

VAYESHEV 2 - SHEKHEM - THE PORTAL FOR GOOD AND EVIL

According to the Midrash the city of Shekhem was considered a place destined for a variety of unhappy events. These include the assault of Dinah, the selling of Yoseph and the later divide of the twelve tribal kingdom of Israel. 1 R. Shrem reinforces this fact and equates the numerical value of Shekhem - with that of Satan (360) - He cites a Midrash that the only one of the brothers equipped to combat this negative force associated with this land was Yoseph HaSadik. 2 We see in the blessings of Yaakov to his children that he recognized this truth by giving the land he previously purchased over exclusively to Yoseph. 3 Parenthetically, the Midrash associates Shekhem with the garment of Adam HaRishon. These were wrestled away by Yaakov from his brother Esav and given over for the exclusive use of his son Yoseph. 4 Yaakov recalls that he had given preference to Yoseph over his brothers in assigning him this land. In the verse he recognizes it as a portion that he wrestled away from the Amorite (Esav) with his spiritual sword and bow. 5 Yaakov clearly recognized that the brothers might not have the ability to properly rectify the negative forces in that area. I would like to suggest that the rectification of the forces of the city began with Abraham and then Yaakov and were to be completed by Yoseph. The brothers attempted twice to intervene but Yaakov finally might have favored Yoseph in the matter. The brothers removed the power of Yoseph from this portal city via the sale to the Yishmaelites or Midyanites. The rectification of Shekhem would wait two centuries with the final return of the bones of Yoseph to Shekhem recorded at the end of Sefer Yehoshua.

EARLY STAGES OF TIKUN

In order to subdue the negative forces which appear to relate to the Yesod of the evil husk, the Patriarchs Abraham and Yaakov made it a point to initially reach or enter Shekhem. The city stands on the east west corridor facing the mountains of Gerizim and Ebal whereby both the blessings and curses would be announced before Israel. 6 If the city can be rectified by removing the foreskin or husk - the channel -or the Yesod will be sanctified to allow the holy flow onto the land. This is comparable to the five hasadim that are prevented from flowing thru the Yesod until the husk is removed, the membrane is pulled over, the blood is drawn and the wine is poured during the berit milah ceremony. 7 According to the Talmud, Abraham apparently had only been commanded initially to remove the husk which only allows the hasadim to reach up to the Yesod. 8 Hence - Abraham comes to Canaan traveling thru the land only as far as Shekhem. Yaakov extends further and enters the boundaries of Eres Yisrael from Padan Aram and this time arrives into Shekhem. 9 The Talmud informs us in the name of Shemuel that he established rules of the market place in the city. 10 The Torah also informs us that he purchased land in the area. 11 The Sefer Be'er Mayim Hayyim writes that his purchase of land with full payment was to extract spiritual control of the city from the clutches of the sons of Hamor. 12 It appears to me that the market place rules he established were founded upon the principle that every business transaction which involves the transfer of articles or money represents and parallels a spiritual transfer above. His intent was to loosen their hold on the portal known as Shekhem. In fact proper business ethics or "sohera" acts as a force field of protection for the Divine Presence. 13 Parenthetically the Talmud teaches in the name of R. Yohanan that anyone who robs a perutah from his fellow is as if he took his soul from him- for it is stated in Mishle "such are the ways of anyone who steals, he takes away the soul of the robbed." 14 It is clear that one's money is associated with the lights that envelop his soul. Hence we are taught in the Talmud that Yaakov was concerned for his possessions more than his physical being and that he returned back to the other side of the river to retrieve small jars. 15 Even subsequent to the transaction for the land - The Yesod was still not rectified as was evidenced by the assault on Dinah by Shekhem Ben Hamor. The brothers Shimon and Levi thought to remove the husk or negative forces of Shekhem by killing the male population of the city. R. Y. Horowitz In his Shene Luhot HaBerit cites R.

Menahem from Ricanti's teaching that the rapist is called by the name HaHivi an allusion to the original serpent called Hivya in Aramaic - 16 who possibly drew his power from the negative forces still prevalent in Shekhem.

WHO IS SPIRITUALLY PREPARED TO ESTABLISH A NEW HOLY PORTAL IN SHEKHEM

Our parasha recalls that the brothers left Hevron and travelled 48 miles north to tend their father's sheep in Shekhem. Evidently this was not simply a stroll back to Shekhem to feed some animals. No doubt there was a Tikun to be made there - the 10 brothers considering themselves spiritually advanced and up to the task. Yaakov had other ideas and realizes that he is forced to send Yoseph to at least make the determination. He asks him to see and observe two different spiritual realities. Both are referred to by the code name Shalom- a reference to the holy channel of Yesod as is known. 17. The verse according to our approach would be elucidated as - Go and observe if the brothers have established the channel amongst themselves and additionally please observe if the Yesod has been established via their business of tending the animals. 18 The brothers do not recognize the lofty spiritual level of Yoseph and initially consider him as a form of negative husk and place him into a pit. Yehuda reasons that a sale is just as effective to transfer his spiritual being to a foreign source. This results in the delay in the Tikun of Shekhem which would last for two centuries. The blessings and the curses which would emanate from the mountains which physically form shoulders (a translation of the word Shekhem) which were crucial for the tribes spiritual nourishment would have to wait. In addition the holy spiritual funnel of Yesod inherent in Yoseph will be transferred in a sale to Egypt.

THE TIKUN OF SHEKHEM - THE RETURN OF YOSEPH

R. HaAri notes that the sale of Yoseph by the brothers represented a spiritual transfer that is rectifiable. 19 The national blemish caused by the brothers requires at least the return of Yoseph's bones back to his roots in Shekhem. This will allow Yoseph to somewhat cleanse the spiritual Yesod - preparing Israel to settle in purity in the land of Israel This was conveyed by Yoseph to his brothers "You shall elevate - taking my bones with you from here" 20 The Midrash phrases Yoseph's request as "Return me to the place I had been taken from". 21 A similar rabbinic statement is found in the Talmud - "From Shekhem he was stolen and to Shekhem he is to be returned." 22 This process begins with Moshe extracting the coffin of Yoseph from the Nile. After 40 years in the Midbar - The nation as a whole brought him across the Jordan. The land is conquered and apportioned under Yehoshua. It was in the vicinity of Shekhem that the nation stood on the slopes of Gerizim and Ebal to receive the holy influx from above. 23 The return of the Holy channel of Yesod back to the portal of Shekhem would finally come to fruition at the end of Sefer Yehoshua "And the bones of Yoseph ...were interred in Shekhem". 24

Shabbat Shalom

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