

Potomac Torah Study Center
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NOTE: Devrei Torah presented weekly in Loving Memory of Rabbi Leonard S. Cahan z"l, Rabbi Emeritus of Congregation Har Shalom, who started me on my road to learning almost 50 years ago and was our family Rebbe and close friend until his recent untimely death.

Devrei Torah are now Available for Download (normally by noon on Fridays) from www.PotomacTorah.org. Thanks to Bill Landau for hosting the Devrei Torah.

In Loving memory of Iran Kohan-Sedgh, z"l, Chaya Tovah bat David Hakohen, beloved wife of Mehrdad (Paul) Kohan, mother of Yosef and Shirine Kohan, sister of Shanaz (Shana) Friedman, beloved friend to many members of our community, and favorite teacher of many of our children.

Rabbi David Fohrman observes a striking parallel between the sin at Baal Peor (sexual acts in front of an idol of Baal (25:1-9)) and egel zahav (golden calf, Shemot ch. 32). With egel zahav, idolatry led to sexual sins. At Baal Peor, sexual misconduct led to idolatry. After egel zahav, God had warned B'Nai Yisrael not to make covenants with any of the Canaanite nations, to break all their idols, not to prostrate themselves to any of the pagan gods, and not to eat a meal with them. God said that the consequence of any such behavior would be inter-marriage, and that inter-marriage would lead to idolatry (Shemot 14:11-16).

One reason why the sin at Baal Peor was so serious is that it directly violates a commandment from 11 chapters earlier in the Torah. At Baal Peor, Moabite women invited Jewish men to eat a meal with them. They gave the men wine, made them drunk, and led them into sexual adventures (and worse) in front of idols to Baal. This direct violation of God's commandment after egel zahav angered God, who sent a plague to kill those who engaged in the behavior. Pinchas threw a spear into the leaders of the sexual misconduct. His act ended the plague, and God gave him two rewards: a covenant of peace (shalom bayit) and Kohen status. God also established that every future Kohen Gadol would be a direct descendant of Pinchas.

An important lesson from Baal Peor is that Idolatry and sexual misconduct are two aspects of the same thing, a basic attack on intimacy, either with another human (spouse) or with God. These two episodes, which share much of the same language as well as the same lessons in the Torah, are the basis of Halachic restrictions meant to keep Jews from socializing with non-Jews. For example, a Jew may not drink non-Kosher wine. If a non-Jew opens or handles an already open bottle of Kosher wine, the bottle becomes no longer Kosher for a Jew to drink (unless the wine had previously been boiled – and labeled as mevushal). A Jew also may not eat bread made by a non-Jew (there is an exception for bread from a commercial bakery, under Kosher supervision). Until recently, a family inviting company would generally bake rather than purchase bread. In such cases, a Jew keeping Kosher could not eat his non-Jewish neighbor's bread and could not drink wine in a meal with non-Jews. These restrictions limited social interaction of young Jews and non-Jews.

Baal Peor ends a long series of misadventures that started with the grumbling at the beginning of chapter 11, as soon as B'Nai Yisrael left the foot of Har Sinai on what was to have been a short march to enter and take over the land of Israel. The Torah reports the orgy of meat, Miriam's tzaraat, Korach's rebellion, and the sin of the Meraglim. After a gap of 38 years, the new generation stops looking back to Egypt and seems ready to start a new era in Israel, but the sin at Baal Peor shows that this generation is also prone to sin at times.

The daughters of Tzlophchad then enter with a request not to be left out of a share in the land, because their deceased father had only daughters. Their request parallels that of those who were unable to participate in the Korban Pesach in the second year because they were tamei (impure because of contact with a dead body). In both cases, a group of Jews asked why they could not participate in God's holy activity (Korban Pesach and land holding in God's land). In both cases, Moshe consulted with God, who agreed with both requests. In both cases, God took the instance and used it to create a new law, establishing Pesach Sheni and establishing a law that an inheritance of land in Israel would go to the daughters if a man died and had no sons. [The law of inheritance was necessary to permit marriage across tribes while preserving the initial division of land. With marriage across tribes, there had to be a method to keep the land from moving from tribe A to tribe B. Keeping the original division required that the land go with the husband or the wife in every instance.]

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As Rabbi Fohrman observes, Pesach Sheni and the daughters of Tzlophchad are “bookends” around the negative section of Sefer Bamidbar. All the incidents between Pesach Sheni and the daughters of Tzlophchad involve sins and punishment. The men requesting permission to participate in the Korban Pesach and the daughters wanting to maintain a share of the land in the name of their father are positive buy-in moves to participate in God's gift and plan for B'Nai Yisrael. These positive segments, both of which lead to new mitzvot in the Torah, help cleanse Sefer Bamidbar from a portion of its negativity and restore a positive mood toward the end.

Since we conclude Bamidbar during the Three Weeks and always read Parashat Devarim during the Nine Days, even the daughters of Tzlophchad cannot eliminate the sorrow of this period. I am writing this message after breaking my fast on 17 Tammuz, which is the yahrtzeit of two people special in my life. Susan Lowenthal, a wonderful Judaic artist and personal friend, who was born in a D.P. camp after the Holocaust, was nifter on 17 Tammuz a few years ago. Emil Katz, my cousin Freida's wonderful father-in-law, a weekday gabbai at Beth Jacob synagogue in Beverly Hills for 40 years, also passed away on 17 Tammuz.

My beloved Rebbe, Rabbi Leonard Cahan, z"l, always brought in memories of the past, whether good or bad, to help connect us with our heritage. As we notice the positive stories of Pesach Sheni and inheritance for daughters separating us from the sins of Sefer Bamidbar, and as we recall those who perished on the fast day of 17 Tammuz, I recall the unique way that Rabbi Cahan brought the Torah to life for new generations. Just as Tisha B'Av will come and be gone soon, hopefully the coronavirus pandemic will also leave us before long. May we come close to Hashem in our lives and soon see better times. May we all also find our Rebbes to inspire us in better times as well as helping us get through the rough periods.

Please daven for a Refuah Shleimah for Hershel Tzvi ben Chana, Gedalya ben Sarah, Mordechai ben Chaya, Baruch Yitzhak ben Perl, David Leib HaKohen ben Sheina Reizel, Zev ben Sara Chaya, Uzi Yehuda ben Mirda Behla, HaRav Dovid Meir ben Chaya Tzippa; Eliav Yerachmiel ben Sara Dina, Amoz ben Tziviah, Reuven ben Masha, Moshe David ben Hannah, Meir ben Sara, Yitzhok Tzvi ben Yehudit Miriam, Yaakov Naphtali ben Michal Leah, Rivka Chaya bat Leah, Zissel Bat Mazal, Chana Bracha bas Rochel Leah, Leah Fruma bat Musa Devorah, Hinda Behla bat Chaya Leah, Nechama bas Tikva Rachel, Miriam Chava bat Yachid, and Ruth bat Sarah, all of whom greatly need our prayers. Note: Beth Sholom has additional names, including coronavirus victims, on a Tehillim list.

Hannah & Alan

Drasha: Parshas Pinchas: Loyal Leadership

by Rabbi Mordechai Kamenetzky © 2019

At the end of Parshas Pinchos, Hashem tell Moshe Rabbeinu about the forthcoming end of his life, and the passing of the leadership to the next generation. Moshe, concerned about the future of his people, asks a request, "Hashem should choose a leader who will go and come in front of them, (the Jewish Nation) and the congregation of Israel should not be like a flock that does not have to them a shepherd."

Seemingly, Moshe Rabbeinu uses a few extra words. Instead of simply saying that the Jews should not be like "a flock without a shepherd," he adds the words "asher ein lahem roeh" that does not have to them a shepherd." Why the extra words?

Rabbi Paysach Krohn, in his book, "Around the Maggid's Table' (Artscroll, 1989) tells the following story. At the outbreak of World War One, A young man came to the great Gaon and leader of European Jewery, Rav Chaim Ozer Grodzinsky for a blessing not to be inducted into the Russian army. The hazards of war wee terrifying, and the army usually kept soldiers in their ranks for decades. After conversing with the teen for a bit, the Rav asked, "Do you wear tzitzis." "No." came the reply.

"Do your put on tefillin every day."

"No."

"Do you observe the Shabbos." The boy, looking down, embarrassed, and in a whisper he answered again, "No."

Silence permeated the room and the boy stood in fear of what the holy tzaddik would tell him. Instead, after a few moments, Rav Grodzinsky looked up at him, and in a calming, loving voice, he said, "I bless you that the Soviet authorities should be just as disappointed in you as I am."

Only a few weeks later, the boy came back to the Rav and told him, "Rebbe, your bracha worked! I was rejected by the Soviet army!" He then lifted his shirt to show the Rav his tzitzis. Needless to say, he returned to the path of observance.

My grandfather, Rav Binyamin Kamenetzky zt"l would explain based upon a passage in the Sefer Kehilos Yitzchok. Rav Jacob Joseph, a great orator, was appointed as the maggid of the city of Vilna in 1883, five years before coming to the United States to assume the position of chief Rabbi of the city of New York. In his inaugural address, he answered the question as follows.

One who tends to his own sheep does not care about the sheep per se, rather he worries about his bottom line. His concern for an injured sheep would be more for his bottom line than for the welfare of is animal.

But one who is watching sheep for someone else, doesn't care much about the bottom line. The sheep are not his, and he has no vested interest in them. His tending to the sheep is more idealistic, as he is concerned about the actual health and well-being of the sheep.

The same, explained Rav Joseph, is with leaders of people. There are many nations in the world – each one with a different leader. Some do their job well, but they ultimately care about their bottom line. The individual needs of the many citizens don't concern that all that much – as long as their position is secure and they win the next election.

Moshe wasn't worried that the Jews would be left without someone taking charge. He knew that there will be a leader. He wanted to ensure that the leader was a leader "of them." The new leader had to take into account the plight of every single Jew, each personal situation, and every individual's struggles and challenges. He wanted the leader to celebrate with them and revel with joy in their accomplishments. Therefore, he implored Hashem, "Let the Jews not be like a flock that does not have to them a leader." Moshe insisted that the leader be a leader "for them."

Moshe, the ultimate leader of the Jewish Nation, knew to instill this important trait in the future of our leaders for generations to come..

Pinchas: Zealot-Prelate or Priest of Peace?

by Rabbi Dov Linzer, Rosh HaYeshiva, Yeshivat Chovevei Torah © 2016, 2020

Parashat Pinchas has much to say about zealotry and peace, and the messages certainly remain worthy of examination today. Consider the following situation: A religious zealot witnesses a person flagrantly violating religious standards of behavior. Acting in the name of God, she picks up the nearest available weapon and violently slays the sinner. If this happened today—and it does—we would be outraged and call for the act to be condemned. The Torah, however, praises it:

Pinchas ... has turned My anger away from the people of Israel, when he was zealous for My sake among them, that I consumed not the people of Israel in My jealousy. Therefore, say, Behold I give him My covenant of peace....a covenant for eternal priesthood, because he was jealous for his God and made atonement for the Children of Israel (Bamidbar, 25:11–13).

Is religious zealotry, then, an ideal to be emulated? While the Gemara recognizes that such actions were praised after the fact in the Torah, it states that halakha, as a normative system, would never give prior warrant to such violence. Rather, from a halakhic point of view, Pinchas was actually a “pursuer” who could have been killed to prevent him from taking Zimri’s life (Sanhedrin 82a). License can never be given to violence.

One can detect a similar concern in the blessing that God gives to Pinchas: “Behold, I give him My covenant of peace.” While this act of zealotry may have been praiseworthy after the fact and in this unique set of circumstances, the blessing for eternity, the guiding principle for life, must be one of peace, not violence. One must hold strong to zeal for truth and for God, but to realize it in the real world—the world of human beings and imperfection—one must work in ways of peace.

God’s seal is truth (Shabbat 55a), and truth is absolute and unbending. But even God’s name is erased for the sake of peace (Shabbat 116b). For the Torah of truth to be a Torah for life, one needs to be guided by the principle of peace. When Torah and truth run up against error and sin, the response need not be violence; the response can be understanding and compromise.

Thus, we find that Pinchas goes on to become the embodiment of peace. In Sefer Yehoshua, when the tribes of Reuven, Gad, and half the tribe of Menashe return to the Transjordan and build a large altar, the Israelites make preparations to wage war against them, believing that they have abandoned God. Pinchas, however, leads a delegation that brokers peace and averts war (Yehoshua, 22). He has moved beyond his zealous, uncompromising youth to become an elder statesman who pursues diplomacy, compromise, and peace. Significantly, the Talmud records Rav Ashi’s opinion that Pinchas did not even become a kohen until he brokered this peace (Zevachim 101b); his “covenant of priesthood” could only be realized when he realized his “covenant of peace.”

It is instructive in this regard to contrast Pinchas and Eliyahu. The Midrash states that “Pinchas is Eliyahu,” and indeed, both of them were “zealous for God.” In response to rampant idolatry in the land of Israel, Eliyahu decreed that there would be no rain, and after three years of famine, in a great public demonstration, he slew the prophets of the pagan god Ba’al by the edge of the sword. He ran to hide in a cave, and there, God appeared to him:

And he came there to a cave, and lodged there; and, behold, the word of the Lord came to him, and he said to him, What are you doing here, Eliyahu? And he said, I have been very zealous for the Lord God of hosts; for the people of Israel have forsaken your covenant, thrown down your altars, and killed your prophets with the sword; and I am the only one left; and they seek my life, to take it away. And God said, Go out, and stand upon the mount before the Lord. And, behold, the Lord passed by, and a great and strong wind tore the mountains, and broke in pieces the rocks before the Lord; but the Lord was not in the wind: and after the wind an earthquake; but the Lord was not in the earthquake: and after the earthquake a fire; but the Lord was not in the fire: and after the fire a still small voice (Melakhim I, 19: 9–12).

Eliyahu has indeed been “zealous for the Lord,” and as a result, many have died by sword and famine. God, however, has a lesson to teach him: God is not about violence but about the small still voice, the voice that will speak to a person’s heart, the voice that will bring about peace. Eliyahu, however, cannot comprehend this message:

And, behold, there came a voice to him, and said, What are you doing here, Eliyahu? And he said, I have been very zealous for the Lord God of hosts; because the people of Israel have forsaken your covenant, thrown down your altars, and killed your prophets with the sword; and I am the only one left; and they seek my life, to take it away.

And the Lord said to him, Go, return on your way....and Elisha ... shall you anoint to be prophet in your place (Melakhim I, 19: 13–16).

Eliyahu is so committed to his absolute sense of truth that he cannot understand that the time for zealotry has passed and that, for the people to reconcile with God, a small voice, the voice of peace, is needed. If he cannot understand this, then he can no longer lead the people, and Elisha the prophet must take his place.

Pinchas is Eliyahu, but he develops and matures. Eliyahu, on the other hand, is only the younger Pinchas. Eliyahu is taken heavenward in a whirlwind; he is not a person of this world. His zealotry for truth and for God could not be reconciled with the frailties of human beings. He is never to become the older Pinchas, at least not in this world, but he will become the ultimate emissary of peace in the future world: “Behold, I will send you Eliyahu the prophet before the coming of the great and terrible day of the Lord; And he shall turn the heart of the fathers to the children, and the heart of the children to their fathers, lest I come and strike the land with a curse” (Malakhi, 3:23). He will be the one to bring about peace to save the world from the harsh judgment that God, in God’s attribute of truth, would demand.

In the end, the Sages debate how much Eliyahu’s final mission of peace will differ from his earlier mission of truth and zealotry. We find the following discussion in the Mishnah regarding those whose personal status prevented them from marrying within the Jewish people:

R. Yehoshua said: I have received a tradition from Rabban Yochanan b. Zakkai, who heard it from his teacher, and his teacher [heard it] from his teacher, as a halakha [given] to Moshe from Sinai, that Eliyahu will not come to pronounce unclean or to pronounce clean, to put away or to bring near, but to push away those brought near by force and to bring near those pushed away by force....

R. Yehudah says: To bring near, but not to push away....

The Sages say neither to push away nor to bring near, but to make peace in the world, for it is said, “Behold I send to you Eliyahu the prophet, etc., and he shall turn the heart of the fathers to the children and the heart of the children to their fathers” (Mishna Eduyot 8:7).

R. Yehoshua is saying that, even in the future, Eliyahu will not compromise truth one iota. Peace will be possible only as a byproduct of truth. Eliyahu’s mission will be to rectify falsehood, to ensure that a person’s status is true to reality. R. Yehudah believes that, in the end, truth will serve the interests of peace, but it will be called upon only to bring close those who have been distanced. The Sages, however, reject both of these positions, holding that, for Eliyahu, these two principles will never be reconciled. Eliyahu will only be able to devote himself to peace by allowing the work of truth to be done by others.

Eliyahu was not of this world, but Pinchas was. He was given God’s covenant of peace and was able to realize true religious leadership in his own lifetime, leadership that brought unflinching devotion to God and truth to serving the people, leadership that actualized this truth in ways of peace.

Shabbat Shalom!

Pinchas -- A Good Eye

by Rabbi Mordechai Rhine © 2014 Teach 613

Moshe was nearing the completion of his career. Although he would have liked to continue and lead the Jewish people into the Land of Israel, Hashem told him that this was not to be. Instead Moshe was told, "Ascend the mountain, and look at the land which I have given to the people of Israel." What was the purpose of this "looking" which Moshe was directed to do?

There is a beautiful story about Rabbi Shlomo Zalman Auerbach of Yerusholayim in which a man who was working in Rabbi Auerbach's yeshiva informed the Rabbi that he would soon be moving to a new apartment. The Rabbi replied with a request that the man should tell him once things were finalized, but before they moved in. The man was surprised by the request, but as soon as the paperwork was completed he informed the Rabbi. Rabbi Auerbach requested that they could go together to see the apartment. And so they did.

When they got to the apartment Rabbi Auerbach asked the man to give him a tour of the apartment, slowly, one room at a time. As they entered each room, the Rabbi smiled broadly and enthusiastically. In each room he added a pleasant comment. "Ah... so this is where the children will play... This is where your wife will cook such nurturing meals... and this is where you will have your Shabbos meals." The man enjoyed the attention and the enthusiasm, but he was a bit confused as to why the Rabbi had taken the time to experience a tour of the apartment.

Rabbi Auerbach realized the man's confusion so he explained. I know that the last few years have been difficult for you. You've had some health problems, and some financial issues. The apartment you were in was too small for your family, and this too was causing much stress. I wanted to bestow an "Ayin Tova- a Good Eye", an attitude of blessing on your new home.

Most of us are more familiar with the concerns associated with "Ayin Horah- An Evil Eye". Jewish tradition maintains, for example, that it is forbidden to gaze at someone else's harvest with jealousy as that gaze can cause serious damage. Likewise it is not recommended for a person to flaunt one's blessings as this might evoke ill will from those who are not so blessed, and can have serious ramifications.

Interestingly, in its most extreme form, the source of jealousy is really quite fascinating. The commentaries explain that when a person sees blessing by someone else, if he does not have a healthy perspective, he may begin to wish that the blessing or asset would be his. Soon he rationalizes that it really could have been his... and actually should have been his. Finally he begins to think that what his friend has really does belong to him... just that his friend took it from him.

A person who has a healthy perspective realizes that Hashem gives each person what they should have. There is no reason to look at someone else's assets and erroneously think that they were incorrectly assigned. In fact, in its most pristine form, a healthy perspective produces a person who can look at someone else's blessing and wish them only good... even in cases where they themselves also hope to be blessed in a similar way and have not yet been so blessed.

Perhaps this is the great mission placed upon Moshe to "look at the land". Moshe's task was to gaze at the land lovingly and with a sense of blessing. Despite the fact that he desperately wanted to enter the land and was not allowed to, he still was able to bestow an "Ayin Tova- A good Eye" upon the Land and upon those who would be blessed to enter it.

With best wishes for a wonderful Shabbos!

Angel for Shabbat, Parashat Pinehas

by Rabbi Marc D. Angel*

The Book of Judges, chapter 11, tells the horrific story of Jephthah and his daughter. Jephthah was chosen to be the leader of the Israelites in their war against Ammon. Before going to battle, he vowed that, if victorious, he would offer "whatsoever comes forth of the doors of my house to meet me" as a burnt offering to the Lord. When he returned triumphantly from the war, it was his daughter—his only child—who came out of the house to greet him with song and dance.

Though sorely grieved by the rash vow he had made, Jephthah said that he could not go back on his word. It appears from the biblical story that he did indeed sacrifice his daughter. Rabbinic tradition, though, includes the view that he did not murder his daughter, but had her life devoted to God. She was doomed to live the rest of her life in isolation from society.

The Midrash raises obvious questions: why didn't Jephthah go to Pinehas, the high priest, and plead for his vow to be annulled? Or why didn't Pinehas take the initiative to go to Jephthah so as to annul the vow and thereby save the daughter's life?

Jephthah thought: I am the judge of Israel, and I will not humiliate myself by going to the high priest—a man of lower rank. Pinehas thought: I am the high priest, and I will not humiliate myself by showing deference to the judge—a man of lower spiritual rank. While each of them was jealous for his own dignity, the life of Jephthah's daughter was sacrificed. The Midrash points out that God punished both Jephthah and Pinehas for their callousness, willfulness and egocentrism.

Yet, why did these leaders allow their pride to prevent them from acting intelligently and morally? I think this Midrash is underscoring a problem endemic to powerful or charismatic leaders. These individuals are accustomed to being honored, to having a retinue of admirers who fawn over them and agree with their every word. They internalize a feeling of invincibility and infallibility; they think that they do not make mistakes, or that they are not allowed to admit that they make mistakes. Their personal honor becomes a "false god"—they worship themselves!

In her book, "The March of Folly," Barbara Tuchman describes the immorality and corruption which characterized a group of Renaissance Popes. Rodrigo Borgia, known as Pope Alexander VI, was an egregious example of depraved and luxurious living. Late in life, he was stricken with a moment of remorse. He told a consistory of cardinals: "The most grievous danger for any Pope lies in the fact that encompassed as he is by flatterers, he never hears the truth about his own person and ends by not wishing to hear it."

I recently learned of a phenomenon called "echo reasoning." This refers not merely to leaders, but to everyone who speaks and listens only to those with similar views. These views are echoed from one to the other, and become louder and more entrenched. It becomes increasingly difficult to think beyond the "truths" of the group. Members of the closed circle become more extreme, less able to reason independently.

To be morally strong and intellectually sound, we need to be open to an array of views and to be open to criticism. We need to engage in honest self-evaluation—trying to avoid the egotism and pride that paralyzed Jephthah and Pinehas, Pope Alexander VI and victims of "echo reasoning." We need to think; to challenge and be challenged; to express our views and listen to the views of others. Unless we have this intellectual and emotional flexibility, we run the risk of becoming our own "false gods". We surround ourselves with flatterers and sycophants—with the result that our own humanity becomes hollow and false.

When political or religious leaders succumb to the illusion of power and infallibility, they become dangerous to themselves and to others. A society or religious group that submits blindly to authoritarian leadership is dooming itself to perdition.

It is fashionable in some religious circles to idolize cult leaders and to refrain from (and even deeply resent) any criticism aimed at these great ones. It is fashionable in some circles to foster "echo reasoning", where it is only licit to speak with others who share the same views, where it is forbidden to hear opposing ideas and critiques. Such circles represent a genuine danger to healthy religious life. Such circles foster leaders who are likely to fall into the patterns of Jephthah and Pinehas.

When this happens, innocent people suffer. Religion grows rigid and intolerant. Voices are silenced.

We can fight "echo reasoning" by insisting on independent reasoning. We can fight autocracy by insisting on freedom of expression. We can combat religious rigidity and intolerance by raising our voices for intellectual vibrancy, compassion and social responsibility.

* Jewishideas.org.

Parshas Pinchas
By Rabbi Yehoshua Singer*

Note: Rabbi Singer's Dvar Torah is coming late this week. I hope to have it in time to be posted with the rest of the materials at PotomacJewish.org. Please look for it there. Thank you. M"H, his weekly Dvar will be back in the usual place in the future.

* Rabbi, Am HaTorah Congregation, Bethesda, MD.

Dvar Torah: Pinchas
By Rabbi Moshe Rube*

Last week we had the distinct privilege of hearing from Rabbi Cary Friedman, a rabbi who has spent his professional life conveying spiritual tools to help our law enforcement be the most professional, balanced, and ethical they can be. (Though as Rabbi Cary made clear, it's in a language that can be used by a secular government.) The United States government uses Rabbi Cary's courses and slowly but surely, they're becoming available to more and more cops across America.

One of the most memorable things Rabbi Cary told us is that the impulse that directs a person to be a cop is the same as the one that directs someone into the clergy. Many police cadets wanted to be members of the clergy but couldn't for outside reasons (like wanting to get married). So they took their desire to better the world and enrolled in the police academy. That's a far cry from wanting power over people as the motivation. I wonder if I could have made a good cop...

This actually answers a question about God's reward to Pinchas. After slaying Zimri for brazenly taking a Moabite woman (who were sent by the nation of Moav to seduce the Jews into sin) and stopping the plague, God rewards him by making him a priest.

How does this reward fit the action? Pinchas was a man of action enforcing God's law to save Israel. A kohen spends his time in the Temple bringing sacrifices and guiding people through the spiritual service. They seem to be at opposites. Just like clergy and cops seem to be.

But we learned that they are not. Clergy and cops are cut from the same cloth of wanting to better the world and achieve a just and orderly society. They approach it in different ways but they're not so different in their mission.

That's what God was telling Pinchas. God rewarded him by giving him the task that would best suit him and his future generations based on their spiritual strengths. Pinchas enforced the law so God made him part of the clergy.

Shabbat Shalom,

* Rabbi, Knesseth Israel Congregation, Birmingham, AL

Rav Kook Torah
Pinchas: The Daily Sheep Offering

The central daily offering in the Temple service was the Tamid, an offering of two lambs. One lamb was offered just after daybreak, at the start of the day's service; the second lamb was offered in the afternoon, at its conclusion. The sheep were purchased using half-shekel coins collected from the entire Jewish people.

Why was a small sheep used for the Tamid offering, and not a more impressive offering? And why use only young animals, less than a year old?¹

Bulls and Sheep

Some Temple offerings were brought from bulls, while others from sheep. A bull is usually a peaceful animal and a productive worker. But on occasion a bull can suddenly transform itself into a terrifying force of danger and destruction. For this reason, a bull is an appropriate offering for those seeking to atone for a life that has tragically fallen into a grave state of ruin and disaster.

Sheep, on the other hand, provide a suitable offering when the problem is not one of destructive behavior, but rather a general spiritual decline and indulgence in materialism. The peaceful but mundane sheep are a fitting metaphor for our daily struggle against the negative influence of involvement in worldly matters.

With regard to the Jewish people as a whole, one cannot speak of widespread corruption and moral decay. The Tamid offering, purchased with funds from the entire nation, does not atone for the extreme vices of evil individuals. Rather, it is meant to meet the nation's general spiritual needs: to uplift lives from the poverty of a materialistic existence and renew their aspirations for a life rich with meaning and holiness.

Yearlings

Why use sheep in their first year? Unlike older beasts, who are often difficult and ornery, these young sheep do not symbolize a life that is dominated by self-centered materialism. Since the intrinsic holiness of the Jewish people does not allow worldly influences to be etched deeply into the nation's soul, the Tamid offering is best represented by young, relatively innocuous animals.

(Sapphire from the Land of Israel. Adapted from Olat Re'iyah vol. I, p. 130.)

1 Maimonides wrote that offerings are *chukim*, Divine statutes for which we do not know the reason. Yet that assertion did not deter scholars throughout the ages — including Maimonides himself - from suggesting possible reasons to explain various details of the Temple service.

Pinchas: The Zealot*

G d spoke to Moses, saying: "Pinchas, the son of Elazar, the son of Aaron the kohen, turned away My wrath from the children of Israel with his zealotry for My sake . . . Therefore . . . I shall grant him My covenant of peace . . ." Numbers 25:11–12

Pinchas's deed evokes many associations—courage, decisiveness and religious passion are several that come to mind—but peace hardly seems one of them. Pinchas, after all, killed two people. True, what he did was condoned by Torah law, and his doing so saved many lives; still, one does not usually think of homicide as a peaceful act.

As the Torah tells it (see Numbers 25; Rashi *ibid.*; Talmud, Sanhedrin 81b–82b and 106a), the wicked prophet Balaam, having failed to undermine the people of Israel's special relationship with G d by harping on their past sins, had an idea. "Their G d abhors promiscuity," he said to Balak, the Moabite king who had hired him to place a curse on Israel. Corrupt them with the daughters of your realm, and you will provoke His wrath upon them.

This time Balaam succeeded. Many Jews, particularly from the tribe of Simeon, were enticed by the Midianite harlots who descended upon the Israelite camp in the Shittim valley, and were even induced to serve Baal Peor, the pagan god of their consorts. When tribunals were set up by Moses to try and punish the idolaters, Zimri, the leader of Simeon, sought to legitimize his tribe's sins by publicly taking a Midianite woman into his tent, before the eyes of Moses and the eyes of the entire community of Israel.

Moses and the nation's elders were at a loss as of what to do. Torah law does not provide for any conventional, court-induced punishment for such an offender. There is a law that gives license for "zealots to smite him," but this provision eluded Moses and the entire Jewish leadership. Only Pinchas remembered it, and had the fortitude to carry it through. He killed Zimri and the Midianite woman, stopping a plague that had begun to rage as the result of G d's wrath against His people.

The Grandfather Issue

The Talmud, referring to G d's opening words to Moses quoted above, asks: The Torah has already told us who Pinchas is, back in the sixth chapter of Exodus and again, but a few short verses before, in Numbers 25:7. Why does the Torah again refer to him as "Pinchas, the son of Elazar, the son of Aaron?"

Rashi, quoting the Talmud and Midrash, explains:

Because the tribes of Israel were mocking him, saying: Have you seen this son of the fattener, whose mother's father fattened calves for idolatrous sacrifices, and now he goes and kills a prince in Israel?! Therefore, G d traced his lineage to Aaron.

(Pinchas's maternal grandfather was Jethro, who prior to his conversion to Judaism was a pagan priest.)

This explanation, however, seems to raise more questions than it answers:

a) What set "the tribes of Israel" against Pinchas? The animosity of one tribe, the tribe of Simeon, would be understandable: he killed their leader and put an end to their pagan orgy. But why was he condemned by the entire community of Israel, most of whom were outraged by Zimri's act and were doubtless grateful for Pinchas's stopping the plague?

b) Of what possible relevance is Jethro's past? If Pinchas acted wrongly, then he is guilty of much worse than having a grandfather who fattened calves for slaughter. "Murderer" would be a more apt epithet than "fattener's grandson." And if it was acknowledged that killing Zimri was the right thing to do, why was the young hero and savior of his people being mocked?

c) If, for whatever reason, Pinchas is to be faulted because of Jethro's idolatrous past, why dwell on the fact that he "fattened calves for slaughter"? What about the fact that he was a pagan priest who (as the Midrash tells us) had served every idol in the world?

d) Whatever the complaint against Pinchas was, how is it refuted by the fact that he was Aaron's grandson?

Who Is a Zealot?

The nature of Zimri's crime made his killing an extremely sensitive moral issue. On the one hand, the Torah deems what he did deserving of death. On the other hand, it does not entrust the carrying out of the sentence to the normal judiciary process, ruling instead that "zealots should smite him." Who, then, qualifies as a zealot?

When a sentence is carried out after the due process of a trial and conviction, there is less of a need to dwell on the motives of the judges and executioner: they're going by the book, and we can check their behavior against the book. But the motives of the zealot who takes unilateral action are extremely important, for his very qualifications as a zealot hinge upon the question of what exactly prompted him to do what he did. Is he truly motivated to "still G d's wrath," or has he found a holy outlet for his individual aggression? Is his act truly an act of peace, driven by the desire to reconcile an errant people with their G d, or is it an act of violence, made kosher by the assumption of the label "zealot"?

The true zealot is an utterly selfless individual—one who is concerned only about the relationship between G d and His people, with no thought for his own feelings on the matter. The moment his personal prejudices and inclinations are involved, he ceases to be a zealot.

(This may be why the law that "zealots smite him" falls under the unique legal category of *halachah v'ein morin kein*, "a law that is not instructed": if a would-be zealot comes to the court and inquires if he is permitted to kill the transgressor, he is not given license to do so (Mishneh Torah, Laws of Forbidden Relations, 12:5). Indeed, the very fact that he has come to ask disqualifies him—someone who needs to ensure, in advance, that he is backed by the court is no zealot. The true zealot has no thought for himself: not of his feelings on the matter, not of his personal safety, not even of the moral and spiritual implications of his act on his own self—he doesn't even care if what he is doing is legal or not. He is simply determined to put an end to a situation that incurs the divine wrath against Israel.)

Aaron's Grandson

According to this, the questions posed above answer each other.

The tribes of Israel knew that the case of Zimri warranted the law that “zealots smite him.” But they were skeptical of Pinchas’s motivations. Why is it, they asked, that no one—not Moses, not the elders, nor anyone in the entire leadership of Israel—was moved to assume the role of zealot, save for Pinchas, “the youngest of the band”? Was Pinchas the most caring and selfless one of them all? Far more likely, said they, that what we have here is an angry young man who thinks he found a Torah-sanctioned outlet for his aggression.

A bit of digging around in the skeletons of Pinchas’s family closet only reinforced their initial doubts. Of course, they said. Look at his grandfather! Few professions are as inhumane as the fattening of calves for slaughter. The fact of Jethro’s idolatry is not what is relevant here, but his nature and personality. Pinchas, the “tribes of Israel” reasoned, must have inherited his grandfather’s natural cruelty, and proceeded to clothe it in the holy vestments of zealotry.

So G d explicitly attached Pinchas’s name to Aaron, the gentlest and most peace-loving man that Israel knew. Aaron, the “lover of peace and pursuer of peace, one who loves humanity and brings them close to Torah.” In character and temperament, G d was attesting, Pinchas takes after his other grandfather, Aaron. Not only is he not inclined to violence—it is the very antithesis of his natural temperament. Pinchas is a man of peace, who did what he did with the sole aim of “turning away My wrath from the children of Israel.”

Two Hypocrites

This also explains the significance of another statement by Rashi. After emphasizing that Pinchas was Aaron’s grandson, the Torah writes: “The name of the smitten Israelite, who was smitten with the Midianite, was Zimri the son of Salu, a tribal prince of the Simeonites.” On which Rashi comments, “On the same occasion that the righteous one’s lineage was cited in praise, the wicked ones lineage was cited in detriment.” But what detriment is there in Zimri’s being a Simeonite prince?

Those who looked with a negative eye on Pinchas’s motives saw his cruelty even more strongly underscored when contrasted with the motives of the man he killed. Pinchas slew a man while that man was engaged in an act of love; Pinchas was giving vent to his own violent passions, while Zimri acted out of a selfless concern for his constituents, putting his own life on the line (for surely he knew that some zealot might take it upon himself to kill him) to save his tribe through his bold attempt to legitimize their sins. If Pinchas did the right thing—these critics were saying—he did it for all the wrong reasons, while Zimri might have done a wrong thing, but was motivated by an altruistic love for his people.

