

Potomac Torah Study Center
Vol. 10 #37, July 7, 2023; 18 Tammuz 5783; Pinchas 5783

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 more than 50 years ago and was our family Rebbe and close friend until his 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 archives.

I always have mixed feelings when we reach Pinchas in the annual Torah reading. For many years, I try to schedule some leining on Yom Tov, because I especially enjoy leining the korbanot (sacrifices) from chapter 28 and 29 of Bemidbar. The korbanot help me feel connected to the holy Temple and especially to Musaf on Yom Tov. The mixed feelings arise because Pinchas always comes right around 17 Tammuz, the beginning of the Three Weeks, the saddest period of the year for Jews. From 17 Tammuz to Tisha B'Av, we continue to mourn the destruction of the two Temples in Jerusalem.

In central Maryland, where we live, this period also comes during the hottest and most humid weeks of summer. I always struggle with the heat and prefer to stay indoors in air conditioned comfort during July. As a "farmer," trying to grow 250 dahlia plants (a species that originated in the mountains of Mexico), July in Maryland could not be less favorable: UV index values of 11 most days, temperatures in the 90s, dew points often around 75, and heat indices in excess of 100. In these conditions, ground fungus can kill dahlia plants in a day or two, and spider mites can kill a healthy dahlia plant in three days. Any dahlia plant that survives to mid August in our climate is a gift from Hashem.

As the chronological material in the Torah winds to a close, parshat Pinchas focuses on three stories. Hashem rewards Pinchas for his act of zealotry by promising that all future Kohanim Gedolim would come from his descendants (25:13, according to Ibn Ezra). Next God tells Moshe to take a census according to each family in every tribe. This census was to be the basis on which Yehoshua would allocate land in Canaan to each family and thus each tribe. The daughters of Tzelofchad then approach Moshe to request that they receive land that would have gone to their father, because they have no brother. (Hashem approves of this request.) David Block, a colleague of Rabbi David Fohrman at alephbeta.org, notes that these stories all involve legacy. How will future generations remember Pinchas, the final census, and the daughters of Tzelofchad? The legacy of Pinchas is every Kohen Gadol after Elazar. The legacy of the final census is the division of the land in Canaan, permanent until the destruction of the Temples and inter-mingling (or loss) of most of the tribes. The legacy of the Tzelofchad daughters is their desire to continue their father's legacy as one of the families receiving holdings from the time of Yehoshua.

The next story in Pinchas is the transition of leadership from Moshe to Yehoshua. Rav Block explains that this story also deals with Moshe's legacy. While the Torah does not mention either of Moshe's sons (Gershon and Eliezer) receiving any land or leadership, presumably they remained as part of Levy. The Torah, however, discusses Moshe's legacy – leadership went from Moshe to his trusted assistant, Yehoshua. The Mishnah extends this legacy by recounting how Yehoshua transmitted the Torah (written and oral) to the Elders, the prophets, men of the Great Assembly (Pirkei Avot 1:1), and then on to each generation of rabbis. In this sense, the final stories of the chronological history of the Torah, which culminate in Pinchas, all deal with aspects of the legacy of Moshe, Pinchas, and the generations of the Exodus and the first generation to enter the land.

Pinchas has another distinction, as Rabbi Aharon Loschak discusses below. What is the single most important pasook

(verse) in the Torah? Bemidbar 28:4:

The first lamb you shall sacrifice in the morning and the second lamb you shall sacrifice in the evening.

This pasook reminds us that the most important aspect of our religion is that it is constant, something that we do every day, the same way. Our relationship with our Creator should be so much a part of ourselves that it is basic and continuous. Once we make that relationship the center of our being, we can go on to the other important mitzvot – unity of Hashem, focus on treating everyone with respect and caring, and everything else that is so important to leading a worthwhile life.

Focusing on the two long fasts and the discomfort of the Three Weeks makes Pinchas seem like an introduction to misery. Behind the discomfort of fasting and the focus on abstaining from pleasure, however, is only part of the theme of this period during the hottest part of summer. Pinchas contains the most central theme in our religion (creating a constant relationship with our Creator) and reminds us of the importance of the legacy of Moshe and the generations of the Exodus and Midbar. We should all hopefully create our own legacies – and following the mitzvot is central to this effort. Hannah and I, as well as our sons and their families, are part of the legacy of our beloved Rebbe, Rabbi Leonard Cahan, z"l, who started me on my study of the legacy of our religion more than fifty years ago. Rabbi Cahan was our teacher, close friend, and inspiration – and also the person to whom we went first whenever we had difficult issues in our lives. His role was part of the positive message from Pinchas, something that we try to pass along to our children and grandchildren.

May Hashem protect our people during the Three Weeks, the most dangerous time of the year for us, and may He inspire us to renew and improve our relationships with Him as we work our way to Elul and then the High Holy Days.

Shabbat Shalom,

Hannah and Alan

Much of the inspiration for my weekly Dvar Torah message comes from the insights of Rabbi David Fohrman and his team of scholars at www.alephbeta.org. Please join me in supporting this wonderful organization, which has increased its scholarly work during and since the pandemic, despite many of its supporters having to cut back on their donations.

Please daven for a Refuah Shlemah for Arye Don ben Tzivia, Reuven ben Basha Chaya Zlata Lana, Yoram Ben Shoshana, Leib Dovid ben Etel, Asher Shlomo ben Ettie, Avraham ben Gavriela, Mordechai ben Chaya, Hershel Tzvi ben Chana, Uzi Yehuda ben Mirda Behla, David Moshe ben Raizel; Zvi ben Sara Chaya, Eliav Yerachmiel ben Sara Dina, Reuven ben Masha, Meir ben Sara, Oscar ben Simcha; Sharon bat Sarah, Noa Shachar bat Avigael, Kayla bat Ester, and Malka bat Simcha, who need our prayers. Please contact me for any additions or subtractions. Thank you.

Shabbat Shalom,

Hannah & Alan

Pinchas: What One Person Can Do!

By Rabbi Label Lam © 5773

HASHEM spoke to Moshe, saying: Pinchas son of Elazar, son of Aaron the Kohen turned back My wrath from upon the Children of Israel, when he zealously avenged Me among them, so I did not consume the Children of Israel in My vengeance. (Bamidbar 25:10)

...turned back My wrath from upon the Children of Israel: Why was HASHEM's anger aimed at all of Israel? This is to teach us that if even one person violates in this area he brings wrath upon the entire community! (Yalkut Pisron Torah)

...so I did not consume the Children of Israel in My vengeance: Were all the Children of Israel to be destroyed? Rather, had it not been for the Tefilla (prayer) of Pinchus, all of Israel would have been eliminated in the plague, because of the principle that all Jews are guarantors one for another! (Midrash HaGadol)

We have to stand back and marvel at the magnitude of the accomplishment of Pinchus! All of Israel was at risk! We were hemorrhaging badly. Someone needed to stop the bleeding. The Midrash relates the gravity of the situation and the value of the deed done by Pinchus. However there's a louder point here. The whole plague was started like a wild fire by one person, and it was extinguished by the heroism of one man. Look at the power invested in the individual!

It may be hard for us to believe in the abstract but we live it concretely every day! Traffic is backed up for miles. Ambulances and stretchers are rushed to the scene. Lives are ruined and hundreds of thousands are inconvenienced by loss of valuable work time, missing appointments, and airplane flights. Why? One foolish person was engaging in distracted driving, multitasking, absorbed in texting during the morning commute. Look at the power any individual to be destructive. About this King Solomon had written in Koheles, *"One sinner destroys a lot of good!"* It's easy to be destructive. It's harder to be constructive. It takes months and years to build a house and with one match all is lost. It takes years to develop a trusting relationship and with one word or a single betrayal all can be undone! It's harder for us to imagine the power of the average individual to effect good like Pinchus did! Rebbe Nachman from Breslov said, *"If you believe you have the ability to destroy something then you must also believe that you have the capacity to correct it."* How can we understand this?

