

Parshat Vayechi Directed Dispersion

Summary by Channie Koplowitz Stein

Based on a Naaleh.com shiur by Mrs. Shira Smiles

As Yaakov senses his imminent demise, he gathers his sons around him to give them a blessing. Shimon and Levi are addressed jointly: "Accursed is their rage for it is intense... I will divide them within Jacob and disperse them among Israel." Rashi explains, Levi will travel around the country to collect priestly donations and will also be teachers of adults, while Shimon will be the itinerant teachers of young children. Rabbi Belsky asks, do we want people with anger issues to teach us? How can we attribute purity to Shimon and Levi so that they will be proper role models, asks Rabbi Grosbard. Further, what does Yaakov add by seemingly repeating "separating them within Jacob" and "dispersing them among Israel."

Yaakov originally wanted to reveal the time of redemption. Instead, says Rabbi Leff, he revealed the brothers' strengths and weaknesses so that they could use them to help bring the redemption earlier.

Rabbi Wolbe adds, Yaakov's blessing was the blessing of self-knowledge. Understand-

ing one's character traits, strengths and weaknesses, is the most significant gift one can get. If you know what your core trait is, you can measure all your actions and all other traits against that yardstick and continuously improve yourself. Additionally, everyone has a core negative trait that balances out the positive. When one knows what his triggers are, one can work to improve them. Rebbetzin Felbrand suggests, since all character traits are interconnected, working on one will affect the others. Identify what you admire most in other people, ask yourself what activities give you the greatest satisfaction and what your greatest aspiration is. (Writing your own epitaph can help you focus on what trait you want to be remembered for.)

The *Mikdash Halevi* explains that Shimon and Levi were called *achim*, comrades with a sense of responsibility for each other. It was this that was the catalyst for them taking responsibility for rescuing Dinah and it is this responsibility for the development of one's students, says Rav Belsky, that is most important for a Torah teacher. It is precisely

those who have this sense of responsibility who should be dispersed among the people to be their teachers. Zealousness and passion are related to anger notes the *Ohel Moshe*. An effective teacher is one who teaches values as well as skills with passion and love.

Shimon was placed next to Yehudah so they could learn from him self-control, as the future Monarch of all Israel, needed and exhibited proper sovereignty writes *Limudei Nison*. Rabbi Samson Raphael Hirsch explains that while the anger or passion of Shimon and Levi could indeed pose a great danger to others, it could also serve as a source of strength and pride. When the nation is flourishing, a united Shimon and Levi can indeed pose a threat to the nation. Therefore, says Yaakov, let me disperse them throughout the land. On the other hand, when they are downtrodden and in exile, let me divide them throughout the people to give them strength in their convictions and pride in their Jewishness so that their spirit would remain alive and strong throughout the difficult Diaspora.

Introduction to Eishes Chayil Part II

Based on a Naaleh.com shiur by Mrs. Shira Hochheimer

The day that Shlomo Hamelech was supposed to inaugurate the *beit hamikdash*, he overslept. It was almost the 4th hour when it would be too late to bring the morning *korbon tamid*. The Jewish people came to Shlomo's mother Batsheva to ask what to do. They did not want to offend their king but they also did not want to offend the King of kings. Batsheva went to Shlomo and rebuked him. These are the nine verses of *mussar* found at the end of Mishlei. She told him he was the king and could not act this way. He was the leader of the nation and needed to focus on doing what was right. She was his mother and it would affect poorly on her. Shlomo Hamelech listened and followed her directive. He wanted to communicate his thanks and appreciation for what it meant to have such a special mother who was willing to set him straight when he needed those direct words of

mussar. According to the Malbim this is why he launched into the poem of *Eishet Chayil*. It's meant to express appreciation of the woman's role and influence in the Jewish home. Shlomo Hamelech ends Mishlei, his book of wisdom by depicting what women can achieve.

In general, Sefer Mishlei is very direct. It tells it like it is and can seem harsh at times. *Eishet Chayil* is different. Its written as a poem. If you listen to the cadence there's a certain rhythm. Each line generally has two parts that flow one in to the other. It is written in *aleph beit* order. The *aleph beit* is very different than any other alphabet in the world. Language is normally used to communicate ideas. It doesn't have meaning in and of itself. Rather it's meant to communicate an idea. In the Hebrew language every letter of the aleph beit is imbued with power. The Midrash tells us that

Hashem looked into the Torah and created the world. The letters themselves were divinely ordained. Hashem chose them for a reason and we can find interpretation in each of them. For example, the Torah begins with a *beit* because it has three closed sides and one open side. This is meant to teach us that we should not look at what preceded creation but only what was afterwards.