G d, who knows the heart of every man, spoke to dispel this distorted picture. Pinchas, He attested, inherited the peace-loving nature of his grandfather, while Zimri was every inch a descendant of Simeon, whom Jacob rebuked for his heated and violent nature. (“Cursed be their anger, for it was fierce,” said Jacob of Shimon and Levi, rebuking them for the massacre of Shechem and their plot against Joseph, “and their wrath, for it was cruel”—Genesis 49:5.)

Indeed, the Talmud describes a hypocrite as one who “does the deeds of Zimri, and asks to be rewarded like Pinchas.” Zimri’s kindness was the ultimate hypocrisy: instead of fulfilling his role as the leader of his people by prevailing upon them to cease the behavior that was destroying them, he pursued the fulfillment of his own passions without regard to the terrible consequences to their spiritual and physical wellbeing—all the while disguising his act as selfless and self-sacrificial. In contrast, Pinchas’s deed was “hypocritical” in the positive sense: ostensibly violent and cruel, but in truth a selfless act of peace.

* Based on the teachings of the Lubavitcher Rebbe; Courtesy of MeaningfulLife.com

Parshat Pinchas: The Daily Offerings

By Rabbi M. Wisnefsky

Command the children of Israel and say to them: My offering, My food for My fire offerings, a spirit of satisfaction for Me, you shall take care to offer to Me at its appointed time. (Bemidbar 28:2)

My Food: G-d calls the sacrifices His daily "food," for just as food sustains the body, so did the sacrifices draw Divine life-force into the world. Furthermore, the constancy of the daily sacrifices expressed the eternal bond between G-d and the Jewish people.

The daily prayers were instituted to parallel the daily sacrifices and to substitute for them in the absence of the Tabernacle or Temple. Thus, our daily prayers also "sustain" G-d. If we ever doubt how important our prayers can be, we should recall that G-d considers them vital to the world's existence and maintenance. They are as important to Him as our daily bread is to us.

Allegorically, this verse refers to the soul's continuous yearning to ascend out of and transcend the confines of its existence within the body and regain the Divine consciousness it knew before its descent into this world. This love for G-d became fixed in every Jew's soul-consciousness when G-d revealed Himself to us at Mt. Sinai.

– Kehot's Chumash Bemidbar

* An Insight from the Rebbe

Gut Shabbos,
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Parshas Pinchas

As the concerns over Coronavirus continue and the unknowns remain, we find ourselves isolated and bereft of community. While the Zoom sessions alleviate the loss, we still feel as though a part of life has been put on hold and taken from us. There is a Rash"i in this week's Parsha which can give us much comfort and encouragement. It may be that even now we have far more of the essentials of life than we realize.

When Moshe learns that his time is near, he begins to pray for an appropriate successor. He opens his prayer with a unique phrase referring to G-d as "Elokei Haruchos l'chol basar" – "Lord of the spirits of all flesh". Rash"i (Bamidbar 27:16) explains that this reference was itself the beginning of Moshe's prayer. Moshe was saying "Master of the World, it is revealed and known before you the mind of each and every one and they are not similar to each other. Appoint over them a leader who will bear each and every one according to his mind."

Aside from the lessons Moshe's prayer teaches us about leadership, the language Rash"i uses can give us an insight into life in general. Rash"i explains that Moshe's concern was that the leader should have the ability to bear "each and every one". Moshe was not concerned about the leader's relationship with the other officials, with the communities at large, nor even with the individual families. Moshe's concern was for the leader's relationship and interaction with each and every individual.

When we generally think of community and of leaders and government officials, we tend to think of organizations and communal structures. A leader's ability to recognize and understand individuals may help in their understanding of the masses and their ability to develop proper systems for the whole, we would not expect the individual to be their focus. They have a much greater responsibility and cannot be expected to be focused on every individual they meet. Their time must be reserved for the public and the needs of the many.

Rash"i is presenting an entirely different perspective. The function of a leader, and by extension the function of community, is to serve the individuals. This perspective requires some explanation. The Jewish nation was comprised of two and a half million individuals. It was surely not humanly possible to tend to the needs of the community and still be focused on each individual. What did Moshe expect of his successor?

Perhaps the answer can be found in Hashem's response to Moshe. Hashem begins his response by commanding Moshe "Take Yehoshua" (Bamidbar 27:18). Rash"i explains that "Take" in this context means to take him with words – to draw him in with a message of the value of what he is accepting and to tell him "You are fortunate that you merit to guide the children of the Omnipresent." Moshe was not instructed to encourage Yehoshua with the honor and glory of leadership, with the significance of public life nor with what one can accomplish when engaging on a communal level. The message to Yehoshua was to focus on the value and significance of the people he was leading, and the great honor it is to serve them. They are princes and princesses of the most noble stock - they are all the children of G-d, each and every one.

From this perspective, we can understand Moshe's request. The individual is not simply a part of the group. Each individual is a precious and dear irreplaceable child of G-d. Each and every one of us has a role to play in G-d's world, a role so significant and important to G-d that our Rabbis teach us (Sanhedrin 37a) "every person is obligated to say 'The world was created for me'". A Jewish leader's role is not the group. A Jewish leader's role is to ensure that each individual can maximize their own personal connection with G-d.

Although, we currently have limited connection with others, we all still have ourselves. Our individual growth and our own individual awareness of G-d and relationship with G-d is so valuable that He creates the entire world for each of us. We each have very important work to do, even under the circumstances.

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Covenant and Conversation

Rabbi Jonathan Sacks

The Crown All Can Wear

Moses said to the Lord, "May the Lord, God of the spirits of all flesh, appoint a man over this community to go out and come in before them, one who will lead them out and bring them in, so the Lord's people will not be like sheep without a shepherd." (Num. 27:15-17)

Moses was in sight of the Angel of Death. Miriam had died. So had Aaron. And God had told Moses "you too will be gathered to your people, as your brother Aaron was." (Num. 27:12-13), so he knew he was not fated to live long enough to cross the Jordan and enter the land. Who would be his successor? Did he have any thoughts on the matter?

With profound attentiveness, the Sages noted the immediately previous passage. It is the story of the daughters of Tzelophehad, who claim their rights of inheritance in the land, despite the fact that inheritance passed through the male line and their father had left no sons. Moses brought their request to God, who answered that it was to be granted.

Against this background, the Midrash interprets Moses' thoughts as he brings his own request to God, that a successor be appointed: What was Moses' reason for making this request after declaring the order of inheritance? Just this, that when the daughters of Tzelophehad inherited from their father, Moses reasoned: The time is right for me to make my own request. If daughters inherit, it is surely right that my sons should inherit my glory.

The Holy One, Blessed Be He, said to him, "He who keeps the fig tree shall eat its fruit" (Prov. 27:18). Your sons sat idly by and did not study the Torah. Joshua served you faithfully and showed you great honour. It was he who rose early in the morning and remained late at night at your House of Assembly. He used to arrange the benches and spread the mats. Seeing that he has served you with all his might, he is worthy to serve Israel, for he shall not lose his reward.[1]

This is the unspoken drama of the chapter. Not only was Moses fated not to enter the land, but he was also destined to see his sons overlooked in the search for a successor. That was his second personal tragedy.

But it is precisely here that we find, for the first time, one of Judaism's most powerful propositions. Biblical Israel had its dynasties. Both Priesthood and, in a later age, Kingship were handed down from father to son. Yet

there is a staunchly egalitarian strand in Judaism from the outset. Ironically, it is given one of its most powerful expressions in the mouth of the rebel, Korach: "All the congregation are holy and the Lord is in their midst. Why then do you (Moses) set yourselves above the congregation?" (Num. 16:3).

But it was not only Korach who gave voice to such a sentiment. We hear it in the words of Moses himself: "Would that all the Lord's people were Prophets and that the Lord would put His spirit on them" (Num. 11:29).

We hear it again in the words of Hannah when she gives thanksgiving for the birth of her son:

The Lord sends poverty and wealth;
He humbles and He exalts.

He raises the poor from the dust and lifts the needy from the ash heap;

He seats them with princes and has them inherit a throne of honour. (1 Sam. 2:7-8)

It is implicit in the great holiness command: "The Lord said to Moses, 'Speak to the entire assembly of Israel and say to them: Be holy, because I, the Lord your God, am holy'" (Lev. 19:2).

This is not a call to Priests or Prophets – a sacred elite – but to an entire people. There is, within Judaism a profound egalitarian instinct: the concept of a nation of individuals standing with equal dignity in the presence of God.

Korach was wrong less in what he said than in why he said it. He was a demagogue attempting to seize power. But he tapped into a deep reservoir of popular feeling and religious principle. Jews have never been easy to lead because each is called on to be a leader. What Korach forgot is that to be a leader it is also necessary to be a follower. Leadership presupposes discipleship. That is what Joshua knew, and what led to him being chosen as Moses' successor.

The tradition is summed up in the famous Maimonidean ruling: With three crowns was Israel crowned – with the crown of Torah, the crown of Priesthood, and the crown of Kingship. The crown of Priesthood was bestowed on Aaron and his descendants. The crown of Kingship was conferred on David and his successors. But the crown of Torah is for all Israel. Whoever wishes, let them come and take it. Do not suppose that the other two crowns are greater than that of Torah.... The crown of Torah is greater than the other two crowns.[2]

This had immense social and political consequences. Throughout most of the biblical era, all three crowns were in operation. In addition to Prophets, Israel had Kings and an active Priesthood serving in the Temple. The dynastic principle – leadership passing from father to son – still dominated two of the three roles. But with the destruction of the Second Temple, Kingship and a functioning Priesthood ceased. Leadership passed to the Sages who saw themselves as heirs to the Prophets. We see this in the famous one-sentence summary of Jewish history with which Tractate Avot (Ethics of the Fathers) begins: "Moses received the Torah from Sinai and handed it on to Joshua, who handed it on to the elders, the elders to the Prophets, and the Prophets to the men of the Great Assembly" (Mishnah Avot 1:1).

The Rabbis see themselves as heirs to the Prophets rather than to the Priests. In biblical Israel, the Priests were the primary guardians and teachers of Torah. Why did the Rabbis not see themselves as heirs to Aaron and the Priesthood? The answer may be this: Priesthood was a dynasty. Prophetic leadership, by contrast, could never be predicted in advance. The proof was Moses. The very fact that his children did not succeed him as leaders of the people may have been an acute distress to him but it was a deep consolation to everyone else. It meant that anyone, by discipleship and dedication, could aspire to Rabbinic leadership and the crown of Torah.

Hence we find in the sources a paradox. On the one hand, the Torah describes itself as an inheritance: "Moses commanded us the Torah as an inheritance [morasha] of the congregation of Jacob" (Deut. 33:4). On the other hand, the Sages were insistent that Torah is not an inheritance: "R. Yose said: Prepare yourself to learn Torah, for it is not given to you as an inheritance [yerusha]" (Mishnah Avot 2:12).

The simplest resolution of the contradiction is that there are two kinds of inheritance. Biblical Hebrew contains two different words for what we receive as a legacy: yerusha/morasha and nachala. Nachala is related to the word nachal, "a river." It signifies something passed down automatically across the generations, as river water flows downstream, easily and naturally. Yerusha comes from the root yarash, meaning "to take possession." It refers to something to

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which you have legitimate title, but which you need positive action to acquire.

A hereditary title, such as being a duke or an earl, is passed from father to son. So too is a family business. The difference is that the first needs no effort on the part of the heir, but the second requires hard work if the business is to continue to be worth something. Torah is like a business, not a title. It must be earned if it is to be sustained.

The Sages themselves put it more beautifully: “Moses commanded us the Torah as an inheritance [morasha] of the congregation of Jacob” – read not ‘inheritance [morasha]’ but ‘betroted [me’orasa]” (Berachot 57a). By a simple change in pronunciation – turning a shin [=“sh”] into a sin [=“s”], “inheritance” into “betrotal” – the Rabbis signalled that, yes, there is an inheritance relationship between Torah and the Jew, but the former has to be loved if it is to be earned. You have to love Torah if you are to inherit it.

The Sages were fully aware of the social implications of R. Yose’s dictum that the Torah “is not given to you as an inheritance.” It meant that literacy and learning must never become the preserve of an elite: And why is it not usual for scholars to give birth to sons who are scholars? Yosef said: So that it should not be said that the Torah is their inheritance. (Nedarim 81a)

The Sages were constantly on their guard against exclusivist attitudes to Torah. Equality is never preserved without vigilance – and indeed there were contrary tendencies. We see this in one of the debates between the schools of Hillel and Shammai: “Raise up many disciples” – The school of Shammai says: A person is to teach only one who is wise, humble, of good stock, and rich.

But the school of Hillel says: Everyone is to be taught. For there were many transgressors in Israel who were attracted to the study of Torah, and from them sprang righteous, pious, and worthy men. To what may it be compared? “To a woman who sets a hen to brood on eggs – out of many eggs, she may hatch only a few, but out of a few [eggs], she hatches none at all.”[3]

One cannot predict who will achieve greatness. Therefore Torah must be taught to all. A later episode illustrates the virtue of teaching everyone: Once Rav came to a certain place where, though he had decreed a fast [for rain], no rain fell. Eventually someone else stepped forward in front of Rav before the Ark and prayed, “Who causes the wind to blow” – and the wind blew. Then he prayed, “Who causes the rain to fall” – and the rain fell.

Rav asked him: What is your occupation [i.e., what is your special virtue that causes God to answer your prayers]? He replied: I am a teacher of young children. I teach Torah to

the children of the poor as well as to the children of the rich. From those who cannot afford it, I take no payment. Besides, I have a fish pond, and I offer fish to any boy who refuses to study, so that he comes to study. (Ta’anit 24a)

It would be wrong to suppose that these attitudes prevailed in all places at all times. No nation achieves perfection. An aptitude for learning is not equally distributed within any group. There is always a tendency for the most intelligent and scholarly to see themselves as more gifted than others and for the rich to attempt to purchase a better education for their children than the poor. Yet to an impressive – even remarkable – degree, Jews were vigilant in ensuring that no one was excluded from education and that schools and teachers were paid for by public funds. By many centuries, indeed millennia, Jews were the first to democratise education. The crown of Torah was indeed open to all.

Moses’ tragedy was Israel’s consolation. “The Torah is their inheritance.” The fact that his successor was not his son, but Joshua, his disciple, meant that one form of leadership – historically and spiritually the most important of the three crowns – could be aspired to by everyone. Dignity is not a privilege of birth. Honour is not confined to those with the right parents. In the world defined and created by Torah, everyone is a potential leader. We can all earn the right to wear the crown.

[1] Numbers Rabbah 21:14.

[2] Maimonides, Mishneh Torah, Hilchot Talmud Torah 3:1.

[3] Avot DeRabbi Natan, version 2, ch. 4.

Shabbat Shalom: Rabbi Shlomo Riskin

“Moses said to the Lord, ‘May the Lord, the God who gives breath to all living things, appoint someone over this community to go out and come in before them, one who will lead them out and bring them in, so that the Lord’s people will not be like sheep without a shepherd’” (Numbers 27:15-17)

Moses’s request is made immediately after God instructs him to climb Mount Abarim and take a glimpse of the Promised Land—after which “he will be gathered to his family-nation.”

God explains that Moses must now relinquish his leadership because he did not sanctify God when he struck the rock instead of speaking to it.

On what basis is Joshua chosen by God to be Moses’ successor? The Midrash (Tanhuma Pinhas 11) suggests that the most logical choice would have been the more intellectually gifted Phinehas or Eleazar the priest, or alternatively, the personal choice of Moses himself—his own sons (see Rashi on Num. 27:16). The Midrash explains the choice of Joshua by citing a biblical verse: “He who tends a fig tree will eat its fruit, and he who

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looks after his master will be honored. Let the one who watches over the fig tree get to eat of its fruits” (Prov. 27:18).

Joshua was the devoted servant who never left Moses’s tent (Ex. 33:11). He was such a faithful disciple that he was absent from the encampment during the sin of the golden calf because he remained all 40 days at the foot of Mount Sinai, waiting for Moses to come down from the mountain (Exodus 32:17).

But why was “devotion” the primary consideration for a successor to Moses? After all, the most unique Mosaic quality was his outstanding intellect, the fact that he was able to connect and cleave to the active intellect of the Divine (as it were) so that Moses’s Torah and God’s Torah would merge together as one. Moses was a “law-giver King,” a ruler whose precepts of compassionate righteousness and moral justice would rule Israel until the end of time. Why choose the outstanding caretaker, the best shamash, not the most praiseworthy jurist, the leading expert in analysis and halachic judgment? I would submit that, although we are rightly called the “people of the book,” and Jews throughout the ages have been proud of their intellectual accomplishments in Torah, in philosophy and in science (witness the large proportion of Jews who have won Nobel prizes), our Torah-Book is first and foremost meant to foster the well-being of the people; it is “for your own good”: “Its ways are pleasant ways, and all its paths are peace. It is a tree of life to those who embrace her; those who lay hold of her will be blessed” (Prov. 3: 17-18).

Our Talmud’s ultimate objective must be to create a perfect society which looks out for the welfare of each individual; hence Maimonides concludes his magnum opus, the Mishne Torah, with a description of the Messianic Age, the period of human fulfillment and redemption which is the purpose of our entire halachic system. And it is not by chance that the source of our Oral Law, according to the Midrash is within the contextual frame of the Divine characteristics, the God of love, compassion, freely giving grace, long-suffering, great loving-kindness, and truth. We may be the people of the Book, but the objective of the Book is the welfare of the people—one might even add, “to the people, by the people (human input in the Oral Law) and for the people.”

The true fruit of the tree of Torah is the Jewish people, whom Torah has informed, nurtured and recreated for the past 4,000 years. One can become too involved with the tree, so that one forgets that its purpose is its fruits, so involved in the analysis and casuistry of the logic that one overlooks the human enhancement which is its truest aim.

Only one who watches over the tree and worries about preserving its fruits has the right to legislate for them.

That's why Joshua is appointed just as Moses is reminded of his sin at the "waters of strife," when he strikes the rock (which symbolizes the often hard and stiff-necked nation) rather than speaking to it the loving words of our Oral Law. That is why the most fundamental task facing Joshua must be to understand the various spiritual needs (ruah) of the people comprising the nation and suit his decisions (as much as possible) to their temperaments and requirements. He must sensitively nurture his people just like a shepherd nurtures his flock, not only leading from up-front but also personally "bringing them in and taking them out" whenever necessary. Joshua is a true leader, who proved himself by "nurturing" and tending to the needs of his rebbe and learned from his rebbe to be devoted to the needs of his nation.

Torah.Org: Rabbi Yissocher Frand

Pinchas Did Not Daven – He Engaged in Argumentation

A pasuk in Psalms says, "Vaya'mod Pinchas vaYefalel, va'Teaztar haMageifa" [Tehillim 106:30]. This is commonly translated "And Pinchas stood and prayed and the plague stopped." However, the Talmud questions this translation of the pasuk: "Rav Eliezer says the pasuk does not say 'vaYispalet' [he prayed], but rather 'vaYefalel'" [Sanhedrin 44a]. The nuance of this unique form of the root word, according to Rav Eliezer, teaches that Pinchas argued a case before the Almighty (translating the word vaYefalel from the word pelilim, which connotes judges and judgment [as in Shemos 21:22]). VaYefalel does not mean Pinchas prayed, but rather Pinchas presented a compelling case before the Master of the Universe, he contended with Him.

The Gemara presents Pinchas' argument according to Rav Eliezer: "Because of these two people (Zimri and Kozbi), twenty-four thousand people should be killed? (And even more people were going to be killed before Pinchas 'intervened'). It is not right!"

We can add an interesting observation. The Sefer HaKrim from Rav Yosef Albo discusses a very fundamental question: How and why does prayer help? If a person is sick, Heaven forbid, that means that the Almighty ruled regarding this person that he should be sick. How then is prayer supposed to help? Is our intention to change the Ribono shel Olam's Mind? Is the expectation that after we pray, the Almighty will say, "Do you know what? I never thought of that! I will change my decree regarding this person?" Obviously, when the Almighty does something, it is Perfect and Righteous. So what is the whole point of davening?

Rav Yosef Albo's answer to this question is that something happens to the person who prays. When a person davens, he becomes a different person. The law or the decree that the Almighty issued regarding 'Ploni son of Ploni'

was for a different person. Because of the person's prayers and his drawing closer to the Almighty, he changes into a different person upon whom the decree was never issued.

This explains something else, which with some understanding of a bit of the rules of Hebrew grammar, is most enlightening. The Hebrew verb for praying is mispallel, which is a reflexive grammatical tense (hispa-el). For example, it becomes similar to the expression Ani mislabesh – I am dressing myself – which is also a reflexive verb. However, why in conjunction with prayer is the verb reflexive (hispa-el)?

The answer is because the person who prays undergoes a metamorphosis of sorts. He becomes a different person. This is one of the theories of how prayer helps – it is because through your prayers and your intense communication with Hashem, you change! If that is the case, it is very appropriate why over here the verb form is not reflexive (hispa-el) but it is (pea-el), vaYefallel. Pinchas did not need to change. He was a Tzadik [righteous person]. Pinchas did not engage in prayer in order to change himself. Rather, he engaged in dispute and argumentation with the Almighty, as vaYefallel connotes the idea of Pelilus [seeking justice before Judges].

"Elokai HaRuchos" Is the G-d of Unique Spirits

When Moshe Rabbeinu was given the decree that he was about to die, in the spirit of all great Jewish leaders, he was not necessarily worried about himself, but requested that G-d appoint an appropriate successor to lead the Jewish nation. The language he uses, "Yifkod Hashem Elo-kai haRuchos l'chol basar, Ish al ha'Eidah" [May Hashem, G-d of the spirits of all flesh, appoint a man over the assembly] [Bamidbar 27:16], is itself somewhat peculiar. There is only one other place in Tanach where the Almighty is referred to by the unique formulation "Elokai HaRuchos l'chol basar" [G-d of the spirits of all flesh] [Bamidbar 16:22].

Chazal take note of this unique expression. The Medrash comments in this context: "Just as people's faces are dissimilar to one another, so too their opinions are different one from another." This is a very famous Chazal. No two people think alike, act alike, or have the same personality. People can share features and personality traits but no two people are identical. Every person has his own opinion, outlook, and perspective. This, the Medrash explains, is why Moshe invokes here the expression "G-d of the spirits..." You know what makes every single human being tick. You know how every individual is different. Your children each have their own opinion about matters. When I am now departing from them, I plead with You to appoint for them a leader who will be sensitive to the idiosyncrasies and uniqueness of every single individual. The leader should be able to relate

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to the whole spectrum of humanity that makes up Klal Yisrael.

There are two observation I would like to share on this. The first is an observation I once heard in the name of Rav Shlomo Eiger. Rav Eiger notes – if Chazal want to say over here that people are different, why did they use the expression "Just as their faces are different, so too their opinions are different"? Why could the Rabbis not have stated simply – "People are different"? There must be some significance in the formulation of the simile comparing differing faces to differing opinions.

Rav Shlomo Eiger asked, "Do you have anything against me because you do not like my face?" The assumption of course is that the fact that my face is different than your face should not bother you in the least. The fact that people's appearances are different from one another does not bother anyone. On the contrary, everybody wants individuality. I do not want anyone looking exactly like me. Similarly, it should not bother anyone that another person does not think like him either! This is the idea that Chazal are trying to convey – just as people's faces are different from one another and no one cares, so too their attitude about opinions should be the same. Why, then, are people so intolerant when someone else has a different view? Somehow, people cannot tolerate it when someone sees matters differently from them. "It has to be my way or the highway!"

I saw a second related observation from the writings of Rav Dovid Povarsky, zt"l: There are no two human beings in the world who look exactly alike. That means that even people such as fathers and sons, brothers, and even identical twins who basically look alike, there are always at least slight ways to tell them apart. Now consider, how many people have walked on the face of the earth since the beginning of time? Billions upon billions — and nobody looks the same.

Why is that? It is because we all have a different shrosh neshama [root soul]. Our physical bodies are a reflection of our souls. Since our souls by definition are different, our faces need to be different as well. This explains why (even according to those opinions that they have some type of pseudo soul) animals do not have different appearances. Have you ever looked at squirrels? Examine any two squirrels – they look exactly alike! Even cows who might have spots or markings distributed differently over their bodies, is the face of one cow so different from the face of another cow?

The answer is that just as animals lack sophisticated souls with nuances of difference and variation, so too their outward physical manifestations similarly lack distinction and variety. Humans are totally different. Our opinions differ from one another and are not

alike because our inner root souls are different from one another.

Dvar Torah

Chief Rabbi Ephraim Mirvis

How does one become a Rabbi? Well, the answer is by receiving ‘semicha’ from another Rabbi because it’s only a Rabbi who can create a new Rabbi. So, therefore, the obvious follow-up question is ‘what is semicha?’ The answer comes from parashat Pinchas. There we read how, immediately prior to his death, Moshe Rabbeinu wanted to ensure that his successor would be appointed within his lifetime – and that’s exactly what happened. Yehoshua (Joshua) became the leader of the people in the presence of Moshe.

Hashem instructed Moshe to take Joshua “v’semachta et yadcha eilav” – ‘and lean your hand upon his head’. So the term ‘semicha’ implies the resting of hands upon the head of an individual – and that’s how semicha was originally given. We dispensed long ago with the placing of hands on the head of the recipient, but the term ‘semicha’ for rabbinic ordination still remains till this day, and I believe it is charged with enormous significance.

Rav Moshe Feinstein explains that when thinking of the semicha, we shouldn’t primarily think of the person giving the semicha, placing his hands upon somebody’s head but rather, of what the person receiving the semicha is doing, because he needs to bow his head.

In so doing, he is paying respect to the person who is giving him the semicha – and through that person to all previous people who have had semicha, going all the way back to Moshe Rabbeinu who received the Torah at Mount Sinai.

Therefore, when creating a new Rabbi, it’s not as if we are giving the person a blank sheet of paper, inviting him to write the next chapter of laws and customs and practices of the Jewish people from scratch – no! It’s as if we are giving him some very precious bricks for him to add on to the ongoing building of the edifice which is rooted in Sinai. And that’s exactly what you Yehoshua was doing. As he bowed his head, he was paying respect to Moshe and to what had transpired at Mount Sinai. And in turn, as we learn in the first Mishna of Pirkei Avot, Joshua handed it down to the elders; and the elders to the prophets; and the prophets to the men of the Great Assembly; all the way through to us today.

Therefore when it comes to determining the Halacha for new situations which have never existed before, we interpret the Halacha on the basis of the foundations of our ‘mesorah’, passed down from generation to generation – and what applies within the realm of our rabbis and the ‘paskining’ of halacha applies within

community life as well.

As a nation, we know that we can only know where we’re going to if we know where we’re coming from.

OTS Dvar Torah

Female advocates – a precept from the Torah

Osnat Sharon, Rabbinical Court Advocate and civil attorney

The daughters of Tzelofchad merited far more than just inheriting their father’s portion of the land. They merited to have a chapter of the Torah in their names, as well as to marry and start families.

“The daughters of Tzelofchad came forward... and they stood before Moses, Eleazar the priest... and the whole assembly, at the entrance of the Tent of Meeting...” The episode concerning the daughters of Tzelofchad opens a window to the study of the laws of inheritance in the Torah. Seemingly, the Torah should have begun with chapter 27, verse 8: “Further, speak to the Israelite people as follows: ‘If a man dies without leaving a son, you shall transfer his property to his daughter. If he has no daughter, you shall assign his property to his brothers. If he has no brothers, you shall assign his property to his father’s brothers. If his father had no brothers, you shall assign his property to his nearest relative in his own clan, and he shall inherit it. This shall be the law of procedure for the Israelites, in accordance with Hashem’s command to Moses.’”

This would be the law, put simply. If so, why did the Torah tell us the whole story of the daughters of Tzelofchad?

Revisiting these verses, we read about five single women. In those days, they would certainly be considered “old maids”, and they had come to demand what they deserved. The verse states: “The daughters of Tzelofchad ... stood before Moses, Eleazar the priest... and the whole assembly, at the entrance of the Tent of Meeting...” The daughters had come to the Tent of Meeting, the most central and sanctified spot in the Israelite camp, in which the Divine spirit had dwelled. They didn’t dispatch emissaries or public relations agents. They came themselves, with the full force of their strong personalities. The text doesn’t just refer to them communally as the daughters of Tzelofchad. Each of them is mentioned by name. Not everyone in the Torah merits to be called by their first names; the daughters of Tzelofchad came to represent themselves, in the name of their father. They made a point of explaining that their father had died for his personal sin, and that he was not a member of Korach’s congregation. The Torah then describes their pedigree, going all the way back to Joseph.

The daughters of Tzelofchad did not hide behind a curtain or wear masks on their faces

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out of modesty. They approached confidently and courageously, presenting their arguments to Moses and all of the dignitaries of the community. Such boldness! Nothing they said was apologetic and they never tried to justify themselves. Instead, they spoke succinctly and convincingly.

Essentially, the daughters of Tzelofchad had made a request that might appear feministic today: they wanted an inheritance. “Give us an estate among our father’s kinsmen”...

Were they seeking gender equality?

Moreover, the daughters of Tzelofchad, whom Rashi calls “wise”, engage in a critical analysis of Halacha without a second thought. Noting the words of the Halacha, “for he did not have a son”, they reassert that if Tzelofchad were to have a son, they wouldn’t have made any claims. Rashi calls them “wise women” for good reason. The daughters of Tzelofchad approached Moses and the entire congregation, demanding an inheritance. They said that it was obvious to them that they deserve an inheritance – but have no worry. We haven’t come to foment a revolution. We have no intention of changing the core principles of Jewish law, as set forth in the Torah. It is true that at the outset, daughters do not inherit. Yet what should be done, considering that our father had no sons?

We could suppose that Tzelofchad’s daughters had surprised Moses with this question, and that he wasn’t ready with an answer to it. Even the great prophet Moses had forgotten this tenet of Jewish law. Our sages say that this Parsha should have been written by Moses, but that “the daughters of Tzelofchad merited to write this Halacha themselves”. Single, assertive feminists who wrote the Halacha themselves. God attests to this, saying “The plea of Zelophehad’s daughters is just”. Our sages add, “Content is the person with whose words God agrees.”

What was so great about what these women had done that earned them such praise from the Torah, from Jewish sages, and from all of the commentators? After all, were they alive today, wouldn’t they be considered “loud-mouthed feminists” from women’s organizations? Like the toanot rabbanivot, the female rabbinic court advocates, whom the rabbinical court system had taken so long to recognize as wise, assertive, studious and righteous women? Could they be likened with the women who demand to dance with Torah scrolls during Simhat Torah, or who partake in the joy of Purim by reading the Megillah?!

The daughters of Tzelofchad teach us that to achieve a breakthrough, you need to be courageous and think clearly. If you believe that your claim is just and correct, there’s no need to justify yourself, be more modest, or ask yourself “why me”, or “Why can’t someone else do it?”

If you have something to say, say it! Say it loud and clear.

As we read in the Song of Songs: “Let me see your face, Let me hear your voice, for your voice is sweet”. The words of truth are being spoken. The daughters of Tzelofchad teach us what female assertiveness is all about. They show and teach us that if we firmly and unflinchingly believe that what we’re doing is right, we will achieve results. Mahla, Noa, Hogla, Milka and Tirtza came to represent themselves, pure Halacha, their families and all of the generations that were to come. The Torah describes their pedigree, going all the way back to Joseph, for good reason.

Our sages explain that the women of the desert generation were not punished for the sin of the spies because of their great love of the Land of Israel. The sages emphasize that the women felt a greater love for the land of Israel than the men, since the men said: “...let us head back for Egypt”, while the women asked “to be given an inheritance”.

The wisdom of the daughters of Tzelofchad, and their keen perception of reality, teach us an important lesson in the ways of the world. They had no intent of changing the essence of Jewish law, but rather to augment it. In this way, they indicate to Moses, Elazar and the tribal princes that they are on the same side. They are religious, Orthodox women. This is how they stave off any opposition their claims might have produced.

We’ll end with the verses at the end of Parshat Masei, which tell us that the daughters of Tzelofchad were the wives of the sons of their uncles. Our sages explain that thanks to their righteousness, they merited to marry their own cousins, within their tribe, so that their father’s inheritance did not pass to another tribe. Their reward seems to be threefold. They merited an inheritance in the land of Israel. They merited that an entire chapter of the Torah was written in their names, and ultimately, they merited to start their own families and keep their inheritance within their tribe.

Dvar Torah: TorahWeb.Org

Rabbi Ahron Lopiansky

Kanous: Anarchy or Ultimate Justice?

This parsha start by lauding Pinchas for his courageous act of kanous - zealously. Bnai Yisroel are saved because of his act and he himself is granted eternal priesthood and an eternal covenant with Hashem. This would definitely indicate that what he had done was most worthy.

Yet when we take a closer look at the associated halachos, we are perplexed. For instance, the halachah is that if a kanoi first asks beis din what to do, he is never granted permission to act as Pinchas did (Rambam Hilchos Isurei Biah, 12:4). Additionally, the kanoi can only kill the transgressors while they

are engaged in the sinful act. If he does so a moment later, he is judged as a murderer and punished. Even more vexing is the ruling (Sanhedrin 81b) that had Zimri turned around and killed Pinchas in self-defense, he would have been within in his rights, and therefore innocent of murder! This all leaves us to wonder: was Pinchas's act laudatory or murder; was Pinchas right or wrong?

The Talmud Yerushalmi (Sanhedrin 48b) goes a step further and states that this type of action is and was disapproved by the Chachomim, and they actually wished to put him into cherem. The only reason they did not do so was because the Divine Spirit declared that a covenant was being forged with Pinchas on account of this act! But how does this square with the dictum, "lo baShomayim he", that the chachomim, and not new information emanating from Heaven, have the final say in determining the halacha? And if, on the other hand, the Divine Spirit does have the final say, then why do the chachomim still disapprove of kanoim?

The topic of kanous also raises troubling questions about a society that allows itself to be run by extra-judicial actions and vigilantes. Is this not anarchy?

The Akeidah (Sha'ar 83) give us tremendous insight into this parsha and I will try to rephrase his lengthy and somewhat hidden words.

The world of mitzvos is aimed at one's rational faculties. The mitzvos of punishing sinners comprise a mandate imposed on the courts of Klal Yisroel. Concomitantly, those sins that are beyond the pale of human judgement, are only for G-d to judge and punish as He sees fit.

A person, however, possesses a spirit, that rises above his intellect. If a man is so moved by righteousness that he abandons logic and is willing to sacrifice himself [e.g. Pinchas exposing himself to the possibility of Zimri killing him in self-defense], it is his spirit rising to the occasion. His soul, thereby becomes an emissary for the Divine Beis Din, so to speak, and he is now acting as an agent of the Divine Court, not as an agent of a human beis din.