Years ago I bought one of my boys a bike. Unfortunately he left it in front of the house and when the public schools kids came home from school, they could not resist, and the bike disappeared. He was upset and feeling victimized so I bought him another bike and cautioned him to take better care of it. This time he left it in the garage but he left the garage door open, and when the public school kids were passing by, they came into our garage and took his new bike. I wasn't about to buy a new one so fast but it was Pesach night and he was bargaining hard for the return of the Afikomen, I insisted he have "some skin in the game" and so we became 50/50 partners in another new bike. Chol HaMoed we were almost at the hotel upstate where my mother-in-law was staying for Yom Tov when I decided to tease my son. I pressed the garage door opener which only works when you are 10 feet away. We were more than 50 miles away. Gazing into rear view mirror I told him that now the garage door was open and the public school kids are passing by our house. He glared back at me and advised, *"Then push the button and close it again!"*

That's what one person can do!

<https://torah.org/torah-portion/dvartorah-5773-pinchas/>

Pinchas: Zealot – Prelate or Priest of Peace?

by Rabbi Dov Linzer, Rosh HaYeshiva, Yeshivat Chovevei Torah © 2016, 2023

This week's parsha Pinchas has much to say about zealotry and peace, and the messages remain worthy of examination today. Consider the following: A religious zealot witnesses a person flagrantly violating religious standards. 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 an ideal to be emulated? While the Gemara recognizes 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 God gives to Pinchas: “*Behold, I give him My covenant of peace.*” While this act of zealotry may have been praiseworthy in this unique set of circumstances, the blessing for eternity, the guiding principle for life, must be 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.

Pinchas goes on to embody peace. In Sefer Yehoshua, the tribes of Reuven, Gad, and half the tribe of Menashe return to the Transjordan and build a large altar. Believing they have abandoned God, the other Israelites prepare to wage war. 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 pursuing diplomacy, compromise, and peace. The Talmud records Rav Ashi’s opinion that Pinchas did not 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 to contrast Pinchas and Eliyahu. The Midrash states “*Pinchas is Eliyahu.*” Indeed, both were “*zealous for God.*” In response to rampant idolatry, Eliyahu decreed there would be no rain. 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 God appeared:

... 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 (Kings I, 19: 9–12).

Eliyahu has indeed been “*zealous for the Lord,*” and many have died by sword and famine. But God has a lesson: God is not about violence but the small still voice, the voice that speaks to a person’s heart, that will bring about peace. But Eliyahu 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 (Kings I, 19: 13–16).

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

Pinchas is Eliyahu, but 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 frailties of human beings. He will never become the older Pinchas, at least not in this world, but 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. The following discussion in the Mishnah is 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. Peace will be possible only as a byproduct of truth. Eliyahu’s mission will be to rectify falsehood, to ensure a person’s status is true to reality. R. Yehudah believes truth will serve the interests of peace in the end, but will only be called on to bring close those who have been distanced. The Sages reject both positions, holding these principles will never be reconciled for Eliyahu. He 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 realized true religious leadership in his lifetime, leadership that brought unflinching devotion to God and truth to serving the people and actualized this truth in ways of peace.

Shabbat Shalom!

<https://library.yct Torah.org/2023/07/pinchas-zealot-prelate-or-priest-of-peace-2/>

Pinchas: Obscure Serah's Ongoing Message

By Rabbi Marc D. Angel *

Some time ago, my wife and I attended a synagogue where the Rabbi was celebrating his 36th anniversary with the congregation. In the middle of his sermon, he stopped and looked around the room. He pointed to one seat, and then another, and then yet another. “I remember who sat there,” he said, “and who sat there, and who sat there.” In his 36 years with the congregation, he shared life with so many congregants, and he remembered all those who had passed on to their eternal reward. The congregation had texture, a historical memory. The rabbi and other long-standing members remembered the voices of all those congregants who had been part of the community during their lifetimes. As long as they were remembered, they still mattered to the congregation. They still were part of the living texture and tradition of the community. Shared memory fosters a sense of togetherness, the linking of generations.

People need and want a sense of community and continuity. Yet, our world seems to be increasingly obsessed with undermining societal wellbeing. The contemporary catchwords are “new,” “change,” “technological innovation.” While these terms reflect much that is valuable, they also reflect social malaise, breakdowns of families and communities, increasing alienation from the past, from historic social texture.

Communities and congregations change. Some people move away. Some die. New people join. Elders often become strangers in the synagogues they’ve attended for many years. The sense of continuity fractures.

We need to find the formula for being receptive to the “new” without losing the continuity and strength of the “old.”

This week’s Torah portion mentions Serah bat Asher, an enigmatic figure who is mentioned just twice in the Torah. She is listed among those of Jacob’s family who came to Egypt where Joseph had become a powerful leader (Bereishith 46:17). And here (Bemidbar26:46), she is listed again as the Israelites are counted in advance of entering the Promised Land. The Torah gives no details about her.

Since Serah is mentioned these two times — spanning over 250 years — tradition has it that she lived a very long life. She was with the Israelites when they first entered Egypt; she was with them throughout the centuries of slavery; she was with them when they ultimately entered the Promised Land.

Why would the Torah mention this obscure figure in such a way as to suggest her incredible presence throughout the formative years of the People of Israel?

Perhaps the Torah lists Serah as a symbol of continuity and social context. By spanning the generations, she had a unique role to play in keeping the Israelites united. Her memories bound the people together. Presumably, people could come to her and learn about the “old days,” the earlier experiences of slavery and redemption. They could draw on the wisdom she had gained through many years of an eventful life.

Wouldn’t it be special to have a cup of coffee with Serah, to hear stories from her long life, to gain her insights and to share her dreams for the future? Wouldn’t we all be stronger and happier by feeling the personal presence of someone whose life has spanned so many years, who connects personally with so many generations?

Actually, our communities and congregations today have their own Serah figures, people who have lived long and active lives, who remember the “old days” and the personalities of earlier generations. Wouldn’t it be special for us to have a cup of coffee with them, hear their stories, learn from their experiences, share their dreams for the future? Wouldn’t it be wonderful for our elders of today to be valued for the continuity they represent, rather than have them feel as strangers or relics?

The obscure figure of Serah continues to remind us of the mystery of the generations, the need for intergenerational continuity and communication. The Torah only mentions her twice, but in a way that underscores the importance of linking the generations with a shared historical memory, a shared social context, a shared destiny. Even today, the obscure Serah continues to lead the way for us.

* Founder and Director, Institute for Jewish Ideas and Ideals.

The Institute for Jewish Ideas and Ideals has experienced a significant drop in donations during the pandemic. The Institute needs our help to maintain and strengthen our Institute. Each gift, large or small, is a vote for an intellectually vibrant, compassionate, inclusive Orthodox Judaism. You may contribute on our website jewishideas.org or you may send your check to Institute for Jewish Ideas and Ideals, 2 West 70th Street, New York, NY 10023. Ed.: Please join me in helping the Institute for Jewish Ideas and Ideals at this time.

<https://www.jewishideas.org/node/3139>

Lessons from a "Goses" – a Dying Person

By Dr. Kenneth Prager *

[ed. Note: Our parsha opens when all who were to die in the Midbar, except Moshe, had died. Every other Jew alive at this point were to enter the land and inherit their family holdings. Dr. Prager’s reflections fit the mood of the parsha and the Three Weeks.]

Thirty-five years ago, when I was an attending physician in my hospital’s intensive care unit, I started to ponder the ethical

issues involved in the use — and misuse — of increasingly powerful medical technology. Twelve years before that, in 1968, during my internship, there were few end-of-life ethical conundrums: We treated every patient as aggressively as possible — always. Death was the enemy, and we employed every medical intervention to avoid the demise of our patients. Our technology was primitive by today's standards, and we could not prolong the process of dying significantly.

