

What Was Dina's Blessing?

A Midrash on a Verse in Parashat Vayehi - Bereshit 49:18

She sat alone, waiting outside the dwelling of her dying father, filled with the sounds and images of the night her mother left this world. It was before Yosef went down to Egypt, when the children of the Four Mothers still hated each other. Ever since her encounter with Shekhem, no one could get along. Each one blamed the other, while feeling guilty for what had happened. She had stopped speaking and taken a vow of silence.

Tonight Dina remembered how her mother, Leah, called her to come alone, to receive the Blessing of the Mothers. Sitting by the cool desert springs in the light of the full moon, her mother's eyes were soft with tears as she beckoned for her only daughter to draw near. These were Leah's last words:

"By the Waters of Life, women wait and weep.

For our babies to be born.

For the ones we love to love us.

For the right time to speak.

My precious daughter,

you carry within you the seed of my mother and her mother,

It is the seed of the Great Mother that waits, with anticipation,
to be born in fertile soil.

The seed comes from the fruit, pregnant pomegranate,
bursting with sweet juices and hidden mysteries.

The fruit comes from the Tree of Life

whose roots and branches are nourished by Living Waters.

The cycles of birth, death, and renewal are endless,

so we wait, and sometimes weep, for the time to be ripe.

I carry within me the song of your grandmothers

and tonight I pass it on to you.

One day, you will sing this song, and new seeds will be planted."

Leah sang:

"Lishu'atkha kiviti Adonai. Lishu'atkha kiviti Adonai.

Lishu'atkha, Lishu'atkha, Lishu'atkha kiviti Adonai."

Dina recalled how she wept when her mother died. Her salty tears mingled with the sweet spring waters, as she bathed and prepared her mother's body. Her father and brothers carried Leah to the family burial cave and there they sat for seven days, telling the stories of her life. Dina never spoke, but in her heart she chanted the prayer of her grandmothers over and over.

Now, many years later, in the land of Egypt, Dina's father was preparing to die. He invited his twelve sons, and two of his grandsons, to receive the Blessing of the Tribes. She was not included. Ordinarily she didn't mind. As always, she had found her place among the women of the land. But this time, she was drawn to her father's tent to sit and listen. Ya'akov first blessed Yoseph and his two sons. Then he called for the children of Leah and extended his hands to her six brothers, each in turn - Reuven, Shimon, Levi, Yehudah, Zevulun, Yissachar. As he began to bless the children of Bilhah and Zilpah, starting with Dan, the song in Dina's heart rose to her lips and she began to sing:

*"Lishu'atkha kiviti Adonai. Lishu'atkha kiviti Adonai.
Lishu'atkha, Lishu'atkha, Lishu'atkha kiviti Adonai."*

Her father was surprised by this interruption. He didn't recognize the voice, so he sent Binyamin to see who it was. When Ya'akov learned that it was Dina, he invited her to come inside. "Come, my child. For so many years we have not heard your voice. What brings this song to your lips?"

With great determination, Dina spoke. "I learned this song from my mother, Leah. It is the song of the women who are waiting to be seen and heard. You blessed Leah's children, but forgot me. I am Leah's seventh child, your only daughter. Like Dan, Divine Justice is my name. Do you have a blessing for me? "

"I never thought of giving you a blessing, Dina." answered Ya'acov.

"I know, Abba," said Dina. "With your vision of spirit, I'd like you to look with me into the past. You took us from our home in Haran and brought us to the strange land of Canaan. On the way, your dream became my nightmare. You allowed my brothers to kill Shekhem and his entire tribe, for my honor. But it was your honor that they were defending, not mine. You assumed he had forced himself upon me, but you never asked. He was gentle and kind and I loved him."

"Please forgive me, Dina," sighed Ya'akov. "What happened to you and the people of Shekhem has pained me all of these years. When we entered Canaan, I passed the mantle of leadership to your brothers. They were young and inexperienced and they lost their senses. You see, the custom of the land was to kill the daughter who had dishonored the family, but they

could never do that, so they killed the ones who dishonored you. They could have made peace, but they didn't know how."

"It left me silent, Abba. All I could do was wait for the courage to love again. I no longer saw myself as part of this family. But every time I heard the song of my mothers rise up within me, I also saw visions of a world that is yet to come and that brought me comfort."

"Look with me, now, into the future. Do you see? I too have a tribe - a tribe of women - singing, dancing, laughing, crying, dreaming, creating. Have you ever seen such beauty and purpose? We waited and, in our waiting, we blessed and empowered ourselves!"

Dina placed her hands on her father's head. "And now, I want to bless you, Abba, that you let go peacefully and without fear. 'אל תירא "אבי" יעקב' You and our mothers have planted the seeds of truth and wisdom within us. I promise that your children will continue to seek the Light of the Holy One."

Ya'akov cried. "Thank you for all that you have revealed to me today. May our family carry your song of healing with them into the long, dark times of confusion that lie ahead, when all they have left in this world is faith."

He lifted his arms. "I would like to bless you, Dina. May the day come soon when you and your tribe are seen and heard and counted. May you soar like an eagle with far-reaching vision, and with the gentleness of a dove, may you teach our people, and all the people of the land, kindness, courage, peace, and love.

Then Dina and her entire family sang:

*"Lishu'atkha kiviti Adonai. Lishu'atkha kiviti Adonai.
Lishu'atkha, Lishu'atkha, Lishu'atkha kiviti Adonai."*