

The sons of Yaakov answered Shechem, and his father, Chamor, with guile. (34:13)

Rashi defines the word *mirmah*, guile, *b'chochmah*, with cleverness. One who reads the narrative and delves into what occurred and the response of Yaakov *Avinu's* sons to the moral incursion into their family, might discover *mirmah*, more as deceit than cleverness. Their intention was to convince the men of Shechem to have Brisim, circumcisions, for the purpose of weakening them physically. From the very beginning, the intention of Yaakov's sons was to avenge the degradation of their family. Why is this considered to be "clever"?

Horav Yeruchem Levovitz, zl, explains that *ramaus*, deceit, swindle, is a term that applies to an act of "cleverness" when it is executed in the pursuit of committing a prohibited act. If, however, one is acting virtuously, for the purpose of carrying out an act of righteousness (even if it involves indignation), it is not deceit; it is cleverness. This is what *Rashi* is teaching us. Shechem defiled Dinah, the daughter of the Patriarch. How dare this filthy pagan come to breach the circle of such sanctity with his depravity. Such an incursion may not go unrequited. If someone intrudes on the *kedushah*, sanctity, of *Klal Yisrael*; if he commits an act of aggression – moral, physical, or spiritual; if he acts prohibitively, he must be dealt with in order to preserve the honor of our People and of Hashem. In dealing with the aggressor we employ whatever methods are available in order to subdue him and avenge our honor. This is not deceit, because it is not iniquitous.

To some, this might appear as a double standard. It is not. Double standard is a term used to describe an activity which, if one person does it, it is considered to be wrong/inappropriate, while, if another person does the exact same activity, it is viewed as appropriate. In this particular case, it is not the person who determines the appropriateness of the activity, but the objective of the activity. If one's goal is to cheat someone, then his act of convincing him is deceitful. If his goal, however, is to avenge, to repair, to correct a wrong, it is not deceitful; rather, it is clever.