A mere 10 years later, when I was an attending physician in the intensive care unit, medical technology had advanced greatly, and the lives of many ICU patients were saved by respirators, dialysis machines, and powerful new drugs. I soon realized, however, that there was a group of patients who could not be cured with these interventions, but whose dying was prolonged significantly — with much suffering for both them and their families.

I needed guidance in how to deal with these ethical dilemmas. As someone who took his Jewish religion seriously, I began reading articles and books on Jewish medical ethics. In the course of my readings, I came across a curious and powerful statement written some 800 years ago by a Jewish scholar from the Bavarian town of Regensburg, Rabbi Judah the Pious. He wrote in *Sefer HaHassidim, The Book of the Righteous*: “We do not compel a person not to die quickly.” What a strange but insightful statement, I thought. The rabbi gave an example: If a person is a gose and someone near his house is chopping wood so that his soul cannot depart, one should remove the woodchopper. One does not put salt on his tongue in order to prevent his death....”

In Jewish law, a gose is someone who is moribund, someone who is actively dying. In the thirteenth century, people had fixed ideas about events surrounding death and felt that loud noises or the pungent taste of salt could delay that final moment when the soul departed the body. Removing the woodchopper was viewed as removing an impediment to one's peaceful death.

I learned from yet another source written a thousand years before Rabbi Judah the Pious the same principle: that one should remove an impediment to a peaceful death. In the Talmud, the story is told of the death in the third century of Rabbi Judah the Prince. He was the foremost Jewish sage of his era and was suffering with an intestinal disease. His disciples, overcome with the dread of losing their beloved teacher — but seemingly unaware of the degree of his suffering and of the hopelessness of his terminal illness — continued to pray for his recovery. It was only the rabbi's housemaid, who, seeing his torment and the inevitability of his imminent death, was determined to silence the prayers of his followers, which she believed were preventing him from dying peacefully. She cleverly threw an earthenware vessel to the ground. The noise of the shattering vessel stunned the praying crowd so that they ceased their prayers for an instant, during which time Rabbi Judah's soul departed. Just as in the case of the woodchopper, the handmaid acted to remove an impediment to a peaceful and quick death: in this case, the prayers of his students.

When, as a young ICU attending, I first read these sources, I was intrigued by the idea that the wise Jewish scholar of 800 years ago, who could never have dreamed of our medical technology, had ruled that one must remove an impediment to imminent death, and that a compassionate handmaid a thousand years earlier, had intuited the same humane principle.

In today's ICUs, the woodchopper and the prayers of devout followers have been replaced by ventilators, dialysis machines, ventricular assist devices, and extra corporeal membrane oxygenators. Might not Rabbi Judah the Pious, rounding in our ICUs today, be dismayed at how often his introductory principle — “we do not compel a person not to die quickly” — was being routinely violated by our modern-day incarnations of the woodchopper? Whether because of the understandable grief of families unable to let go, or the injunctions of some rabbis that every moment of life must be preserved, or the poor judgment of physicians who do not recognize when the battle for life is lost, aren't patients too often compelled “not to die quickly?”

Take the case of my patient Ben. When he was 88 years old, he came to see me for mild chest pain, and brought with him an x-ray that showed a mass in his lung. His daughters requested that I not share with their elderly and frail father my diagnostic impression of cancer. They were a deeply religious Jewish family, and it was their custom not to share bad news with elderly parents. Indeed, Ben was too frail, with heart and kidney disease, to undergo surgery, chemotherapy, or radiotherapy. He and his daughters had agreed, however, to a needle biopsy of the mass in view of the possibility that it might be a treatable non-cancerous process. Unfortunately, my fears were realized; the lesion was malignant. Ben was uninterested in the biopsy result, and he was sent home with medication for pain.

I had not heard from him for a year when he returned to my office, accompanied by his daughters. He looked thin, drawn, and breathless, but he maintained his sweet smile and greeted me warmly.

His pain was now worse, and he had developed a large collection of fluid in his chest cavity. It was clear that he was near death. Given the absence of therapeutic options, I suggested to his daughters that their father return home with hospice care, which would maximize his comfort and treat symptoms as they arose. His daughters consulted with their Orthodox rabbi, who stated that all measures be taken to keep Ben alive and comfortable as long as possible. Every moment of life was considered sacred, and if hospitalization could prolong his life, he should remain hospitalized and be treated aggressively. I offered the option of discharging Ben home with follow-up by home hospice, but the family declined. Rather than have his shortness of breath treated with as-needed doses of morphine at home under the supervision of a team of home hospice professionals, his family requested that he stay in the hospital and have a chest tube inserted to remove as much fluid as possible and thereby alleviate his breathlessness and probably prolong his life. When asked about his preferences, Ben deferred to his daughters.

A chest tube was placed, and although his breathing temporarily eased, Ben remained uncomfortable and quickly became weaker. Despite the chest tube, his breathing soon became more labored and I suggested to his daughters that he be allowed to pass away peacefully without placing a breathing tube in his throat — intubation — and connecting him to a respirator. After a long discussion among themselves and with their rabbi, it was concluded that since intubation would prolong Ben's life somewhat, they felt religiously compelled to request ICU transfer and ventilator support. At this point, I tried once again to gently ascertain Ben's wishes but whenever the discussion became too specific, his response was, "ask my daughters."

As Ben's breathing became more labored and it was clear that he would die imminently, he was transferred to the ICU, intubated, and connected to a respirator. As we were intubating Ben, the thought occurred to me that he was a *goses* and that we were ignoring Rabbi Judah the Pious' admonition to avoid compelling a person "not to die quickly." Ben was sedated for comfort and, despite the ventilator, died a day later. His family agreed at the last moment not to attempt cardiac resuscitation when his heart stopped beating.

Although one might criticize under these circumstances the rabbi's decision to preserve Ben's life as long as possible — while attending to his pain and shortness of breath — the importance of the concept of the sanctity of life in the Jewish religion cannot be overstated. Judaism is a religion that treasures every second of life. Although Judaism accepts the notion of a hereafter, the entire corpus of Jewish law and lore focuses on life in this world, and stresses the importance of sanctifying every moment of existence by carrying out good deeds, adhering to God's laws, and deriving as much happiness and pleasure as possible within the bounds of *halakha*. If a person can be kept alive for one more day, that person might use that time to do a *mitzvah* reflect on life, do *teshuvah* (repentance), or pray to God.

I also feel that the Holocaust continues to have a significant impact on the way rabbis and Jewish laypeople think about the sanctity of life, especially when confronting end-of-life issues. Because a mere 70 years ago one out of every three Jewish men, women, and children on earth was murdered by the Nazis and their henchmen, the notion of the sanctity of life has been reinforced, leading many rabbis to ordain that every moment of life, even as life is ebbing, be preserved by whatever means possible.

Returning to the concept of a *goses*: Although the classical sources I quoted above admonish us not to prolong the dying process of a moribund person — "we do not compel a person not to die quickly" — there is a very important flip side to this ancient concept. The Talmud prohibits actions that are intended to hasten the death of a *goses*, "who is regarded as a living person in all respects." The Talmud enumerates such prohibited actions. One may not move the patient, close his eyelids, or bind his jaws — actions that should not be carried out until after death. The *goses* was likened to a flickering candle that becomes extinguished with the slightest perturbation. Clearly, the rabbis warn physicians to beware of the temptation to extinguish the flickering candle of life by, for example, administering a higher dose of morphine than is necessary to alleviate suffering. When such drugs are used with the intent to hasten death, regardless of the humane motives of the physician or the family, this is clearly prohibited.

It is a delicate balancing act indeed: Just as Rabbi Judah the Pious and the Talmud would seem to sanction, if not require, intentionally removing impediments to a peaceful death of a *goses* in order to avoid prolonging the dying process, that

same goses should not have his or her death intentionally hastened by actions of the physician or family. The laws pertaining to a goses would seem to indicate that there is a definite, if subtle, distinction in Judaism between an action to remove or withhold treatment that prevents a peaceful death, and an action with the intent of hastening death such as administering a drug to the patient to accomplish this goal. The tension between respecting the sanctity of life by prohibiting actions intended to hasten the death of a moribund patient, and alleviating suffering by permitting the removal of machines or medicines that are impediments to a peaceful death, is a frequent concern of every ICU physician. Thus, the concept of a goses developed centuries ago by Jewish scholars would appear to be relevant and useful even today in end-of-life situations.