An analogous situation would be where one sees an innocent person being murdered. Assuming the witness has no chance of rescuing the victim, reason dictates that he protect his own life by not intervening. But if this witness has such a strong sense of moral outrage that he nonetheless stands up and fights the attacker - even if it was to no avail, and makes "no sense" - we would commend his noble spirit of righteousness, that could not sit idly by and tolerate the injustice that was being perpetrated. Thus kanous is not, and can't be, mandated. It must be the spontaneous reaction of a noble spirit who can't tolerate evil, no matter what the consequences.

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Rav Moshe Chaim Luzzato (Mesilas Yesharim, chapter 19) phrases it thus: It is obvious that a person who truly loves his friend will not be able to tolerate someone hitting him or humiliating him, and will surely defend him. Similarly, one who loves Hashem's Name will not be able to see its desecration by a wanton disregard for transgressions.

This kanous is, on the one hand, an expression of the ultimate nobility of the human spirit. But on the other hand, it is greatly suspect. It requires an extraordinary purity of motive and precision of timing.

The Netziv (Ha'amek Davar, Breishis 34:25) expresses this most precisely when describing Shimon and Levi's killing of Shechem: Though the two brothers were united in their great fury, and personal endangerment, their motives were extremely different. One was merely expressing the human response to an insult to family pride, and that is an "alien fire" [i.e. an improper and un-Jewish motive.] The other was coming with a zealously for G-d's justice without personal interest or gain. But even that motive needs to be applied at the right time and place, for if not, it too can be very destructive.

Yes, the rabbis condemn zealously, for it is a non-halachic response, done out of motives that are suspect. But when the Divine Spirit revealed to us that Pinchas was the unique individual whose actions stemmed from the noblest of spirits and purest of motives, expressed at the right time and place, then we rightfully hail him as the savior of Israel!

Torah.Org Dvar Torah

by Rabbi Label Lam

Keep the Peace

Then an Israelite man came and brought the Midianite woman to his brethren, before the eyes of Moshe and before the eyes of the entire congregation of the Children of Israel, while they were weeping at the entrance of the Tent of Meeting. Pinchas the son of Eleazar the son of Aaron the Kohen saw this, arose from the congregation, and took a spear in his hand. He went after the Israelite man into the chamber and drove [it through] both of them; the Israelite man, and the woman through her stomach, and the plague ceased from the children of Israel. Those that died in the plague numbered twenty four thousand. HASHEM spoke to Moshe, saying: Pinchas the son of Eleazar the son of Aaron the Kohen has turned My anger away from the children of Israel by his zealously avenging Me among them, so that I did not destroy the children of Israel because of My zeal. Therefore, say, “I hereby give him My covenant of peace. (Bamidbar 25:6-12)

A peace prize for this!? Yes! It seems we must redefine “peace”. What it means and what it doesn’t mean. Obviously peace is not passivity. Peace is not yielding weakly to

force. Rather peace is a harmonious mixture of opposites, strength and kindliness. It's the surgical path to TRUTH that does the least harm and the most good in a just way. "All his ways are ways of pleasantness and all His paths are paths of peace!" The practitioner of peace is distinguished by the strictness he applies to himself, while reserving generosity for others.

The following amazing story portrays the "way of peace", it was recently circulated from a famous Mechanech Rav Shloime Levenstein from Eretz Yisrael: A young Rebbe turned to an older Rebbe, "Shalom Aleichem", The Rebbe replied "Alechem Shalom. With whom do I have the honor of speaking with?" The young Rebbe replied "30 years ago I was a Talmid in your Cheder". The older Rebbe replied "please remind me your name... oh yes I remember the name, and what do you do for a living?" The young Rebbe replied "I teach in a Cheder". "You teach in a Cheder? That's great!" "And this is all thanks to you!" "You teach because of me, how come?" The young Rebbe replied: "I will remind the Rebbe of the story and the Rebbe will understand".

"When I was a young boy in Cheder, one of my classmates, who was not yet bar mitzvah, received an expensive watch. In those days no one had a watch before they turned bar mitzvah. Only if they came from a wealthy family, they would receive a watch as a gift. All my classmates gathered around him to see the new watch. We were all jealous. During the break, the boy put the watch on his desk and when he returned, the watch had disappeared.

Our Rebbe came to the classroom and told us that whoever took the watch must return it. Of course no one did. Then he told us to stand by the wall with our eyes closed and he checked our pockets one by one until he came to me and found the watch in my pocket. I was sure he would get me in big trouble, but to my surprise, he took the watch without anyone noticing, sat back in his chair, and said to the kids "I want you to know that the watch was not stolen; it was taken by one of the boys who just struggling with the Yetzer Hara. We have to give him the opportunity to fix what he did. This boy is not a thief and he is not a bad boy". This Rebbe was you!

I was so relieved that you told everyone to close their eyes so they would not know it was me. I thought that later on you will take me to the side and give me Musar. I waited for you to confront me, but as the days went by, you had not mentioned anything to me. Slowly, the incident was forgotten.

And I was so amazed that I thought to myself that if this is what it means to be a Rebbe, then I would also want to be a Rebbe in Cheder. That is why I became a Melamed. "Do you remember the incident? Do you remember that it was me who took the watch?" The old Rebbe replied, "No I do not remember" "How come the Rebbe does not remember?" The Rebbe saw it was me!" "I did not see" said the Rebbe "my eyes were also closed..."

This Rebbe did a surgery to recover the watch while shielding the identity and preserving the dignity of the guilty party.

So too Pinchus did a difficult but necessary surgery to stop the hemorrhaging in order to restore and keep the peace.

Bar Ilan University: Dvar Torah

Tolerance as a Societal Value

By Elishai ben Yitzhak

The "search committee" for a person who would lead the Israelites, inheriting Moses' place, lists the basic qualifications for candidates, according to Moses' request. One of the qualities required was that he be "an inspired man" (Num. 27:18). In explaining this trait, the *midrash* takes it in the direction of tolerance. The reason for requiring this has to do with the multiplicity of different opinions to be found in society. In the words of the *midrash*:¹

Just as the countenances (of people) are not alike, so also their views, and each person has his own opinion... So it says, "He makes a weight for the spirit" (Job 28:25)—for the spirits of each and every individual creature. There is proof that it is so from the request which Moses made of the Holy One, blessed be He, in the hour of his death. He said to Him: Master of the Universe! The views of everyone are well known to you, and your children's views are not all alike. When I depart from them, I pray, appoint them a leader who will be tolerant of each person's view.

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Justice Menahem Elon commented on this as follows: That is the lesson of leadership and government in the heritage of Israel—tolerance for every individual and every group, according to their opinions and outlooks.²

"Tolerance is a font of life."³ The principle of tolerance as a fundamental principle necessary for maintaining human society appears in Jewish sources in many realms,⁴ and can be defined in a variety of ways. For the purposes of this article:

Tolerance means respecting the personal feelings of every individual; tolerance means being considerate of the views and sensibilities of every person insofar as they are human beings; tolerance means attempting to understand one's fellow, even if that person behaves contrary to convention; tolerance means being ready to compromise, compromising between the individual and the generality, compromising between one individual and another. This compromise does not mean foregoing on one's principles, but it means foregoing the use of any means to achieve one's ends.⁵

However, while we may recognize the lofty ideal of mutual respect as a supreme value, the experience of our existence, the social discourse, and the realities of everyday life all point to a deep chasm between the ideal and its realization; so much so, that looking from the sidelines one might mistakenly think that the principle of tolerance belongs to the group of general rules of which it is said, "that is the *halakhah*, but we do not instruct thus." One of the prevalent problems in our lives is the inability to accept the views of the other, and sometimes one feels that the truth lies entirely on one side, and the other side is altogether wrong.

The Torah, whose ways are pleasant ways, and all her paths, peaceful, deals extensively with the values of tolerance, and these values are interspersed throughout Jewish halakhic sources, Jewish law and philosophy in all generations.⁶ Here it should be noted that even tolerance has its limits,⁷ but for the purposes of this article we shall deal with the principle itself and not its limits.⁸

The Talmudic story about Rabbi Meir, who was caused trouble by ruffians in the neighborhood, is well known. Suffering sorely from them, Rabbi Meir prayed that they might

¹ Numbers Rabbah (Vilna ed.), *Parashat Pinchas*, 21; also cf. *Midrash Tanhuma* (Buber ed.), *Parashat Pinchas*, 1. Originally published in Hebrew in 2018; this translation has not been reviewed by the author.

² Justice Elon, Elections Appeal 2/84, *Neiman et al. v. Central Committee for the Elections to the 11th Knesset* 39(2) *Piskei Din* 225, p. 296.

<http://versa.cardenzo.yu.edu/sites/default/files/upload/opinions/Neiman%20v.%20Chairman%20of%20the%20Central%20Elections%20Committee.pdf>

³ Rabbi Abraham Isaac Kook, *Iggerot ha-Rayah*, no. 871.

⁴ On tolerance in Judaism see Aviezer Ravitzky, "She'elat ha-Sovlanut ba-Mesoret ha-Yehudit: Bein Pluralism le-Paternalism," *Bein Samhut le-Otonomia bi-Mesoret Yisrael* (Ze'ev Safrai and Avi Sagi, eds.), 1997, pp. 396-420. For a discussion of varieties of tolerance, see: Yossi Nehushtan, "Ikaron ha-Sovlanut," *Iyyunei Mishpat* 34 (1971), p. 5; also: Yirmiyahu Yovel, "Sovlanut ke-Hesed u-khi-Zekhut," *Hyun* 45, p. 482.

⁵ Aharon Barak, "Al ha-'Erekh bi-Devar Sovlanut," *Mivhar Katavim*, Part 3—*Ekronot Hukatiyim*, 2017, p. 169. On the need for tolerance in a democracy, see Karl Mannheim, *Darkah shel Demokratiya*, 1958, p. 177.

⁶ On the distinction between pluralism and tolerance see Avi Sagi, *Elu ve-Elu—Mashma'uto shel ha-Siah ha-Hilkhati*, 1996, pp. 190-197.

⁷ Aviad HaCohen, "Nitgaltah Humrah Hadasha!," *Akdamut* 27, p. 127, 131.

⁸ Cf., for example, Rabbi A. I. Kook, *Iggerot ha-Rayah*, Vol. 3, no. 871; Rabbi A. I. Kook, *Ein Ayah, Berakhot* ch. 4, par. 4.

die, thinking in this manner to be rid of the trouble they were causing him. His wife Beruriah, however, asked that he change his prayer, not praying for them to die but rather for them to repent and mend their ways.⁹

Underlying the disagreement between Rabbi Meir and his wife Beruriah was their attitude toward the other, towards someone who holds different opinions from one's own, to someone with whom one disagrees, a great chasm separating one person from the other. In Rabbi Meir's view, the solution was to eradicate the phenomenon and wipe it out. Following his approach, as reflected in the story, there is no place for people who hold different views. In contradistinction, his wife in her great wisdom attempted to present a different angle according to which the solution to such a problem cannot be to pray for the death of the other, rather, the opposite—to pray for mercy on them, that they turn back and improve their ways.¹⁰

The Talmud does not inform us at what stage in Rabbi Meir's life this episode took place, but we may surmise that Beruriah's words had an impact on him.¹¹ The figure of Rabbi Meir, as reflected in other sources, is of a person who knew how to make room for other opinions, even if they contradicted his own, so he is a figure who can teach us tolerance. For example, Rabbi Meir always rose before elderly common folk.¹² He conversed¹³ with and even paid condolences to Abnomos of Gadara, a great sage¹⁴ and philosopher whose status was compared to that of Balaam.¹⁵ Rabbi Meir remained faithful to his rabbi, Elisha ben Abuyah, who turned heretic and was dubbed *Aher*, "the Other."

Only a person as greatly tolerant as Rabbi Meir, who "found a pomegranate, ate the [fruit] within and discarded the peel,"¹⁶ would be capable of seeing the inner qualities and not just the outer shell of the Other. It was Rabbi Meir who advised caution in dealing with the minority opinion, notwithstanding the principle of "follow the majority," and argued

that in certain situations the minority opinion has crucial significance and hence "one should have regard for the minority."¹⁷ This notion of Rabbi Meir's is founded on the overarching principle that guided his life and is formulated in Tractate *Avot* as follows: "Be humble of spirit before all men."¹⁸ Maimonides further elucidated Rabbi Meir's words:

This means that you should be humble not only before the great, but also before any person. With whomever you may be, you should converse and associate with that person as if his stature were greater than yours.¹⁹

Maharsha says in his commentary on the benediction, *hakham ha-razim*,²⁰ "You find among them sixty myriads of different opinions, and that covers the full scope of views."²¹ It follows that the full view on a given matter depends on all the people living in the society; and if the congregation of Israel numbers sixty myriads, each person has a part in the overall thesis, in the mosaic of ordered thought on the matter. Importance also accords to the opinion of the masses and to the views of those who are of lesser understanding. Rav Kook, who dealt extensively with the theme of tolerance,²² explains this approach and instructs us:

In every creation in the world, even in the most elementary human creation, one can discover a wealth of thoughts and feelings, far more than is evident on the surface. Every simple statement, even a common conversation, can provide a wealth of contentment and emotion; just as there is no created being in the world that does not contain hidden strengths.²³

One wonders, is there room for hearing other views, perhaps improper or rejected ones? The Mishnah, Tractate *Eduyot*, deals with the question of whether there is any point in mentioning the minority position in cases where the *halakhah* has been ruled by the approach of the majority or has been decided in accordance with other principles of *halakhah*. This question is asked in the

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Mishnah with reference to the position taken by the School of Shammai. The Mishnah's answer comes from the realm of values: "To teach future generations, that a person should not stand on his view, for the founding fathers did not stand on their views."²⁴ Maimonides elucidates:

A person should not stand on his view, meaning he should not stubbornly insist his notion be upheld, and base himself on it and act according to it; and he should not find it too hard to act in opposition to his view, for the views of the founding fathers, namely Shammai and Hillel, were [on occasion] rejected, and these sages did not insist on adhering to their former opinions.²⁵

This approach is maintained in the work of Rabbi Israel Lifshitz on the Mishnah: "A person should not stand on his view...for it is a great shortcoming in a person's being, a major obstruction to arriving at the truth."²⁶

It seems to me that there is no greater example of accepting the other, accepting a person who is different from you, one whose views are diametrically opposed to yours, than the command in the Torah: "When you see the ass of your enemy (*sona'akha*) lying under its burden and would refrain from raising it, you must nevertheless raise it with him (*azov ta'azov imo*)" (Ex. 23:5). The underlying statement made by this commandment, according to its plain sense, is that even your enemy is a human being. No matter how great the chasm separating you from him, you are still obliged to stand at his side and assist him; he is still "your fellow" and you are not entitled to look away from him. This was well expressed by the Aramaic translation attributed to Jonathan: "At such a moment you shall surely lay aside (*'azov ta'azov*) the hatred (*sin'ah*) that is in your heart."²⁷ *Translated by Rachel Rowen*

⁹ *Berakhot* 10a.

¹⁰ On the disagreement between Rabbi Meir and Beruriah, see Rabbi Abraham Isaac Kook, *Ein Ayah*, Tractate *Berakhot*, Part 1, par. 123.

¹¹ Similarly, in the amoraic period, we have the story of Rabbi Zeira, who used to ask for mercy for delinquents. His death caused them concern, for who would come to their aid now? See *Sanhedrin* 37b.

¹² Jerusalem Talmud (Vilna ed.), *Bikkurim* 3.3: "If Rabbi Meir saw an elderly person, even of the common folk, he would rise from his place for him."

¹³ *Hagigah* 15b.

¹⁴ Genesis Rabbah, ch. 65.20; Exodus Rabbah, ch. 13.

¹⁵ *Eikhah Rabbati*, Proem 2: "The nations of the world had no philosophers as great as Balaam son of Beor and Abnomos of Gadara."

¹⁶ In *Hagigah* 15b the Talmud presents another two metaphors that help reconcile Rabbi Meir's consenting to learn Torah from *Aher*: a date—Rabbi Meir ate a date, and spit out the pit; and a nut—even if its shell were full of mud and dirt, that in no way would affect the taste of the fruit within.

¹⁷ On "regard for the minority" see *Resp. ha-Rid* (Isaiah di Trani), *resp.* 12.

¹⁸ Mishnah *Avot*, 4.10.

¹⁹ Maimonides, commentary on the Mishnah, *Avot*, *loc. cit.* Also see the commentary of Ha-Meiri.

²⁰ A special blessing recited when witnessing a vast throng of Jews, praising the Almighty who is *hakham harazim*, the One who understands the root and inner thoughts of each individual. [Translator's note.]

²¹ Maharsha, *Hiddushei Aggadot*, *Berakhot* 58.1, s.v. "*hakham ha-razim*."

²² Cf., for example, Tzvi Yaron, *Mishnato shel ha-Rav Kook*, 2003, pp. 323-371.

²³ Rabbi Abraham Isaac Kook, *Shemonah Kevatzim*, I, par. 861; also see Rabbi Eliyahu Dessler, *Mikhtav mi-Eliyahu*, Vol. 3, p. 220.

²⁴ Mishnah, *Eduyot* 1.4.

²⁵ Maimonides, *Eduyot*, *loc. cit.*

²⁶ *Tiferet Yisrael—Yakhin*, *Eduyot*, *loc. cit.*

²⁷ "*Mishbok tishbok be-hahi sha'ia sana di-ve-libbakh*."

Weekly Parsha :: PINCHAS

Rabbi Wein's Weekly Blog

The Torah traces the lineage of Pinchas back to his grandfather Aaron. At first glance, there are no more disparate characters that appear to us in the Torah's narrative. Aaron is gentle and kind, compromising and seeking peace between differing people and factions, noble in character and beloved by all of Israel. When Aaron passes from the world, the entire Jewish people without exception mourned his passing, and felt a great loss that his departure meant to them. Aaron was not only the first high priest of the Jewish people to serve in the tabernacle but was also the prototype for all later high priests that would occupy that position in future generations.

In contradistinction to this assessment of character and behavior, the Torah describes Pinchas as a zealot who takes violent action against those who publicly defame and destroy Torah values and the Jewish people. He rises to the occasion by killing one of the leaders of the tribes of Israel. He is criticized by the Jewish people for such behavior, and they attributed his conduct to his lineage. Pinchas was not only descended from Aaron but he also was descended from non-Jewish priests, and his violent characteristics are attributed to his non-Jewish grandfather. Yet, the Torah chooses to emphasize the priestly lineage of Pinchas and attribute his behavior and his response to the public defamation of God in Israel specifically to his grandfather Aaron.

There is a strong lesson being taught with this nuance of lineage that appears in this week's Torah reading. We will find later in Jewish history, at the time of the Greek persecution of the Jews and of Judaism, that another descendent of Aaron, Matityahu, together with his family, also kills a renegade who defames the God of Israel and the Jewish people publicly by sacrificing to idolatry. Here we again see that within the holy and gentle character of Aaron and the priestly clan of Israel, there resides an iron will to stand strong against the defamation of everything that is holy and eternal.

When the situation demands it, the gentle priest becomes a man of war, who can and must take decisive and even violent action, to preserve the integrity of Torah and Jewish life. The Torah is generally not in favor of zealotry. However, as in the case of Pinchas, and later Elijah, sometimes zealotry is not only acceptable but necessary for Jewish survival. The problem always is how can a person measure whether the situation calls for such zealotry and even violent behavior.

This eternal difficulty of life is presented to us. We can rarely be certain as to the correctness of our attitudes and behavior under a given situation or in response to a certain challenge. The Torah does not demand from us the wisdom of angels. But it does show us that there are different, even opposing responses, that are valid in difficult situations in both public and private life. The wise and holy person will be able to choose correctly.

Shabbat Shalom

Rabbi Berel Wein

In My Opinion :: IMPLOSION

Rabbi Wein's Weekly Blog

Even a cursory review of world history allows the reader to realize that great and mighty countries and empires fall not necessarily because of outside pressures, but because of the implosion of the society itself. Rome ruled the world for over five centuries, and, at the height of its power, it succumbed to barbaric tribes. The breakup and disintegration of the Empire came as Rome was undermined by the spread of Christianity within its society and the dissatisfaction and dissolution of social norms. These factors gave way to internal violence and a complete abandonment of any sense of loyalty to the Empire itself, or to the history that Rome had so carefully fashioned and preserved over its centuries of hegemony. In short, Rome collapsed from within and not from without.

The same can be said of the Spanish Empire in the 16th century, which never recovered from its foolish, and self-destructive exile of its Jewish population at the beginning of the century. It no longer possessed the creativity and will to succeed that had driven it to become one of the major powers in the world.

The Ottoman Empire was also rotten from the inside, and any stress placed upon it would hasten its extinction and disappearance. The first World War provided that stress, and the Ottoman Turkish Empire never recovered. In our time, we have witnessed the destruction of Communism within the Soviet Union after 75 years of brutal and tyrannical rule. Once again, the Soviet Union collapsed from the inside and not from the outside. It had weathered all of the storms of World War II and the Cold War, but it could not survive because of the malays of its population, the burdens of bureaucracy and inefficient government that it had foisted upon a helpless populace.

A serious question has now arisen regarding the future of the United States of America. It is a very polarized society, and over the past decades it has lost its moral footing. It has become dissolute, hateful of its own heritage, spoiled by too much material wealth, and subject to Marxist indoctrination emanating from its educational systems. Whether or not the United States will be able to survive this storm is, as of yet, an undecided question. However, it is clear to me that no matter what happens, it will become increasingly difficult for Orthodox Jews to maintain themselves in American society. The entire culture is hostile to Torah values and to a Jewish way of life.

Jews have waxed prosperous over the past decades, and the continuity of Orthodox educational institutions is contingent upon the continuation of that prosperity. However, whether America will have a prosperous future over the next few decades is a difficult question to answer. There will be more governmental regulations regarding curriculum, and the nature of educational classes in schools. Education separated by sex will certainly not be allowed, and the concentration on Torah studies will be severely limited. I hope that I am wrong regarding my fears, but my heart tells me otherwise.

Certainly, the America that I grew up in and lived in for most of my lifetime no longer exists. There is no longer wholesome entertainment nor a feeling of moral probity. America was once a religious country. Today it has become overwhelmingly secular with all the attendant evils that such a change in society inevitably engenders. History teaches us that nothing goes on forever, and that great countries and empires rise but inevitably fall.

For many years, I thought that the United States was an exception to that rule, but I no longer believe so. The curve has already flattened, and we are witness to the downward spiral that leads to irrelevance and impotence in world events, I fervently pray that I am wrong but these are my impressions as I view the current scene.

Shabbat Shalom

Berel Wein

Moral vs. Political Decisions (Pinchas 5780)

Rabbi Jonathan Sacks

The coronavirus pandemic raised a series of deep moral and political issues.[1] How far should governments go in seeking to prevent its spread? To what extent should it restrict people's movements at the cost of violating their civil liberties? How far should it go in imposing a clampdown of businesses at the cost of driving many of them bankrupt, rendering swathes of the population unemployed, building up a mountain of debt for the future and plunging the economy into the worst recession since the 1930s? These are just a few of the many heart-breaking dilemmas that the pandemic forced on governments and on us. Strikingly, almost every country adopted the same measures: social distancing and lockdown until the incidence of new cases had reached its peak (Sweden was the most conspicuous exception). Nations didn't count the cost. Virtually unanimously, they placed the saving of life

above all other considerations. The economy may suffer, but life is infinitely precious and saving it takes precedence over all else.

This was a momentous victory for the value first articulated in the Torah in the Noahide covenant: "He who sheds the blood of man, by man shall his blood be shed, for in the image of God He created man" (Gen. 9:6). This was the first declaration of the principle that human life is sacred. As the Sages put it, "Every life is like a universe. Save a life and it is as if you have saved a universe." [2]

In the ancient world, economic considerations took precedence over life. Great building projects like the Tower of Babel and the Egyptian pyramids involved huge loss of life. Even in the 20th century, lives were sacrificed to economic ideology: between six and nine million under Stalin, and between 35 and 45 million under Chinese communism. The fact that virtually all nations, in the face of the pandemic, chose life was a significant victory for the Torah's ethic of the sanctity of life.

That said, the former Supreme Court judge Jonathan Sumption wrote a challenging article in which he argued that the world, or at least Britain, had got it wrong. [3] It was overreacting. The cure may be worse than the disease. The lockdown amounted to subjecting the population to house arrest, causing great distress and giving the police unprecedented and dangerous powers. It represented "an interference with our lives and our personal autonomy that is intolerable in a free society." The economic impact would be devastating. "If all this is the price of saving human life, we have to ask whether it is worth paying."

There are, he said, no absolute values in public policy. As proof he cited the fact that we allow cars, despite knowing that they are potentially lethal weapons, and that every year thousands of people will be killed or maimed by them. In public policy there are always multiple, conflicting considerations. There are no non-negotiable absolutes, not even the sanctity of life.

It was a powerful and challenging piece. Are we wrong to think that life is indeed sacred? Might we be placing too high a value on life, imposing a huge economic burden on future generations?

I am going to suggest, oddly enough, that there is a direct connection between this argument and the story of Pinchas. It is far from obvious, but it is fundamental. It lies in the difference – philosophical and halachic – between moral and political decisions. [4]

Recall the Pinchas story. The Israelites, having been saved by God from Bilam's curses, fell headlong into the trap he then set for them. They began consorting with Midianite women and were soon worshipping their gods. God's anger burned. He ordered the death of the people's leaders. A plague raged; 24,000 died. A leading Israelite, Zimri, brought a Midianite woman, Cozbi, and cohabited with her in full view of Moses and the people. It was the most brazen of acts. Pinchas took a spear and drove it through them both. They died, and the plague stopped.

Was Pinchas a hero or a murderer? On the one hand, he saved countless lives: no more people died because of the plague. On the other hand, he could not have been certain of that in advance. To any onlooker, he might have seemed simply a man of violence, caught up in the lawlessness of the moment. The parsha of Balak ends with this terrible ambiguity unresolved. Only in our parsha do we hear the answer. God says:

"Pinchas, son of Eleazar, son of Aaron the Priest, has turned back My anger from the Israelites by being zealous among them on My behalf, so that I did not wipe out the Israelite people in My zeal. Therefore say: I am making with him My covenant of peace." (Num. 25:11-12)

God declared Pinchas a hero. He had saved the Israelites from destruction, showed the zeal that counterbalanced the people's faithlessness, and as a reward, God made a personal covenant with him. Pinchas did a good deed.

Halachah, however, dramatically circumscribes his act in multiple ways. First, it rules that if Zimri had turned and killed Pinchas in self-defence, he would be declared innocent in a court of law. [5] Second, it rules that if Pinchas had killed Zimri and Cozbi just before or after they were engaged in cohabitation, he would have been guilty of murder. [6] Third, had Pinchas consulted a Bet Din and asked whether he was permitted to do what he was proposing to do, the answer would have been, No. [7]

This is one of the rare cases where we say Halachah ve-ein morin kein: "It is the law, but we do not make it known." And there are many other conditions and reservations. The Torah resolves the ambiguity but halachah reinstates it. Legally speaking, Pinchas was on very thin ice.

We can only understand this by way of a fundamental distinction between moral decisions and political decisions. Moral decisions are answers to the question, "What should I do?" Usually they are based on rules that may not be transgressed whatever the consequences. In Judaism, moral decisions are the province of halachah.

Political decisions are answers to the question, "What should we do?" where the "we" means the nation as a whole. They tend to involve several conflicting considerations, and there is rarely a clear-cut solution. Usually the decision will be based on an evaluation of the likely consequences. In Judaism this sphere is known as mishpat melech (the legal domain of the king), or hilchot medinah (public policy regulations). [8] Whereas halachah is timeless, public policy tends to be time-bound and situational ("a time to kill and a time to heal, a time to tear down and a time to build").

Were we in Pinchas' position, asking, "Should I kill Zimri and Cozbi?" the moral answer is an unequivocal No. They may deserve to die; the whole nation may be eyewitnesses to their sin; but you cannot execute a death sentence without a duly constituted court of law, a trial, evidence and a judicial verdict. Killing without due process is murder. That is why the Talmud rules Halachah ve-ein morin kein: if Pinchas had asked a Bet Din whether he were permitted to act as he intended, he would be told, No. Halachah is based on non-negotiable moral principle, and halachically you cannot commit murder even to save lives.

But Pinchas was not acting on moral principle. He was making a political decision. There were thousands dying. The political leader, Moses, was in a highly compromised position. How could he condemn others for consorting with Midianite women when he himself had a Midianite wife? Pinchas saw that there was no one leading. The danger was immense. God's anger, already intense, was about to explode. So he acted – not on moral principle but on political calculation, relying not on halachah but on what would later be known as mishpat melech. Better take two lives immediately, that would have been eventually sentenced to death by the court, to save thousands now. And he was right, as God later made clear.

Now we can see exactly what was ambiguous about Pinchas' act. He was a private individual. The question he would normally have asked was, "What shall I do?", to which the answer is a moral one. But he acted as if he were a political leader asking, "What shall we do?" and deciding, based on consequences, that this would save many lives. Essentially, he acted as if he were Moses. He saved the day and the people. But imagine what would happen anywhere if an ordinary member of the public usurped the role of Head of State. Had God not endorsed Pinchas' action, he would have had a very difficult time.

The difference between moral and political decisions becomes very clear when it comes to decisions of life and death. The moral rule is: saving life takes precedence over all other mitzvot except three: incest, idolatry and murder. If a group is surrounded by gangsters who say, "Hand over one of you, or we will kill you all," they must all be prepared to die rather than hand over one. [9] Life is sacred and must not be sacrificed, whatever the consequences. That is morality; that is halachah.

However, a king of Israel was permitted, with the consent of the Sanhedrin, to wage a (non-defensive) war, even though many would die as a result. [10] He was permitted to execute a non-judicial death sentence against individuals on public policy grounds (le-takken ha-olam kefi mah she-ha-sha'ah tzerichah). [11] In politics, as opposed to morality, the sanctity of life is a high value but not the only one. What matters are consequences. A ruler or government must act in the long-term interests of the people. That is why, though some will die as a result, governments are now gradually easing the lockdown provisions once the rate of infection falls, to relieve distress, ease the economic burden, and restore suspended civil liberties.

We have moral duties as individuals, and we make political decisions as nations. The two are different. That is what the story of Pinchas is about.

It also explains the tension in governments during the pandemic. We have a moral commitment to the sanctity of life, but we also have a political commitment, not just to life but also to “liberty and the pursuit of happiness.”[12] What was beautiful about the global response to Covid-19 was that virtually every nation in the world put moral considerations ahead of political ones until the danger began to recede. I believe that there are moral and political decisions and they are different. But there is a great danger that the two may drift apart. Politics then becomes amoral, and eventually corrupt. That is why the institution of prophecy was born. Prophets hold politicians accountable to morality. When kings act for the long-term welfare of the nation, they are not criticised. When they act for their own benefit, they are.[13] Likewise when they undermine the people’s moral and spiritual integrity.[14] Salvation by zealot – the Pinchas case – is no solution. Politics must be as moral as possible if a nation is to flourish in the long run. Shabbat Shalom

Shabbat Shalom: Pinchas (Numbers 25:10-30:1) **Rabbi Shlomo Riskin**

Efrat, Israel – “Moses said to the Lord, ‘May the Lord, the God who gives breath to all living things, appoint someone over this community to go out and come in before them, one who will lead them out and bring them in, so that the Lord’s people will not be like sheep without a shepherd’” (Numbers 27:15-17)

Moses’s request is made immediately after God instructs him to climb Mount Abarim and take a glimpse of the Promised Land—after which “he will be gathered to his family-nation.”

God explains that Moses must now relinquish his leadership because he did not sanctify God when he struck the rock instead of speaking to it.

On what basis is Joshua chosen by God to be Moses’ successor? The Midrash (Tanhuma Pinhas 11) suggests that the most logical choice would have been the more intellectually gifted Phinehas or Eleazar the priest, or alternatively, the personal choice of Moses himself—his own sons (see Rashi on Num. 27:16). The Midrash explains the choice of Joshua by citing a biblical verse: “He who tends a fig tree will eat its fruit, and he who looks after his master will be honored. Let the one who watches over the fig tree get to eat of its fruits” (Prov. 27:18).

Joshua was the devoted servant who never left Moses’s tent (Ex. 33:11). He was such a faithful disciple that he was absent from the encampment during the sin of the golden calf because he remained all 40 days at the foot of Mount Sinai, waiting for Moses to come down from the mountain (Exodus 32:17).

But why was “devotion” the primary consideration for a successor to Moses? After all, the most unique Mosaic quality was his outstanding intellect, the fact that he was able to connect and cleave to the active intellect of the Divine (as it were) so that Moses’s Torah and God’s Torah would merge together as one. Moses was a “law-giver King,” a ruler whose precepts of compassionate righteousness and moral justice would rule Israel until the end of time. Why choose the outstanding caretaker, the best shamash, not the most praiseworthy jurist, the leading expert in analysis and halachic judgment? I would submit that, although we are rightly called the “people of the book,” and Jews throughout the ages have been proud of their intellectual accomplishments in Torah, in philosophy and in science (witness the large proportion of Jews who have won Nobel prizes), our Torah-Book is first and foremost meant to foster the well-being of the people; it is “for your own good”: “Its ways are pleasant ways, and all its paths are peace. It is a tree of life to those who embrace her; those who lay hold of her will be blessed” (Prov. 3: 17-18).

Our Talmud’s ultimate objective must be to create a perfect society which looks out for the welfare of each individual; hence Maimonides concludes his magnum opus, the Mishne Torah, with a description of the Messianic Age, the period of human fulfillment and redemption which is the purpose of our entire halachic system. And it is not by chance that the source of our Oral Law, according to the Midrash is within the contextual frame of the Divine characteristics, the God of love,

compassion, freely giving grace, long-suffering, great loving-kindness, and truth. We may be the people of the Book, but the objective of the Book is the welfare of the people—one might even add, “to the people, by the people (human input in the Oral Law) and for the people.” The true fruit of the tree of Torah is the Jewish people, whom Torah has informed, nurtured and recreated for the past 4,000 years. One can become too involved with the tree, so that one forgets that its purpose is its fruits, so involved in the analysis and casuistry of the logic that one overlooks the human enhancement which is its truest aim.

Only one who watches over the tree and worries about preserving its fruits has the right to legislate for them.

That’s why Joshua is appointed just as Moses is reminded of his sin at the “waters of strife,” when he strikes the rock (which symbolizes the often hard and stiff-necked nation) rather than speaking to it the loving words of our Oral Law. That is why the most fundamental task facing Joshua must be to understand the various spiritual needs (ruah) of the people comprising the nation and suit his decisions (as much as possible) to their temperaments and requirements. He must sensitively nurture his people just like a shepherd nurtures his flock, not only leading from up-front but also personally “bringing them in and taking them out” whenever necessary. Joshua is a true leader, who proved himself by “nurturing” and tending to the needs of his rebbe and learned from his rebbe to be devoted to the needs of his nation.

Shabbat Shalom!

