

“And he took his two wives, his two handmaids, and his eleven sons.” (32:23)

There seems to be a child missing. Yaakov had eleven sons and one daughter. What happened to Dinah, Yaakov's daughter? *Rashi* tells us that Yaakov hid her in a box, so that Eisav would not see her and want to take her for a wife. Yaakov was punished for this when Dinah went out and was violated by Shechem. He should have been sensitive to his brother's needs. Who knows? Perhaps Dinah might have influenced Eisav to initiate a positive change in his life. This is enigmatic. How can we expect Yaakov to marry his daughter to such an evil person as Eisav? Furthermore, we find that Leah was lauded for her excessive weeping when she entreated the Almighty that she not fall into Eisav's hands. If Leah was praised, how can Yaakov be criticized?

The *Alter, z.l., m'Kelm* gives an answer to this question which can be applied to situations in which we must act in a manner that seems harsh and cruel, but is necessary. He explains that Yaakov clearly had to protect his daughter. There is no way he could have permitted her to marry Eisav. Hiding her in the box was an action that he had to take, but, did he have to close the door with so much force? *Horav Nosson Wachtfogel, z.l.*, explains the *Alter's* statement with a similar thought from *Horav Yeruchem Levovitz, zl. Chazal* tell us that *Rebbi, Rabbi Yehudah HaNasi*, the great sage who was the codifier of the *Mishnah*, underwent thirteen years of terrible pain because of something he said to a calf that was about to be slaughtered. It happened that the calf ran away and hid beneath *Rebbi's* cloak, crying, “I do not want to be slaughtered.” *Rebbi* responded, “Go. This is for what you were created.” *Rebbi's* response was considered heartless, and he was, consequently, punished. When we think about it, what did he do wrong? The animal was created to be slaughtered eventually. He was “telling it like it is.” Is this a reason for him to endure thirteen years of excruciating pain?

Rav Yeruchem explains that, indeed, his response was correct. It was the tone of his voice that was wrong. He should have responded more compassionately, with greater empathy. This would have at least conveyed a message, “I feel bad for you and empathize with your pain, but that is the purpose of your creation.” It is not what he did; rather, how he did it that made the difference.

Likewise, Yaakov understood only too well the danger of allowing Eisav to notice Dinah. He knew he had no recourse but to hide her from him. Yaakov's act of protecting his daughter, however, should have been carried out with regret, with ambivalence, with a heavy heart. Apparently, it was not.

When we are compelled to act in a certain matter; when we must say no; when we have to reject someone justifiably, it should be done with a heavy heart. Otherwise, we may one day have to answer for our actions. An educator, at times, must take negative action against a student for appropriate reasons. It is certainly not something he enjoys doing, but it is necessary for the well-being of a class. He must carry out the necessary action ruefully, as if he had no alternative.