Judaism's stance on physician-assisted suicide is clear given its attitude toward a goses. If a physician may not do anything that will hasten the death of a moribund patient, one is obviously prohibited from prescribing a lethal dose of medication to allow a terminally ill patient who may still live for months, to commit suicide. The changing values of our society, which are increasingly accepting of physician assisted suicide — it is now legal in 6 states — are clearly contrary to the teachings of traditional Judaism.

Many Orthodox rabbis, and Ben's rabbi must be counted among them, feel that medical technology has rendered the idea of a goses obsolete. After all, they reason, if some patients who were formerly considered moribund can now have their moment of death delayed by medical technology, or even reversed, how, then, can we decide who is a goses? Is the concept still relevant in our technologically sophisticated ICUs?

Perhaps because of my decades of exposure to the sometimes painful realities of patients dying in the ICU, I believe that the concept of a goses remains relevant even in our modern medical centers. In answer to those in the Orthodox community who feel that the concept of a goses is rendered irrelevant because of powerful life sustaining technology, I point to many ICU patients whose death would be imminent without life support, who are comatose or severely obtunded, who suffer pain and indignity, and who have no chance of leaving the hospital alive. Might not such a patient rightfully be called a goses, and should we not be allowed to remove medical impediments to a more peaceful death?

Rabbi Judah the Pious would no doubt insist that in assessing when a critically ill person crosses the line between possible survival and certain death, painstaking efforts must be made by physicians to ensure the accuracy of their prognoses. The concept of a goses is helpful only insofar as the physicians caring for such a patient are mindful of the sanctity of life and assume the awesome responsibility of making an accurate prognosis with humility and skill.

I believe that even today the concept of a goses offers a clear lesson for doctors, patients, and families. In the coming decades, America will face a an increasing number of end-of-life ethical issues as many aged baby boomers will have access to ever more sophisticated medical technology that can prolong life but will often prolong the dying process. The strains on our medical resources, especially in a country where 20 percent of its population dies in ICUs, will be great.

But resource allocation is not the only, nor the most important reason, why we should recognize the wisdom of considering certain dying patients as a goses and allow them a peaceful and dignified death. I have seen numerous examples of patients — Jewish and Gentile — whose final days, weeks, or even months have been marked by unresponsiveness, a hopeless prognosis for survival to discharge, but who have undergone repeated invasive procedures, resuscitations, and diagnostic tests that have served only to prolong the dying process and subject their body to grievous deformities and indignities. Very often, Orthodox families of such patients have suffered by witnessing what their loved ones have had to endure.

The choice is not between the false specter of so-called "death panels" eager to pull the plug on a patient, and those who would use technology to prolong the suffering of dying patients. There is a way to respect the sanctity of life of a goses, while withholding or removing impediments to a peaceful death. But this requires physicians with wisdom, expert clinical judgment, skills of communication, and sensitivity to the value of life and the concerns of families. It also requires sensitive guidance from spiritual leaders, who sometimes view death as an enemy, rather than inevitable, and who should heed the wisdom of Ecclesiastes 3:1 that, *"There is a time for everything and a season for every activity under heaven...a time to be born and a time to die..."*

* Professor of Medicine at Columbia University Medical Center, Director of Clinical Ethics and Chairman of the Medical

Ethics Committee (at the time he wrote this article).

<https://www.jewishideas.org/article/lessons-goses-dying-person>

Pinchas -- Becoming Grand

by Rabbi Mordechai Rhine * © 2016

It was in the midst of a rebellion against Moshe that Pinchas took action. As a plague of punishment swept the camp, Pinchas killed the leader of the grand rebellion and put an end to the rebellion and the plague that it caused. In return for restoring peace between Hashem and His people, Pinchas was rewarded with "peace." He was awarded the status of Kehuna, to be part of the priestly family.

Rashi asks: Wasn't Pinchas already part of the priestly family of Aharon? Why did he need to be awarded that status at this special time?

Rashi explains that when the Kohanim were appointed, Pinchas was already born. To be a Kohein one would have to be appointed, or born from someone who was appointed as a Kohein. Pinchas was not appointed when Ahron was appointed, and he was already born, so until this moment Pinchas was not a Kohein.

Still, the question remains, why wasn't Pinchas appointed at the time that his grandfather, Aharon, and his father, Elazar, were appointed. He was alive and available. Why was he excluded at the original time of appointment?

The basic answer is that Hashem knew that Pinchas was capable of earning the status of Kehuna on his own. And so He excluded Pinchas from the original appointment -- which would have been simply because he was part of the family -- and waited for Pinchas to earn his status as a Kohein.

There are, indeed, in life, two forms of acquisition. There are people who are born into a status, and there are others who really earn the status that they have achieved.

An older gentleman told me that he had "just become a grandfather." I was surprised, because I knew that his children had many children, and none had been born recently. He explained that his son and daughter-in-law had asked if he could take care of some of their children for a week so they could get a vacation. He agreed, and spent some very special quality time with the children. He said, "Until now I was a grandfather because my children had children. After some good outings and meaningful conversations I have really gotten to know the children, and I feel like I have truly now become a grandfather."

There is a cute story of a man who comes to the Rabbi saying that he would like to become a Kohein. At first the Rabbi insists that he can't make him a Kohein. But when the man offers a million dollars to become a Kohein the Rabbi becomes intrigued and asks him why he wants to become a Kohein. The man says, "My father was a Kohein, my grandfather was a Kohein, and I really want to be a Kohein too."

In a halachic sense the man is happily mistaken. If his father was a Kohein he is a Kohein as well. But with an attitudinal approach we may find that there is much merit to his perspective. "My father was a Kohein. What do I have to do to earn that status? What do I have to do so that this title should really belong to me?"

In a similar vein the Medrash says that although Torah is an inheritance)Morasha(it should be viewed as a marriage)Miorasa(. The commentaries explain that while Torah is an inheritance, and is the entitlement and obligation of every Jew born into it, a real appreciation for Torah only comes when we view it as a very personal relationship. Like the relationship with a spouse, it doesn't necessarily come naturally. It takes work; you earn the relationship, and then you can take pride that the relationship is really "yours."

Our sages tell us that this is what was unique about the forefathers of our people. Each one forged a special relationship with Hashem, and developed their own personal status as a leader. For Avraham this came naturally. His had to discover

monotheism on his own. But for Yitzchak and Yakov, who could have simply followed in the footsteps of those who preceded them, it took the conscious effort of self development to develop a personal relationship.

In every one of us there is a piece of Pinchas' legacy. There are things that we could just as well have as "status that we were born into." Yet, we can choose instead to earn that status. We can study and devote ourselves well to Torah and develop a personal relationship as a Jew. Likewise, we can work to develop relationships with relatives so that we become Grand in the fullest sense of the word.

Wishing you and yours a wonderful Shabbos!

* Rabbi Mordechai Rhine is a certified mediator and coach with Rabbinic experience of more than 20 years. Based in Maryland, he provides services internationally via Zoom. He is the Director of TEACH613: Building Torah Communities, One family at a Time, and the founder of CARE Mediation, focused on Marriage/ Shalom Bayis and personal coaching. To reach Rabbi Rhine, his websites are www.care-mediation.com and www.teach613.org; his email is RMRhine@gmail.com. **For information or to join any Torah613 classes, contact Rabbi Rhine.**

Rabbi Rhine is on summer vacation for some weeks. During this time, with his blessing, I am posting some of his outstanding archived Devrei Torah. To find more of Rabbi Rhine's Devrei Torah, go to Teach613.org and search by parsha.

<http://www.teach613.org/pinchas-becoming-grand/>

Parshas Pinchas

by Rabbi Yehoshua Singer * © 2020

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 Yeshoshua 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.