Pinchas: The Tamid Offering Performed at Sinai

Rav Kook Torah

“This is the regular daily burnt offering, like the one performed at Mount Sinai; an appeasing fragrance, a fire-offering to God.” (Num. 28:6)

- Why does the Torah stress the fact that the daily Tamid offering was performed at Mount Sinai?
- Why is this offering described as both an “appeasing fragrance” and a “fire offering”?

The ‘Fragrant’ Service of the Forefathers

Even before the Torah’s revelation, the Jewish people merited an extraordinary closeness to God. The Sages taught that Abraham kept the entire Torah, even before it was revealed at Mount Sinai. And his descendants learned from him, continuing his legacy of holy living.

If the Jewish people already adhered to the Torah’s precepts, what did the Torah’s revelation at Mount Sinai accomplish?

The sanctity of Israel before Sinai was not on a permanent basis. The Midrash uses an unusual term to describe the mitzvot performed by the Forefathers. It refers to their service as *reichanit* - fragrant. What does this mean?

Their holiness contained elements of nobility and beauty, a spiritual richness and individual greatness. But their spiritual path was not firmly grounded in the world of actions. It was of a transient nature, like a passing aromatic fragrance.

The Concrete Sanctity of Sinai

At Mount Sinai, the sacred fire was etched in our souls on a practical, tangible level. We accepted the commitment to keep the Torah in action and deed: “We will do and we will obey.” For this reason, the Torah emphasizes that the Tamid offering was performed at Mount Sinai. The daily offering epitomizes the constant, concrete sanctity that was engraved in the very essence of Israel at Sinai.

The two characterizations of the Tamid offering - as an “appeasing fragrance” and as a “fire-offering” - indicate that it combines both of these paths of holiness.

The daily offering retains the abstract beauty of the Forefathers’ individual spirituality. It still exudes an “appeasing fragrance” recalling the fragrant service of the Avot.

But the Tamid also corresponds to the day-to-day, concrete sanctity of Sinai. It was a “fire-offering.” Like fire, it acted upon and ignited the physical world, introducing light and holiness into the realm of action and deed.

Insights Parshas Pinchas

Yeshiva Beis Moshe Chaim/Talmudic University

Parshas Pinchas - Tammuz 5780

Based on the Torah of our Rosh HaYeshiva HaRav Yochanan Zweig
Follow the Leader

Moshe spoke to Hashem saying, "May Hashem, God of the spirits of all mankind, appoint a man over the assembly who shall go out before them and come in before them, who shall take them out and who shall bring them in..." (27:15-17)

This week's parsha includes a remarkable conversation between Moshe and Hashem about the succession plan for leadership of Bnei Yisroel after Moshe's demise. Initially, after seeing that the daughters of Tzelafchad prevail in their quest to inherit their father's share in Eretz Yisroel, Moshe is moved to ask Hashem if his children could succeed him as leader. However, Hashem informs Moshe that He has other intentions; namely, that Moshe's faithful servant Yehoshua be rewarded for his service (see Rashi 27:16).

Hashem then enjoins Moshe to "take to yourself Yehoshua son of Nun..." (27:18). Rashi (ad loc) explains that Hashem wanted Moshe to persuade Yehoshua by telling him how fortunate he was to get to lead the children of Hashem. Yet, a few verses later (27:22), when Moshe actually fulfills what Hashem had asked him to do - "Moshe did as Hashem commanded him. He took Yehoshua..." - Rashi (ad loc) comments that Moshe convinced Yehoshua by informing him of the great reward for the leaders of the Jewish people in the World to Come. Hashem had asked Moshe to tell Yehoshua how fortunate he was to be offered the ultimate leadership position of Hashem's children, yet Moshe basically talked to him about the retirement benefits. Why did Moshe change what Hashem had initially asked him to tell Yehoshua?

To begin to understand what transpired we must start by examining how Moshe described the kind of person necessary for his job. Moshe makes a specific request that Hashem appoint someone who "will go out in front of them and come in before them." Moshe then adds, "who shall take them out and who shall bring them in..." (27:17). This request seems a bit contradictory; does the leader go out in front of them and come in before them, or does he take them out and bring them in?

There is a very enigmatic statement in the Gemara (Kesuvos 105b) regarding leadership (it's one that haunts shul rabbis the world over), "Abaye said - this young rabbi who is beloved by the people of his town, it is not because they think he has such fine character, it is because he doesn't rebuke them in religious matters." Abaye's statement is very difficult to understand: If a rabbi is beloved, it's because he isn't doing his job. However, the converse seems just as bad: If he is doing his job (criticizing his constituency), he will be despised. Surely, a hated rabbi cannot be considered to be doing his job properly either!

The Torah is teaching us the fundamentals of leadership. Every leader has two roles; one is to lead by example, the other is to direct the people to do what needs to be done. The primary responsibility of a leader is to inspire the people to act in a certain way; i.e. a leader needs to be relatable and charismatic enough that the people will follow his lead. They need to look up to him, want to emulate him and his way of living, and buy into his goals in order to help fulfill his vision for the community.

But a leader also has an important, albeit secondary, role; to make sure his followers are doing what they are supposed to be doing, even when they don't want to do the right thing. This is a much harder task, as it must come from an outside force rather than an inner motivation. A leader is empowered to force his constituents to do the right thing, even when they don't want to.

Moshe's request from Hashem reflects these two roles; "he must lead them out and lead them in," but if they don't want to then he must "bring them out and bring them in." This also explains the two versions of what Moshe was to tell Yehoshua. Hashem was telling him to persuade Yehoshua by extolling the privilege of inspiring the children of Hashem through leadership. The word Rashi uses in that verse (27:18) is *l'hanhig*

- to lead. When Moshe tells Yehoshua he is referring to the less pleasant aspect of leadership - criticizing and forcing the people to do what they do want to do. Rashi in that verse (27:22) uses the word *parnes* - provider. The ultimate power behind a leader is that he is their provider; which is how he can force them to do the right thing. But this is very difficult and unpleasant to do, and as Moshe tells Yehoshua, "the reward for providers of the Jewish people is in the next world."

Just as Moshe made sure that Yehoshua would fully understand both roles of leadership, we must understand and apply these same principles to our own homes. A parent's leadership role is primarily to inspire his children to follow in the proper way to live. The children have to look at his example and feel like they want to emulate him. A key component of this is that the parent needs to be someone whom they want to emulate. Of course, a parent has to criticize and gently redirect his children when they make mistakes. But even then, the primary goal is to make sure the children understand he is doing it out of love for them, not because he wants to control them. In this way, they will choose to follow in his path long after they have left their parents' house.

A Will to Want Not

If a man will die and he has no son, you shall cause his inheritance to pass over to his daughter (27:8).

This week's parsha recounts the entire incident of the daughters of Tzelafchad who wished to inherit their father's portion in Eretz Yisroel, even though he predeceased the actual distribution of the land of Israel to the respective tribes. The issue lay in whether or not a daughter may inherit property from her father in a case where there are no sons.

The Sefer Hachinuch (Mitzvah 400), in his discussion of the laws of inheritance, rules that although the Torah ascribes directives in dealing with inheritance, there is no obligation for a parent to leave an inheritance for a child. This imperative is only found in regards to the nations of the world.

This seems a little difficult to understand; it is within every Jewish parent's nature to be concerned for his child's financial well-being, with special emphasis placed upon ensuring his child's security even after the parent's death. The Chinuch's ruling seems contrary to the innate character of the Jew. What could possibly be the Chinuch's reasoning?

A similar question can be asked on a ruling of the Talmud. The Gemara (Kesuvos 49b) states that a parent need only be concerned for the financial well-being of his child until the age of six. How can we possibly fathom a Jewish parent considering his child financially independent at the age of six?

The attribute of kindness defines a Jew's nature. Therefore, there is never any doubt that a Jewish parent will assume responsibility for his six-year-old child. Rather, the Torah is sending a profound message to the child to appreciate all that his parents are doing for him, for their financial assistance is done out of a sense of compassion, not obligation. Providing for your children is an expression of love, not a fulfillment of an obligation. Once a child begins to internalize his parents' motivation for supporting him, it will strengthen the child's love for his parents.

Standing on their Shoulders

The sons of Reuvein: of Chanoch, the family of the Chanochite... (26:5)
Prior to Bnei Yisroel entering Eretz Yisroel, Hashem commanded Moshe and Elazar to conduct a new census. To all the family names, the letter "hey" was added as a prefix and "yud" as a suffix. For example, the family of Chanoch was referred to as "HaChanochi." Rashi (ad loc) explains that those letters formed the name of Hashem. The reason for this change to their names is that the nations of the world mocked the purity of the Jewish lineage.

They pointed out that Bnei Yisroel tracing their genealogy according to the tribes of their father was a fantasy. They claimed that since the Egyptians had complete control of the Jewish males (who were slaves), surely they had violated the Jewish women; leading to many Jews being descendants of the Egyptians. Therefore, Hashem attached His name to the names of the Jewish families in order to attest to the purity of Jewish ancestry.

It is difficult to understand how adding two letters to Jewish families' names deflects the claims of the nations. The only possible answer is that Hashem had no intention of deflecting the claims of the nations. Rather, this was done to assuage the insecurities of Bnei Yisroel themselves. At this time, Bnei Yisroel were recovering from a plague that decimated a significant portion of the nation. This plague came as a punishment for their involvement in licentious behavior and acts of depravity while consorting with the daughters of Midian. These transgressions seem to indicate characteristics distinctly attributed to Egyptian nature and culture.

Consequently, these transgressions committed by Bnei Yisroel might have led some to give credence to the notion that the allegations of the nations of the world were indeed true. Therefore, Hashem lent His holy name to the Jewish families to reassure them that they were of pure lineage.

However, there is also a much deeper lesson to be learned here. We often ascribe our own failings to issues that are beyond our control, when in truth we must own our mistakes and work to improve ourselves. We tend to blame our parents or circumstances beyond our control for things that we ought to own as our responsibility. Hashem is lending His name to our lineage to tell us that our past is in His hands, but our present and future are in our own control.

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Ask Rav Aviner

Ha-Rav answers hundreds of text message questions a day. Here's a sample:

Changing name of Donor on Object in Shul

Q: If someone donated a Torah cover to the Shul and it deteriorated over time, is it permissible for someone else to donate a new one and have his name on it?

A: Yes. Every donor clearly understands that an object will not last forever. This follows the opinion of Shut Shevet Ha-Levi (9:205) unlike Shut Igrot Moshe (Orach Chaim 2:26).

Son who Enters Har Ha-Bayit

Q: I just discovered that my son enters the Temple Mount without asking me. What should I do?

A: Love him.

People of the Book

Q: Is the expression "People of the Book" about the Jewish People correct?

A: No. This is an expression used in the Koran. We are the "People of Hashem".

Minhag of Baal Teshuvah

Q: Which Minhag should a Baal Teshuvah adopt?

A: He should follow his ancestors' Minhagim. If he desires, however, he can choose a different Minhag, such as his Rabbi's. Piskei Teshuvot 68:3 note #26.

Peyot

Q: Why do we need to have Peyot?

A: Holiness of one's face.

Honor during Torah Class

Q: It is permissible to go to the restroom in the middle of a Torah class?

A: No. One should go before or after. Prof. Nechama Leibowitz did not allow students to go out in the middle of a class, or come in late. She said: Would you act this way in a concert?!

Feeding Cats

Q: My science teacher told us that it is not good to feed the many street cats in Israel, because they kill all sorts of pests when they are hungry. Is this proper even if a cat is hungry at the moment?

A: Yes. The cats eat mice and snakes.

Pidyon Ha-Ben for Child who did not have a Brit Milah

Q: If parents refused to give their child a Brit Milah because of ideological reasons, should he still have a Pidyon Ha-Ben?

A: Yes. They are not connected to one another.

Miracle Stories

Q: Why do Sefardic Rabbis tell so many miracle stories about Rabbis and Ashkenazic Rabbis do not?

A: There are Ashkenazic Rabbis who do tell them, and Sefardic Rabbis who do not. But according to all opinions, this is not the essential matter, but rather one's greatness in Torah learning, in awe of Hashem and with proper character traits.

Detailed Mitzvot

Q: Why are there Mitzvot in the Torah which are not written with the details such as Shabbat and women covering their hair?

A: They are written in detail in the Torah to someone who is accustomed to reading the Torah in the proper way. Great Rabbis of the previous generation proved this in their commentaries: Revid Ha-Zahav, Mesech Chochmah, Netziv, Ha-Rav Shimshon Rafael Hirsch, Ha-Ketav Ve-Ha-Kabbalah and the Torah Temimah.

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For the week ending 11 July 2020 / 19 Tammuz 5780

Rabbi Yaakov Asher Sinclair - www.seasonsofthemoon.com

Parshat Pinchas

Know Your Enemy

"Harass the Midianites and smite them" (25:17)

I think I'm not alone in finding it difficult to maintain an appropriate weight for my height and my age. (In other words: "The Battle of the Bulge"). One of the techniques that seems to work is to "know your enemy." I remember once sitting in front of a beautiful and delicious piece of cake and saying to the cake, "Cake, I love you, but you hate me!"

Demonization — the stigmatizing of other's beliefs not in accord with one's own — is usually seen as an irrational defense, and is called upon only by those who are uncertain of the rightness of their own beliefs in the first place.

Take the case of the "battle cry" for example. A battle cry is a yell or chant taken up in battle to arouse aggression and esprit de corps on one's own side (and cause intimidation on the hostile side.) Often the battle cry is a way of submerging one's own lack of confidence. Now I doubt that the aforementioned piece of cake was much affrighted by my "battle cry" — but it worked to remind me that the beguiling fondant cream oozing from the cake was really half-an-hour on the treadmill. As the Italians say: "A moment on the lips — a lifetime on the hips."

But raise the stakes a bit, and things get to be more serious. Maybe instead of considering the challenge of merely a couple of (hundred) extra calories, consider instead the lure of big-time lust and immorality. What do you do to fight that?

"Harass the Midianites and smite them"

There are two commandments in this passage: The first is to view the Midianites as enemies — to demonize them — and then to concretize that perception by constantly harassing them. The word "harass" here is in the infinitive, to imply a constant state of mind rather than just a specific and tangible action. The lust for immoral pleasure, which is the very essence of Midian, can only be counteracted by a constant state of loathing. And that can come only by demonization. And that mindset results only from a constant internal battle cry.

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Parshas Pinchas: Waking Up to a New World

Rabbi Dr. Tzvi Hersch Weinreb

These days, we all find ourselves living in a new and different world. It was just this past Purim that we sat together in shul, next to one another, listening to the reading of Megilat Esther. We exchanged mishloach manot in close physical proximity to our friends, and the phrase "social distancing" was not part of our vocabulary. We felt secure economically

and were busy planning travel to distant places, especially Eretz Yisrael, for Pesach programs. Our calendars were filled with bar mitzvah celebrations and weddings.

How drastically has our world changed! Even as many communities have gradually "reopened," we now realize that things may never be quite the same as they were just a short time ago.

It is thus no wonder that I have lately found myself pondering the story of a man who lived not long before the fall of the first Beit HaMikdash, a man named Choni HaMaagal. Not only have I been pondering his story, but I have begun to identify with him.

The story is found in the Babylonian Talmud tractate Taanit. A slightly different version of the story is told in the Jerusalem Talmud, and a very different version appears in the writings of the historian Josephus.

As the Babylonian Talmud has it, Choni Hamaagal was a very pious man whose prayers were always answered. The nation turned to him to pray for rain in times of drought. One day, he passed a man planting a tree. He asked the man how long it would take for that tree to bear fruit. When the man responded that it would take many years, Choni asked, "Then why do you bother planting?" The man replied that he was not planting for himself but for his son, or perhaps even for his grandson, who would eventually enjoy the fruit.

Soon afterwards, Choni lay down to rest in a nearby cave. He fell into a deep sleep and awoke. He passed by the tree and, sure enough, there was a man there plucking fruit from the tree. It soon became apparent to Choni that the man enjoying the fruit was indeed the grandson of the man he had earlier encountered. He eventually discovered that he had been asleep for seventy years.

Choni returned to the local beit midrash, the study hall. He was accepted there because of his evident Torah scholarship. But gradually, Choni realized that he couldn't relate to this new generation. The world had changed, people had changed. He could find no friend, no person with whom he could share his thoughts and feelings. He exclaimed, "oh chavruta oh mituta, either companionship or death".

The notion of living out the rest of his years in a thoroughly changed social environment was so displeasing to Choni that death itself was preferable to him.

In this week's Torah portion, Parshat Pinchas (Numbers 25:10-30:1) we read that Moses, cognizant of his own imminent death, did not wish to leave his people leaderless. He thus beseeched the Almighty to designate his successor. Translated literally, his prayer reads: "May the Lord, God of the spirits for all flesh, appoint a man over the congregation who can go out before them and come in before them, so that the Lord's people not be like sheep without a shepherd." (ibid. 27:15-17)

The Lord appoints Joshua as Moses' successor. Moses "places his hands upon him," assenting to the Lord's choice.

This passage allows us a glimpse into the psyche of Moses. We learn, for example, that Moses made peace with his ultimate demise. We learn that he feels responsible for finding a competent successor. And we discover that he has no problem with the fact that it is his disciple who will one day fill his shoes.

I have recently been reading a fascinating book. It is written by Prof. Gerald J. Blidstein, of the University of Beersheba, and is entitled *Etzev Nebo*. The English title is more descriptive: *The Death of Moses: Readings in Midrash*.

The author displays a dazzling mastery of the entire Midrashic corpus. He demonstrates that the Midrash supplements the Torah's account of Moses' final days with a variety of intriguing alternative scenarios.

I carefully followed his analysis of those passages in the Midrash that insist that Moses did not easily surrender to his death, but instead protested to the Lord and begged to be granted, if not immortality, then at least a significant extension of his allotted time on earth. He even offered to live on in a subsidiary role, as a disciple of Joshua.

One Midrashic source, *Devarim Rabba* on Parashat Va'Etchanan, maintains that Moses was, in some mystical manner, granted his wish. The Midrash envisions the scene: "A heavenly voice, a bat kol, proclaimed, 'Study Torah under Joshua.' The people agreed... Joshua sat at the head, with Moses at his right and the sons of Aaron at his left, and

Joshua taught in Moses' presence. The Lord took the reins of wisdom from Moses and handed them over to Joshua. Moses did not understand a word of Joshua's lecture. Afterwards, the people asked Moses to review the lecture, and Moses was forced to admit that he knew not what to say and then collapsed. He said, 'Master of the Universe, until now I begged for life, but now I am ready to give my soul over into Your hands.'"

Reading this passage, I could not help but recall the story of Choni HaMaagal. The world changes from one generation to the next. As the older generation ages, it becomes increasingly aware that it has no place in the new world. It is outdated, almost irrelevant, out of touch with the challenges and resources of the new reality.

Choni was not the first to prefer death to the lack of companionship. Moses, at least according to one Midrashic approach, surrendered to every man's eventual fate only when he realized that he had no meaningful role to play in Joshua's new world.

As I reflect upon the story of Choni and the Midrash about Moses, two anecdotes come to mind.

One was related by the late Hasidic Rebbe of Klausenburg, Rabbi Yekutiel Yehuda Halberstam, a descendant of the famed nineteenth century halachic authority, Rabbi Chaim of Zanz. The Rebbe taught that his ancestor ceased to issue halachic rulings after he reached the age of seventy. This was not because he felt that his intellect was waning. Rather, he believed firmly that he was not, and could not be, sufficiently familiar with the realities faced by a new generation. He was thus unqualified to offer it authoritative halachic guidance.

Secondly, it was the late Rabbi Walter Wurzbürger who shared with me the last conversation he had with his mentor, Rabbi Joseph B. Soloveitchik. Rabbi Soloveitchik told him that he struggled to be able to understand each new generation of his students sufficiently to adapt to their cultural backgrounds. He claimed that he was confronted with an entirely new generation of students every five years. For example, he decided to change the language in which he delivered his lectures from Yiddish to English. But, he lamented, "it was eventually no longer a matter of mere language. I began to feel that I had outlived my usefulness."

Today, old and young alike, we all face circumstances which will force us to doubt our ability to cope successfully, let alone live full and meaningful Jewish lives. We must not yield to these doubts. Instead, we must draw upon our own inner strengths and upon the vast creative resources that lie within the minds and souls of others.

We must strive with all our might to make the "new normal" a spiritually and materially "greater normal."

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Rabbi Buchwald's Weekly Torah Message

"The Pain of Giving Reproof"

(Updated and revised from Parashat Pinchas 5761-2001)

Rabbi Ephraim Z. Buchwald

On Thursday, July 9th, Jews the world over will observe the fast of Shivah Asar b'Tammuz, the Seventeenth day of Tammuz. The fast marks the day on the Hebrew calendar, in the year 586 B.C.E., when the Babylonian forces made its first breach in the walls of Jerusalem during the siege that ultimately led to the destruction of the Temple, on Tisha b'Av, the Ninth of Av.

The period between Shivah Asar b'Tammuz and Tisha b'Av is known as the "Three Weeks." During these three weeks, rejoicing is limited and the mourning period begins. The communal mourning becomes amplified during the nine days that precede Tisha b'Av, and becomes most intense on the fast of Tisha b'Av, which this year will be observed from Wednesday night, July 29th through Thursday night, July 30th.

In order to create the appropriate mournful atmosphere in anticipation of the Temples' destruction, the sages ordained that the haftarat, the prophetic messages read on the three Shabbatot between the Seventeenth of Tammuz and the Ninth of Av, are prophecies that predict the destruction of the first Temple. These three haftarat that come from the

opening chapters of the books of Jeremiah and Isaiah are known as Shalosh d'Puranuta, the three prophecies of calamity. Each prophecy predicts the coming great destruction, and the punishments that would be visited upon the People of Israel due to their sinfulness.

The haftarah for parashat Pinchas consists of the entire first chapter of Jeremiah and continues through the first three verses of Jeremiah 2. The Book of Jeremiah opens with a description of G-d's selection of Jeremiah as a prophet. The youthful Jeremiah is reluctant to prophesy, claiming that he is unqualified because he is but a lad. G-d touches his mouth, and tells Jeremiah to have no fear, after all, G-d will put His words in to the prophet's mouth.

The first prophecy of Jeremiah concerns a vision of an almond-wood staff that G-d shows him. The second prophecy is a vision of a boiling caldron that is bubbling over from its northern side. G-d explains that the boiling caldron represents the evil that will burst forth from the north, symbolizing the Babylonian nation, who will emerge from the north, bringing great destruction in their wake.

While the meaning of the prophecy of the burning caldron is quite straightforward, the opening prophecy of the almond-wood staff is opaque and confounding. In Jeremiah 1:11, G-d asks the prophet, *מה ?* אַתָּה רֹאֵה יְרֵמְיָהוּ "What do you see, Jeremiah?" The prophet responds, *מִקָּל שֹׁקֵד אֲנִי רֹאֵה*, "I see a staff made of almond-wood." Continuing his prophecy, Jeremiah says, (Jeremiah 1:12): *וַיֹּאמֶר הָשֵׁם אֵלַי*, G-d said to me, *הֵיטִבְתָּ לְרֹאוֹת כִּי שֹׁקֵד אֲנִי עַל דְּבָרִי לַעֲשׂוֹתוֹ*, "You have seen very well, for I will hasten to fulfill My word!"

The representational message of the almond-wood staff is clearly the message of "speed." Since the almond is the first tree to blossom in Israel, it symbolizes speed and alacrity—that G-d will hasten to bring the ominous fulfillment of His prophecy of destruction upon the Jewish people. (See the reference to almonds blossoming on Aaron's staff in Numbers 17:23).

But, the question remains, why does G-d say, *הֵיטִבְתָּ לְרֹאוֹת*, "Jeremiah you have seen very well," after all, what was so special about Jeremiah being able to identify an almond-wood staff?

May I suggest a possible explanation. A "staff"—*מִקָּל*—differs from a "branch" since it is a finished piece of wood. Once the wood is finished, sanded and planed, it is very difficult to distinguish between almond, pine or other varieties of wood. G-d therefore compliments Jeremiah, saying, *הֵיטִבְתָּ לְרֹאוֹת*, "You have seen very well." By being able to distinguish that the staff is specifically almond, you have enabled Me [G-d] to clarify my message of speed. This was no easy task. You, Jeremiah, are quite talented!

Good and well, but this raises another question, Why didn't G-d show Jeremiah an *עֵץ שֹׁקֵד*, an almond wood branch with leaves and bark? That would have made it much easier for Jeremiah to identify the wood's origin?

Perhaps, that is exactly the point. The message that Jeremiah will deliver to the people is a message of destruction and despair, a message of pain and suffering. Such a bitter message must be difficult for the prophet to deliver. G-d purposely made it difficult for the prophet to identify the almond-tree staff, to teach the prophet that delivering words of calamity must be difficult. As much as G-d needs to bring the punishment upon the Jewish people, He cannot do it with ease. Neither can the prophet who conveys G-d's message rejoice in being the messenger of G-d delivering the message of calamity. While Jeremiah is destined to be a prophet of doom, he may not be a joyful prophet of doom. Evil will eventually befall the people, but Jeremiah must share their pain. If he does not share their pain, then he is hardly a legitimate prophet.

For us, this is a most profound lesson of life. Whether the issues concern Jews or non-Jews, the land of Israel or other lands and other people in various parts of the world, the message of Israel prevailing over its enemies must be conveyed with care and consideration. Even when we speak of those who seemingly deserve to be punished, for the Jew, the message of suffering can never be a joyous message. Says the book of Proverbs—Mishlei (24:17), *כַּנְפֵּל אוֹיְבְךָ, אַל תִּשְׂמָח*, When your enemy falters, do not rejoice. As much as we would like to rejoice, (and

perhaps, even deserve to rejoice), it is never proper to rejoice. It must be difficult for Jews to see even our most deserving enemies suffer.

This attitude of extreme sensitivity to the pain of others is an embodiment of the so-called "bottom line" of Judaism—the unqualified reverence for the sanctity of human life. It is for this same reason that G-d had to stop the ancient Israelites from singing the Hallel, the Songs of Praise of G-d, as the Egyptians drowned at the sea.

This sensitivity is our sacred tradition.

Fortunate are we to be the possessors of these remarkable traditions. The alternative, would be unthinkable.

May you be blessed.

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Chief Rabbi Ephraim Mirvis

Dvar Torah: Pinchas

What is the hallmark of a great leader?

In Parashat Pinchas we find Moshe appealing to Hashem prior to his passing, to appoint his successor. This would be in order to guarantee a smooth transition of authority from one leader to the next. But what would the qualities of the next leader need to be? Moshe said to Hashem, please appoint a man, *אִשָּׁר יֵצֵא לִפְנֵיהֶם וְאִשָּׁר יֵבֵא לִפְנֵיהֶם* – who will go out ahead of the people and come in ahead of the people ... *וְלֹא יִהְיֶה עִדָּת ה' כְּצֹאֵן אֲשֶׁר אֵין לָהֶם רֹעֵה* – in order that the assembly of the nation should not appear to be like sheep who have no shepherd".

Why did Moshe use this particular comparison? The Ktav Sofer explains beautifully – he says, often when a shepherd guides his sheep, he allows them to run ahead to pasture, while he remains at the back, with his staff in hand in order to keep the flock together. Therefore somebody looking at this flock might not notice the shepherd lagging behind – they might appear as sheep who have no shepherd.

Why is the shepherd doing this, asks the Ktav Sofer? He is doing it to protect himself. If a thief or a wild animal should attack, at least the shepherd would be able to flee for his own life.

Moshe was appealing to Hashem for the next leader to be visible, who would be there for their sake and not merely to protect his own position. Let the next leader be one who will go out ahead of the people always, in order to guarantee their successful future.

Ever since that time, our nation has been blessed with some truly outstanding leaders who have gone out ahead of the nation, who have been visible and who have been trailblazers. It is as a result of these courageous leaders of conviction that our nation has not appeared as sheep who have no shepherd.

Shabbat shalom

Rabbi Mirvis is the Chief Rabbi of the United Kingdom. He was formerly Chief Rabbi of Ireland.

Rabbi Yissocher Frand - Parshas Pinchas

Never Too Old to Improve

Still Looking to Improve at Age 120: Moshe's Mussar Method Modification

The narration at the beginning of Parshas Pinchas is really a culmination of the incident at the end of Parshas Balak where, in an act of religious zealotry, Pinchas executes the Prince of the Tribe of Shimon, together with a Midyanite Princess, when the two were engaged in an act of immorality. In this week's parsha, Moshe is commanded to take revenge against the Midyanites for their heinous act of having their daughters seduce the men of Israel into committing acts of idolatry and sexual immorality.

The truth of the matter is that the battle against Midyan does not occur in Parshas Pinchas. It occurs in Parshas Matos. There we have again the command from G-d to Moshe to take revenge against the Midyanites, and there the command is linked with Moshe's death: "... And afterwards you will be gathered to your nation." [Bamidbar 31:2]. In Matos, Moshe gathers an army of 12,000 men. They attack Midyan and kill out their kings. However, rather than killing out the women, the Jewish soldiers capture them and bring them back to Moshe Rabbeinu.

Moshe is not pleased. He became angry with the officers: "Have you kept the women alive?" [Bamidbar 31:15]. What is with you? The women were the cause of this whole tragedy, and now you are keeping them alive?

Then the pasuk says further "Elazar the Kohen said to the men of the army who came back from the battle, 'This is the decree of the Torah which Hashem commanded Moshe...'" [Bamidbar 31:21-24].

In addition to the women, the soldiers came back with much booty of war—the "vessels of Midyan." This is the only place where the Torah states the laws of kashering (purging absorbed non-kosher food from the vessels in which they were cooked). Interestingly, this parsha is not told to Bnei Yisrael by Moshe Rabbeinu, but rather by his nephew, Elazar.

Rashi explains: Since Moshe became angry here, he made a mistake. Even though he became angry for legitimate reasons (he was chastising them—how did they dare keep the women alive) nevertheless, once he lost his temper, he erred. Rashi cites several incidents throughout the Torah where Moshe became angry, and as a result, he forgot the halacha. One of the examples Rashi cites is the incident in Parshas Chukas, "Hear you, you rebellious people!" (when the people were complaining about lack of water). This incident caused Moshe to lose his opportunity to enter Eretz Yisrael. Again, once he became angry, he made a mistake (by hitting the rock rather than speaking to it, according to Rashi's interpretation there). For this reason, the parsha of the "Vessels of Midyan" was given through Elazar, rather than through Moshe.

Parshas Devorim begins with "These are the words that Moshe spoke to all of Israel in Transjordan, in the Midbar, in the Aravah, opposite the Sea of Reeds, between Paran and Tofel, and Lavan and Chatzeiros, and Di-Zahav." [Devorim 1:1] Rashi on this, the first pasuk in Sefer Devorim, paraphrasing the Sifrei, writes: Each one of the places mentioned in pinpointing the location of this address alludes to some type of subtle chastisement that Moshe Rabbeinu was giving the people. The Sifrei elaborates on the message of the various locations: In the "Midbar" – to remind them of how they made the Almighty angry in the Wilderness. "B'Aravah" – reminded them of how they sinned in Aravah with their worship of Baal Peor. "Mul Suf" refers to Yam Suf. "Bein Lavan u'bein Tofel" – refers to how they badmouthed the man, which was white (lavan). Virtually every word of this one pasuk alludes to chastisement.

I saw an interesting observation in a sefer called Maor v'Shemesh from Rav Klonimus Kalman haLevi Epstein. Chazal say that the word "Eleh" always excludes what had been mentioned previously. On the words "V'Eleh haMishpatim asher tasim lifneihem" [Shemos 21:1] Rashi points out that "Eleh" always excludes that which came prior.

The Maor v'Shemesh says that Moshe Rabbeinu "learned a lesson" (if we may use this terminology) over here. These are the last days of his life. Moshe said to himself, "I have made some mistakes in the past. One major mistake I made in the past was that I was too harsh with them. I have been too explicit with them in my criticism. I called them 'Morim' (you rebellious ones). [Bamidbar 20:10]" Now Moshe Rabbeinu decides he is going to take a different approach. He is going to give mussar, but he is going to do it subtly. "I will remind them of all the places they acted inappropriately, but I will do it derech remez (by hinting), because that is that way that mussar must be delivered.

There are two ways of giving mussar. When somebody does something wrong, you can say to him "How did you do that?" or you can say "How could you do that?" When the emphasis is on the word "that," the implication is that you have done a horrible thing. When the emphasis is on the word "you," the implication is that the act might not be so horrible, but a person of your great stature should not be doing it.

The famous Shaloh teaches a profound lesson on the pasuk in Mishlei "Al Tochach Letz pen Yisnaeka; hocheach l'chacham v'ye'havecha" [Mishlei 9:8] – (which on the surface means, do not give mussar to the cynic, for he will hate you, but give it to the wise person and he will love you). The Shaloh writes that this is not talking about two different people. It is the same person; however every person has a side of him that is a letz (a cynic) and a side of him that is a chochom (wise person). The Shaloh interprets the pasuk to be teaching that when giving mussar

to a person, appeal to the wise man within him—do not beat down the cynic within him.

That is what Moshe Rabbeinu is teaching us here. In the past, I have taken the approach of giving mussar to the "letz," as when I said "Hear yea you rebellious ones!" However, now, at the end of his life, Moshe Rabbeinu says, "I am going to change my approach. I am going to give mussar, but only in the most discreet of terms."

The truth of the matter is that giving mussar is not really something that we should do on a normal basis. As the Chazon Ish writes [Hilchos Shechita, end of Siman 2], we do not know how to give mussar nowadays. Unless a person is a Rav or in a position of authority (e.g., a teacher or a Rebbe), it is not for us to chastise our fellow man, because we really do not know how to do it.

However, in one area we must all give mussar. In this area, we are obligated to chastise. That area is in the raising of our children. The lesson of the Shaloh haKodosh is that there is a right way to give chastisement to our children and there is a wrong way. The wrong way is to chastise the "Letz" within them. Rather, appeal to the "Chochom" within them. As Mishlei teaches, "Chastise the wise and they will love you."

This is one lesson. The other lesson is that Moshe Rabbeinu is now 120 years old. He has been in this business for the last forty years. He did a very good job. Most people, who have been at something for forty years, with the success that Moshe Rabbeinu had in his career, think to themselves, "There is nothing more for me to learn about how to do this business." However, Moshe Rabbeinu, on the very last day of his life, is looking at himself and saying, "You know what? I made mistakes along the way. My mussar sometimes was too strong. I got angry. 'I lost my temper.' I am going to try a different approach."

The different approach is that the benign-sounding pasuk at the beginning of Sefer Devorim was his "mussar shmooz". At age 120, after doing this for forty years, Moshe Rabbeinu said, "Let us try something new." This is a lesson for all of us, no matter our age. I am a firm believer in the principle that a person is always in the child-raising business until he leaves this world, but even if we are not in the active child raising business anymore, we should all be in the business of learning how to improve our interpersonal skills. If Moshe Rabbeinu, at the end of his days, could introspect and say, "I have to change my approach", at least sometimes we need to look at ourselves and say, "I need to change my approach" as well.