The components of the letters are also divine. The Gemara in Menachot tells how Moshe wanted to understand the purpose of the crowns atop the letters of the *Torah*. Hashem placed him in the back row of the heavenly yeshiva where Rabbi Akiva was extrapolating the meaning of each of the crowns. Only because it was divine was this possible. The Ramban tells us in Bereishit that if one would move around the location of the spaces of the

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words of the Torah one would see all the names of Hashem. This teaches us that the letters and crowns of the Torah are very significant.

The Gemara Eiruvim brings a story of a man who went to visit Rabbi Yishmael. He asked him, "What do you do?" Rabbi Yishmael

answered, "I'm a scribe." He then said, "Be very careful with the work you do, because your work is the work of heaven. If you leave out one letter or you add a single letter to the Torah scroll you are writing, you will destroy the entire world." Every letter contributes to the creation of the world. This is why Shlomo Hamelech wrote *Eishes Chayil* in alphabetical

order. He wanted to tell *Klal Yisrael* that the role of the woman of valor is powerful. When she fulfills her purpose, when she acts like Batsheva did, she becomes a partner with Hashem in the creation of the world. *Eishes Chayil* is not just a poem but a moving ode that depicts the essence of why we were placed on this earth and what our mission is meant to be.

A Woman's Lifestyle Within the Home Part II

Based on a Naaleh.com shiur by Rebbetzin Tziporah Heller

A woman by nature is more insightful. She will sense her husband's internal will and know more than him what he truly desires. She'll do what he wants on the deepest level. She will understand his potential and what will give him a sense of purpose. She will bring forth what is truly in his heart. This is what is meant when it says, "Her husband's heart trusts in her." She is completely faithful to her husband. Her home is one in which there is a feeling of mutual emotional safety. Her deeds and her feelings are valued. He feels at rest when he enters the home and doesn't feel the need to conceal his feelings so as to appear perfect. He is leading the family where they need to go.

I read two articles of women who were married to their husbands for a significant amount of time. The husbands were spiritually and physically successful, but in both situations, they were addicted to the internet. In one case where the husband told the wife what he was doing, he hoped to hear, "You're my husband, let's work on this together. Let's find a 12 Step Program." But instead she expressed her revulsion. It was before the high holidays, so he was able to get himself into a better mode by doing *teshuva*. But slowly he got back into it because he was never trying to please himself, he was only trying to please her. And his perception was that she was not him, so he could give himself

a little break which ultimately engulfed him. In the other case the wife did respond in a way in which the husband recognized she and him were one person. There were tears, just as he sometimes was grieved and angry at himself at how he had ended up in this place. But the end goal was, how can we get out of this, what's really going to work for us?

We find in *halacha* that a man can annul his wife's oath if it will affect their relationship because their relationship and his need to trust her is so great. The Gemara tells a story of a woman who misunderstood something her husband said and broke two candlesticks over Bava ben Buta's head. She was following an ideal and Bava said, "If this is how you actualize an ideal, may Hashem bless you with great sons." If there's a fool in the story, it's the husband. But the woman is praised for trying to do her husband's will. She wasn't just attempting to listen to what he said but to understand what was in his heart. The husband was furious at Bava ben Buta and the wife's true intent was to appease his anger. This is what knowing his heart is. It's bringing him back to a place where his anger is no longer his self-definition.

Chazal say, "*Eishes chaver k'chaver*, a wife of a *talmid chacham* is considered like a *talmid chacham*." One must show her the same respect one shows her husband because they

are considered one person. And one could trust her when she says, "This is what my husband meant, this is what he says, this is our way," because his influence upon her is great, if she's continuously trying to give it actualization.

In the Torah there are instances where a *tzaddik* has a son who is a *rasha* or a *rasha* has a son who is a *tzaddik*. However, there are rare instances where righteous husbands had evil wives or righteous women had evil husbands. The clear rule is that the unity between husband and wife is very deep. We find cases where a woman will be so attuned to what her husband wants that she loses sight of anything else. The Gemara brings a story of a woman whose husband had a stroke and she would tie tefillin on him. In her second marriage she was married to a ruthless tax broker and she would tie his business documents.

A marital relationship is deep because the wife actualizes what her husband is. His potentials would have been sterile if not for her. It continues even in *olam haba* where they are seen as one person. Obviously, if either the wife or husband is not at the same spiritual level, they won't share the same portion. Avigayil would not have shared Naval's portion in *olam haba*. It's only when there's true unity that they become one.