* Rabbi, Am HaTorah Congregation, Bethesda, MD. Note: Rabbi Singer is leaving our community at the end of July to become the head of the Savannah Kollel, associated with Congregation B'Nai Brith Jacob. During this hectic time, Rabbi Singer's new Dvar Torah did not reach me in time for this issue. The Savannah Kollel is one of the treasures of the South, and Rabbi Singer will be a distinguished Chief Rabbi for the Kollel. Hopefully Rabbi Singer will continue to instruct us from his new position at one of the great synagogues and kollels in the South.

Pincha

By Rabbi Herzl Hefter *

[Rabbi Hefter did not send a Devar Torah this week. Watch for future Devrei Torah from Rabbi Hefter in this spot.]

* Founder and dean of the Har'el Beit Midrash in Jerusalem. Rabbi Hefter is a graduate of Yeshiva University and was ordained at Yeshivat Har Etzion. For more of his writings, see www.har-el.org. To support the Beit Midrash, as we do, send donations to America Friends of Beit Midrash Har'el, 66 Cherry Lane, Teaneck, NJ 07666.

Reflection on Parashat Pinchas

Parashat Balak: Pray for Evil

By Rabbi Haim Ovadia *

[note: Rabbi Ovadia did not send me a new Devar Torah for Pinchas. However, last week, for the double parsha, I used a Devar from Rabbi Ovadia from Hukkat. This week, I am running his companion Devar, for Balak, especially since the message is universal – and also directly applies to the beginning of Parashat Pinchas.]

Prayer is not a biblical commandment. According to Nahmanides, that is. According to Maimonides, it is a biblical commandment, but even he agrees that the original concept was much more limited than it is today, as one would pray once a day, in a language and format which suited him or her. Though Nahmanides is more emphatic in his statement that prayer is a personal and emotional concept, Maimonides agrees with him that it should not turn formulaic and mechanical. There is no use in chanting pages from the siddur and chapters from psalms without understanding, intention, or emotion, and already the Bible has warned us against the vacuous prayer which has no actions to back it up. Samuel, David, Isaiah, Jeremiah, Malachi, and Job all address the problem, but unfortunately, it still prevails. There are those among observant Jews who believe that prayers work automatically, as if pulling levers and depositing coins in God's big vending machine in heaven. For health, press A3, B2 to win the lottery, and a blinking red light on C1 means we ran out of potential dates for you.

That corrupt understanding of prayer leads to the preposterous idea that one could pray for evil things to happen, that we should therefore be afraid of curses cast by religious leaders, and that terrorists succeed because they offer prayers to God. I, for one, would not want to adhere to a concept of a God who allows terrorists to wreak havoc because they prayed

with intention and devotion, but those who argue in favor of this world view point to Jewish sources, so I would like to examine them here.

There are three main sources which support the idea of “evil prayers.” One is the statement of the Talmud (Ber. 63:1) that a burglar says a prayer before breaking into a house. This is obviously a rebuke by the Talmud and not a sign of approval. The Talmud quotes this phrase as a popular saying, and it is used to show the cognitive dissonance between the knowledge that stealing is a transgression, and the urge to offer a prayer to guarantee success.

In the same discussion in the Talmud the following statement appears:

Always be aware of God, even when you are about to commit a crime, and He will straighten your path.

Some understood this statement as saying that God will help the one who prays in carrying out his evil plans, and found proof that one could pray for evil outcome. Others tried to refute it by saying that the meaning is that one who is always aware of God will never sin. The truth is much more prosaic, though. In rabbinic literature, the words דבר עבירה - an issue of transgression -- are sometimes a euphemism for intimate relationships (Ber. 22:1; Megilah 12:1; Sotah 11:2 and 36:1; San. 82:2, and more). The Talmud is saying that intimate relationships should not be a carnal affair but rather invested with spirituality, thus strengthening the bond between the spouses.

The most solid proof, however, that “evil prayer” works, is the story of Balaam, especially in its Talmudic rendition. According to the Talmud (San. 105:1), Balaam knew the exact moment in which God gets angry, and he was able to present his requests for the destruction of his enemies at precisely that moment. Fortunately for the Israelites, God maintained His calm during Balaam’s attempts at cursing them, thus saving them from disaster. Those who rely on this story miss, in my opinion, the Talmudic message here: “evil prayers” do not work. Even if you believe that there is such a moment, the moment is in God’s hands and if He chooses not to get angry, that moment will not materialize. In other words, while it is true that in a state of religious devotion people are capable of doing things they would not do under regular circumstances, their prayers do not affect God. God’s decision whether one will be punished or not is not based on the requests or curses of a mercenary prophets or fanatic clerics, but rather on the actions of humans.

This is also the message of the Torah in describing Balaam as a narrow-minded, greedy, and stubborn person, who kept pressing for a curse and for the big prize from Balak, even after being repeatedly told by God that he will not be able to curse the Israelites, and after being thwarted three times during his journey to Moab. He is portrayed as an arrogant and hot-headed person, who was bested at prophecy by his own donkey. The story comes to show us that of all the dangers lurking in the desert, this was not one that the Israelites should have been afraid of.

Following the Talmud’s statement of God’s “angry moment,” there is a story of a rabbi who was harassed by his heretical neighbor. The rabbi decided to wait for the appropriate moment to curse his neighbor, but kept falling asleep and missing the “golden” opportunity. He realized that praying for destruction or punishment is inappropriate, and this is the message we should apply to our prayers and our religious life, which should never have a negative bent. We should focus our intention and prayers in creating better conditions for us and for others to love and respect each other, and to fulfil God’s mission in making this world better place, one little prayer at a time, and as many great actions as possible.

* Torah VeAhava. Rabbi, Beth Sholom Sephardic Minyan (Potomac, MD) and faculty member, AJRCA non-denominational rabbinical school(. **New: Many of Rabbi Ovadia’s Devrei Torah are now available on Sefaria:** <https://www.sefaria.org/profile/haim-ovadia?tab=sheets> . The Sefaria articles usually include Hebrew text, which I must delete because of issues changing software formats.

Shavuon Pinchas by Rabbi Moshe Rube*

Eighty years sounds like a lot of life. Because it is. It's a time that a lot of us picture as the time we start to put our feet up and enjoy what we've sown. To see our houses established and our children grown.

Attending Geoff Levy's 80th birthday party testified to this as all his family and friends came in on a rainy day to see him and celebrate him. Some of the guests were past 80 or pushing 80 themselves.

But there's another part to being 80. Our Sages say that 80 is the age of strength. Ironical that the age where we think we should start winding down, our Sages give us a wink and say, "Sorry Charlie, now is the time where your strength is at your peak. You ain't done yet."

Indeed we have a long tradition of 80 year olds starting some amazing life work at this age. Moses was 80 when he led the people out of Egypt. He was 80 when God split the sea through him. And he spent the next 40 years of his life leading the Jews through the desert. It's only now in the last few portions of the Book of Numbers, when Moshe is pushing 120, that he starts giving the mantle over to the next generation appointing Yehoshua as the next leader and Pinchas as the new Kohen.

So to Geoff and all the other people near 80 reading this, the age of strength is upon you. Your life is just beginning.

Shabbat Shalom!

* Senior Rabbi of Auckland Hebrew Congregation, Remuera)Auckland(, New Zealand. Formerly Rabbi, Congregation Kneseth Israel)Birmingham, AL(.

Rav Kook Torah Pinchas' Ancestry

When Pinchas killed Zimri — the Israelite prince who paraded his Midianite woman in front of Moses and all of Israel — the tribal leaders mocked Pinchas for his act of zealotry: "His maternal grandfather]Jethro[fattened up calves for idolatrous sacrifices, and he had the audacity to murder a prince of Israel!")Sanhedrin 82b(

Why did the tribal leaders belittle Pinchas due to his grandfather? Either killing Zimri was the right thing to do, or it was very wrong. Why malign him for his ancestry?