Have a healthy summer!

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Kohen Forever :: Pinchas

Ben-Tzion Spitz

No love, no friendship can cross the path of our destiny without leaving some mark on it forever. - Francois Muriac

God has made a lot of promises to us. And when we read some of those promises, they sound quite nice. However, many of those promises are conditional. If we are good, then God will bless us with bounty, success, victory over our enemies, and more. When we don't fulfill our side of the deal, then God doesn't necessarily feel obliged to fulfill His side.

For example, we are told by the Talmud (Tractate Berachot 4a) that our patriarch Jacob was worried that perhaps some sin of his may have reduced not just his reward, but even the divine protection God had promised him. Jacob, it seems, understood that God's promise to him had been conditional.

However, there are a handful of promises that are unconditional. This week's reading of Pinchas has one such promise.

At the end of last week's reading, we are told of the mass promiscuity that men of Israel embarked on with the seductive women of Moab and Midian. At the height of the illegal dalliance, a prince of one of the

tribes of Israel is publicly intimate with a princess from Midian. Moses and the elders are horrified and seemingly paralyzed into inaction, but Pinhas, the grandson of Aaron, takes a spear and skewers the couple during their romantic act. Pinhas' violent, vigilante execution is credited with stopping the plague which had killed 24,000 men of Israel because of God's wrath over the widespread immorality.

As a reward for his daring, decisive act, which demonstrated Pinhas' love, obedience, and allegiance to God, God promises him an everlasting covenant of peace. The covenant installs Pinhas and all his descendants as Kohens, as the priests consecrated and dedicated to the service of God in the Tabernacle and later in the Temple.

The Meshech Chochma on Numbers 25:11 explains that this is an eternal, unconditional promise. It doesn't matter if a future Kohen misbehaves, he will always retain the status of a Kohen, with all of the ensuing rights and responsibilities of a Kohen.

He underlines that whenever God makes an absolute promise through His prophet, the promise cannot be revoked by any sin. He brings as further proof that there were descendants of Pinhas, who though they were the opposite of shining examples of morality, merited to serve as High Priests during the era of the second Temple.

May we merit to see both conditional and unconditional blessings, speedily and in our days.

Dedication - To the Kohens who are studying the laws of their Temple service.

Shabbat Shalom

Ben-Tzion Spitz is a former Chief Rabbi of Uruguay. He is the author of three books of Biblical Fiction and over 600 articles and stories dealing with biblical themes.

Rabbi Shmuel Rabinowitz

Psalm from within the Earth! - Pinchas 5780

In this week's Torah portion of Pinchas, we read a long perek (chapter) that summarizes the census that took place in the Moab plain on the western side of the Jordan. This census was part of the nation's preparation for dividing the land among the tribes of Israel. During the census, we find a surprising reference to an event we read about weeks ago: the rebellion of Korach against Moses.

The Torah describes the census as the tribes of Israel were divided into households, and when it summarizes the families of the tribe of Ruben, it focuses on two familiar people – Datan and Aviram, Korach's partners in the rebellion against Moses:

"The sons of Eliab were Nemuel, Datan and Aviram they are Datan and Aviram, the chosen of the congregation who incited against Moses and Aaron in the assembly of Korach, when they incited against the Lord. And the earth opened its mouth and swallowed them and Korach...and they became a sign."

And then there's an additional comment we will examine:

"Korach's sons, however, did not die." (Numbers 26, 9 – 11)

What is the story with Korach's sons? When we read Parashat Korach we were given the impression that the entire Korach family was swallowed by the earth. Now, it turns out that impression was mistaken. Korach's sons did not die.

The next time we encounter Korach's sons will be in the book of Psalms. It turns out that Korach's sons were among the poets of the Psalms, and they even served as head poets in the Temple in Jerusalem. Eleven of the psalms were composed by the sons of Korach. Let's look at some of the verses of these psalms:

As a hart cries longingly for rivulets of water, so does my soul cry longingly to You, O G-d.

My soul thirsts for G-d, for the living G-d; when will I come and appear before G-d?

Why are you downcast, my soul, and why do you stir within me? Hope to G-d, for I will yet thank Him for the salvations of His presence. Psalms 42, 2-3; 12)

My soul yearns, yea, it pines for the courts of the Lord; my heart and my flesh pray fervently to the living G-d.

O Lord of Hosts, fortunate is the man who trusts in You. (Ibid 84, 3; 13)

Korach's sons' psalms raise questions. These are lofty people experiencing profound religious experiences, connected down to the depths of their souls to what is sacred and to closeness with G-d. No wonder they merited being among the poets of the Psalms.

In order to understand their story correctly, we turn to Rashi, the biblical commentator:

"At first, they were in their father's counsel, but at the time of the controversy, they parted, and when all those around them were swallowed up, and the earth opened its mouth, their place was left within the mouth of the earth...There they uttered a song, and there they composed these psalms. Then they ascended from there, and the holy spirit rested on them." (Rashi on Psalms 42, 1)

The sons of Korach, it turns out, were not always such righteous men. At the beginning of the rebellion, they sided with their father against Moses and Aaron. But at a certain point, they stopped and looked at where they were heading. When their father, Korach, was swallowed up by the earth, they descended as well! From the depths of the earth they acknowledged the error in their ways and made the decision to withdraw from the rebellion. At the last minute, they ascended from the earth and stayed alive!

Korach's sons symbolize man's incredible, G-d-given ability to rise up from low spiritual situations and embark on a new path that ultimately leads to the Divine Presence.

The poets of the Temple, the Torah tells us, were Korach's descendants. The prophet Samuel was a descendant of Korach's as well. Korach's family was not rejected following the acts of the head of the family because the right to renounce wrongdoing, rise up and move forward is not dependent on the acts of parents or on the acts of the person himself. Irrespective of a person's situation, he or she is called upon to rise up and move forward in a beneficial and joyful spiritual path.

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Shema Yisrael Torah Network

Peninim on the Torah - Parshas Pinchas

פרשת פינחס תש"פ

ובני קרח לא מתו

But the sons of Korach did not die. (26:11)

It is not as if Korach had protected his sons by excluding them from his ill-fated debacle. *Rashi* comments that they had been involved from the very beginning. At the time of the dispute, however, they were *meharher bi'teshuvah*, had thoughts of repentance in their hearts. Therefore, a place was fortified for them in *Gehinnom*, Purgatory, and they resided there. This means that the earth beneath them hardened above the spot designated for them in *Gehinnom*. Thus, they were spared due to the *teshuvah* thoughts they harbored. This is a powerful and inspiring lesson. *Teshuvah* saves.

When the *Ponovezher Rav*, *zl*, was about to travel on a fundraising trip, he visited his revered *Rebbe*, the *Chafetz Chaim*, *zl*, to receive his blessing. "Does the *Rebbe* have a message for the people in Europe?" he asked. "Tell them that it is quite simple to do *teshuvah*, repent. All one has to do is regret and express remorse over his deviation from Hashem's Torah. He then accepts upon himself to continue upon the prescribed path. The *yetzer hora*, evil inclination, would like us to think that *teshuvah* is a difficult undertaking which usually concludes in failure. This is one of the wiles of the *yetzer hora*. *Teshuvah* is not difficult."

The Bnei Brak security guard who worked the protective unit that safeguarded Ponovezh *Yeshivah* was himself not observant. Thus, it came as a total surprise, when one day he appeared at his post sporting a *yarmulke* and wearing *tzitzis*. One of the *rabbanim* who met him asked, "My friend, what prompted you to wear *bigdei malchus*, royal garb?" The man replied, "It was the *shiur*, lecture, delivered by *Maran Horav Shach* (the *Rosh Yeshivah*)." The *Rav* countered, "What did you understand from the *shiur* that inspired you?"

"I did not understand a single word," the guard replied. "When the car transporting the *Rosh Yeshivah* to the *yeshivah* pulled up, however, I

saw how the students reverently lifted the aged *Rosh Yeshivah* from the car, and how they supported every step that he slowly took until he ascended to the lectern. When I saw this, I thought to myself, ‘The *bais hamedrash* is filled to capacity, standing room only. What can this elderly *Rosh Yeshivah* say that is so special?’ I decided to stand by the door of the room and listen. As soon as the *Rosh Yeshivah* began the *shiur*, a complete transformation occurred. The *Rosh Yeshivah*, who was weak and unable to walk, delivered a lecture like a young, spirited eighteen-year-old. His passion and spirited delivery blew my mind! Where did he suddenly garner the strength to be so young and exuberant? I figured that it must come from the Torah. I decided then and there that, if Torah can create such a metamorphosis in a person, I was going to change my way of life and become observant.”

We have no shortage of *teshuvah* stories, because many people find their way back, often (like the *Bnei Korach*) through the vehicle of a *hirhur*, thought. (I looked up ‘thought’ in the thesaurus and arrived at a better word: consideration.) Many of us have fleeting thoughts, but never stop long enough to consider their import and impact. “Consider” the following story, which I just read in Rabbi Yechiel Spero’s, “One Small Spark.”

Many *yeshivos* in *Eretz Yisrael* cater to the needs – both physical and spiritual – of men who are returning to Jewish observance. One such *yeshivah*, under the leadership of *Horav Eliyahu* Feivelson, focuses primarily on the younger generation, men who seek to concretize their religious beliefs and their knowledge of Torah before going on to build a family. Thus, *Rav* Feivelson was surprised one day when a gentleman, regal in dress and demeanor, visited him with an unusual request: “I am a professor at the university and recently became a *baal teshuvah*. I am well on the road to becoming a fully observant member of *Am Yisrael*. My issue is with my wife. She is not yet there. In fact, she neither has interest in becoming *frum*, observant, nor in my carrying out my choice. She would much rather that I return to the ‘normal’ way of life that we enjoyed before I became *frum*. I came here to ask the Rabbi to please speak with my wife and attempt to convince her to accompany me on this journey.”

Rav Feivelson was impressed with this man’s request. It was not every day that an accomplished senior citizen showed up at his door to make such a request. “What motivated your return to Torah Judaism?” he asked the professor. This is his moving story.

“I was nine years old when my parents emigrated to *Eretz Yisrael*, following World War II. They were survivors who had lost everything in the Holocaust. Family, money, religion – all lost. They sought a better future for their *ben yachid*, only child. We arrived in a growing city that did not yet have the type of school that my mother wanted for me. Not knowing much about schools, she contacted her brother for advice. He suggested *Batei Avos*, which was a fine school, part of a religious orphanage located in Bnei Brak. The school had been established by the *Ponovezher Rav*, as part of his legacy to rebuild the Torah that was decimated in Europe. My mother trusted her brother. She had no reason to ask whether the school was religious. If she had known that it was, I would not have attended. Her child would not fall prey to the ‘mistake’ that had cost them everything. (Sadly, whenever something goes wrong, it is always G-d’s fault. We cannot judge. What the survivors experienced is beyond anything that we can describe or understand.)

Ashdod to Bnei Brak was not a commonly traveled route. When my mother sent me off, we knew that it would be some time before we would see one another. I would have a room and three solid meals a day, so why should she worry? One day, when my mother had to be in Bnei Brak for another reason, she decided to visit me in the school. How shocked and dismayed she was to discover that her precious child was attending a *frum* school. She was adamant: ‘Pack your bags; we are leaving this place. My child will not attend a religious school!’

“Three days later, an elderly man wearing a long black frock, sporting a white beard, appeared at our door. He introduced himself as *Rav Kahaneman*, the *Ponovezher Rav*. Apparently, he had been traveling outside the country on one of his fundraising trips and was dismayed to discover upon his return that one of his students had opted to leave.

‘What can I do,’ he asked, “to resolve the situation? Why did you take him home? Did we do something wrong? Was it the food, or his bed? What can we do to rectify this, so that he can return forthwith?”

“‘Nothing! Absolutely nothing! After what my husband and I experienced, we want nothing to do with religion. I was unaware that your school was religious. Otherwise, he would never have stepped foot in your building.’

“The *Rosh Yeshivah* begged. He pleaded. He promised the world. My mother, however, was adamant. There was no way I was returning to *Batei Avos*. Suddenly, the *Rav*’s knees began to shake, and he asked for a chair. He sat down by the table and began to cry uncontrollably. He uttered not a word; he just cried and cried. Ten minutes elapsed. He stopped, wiped his tears, rose from the chair and left our home.

“Indeed, my mother saw to it that her precious child would not grow up religious. I, however, never forgot that image before my eyes. The sight of an elderly *Rosh Yeshivah* weeping copiously over the loss of one young child to Judaism was forever etched in my psyche. His tears were so genuine, because his love of Torah and every Jewish *neshamah* was heartfelt and authentic. Many decades passed since that day, but I have finally returned. Now, I want my wife to join me, so that we can live out our twilight years as fully-observant Jews.”

Rav Feivelson agreed to help. After such a story, who could demur such a request? The *Rosh Yeshivah*’s cries never ceased. They pierced the heart of a young boy and remained with him throughout his life, until they finally had the desired effect.

קח לך את יהושע בן נון איש אשר רוח בו ... ונתתה מהודך עליו למען ישמעו כל עדת בני ישראל

Take to yourself Yehoshua ben Nun, a man in whom there is spirit...You shall place some of your splendor upon him, so that the entire assembly of Bnei Yisrael will pay heed. (27:18,20)

Targum Onkelos comments, *B’dil di yikablam minei kol k’nishta divnei Yisrael*; “So that the entire congregation of *Bnei Yisrael* will accept him.” *Rashi* writes, “So that they treat him with respect and fear, in the manner that they treat you.” It is wonderful to have *Moshe Rabbeinu*’s approval, but is it not superfluous? Once Hashem gave the order, “Take to yourself Yehoshua,” what else was necessary to segue to Yehoshua becoming Moshe’s successor? Is Hashem’s approval insufficient that it was necessary for the people to see that Moshe, too, was on board with this choice? Why did Moshe have to make *semichah*, lean his hands on him, to demonstrate to the nation that Yehoshua had his full support?

Horav Yissachar Shlomo Teichtal, *zl*, explains this practically. He begins by relating an incident that occurred concerning *Horav Shlomo Kluger*, *zl* (*Maharshak*), *Av Bais Din* and *Maggid* in Brody, Galicia. He was a prolific author who wrote 160 volumes (of which 115 were sizable) of commentary on all areas of Torah. Following his father’s death, he had grown up as a homeless orphan. The *Maggid*, *zl*, of Dubno met the boy wandering the streets of Zamosc, Poland, and took him in, arranging for *rebbeim* to tutor the young prodigy. He sat on a number of *batei din* (at age 22), together with more seasoned scholars, finally assuming a *rabbanus* in Kelokow, Galicia, at age 36.

Rav Shlomo was the paragon of integrity, a man who was unwilling to bend or compromise *halachah* out of fear of a litigant’s power, social or economic standing. This attitude (which is the only attitude a *rav* should adopt) led to his early departure from this *rabbanus*. In those days, *rosh hakahal*, head of the community/president, was a very powerful position. Indeed, some rabbinic leaders would acquiesce to the demands of their *rosh ha’kahal*. He was usually a distinguished, powerful leader who was extremely wealthy and well-connected. The average member of the Jewish community would act submissively in the presence of the *rosh hakahal*. *Rav Shlomo* did not. In fact, when a *din Torah* between the *rosh ha’kahal* and a member of the community presented itself before him, he rendered judgment according to *halachah* as he saw it. Sadly for him, in one instance, it found the *rosh hakahal* liable to pay a hefty sum of money.

It did not take long before the *rosh hakahal* made the *Rav*’s life miserable. As a result, poverty reigned in *Rav Shlomo*’s home. Every avenue of income was closed before him, because the *rosh ha’kahal*

controlled the community. He could no longer afford the type of clothes worn by the *rav* of a community. His old ones were torn, and he suffered the final indignity on *Shabbos* when he sat down on his seat up front and felt moisture beneath him. He stood up to see that “someone” had put filthy grease, generally used for the wheels of a carriage, on his seat. It ruined the rabbinic garb that he was wearing. Between the worn-out material, the holes and the grease, *Rav Shlomo Kluger* looked like an itinerant vagabond, which is what he had become. The *rosh hakahal* had won the first salvo.

Everyone eventually answers for whatever injustice he causes, especially if he denigrates a Torah scholar, because then he is disagreeing with Hashem and His Torah. Nonetheless, the man’s ultimate punishment would neither put food on *Rav Shlomo’s* table, nor would it give him some presentable garments. He packed his bag and left town. He planned to seek a tutoring position teaching children. The rabbinate was not for him. His deferential, unpretentious temperament precluded him from assuming a rabbinic position (or so he felt). He could hardly go on an interview in torn, foul-smelling clothing.

As he was traveling, he chanced upon *Horav Yosef Stern*, *zl*, *Rav* of Zalkova, one of that generation’s premier Torah giants, who immediately recognized the young *Rav* of Kelokow. He remarked, “How does someone of your stature go out in public in such attire? Where is your *kavod haTorah*, honor for the Torah?” (As a distinguished *Rav*, *Rav Shlomo Kluger* represented Torah at its apex. He could not present himself publicly in such a degrading manner.) After *Rav Shlomo* poured out his heart to *Rav Yozpa*, the *Rav* suggested traveling to Brody, where *Horav Efraim Zalman Margolis*, *zl*, lived. (*R’ Efraim Zalman* was a successful businessman who was also Brody’s leading Torah scholar. He had authored the *Matei Efraim* and *Shaarei Efraim*.) He had two sons who required tutoring. *Rav Shlomo* thanked the *Rav* and asked for a letter of approbation, since he did not know *Rav Efraim Zalman*. He was certain that without some kind of letter attesting to his erudition and character, he would be hard pressed to land a job.

Rav Shlomo continued his journey toward Brody, where he met *Rav Efraim Zalman*. His home was palatial, which added to the *Rav’s* discomfort, standing there in his filthy, torn clothing. *Rav Efraim Zalman’s* impeccable character refinement matched his brilliance in Torah knowledge. When *Rav Shlomo* related to him that he was seeking a position as a children’s tutor, *Rav Efraim* demurred, “You are far over-qualified for that. The city of Brody needs a *Maggid*, preacher, and *Av Bais Din*, head of its rabbinical court. I think that you are a perfect fit,” *Rav Efraim* said, “but first, we must obtain new clothes worthy of a distinguished *Rav*.” *Rav Efraim* barred *Rav Shlomo* from leaving his home for three days until the clothes were ready. If anyone were to see him in his shabby, foul-smelling clothes, all bets would be off. He would never get a job.

The next stop was the home of *Horav Meir Teumim*, *zl*, *Rav* of Brody, so that the *Rav* could converse with *Rav Shlomo* in learning and get a sense of what kind of peerless *talmid chacham*, Torah scholar, he was. After the *Rav* was favorably impressed with the young *Rav’s* brilliance and unsurpassed erudition, it was time to visit Brody’s *rosh ha’kahal*. Obviously, a city of 25,000 Jews, which was home to many scholars, had a unique *rosh ha’kahal*. He was an individual who was not just wealthy and well-connected, but who was also an individual who knew his way around *Shas*, all of *Talmud Bavli*, and was comfortable in *Shulchan Aruch*, code of Jewish Law. He was a man who enjoyed his share of *kavod*, honor, and, due to his position, came to expect it. This time, *Rav Shlomo* had to be convinced that the man was actually erudite. *Rav Shlomo* felt that it was below the dignity of a *talmid chacham* to cower before an *am ha’aretz*, an illiterate person. He felt that the man’s money and power did not empower him with a level of dignity such that the Torah embodied within a *talmid chacham* should be denigrated for him. *Rav Efraim Zalman* explained that while he was absolutely justified in his feeling, the man was a scholar. If he wanted the position, he would have to accept the *rosh ha’kahal*.

All went well until the first *Shabbos*, when it was announced throughout the community that the new young *Av Bais Din* and *Maggid* would

address the congregation during *davening*. That *Shabbos*, the *shul* was packed, standing room only. When *Rav Shlomo* ascended the podium, he took one look at the crowd and nearly passed out. He had never seen so many people, let alone delivered a lecture to them. He began to speak, and his anxiety took over to the point that the words that he emitted from his mouth were foreign to everyone – even to him! *Rav Efraim* understood what was happening, and he immediately exclaimed, “Fantastic, *gevaldig*! Brilliant! What an incredible thought!” Nu, when *Rav Efraim* spoke, the *shul* listened. They, too, “convinced” themselves that the gibberish they were hearing was brilliant dialectic from a young master. This caused *Rav Shlomo* to calm down and speak eloquently for the next four hours, during which he held the congregation spellbound.

The question is obvious: Why did *Rav Efraim Zalman* focus so much on the externals, i.e. clothing, oration, presentation? Was his approbation not enough to garner support for his candidate? *Rav Teichtal* explains that, “No, it was not enough, because people expect a *Rav* to present himself to be authoritative, impressive, and commanding obedience and respect. If the powerful people who expect everyone to defer to them do not respect the *Rav*, do not expect that he can be a people’s *talmid chacham*, an unparalleled *posek*, an individual who can engage young people and reach them, then he will not be successful. It is all about authority. While it is true that one must be able to appreciate greatness, something which is beyond the average boor, one must know whom he is expected to impress before he begins the interview. Even Yehoshua needed Moshe *Rabbeinu* with him.

... וביום השבת שני כבשים בני שנה תמימים

And on the *Shabbos* day: two male lambs in their first year, unblemished. (28:9)

Shabbos bears testimony that Hashem created Heaven and earth. Hashem imbued this day with unique spiritual character, distinguishing it from the other six days of the week, elevating it to a higher level of sanctity. Thus, on *Shabbos* when the *Bais HaMikdash* was extant, we could offer a *Korban Mussaf*, Additional Offering, similar to what is offered on Festivals and holy days. The *Sefer HaChinuch* explains that when we bring an offering, we fix our thoughts on the significance of the day and its broad degree of sanctity. Man is impacted by his actions. Thus, Hashem commanded us to perform specific actions for the sake of the day, which, in turn, will imbue us with its sacredness. In short, a *korban* reminds us that this day – i.e. *Shabbos*, *Rosh Chodesh*, *Yomim Tovim* – is spiritually unique.

Horav Yitzchak Zilberstein, *Shlita*, (*Mitzvos B’Simchah*) relates an inspiring *d’rash*, homiletic exposition, from *Horav Yaakov Yosef Herman*, *zl*, with regard to *Shabbos*. In the *Hoshanos* recited on *Shabbos Chol Hamoed Succos*, we laud *Klal Yisrael* for their devotion to *Shabbos Kodesh*. We recite a number of accolades, one of which at first appears ambiguous and somewhat less than laudatory: *Yosheves u’mantenes ad k’los ha’Shabbos*; “Who sit patiently on, before the end of *Shabbos*.” At first glance, this phrase implies that we are waiting for *Shabbos* to end, sort of looking at our watch every moment to see if we can perform a weekday activity. *Rav Herman* gave meaning to this verse via an incident that occurred personally concerning him.

Rav Herman’s daughter lay critically ill in the hospital. It was *Erev Shabbos*, and her parents had to make the painful decision: to leave her alone in the hospital for *Shabbos*, or stay with her and ignore the many guests that lined up by their door for the *Shabbos* meals. These were people who had nowhere to go, nothing to eat. These were people whose spiritual uplift for the entire week was derived from their *Shabbos* with the Hermans. *Rav Herman* decided that he must attend to the needs of these people. Hashem *Yisborach* would attend to his daughter. The *mitzvah* of *hachnosas orchim*, welcoming guests to his home, easing the travail of their lives, would stand to serve as a *z’chus*, merit, for his daughter.

It happened that another patient with the last name of Herman was at the hospital. Over the course of *Shabbos* this patient passed away. According to hospital regulations, a letter was supposed to have immediately been sent to the family of the deceased. By some quirk, a secretary erred and instead sent the death notification to the wrong

Herman family. She sent the letter to Rav Yaakov Yosef Herman. When the telegram arrived on *Shabbos*, the righteous Hermans refused to accept it. It was *Shabbos*; they would not disrupt the *kedushas*, sanctity, and serenity of *Shabbos*. They would wait it out. The telegram was forwarded instead to their sister-in-law who read it and went to speak to the Hermans. They refused to listen to anything that was not *Shabbos*-related.

On *Motzoei Shabbos*, another telegram arrived, apologizing profusely for the error. Indeed, they were pleased to inform the Hermans that their daughter's condition had improved, and she was expected to be released in a couple of days. When Rav Herman was informed of the mix-up in telegrams, he realized *p'shat*, the explanation of the verse in *Hoshanos*. The Jew is lauded for patiently waiting until the conclusion of *Shabbos* before addressing any non-*Shabbos* related issues. He is in no rush. The weekday can wait. Now, it is *Shabbos*. Today, he celebrates with Hashem.

Horav Zilberstein concludes with an incident that occurred concerning the saintly Rabbi Klonimus, father-in-law of the *Maharshal*, who lived at the beginning of the sixteenth century. The Jewish community constantly suffered from the brutal anti-Semites and their blood libels. The Christians would claim that the Jews killed Christian children, so that they could use their blood to mix into the *matzah* batter. While this claim was preposterous, the sadistic ruffians that comprised the peasant populace at the time did not require much more to agitate them sufficiently to create a pogrom against the Jews. During those dark times, the Jews were compelled to live surrounded and hounded by such hatred. Therefore, when a Christian child was found murdered on *Shabbos*, fingers were immediately pointed at the Jewish community. The Christian population was poised to obliterate the entire Jewish populace. Rabbi Klonimus immediately wrote various *sheimos*, *Kabbalistic* names and incantations, on a piece of paper and placed them by the murdered child's body. Then, to the shock and awe of both the Christian and Jewish communities, the child arose and revealed who had murdered him. He then fell back, dead. The Jewish community was spared.

Everyone was overjoyed, except Rabbi Klonimus, who, while happy to have saved the community, was chagrined that he had desecrated *Shabbos*. Veritably, it was a matter of *pikuach nefesh*, to save Jewish lives, but he was troubled that his "slate" felt imperfect. Thus, prior to returning his holy soul to its Source, Rabbi Klonimus instructed that for the next one hundred years whoever passed his grave should throw one stone on it. (The punishment for *Shabbos* desecration is stoning.) He did what he had to do, but he was still troubled. After all, *Shabbos* is special.

Va'ani Tefillah

ועל נשמותינו הפקודות לך – *V'al nishmoseinu ha'pekudos Lach*. And for our souls which are in safekeeping with You.

Chayeinu, our life; *nishmoseinu*, our souls/quality of life. We recognize that life without the *neshamah Shenasata bi*, the soul which You placed within me, has no meaning. What quality of life can be attributed to a life without meaning? Thus, we do not thank Hashem only for our lives, but for our souls as well, because one does not go without the other. Actually, our "life" is our *neshamah*, the spiritual, Heavenly component within us that endures forever, long after their physical body has ended its journey on this world.

What is the meaning of *ha'pekudos Lach*, "which are in safekeeping with You"? *Pikadon* in Hebrew means deposit or collateral. *Horav Yitzchak Kirzner*, zl, explains that the *neshamah* of a person is also called a *pikadon*, since part of the *neshamah* ascends to Heaven when we go to sleep at night. We pray that Hashem will "take care" of our *neshamah* and return it to us when we arise. Now, if we take a moment to digest this: At the moment of our awakening, we are "accepting" a delivery from Hashem: our *neshamah*! How can we just pull the blanket over our heads and go back to sleep?

Sponsored in loving memory of our dear mother, grandmother and great grandmother on her yahrzeit

Mrs. Hindy Herskowitz

מרת הינדא בת ר' יוסף צבי הלוי ע"ה - נפ' י"ז תמוז תשע"ד

Avi Herskowitz and family

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prepared and edited by Rabbi L. Scheinbaum

לע"נ

**שרה משא בת ר' יעקב אליעזר ע"ה
ביילא בת (אריה) לייב ע"ה**

PARSHAT PINCHAS

Should Chumash end with Parshat Pinchas?

Obviously not, yet in the middle of this week's Parsha we find the story of Moshe Rabbeinu's 'death' and the transfer of his leadership to Yehoshua (see 27:12-23).

Furthermore, a careful study of Parshat Pinchas reveals that almost all of its topics seem to belong elsewhere in Chumash.

In this week's shiur, we attempt to understand why.

INTRODUCTION

Up until Parshat Pinchas, the narrative of Sefer Bamidbar has followed in a very logical (chronological) order. However, towards the beginning of Parsha Pinchas, we uncover a serious problem in relation to the story of the war against Midyan.

Even though God's command to avenge the Midyanim is recorded towards the beginning of Parshat Pinchas, the details of that battle are not recorded until several chapters later in the middle of Parshat Matot. In the 'interim', Parshat Pinchas discusses several events that are not only unrelated, but also appear to have taken place at a later time!

After explaining this problem in a bit more detail, our shiur will attempt to explain the reason for what otherwise seems to be a very strange progression of parshiot.

[Before we begin our shiur, a note of convention:

Parsha - with a capital 'P' - refers to Parshat HaShavua, parsha (or parshia) - with a small 'p' - refers to 'parshiot' ['ptuchot' or 'stumot'] - the paragraph-like divisions in Chumash, denoted by a wide blank space on the line .]

DEFINING THE PROBLEM

Review 25:1-15, noting how Parshat Pinchas begins by completing the story of Bnei Yisrael's sin with the daughters of Midyan (from the end of Parshat Balak). First, Pinchas is rewarded for his zealous act (that saved Bnei Yisrael from a harsher punishment/ 25:10-15); and immediately afterward God commands Moshe to avenge the Midyanites:

"And God spoke to Moshe, saying: Attack the Midyanites and defeat them, for they attacked you by trickery..." (25:16-18).

Logic would dictate that Chumash should continue at this point with the story of that battle. But that's not what happens! Instead, the details of that battle are recorded only some **five** chapters later - in the middle of Parshat Matot:

"And God spoke to Moshe, saying: Avenge the Israelite people on the Midyanites...[then] Moshe spoke to Bnei Yisrael: Choose men for battle, and let them attack Midyan to avenge God's anger with Midyan..." (see Bamidbar 31:1-2 / compare with 25:16-18).

In the interim (i.e. chapters 26-30), we find several unrelated topics, as summarized in the following table:

<u>Chapter</u>	<u>Topic</u>
26:1-65	A census of the entire nation
27:1-11	The story of 'bnot Tzlofchad'
27:12-14	Moshe Rabbeinu's 'final day'
27:12-23	The transfer of leadership from Moshe to Yehoshua
28:1-30:1	Laws of korbanot - tmidim and musafim
30:2-17	The laws of nedarim (vows)

This problem usually goes unnoticed for a very simple reason. When the census begins in chapter 26, it appears to be directly connected to this commandment to avenge the Midyanim:

"And God spoke to Moshe, saying: Attack the Midyanites..." (see 25:16-18)

"And it came to pass after the plague, God told Moshe... take a census of Bnei Yisrael from the age twenty and up - by their ancestral houses, all who are able to bear arms" (see 26:1-2).

This juxtaposition leaves us with the impression that this census is necessary as part of the preparation for the ensuing battle against Midyan. However, by the time the details of that census are completed (some 60 verses later) it becomes quite clear that this "mifkad" has nothing to do with that battle. Rather, its purpose is stated explicitly:

"... This is the total number of Bnei Yisrael: 601,730. And God spoke to Moshe saying: **To these [counted people] shall the land be apportioned** - according to the listed names, the larger the group the larger the share..." (see 26:51-54).

In other words, this census will form the basis for the partition of the Land after its conquest. This observation explains why this specific census is conducted "le-beit avotam" [lit. by their ancestral houses / see 26:2] - hence it includes the specific names of the official family units, as the land will be apportioned according to the size of these family units (see 26:52).

[Note how this detail of "le-beit avotam" is the primary difference between the census here, and the census in Bamidbar chapters 1-2. There, we don't find these individual family unit names!]

Further proof that this census is totally unrelated to the war against Midyan comes from the details of that battle in Parshat Matot. Review 31:4-6, noting how God instructs Moshe to conscript only one thousand soldiers from each tribe. If only 12,000 soldiers are needed to fight Midyan, then there is certainly no need for Moshe to conduct a comprehensive census of over 600,000 soldiers!

Conclusive proof that the census in chapter 26 is taken for the sole purpose of apportioning the land (and has nothing to do with the ensuing battle against Midyan) is found in chapter 27, where we find the story of how the daughters of Tzlofchad complained that they would not receive a 'nachala' [a portion of the land]. Certainly, this has nothing to do with the war against Midyan, but everything to do with inheriting the Land!

[The final topic of chapter 27, i.e. the appointment of Yehoshua to succeed Moshe, also relates to the topic of inheriting the land, as it will become Yehoshua's responsibility to conquer and then oversee the inheritance of the land according to the tribal families.]]

Finally, chapters 28 thru 30 describe numerous laws regarding korbanot and nedarim [vows]. These laws as well certainly have no direct connection to the war against Midyan.

Only in chapter 31, Sefer Bamidbar finally returns to the details of the battle against Midyan that began back in chapter 25.

The following chart summarizes our discussion thus far and illustrates how the natural flow from chapter 25-31 is interrupted by topics A-F:

<u>CHAPTER</u>	<u>EVENT / TOPIC</u>
=====	=====
* 25 ==> GOD'S COMMANDMENT TO ATTACK MIDYAN	
A) 26	The Census of the people who will inherit the Land
B) 27:1-11	The story of bnot Tzlofchad
C) 27:12-14	Moshe Rabbeinu's final day
D) 27:12-23	The transfer of leadership from Moshe to Yehoshua
E) 28->29	The laws of korbanot - tmidim and musafim
F) 30	The laws of nedarim (vows)
* 31 ==> THE BATTLE AGAINST THE MIDYANIM	

Clearly, none of these topics relate directly to 'milchemet Midyan'. Nonetheless, the Torah records them here in Parshat Pinchas.

To understand why, we must first determine where each of these parshiot (i.e. A-F) **does** belong.

A) THE CENSUS - MIFKAD HA-NACHALOT

As we explained above, the census (in chapter 26) was taken to enable the leaders to properly apportion the land. Therefore, it's rather easy to identify where this section 'belongs', for the last three chapters of Sefer Bamidbar discuss the topic of inheriting the land (see 33:50 till the end of the book). In fact, we can pretty much pinpoint where this unit belongs by noting a rather obvious textual (and thematic) parallel. Simply review once again the concluding psukim of the census:

"Among these shall the land be apportioned as shares, according to the listed names, with larger groups **INCREASE** the share, with smaller groups **REDUCE** the share. Each is to be assigned its share according to its enrollment..." (see 26:52-54).

The note how we find almost the identical commandment in Parshat Mas'ei, when God charges Bnei Yisrael with the mission of conquering the land:

"When you cross the Jordan into the Land of Canaan... you shall take possession of the land and settle it..."

