

בס"ד

# THE RASHI OF THE WEEK

Week of

# Parshas Vayishlach

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Compiled from the works of  
**Rabbi Menachem Mendel Schneerson**  
**The Lubavitcher Rebbe**

by  
Rabbi Shmuel Mendelsohn  
North Miami Beach, FL

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## An Outline of the Rebbe's Explanation of Rashi Parshas Vayishlach

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### Rashi in His Own Words

**בראשית ל"ד, א':** ומצא דינה בת לאה אשר ילדה ליעקב לראות בכנות הארץ:  
**רש"י ד"ה בת לאה:** ולא בת יעקב, אלא על שם יציאתה נקראת בת לאה, שאף היא יצאנית היתה, שנאמר (ל', ט"ז)  
ותצא לאה לקראתו (ועליה משלו המשל (יחזקאל ט"ז, מ"ד) כאמה כבתה):

**Bereishis 34:1:** Dinah, the daughter of Leah, whom she had borne to Yaakov, went out to look about among the daughters of the land.

**Rashi Heading - the daughter of Leah:** And not the daughter of Yaakov? However, because of her going out she was called the daughter of Leah, since she (Leah) too was in the habit of going out, as it is said, "and Leah came forth toward him<sup>1</sup>." (And concerning her, they devise the proverb<sup>2</sup>, "Like mother like daughter.")

### Synopsis

This week's Torah portion, Vayishlach, tells us a tragic story about Yaakov's daughter Dinah. She went out "among the daughters of the land," and was assaulted. However, the Torah refers to her most unusually. It calls her "the daughter of Leah, whom she had borne to Yaakov." The Torah is always concise. Why doesn't it just call her Yaakov's daughter?

Rashi explains that the Torah calls her the daughter of Leah because Leah was also in the habit of going out. It seems as if Rashi is saying that the reason for Dinah's problem was because she "went out." She inherited this trait from her mother, Leah. Why would the Torah speak in a derogatory manner about Leah, who was one of the matriarchs of the entire Jewish nation? The Torah is careful not to speak in a derogatory manner, even regarding a non-kosher animal! Here we are speaking about the wife and daughter of our forefather Yaakov. How can the Torah speak about them in this manner?

The explanation is that Dinah's "going out" did not have any negative connotations. There was nothing wrong with her going out. Rashi already told us the cause of her assault. Rather, Hashem punished Yaakov, not Dinah. When he had his epic meeting with his brother Eisav, he

1. Parshas Vayeitzei, Bereishis 30:16.

2. Yechezkel 16:44.

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hid Dinah for fear that he would see her and want to marry her. The fact is that despite Yaakov's good intentions for hiding his daughter, G-d punished him. Dinah was able to bring Aisov to Teshuvah. Her mother, Leah, had the same ability. Their "going out" was a good thing. They were bringing the world closer to Hashem.

### **Rashi's Explanation**

In this week's Torah Portion, Vayishlach, The Torah tells us that "Dinah, the daughter of Leah whom she had borne to Yaakov, went out to look about among the daughters of the land." Rashi cites the words from this verse, "The daughter of Leah," and explains the following. She was the daughter of Leah, "and not the daughter of Yaakov. Because she was in the habit of going out, she was called the daughter of Leah. Leah was also in the habit of going out, as it says 'and Leah went out to greet him (referring to Yaakov).'" There are versions of Rashi which conclude with the words, "The allegory regarding her (Dinah), was used, 'like mother like daughter.'"

This verse marks the beginning of a very tragic story that took place with Dinah. Dinah, the daughter of Yaakov, our forefather, was assaulted.

### **Difficulties in Understanding Rashi**

From Rashi's explanation, it is clear that the Torah is speaking in a derogatory manner regarding Leah. Why would Rashi, according to Peshat, choose to speak in such a manner about Leah? We find in the Talmud<sup>3</sup> that the Torah does not even speak derogatorily about a<sup>4</sup> non-kosher animal. Additionally, Rashi himself writes that once the Torah mentions a righteous person, it speaks in his praise<sup>5</sup>. There Rashi quotes<sup>6</sup> that "the mention of a righteous is for a blessing." The fact that "the mention of a righteous is for a blessing" certainly applies to our matriarch Leah! She was one of the only four women in history to be a matriarch of every Jew.

One might consider the possibility that the Torah said something less than positive about Leah to justify Dinah's actions. However, it is difficult to say that the Torah would publicize something pejorative about a mother, especially such a mother, to justify the actions of her daughter.

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3. Bava Basra 123, a.

4. Parshas Noach, Bereishis 6:9.

5. Ibid.

6. Mishlei 10:7.

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There is another possibility. Perhaps Rashi is explaining why the Torah uses a description that seems to be unnecessarily long. The Torah could have said, “Dinah, the daughter of Yaakov” instead of “Dinah, the daughter of Leah, whom she had borne to Yaakov.” Rashi is telling us that the Torah calls Dinah “the daughter of Leah” to show that she “inherited” this trait from her mother. The Torah always expresses itself in the most concise manner possible. However, the Torah also endeavors to state things in the nicest way possible. Perhaps Rashi found it necessary to use this explanation to explain why, in this instance, the Torah was not concise.

