

TOLERATING EVIL A PERSPECTIVE ON MUMBAI

Background

Shechem, the son of Chamor, set his sights on Dina. He carefully laid a trap to entice her out of her tent, and then kidnapped and defiled her. When Yaakov and his sons heard what had been done, “*they were extremely distressed . . . [and said] ‘So shall not be done!’*”

Shechem became infatuated with Dina and asked for her hand in marriage. “Name your price, and I will pay it,” he told Yaakov.

The brothers of Dina answered Shechem, “To marry into our family, a person must have a *bris millah*.”

Shechem and Chamor agreed, and they convinced the people of their town to be circumcised as well. On the third day of their *millah*, Reuvain and Shimon took up their swords and killed out every male in the city.

After they were finished, the *posuk* says, “*The sons of Yaakov came upon the corpses of the city that had defiled their sister.*” The Siforno is bothered by the expression “the city that defiled their sister.” After all, it was Shechem alone who committed the act, not the city.

The Siforno answers by explaining that in that society, forcibly taking a woman was not considered abhorrent. If it had not been socially acceptable, Shechem never would have done it. Therefore, it is considered as if they were all participants.

Questions

The Siforno doesn’t seem to have answered his own question. Granted the entire town may have been responsible for creating the social atmosphere that accepted such conduct, but all they did was to give Shechem the opportunity to act as he wished. They didn’t join him in the act. They didn’t aid him. They didn’t tempt him to do it. The most we can blame them for is giving Shechem the opportunity to do as he chose. So how can the *posuk* say the city defiled Dina?

ספר בראשית פרק לד

(כז) בְּנֵי יַעֲקֹב בָּאוּ עַל הַחֲלָלִים וַיִּבְזוּ הָעִיר אֲשֶׁר טָמְאוּ אֶחָתָם:

The sons of Yaakov came upon the corpses of the city that had defiled their sister.

ספורנו עה"ת ספר בראשית פרק לד פסוק כז

(כז) הָעִיר אֲשֶׁר טָמְאוּ. כִּי לוּלִי הָיָה כִּבְר דְּבַר כִּזָּה בִּלְתִּי נִמְאָס אֶצְלָם לֹא הָיָה שְׂכָם עוֹשֶׂה כֵּן אִמְנָם הָיָה זֶה גְּמוּל מוֹרְגַל אֶצְלָם שֶׁלְקָחוּ רֵאשִׁי הָעִיר בְּנוֹת הָעָם בִּלְתִּי רְשׁוֹת לְנָשִׁים אוּ לְפִלְגָשִׁים ע"ד וִיקָחוּ לָהֶם נָשִׁים מִכָּל אֲשֶׁר בַּחֲרוּ:

The city that defiled Dina - If it weren't that this act was no longer abhorrent to them, Shechem never would have done it. However, it had become commonplace that the head of the city could take whatever girl he wanted by force.