"You shall **apportion** the land among yourselves... with larger groups **INCREASE** the share, with smaller groups **REDUCE** the share... You shall have your portions according to your **ancestral tribes**..." (see 33:50-55)

[Note CAPS in both quotes to highlight parallel]

Review these psukim once again, noting how this commandment in Parshat Mas'ei is almost identical to the commandment recorded at the conclusion of the census in Parshat Pinchas (see above 26:52-54)!

Furthermore, Parshat Mas'ei continues with numerous other commandments concerning inheriting the land. [For example, the borders of Eretz Canaan that are to be conquered (see 34:1-15), the tribal leaders who will apportion the land (see 34:16-29), the cities of the levi'im and the cities of refuge (see chapter 35), etc.]

Hence, we conclude that the census in Parshat Pinchas actually 'belongs' in Parshat Mas'ei!

B) BNOT TZLOFCHAD

Note how this incident (see 27:1-11) is recorded immediately after the census [read 27:1 carefully], and most probably that is exactly when it took place. After all, the daughters of Tzlofchad's complaint stems from their worry that their father's inheritance (as promised in the census) will be lost, for they have no brothers.

Clearly, this story can be considered a direct continuation of the "mifkad ha-nachalot" (i.e. chapter 26), for it too deals with laws concerning inheriting the Land. Therefore, it too should have been recorded in Parshat Mas'ei. [In fact, the story of bnot Tzlofchad actually continues in Parshat Mas'ei - see chapter 36!]

C) MOSHE RABBEINU'S FINAL DAY

In the next parsha (27:12-14), God commands Moshe to take a final glance of the Promised Land prior to his death:

"And God told Moshe: Ascend Mount Eivrim and view the land which I am giving to Bnei Yisrael, then you will be gathered unto your people, just as Aharon was..." [i.e. the time has come for Moshe to die (see 27:12-13).

Obviously, this commandment should have been recorded at the very end of Sefer Bamidbar, or even at the end of Sefer Devarim - prior to Moshe's death; surely not in the middle of Parshat Pinchas! [To verify this, simply compare it to Devarim 34:1-6.]

Furthermore, even if this story 'belongs' in Sefer Bamidbar, it most definitely should have been recorded **after** "milchemet Midyan", for that story begins -stating explicitly:

"And God spoke to Moshe: Avenge the Midyanites... **afterward** you shall be gathered to your nation" (31:1).]

D) APPOINTING YEHOSHUA AS THE NEW LEADER

The next parshia (27:15-23) is simply Moshe's reaction to this commandment (that he must die). Therefore, Moshe requests that God appoint a leader in his place. Clearly, both of these parshiot [(C) and (D)] form a unit, but it would have made more sense to records this unit somewhere towards the end of Chumash; but definitely **not** in the middle of Parshat Pinchas!

In fact, considering that this story includes the appointment of Yehoshua as the new leader, this unit could have formed a very appropriate conclusion for the entire Sefer.

E) KORBANOT TMIDIM U-MUSAFIM

The next two chapters (28->29) constitute a schedule of the various korbanot **musaf** that are offered on special occasions in 'addition' [= musaf] to the daily **tamid** sacrifice.

Obviously, this entire unit doesn't belong here, for it has nothing to do with the ongoing narrative. Rather, it should have been recorded in Sefer Vayikra, most probably in Parshat Emor, together with the other laws of korbanot and holidays (see Vayikra chapter 23, noting how the phrase: 've-hikravtem isheh la-Hashem..' relates to the complete details found in Bamidbar chapters 28-29]

F) PARSHAT NEDARIM

In chapter 30 we find a commandment regarding the laws of "nedarim" [vows]; yet another parshia of mitzvot (as opposed to narrative). These laws could be understood as a direct continuation of the previous section - because the final pasuk of the "tmidim u'musafim" section states that these korbanot were brought **'in addition** to their **nedarim**...' (see 29:39!).

Based on this analysis, it becomes clear that the Torah has intentionally 'interrupted' the story of the war against Midyan with several unrelated parshiot! The obvious question is: **why?**

DIVIDE & CONQUER

To answer this question, we must first group these six topics (i.e. A-F above) into two basic categories.

I. PREPARATION FOR ENTERING ERETZ CANAAN (26-27)

- A. The census for dividing the land - mifkad ha-nachalot
- B. The complaint of bnot Tzlofchad re: their inheritance
- C. Moshe's death
- D. The transfer of his leadership to Yehoshua.

II. MITZVOT THAT BELONG IN SEFER VAYIKRA (28-30)

- E. The laws of tmidim u-musafim
- F. The laws of nedarim

These two categories can help us pinpoint where each of these two units belong.

The first unit (I.) contains parshiot that detail Bnei Yisrael's preparation for entering the land. As we explained above, these parshiot belong in Parshat Mas'ei. To illustrate this point, the following table shows the progression of parshiot from the story of milchemet Midyan until the end of Sefer Bamidbar:

CHAPTER	TOPIC
31:1-54	The war against Midyan
32:1-42	The inheritance of Reuven & Gad in Transjordan
33:1-49	Summary of B.Y.'s journey through the desert
33:50-56	* The commandment to conquer & inherit the Land
34:1-15	* The precise borders of Eretz Canaan.
34:16-29	* The tribal leaders who are to apportion the Land
35:1-18	* The cities of the Levites for their inheritance.
35:9-34	* The cities of refuge to be set up in the land.
36:1-13	* Laws of inheritance relating to inter-tribal marriages

This table illustrates how the final topic of Sefer Bamidbar is **preparation for entering Eretz Canaan** (i.e. 33:50-36:13).

Considering that chapters 26-27 in Parshat Pinchas discuss this very same topic, we conclude that they actually 'belong' at the end of Sefer Bamidbar.

The second unit, containing the laws of **tmidim u-musafim** and **nedarim**, clearly belongs in Sefer Vayikra. However, this phenomenon should not surprise us, for there are many other instances in Sefer Bamidbar where we find 'insertions' of a set of laws that seem to belong in Sefer Vayikra. [See our Introductory shiur to Bamidbar, where this topic was discussed in detail. Later in our shiur, we will suggest a reason why specifically these mitzvot were 'transferred' from Vayikra to Bamidbar.]

CUT AND PASTE?

Based on this distinction, we can now redefine our question: Why does the Torah 'cut' these parshiot (i.e. chapters 26 & 27) from Parshat Mas'ei (where they seem to belong), and 'paste' them instead in Parshat Pinchas - after the story of Bnei Yisrael's sin with bnot Midyan, but before they avenge the Midyanim?

Before we offer a thematic explanation, we should note a small technicality that can support our conclusions thus far.

Using a Tanach Koren (or similar), take a careful look at the opening pasuk of chapter 26, noting how there is a parshia break smack in the middle of this pasuk!

"Va-yehi acharei ha-mageifa" - when the **plague** was over - **SPACE** , [i.e. a parshia break in the middle of the pasuk] ...and God told Moshe...Take a census of Bnei Yisrael..." (see 26:1-2)

This strange 'parshia break' in the middle of the pasuk may reflect this 'interruption' of the narrative, which takes place precisely at this point, in the middle of this pasuk!

Now that we have established that the census in chapter 26 'belongs' at the end of the book, we must now search for a reason why the Torah intentionally inserted this unit specifically at this point in Sefer Bamidbar, i.e. after the plague that followed Bnei Yisrael's sin with 'the women of Moav & Midyan'.

We will suggest a reason for this juxtaposition by considering the overall theme and structure of Sefer Bamidbar.

THE LAST PLAGUE

Recall how the narrative of Sefer Bamidbar began as Bnei Yisrael prepare for their journey from Har Sinai towards the Promised Land. Ideally (i.e. had Bnei Yisrael not sinned), Sefer Bamidbar would have continued with the story of the conquest and settlement of the Land.

Even though everything seems to be going fine in the first ten chapters - i.e. up until the psukim of "va'yhi bnsoa ha'aron" (see 10:35-36) - as soon as Bnei Yisrael begin their journey (in chapter 11), everything seems to go wrong. Instead of describing what should have been, Sefer Bamidbar becomes the story of how and why Bnei Yisrael do NOT make it to the land of Israel.

Note how just about every story in Sefer Bamidbar from chapter 11 thru chapter 25 describes a rebellious act of Bnei Yisrael, followed by a terrible punishment. [For example, the "mitonnim", the "mitavim", the "meraglim", Korach and his followers, "mei meriva", the "nachash nechoshet" incident, and "chet bnot midyan".]

The sin of the "meraglim" (in chapter 13) was so severe that God swore that the first generation must perish in the desert. Then, even in the fortieth year, we find additional incidents where Bnei Yisrael sin (and are punished). For example, note the story of the 'nachash nechoshet' (see 21:4-10) and 'chet bnot Midyan' (see 25:1-6).

Even though chapters 11 thru 25 of Sefer Bamidbar are replete with stories of rebellion, punishment, and death; from chapter 26 and onward, the primary topic of Sefer Bamidbar

changes once again. Instead of stories of rebellion, now we find stories of conquest and preparation for entering the land. The following table summarizes this division of the narrative of Sefer Bamidbar into three distinct sections:

- I. 1->10 Preparation at Har Sinai to travel to Israel
- II, 11->25 What went wrong, i.e. why first generation failed
- III. 26->36 Preparation for entering the land [new generation]

From this perspective, the act of Pinchas, which stopped the plague in the aftermath of the sin with "bnot Mo'av" constitutes an important milestone in Sefer Bamidbar- for this incident was the **last** punishment in the desert. Hence, those who survived that plague are now destined to become the first **inheritors** of Eretz Canaan!

With this background, we can suggest that the Torah's 'insertion' of the census specifically at this point in the Sefer emphasizes precisely this point - that the tragic events in the desert have finally come to an end. Those who survived this plague are now worthy of inheriting the Land.

This interpretation is supported by the final statement of that census, recorded after the levi'im are counted: "These are the persons counted by Moshe...Among these there was not one of those counted by Moshe & Aharon in Midbar Sinai (chapters 1-2) ... For God had said of them: They shall die in the wilderness, not one of them survived, except Kalev ben Yefuneh and Yehoshua bin Nun" (26:63-65).

Further support is found in Sefer Devarim, in Moshe Rabbeinu's opening address to the nation. In Moshe's introductory speech (before he begins his main speech that reviews the various laws that Bnei Yisrael must keep once they enter the land / see 5:1, 5:28, 6:1 etc.), note his emphasis on this very same point:

"Your very own eyes have seen what God has done to Ba'al Pe'or, for anyone who had followed Ba'al Pe'or [i.e. chet bnot Mo'av] - God has destroyed him from your midst [via the 'mageifa']. But **you** - who have remained loyal to your God - are standing here alive to today!" (see Devarim 4:3-4). [Did you realize that this is the context of the pasuk "v'atem ha'dvakim b'Hashem Elokeichem" (that we often quote in our daily tefilla)?]

FROM CENSUS TO LEADERSHIP

In a similar manner, we can explain why this census is followed by God's commandment to Moshe to ascend Har HaEivarim to die, and the story of how his leadership is transferred to Yehoshua. Considering that this census will become the basis for the 'inheritance' of the Land of Israel, we mention immediately afterward this transfer of leadership, for it will become Yehoshua's duty to lead the new generation to conquer and inherit the Land. [See further iyun section for a discussion of how Rashi relates to this point.]

TMIDIM U-MUSAFIM - WHY HERE?

Now that we have explained why the Torah moves the unit of chapters 26-27 from Parshat Mas'ei to Parshat Pinchas, we must also explain why the Torah moves chapters 28-30 (the second category) from Sefer Vayikra to Parshat Pinchas.

As we explained in our introductory shiur, Sefer Bamidbar contains numerous mitzvot that 'could have been' recorded in Sefer Vayikra. Here we find yet another example.

However, as was the case in the other instances, we must look for a thematic connection between those laws and the ongoing narrative. In other words, we must ask - what is the connection between the laws of tmidim u-musafim and Bnei Yisrael's preparation for entering Eretz Canaan?

Once again, we return to the theme of Sefer Bamidbar to suggest an answer.

Recall that the first ten chapters of Sefer Bamidbar describe Bnei Yisrael's **preparation** for their journey from Har Sinai to the

Promised Land. Those chapters emphasize the intrinsic connection between the camp of Bnei Yisrael and the mishkan. Bnei Yisrael must travel with the mishkan, and thus the 'Shchina' (the Divine presence), at the center of the camp (see shiur on Parshat Bamidbar).

Now, forty years later, as the Torah describes Bnei Yisrael's preparation for entering the Promised Land, Chumash may be emphasizing this very same point once again - by recording the laws of tmidim u-musafim in Parshat Pinchas.

One can suggest two thematic reasons:

- 1) The korban Tamid, the daily collective offering on the **mizbeiach**, together with the additional **musaf** offering on the holidays, is purchased with the 'machatzit ha-shekel', collected from each member of Am Yisrael when taking the yearly **census**!
- 2) The **tamid** offering is a symbolic daily reminder of Ma'amad Har Sinai. Recall (from our shiur on Parshat Tetzaveh) our definition of the **Shchina** unit in Shmot chapters 25-29 (the commandment to build the mishkan). That unit began with the purpose of the mishkan:

"And they shall make for Me a mikdash, ve-**shachanti** betocham - that I should **dwel**l in their midst" (25:8).

That unit concluded with the commandment to offer the daily korban tamid, whose purpose was to perpetuate the **Shchina** which dwelled on Har Sinai:

"**Olat tamid** for all generations, at the entrance of the ohel mo'ed... for there **I will meet** with Bnei Yisrael... v-**shachanti** - and I will **dwel**l among Bnei Yisrael, I will be their God..."
(see Shmot 29:42-45 compare Bamidbar 28:1-6).

A similar phrase is found in the presentation of the korban tamid in Parshat Pinchas:

"**Olat tamid**, which was instituted at **Har Sinai**..." (28:6).

Thus, the korban tamid may symbolize the special connection between God and Bnei Yisrael that must crystallize as Bnei Yisrael prepare to conquer and inherit their Land.

From this perspective, this korban **tamid** may reflect both the collective nature of Am Yisrael's relationship with God ['korban tzibbur'], together with the value of the contribution of each individual [machatzit ha-shekel].

As Yehoshua prepares to lead Bnei Yisrael into a new era, these principles of the 'avodat tamid' - collective purpose, individual responsibility, and daily routine - must serve as a guiding light for the entire nation.

shabbat shalom,
menachem

FOR FURTHER IYUN

A. The interpretation presented in the above shiur can explain why Rashi (26:1) quotes **two** Midrashim to explain why this parsha of the census is located here.

1) The first Midrash he quotes, relating to the connection between the plague and the census, explains that Bnei Yisrael are so dear to God that He counts them after every tragedy, just as the shepherd counts his sheep after they have been attacked.

However, this approach is difficult, for it does not take into account the Torah's explicit explanation that this census is to determine who will inherit the land (see 26:53). Furthermore, in the other instances when Bnei Yisrael are smitten by plagues, the Torah never records God's command Moshe to take a census. Why should this plague be any different?

2) Therefore, Rashi quotes a second Midrash comparing Moshe to a shepherd: Moshe, like a shepherd, when he took Bnei Yisrael out of Egypt he counted them, now that he is about to die, he must return the sheep to their owner. Therefore, he must count them once again.

While the first Midrash focuses on the connection between the plague and the census, the second Midrash focuses on the connection between the census and the transfer of leadership from Moshe to Yehoshua.]

B. Note the Ramban's explanation why the parsha of Moshe's 'death' is written at this time (in Parshat Pinchas).

What issue led Ramban to this conclusion?

C. The story of Bnei Gad & Reuven (chapter 32) could be considered part of the nachala section.

1. Explain why.
2. Explain why it isn't, and why it actually continues to the story of milchemet Midyan.

Pay attention to the opening words of perek 32.

How does this relate to milchemet Midyan?

3. How does this story relate to other events in the desert, such as chet ha-meraglim for example. (See the Netziv on this issue.)

D. Use our explanation of the importance of the korban tamid to explain why each korban musaf in Parshat Pinchas concludes with the phrase 'milvad olat ha-tamid ...'.

E. Compare the names of the family groups in the census in Parshat Pinchas [le-beit avotam...] to the names of the original seventy members of Yaakov's family who went down to Egypt (see Breishit 46:8-27). Can you find the significance of this parallel?

[To whom was this land first promised?]

The CHAGIM in PARSHAT PINCHAS

As you 'should' have noticed, every time that we doven MUSAF (i.e. on shabbat, rosh chodesh, & yom-tovim), we always include a quote from Parshat Pinchas.

Similarly, the Torah reading on every rosh chodesh and yom-tov is either entirely from Parshat Pinchas, or at least the 'maftir' section!

To understand why, the following shiur undertakes a simple analysis of chapters 28->29 in Parshat Pinchas.

INTRODUCTION

Even though we find several presentations of the Jewish Holidays throughout Chumash, their presentation in Parshat Pinchas is quite unique. In fact, our shiur will show how the primary topic of this unit may not even be the holidays! [It will help us understand why these holidays are 'repeated' in Sefer Bamidbar, even though they were already discussed in Parshat Emor /i.e. Vayikra 23.]

We begin our study by identifying the precise unit under discussion and its structure.

AN ORGANIZED UNIT

Just about every time that Chumash presents a unit of "mitzvot" - it begins with a very short introductory narrative - the most common form being "va'yadaber Hashem el Moshe lay'mor", or something similar.

This standard format allows us to easily identify chapters 28 & 29 as a unit, as it begins with that opening phrase (see 28:1), and the commandments continue until the end of chapter 29.

Note as well 30:1 we find what constitutes the concluding verse of this unit, for it describes Moshe's fulfillment of God's command in 28:2, that Moshe should command these laws to Bnei Yisrael!

In the opening verse God instructs Moshe (see 28:1-2): "**Command** Bnei Yisrael and tell them - keep the laws of My [daily] offerings..."

In the closing verse (see 30:1):

"And Moshe spoke to Bnei Yisrael [telling them] everything [all the laws] that God had commanded him."

[Note a very similar structure between Vayikra 23:1 and 23:44.]

This alone already indicates that all of the laws included between these opening and closing verses forms a unit. [Note how the chapter division of Chumash seems to have made a major mistake here, for 30:1 should really have been 29:40! Note how the 'parshia' break of Chazal is much more accurate (as usual) than the 'King James' chapter division! This 'mistake' probably stems from a misunderstanding of the opening pasuk of Parshat Masei, and how it connects to the last verse of Parshat Pinchas.]

As we browse through the content of chapters 28->29, it seems as though its primary topic is the holidays, for they begin in 28:16 and continue all the way until 29:39. Note as well how these holidays are presented in the order of their lunar dates, i.e. beginning with Pesach and concluding with Succot.

Nonetheless, when we consider that this unit begins in 28:1, we must assume that the first fifteen psukim share the same theme. By taking a closer look, the connection becomes rather obvious, for the first topic is the daily "olah" offering - a lamb - offered once in the morning and once in the evening (see 28:2-8). These laws are followed by the commandment to offer an 'additional' "olah" every Shabbat (see 28:9-10), and more elaborate "olah" on every Rosh Chodesh [first day of the lunar month]

Now, to determine what thematically ties this unit together, we need only list the topic of each of its individual "parshiot" in search of a logical progression:

As we will see, the progression is very logical:

PSUKIM	TOPIC / The laws of:
=====	=====
28:1-8	the DAILY korban TAMID
28:9-10	WEEKLY korban MUSAF for SHABBAT
28:11-15	MONTHLY korban MUSAF for ROSH CHODESH
28:16-25	a special korban MUSAF for CHAG HA'MATZOT
28:26-31	a special korban MUSAF for CHAG SHAUVUOT
29:1-6	a special korban MUSAF for YOM TRU'AH
29:7-11	a special korban MUSAF for YOM KIPPUR
29:12-34	a special korban MUSAF for each day of SUCCOT
--->	* [note how each day is a separate parshia!]
29:35-38	a special korban MUSAF for SHMINI ATZERET
29:39	the summary pasuk

The progression within this unit is very straightforward. We begin with the DAILY "korban tamid", followed by the WEEKLY "musaf shabbat", followed by the MONTHLY "korban rosh chodesh", followed by the YEARLY schedule of korbanot offered on the chagim, beginning with the first month, etc. It is for this reason that the FIRST pasuk of each of these 'holiday' "parshiot" begins with the precise lunar date.

THE KEY PHRASE: "AL OLAT ha'TAMID..."

As you review these parshiot, note how each parshia relates in some manner to the daily "olat tamid". The opening parshia describes it, while each and every parshia that follows concludes with the statement "al olat ha'tamid" or "milvad olat ha'tamid".

The Torah goes out of its way to emphasize that each of these korbanot are to be offered IN ADDITION to the daily OLAH offering! In fact, that is why we call the offering a 'MUSAF'! - The word "musaf" stems from the verb "l'hosif" = to add on. These special korbanot are offered in ADDITION to the daily korban TAMID, and hence their name - a korban MUSAF.

Therefore, this unit begins with the KORBAN TAMID and then continues with the detail of each korban MUSAF that is offered in

addition to the daily "olat tamid". Hence, a more precise definition for this unit would be KORBANOT TMIDIM u'MUSAFIM.

Indeed, each of the holidays are mentioned within this unit, but not because the holidays are its primary topic. Quite the contrary; the holidays are mentioned, for on each holiday an 'additional' korban is to be offered.

BETWEEN EMOR & PINCHAS

With this background, we can better understand the difference between the presentation of the chagim in Parshat Emor (see Vayikra chapter 23) and their presentation here.

In contrast to Parshat Pinchas whose primary topic is korbanot, the primary topic in Parshat Emor is the holidays. In fact, that is precisely its title: "moadei Hashem..." - God's appointed times (23:1,4)! That unit details the nature and specific laws for each holiday. For example, the prohibition to work, the need to gather ("mikraei kodesh"), and special mitzvot for each holiday, such as: offering the "omer", the "shte ha'lechem", blowing shofar, fasting, succah, lulav & etrog etc. [To verify, review Vayikra 23:1-44.]

[Btw, that parsha **does** include certain korbanot, such as those which come with the "omer" and "shte ha'lechem". But again, those korbanot are special for that day and hence, relate to the special nature of each of those holidays.]

Notice as well that each holiday in Parshat Emor includes the mitzvah of "v'hikravtem ishe la'Hashem" [you shall bring an offering to God/ see 23:8,25,27,36]. However, this commandment appears quite ambiguous for it doesn't specify which type of korban is to be offered.

Parshat Pinchas solves this ambiguity, by telling us precisely what that offering should be. To prove how, note a key summary pasuk found in Parshat Emor:

"These are God's appointed times set aside for gathering IN ORDER to offer a - ISHE LA'HASHEM -, an OLAH, MINCHA, ZEVOACH, & NESACHIM, - on EACH DAY - DVAR YOM B'YOMO." (See Vayikra 23:37, compare with 23:4)

What does "dvar yom b'yomo" refer to? Most likely to the precise details for these korbanot as recorded in Parshat Pinchas! [Note Rashi on that pasuk (23:37), that is exactly what he says!] [Using computer jargon, we could say that Parshat Emor is 'indexed' to Parshat Pinchas - or, if each "v'hikravtem ishe" in Emor was in 'hyper-text', it would link to its respective URL address in Parshat Pinchas. [e.g. 23:8->28:19, etc.]

Also, if you look carefully at the names of the chagim in the opening pasuk of each parshia in Parshat Pinchas, you'll notice that each specific name reflects the primary aspect of the chag as it had already been described in Parshat Emor! [That comparison is quite straightforward, but beyond the scope of this shiur.]

With this background, the presentation of the holidays in Parshat Pinchas is quite easy to understand. Each holiday is introduced by its lunar date and name (based on its more detailed description in Parshat Emor). This introduction is followed by the complete details of the korban MUSAF for that holiday, including the type of each korban, and the number of animals that are to be offered. Other than those details (of the korban MUSAF), Parshat Pinchas does not add in any new laws for any of the "chagim".

THE INTERNAL STRUCTURE OF PARSHAT HA'MUSAFIM

Let's return now to Parshat Pinchas to take a look at the actual korbanot and what they're all about.

Even though the korban MUSAF of each holiday is presented in a separate parshia, the set of korbanot for each holidays are quite similar. Note how each set contains:

- * an OLAH offering of PARIM, AYLIM, & KVASIM;

- * the appropriate flour & wine offerings,

[better known as "MINCHATAM V'NISKAM";

* and a CHATAT offering of a SEIR IZIM (a goat).

The following table compares the specific korbanot of each chag. [If you have the time (and patience), I recommend that you try to work it out first on your own.]

As you review this table, note how similar most of the MUSAFIM are. However, note as well where and how they differ!

CHAG / OLAT:	PAR	AYIL	KEVES	/ SEIR	CHATAT
ROSH CHODESH	-	2	1	7	1
CHAG HA'MATZOT	2	1	7	1	
[same for all 7 days]					
SHAVUOT	- 2	1	7	1	
ROSH HA'SHANA		1	1	7	1
YOM KIPPUR	-	1	1	7	1
[same as R.H.]					
SUCCOT (day 1) -		13	2	14	1
SUCCOT (day 2) -		12	2	14	1
SUCCOT (day 3) -		11	2	14	1
SUCCOT (day 4) -		10	2	14	1
SUCCOT (day 5) -		9	2	14	1
SUCCOT (day 6) -		8	2	14	1
SUCCOT (day 7) -		7	2	14	1
SHMINI ATZERET -	1	1	7	1	

As you study this chart, note how one can easily identify certain groups of holidays. Let's organize them as follows:

GROUP ONE: [the 2-1-7-1]

Rosh Chodesh, Chag ha'Matzot, and Shavuot

Note how all three are connected to YETZIAT MITZRAYIM! [Rosh Chodesh - based on Shmot 12:1, and Shavuot can be considered the conclusion of Pesach.]

GROUP TWO: [the 1-1-7-1]

Rosh ha'Shana, Yom Kippur, and Shmini Atzeret

Note, that all three are in Tishrei! Since the first two are 'days of judgement', then we must conclude that Shmini Atzeret must also be a 'day of judgement'!

[e.g. "tiflat geshem" etc.]

GROUP THREE: [the {13->7}-2-14-1]

The seven days of Succot

This is the most interesting group, for (unlike "chag ha'matzot") even though each day of Succot is the same holiday, for some reason the number of PARIM decreases daily.

DOUBLE NATURE

In addition to this obvious division into three groups, there remains another interesting phenomenon in the above chart. For some reason, the OLAH offering on Succot seems to be DOUBLE. On every other holiday we offer one AYIL and seven KVASIM, but on each day of Succot we double that - offering TWO and FOURTEEN instead! Furthermore, in regard to the PARIM, there's an 'explosion'. Instead of either one or two, we find THIRTEEN! More puzzling is the fact that each day we bring one less.

So what's going on with the korbanot on Succot?

One could suggest that Succot should not be considered a separate category, but rather a COMBINATION of the other two. Let's explain why.

On the one hand, Succot could be included in Group One, for that group contains the other two "shalosh regalim" (i.e. Chag ha'Matzot and Shavuot). On the other hand, Succot could also be included in Group Two, for that group contains all of the other holidays that fall out in the seventh month (i.e. "chagei Tishrei"). [Thematically as well, Succot fits into both groups. On the one hand it is a thanksgiving holiday (like the holidays in Group One), where we thank God for our fruit harvest /that's why we recite the Hallel. On the other hand, it is also a time of awe (like the holidays in Group Two), for we anticipate the rainy season which

will determine the fate of the forthcoming year/& that's why we recite the "Hoshanot"].

This 'double nature' of Succot can explain why its korbanot are DOUBLE - two AYLIM instead of one; & fourteen KVASIM instead of seven. But what about the PARIM? According to this interpretation, we should only bring THREE on each day of Succot. So why do we bring and 'extra' ten on the first day, an extra nine on the second, etc.

It's rather cute, but if we add up all the 'extras', i.e. $10+9+8+7+6+5+4$ we find that we've added 49 [=7x7] PARIM. In relation to the "chagim", finding significance in the number seven (or its multiple) should not surprise us. There are many instances in Chumash when 'seven' relates to our recognition that it God who controls what we perceive as nature (see shiurim on both Parshat Breishit and on Parshat Emor).

Our recognition that God controls nature is most critical on Succot - for it sits at the junction (and 'overlap') of the agricultural year, i.e. at the end of the previous year (the autumn fruit harvest) and beginning of the new year (the upcoming rainy season).

Furthermore, should we add these 49 PARIM to the original 21 PARIM [3x7days], we find that a total of SEVENTY parim are offered during SUCCOT. Chazal point out that these seventy bulls are representative of the seventy nations of mankind. [See shiur on Parshat Noach and the 'Migdal Bavel' vort'.]

[If you want to find additional meaning to the number 7 or 49 [=7x7] in relation to the 7 days of Succot in the 7th month, ask your local kabbalist. - "v'akmal".]

In summary, we have shown how what appears to be a rather monotonous list of korbanot may actually be hiding some very fundamental aspects of the "chagim". Hopefully, next time you doven MUSAF, it will make your tefilah a bit more meaningful.

shabbat shalom,
Menachem

=====

FOR FURTHER IYUN

1. If you are not familiar with the structure of tfilat Musaf, after the standard opening three brachot, we recite a "piyut" which describes our sorrow (& our fault) over the fact that the Bet ha'Mikdash no longer stands (e.g. "mpnei chataeinu", or tikanta shabbat..." etc.). That "piyut" concludes with our wish that the Bet ha'Mikdash will be rebuilt so that we can once again offer the korbanot - then we quote the actual korban from Parshat Pinchas and a brief description of its NESACHIM. This is followed by yet another piyut (e.g. "yismchu b'malchutcha" or "melech rachaman...") and then concludes with the bracha of "kedushat ha'yom" (e.g. "mkadesh ha'shabbat", or "yisrael v' hazmanim").

2. Note that in regard to lighting Chanuka candles, Bet Shamai's shita that we begin with eight and conclude with one is based on a comparison to PAREI ha'CHAG - i.e. the PARIM of Succot.

3. The only korban that doesn't change for any holiday is the "seir izim I'CHATAT". This korban serves as atonement for any possible sin of Am Yisrael in the Mikdash. The "seir izim" is chosen as it is symbolic of the sin of the brothers of Yosef when they used a "seir" to 'cover up' their sin. See Ramban! As it purpose is atonement, only one offering is necessary per set, and hence it is not doubled in Succot as are the other korbanot.

4. See previous shiur on Rosh Ha'shana for a more complete explanation of why Tishrei (at the beginning of the rainy season), serves as a time when all mankind is judged.

5. Note machloket between Ramban (and everyone else) concerning whether this korban MUSAF was offered in the desert or only once Bnei Yisrael entered the land. Relate it to his "shita" of "yeish mukdam u'muchar ba'Torah". [Ramban on 28:1 & on Vayikra 3:2.] Relate this to the above shiur.

Pinchas: The Sequence of Bamidbar 26-30

by Rabbi Yitz Etshalom

I. INTRODUCTION: PARASHAT T'MIDIN UMUSAFIN

Chapters 28-29 in Bamidbar present the “Mishkan-calendar” of set, public offerings, in the following order:

- A. Korban Tamid
- B. Musaf: Shabbat
- C. Musaf: Rosh Hodesh
- D. Musaf : Matzot
- E. Musaf : Bikkurim (Shavuot)
- F. Musaf : Yom T'ruah (Rosh haShanah)
- G. Musaf : Yom haKippurim
- H. Musaf: Hag Hashem (Sukkot) day 1
- I. Musaf: Hag Hashem day 2
- J. Musaf: Hag Hashem day 3
- K. Musaf: Hag Hashem day 4
- L. Musaf: Hag Hashem day 5
- M. Musaf: Hag Hashem day 6
- N. Musaf: Hag Hashem day 7
- O. Musaf: Hag Hashem day 8

Hence, this section (including its concluding verse, at 30:1) is called “Parashat T'midin uMusafin”.

The immediate oddity that strikes the reader is one of location – why is Parashat T'midin uMusafin placed near the end of Sefer Bamidbar; it's natural location would be in the middle of Sefer Vayyikra, either at the conclusion of the “Torat haKorbanot” (chs. 1-7) or in the parallel treatment of the calendar in Ch. 23. Indeed, the calendar so closely approximates that of Vayyikra 23 that it would have been an “easy fit” to integrate the two parashot by including the specific Korban of each day as an expansion of the general command “v'hikravtem isheh l'Hashem” (you shall offer a burnt-offering to Hashem).

The issue of location raises a larger question about the sequence of commands in the latter chapters of Bamidbar. Beginning from ch. 20:

- 1) Death of Miriam/Mei M'rivah (20:1-13)
- 2) Edom (20:14-21)
- 3) Death of Aharon (20:22-29)
- 4) War with K'na'ani (21:1-3)
- 5) Travels (complaints, plague, song of the well) (21:4-20)
- 6) Sichon/Og (21:21-22:1)
- 7) Balak/Bil'am (22:2-24:25)
- 8) P'or/Pinchas (25:1-15)
- 9) Command to Harass the Midianites (25:16-18)
- 10) Census (26:1-51)
- 11) Division of the Land (26:52-56)
- 12) Levite Census (26:57-65)
- 13) Daughters of Tzlafchad (27:1-11)

- 14) Imminence of Death of Mosheh (27:12-14)
- 15) Mosheh's request re: continued leadership (27:15-23)
- 16) T'midin uMusafin (28:1-30:1)
- 17) Nedarim (vows) (30:2-17)
- 18) War with Midian (31)
- 19) Apportionment of East Bank to Gad and Reuven (32)

Understanding the rhyme behind the sequence here is a challenge; for purposes of this shiur we will confine ourselves to items 8-18. The problem is exacerbated once we note the following conundrum:

Since God commanded B'nei Yisra'el to act with enmity towards Midian (something which, one would assume, is doubly difficult for Mosheh considering that his wife and esteemed father-in-law are Midianites) in the immediate aftermath of the Midianite-inspired whoring after the Moavites and their god, why is that command interrupted (in text, if not in time), with two censuses, two passages dealing with the division of the land, God's command to Mosheh that he ascend the mountain, Mosheh's "demand" of God that He appoint a successor, T'midin and Musafin and the laws of personal vows?

This question may be asked in two fashions, depending on how strictly we apply chronological fidelity to the text.

If we assume that the events in the Torah are presented in the order in which they happened (except where impossible – compare Bamidbar 1:1 and ibid. 9:1; see Ramban at Sh'mot 18:1), then these commands were given and these interactions took place between God's command to harass the Midianites and the direct command to wage a war of vengeance against them.

If, following Ibn Ezra (Sh'mot 18:1 and elsewhere), Rashi (ibid.) and others, we make no assumption about the relationship between chronos and textus, the question becomes even stronger. Why did the Torah choose to interrupt the command regarding the war against Midian with these other passages, which may have happened at an earlier time?

