

Yaakov's sons answered Shechem and his father Chamor cleverly. (34:13)

Mirmah is usually translated as “treachery/deceit.” In this instance, *Rashi* translates it as, *chochmah*, wisdom, or cleverness. This interpretation begs elucidation, since how much wisdom does it take to overpower a community of men on the third day following surgery, when they are in intense pain? One could hardly call this cleverness. The *Netziv*, *zl*, explains that “cleverness” in this case serves as a disclaimer, to declare that at no time did the brothers intend to accept this base people into their family. Shechem and his cohorts were not becoming Jews. The use of the word *mirmah* reminds us not to ever make such a mistake.

In a *drashah*, speech, on *Shabbos Vayishlach*, *Horav Yehonasan Eibeshutz*, *zl*, said that *Bnei Yaakov* were powerful enough to wipe out the city of Shechem. The people of Shechem deserved the punishment, and *Bnei Yaakov* could and would do it. The problem was: “What will the neighbors say?” The gentile nations that bordered on Shechem would certainly take umbrage with the fact that an entire people was killed out by Jews. They would take revenge. In order to circumvent such a reaction, the brothers suggested that the people of Shechem be circumcised, a ritual which leads to conversion. Word would spread that the Shechemites were now converted Jews. If this would be the case, the gentiles would not intervene. “If Jews kill Jews, it is none of our concern.” That was a clever move on the part of *Bnei Yaakov*. They played on the age-old hatred that Eisav harbors for Yaakov – and it worked.