tree of the knowledge of good and evil*. All they wanted to talk about was the 'evil' they had seen with their

eyes. And all they wanted to do was make that as many people as possible in the town of Shechem died on account of it.

So ... which side of the discussion would you have been on?

Shechem in Our Rearview Mirror

Thus ended the brief, tragic, sojourn of Yisrael/Ya'akov in the area of Shechem. Our beloved patriarch must now abandon the tract of land he has purchased, leave behind the *mizbeach* he has built, and flee for his life for a third time.

Next time will he and his sons will do it the Holy One's way? Will we? *Next time* will the sons of Yisrael/Ya'akov ***sh'ma*** the Holy One and do as the Holy One directs rather than acting presumptuously? Will you and I? And *next time* maybe – just maybe - will the testimony of the Way of the Holy One our Divine Bridegroom in Heaven has entrusted to the sons and daughters of the Covenant stand against the storm and inspire the world instead of burning up like so much wood, hay, and stubble in an inferno of self-righteous judgment fueled by hatred and offense? That, Dear Reader, is up to us.

Questions Concerning Today's Study

1. Let's begin our study with a few basic questions:

[A] Get out your Bible Atlas and look up the location of the land which today's *psukim* say was purchased by Ya'akov. Who occupies that land now?

[B] As stated in the opening sentence above, our fathers are recorded as purchasing three parcels of ground in Eretz Yisrael. Can you recall what other two parcels were purchased, who purchased them, and what the price was?

[C] What was the first thing Ya'akov did when he purchased this parcel of land?

[D] In Strong's, look up the word translated "altar" in the last verse of chapter 33. Write the Hebrew word and its meaning.

[E] What did Ya'akov call the altar? Was this idolatry? Did this constitute taking the Holy One's name 'in vain'? Did it constitute the setting up of a 'graven image'?

[F] Look back at Ya'akov's 'vow' taken at Bayit-El [Bethel] - Genesis 28:20-21. What conditions did Ya'akov put on his vow (what did the Holy One have to do to make the vow operate)? What did Ya'akov promise to do if the Holy One did all these things?

[G] Compare the Hebrew word translated "in peace" in 28:21 with the Hebrew word translated "to Shalem" [KJV] in 33:18. Write the Hebrew words and their meaning.

[H] Looking solely at verse 1 of chapter 34, what mistake of Ya'akov, Dinah and Ya'akov's son led to Dinah's abduction by Shechem? Explain. What do you think are appropriate guiding principles for interactions with nonbelieving persons on 'their turf'?

[I] How old do you think Dinah was at the time of these events? [Hint: Ya'akov spent 20 years working for Laban, and Jewish historians say he spent 18 months in Sukkot. Dinah was born sometime while Ya'akov was working for Laban - and was not one of the oldest].

[J] What did Ya'akov's sons do wrong in handling the situation?

[K] Which sons of Ya'akov did the killing? Were their actions justified? How would you have suggested they handle the situation?

[L] Which sons of Ya'akov did the plundering? For this were they praised or reprimanded? How would you have suggested they handle the situation created by the brothers who did the killing?

[M] Ya'akov came to Shechem 'intact' or 'whole', 'complete', 'secure' and 'at peace'. How did he leave?

2. In today's reading from the Haftarah we see the Holy One, through the prophet **Ovadi-yah**, expound on what awaits Israel's enemies on **Yom Adonai** - the "Day of the Holy One".

Ki-karov yom Adonai al-kol ha-goyim

For the day of the Holy One is near upon all the nations.

ka'asher asita ye'aseh lach

As you have done, so it will be done to you;

gemulcha yashuv b'roshecha

your deeds will return on your own head.

Ki ka'asher shtitem al-har kodshi

For as you have drunk upon My holy mountain,

yishtu chol ha-goyim tamid

so all the nations will drink continually;

v'shatu vela'u

indeed, they will drink, and swallow down,

v'hayu k'lo hayu

and will be as though they had not been.

Uv'har Tziyon tihyeh fleytah

But upon Mount Zion there will be those who escape,

V'hayah kodesh

and it will be holy

v'yarshu beyt Ya'akov et morasheyhem
and the house of Ya'akov will possess their own inheritance.

V'hayah veyt Ya'akov esh uveyt Yosef lehavah
The house of Ya'akov will be a fire, and the house of Yosef of flame,

uveyt Esav lekash
and the house of Esau stubble.

v'dalku vahem va'achalum
They will set them ablaze, and consume them;

v'lo-yihyeh sarid l'veyt Esav ki Adonai diber
there will be no survivor of the house of Esau, for the Holy One has spoken.

[A] What does Ovadiyah say about the timing of the Day of the Holy One?

[B] What principles will the Holy One use in judging the nations?

[C] In Strongs' look up the word translated as "heathen" in verse 15 [KJV].
Write the Hebrew word and its meaning.

[D] What two things does the prophet say will happen on Mount Tzion in the Day of the Holy One?

[E] What two things does the prophet say the 'house of Ya'akov' will do on the Day of the Holy One?

[F] What three things does the prophet say will happen to the 'house of Esav' on the day of the Holy One?

3. In today's reading from the Apostolic account of Mattityahu we find Y'shua returning to His *talmidim* on His Dark Night of the Soul to find them sleeping.

He came to the talmidim, and found them sleeping, and He said to Rock [Kefa],

"What, couldn't you watch with me for one hour?

Watch and pray, that you don't enter into temptation.

The spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak."

[Matthew 26:40-41]

[A] To which of the sleeping disciples does Y'shua speak?

[B] What did Y'shua say was the reason He wanted the *talmidim* to 'watch' and 'pray'? Review your notes from Tuesday regarding those words.

*May we know the mizbeach of the Holy One,
And eat freely from the tree of life at the wedding banquet of Messiah.*

The Rabbi's son

Meditation for Today's Study

Psalm 59:14-17

At evening let them return.

Let them howl like a dog, and go around the city.

They shall wander up and down for food,

And wait all night if they aren't satisfied.

But I will sing of your strength.

*Yes, I will sing aloud of your lovingkindness [Hebrew, **chesed**]*

in the morning.

For you have been my high tower,

A refuge in the day of my distress.

To you, my strength, I will sing praises.

*For God is my high tower¹⁰, the God of my mercy [Hebrew, **chesed**]¹¹*

¹⁰ The Hebrew word our English Bibles translate has 'high tower' here [KJV, defense], is **misgav**, *mem, shin, gimel, beit*, Strong's Hebrew word #4869, pronounced *mis-gawb'*. The verb root of this word is **sagab**, *shin, gimel, beit*, Strong's Hebrew word #7682, pronounced *saw-gawb'*.

¹¹ The Hebrew word our English Bibles translate as 'mercy' here is **chesed**, *chet, samech, dalet*, Strong's Hebrew word #2617, pronounced *kheh'-sed*.