II. STRUCTURE OF THE INTERVENING SECTIONS

A review of the "interrupting" passages which break up the commands regarding the war against Midian reveals a curious structure, once we utilize the Parashot of the Masoretic text as our guide:

(War against Midian)

Census of the army (12 Parashot)

Command to Divide the Land (1 Parashah)

Census of the Levi'im (1 Parashah)

Interaction with B'not Tz'laf'had (2 Parashot)

Command regarding impending death of Mosheh (1 Parashah)

Mosheh's "demand" that God appoint a successor (1 Parashah)

T'midin uMusafin (15 Parashot)

Nedarim (1 Parashah)

(War against Midian)

The "interjection" includes 16 Parashot relating to various aspects of the national census, 2 Parashot which are associated with the transfer of leadership and another 16 which deal with offerings (and vows – see the end of the Ramban's comments at Bamidbar 30:2).

In other words, squarely placed in the middle of the "interrupting section" are the two Parashot which deal with the end of Mosheh's leadership and the onset of Yehoshua's.

Having identified the structure, we can see that this entire section is made up of two sub-sections (Census and T'midin) with the transfer of leadership as the fulcrum around which they revolve. As such, we would expect a single message to emerge from each of the sub-sections, a message which is somehow made clearer by the 14 verses at its axis.

Let's begin from the inside out – from the command to Mosheh that he ascend the mountain and Mosheh's response:

12. And Hashem said to Mosheh, Get up into this Mount Abarim, and see the land which I have given to the people of Israel.
13. And when you have seen it, you also shall be gathered to your people, as Aharon your brother was gathered.
14. For you rebelled against my commandment in the desert of Zin, in the strife of the congregation, to sanctify me at the water before their eyes; that is the water of Meribah in Kadesh in the wilderness of Zin.
15. And Mosheh spoke to Hashem, saying,
16. Let Hashem, the God of the spirits of all flesh, set a man over the congregation,
17. Who may go out before them, and who may go in before them, and who may lead them out, and who may bring them in; that the congregation of Hashem be not as sheep which have no shepherd.
18. And Hashem said to Mosheh, Take Yehoshua the son of Nun, a man in whom is spirit, and lay your hand upon him;
19. And set him before Eleazar the priest, and before the entire congregation; and give him a charge in their sight.
20. And you shall put some of your honor upon him, that the entire congregation of the people of Israel may be obedient.
21. And he shall stand before Eleazar the priest, who shall ask counsel for him according to the judgment of Urim before Hashem; at his word shall they go out, and at his word they shall come in, both he, and all the people of Israel with him, the entire congregation.
22. And Mosheh did as Hashem commanded him; and he took Yehoshua, and set him before Eleazar the priest, and before the entire congregation;
23. And he laid his hands upon him, and gave him a charge, as Hashem commanded by the hand of Mosheh.

The first thing for us to note here is that Mosheh is commanded to ascend the mountain at this point, never to return. That would mean that his glorious career has come to an end now, in Moav, just after having conducted a final census and seen to the complete disposition of the Land. This is, however, not the way that matters play out: Mosheh goes on to oversee the war with Midian, the division of the East Bank of the Jordan and to deliver a full farewell speech (Sefer D'varim). As noted above, we might posit that the command given here was given later, towards the end of Mosheh's farewell speech – but, if that is the case, why does the text insert it here? Either way, there must be something in Mosheh's response which somehow modifies the Divine decree and allows Mosheh to continue his leadership, if only for a short while.

III. “AS AHARON YOUR BROTHER WAS GATHERED”

Mosheh was told that he would be gathered unto his people “as Aharon your brother was gathered”. This comparison is ambiguous – does it mean that he would die in the same manner? (see Rashi ad loc.) Could it be referring to the single violation in which both Mosheh and Aharon participated that caused their premature removal from the leadership of B'nei Yisra'el?

There is yet another aspect to this comparison which will illuminate our understanding of Mosheh's response and the evident “extension” he received as a result.

There are two basic models of leadership in T'nakh – dynamic and dynastic.

The entire book of Shoftim deals with a form of dynamic leadership whereby Hashem's response to B'nei Yisra'el's suffering and attendant calling out in pain is to inspire a new leader (invariably a member of the tribe “under fire” at the time). That leader rallies the troops to defeat the oppressor, loosen the bonds of persecution and then retains his position for life. Upon his death, however, the position becomes a void – until the next time when B'nei Yisra'el find themselves in need of salvation.

Dynastic leadership (the focus of Sefer Sh'muel), contradistinctively, establishes a built-in system where the impending death of a leader is accompanied by the appointment of a successor (usually from among the sons of the dying monarch), such that there never need be a void of leadership. See, for instance, the opening chapter of Sefer Melakhim – where the succession of David's throne is being contested while the hoary king is on his death-bed.

What sort of leadership is the lot of Aharon? It is clear that his was dynastic. For example, when he is charged with maintaining the sanctified areas and items:

And Hashem said to Aharon, You and your sons and your father's house with you shall bear the iniquity of the sanctuary; and you and your sons with you shall bear the iniquity of your priesthood. (Bamidbar 18:1)

Throughout the commands to Aharon, the phrase “Aharon uvanav” (Aharon and his sons – see, e.g. Sh'mot 27:21, Vayyikra 6:9, Bamidbar 4:5) is found with great frequency. Furthermore, in the command regarding the Parah Adumah (Bamidbar 19), given while Aharon is still alive, his son El'azar is mentioned by name as responsible for the sprinkling of the blood (vv. 3- 4).

Ostensibly, Mosheh's leadership was of a dynamic sort; he was selected to lead B'nei Yisra'el out of Mitzrayim (i.e. in response to oppression) and, now that his career was to end, there would not necessarily be a need for another leader until the next “crisis” came about. Much as the leadership operated in a post-Yehoshua Israel, the nation could have been run by a loose federation of the elders until entering the land. In other words, the position of leadership (Navi/Melekh) occupied by Mosheh was not necessarily to be constant, rather in response to need. For example, note the way that the Torah describes the appearance of later prophets:

(in response to the anticipated temptation among B'nei Yisra'el to consult soothsayers)

Hashem your God will raise to you a prophet from your midst, from your brothers, like me; to him you shall listen; According to all that you desired of Hashem your God in Horev in the day of the assembly, saying, Let me not hear again the voice of Hashem my God, neither let me see this great fire any more, that I die not. And Hashem said to me, They have well spoken that which they have spoken. I will raise them a prophet from among their brothers, like you, and will put my words in his mouth; and he shall speak to them all that I shall command him. (D'varim 18:15-18)

As such, Hashem's command that Mosheh ascend the mountain – alone – signaled the end of that glorious career and an impending void of leadership.

Although the Divine intent in the phrase “as Aharon your brother died” may have been associated with the manner of death (or the violation, as above), Mosheh extended it to relate to the manner of succession.

What was the manner of succession of Aharon's leadership?

And Hashem spoke to Mosheh and Aharon in Hor haHar, by the border of the land of Edom, saying, Aharon shall be gathered to his people; for he shall not enter into the land which I have given to the people of Israel, because you rebelled against my word at the water of Merivah. Take Aharon and El'azar his son, and bring them up to Mount Hor; And strip Aharon of his garments, and put them upon El'azar his son; and Aharon shall be gathered to his people, and shall die there. And Mosheh did as Hashem commanded; and they went up to Mount Hor in the sight of the entire congregation. And Mosheh stripped Aharon of his garments, and put them upon El'azar his son; and Aharon died there in the top of the mount; and Mosheh and El'azar came down from the mount. And when the entire congregation saw that Aharon was dead, they mourned for Aharon thirty days, all the house of Yisra'el. (Bamidbar 20:23-29)

As Rashi (quoting the Midrash Tanhuma) points out (ad loc. v. 25), Mosheh consoled Aharon that at least he could see his “crown” given to his son while he was alive (that Mosheh would never see). A critical point in this entire scene is the presence of El'azar, whose donning of the garments established an unbroken chain of Kehunah which effectively outlived the person of Aharon.

That is how Mosheh “turned” the phrase “ka'asher meit Aharon ahikhah” – that if I am to die as did my brother Aharon, I should see the inauguration of my successor while I live. Mosheh effectively turned his leadership into a potential quasi-dynasty and “steered” the Divine command from a statement of the type of death he would experience into a statement about his entire career.

As such, Mosheh's reaction is understandable. Since God commanded him to ascend the mountain and die as did his brother, Mosheh “calls Him on it” and insists that the similarity between their deaths be complete: That he see his successor inaugurated before his death.

Hashem responded to this “request”, indicating Divine acceptance (if not favor) to the Mosaic initiative. Indeed, the mention of El'azar in the context of Yehoshua's appointment creates the immediate association with Aharon's death.

Compare:

21. And he shall stand before Eleazar the priest, who shall ask counsel for him according to the judgment of Urim before Hashem; at his word shall they go out, and at his word they shall come in, both he, and all the people of Israel with him, the entire congregation.

22. And Mosheh did as Hashem commanded him; and he took Yehoshua, and set him before Eleazar the priest, and before the entire congregation;

with

And Mosheh stripped Aharon of his garments, and put them upon El'azar his son; and Aharon died there in the top of the mount; and Mosheh and El'azar came down from the mount. And when the entire congregation saw that Aharon was dead...

The two cited passages share the presence of Mosheh, El'azar and “the entire congregation” (kol ha'edah), along with a mention of the priestly garb worn by El'azar, solidifying the association created by the phrase “as did Aharon your brother”.

IV. THE NEW LEADERSHIP

What changed as a result of Mosheh's insistence on creating a quasi- dynasty?

(I refer to it as a quasi-dynasty because, in spite of the continuity of leadership, the absence of filial ascension renders it something less than a full dynasty. This may be the reason that there was no concern about Yehoshua's children and their worthiness for the post – if he had any – since the position of “next shepherd of B'nei Yisra'el” would not be filled by a family member but by the man most fit for the job.)

To ask the question more clearly – what would have happened had Mosheh not responded as he did?

First of all, there is no reason to think that Mosheh would have had to lead the people to the point of entry in to the Land; the decree was never stated that he would have to die just before they entered (enhancing the drama and personal frustration). Witness Aharon, whose death was decreed at the same time and for the same purpose (but cf. Abravanel, D'varim 1:37) but who died at some point earlier than “the very last moment of the desert wandering”, before the East Bank of the Jordan was captured from the Emorite kings of Heshbon and Bashan.

Second, the orientation of Mosheh's farewell would likely have been more “past-oriented”, reflecting on the Exodus and wanderings, without creating the continuity with the next stage of national existence in the Land.

Now that a succession has been established, the “rules” have changed.

Mosheh's leadership must continue until the point where Yehoshua is ready to take over, since, under the new scheme, that leadership is to be a continuum.

Since the next "crisis" to be faced is entering the Land and dis inheriting its people, that is the point at which Yehoshua is to take over; hence, Mosheh will live until that point (unlike Aharon) – taking the decree until the last minute and the final kilometer, so to speak.

As a result of that, any wars to be fought on the East Bank must now be fought under Mosheh's leadership. Since the war with Midian was not a "crisis" but rather the result of a Divine command in response to the Midianite/Moabite treachery associated with P'or-worship, there is no need for Yehoshua to be installed at that point. In fact, Yehoshua plays no role in that war – rather, Mosheh and El'azar are the central figures in Ch. 31.

It follows, then, that the war against Midian was originally given to be carried out by B'nei Yisra'el after Mosheh's death. Hence, they were commanded to "harass" them in Ch. 25 but that command was not given a clear form until after Mosheh was told to ascend the mountain. Since Mosheh reoriented the leadership scheme, however, he would remain through that war and, as the text states:

Avenge the people of Yisra'el of the Midianim; afterwards shall you be gathered to your people. (31:2)

V. THE CENSUS AND THE DIVISION OF THE LAND

The analysis suggested above brings us back to our original question regarding the odd placement of the Parashot of T'midin uMusafin.

Before directly addressing the question, let's return to the Parashot of the census. One of the remarkable features of the census is the startling result: 601,730 soldiers counted just before entering the land (Bamidbar 26:51). Compare this number with the census of nearly 39 years previous: 603,550 (ibid. 1:46). Through the wandering, the dying out of an entire adult population and the raising of a new generation, born free in the wilderness – the total adult male population is nearly the same as it was at the Exodus. (Leaving aside the curiosity that the number counted on the 20th day of the 2nd year – Bamidbar 1 – is exactly the same as that some months earlier during the collection for the Mishkan [Sh'mot 38:26 – see Rashi at Sh'mot 30:16 and Ramban ad loc. v. 12]; Rav Elhanan Samet has written a comprehensive article on the problem which can be found in his *Iyyunim beParashat haShavua*, Parashat Bamidbar).

It might be assumed that the representative participation of each tribe remained constant – but note the changes over the 39 years in the desert:

Tribe 2nd Year 40th Year

Reuven 46,500 43,730

Shim'on 59,300 22,200

Gad 45,650 40,500

Yehudah 74,600 76,500

Yissachar 54,400 64,300

Zevulun 57,400 60,500

Ephraim 40,500 32,500

Menasheh 32,200 52,700

Binyamin 35,400 45,600

Dan 62,700 64,400

Asher 41,500 53,400

Naphtali 53,400 45,400

Total: 603,500 601,730

In spite of the severe depletion of Shim'on's soldiers (likely as a result of the plague following the P'or-worship), the marked drop-off in Ephraim's army and the significant diminution of Naphtali's fighting force, the total remains nearly the same – a bit over the "magic" number of 600,000 (see BT Berakhot 58a).

One message that emerges from the comparison of these two censuses is the consistency of B'nei Yisra'el's existence and the phenomenon of "making up for losses" accomplished by the corporate whole. To wit, people are born, people die, but corporate Israel lives on.

This message is strengthened by the census of the Levi'im, which totals 23,000 men from one month and up in the 40th year (26:62), and totals 22,000 at the beginning of the second year (3:39).

Thus, the first 12 paragraphs, as well as #14, underscore the basic message of Israelite continuity in spite of the cycle of death and birth which takes its toll on every member.

Paragraph #13 deals with the division of the Land. Note that Mosheh is somewhat excluded from the process and the division will be based not on the households headed by "live" members, rather by those who left Egypt (and are now buried between Kadesh and Moav) – again, the nation that left Egypt lives on, even if the individuals do not.

The final two parashot in this section deal with the daughters of Tz'lafhad – the inclusion here is most appropriate, as it deals with the division of the land and the loophole which needs to be closed in the case of a man who dies, leaving only daughters.

Yet there is a short phrase that is very instructive in the presentation of B'not Tz'lafhad which serves to highlight what is new about this second generation – and what they share with their forebears.

When the young women approach Mosheh with their petition, they use the phrase: *Lamah Yigara'* – why should (our father's name) be left out? (27:4). This word combination appears only one other place in T'nakh. When the men come before Mosheh (at the very beginning of the second year) complaining that due to ritual impurity they are being excluded from the Korban Pesach (Bamidbar 9:7), they state *Lamah Nigara'* – why should we be left out?

The common phrasing here (which I addressed in the Siyyum on Sefer Bamidbar in a different vein) serves to tie the two generations together, while setting them far apart.

The generation that knew slavery, that experienced the Exodus first hand and that stood, as adults, at the foot of Sinai – continued to use Egypt as their frame of reference. When God "introduces" Himself to B'nei Yisra'el at Sinai (see Sh'mot 20:2 and, specifically, Abravanel and R. Yehudah haLevi [quoted in Ibn Ezra] ad loc. and ibid. 19:1-6), He uses the Exodus as the point of departure (pun intended) for establishing the ongoing B'rit.

The people, as well, continued to refer to Egypt – specifically in their complaints. They longed to return, even to be buried in Egypt (Bamidbar 14:2), waxed nostalgic about the free food and plenty of Egypt (while conveniently forgetting their servitude – ibid. 11:5) and so on.

The impure men of Chapter 7 feel cheated by their exclusion from the offering and ask Mosheh to find them a solution (which turns out to be the Pesach Sheni). These men long to participate in the Korban Pesach – an offering which celebrates the Exodus from Egypt.

When the daughters of Tz'lafhad, raised in the desert without adult memories (if any) of Egypt, express their great desire not to be excluded, it is the Land that they long to inherit. Whereas the last generation felt its identity as "Yotz'ei Mitzrayim", the new generation saw its *raison d'être* as entering the land.

The common phrase *Lamah Nigara'/Yigara'* serves to demonstrate the great change which has taken place over 38 years – along with the consistency which accompanies that change.

What is the nature of the consistency? A great desire to be included with the community (see the Siyyum on Sefer Bamidbar) and to fully partake in the experience of K'lal Yisra'el.

Thus, the entire section bridging the command to harass the Midianites and the command to Mosheh to ascend the mountain is defined by the constant nature of Am Yisra'el throughout the desert – at once affirming Mosheh's success as a leader and teacher, and denying the need for him to remain present, since the nation goes on regardless of the fate of the individual.

VI. T'MIDIN UMUSAFIN

The sixteen paragraphs following the "turn" in leadership are devoted to the calendar of public offerings; following the reasoning outlined above (and noting the neatly balanced number of Parashot bridging the appointment of Yehoshua and the command to wreak vengeance on Midian) we would expect some underlying message to be found in these paragraphs which associates with the common theme.

Each paragraph is imbued with significant concepts and ideas – and perhaps we will address them in a separate essay. For purposes of this analysis, however, we will simply note that which is common throughout the first fifteen – the Korban haTamid.

In 28:1-8, we are commanded to offer up one lamb in the morning and one in the afternoon, parallel or modeled after the offering at Sinai (28:6). This is the "constant Korban" which is brought daily, including Shabbat, holidays and even overriding ritual impurity (BT Menahot 72b). Each Musaf concludes with some form of the statement *Al Olat haTamid* – accompanying the Olat Tamid.

The constancy of worship – that each special day is framed within the contours of "Tamid" (the morning Tamid is brought before all other Korbanot and the afternoon brought after all others excepting the Korban Pesach), is something which is quite remarkable within the context of Mikdash worship. Normally, that which is special, festive etc. trumps the mundane and regular experience – but the message of the T'midin is the very opposite. The primacy of constancy as emerging from Parashat haTamid is a message which is adopted by Haza"l:

Ben Zoma says: we have found an encompassing verse: "Sh'ma Yisra'el"; Ben Nanas says: we have found an even more encompassing verse: "v'Ahavta l'Re'akha Kamokha". Shim'on ben Pazi says: We have found a yet more encompassing verse, namely: The one lamb you shall offer in the morning..." (Maharal, quoting an otherwise unknown Midrash, Netivot Olam, Netiv Ahavat Re'a Ch. 1).

This message of constancy of worship is the ideal balance to the message identified in the 16 paragraphs dealing with the census and the land.

As such, these parashot of the power of constancy – the constancy of Am Yisra'el as a nation on the one side and the constancy of Am Yisra'el's relationship to haKadosh Barukh Hu on the other, serve to perfectly frame the dialogue between Mosheh and Hashem during which the dynamic leadership of a Shofet/Navi becomes the quasi-dynastic leadership of a Melekh – constant and seamlessly passing

to the next leader, just as his brother did on Hor haHar.

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Parshat Pinchas: Moshe's Mysterious Protégé

by Rabbi Eitan Mayer

Parashat Balak, last week's parasha, ends with an act of entrapment: Bnei Yisrael succumb to the sexual entreaties of the enemy, Moav/Midyan, and once ensnared in the grasp of the Moabite/Midyanite women, they are all but helpless when the women invite them to participate in sacrifices to the Moabite/Midyanite gods. By participating in this worship, Bnei Yisrael add the cardinal transgression of idol worship to the lesser sin of illicit sexual union with non-Jews, and God strikes them with a plague. But instead of abating, the problem grows worse, as Zimri ben Saluh, a leader of the tribe of Shimon, publicly fornicates with a Midyanite woman. Outraged at Zimri's act, Pinhas (grandson of Aharon) is gripped by the need to act. He grabs a nearby weapon and takes immediate "vigilante" action, dispatching Zimri and his Midyanite consort to face their Maker.

Parashat Pinhas opens with Hashem's recognition of Pinhas for his act of kana'ut -- zealotry -- by which he calms the divine fury and prevents it from destroying the rest of the idolatrous nation. This story raises questions about the place of violent vigilantism in our lives, an issue often discussed in studying Parashat Pinhas and deeply pondered in the wake of the Rabin assassination. But I prefer to look at what I consider a neglected topic: the succession of Moshe by Yehoshua.

OH, YEAH . . . YEHOSHUA

Most of us are familiar with the basic outline of the Torah, including one particular fact about Moshe: that he loses his privilege to lead the people into Eretz Yisrael. Last week, in discussing Parashat Hukat, we zeroed in on the event which earns Moshe this punishment -- his disobedience at Mei Meriva. Most of us also know that Yehoshua takes over for Moshe, leading Bnei Yisrael into the Land and leading their conquest of it.

That these two facts are deeply familiar creates a sense that there is not much to be investigated here; these are things we understand well. This assumption always makes me suspicious, however, so we will be looking for the complexity which seems to always lurk under the placid surface of the facts. As usual, we will begin with questions:

- 1) Who is Yehoshua? What do we know about him prior to his accession to leadership in Moshe's place?
- 2) In what ways is Yehoshua different from and similar to Moshe?
- 3) What makes Yehoshua an appropriate successor to Moshe?
- 4) Why doesn't Moshe himself choose Yehoshua as his successor -- why is it left to Hashem to suggest Yehoshua?

A SHADOW FIGURE:

Earlier on in the Torah, Yehoshua is a minor player. He shows up sporadically, playing roles we would certainly consider odd for inclusion in the Torah if not for our knowledge that he will eventually take Moshe's place. Since we know that Yehoshua will move to center stage once Moshe takes his final bow, we consider it natural that Yehoshua appears now and again in various scenes. Imagine reading Lincoln's biography: if you didn't know he was an important president of the United States, you would probably be bored by the details of his childhood. But with his career in retrospect, these details become significant. The same is true of Yehoshua. Since we know he will one day be "president," his early life becomes important. This means we must mine Yehoshua's "cameo appearances" for what they reveal to us about him as a young man and developing leader. Fragmented, as they appear in the Torah, these episodes do not tell us much, but taken as a portrait, they may sketch a coherent picture.

YEHOSHUA THE GENERAL:

Yehoshua first appears in the Torah as a military commander. In Shemot 17:9, Moshe charges Yehoshua to select men and lead a military force against Amalek. The Torah reports that Yehoshua successfully weakens Amalek in the ensuing battle, but, as we know, Amalek remains a foe with whom later Jewish leaders (Sha'ul, Shmuel, Mordekhai and others) will contend. What is important for our purposes is that Yehoshua's first appearance in the Torah is as a military organizer and leader. Yehoshua will succeed Moshe not only as political leader of Bnei Yisrael, but also as commander-in-chief. Since he will direct the conquest of the Land, he needs to be a capable general. The Torah provides no formal introduction for Yehoshua, but it is certainly significant that the first time we meet him, he is clad in chain mail and brandishing a sword, to borrow an Arthurian image.

Even this early on, we get what may be a hint that Yehoshua is to succeed Moshe: after the battle with Amalek, Hashem commands Moshe to memorialize in writing and to communicate to Yehoshua that He will conduct war with Amalek throughout the generations, until Amalek has been completely destroyed. The fact that Moshe is commanded to communicate this to Yehoshua may hint that the reins will be passed to him.

Alternatively, however, it could just indicate that Yehoshua, as a military leader, needs to know about Hashem's military plans. Why, after all, does Moshe command Yehoshua to put together a force and go to fight the enemy -- why doesn't he do the job himself? Either

he is already too old (also hinted by his difficulty in keeping his arms raised during the battle), or he is not as skillful a general as Yehoshua. Especially if the latter is true, Hashem may want Yehoshua informed of His eternal enmity for Amalek so he will know at whom to aim the arrows as current and future military leader. It should be noted, however, that the grand style in which Hashem delivers His plan of continued aggression against Amalek sounds more like what you would tell tomorrow's leader than tomorrow's general: "For I will certainly wipe out the memory of Amalek from under the heavens . . . war for Hashem with Amalek from generation to generation!"

YEHOSHUA THE SERVANT:

In Shemot 24:13, after the broadcast of the "More-Than-Ten Commandments" at Sinai, Moshe ascends Har Sinai to receive the rest of the Torah from Hashem. Although Bnei Yisrael remain a distance from the mountain, an entourage of VIP's accompanies Moshe on his ascent: Aharon, Nadav, Avihu, and seventy elders. The entourage ascends only so far, however; at a certain point, Moshe is commanded to approach the Divine cloud alone, leaving the others below -- except for Yehoshua: "Moshe arose, and his servant [mesharet] Yehoshua; and Moshe ascended to the mountain of God."

We learn a lot about Yehoshua from this "innocent" pasuk (verse): first, he is not simply a general, he is Moshe's personal servant; second, he seems a spiritual cut above rest of the illustrious entourage, as he accompanies Moshe all the way up to the Divine cloud. Yehoshua does not enter the cloud to join Hashem with Moshe, but he does ascend to a plateau higher than everyone else.

The term "mesharet" also requires some explanation. Was Yehoshua Moshe's valet? Did he choose Moshe's cufflinks and tie, hang up his clothes, answer his tent flap?

"Mesharet" is used in several different ways in the Torah:

1) Bereshit 39:4 -- Yosef finds favor in the eyes of the Egyptian Potifar, who has purchased him from his captors; he becomes Potifar's "mesharet," appointed over his household and all of his possessions (except his wife, of course, who makes herself available to Yosef). This position does not sound much like "valet": Yosef is responsible for everything Potifar owns, not just choosing ties that match his outfits. Although there is a strong connotation of service in "mesharet," it is clearly not menial service in this case. Yosef enjoys a position of responsibility and trust, administering an important household's affairs (while assiduously avoiding other types of affairs).

2) Bereshit 40:4 -- Yosef, framed by the scorned Madame Potifar and imprisoned, is instructed to be "mesharet" two royal prisoners: Paro's winemaster and bakemaster. Although it is not clear exactly what "service" is to be provided them, Yosef takes on the role of advisor and dream-interpreter. This again seems to indicate that "mesharet," while indicating service, does not indicate menial service.

3) Very often -- Shemot 28:35 is one example -- the service of the kohanim (priests) and leviyim in the Mishkan (portable Temple) is referred to with the word "le-sharet"; certainly, the avoda (cultic service) is nothing menial. In fact, Moshe specifically uses this word -- "le-shartam" -- to Korah and his crew in arguing that they, as Leviyim, have enough honor already: "You have been chosen . . . to stand before the congregation to serve them" ["le-shartam"] (BeMidbar 16:9). Certainly, Moshe would not use a word like "sharet" if it would raise in the minds of his listeners associations of butlership and valet-hood and other menial functions, since he is trying to show them that they have plenty for which to be thankful already and need no further honor.

It should be noted that there are in Tanakh uses of the word "mesharet" (and its close relatives) in contexts which do seem to indicate menial service. My point is that "mesharet Moshe" need not mean "Moshe's valet," and since we are talking about someone who has recently served as a general and who accompanies Moshe not to the bathhouse but to the summit of Har Sinai, it is difficult to believe that "mesharet Moshe" means anything but "Moshe's protegee" or "Moshe's apprentice." Yehoshua 'serves' Moshe as an intern, so to speak; a young man selected by Moshe for future greatness, he accompanies Moshe where others cannot, learning by watching and doing.

One other example in Tanakh of a similar use of "mesharet" as "protegee" or "apprentice" is the case of Eliyahu and Elisha, certainly another master/protegee relationship. Just after Hashem commands Eliyahu to appoint Elisha as his successor as prophet, we hear that Elisha begins to follow Eliyahu around (as Yehoshua follows Moshe) and "va-ye-shartehu" -- "he served him." Yehoshua 'serves' Moshe the same way Elisha 'serves' Eliyahu. Both are apprentices, proteges who will succeed the master and who now train with him for that day.

Now that we have understood Yehoshua's position as Moshe's servant, one other observation becomes crucial: as Moshe is, in certain ways, separate from his people, Yehoshua shows signs of the same characteristic. The other VIP's remain below, but Yehoshua, training to be the next 'Moshe,' leaves everyone else behind and ascends with his master. Soon the Torah tells us that Moshe's face begins to glow and that he begins to wear a veil in front of his face. This veil symbolizes the disjunction between Moshe and the people: Moshe removes the veil only when speaking to Hashem or when reporting to the people what Hashem has said. At other times, he remains apart from them, veiled. The cloud Moshe enters is a similar structure -- a veil. While Yehoshua does not enter the cloud and does not wear a veil, he is also not with the people. He is in the limbo between leadership of the people and membership among them. He will never achieve Moshe's closeness to Hashem, and therefore will also never achieve Moshe's detachment from the people, but this characteristic is in him to a lesser degree (and we will see it again soon).

YEHOSHUA IN THE DARK:

Back to the scene atop Sinai: Moshe enters the mist and meets with Hashem. The people, far below, become worried at Moshe's prolonged absence and eventually panic. In their insecurity and fear, they build an idol and worship it. Hashem, angered, reports their behavior to Moshe, who breaks off the meeting with Hashem to deal with the people. As he descends the mountain, Luhot (tablets) in hand, he is joined by Yehoshua. Moshe, of course, knows what is going on, but Yehoshua, not privy to Hashem's report of the people's misbehavior, guesses at the noise he hears from the camp: "He said to Moshe, 'The sound of war is in the camp!'" Moshe bitterly responds with a correction: the people are singing in celebration of their idol, not screaming in rage, pain and fear at a military attacker. But this entire scene is strange. Why does the Torah bother including this exchange between Moshe and Yehoshua? The sole purpose of this scene seems to be to show us that Yehoshua doesn't know what's going on.

It is hard to fault Yehoshua for misinterpreting the noise he hears, but perhaps the Torah means to point up his "limbo" status: the reason he doesn't know what is going on is because he is neither here nor there. If he were with the people, he would have witnessed the tragic events (or even played a part in them, as Aharon does); if he were with Moshe, he would have heard Hashem's angry report of the people's activities. But he is in the no-man's-land between the two groups, so he remains clueless until he rejoins the camp. Alternatively, the Torah may be indicating that Yehoshua's dedication to Moshe as his apprentice sometimes leaves him in the dark: he neither observes the people firsthand, nor does he experience the revelations offered to Moshe. As we will see, other incidents seem to confirm the impression that Yehoshua sees nothing but his master Moshe -- until forced to acknowledge the larger picture.

YEHOSHUA IN SECLUSION:

The next time we hear of Yehoshua, he is in seclusion. The people have been punished for their worship of the Egel and Hashem has agreed not to destroy them, but He remains unwilling (so far) to forgive them. The Torah interrupts the extended "forgiveness negotiations" between Hashem and Moshe to describe how Moshe would leave the camp of the people in order to speak to Hashem at a special tent outside the camp. As Moshe would pass by on his way out of the camp, the people would stare after him longingly. Moshe would come to the special tent, the Divine Presence would appear there to meet him, and he would speak to Hashem.

In this context, we hear that once again, Yehoshua is not with the people: "And his protegee [mesharto], Yehoshua, a young man, would never leave the tent," Shemot 33:11. Hashem is distant from the sinful people, refusing to meet with even Moshe within their camp. But Yehoshua is not only not with the people in their camp, and not only visits the special tent (like Moshe), he seems to actually live there! He spends his days cocooned in the Divine meeting place, presumably growing in the spiritual qualities which his master Moshe exemplifies. Perhaps he does not merit to enter the cloud atop Sinai with Moshe, but now, in a sort of reversal, he lives in Hashem's presence, while Moshe is only a visitor to the premises. Moshe is busy shuttling back and forth between the people and Hashem, alternately punishing the people and arguing with Hashem for their forgiveness. But Yehoshua, unsaddled by the responsibilities of leadership, takes advantage of the opportunity to be constantly in the presence of Hashem. Just as the Kohen Gadol is commanded to remain in the Mikdash even when personal tragedy strikes (e.g., a close family member dies), Yehoshua is confined to the Beit HaMikdash no matter what.

(This, by the way, sounds like a very good idea! Everyone should take some time in which he or she ignores other responsibilities and focuses solely on spiritual and religious development. This may appear selfish, but the only way we can continue to provide leadership and inspiration for ourselves and others is by taking some time to strengthen ourselves.)

YEHOSHUA PROTECTS MOSHE:

The next time we encounter Yehoshua, in BeMidbar 11:28, he has emerged from his cocoon as a more mature figure: he is described as "the mesharet of Moshe from his youth," indicating that he is no longer a youth, but that his long service to Moshe began back in his boyhood.

In this episode, Moshe is informed by a messenger that two men, Eldad and Meidad, are prophesying within the camp. Yehoshua responds with panic: "My master, Moshe, stop them/imprison them/destroy them!" [The word is "kela'em," but its meaning is ambiguous]. Yehoshua sees the prophesying of these men as a challenge to Moshe's leadership: it is one thing when Aharon or other "establishment" figures receive prophecy; that is no threat because these people are loyal to Moshe. But, as the rest of Sefer BeMidbar will confirm, Moshe has many enemies who are unhappy with his leadership and ready to challenge him. Yehoshua reads this incident as a challenge: this prophecy is a threat because it is received by people who are not under Moshe's direct control or in his camp of supporters. It is "wild" prophecy and therefore represents what may balloon into a challenge to Moshe's authority.

Despite having outgrown his "youth," it seems that Yehoshua is still less spiritually mature than his master. Moshe turns to him and says, "Are you jealous for me? Would that all of Hashem's nation could be prophets, that Hashem would place His spirit upon them!" Moshe, secure in his position and mature in his understanding of spirituality, knows that the ultimate goal is not to maintain a stranglehold on political or religious leadership, but to facilitate the growth of the nation towards Hashem. What could be a greater success than producing a nation of prophets! Yehoshua, perhaps because he has been Moshe's protegee "since his youth," has become distracted from these ultimate goals by his admiration for and loyalty to his master.

But there is another possibility. Yehoshua, no longer a young man, has indeed matured. While Moshe remains focused on spiritual goals alone, Yehoshua is a military officer as well as the protege of a prophet. He has spent time cocooned in the Divine tent, but he has also spent time on the battlefield, and he knows how the common people think. He, too, believes that in a perfect world, it would be ideal for everyone to be a prophet. But in the world he sees before his eyes, he knows that unregulated prophecy will be understood by the people as a challenge to Moshe's leadership. Moshe is their link to Hashem and the source of whatever stability they have. If another prophet appears, the people will immediately question their loyalty to Moshe. Perhaps Moshe is right in the abstract, but as a practitioner of realpolitik, Yehoshua may have already surpassed his master. And indeed, it is after this story that the people begin to challenge Moshe's leadership, leading to the harsh criticism of Miryam, the spies disaster, and the Korah rebellion.

YEHOSHUA THE SPY:

BeMidbar 13 and 14 present the story of the scouts sent to Eretz Yisrael and the report they deliver to the people. Yehoshua, as we know, is one of the spies. And it is fitting that just as Yehoshua tries to protect Moshe in the story of Eldad and Meidad, Moshe seems to be trying to protect Yehoshua in this story of the spies. Just before Yehoshua departs with the others to see the Land, Moshe changes his name from Hoshea to Yehoshua, adding the name of Hashem to his own name: "God shall save him," or "God is salvation." Perhaps Moshe feels a sense of foreboding and danger as he sends the spies off, and he adds a letter to Yehoshua's name as a prayer that he be kept safe. Although one might interpret that Moshe suspected the other spies were corrupt, it is easier to accept that Moshe simply understood that sneaking into enemy territory to spy it out was risky business. Perhaps Moshe was returning the favor to Yehoshua, protecting his protege as Yehoshua tried to protect him earlier.

