

Parshat Vayishlach tells us that Jacob prepared carefully for the encounter with his brother Esau. He arranged his wives and sons in a protective formation to shield them as much as possible from Esau's view. Where was Deena throughout this ordeal? The Midrash tells us Jacob hid his only daughter from Esau, lest he cast his eye upon her and seek to marry her. The Torah tells us in the ensuing section, Deena left her protective custody after Esau departed and was kidnapped, raped and tortured by Shchem, the son of Chamor the leader of the city of Shchem. Many ask, why was Jacob punished with his only daughter subjected to such a terrible experience? Some answer that it was punishment for shielding Deena from his brother. Perhaps had Esau married her, she could have influenced Esau to mend his ways and follow a lifestyle more appropriate to the son of Isaac and grandson of Abraham.

It would seem odd that Jacob should be responsible for denying his brother Esau a chance at redemption. Esau had a well-earned reputation as a morally deplorable and corrupt human being. Jacob knew only too well firsthand the sort of individual his brother was. Why should he take a risk with his own daughter, to attempt to bring Esau back? Why would he make such a sacrifice?

Abraham and Sarah were selected as a unit to forge the Covenant with Gd. Though Abraham would have a son with Hagar, Ishmael, Isaac was designated to carry on the Covenants with Gd, the covenant entered into at ברית בין הבתרים, and the Covenant entered into with ברית מילה. As it says, כי ביצחק יקרא לך זרע. Both patriarch and matriarch were descendants of Terach. Isaac and Rebecca, also the offspring of Terach, were selected to receive the covenant from Abraham and Sarah and transfer it to the next generation. Rebecca understood that the next generation would have to follow a similar path, where both husband and wife would have to be Terach's descendants and be worthy of the sacred mission they would be entrusted with. Rebecca realized that Esau's wives, local Hittite women, were unfit to be partners in transmitting the Covenant. She told Isaac that if Jacob were to marry a local Hittite woman, her purpose for living would come to an end. Her role was to transmit the Covenant together with Isaac. If Jacob married a local Hittite or Canaanite woman, he would be no more deserving than Esau to perpetuate the Covenants of Abraham. Without a son married to an appropriate wife, the transmission chain would be severed, and her entire purpose and reason

for living, to ensure the transmission of the Covenants to the next generation, would vanish. Isaac charged Jacob to obey his mother and seek his wife in the house of Laban. He was commanded to find a suitable wife with whom to inherit Abraham's mission, ברכת אברהם, and fulfill the Covenants he, Isaac, was entrusted to transfer to the next generation. Esau recognized that his current group of wives was unacceptable to his parents so he added Ishmael's daughter to them, who provided no improvement over the wives he already had. Ultimately, it was the character of the wives that facilitated the readiness and indicated the suitability of Jacob or Esau to be the next patriarch in the chain. (See Parshat Toldot above for additional discussion.)

Unlike other cases of lust once requited that led to enmity towards the former object of desire (for example Amnon and Tamar), Shchem, Deena's tormentor, becomes enchanted with her. He is so overwhelmed by her, that he offers to pay whatever dowry Jacob and his sons demand. He convinces his father and the people of his city to agree to circumcise themselves in order to marry Deena. Jacob realizes that in hindsight, he did not appreciate Deena's powers of enchantment. Perhaps her special touch would have convinced Esau to repent. Perhaps the inevitable battles between Jacob and Esau throughout the millennia could have been avoided had Esau accepted Jacob's faith then instead of delaying that fateful day prophesied in the future, ועלו מושיעים בהר ציון לשפט את הר עשו והיתה לד' המלוכה, והיה ד' למלך על כל הארץ ביום ההוא יהי-ה ד' אחד ושמו אחד.

Why did Jacob resist offering his brother a chance at repentance? Perhaps Jacob feared a repentant Esau might supplant him in the patriarchal chain. He was the one who worked so hard for all those years, studying, serving Gd, why should Esau, someone of great capabilities despite his horrible reputation, take that away from him? Better that they remain estranged and opposite so Jacob could fulfill his destiny. Why should he condemn his own daughter to a life with such a horrible individual?

Perhaps Jacob found support for this position from his own experience. Jacob contracted with Laban to work seven years to marry Rachel. The Midrash tells us on the verse ועיני לאה רכות, And Leah's eyes were teary, that Leah was afraid that

she would end up married to Esau. People said Laban has two daughters and Rebecca has two sons. The older daughter, Leah, would marry the older son, Esau. The younger daughter, Rachel, would marry the younger son, Jacob. When Laban tricked Jacob by substituting Leah for Rachel on their wedding night, we do not find Jacob rushing to divorce Leah. He realizes that she must have an important role to play in building the children of Israel. Perhaps he should have divorced her to allow her the opportunity to marry Esau and convince him to reform. Perhaps she would have been successful in moving Esau to repent, just like her daughter Deena could have. Apparently Jacob felt it was not incumbent on him to provide Esau with a path to repentance with Leah, nor was he obligated to do so with their only daughter, Deena. Perhaps the divine intention, the 'השגחת ה', thought otherwise.

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