



14 Tevet 5784 | December 16, 2023

## **Miketz: Dina, Job, and Endurance** **Rabbanit Dr. Devorah Schoenfeld, Advanced Kollel Class of 2019**

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In this week's *parsha*, Joseph marries Osnat, who is described here as the daughter of Potiphera, priest of On. According to Pirkei DeRabbi Eliezer, Osnat was adopted by an Egyptian family but was originally the daughter of Dina. This daughter, conceived through rape, was abandoned and nearly killed by her family. She was then brought to Egypt by the angel Michael:

The sons of Israel said that she (the daughter) should be killed, for they said that now people would say in all the land that there was an immoral daughter in the tents of Jacob. What did (Jacob) do? He wrote the Holy Name upon a golden plate, and suspended it about her neck and sent her away. She went her way. Everything is revealed before the Holy One, blessed be He, and Michael the angel descended and took her, and brought her down to Egypt to the house of Potiphera; because Osnat was destined to become the wife of Joseph. Now the wife of Potiphera was barren, and (Osnat) grew up with her as a daughter. When Joseph came down to Egypt he married her, as it is said, "And he gave him to wife Osnat the daughter of Potiphera priest of On" (Gen. 41:45). (Pirkei DeRabbi Eliezer 38:1-2)

In last week's *parsha*, Dina's story is left unresolved. Aside from the very first line of the story in which she goes out to visit the daughters of the land, we do not see her actively exercising agency in any way, nor do we hear her speak. We also do not find out what happened to her after this, other than that in Bereishit 46:15 when she goes with her family to Egypt. Into this void step interpretations that try to find a voice for Dina as well as a different ending to her story.

According to Bava Batra 15b, Dina married Job. In the book of Job, Job goes through many horrifying ordeals to prove his loyalty to God, including losing his children and his wealth and becoming physically ill. Although the book of Job only describes this as Job's test, not that of Job's wife, she would also have endured the loss of her children and her home. But unlike in the story of Dina, in the book of Job, we hear some words from Job's wife, when she tells him to curse God and die (Job 2:9). Job replies to her,

“You talk as a despicable woman might talk! Should we accept only good from God and not accept evil?” Bereishit Rabbah 19:12 reframes Job’s harsh language not as calling her despicable but rather describing her as someone to whom despicable things have been done, as in Bereishit 34:7. Job and Dina are alike in having endured horrors; Job calls on Dina to endure these terrible things like he himself does.

The suggestion that Dina is the wife of Job and the one that she is the mother of Osnat come from different sources, so we can’t necessarily say that the same rabbis saw her in both roles. But when we look at these two midrashic texts together, we can see parallels between the life of Dina according to Pirkei DeRabbi Eliezer and Bava Batra. Like Job, Dina endured both physical torture and the loss of her child. Also like Job, she receives in the end double the children that she lost. In Egypt, she would be reunited not only with Osnat, but with her grandchildren, Ephraim and Menashe.

When Yaakov blesses Ephraim and Menashe, he restores them to his family. Beyond this, he recognizes each of them with a share in his inheritance, like sons rather than grandsons (Bereishit 48:6). This is framed as a double inheritance for Joseph, but another way of looking at it would be as an inheritance for each of Jacob’s children, one for Joseph and one for Dina. Since Dina’s grandchildren are also Joseph’s grandchildren, they receive two shares of Jacob’s inheritance.

In the anthology of contemporary Israeli women’s midrash *Dirshuni*, Ayala Tzruyah retells Pirkei DeRabbi Eliezer’s story of Osnat as the exiled daughter of Dina but ends Dina’s story like this:

And when the day of Jacob’s death drew near, he repaired his sons’ deeds, as is written *And to Joseph were born, in the land of Egypt, Menashe and Ephraim, whom Osnat the daughter of Potiphara, priest of On, had born to him* (Gen. 46:20), *And Jacob said to Joseph . . . and now your two sons born to you in the land of Egypt before I came to you to Egypt, are mine, Ephraim and Menashe will be like Reuven and Shimon to me* (Gen. 48:3–6). And a redeemer comes to Dina.

When Jacob claims Ephraim and Menashe as his two children, he repents of sending away Dina’s daughter and instead passes an inheritance to her children as if they were his own.

But do women inherit? This question is not settled until Bamidbar 27, when the daughters of Tzelofchad claim the inheritance of their fathers by insisting that as daughters they have a right to inherit. Rashi on Bereishit 49:22 translates *b'not tzadah alei shur* as “your daughters step over a wall.” This is, based on Midrash Tanchuma, Pinchas 9, about the daughters of Tzelofchad, who were from the tribe of Menashe and inherited land on both sides of the Yarden. Dina’s own voice may not be heard in the biblical text but her great-granddaughters argue for inheritance and ultimately receive it.

Read with these interpretations, the story of Dina is a hidden story of endurance. Dina is abused and her daughter is exiled, but she passes on to her daughters and granddaughters resilience and endurance until ultimately they can advocate for themselves. What Dina was unable to speak, her descendants speak on her behalf.

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