Clashing Commands

While performing a mitzvah is usually a straightforward matter, sometimes the situation is more complicated. There are instances when we must choose between two conflicting precepts. For example, the korban pesach is offered after the daily Tamid offering of the afternoon, even though the afternoon Tamid is ordinarily the last offering of the day. The mitzvah of korban pesach overrides the lesser mitzvah of hashlamah, that the Tamid completes the day's Temple offerings)Pesachim 59a(.

And there can be more serious conflicts, when a positive mitzvah will override a prohibition. This is the category of עשה דוחה לא תעשה. The classic case of עשה דוחה לא תעשה is the permit to wear Tzitzit made of white and tekhelet-blue strings of wool on a linen garment. Even though it is forbidden to wear wool and linen together, the mitzvah of Tzitzit takes precedence over the prohibition of Sha'atnez.]Yevamot 4a. In practice, the Rama rules that our custom is not to wear linen tzitzit)Shulchan Aruch, Orach Chaim 9:2(.

A more extreme example results in suspending a far more serious injunction. The Torah forbids marrying the wife of one's brother, even after his death. Such a union is considered incest and carries the severe punishment of karet. Yet, if the

brother had no children, the prohibition is waived by the mitzvah of Yibbum — levirate marriage.

Due to the seriousness of the prohibition, the mitzvah of Yibbum must be fulfilled with pure intentions. “Abba Shaul said: one who consummates a levirate marriage for the sake of her beauty, or for the sake of marital relations, or for another reason [e.g., he wants to inherit her late husband’s estate], it is considered as though he married a forbidden relation” (Yevamot 39b). Even according to the opinion that mitzvot do not require intent, in this case, one’s intentions must be pure, to fulfill the mitzvah of Yibbum. According to Abba Shaul, only then is the prohibited act of marrying the widow of one’s brother transformed into a permitted and commendable deed.

The prohibition in the case of Pinchas was even more severe. His act of zealotry required overriding the prohibition against murder — a horrific act and cardinal sin that causes the Shechinah to leave Israel (Shabbat 33a). If questioned, the court does not even teach the rule that one may kill a transgressor in these circumstances — הלכה ואין מורין כן (Sanhedrin 81b). For who can know what truly motivates a person? The act of zealotry may only be performed if one’s intentions are pure, when one acts solely for the sake of heaven, with no personal motives. Otherwise, the deed acquires an element of bloodshed, as the transgressor is killed without witnesses and without due process.

Evaluating Pinchas’ Motives

The tribal leaders were highly critical of Pinchas. They suspected that his background — his maternal grandfather, who worshiped idols before he converted to Judaism — influenced his motives and attitude, preventing him from acting with pure intent. How could Pinchas perform such a complex deed, one that requires a pure heart to suspend the prohibition of “Thou shall not kill”?

Therefore, the Torah defends Pinchas by declaring his lineage on his father’s side: “Pinchas, the son of Eleazar, the son of Aaron the priest” (Num. 5:11). His ancestry did have an impact on him — but it was the ancestry of his grandfather Aaron, the beloved high priest who “loved peace and pursued peace, loving all people and drawing them near to the Torah” (Avot 1:12). That legacy enabled Pinchas to act with full intent and pure motives, out of love for his people and perfect love for God, thus validating his zealous act.

(Adapted from Shemu’ot HaRe’iyah II, pp. 229-233. [note: please excuse transfers across software if Hebrew quotations have words out of order])

<https://www.ravkooktorah.org/PINCHAS-82.htm>

The Crown All Can Wear (Chukat 5768, 5779)

By Lord Rabbi Jonathan Sacks, z”l, Former Chief Rabbi of the U.K.*

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. I 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 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 ‘betrothed [me’orasa]’”* (Brachot 57a). By a simple change in pronunciation – turning a shin [=“sh”] into a sin [=“s”], “inheritance” into “betrothal” – 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.” Avot DeRabbi Natan, version 2, ch. 4.

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.

FOOTNOTES:

]1[Numbers Rabbah 21:14.

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

AROUND THE SHABBAT TABLE:

]1[What was on Moses' mind when he asked God to find a successor?

]2[Do you think education is important for all children and all adults?

]3[Why do you think it was important for Moses to know that his son would take over from him as leader of the Jewish people?

]4[How does the fact that Joshua merited to become the next leader after Moses prove that Judaism's concept of a nation is an egalitarian one?

]5[What is the difference between a nachala and a yerusha? Which one is the Torah?

<https://www.rabbisacks.org/covenant-conversation/pinchas/the-crown-all-can-wear/>

Note: because Likutei Torah and the Internet Parsha Sheet, both attached by E-mail, normally include the two most recent Devrei Torah by Rabbi Sacks, I have selected an earlier Dvar.

The Daily Grind and the Daily Lamb

By Aharon Loschak * © Chabad 2023

Imagine if someone stopped you on the street and asked you, *“What’s the single most important verse in the entire Torah?”*

You’d probably answer something to the effect of *“Shema Yisrael”* or perhaps one of the Ten Commandments. Maybe *“Love your fellow as yourself”* would qualify. You know, Golden Rule and all that.

These are reasonable choices.

Well, do I have news for you!

The Most Inclusive Verse in the Torah

A major chunk of the parshah of Pinchas speaks of sacrificial law for various events throughout the year. The Torah details sacrifices to be offered on Shabbat, festivals, and assorted other situations. At the very beginning of these laws, we read of the Tamid offering, the twice daily sacrifice offered in the Temple:

*The first lamb you shall sacrifice in the morning and the second lamb you shall sacrifice in the evening.*¹

These two offerings served as the backbone of the daily Temple service; no other sacrifice was allowed to be offered prior to the morning Tamid or after the afternoon Tamid.

That seems to be the end of it. A simple enough law about sacrifices in the Temple.

But it’s not. Take a look at this Midrash, in which several rabbis offer the verses they believed could encapsulate the entirety of Torah:

Ben Zoma says: We have found a more encompassing verse, which is, *“Shema Yisrael.”*

Ben Nanas says: We have found a more encompassing verse, which is, “Love your fellow as yourself.”

Shimon Ben Pazi says: We have found a more encompassing verse, which is, “The first lamb you shall sacrifice in the morning and the second lamb you shall sacrifice in the afternoon.”

*Rabbi Ploni stood up and said: The halachah follows Ben Pazi.*²

Wait, what? What did Rabbi Shimon ben Pazi just say? Why would a passage about offering daily sacrifices be the *“most inclusive”* verse in the Torah? How can this detail of Temple law play ball with heavyweights like *“Shema Yisrael”* and the Golden Rule itself?

Constancy is Key

The Maharal³ offers a fascinating, yet profoundly simple, explanation: constancy is key.

Yes, to love your neighbor as yourself is very important. The proclamation of faith that is *“Shema!”* is both moving and critical. Yet they are arguably not as important as the simple, banal truth of *“offer the same two sacrifices every day.”*

You see, religious life is thankfully full of high-voltage, electric moments. Be it prayer, taking in the majestic glow of the Shabbat candles, or the thrill of doing a favor for another person, these are the moments we live for. Those pockets of time when we’re energized and joyous about our religious life, and really, life at large.

Such moments are indeed important, and it's safe to say that no person, no matter how pious or devout, could survive without them.

The problem is that such moments are not constant. In fact, for many, they are few and far between. So what then? What do you do when there's no majestic glow of Shabbat candles or the prayers no longer talk to you? What do you do when the electricity of religion is gone, or if not entirely gone, seems to be fast asleep?

It is at such moments, when the going gets tough, that the proverbial tough get going. You wake up listless and apathetic, yet you carry forward.

Why?

Because you're committed. You view your relationship with G d as a constant, something beyond question, a rock-solid formation that is not subject to the passing whims of your interest or drive.

A Committed Relationship

It's really like that with any relationship. Do good relationships offer electric moments of passion, energy, and joy? Of course they do!

