

## Rabbi's Column

One underlying theme in this week's portion is generational change. Not transitioning, but change in how different generations look at family patterns.

Jacob grew up on stories of how it is ok to let the women in the family be brought to a local leader's harem, as long as the local leader paid some protection money in exchange, and promised never to touch any women from the family again. Jacob's sons, growing up in the Old Country, did not have the opportunity to hear these tales from their grandparents and great-grandfather. So, when their sister was taken up by a local leader, they did not allow things to progress and leave everything in God's control. They acted to avoid losing control of which direction integration into society would occur.

The final words of the ring leaders were quite telling, "Is our sister to act like someone who gets paid off for sex?" Abraham and Isaac would have answered yes, based on their actions. Jacob was willing to have that be the answer, and Simon and Levi were not.

Sometimes it happens that when people disagree with each other, it is because the lens through which they see the event in question is focused differently. The interpretation of an event is not the same as the event itself.

This same episode reminds us forcefully that first impressions (or impressions made after a traumatic event) are exceedingly long lasting. Simon and Levi were involved in murdering an entire village. Decades later, as Jacob is dying, he declares, "Simon and Levi are indeed equals; their commerce involves violent tools. I do not want my thoughts or emotions to be involved in their secrets; where they gather any respect of mine should never rest - when they get angry they kill a person; they willingly torture animals. Their anger is so strong it is accursed, their wrath is relentless. I will divide them within Jacob and scatter them throughout Israel." When it comes time centuries later for Moses to bless the tribes, Simon is not even mentioned. Levi is mentioned (since Moses is a member of that tribe, it would be hard to ignore it.) One of the positive aspects of Levi that Moses mentions is that they were so focused on following God, they did not refrain from executing their relatives.

The sages clarify that Jacob's blessing was fulfilled when the Israelites entered the Land. Levi had no land of his own, living on territory which was owned by other tribes. Those tribes were then paid back in amount of land from the inheritance Simon was supposed to receive, with the end result that Simon had to pay rent to the other tribes for any land they lived on.

There are indeed some actions which are reprehensible, no matter who is responsible for doing them.

There are also some actions which are beneficial, no matter who does them. Notice those who are helpful, and then thank them for it.