ISSUE #62

י"ג כסלו תשפ"ה 14/12/24



פרשת וישלח

ויּאמֶר יַעֲקֹב אֶל שִׁמְעוֹן וְאֶל לֵוִי עֲכַרְתֶּם אֹתִי לְהַבְאִישֵׁנִי בְּיֹשֵׁב הָאָרֶץ בַּכְּנַעֲנִי וּבַפְּרִזִּי, וַאֲנִי מְתֵי מִסְפָּר, וְנֶאֶסְפּוּ עַלַי וְהִכּוּנִי וְנִשְׁמַדְתִּי אֲנִי וּבֵיתִי. וַיּאמְרוּ הַכְזוֹנָה יַעֲשֶׂה אֶת אֲחוֹתֵנוּ. (בראשית לד, ל-לא)

And Yakov said to Shimon and Levi, "You have discomposed me, making me odious among the inhabitants of the land, among the Canaanite and among the Perizzite; I am few in number and should they band together and attack me, I will be annihilated — I and my household." And they said, "Should he treat our sister like a harlot?" (Bereishis 34:30-31)

In this week's *Sidrah* we learn about the abduction of Dinah by Chamor, and how her brothers deceived the people of Shechem in order to rescue their sister. When the people of Shechem were vulnerable and weak, Shimon and Levi took matters into their own hands and executed a death sentence on all the males in the city. When Yakov learned about the decimation of Shechem, he admonished Shimon and Levi for their rash actions that not only brought embarrassment and disgrace but also placed the entire family in grave danger, as they were few in number compared to the surrounding nations. In response, Shimon and Levi insisted that there was a larger issue at stake that could not be ignored, no matter what the consequences: "Should he treat our sister like a harlot?"

The Torah does not provide a response from Yakov, leaving the question open with valid points on both sides. How could the *shevatim* have ignored such a terrible assault on their sister? Yet, how could they have committed such a massacre, placing the entire family in grave danger? This predicament reflects a challenge that Klal Yisroel faces throughout the generations: Should one protest or take action against acts of immorality and injustice, or should one fear the serious repercussions of retaliation? What response is the most beneficial and effective?

The Rosh Yeshiva *shlita* resolves this critical dilemma by referencing the Malbim later in the *Sidrah*. The Torah narrates that after the incident involving Dinah, Hashem instructed Yakov to return to Beis-El and build a *mizbeach*. Yakov then instructed his family and household to remove all the idols they had taken from the spoils of Shechem, cleanse themselves, and change their clothes. They were to prepare to go to Beis-El to construct the *mizbeach* and serve Hashem. The *shevatim* followed this directive by removing all the idols and burying them. The *possuk* states, וַּיָּסְעוּ וַיְהִי חָתַּת אֱלֹקִים עַל , *They set out, and a G-dly terror fell upon the cities surrounding them, so they did not pursue the sons of Yakov*.

The Malbim explains that there is a direct connection between the preparations made by the *shevatim* and the fear that gripped the surrounding cities, which ultimately saved them. The fear of Hashem displayed by the *shevatim* extended to these nearby areas, creating a divine fear that discouraged harming them. Through their efforts to purify and improve themselves, and by showing reverence for Hashem, the nations around the *shevatim* also came to revere them.

This is the most effective way to respond to difficulties caused by those around us. By strengthening ourselves in Torah and cultivating a fear of Hashem, we create a Heavenly force that protects and safeguards us from harm. Yakov believed that preventing such terrible crimes isn't about waging a physical war against the perpetrators. Instead, we should fortify ourselves by fulfilling Hashem's will, which will strengthen us against any potential troubles and allow us to live in peace with those around us.

This concept can be further illustrated by an incredible story recounted by R' Leib zatzal. The Shaagas Aryeh was once travelling by wagon and approached a region notorious for its dangers, frequented by murderers and thieves. The wagon driver hesitated to proceed along that route, but the Shaagas Aryeh instructed him to continue without fear, as he would sit beside him wearing his tallis and tefillin. As they journeyed, the Shaagas Aryeh sat next to the driver, bedecked in his tallis and tefillin, and to the driver's amazement, they passed through the treacherous area without incident. Upon reaching the end of their journey, the Shaagas Aryeh explained to his astonished driver that their protection was based on a teaching from the Gemara (Berachos 6a). The Gemara cites the possuk (Devorim 28:10): אָרָאוּ כָּל עַמֵּי הָאֶרֶץ כִּי שַׁם ה' נִקְּרָא עַלֶּיךְ, וְיָרָאוּ מִמֶּרָ , וְיָרָאוּ מִמֶּרָ , וְיָרָאוּ מִמֶּרָ , וְיָרָאוּ מִמֶּרָ , וֹשָׁם ה' נִקְרָא עַלֶּיךְ, וְיָרָאוּ מִמֶּרָ , וֹשְׁם ה' נִקְרָא עַלֶּיךְ, וְיָרָאוּ מִמֶּרָ , וֹשׁם ה' נִקְרָא עַלֶּיךְ, וְיָרָאוּ מִמֶּרָ , וֹשִׁם ה' נִקְרָא עַלֶּיךְ, וְיָרָאוּ מִמֶּרָ , וֹשׁם ה' נִקְרָא עַלִיךְ, וְיַרָאוּ מִמֶּרָ , וֹשִׁם ה' called upon you, and they will fear you, and explains that this refers to the tefillin worn on one's head.

Knowing this new secret method of protection, the wagon driver no longer feared the route, believing he could safeguard himself in the same manner. As he approached the perilous section of the journey, he calmly donned his tallis and tefillin and proceeded on his way. Soon after, he was confronted by a dangerous gang of robbers who badly beat him, and he barely escaped with his life. When he next met the Shaagas Aryeh, he complained about why the advice he received had not worked. The Shaagas Aryeh explained that one must closely examine the words of the Gemara to truly understand this divine protection. The Gemara does not state אַלוּ תְּפִילִין עֵּל הָרֹאשׁ – these are the tefillin on the head; instead, it says אַלוּ תְּפִילִין שֻׁבְּרֹאשׁ - these are the tefillin in the head. This distinction means that others will only fear a person wearing tefillin if the wearer has internalised the ideals inscribed in the parshiyos of tefillin – namely, trust and emunah in Hashem and the belief that He orchestrates all events. Only one who is truly committed to fearing Hashem will have the protection of being feared by the nations of the world.

Let us take a lesson from Yakov Avinu. Our most effective form of protection from the nations around us comes from strengthening our connection to Hashem through His Torah and *mitzvos*. When we fear Hashem, He expands that fear, leading the nations of the world to revere us and refrain from causing harm. May we strive to deepen our commitment to fearing Hashem and fulfilling His will. Through this, we will merit the ultimate *shemirah* that we so urgently need!