But those who enjoy true, everlasting, and committed relationships know this simple truth: The secret sauce lies in the commitment itself — regardless of what happens. The constancy, the willingness and readiness to just keep on plugging and doing the same thing today, tomorrow, and the next ten years no matter how boring it may seem — that is the magic ingredient of a successful relationship.

Our relationship with G d is no different. There are moments of incredible passion and boundless joy. There will be times when your feet lift off the ground in exuberant dance. Those moments are represented by the holiday sacrifices detailed in the later verses. And then, there are moments when it might seem, dare I say, downright boring. Moments that appear to be a repeat of yesterday and a thousand years stretching back — like the daily Temple sacrifice that was offered every day; twice, in fact.

And you know what?

It's in the latter instances when the strength of your commitment will be tested, and should you pass, when its full beauty will flower.

So yes, "*The first lamb you shall sacrifice in the morning and the second lamb you shall sacrifice in the evening*" is truly one of the most important verses in the entire Torah. It gets little attention — and that's the point.

Consider yourself lucky that you're now in on the secret.

FOOTNOTES:

1. Numbers 28:4.
2. Cited in Introduction to *Ein Yaakov* (Rabbi Jacob ibn Habib).
3. Rabbi Yehuda Loewe, the Maharal of Prague, *Netiv Olam*, Netiv Ahavat Rei'a 1:4.

* Writer, editor and rabbi; editor of Jewish Learning Institute's popular Torah Studies program,

https://www.chabad.org/parshah/article_cdo/aid/5168609/jewish/The-Daily-Grind-and-the-Daily-Lamb.htm

Pinchas: How Important is G-d's Food?

by Rabbi Moshe Wisniefsky *

G-d's Food

G-d spoke to Moses, saying, "Command the children of Israel, You must guard 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.")Bamidbar 28:2(

G-d calls the sacrifices His daily "food," for just as food sustains the body, so did the sacrifices draw sustaining 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.

May these days of fasting be transformed into days of gladness and joy,

— from *Daily Wisdom* 3

Gut Shabbos,
Rabbi Yosef B. Friedman
Kehot Publication Society

On this fast day of the 17th of Tammuz, it is highly appropriate to donate to charity, as our sages have declared: "*The reward for a fast is dependent on tzedakah*")Berachot 6b(.

You may donate here: <https://www.kehot.org/Dedicate/Sponsorships>

To receive the complete D'Vrai Torah package weekly by E-mail, send your request to AfisherADS@Yahoo.com. The printed copies contain only a small portion of the D'Vrai Torah. Dedication opportunities available)no fee(. Authors retain all copyright privileges for their sections.

Likutei Divrei Torah

Gleanings of Divrei Torah on Parashat Hashavuah
via the Internet

In loving memory of Dr. Allen Gaisin, z"l,
on the occasion of his fourth yearzeit
(18 Tamuz)

Volume 30, Issue 36

Shabbat Parashat Pinchas

5783 B"H

Covenant and Conversation

Rabbi Jonathan Sacks, z"l

Elijah and the Still, Small Voice

Then the word of the Lord came to him: 'Why are you here, Elijah?' He replied, I am moved by the zeal for the Lord, God of Hosts...' The Lord said to him, 'Go out and stand on the mountain in the presence of the Lord, for the Lord is about to pass by.' Then a great and powerful wind tore the mountains apart and shattered the rocks before the Lord. But the Lord was not in the wind. After the wind was an earthquake, but the Lord was not in the earthquake. After the earthquake came a fire. But the Lord was not in the fire. And after the fire – a still, small voice.

I Kings 19:9-12

In 1165, an agonising question confronted Moroccan Jewry. A fanatical Muslim sect, the Almohads, had seized power in Morocco and was embarking on a policy of forced conversion to Islam. The Jewish community was faced with a choice: to affirm Islamic faith or die. Some chose martyrdom. Others chose exile. But some acceded to terror and embraced another faith. Inwardly, though, many of the 'converted' continued practising Judaism in secret. They were the anusim, conversos, Crypto-Jews, or as the Spanish were later to call them, the marranos.

To other Jews, they posed a formidable moral problem. How were they to be viewed? Outwardly, they had betrayed their community and their religious heritage. Besides, their example was demoralising. It weakened the resolve of Jews who were determined to resist, come what may. Yet many of the Crypto-Jews still wished to remain Jewish, secretly fulfilling the commandments and, when they could, attending the synagogue and praying.

One of the converted addressed this question to a Rabbi. He had, he said, converted under coercion, but he remained at heart a faithful Jew. Could he obtain merit by observing in private as many of the Torah's precepts as possible? Was there, in other words, hope left for him as a Jew? The Rabbi's reply was emphatic. A Jew who had embraced Islam had forfeited membership in the Jewish community. He was no longer part of the house of Israel. For such a person to fulfil the commandments was meaningless. Worse, it was a sin. The choice was stark and absolute: to be or not to be a Jew. If you choose to be a

Jew, you should be prepared to suffer death rather than compromise. If you choose not to be a Jew, then you must not seek to re-enter the house you deserted.

We can respect the firmness of the Rabbi's stance. He set out, without equivocation, the moral choice. There are times when heroism is, for faith, a categorical imperative. Nothing less will do. His reply, though harsh, is not without courage. But another Rabbi disagreed.

The name of the first Rabbi is lost to us, but that of the second is not. He was Moses Maimonides, the greatest Rabbi of the Middle Ages. Maimonides was no stranger to religious persecution. Born in Cordova in 1135, he had been forced to leave, along with his family, some thirteen years later when the city fell to the Almohads. Twelve years were spent in wandering. In 1160, a temporary liberalisation of Almohad rule allowed the family to settle in Morocco. Within five years he was forced to move again, settling first in the land of Israel and ultimately in Egypt.

Maimonides was so incensed by the Rabbi's reply to the forced convert that he wrote a response of his own. In it, he frankly disassociates himself from the earlier ruling and castigates its author whom he describes as a 'self-styled sage who has never experienced what so many Jewish communities had to endure in the way of persecution'.

Maimonides' reply, the Iggeret ha-Shemad ('Epistle on Forced Conversion'), is a substantial treatise in its own right.[1] What is striking, given the vehemence with which it begins, is that its conclusions are hardly less demanding than those of the earlier response. If you are faced with religious persecution, says Maimonides, you must leave and settle elsewhere. 'If he is compelled to violate even one precept it is forbidden to stay there. He must leave everything he has and travel day and night until he finds a spot where he can practise his religion.' [2] This is preferable to martyrdom.

Nonetheless, one who chooses to go to their death rather than renounce their faith 'has done what is good and proper' [3] for they have given their life for the sanctity of God. What is unacceptable is to stay and excuse oneself on the grounds that if one sins, one does so only under pressure. To do this is to profane God's name, 'not exactly willingly, but almost so'.

These are Maimonides' conclusions. But surrounding them and constituting the main thrust of his argument is a sustained defence of those who have done precisely what

Maimonides has ruled they should not do. The letter gives Crypto-Jews hope. They have done wrong. But it is a forgivable wrong. They acted under coercion and the fear of death. They remain Jews. The acts they do as Jews still win favour in the eyes of God. Indeed doubly so, for when they fulfil a commandment it cannot be to win favour of the eyes of others. They know that when they act as Jews they risk discovery and death. Their secret adherence has a heroism of its own.

What was wrong in the first Rabbi's ruling was his insistence that a Jew who yields to terror has forsaken their faith and is to be excluded from the community. Maimonides insists that it is not so. 'It is not right to alienate, scorn and hate people who desecrate the Sabbath. It is our duty to befriend them and encourage them to fulfil the commandments.' [4] In a daring stroke of interpretation, he quotes the verse, 'Do not despise a thief if he steals to satisfy his hunger when he is starving.' (Proverbs 6:30) The Crypto-Jews who come to the synagogue are hungry for Jewish prayer. They 'steal' moments of belonging. They should not be despised but welcomed.