However, this explanation is untenable. Rashi could have explained why the Torah is so verbose in a manner that does not cast aspersions on Leah. Rashi wrote earlier<sup>7</sup> that Dinah was born as a result of Leah’s prayers. That is certainly enough of a reason to refer to her as "Dinah, the daughter of Leah." Moreover, there was nothing negative about Leah’s “going out” to greet Yaakov. On the contrary, Rashi explains<sup>8</sup> that as a result of Leah’s “going out,” Hashem listened to her prayers!

### **The Explanation**

The explanation is as follows. From the above questions, we understand that Rashi is telling us that there was absolutely nothing whatsoever wrong with Leah’s actions. Rashi explained earlier the reason for Dinah’s assault. It had nothing to do with any of her actions. Rather, it was her father Yaakov who was being punished. It says<sup>9</sup> that when Yaakov was preparing for his fateful meeting with his brother Eisav “he took his... eleven children.” Rashi asks where Dinah was. Binyomin was not yet born, meaning that he had twelve children! Rashi explains that “he put her into a chest and locked her in so that Eisav would not set eyes on her. That is the reason that Hashem punished Yaakov Avinu. He withheld Dinah from his brother – (for if had she married him) perhaps she would have caused him to improve his ways. That is why she fell into the hands of Shechem.”

However, this is extremely difficult to understand. Was Yaakov expected to place his daughter, who was completely righteous, in danger? Marrying the wicked Eisav might “perhaps” have caused him to do Teshuvah. However, she could have been devastated! Is it possible to say that Hashem punished Yaakov by having his daughter, the Tzaddeikes, assaulted? His only crime was protecting her and keeping her safe!

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7. Parshas Vayetztei, Bereishis 30:21.

8. Parshas Vayetztei, Bereishis 30:17.

9. Our Parshah, Bereishis 32:23.

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From this, we can understand the following. Dinah was great beyond our understanding. She was capable of causing even the wicked Aisov to return to Hashem! Because each of us has free choice, it was by no means certain that she *would* bring Aisov back to the proper path. However, the merit of causing an evil person to return is so great that it was worth placing Dinah in that situation. Even though it was not more than a possibility – albeit a strong one, that “perhaps she would cause him to improve his ways.”

If not for Aisov's free will, she would have been able to bring him around. Otherwise, Hashem would not have punished Yaakov for hiding Dinah from him. The only reason that Rashi says “*perhaps* she would cause him to improve his ways,” is because of Aisov's had free will.

Based on the above, we can understand that Rashi's words regarding Dinah's trait of “going out,” were said in her praise, and carried no negative connotation. Dinah was so powerful that she would have transformed even one as wicked as Aisov. Certainly, when she “went out to look about among the daughter of the land,” it was solely to bring them to the service of Hashem. There was no immodest intent on her part whatsoever. That is the reason that Rashi writes that she was “the daughter of Leah and not the daughter of Yaakov.” She inherited the ability to go out and affect everyone with whom she came in contact positively from her mother, not her father. Her father hid her in a box and prevented her from bringing people back to G-d's service. That is why Hashem punished him.

### **A Deeper Explanation of Rashi**

The above provides a lesson for Jewish women in all generations. Generally, we say that<sup>10</sup> “the entire glory of a princess is within,” and that a woman is the “mainstay of the house.” That is because a woman's primary job is to build a Jewish home. However, there are circumstances under which a woman must leave the house and “go out.” A woman who can influence others, must use this ability in a modest way for the sake of heaven. In this manner, they will bring women who are “on the outside” and to draw their hearts to the service of Hashem.

A woman must “go out” in a manner befitting a Jewish woman. She must do so with the utmost modesty. By carrying this out in a proper manner, even when she “goes out,” it will be apparent that her true glory is within. G-d endowed women with a greater ability than men to draw others near to the service of Hashem. Aside from quantity, the result of a woman's effort will have

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10. Tehillim 45:14.

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a longer-lasting and a more serious effect than that of a man, who by nature may argue and debate, etc. Since G-d granted the ability to women to draw others close to Hashem, they are obligated to use it. Their obligation is not only conducting the household. Rather it also extends to drawing other women close to their Father in Heaven.

*(Adapted from a talk given on Shabbos Parshas Vayishlach and Shabbos Parshas Vayaishev 5746)*

**I hope that you gained as much by reading this as I did by translating and adapting it.**

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**IN LOVING MEMORY OF OUR FATHER**

Mr. **Sholom Moshe** ben Reb **Shlomo Meir** Hacoהן ע"ה **Cohen**

Passed away on Shabbos Parshas Beshalach, 13 Shevat, 5779

May His Soul be bound in the Eternal Bond of Life

\*

**DEDICATED BY HIS SON-IN-LAW AND DAUGHTER**

**RABBI SHMUEL AND RIFKA** שיזניו **MENDELSON**

**מוקדש לזכות**  
**כ"ק אדמו"ר נשיא דורנו מליובאוויטש**

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הרה"ת ר' מנחם מענדל וחי' מושקא שיחיו מאריס  
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