STRENGTHEN HIM:

We now come to a pattern which many have noticed: Yehoshua, it seems, needs to be strengthened. Hashem commands Moshe to strengthen him; Moshe reminds the people that Yehoshua must be strengthened; the people themselves attempt to strengthen him; and Hashem Himself encourages Yehoshua to be strong (see Devarim 1:38, 3:28, 31:7, 31:23)

This is new: not a leader responsible for his people, but a people who must be responsible for their leader! Moshe, a tower of self-sufficient strength, never seems to need the people's encouragement. But somehow, Yehoshua does need that extra push.

Perhaps, though, Moshe could have used more support as well; perhaps he would not have lost his chance to lead the people into the Land if he had had more support from the people, if he had not been engulfed by criticism from all around. Perhaps he would have found it easier to bear the burden of leadership if he had not been surrounded by those who were trying to tear him down and accusing him of incompetence and arrogance. Perhaps all the talk of strengthening Yehoshua does not reflect any particular weakness in Yehoshua so much as it reflects a bitter lesson that everyone has learned through Moshe. A leader is not a detached tower of strength; a leader maintains a symbiotic relationship with his people. Even someone as great as Moshe needed strength from the people; their attacks eventually wore him down and put him so on the defensive that Hashem had to remove him from leadership. [Eliyahu, similarly, must "retire" when he becomes so bitter, his despair so deep, that he sees the people as completely corrupt and faithless, and himself as the only faithful one left.] A great lesson has been learned, and Yehoshua is told again and again that the people understand that they must strengthen him as he is told that his task is a difficult one and requires that he gird himself with strength.

A LAST MEETING:

In Devarim 31, Hashem summons Moshe and Yehoshua to the Tent so that He can command Yehoshua before Moshe dies. But once Moshe and Yehoshua arrive, Hashem speaks almost exclusively to Moshe, telling him how the people will forsake Him after Moshe's death. Almost casually, Hashem makes a short comment to Yehoshua at the end of this speech. If Hashem wants to 'complain' to Moshe about this people's bottomless capacity for faithlessness, why does He bring Yehoshua into the picture?

Perhaps Yehoshua, still a bit naive, must be inoculated against unrealistic expectations. If he knows that the people are capable of rejecting Hashem utterly, that they may abandon Him in favor of the Canaanite gods they will soon encounter, then he will be less shocked if such a thing does happen. Also, knowing that the people are likely to stray will make him better able to prevent that straying. Perhaps, then, Hashem's "commiseration" with Moshe in Yehoshua's presence is meant to shake Yehoshua out of whatever naive expectations he might still retain about the people.

NOW BACK TO OUR SHOW:

If we now move back to Parashat Pinhas, we have several questions to address:

- 1) Why does Hashem tell Moshe that he is now going to die, prompting Moshe to request that Hashem appoint a leader? If a leader is to be appointed, why doesn't Hashem simply command Moshe to appoint a leader?
- 2) Why doesn't Moshe specifically request that Hashem accept Yehoshua, his protege, as his successor?

In answer to the first question, perhaps Hashem wanted to soften the blow of succession. Simply commanding Moshe to replace himself with another man would have been harsh indeed. Instead, Hashem hints to Moshe -- "Moshe, your death is approaching . . .", allowing Moshe to be the one to bring up the idea of succession. This also gives Moshe the chance to frame the issue as a manifestation of his concern for the people: "Let not the congregation of Hashem be like a flock with no shepherd!" Indeed, it is a manifestation of his love for the people. A direct command from Hashem to replace himself might have marred the issue with the sadness by which he would have been overwhelmed.

In answer to the second question, perhaps Moshe feels too close to Yehoshua to suggest him as a candidate. Yehoshua had been Moshe's protege from his youth, always by his side; Moshe might have suspected that Yehoshua had internalized the same weaknesses which eventually compromised his own leadership. Perhaps he worried that Yehoshua was too much like him.

If so (and this is indeed completely speculation), then Moshe must be deeply gratified when Hashem Himself suggests that Yehoshua be the man: "Yehoshua, a man in whom there is spirit [ru'ah]." Moshe is comforted and relieved to see his protege, the young man on whom he pinned his hopes, take his place as the shepherd.

Shabbat shalom

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TALMUD TIPS

by Rabbi Moshe Newman

Shabbat 121-127

Muktzeh: Hands Off!

The Prophet Nechemia ben Chachalya said, “In those days, I saw in Judea that people were treading winepresses on Shabbat, and bringing sheaves of grain and loading them on donkeys, and also wine, grapes, and figs and all types of loads, and bringing them to Jerusalem on Shabbat. And I warned them not to do it on the day that they were selling food and provisions.” (Nechemia 13:15)

This statement by the prophet Nechemia is taught on our *daf* as a reason for the prohibition against moving certain items on Shabbat under certain conditions. These items that were made off-limits to be moved on Shabbat are called *muktzeh*, which literally means “set aside” – i.e. not needed for Shabbat.

When did the prohibition of *muktzeh* begin? Did it begin in the era of Nechemia? Or did the *muktzeh* ban occur at a different point in our history? Let’s have a closer look at our *gemara*, *Rishonim* and a select later commentary – and I propose that we will arrive at an answer to this question that may come as quite a surprise!

You may wonder: What is the reason for the prohibition of *muktzeh*? Good question! Numerous answers are found in Torah sources. Perhaps the most notable reasons are found in the writings of the Rambam and the Ravad (Rabbeinu Avraham ben David), who both lived in the 12th century.

The Rambam lists three reasons for the prohibition of *muktzeh*. One is to help ensure that a person rests on Shabbat. In his words (free translation), “Our Sages prohibited moving certain things on Shabbat in a manner that a person does during the week. Why? They reasoned: ‘We see that the prophets warned and commanded that a person’s walk on Shabbat should not be like his walk during the week, and his speech on Shabbat should not be like his speech during the week as the verse states, *‘v’daber davar’* (see “Talmud Tips” for Shabbat 107-113 in Ohrnet Magazine). Therefore, it should be all the more so that the way and manner a person moves objects on Shabbat should be different in the way moves objects during the week, so that Shabbat should not be like a weekday to him. If he were allowed to move them as usual, he would come to pick up and arrange items, moving them from corner to corner or from room to room, and he will hide away useful stones and the like, because on Shabbat he is not working and he is sitting idly at home, seeking to occupy himself with any activities at hand. Therefore, it would turn out that he would not be resting on Shabbat, which would nullify the reason the Torah gives for keeping Shabbat (Devarim 5:14) – ‘In order to rest.’”

A second reason for *muktzeh* offered by the Rambam is that if a person would be permitted to move items that could be used to do *melacha* (activities that are forbidden by the Torah to do on Shabbat), it is possible that he will not only move these items but also (unintentionally) use them to do a *melacha* on Shabbat. The Rambam’s third reason is for the sake of people who are not normally working during the weekdays, such as travelers, who are not doing *melacha* any day of the week. If it would be permitted to walk and speak and to move objects on Shabbat in the manner that is permitted on the other days of the week, it would turn out that these people were not resting a “recognizable rest.” Therefore, refraining and resting from these matters – including not handling *muktzeh* – will provide a recognizable resting that is equal to every type of person.

The Ravad, as he is wont to do, disagrees with the Rambam regarding the reason for the *muktzeh* prohibition. The reason the Ravad gives for *muktzeh* is to stem the transgression of *hotza'ah* — transferring an object from a private domain to a public one (or the reverse). He asks two main questions on the Rambam. The question I'd like to discuss here is from a *beraita* on our *daf* which states that “at first” the movement of all objects was prohibited on Shabbat with the exception of three small eating utensils that were necessary for normal eating at the Shabbat table. Then, the *beraita* continues, our Sages permitted the movement of more and more objects for more and more purposes. Rabbi Chanina says in our *gemara* that this *beraita* was taught at the time of Nechemia ben Chachalya, who, as we saw at the very beginning of this essay, was shocked and distraught at the rampant *chillul* Shabbat he saw, and, as a result, enacted a prohibition of *muktzeh* that forbade moving virtually any object on Shabbat. Therefore, the Ravad asks: Since our *gemara* cites Nechemiya's decree as the reason for the ban of *muktzeh*, why does the Rambam give three other reasons?

The Aruch Hashulchan offers a novel approach to *muktzeh*, suggesting that it existed from the time of the giving of the Torah at Mount Sinai. He also asserts that Nechemia's decree was certainly only intended to apply to his generation, but not afterwards. With these two principle, the Aruch Hashulchan defends the Rambam against the Ravad's questions and explains why the Rambam wrote his three reasons for *muktzeh* in a beautifully detailed manner. (Recommended learning: Aruch Hashulchan 308:1-5)

▪ *Shabbat 123b*

PARSHA INSIGHTS

by Rabbi Yaakov Asher Sinclair

Know Your Enemy

“Harass the Midianites and smite them” (25:17)

I think I'm not alone in finding it difficult to maintain an appropriate weight for my height and my age. (In other words: “The Battle of the Bulge”). One of the techniques that seems to work is to “know your enemy.” I remember once sitting in front of a beautiful and delicious piece of cake and saying to the cake, “Cake, I love you, but you hate me!”

Demonization — the stigmatizing of other's beliefs not in accord with one's own — is usually seen as an irrational defense, and is called upon only by those who are uncertain of the rightness of their own beliefs in the first place.

Take the case of the “battle cry” for example. A battle cry is a yell or chant taken up in battle to arouse aggression and esprit de corps on one's own side (and cause intimidation on the hostile side.) Often the battle cry is a way of submerging one's own lack of confidence. Now I doubt that the aforementioned piece of cake was much affrighted by my “battle cry” — but it worked to remind me that the beguiling fondant cream oozing from the

cake was really half-an-hour on the treadmill. As the Italians say: “A moment on the lips — a lifetime on the hips.”

But raise the stakes a bit, and things get to be more serious. Maybe instead of considering the challenge of merely a couple of (hundred) extra calories, consider instead the lure of big-time lust and immorality. What do you do to fight that?

“Harass the Midianites and smite them”

There are two commandments in this passage: The first is to view the *Midianites* as enemies — to demonize them — and then to concretize that perception by constantly harassing them. The word “harass” here is in the infinitive, to imply a constant state of mind rather than just a specific and tangible action. The lust for immoral pleasure, which is the very essence of Midian, can only be counteracted by a constant state of loathing. And that can come only by demonization. And that mindset results only from a constant internal battle cry.

Q & A

Questions

1. Why was Pinchas not originally a *kohen*?
2. Why was Moav spared the fate of Midian?
3. What does the *yud* and *hey* added to the family names testify?
4. Korach and his congregation became a "sign." What do they signify?
5. Why did Korach's children survive?
6. Name six families in this Parsha whose names are changed.
7. Who was Yaakov's only living granddaughter at the time of the census?
8. How many years did it take to conquer the Land? How many to divide the Land?
9. Two brothers leave Egypt and die in the *midbar*. One brother has three sons. The other brother has only one son. When these four cousins enter the Land, how many portions will the one son get?
10. What do Yocheved, Ard and Na'aman have in common?
11. Why did the decree to die in the desert not apply to the women?
12. What trait did Tzlofchad's daughters exhibit that their ancestor Yosef also exhibited?
13. Why does the Torah change the order of Tzlofchad's daughters' names?
14. Tzlofchad died for what transgression?
15. Why did Moshe use the phrase "G-d of the spirits of all flesh"?
16. Moshe "put some of his glory" upon Yehoshua. What does this mean?
17. Where were the daily offerings slaughtered?
18. Goats are brought as *musaf* sin-offerings. For what sin do they atone?
19. Why is Shavuot called *Yom Habikkurim*?
20. What do the 70 bulls offered on Succot symbolize?

All references are to the verses and Rashi's commentary, unless otherwise stated.

Answers

1. 25:13 - *Kehuna* (priesthood) was given to Aharon and his sons (not grandsons), and to any of their descendants born *after* they were anointed. Pinchas, Aharon's grandson, was born *prior* to the anointing.
2. 25:18 - For the sake of Ruth, a future descendant of Moav.
3. 26:5 - That the families were truly children of their tribe.
4. 26:10 - That *kehuna* was given forever to Aharon and his sons, and that no one should ever dispute this.
5. 26:11 - Because they repented.
6. 26:13,16,24,38,39,42 - Zerach, Ozni, Yashuv, Achiram, Shfufam, Shucham.
7. 26:46 - Serach bat Asher
8. 26:53 - Seven years. Seven years.
9. 26:55 - Two portions. That is, the four cousins merit four portions among them. These four portions are then split among them as if their fathers were inheriting them; *i.e.*, two portions to one father and two portions to the other father.
10. 26:24,56 - They came down to Mitzrayim in their mothers' wombs.
11. 26:64 - In the incident of the *meraglim*, only the men wished to return to Egypt. The women wanted to enter *Eretz Yisrael*.
12. 27:1 - Love for *Eretz Yisrael*.
13. 27:1 - To teach that they were equal in greatness.
14. 27:3 - Rabbi Akiva says that Tzlofchad gathered sticks on Shabbat. Rabbi Shimon says that Tzlofchad was one who tried to enter *Eretz Yisrael* after the sin of the *meraglim*.
15. 27:16 - He was asking G-d, who knows the multitude of dispositions among the Jewish People, to appoint a leader who can deal with each person on that person's level.
16. 27:20 - That Yehoshua's face beamed like the moon.
17. 28:3 - At a spot opposite the sun. The morning offering was slaughtered on the west side of the slaughtering area and the afternoon offering on the east side.
18. 28:15 - For unnoticed ritual impurity of the Sanctuary or its vessels.
19. 28:26 - The Shavuot double-bread offering was the first wheat-offering made from the new crop.
20. 29:18 - The seventy nations.

WHAT'S IN A WORD?

Synonyms in the Hebrew Language

by Rabbi Reuven Chaim Klein

The Chayah and Yechidah (Part 3 of 3)

In this 3-part mini-series we will discuss the five Hebrew words for the “soul.” In Part 1 we discussed the different etymologies of the words Nefesh, Ruach, and Neshamah; in Part 2 we discussed the functions of the Nefesh, Ruach, and Neshamah; and in Part 3 we will discuss the role of the Chayah and Yechidah, as well as their etymological basis. In doing so, we will better understand how these five words are not merely synonyms. Rather, each word has its own unique meanings and implications.

In the Creation narrative, the Bible uses the term *Nefesh* in conjunction with sea-life, birds and land animals (Gen. 1:21-30). When describing the creation of Man, the Bible reports that G-d blew into Man's nostrils a *Nishmat Chaim*, which made Man into a *Nefesh Chayah* (Gen. 2:7). Targum Onkelos famously renders the term *Nefesh Chayah* in Aramaic as *Ruach Memallala* (“a verbal *Ruach*”). Either way, in these two passages *Chayah/Chaim* enters the lexicon as a term for the “soul.” Rabbi Chaim of Volozhin (1749-1821) in *Nefesh HaChaim* (2:17) calls the *Chayah* “the *Neshamah* of the *Neshamah*.” In many sources, the *Chayah* is paired with the *Yechidah*. In this essay we will seek to understand what exactly the *Chayah* and *Yechidah* are, as well as the etymological basis for those words. We will also explore the differences between them and the *Nefesh*, *Ruach*, and *Neshamah*.

In *Cheshek Shlomo*, Rabbi Pappenheim traces the words *Chayah/Chaim* to the two-letter root CHET-YOD, which means “life” (*chai*). He understands that the two-letter root CHET-VAV is an extension of that biliteral root that also means “life.” This connection is likely due to the interchangeability of the letters VAV and YOD (for example, *hayah* means “was” in Hebrew, while *havah* means “was” in Aramaic; see also Rashbam to Num. 21:14 and Ibn Ezra to Amos 5:5). As a result of this, Rabbi Pappenheim explains that the verb *chaveh* (Ps. 19:3, Iyov 32:17) refers to “speech,” because verbalizing something “gives life” to an idea which hitherto existed only in thought. Adam's wife was named *Chava* (“Eve”) because she was the mother to all “life” (Gen. 3:20). A “farm” is called a *chavah* (Num. 32:41) because it provides life and sustenance through its products. [Rabbi Aharon Marcus (1843-1916) connects the word *Chayah* to *hayah* (“was,” “existed”), explaining that “living” denotes the most complete form of “existing.”]

In *Yerios Shlomo*, Rabbi Pappenheim traces *Chayah* to the monoliteral root represented by the letter CHET. He

explains that that letter denotes “rest,” “peace,” “harmony,” or “lack of strife/contradiction.” In that sense, he explains, *Chayah* recalls “life” as a state of equilibrium among all the components of one's body. Life can exist only when all those components co-exist with one another.

Although the word *Yechidah* in the sense of “soul” does appear anywhere in the Bible, and Rabbi Pappenheim's lexical insights apply specifically to Biblical Hebrew, we can still draw from Rabbi Pappenheim's explanations to better understand the meaning of *Yechidah*. Rabbi Pappenheim explains that the root CHET-DALET refers to the concept of “singularity/unification.” The word *Yechidah* appears once in the Bible (Judges 11:34), when describing Yiftach's daughter as an “only” child. In that sense, the word *Yechidah* – similar to other CHET-DALET words – means something that is unique and unparalleled.

As Rabbi Pappenheim has it, the word *echad* (the number “one”), which refers to something singular and unique, and the word *yachad* (“together”), which is a “single” unit comprised of sub-units who joined to become one, are both derived from the CHET-DALET root. Rabbi Pappenheim also explains the etymological basis of the word *chad/chidud* (“sharp”) as stemming from the fact that the brunt of its force focuses on “one” point. As a corollary to this meaning, Rabbi Pappenheim explains that a *chidah* (“riddle”) is called so, because it requires one to *sharpen* one's mind and harness all of one's mental energies towards the resolution of “one” question.

With Rabbi Pappenheim's explanations in hand, we can better appreciate how Chazal explained the function of the *Chayah* and *Yechidah*. The Midrash (*Ber. Rabbah* 14:9) says that *Chayah* refers to the transcendental nature of the soul that continues to “live” when the physical body dies, while *Yechidah* refers to the “uniqueness” of the soul, in that it is man's only limb that has no counterpart. These perceptions

clearly allude to the etymological bases for the words in question.

The Vilna Gaon (1720-1797) in *Aderes Eliyahu* (to Gen. 2:7) writes that *Chayah* refers to the overall holistic life-force, like what we have seen above. He further explains that man – as he stands now – does not have a *Yechidah*, but in the future, in Messianic Times, man will have a *Yechidah*. Rabbi Yeshayahu Horowitz (1555-1630), author of *Shnei Luchos HaBris* (*Shelah*), similarly writes that not everyone can be cognizant of their *Chayah* and *Yechidah* during their lifetimes. Only those who are *Bnei Aliyah* (“upwardly mobile” people in a spiritual sense) can merit connecting with their *Chayah-Yechidah*.

Rabbi Alexander Sender Shor (1660-1737) explains that an ordinary person has a *Nefesh*, *Ruach*, and *Neshamah*, but some people have more than that and some have less than that. He explains that a prophet – who attains the pinnacle of spiritual awareness – has the added elements of *Chayah* and *Yechidah*. In the opposite direction, when a person sins, he “kills” a part of himself, which causes him to lose his *Neshamah*. And if he continues to sin, he eventually loses his *Ruach* as well, such that he is left with only a *Nefesh*, like an animal.

Rabbi Yaakov Yehoshua Falk (1680-1756) presents a different model for understanding these five parts of the soul that we have been discussing. He explains that the first three components which make up the soul are given to man at three different stages of life. When a child is first conceived and can start moving around in utero, it receives its *Nefesh*. Afterwards, when a child is born, he or she receives their *Ruach*. Finally, when the child begins to nurse, he/she receives their *Neshamah*.

Rabbi Falk then explains that *Chayah* is not something bestowed to every person. Rather, once a person reaches maturity (i.e. post-puberty), then the repeated performance of mitzvahs and allowing one’s Good Inclination to guide oneself, readies one to receive a *Chayah*. When it comes to the highest level – *Yechidah* – Rabbi Falk writes that no human being was ever able to receive it during their lifetime, except for Moses. But, he notes, those who are perfectly righteous are able to receive a *Yechidah* after their deaths.

Rabbi Yitzchak Karo (1458-1535) – an uncle of the more famous Rabbi Yosef Karo (1488-1575) – writes that the five names of the soul can be explained with two different models. He relates to them as powering different parts of one’s body, or (like Rabbi Falk) as referring to different times in a person’s lifecycle.

Rabbi Karo writes that if one views the five words for the “soul” as powering different parts of the body, it should be mapped as follows: The *Neshamah* powers one’s head and brain (nervous system), the *Chayah* powers one’s respiratory system, the *Yechidah* powers one’s hands (which make man *unique* amongst the animal kingdom because other animals have natural weapons, while man’s hands allow him to defend himself with a whole arsenal of weapons), the *Ruach* powers the heart (circulatory system), and the *Nefesh* powers the legs (ambulatory system).

Alternatively, Rabbi Karo cites a tradition that these names for the soul correspond to five different stages of life (similar to Rabbi Falk’s model). When a baby is first born, his soul is called *Neshamah*, because that is when he first begins to breathe. When one reaches the age of 10 years old, his soul is called *Ruach*, because he is now imbued with a Good Inclination that helps him fight off his Evil Inclination (see Prov. 18:14). When a person reaches the age of 20, the battle that rages on between the Good and Evil Inclinations calms down a bit, such that his soul is now called a *Nefesh*, which is an expression of “rest” or “respite.”

From the age of 30 until 40, a Jew’s soul is called a *Chayah*, because he can be assumed to have performed so many mitzvahs that those merits serve as the basis of his life-force. Rabbi Karo explains that the battle between the inclinations continues until one reaches the age of 40, when his Evil Inclination can be almost completely subdued. From that age until a person’s demise, his soul is called a *Yechidah*, because one’s Good Inclination is there “alone” without the Evil Inclination thwarting its efforts.

After citing this model, Rabbi Karo actually slightly differs with this tradition, dividing the five time-periods as spanning from birth to 13, from 13 to 25, from 25 to 40, from 40 to 60, from 60 until death – but the same basic idea is there. (Special thanks to Dr. Shaul Regev for sending me the relevant sources from his edition of Rabbi Karo’s homilies.)

For questions, comments, or to propose ideas for a future article, please contact the author at rcklein@ohr.edu

COUNTING OUR BLESSINGS

by Rabbi Reuven Lauffer

BLESSING SEVEN: FREE AT LAST

“Blessed are You, Hashem, our G-d, King of the universe, Who releases the bound.”

Blessing number seven thanks G-d for releasing us. But it makes no mention of what we are being released from. It is reasonable to think that if a person goes to sleep free, they will wake up in the morning just as free. In general terms, a person's physical reality does not change intrinsically from one day to the next. And, yet, our Sages instituted a blessing thanking G-d for having “released the bound.” Like with everything that our Sages initiated, there is enormous depth to the blessing.

There are many different forms of being “bound.” There are so many things that infringe on our personal freedom, sometimes without our even being aware. For example, we are all addicted to things. As the wife of Rabbi Moshe Feinstein (one of the foremost authorities in Jewish Law in the previous generation) famously put it, “My husband is like an alcoholic. It is just that he needs Torah instead of wine!” Hopefully, our addictions are nothing more threatening than a weakness for chocolate cake. But there is definitely a plethora of terrifying addictions out there that are extremely dangerous, both to our physical health and to our emotional wellbeing. A person who battles against such cravings requires an inordinate amount of inner strength. These desires are so deep-set that they can overcome a person's very identity. And to conquer those desires necessitates both external assistance and a constant mental awareness that their addiction is not “them.”

During the 1970s, there were Jews in what was then the Soviet empire whose dream was to leave the “communist paradise” and to immigrate to Israel. Their desires came at a great personal price, because officially wanting to leave the USSR was regarded as subversive and it automatically caused them to lose their jobs.

Once they no longer had a job, they were labeled as “parasites,” and then the official harassment began. Often, they were arrested and relocated, or they were thrown into prison on trumped-up charges. In more extreme cases they were exiled to Siberia and put to work in labor camps. At one point, in Siberia, one of these Refuseniks (as they called themselves) was found guilty of a minor infraction and put into solitary confinement for *nine months*. Writing about his experiences afterwards, he related that he went through several different mental phases while he was there, some of which were agonizingly painful. But, at some point he came to the most astonishing realization that the Communists could take away everything from him, except for one thing — his freedom.

Because freedom is sometimes a state of mind and not a state of being.

We are all tied down to so many things in this physical world. These things can influence us, causing us to become obsessed and consumed by their allure. Sometimes this occurs to the point where we lose sight of who we really are. “Blessed are You, Hashem, our G-d, King of the universe, Who releases the bound.” It is G-d's Torah and His commandments that give us the tools to combat our obsessions. They are not guarantees for success, but they provide the most effective method to help a person overcome “binding” obsessions. And, so, when I start keeping the commandments, I am tapping into an inner strength that gives me the ability to shatter the “chains” that are restraining me. G-d and His Torah help me disregard obsessive focus on the physical and to better focus on the spiritual. With this awareness, with this guidance from Above, I can truly release my “bound” self.

LETTER AND SPIRIT

Insights based on the writings of Rav S.R. Hirsch by Rabbi Yosef Herschman

Roofless Renaissance

The festival of Sukkot is unique in its sacrificial offerings. On the first day of the festival, fourteen sheep, two rams and thirteen bulls are brought. While the number of rams and sheep remain constant, the number of bulls decreases by one each day, such that on the seventh day there are six. When the total number of bulls for the seven days is calculated, we arrive at a total of seventy, a number, which our Sages explain, represents the nations of the world. Thus, the offerings of Sukkot are distinct in that they are an expression for all of mankind. Our Sages say that Israel's offering represents a plea for the atonement of mankind.

The Prophet Zechariah links Sukkot to the future goal of the nations. He describes the efforts of the nations, who employ their power *against* G-d – they will ultimately pay homage to G-d in Jerusalem, and all of mankind will then... celebrate Sukkot. But what is the connection of the nations of the world to the festival of Sukkot?

On the festival of Sukkot, Israel builds its sukkah under the protection of G-d. We leave our permanent dwelling, and construct a temporary hut whose roof must be made from produce of the earth. While the walls – which demarcate the social sphere of man – may be made of any material, the roofing must bear no sign of the power and nature of man. By dwelling under this roof, we acknowledge that G-d alone protects, and we rejoice in that protection.

The final wars that the nation will wage against G-d and against His workings will be led by Gog. This name, Gog, stems from the same root as *gag* – roof. Gog is the *opposite* of sukkah – that roofless dwelling under the protection of G-d. Indeed, the whole content of the world history of man is encapsulated in this contrast. Just as people have the power to erect strong and artificial walls, to enclose their sphere and safeguard it against others, so too do they imagine that they can secure themselves against G-d and the effects of His power. They think that they can protect themselves with their own power, and crown the building of human greatness with a gabled roof, rendering them independent of G-d!

This is precisely the struggle of Gog against the sukkah – the roof-delusion of human power and ingenuity against the roof of G-d's protection. So it will come to pass when the Jewish People will have led humanity to its goal, and the futile efforts of man will have been laid bare. No longer will mankind seek protection by its physical and intellectual prowess. Instead, they will rejoice in the only enduring protection, together in one great roofless sukkah.

- Sources: *Commentary*, Bamidbar 29:13, Vayikra 23:43

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SEASONS - THEN AND NOW

by Rabbi Chaviv Danesh

Harmony of a Nation - Overcoming baseless hatred (Part 2)

The Gemara says that the First Beit Hamikdash was destroyed because of the three cardinal sins: idolatry, illicit relations, and murder. The Second Beit Hamikdash, though, was destroyed because of *sinat chinam* (baseless hatred). Since the First Beit Hamikdash was destroyed from idolatry, illicit relations, and murder, and the second was destroyed because of baseless hatred, the Gemara concludes that baseless hatred is akin to the three cardinal sins (Yoma 9b).

What is Baseless Hatred?

Last week we addressed how the question of how the seemingly light transgression of “hating someone in one’s heart” can be compared to the severe transgressions of idolatry, illicit relations, and murder. This week we will focus on an even more fundamental question on the Gemara above. The Gemara says clearly that it was *baseless* hatred that destroyed the Beit Hamikdash. However, this idea is very hard to grasp. What is the meaning of baseless hatred? Don’t people usually have a reason for hating someone? Why would people hate each other for no reason at all?

This question is not only a historical investigation of what took place in the generation when the Beit Hamikdash was destroyed, but it is also very relevant to us in the present day as well. Chazal tell us: *In every generation that the Beit Hamikdash is not rebuilt, it is as if it was destroyed in that generation* (Yerushalmi, Yoma 1:1). This is because if we would do sincere *teshuva* for the sins that caused the Beit Hamikdash to be destroyed, then we would merit seeing it rebuilt. The fact that the Beit Hamikdash is not yet rebuilt is therefore testimony to the fact that we are continuing in the wrong ways that led to its destruction. This means that we are also guilty of baseless hatred. Therefore, it is our duty to investigate the meaning behind baseless hatred and how we are guilty of it today.

Hatred that is Permitted

Before addressing this issue directly, we need a brief background regarding the prohibition of hating others. Even though baseless hatred is forbidden, there is a type of hatred that is not only permitted, but is also a mitzvah. The

halacha dictates that in certain cases it is actually a mitzvah to hate those who go against the words of Hashem (see below the many limitations of this halacha) (Shulchan Aruch, Choshen Mishpat 272:11). There are two primary reasons given for the mitzvah of hating those who go against Hashem: one is for the benefit of the transgressors themselves, and the other is for the benefit of others.

One reason given is so that one will hate the actions of the transgressor and not come to learn from and be influenced by his bad ways (Tzivyon Ha’amoodim on Smak, *aseh* 8). Another reason given is that when people see that one who transgresses is hated, it will deter them from going after their *yetzer hara*, and will also cause those who sinned to do *teshuva* (Megillat Sefer on Smag, *lo taaseh* 5). According to the latter reason, the hatred has to be shown outwardly in order to bring about the intended results.

Limitations of Permitted Hatred

Even when it comes to hating someone who goes against the words of Hashem, the instances are very limited. While this is not a halachic work, and in a practice one should consult a *posek* about each individual case, the following is a general list of opinions that limit the cases for which hatred is allowed.

The hatred of a wicked person is limited to a case where one personally witnessed someone intentionally committing a well known sin, or if two witnesses testified in Beit Din (Jewish court run according to Torah law) that they saw him sin. If the sin is not well known, then one can hate the sinner only if the sinner rejects his rebuke (meaning, he admitted his sin and still refuses to do *teshuva*. If he denies having done wrong, however, it is not considered as having rejected rebuke.) (See Chafetz Chaim, Be’er Mayim Chaim 4:14, 6:31). Even with all this, it is important to note that some prominent *Poskim* hold that since today we do not know how to give proper rebuke, sinners are never considered as having rejected rebuke (See Chazon Ish, Yoreh Deah 2:28. See also Marganita Tava, printed at the end of Sefer Ahavat Chessed).

Even in a case where it is clear that the person transgressed purposefully, if the sinner did *teshuva* one is not allowed to hate him (Rambam, Hilchot Rotzeach 13:14). Therefore, if

he is a righteous person — or even someone “average” when it comes to keeping mitzvahs — one should assume he already did *teshuva* and may not hate him (see Chafetz Chaim 4:4).

Even if he is a person who does not generally keep Torah and mitzvahs, often it is because he is lacking a basic Jewish education and his sins are usually a result of total ignorance — and not of rebellion. In such a case, one is not allowed to hate him as a result of seeing him sin (see Rambam, Hilchot Mamrim 3:3, Chazon Ish, Orach Chaim 87:14 and Yoreh Deah 1:6, 2:16, 2:28, Marganita Tava, printed at the end of Sefer Ahavat Chesed). A halachic authority should be contacted to determine who exactly falls under this category.

Even in the cases where one is allowed to hate, according to some opinions one has to have pure intentions when hating the sinner, which means that he has to hate the sinner for the sin committed — and not for personal reasons (Dibrot Moshe, Bava Metzia ch. 2 note 77 and Kovetz Shiurim, Bava Kama 104). Furthermore, some opinions hold that one should only hate the bad in him, and not the person as a whole (Tanya, *perek* 32).

Even in the cases where one is allowed to hate, one still has to help the transgressor when he needs it, and have mercy on him (Shulchan Aruch, Choshen Mishpat 272:11, Ahavat Chesed vol. 1 3:2-3, 4:2).

It is important to note that those who sin out of spite, heretics, inciters to sin and transgressors of more serious sins, all have stricter laws when it comes to this halacha, and, depending on the case, the above limitations may not apply. As mentioned above, since there are many details with regards to this halacha, one must discuss each individual case with a competent halachic authority.

What is Considered “Baseless”?

Let’s now go back to our original topic, which is the definition of baseless hatred. The commentaries explain that anytime that the halacha does not consider the hatred to be justified, then it is considered *baseless* (see Rashi on Shabbat 32b “*sinat chinam*”). Now, as mentioned above, the only time that halacha allows hatred is toward people who intentionally go against Hashem’s words. Taking into consideration all of the above limitations, it is clear that in the vast majority of cases the hatred that one feels is considered baseless even if we feel that there is good reason for it (see Peleh Yoetz “*sinah*”).

There are many factors that contribute to baseless hatred. Depending on the root of the reason for the hatred, there are different ways to combat it. In the next few articles we will try, *iy”H*, to present ideas from Chazal about how to battle the hatred within and thereby help rebuild the Beit Hamikdash speedily in our day.

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PARSHA OVERVIEW

G-d tells Moshe to inform Pinchas that Pinchas will receive G-d’s “covenant of peace” as a reward for his bold action — executing Zimri and the Midianite princess Kozbi. G-d commands Moshe to maintain a state of enmity with the Midianites, who lured the Jewish People into sin. Moshe and Elazar are told to count the Jewish People. The Torah lists the names of the families in each tribe. The total number of males eligible to serve in the army is 601,730. G-d instructs Moshe how to allot the Land of Israel to *Bnei Yisrael*. The number of the Levites’ families is recorded.

Tzlofchad’s daughters file a claim with Moshe. In the absence of a brother, they request their late father’s

portion in the Land. Moshe asks G-d for the ruling, and G-d tells Moshe that their claim is just. The Torah teaches the laws and priorities which determine the order of inheritance.

G-d tells Moshe that he will ascend a mountain and view the Land that the Jewish People will soon enter, although Moshe himself will not enter it. Moshe asks G-d to designate the subsequent leader, and G-d selects Yehoshua bin Nun. Moshe ordains Yehoshua as his successor in the presence of the entire nation. The *parsha* concludes with special teachings of the service in the Beit Hamikdash.