This epistle is a masterly example of that most difficult of moral challenges: to combine prescription and compassion. Maimonides leaves us in no doubt as to what he believes Jews should do. But at the same time he is uncompromising in his defence of those who fail to do it. He does not endorse what they have done. But he defends who they are. He asks us to understand their situation. He gives them grounds for self-respect. He holds the doors of the community open.

The argument reaches a climax as Maimonides quotes a remarkable sequence of midrashic passages whose theme is that prophets must not condemn their people, but rather defend them before God. When Moses, charged with leading the people out of Egypt, replied, 'But they will not believe me' (Exodus 4:1) ostensibly he was justified. The subsequent biblical narrative suggests that Moses' doubts were well founded. The Israelites were a difficult people to lead. But the Midrash says that God replied to Moses, 'They are believers and the children of believers, but you [Moses] will ultimately not believe.' (Shabbat 97a)

By Dr. Israel and Rebecca Rivkin (Jerusalem)
in memory of

Rebecca's brother, Rabbi Reuven Bulka, a"h
(Harav Reuven Pinchas ben HaRav Chaim Yaakov)
whose yearzeit was this past Thursday, 17 Tamuz

In memory of Blanche Greenberg, a"h
(21 Tammuz)

In memory of Scott Leitner, a"h

Maimonides cites a series of similar passages and then says: If this is the punishment meted out to the pillars of the universe, the greatest of the prophets, because they briefly criticised the people – even though they were guilty of the sins of which they were accused – can we envisage the punishment awaiting those who criticise the conversos, who under threat of death and without abandoning their faith, confessed to another religion in which they did not believe?

In the course of his analysis, Maimonides turns to the Prophet Elijah and the text that usually forms this week's haftarah. Under the reign of Ahab and Jezebel, Baal worship had become the official cult. God's prophets were being killed. Those who survived were in hiding. Elijah responded by issuing a public challenge at Mount Carmel. Facing four hundred of Baal's representatives, he was determined to settle the question of religious truth once and for all.

He told the assembled people to choose one way or another: for God or for Baal. They must no longer 'halt between two opinions.' Truth was about to be decided by a test. If it lay with Baal, fire would consume the offering prepared by its priests. If it lay with God, fire would descend to Elijah's offering.

Elijah won the confrontation. The people cried out, 'The Lord, He is God.' The priests of Baal were routed. But the story does not end there. Jezebel issues a warrant for his death. Elijah escapes to Mount Horeb. There he receives a strange vision, as seen at the beginning of this week's essay. He is led to understand that God speaks only in the 'still, small voice'.

The episode is enigmatic. It is made all the more so by a strange feature of the text. Immediately before the vision, God asks, 'What are you doing here, Elijah?' and Elijah replies, 'I am moved by zeal for the Lord, the God of Hosts....' (I Kings 19:9-10). Immediately after the vision, God asks the same question, and Elijah gives the same answer (I Kings 19:13-14). The Midrash turns the text into a dialogue:

Elijah: The Israelites have broken God's covenant.

God: Is it then your covenant?

Elijah: They have torn down Your altars.

God: But were they your altars?

Elijah: They have put Your prophets to the sword.

God: But you are alive.

Elijah: I alone am left.

God: Instead of hurling accusations against Israel, should you not have pleaded their cause?[5]

The meaning of the Midrash is clear. The zealot takes the part of God. But God expects His prophets to be defenders, not accusers. The repeated question and answer is now to be understood in its tragic depth. Elijah declares himself to be zealous for God. He is shown that God is not disclosed in dramatic

confrontation: not in the whirlwind or the earthquake or the fire. God now asks him again, 'What are you doing here, Elijah?' Elijah repeats that he is zealous for God. He has not understood that religious leadership calls for another kind of virtue, the way of the still, small voice. God now indicates that someone else must lead. Elijah must hand his mantle on to Elisha.

In turbulent times, there is an almost overwhelming temptation for religious leaders to be confrontational. Not only must truth be proclaimed but falsehood must be denounced. Choices must be set out as stark divisions. Not to condemn is to condone. The Rabbi who condemned the conversos had faith in his heart, logic on his side and Elijah as his precedent.

But the Midrash and Maimonides set before us another model. A prophet hears not one imperative but two: guidance and compassion, a love of truth and an abiding solidarity with those for whom that truth has become eclipsed. To preserve tradition and at the same time defend those others condemn is the difficult, necessary task of religious leadership in an unreligious age.

[1] An English translation and commentary is contained in Abraham S. Halkin, and David Hartman, *Crisis and Leadership: Epistles of Maimonides* (Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society of America, 1985) pp. 15-35.

[2] *Ibid.*, 32.

[3] *Ibid.*, 30.

[4] *Ibid.*, 33.

[5] *Shir ha-Shirim Rabbah* 1:6.

Torah.Org: Rabbi Yissocher Frand

Don't Be Frumer Than the Shulchan Aruch

The pasuk in this week's parsha says, "Harass the Midianites and smite them. For they harassed you..." (Bamidbar 25:17-18). The Ribono shel Olam tells Moshe that he should take revenge from the Midianites for what they did to Klal Yisrael. The Medrash Tanchuma comments on this: "One who rises up to kill you—preemptively kill him. Rav Shimon says, 'How do we know that someone who causes his friend to sin is worse than someone who kills his friend?' It is because when someone kills another person, the victim still has a portion in the World-to-Come. However, when someone causes his friend to be sinful, he causes the friend to lose both this world and the next world.

The Medrash continues: Two nations approached the Jewish nation by sword (attacking us physically, but not spiritually) and two other nations approached them by attempting to entice them to sin (attacking them spiritually). Mitzrayim and Edom attacked us physically, but Amon and Moav attacked us spiritually. By the former nations we are commanded "Do not hate them" (Devorim 23:8). By the third generation following their conversion, we are allowed to intermarry with them (Devorim 23:9). However, concerning those who caused us to

Likutei Divrei Torah

sin, it is written "Neither an Ammonite nor a Moavite shall enter into the Congregation of Hashem, even in the tenth generation they shall not enter into the Congregation of Hashem, forever." (Devorim 23:4)

Amon and Moav are on the "Enemies List" forever, because they did something far worse than trying to kill us physically. They tried to seduce us. They tried to take away our Olam HaBah. Therefore, the Ribono shel Olam rejects them eternally.

The Medrash continues and says that someone who has mercy on an Ammonite will end up suffering. He will come to shame, to wars, and to troubles. If the Torah rejects them and places them "off limits" then we are not allowed to show them kindness or to be nice to them. This is an old principle: Don't be frumer (more religious) than the Torah. The Medrash gives an example of someone who had mercy on an Ammonite and, as a result, suffered terribly: Dovid HaMelech. As it is written: "And Dovid said I will do a kindness with Chonan son of Nachash, as his father did with me..." (Shmuel II 10:2)

Nachash was the King of Amon, and at one point he did a favor to Dovid (Shmuel I Chapter 11). Dovid HaMelech now wanted to repay the favor, so when Nachash died, he sent messengers to be Menachem Avel (extend condolence wishes to the mourner) to this Ammonite. The Medrash relates: "The Holy One Blessed be He said, 'You have transgressed My Word to not inquire about or be concerned about their welfare. And you showed them acts of kindness. 'Don't be overly righteous!' (Koheles 7:16)".

What happened to Dovid as a result of this gesture? We won't go into all the details of a long and complicated story in Tanach, but to make a long story short, when the messengers of Dovid HaMelech arrived at the palace, they were treated brutally, stripped down to the waist, and half their beards were cut off to mock them.

This is the point of the Medrash: A person should only do what the Torah says, and not try to improve on the Torah's morality. If the Torah says about the Ammonites and Moavites "Don't seek their welfare or their benefit," we should follow the Torah and not be more "religious" than the Word of G-d.

The sefer Oztros haTorah brings a fantastic incident: When Rav Moshe Feinstein was a Rav in Luban, Russia, there was a Jew in the city who was a moser. A moser is a person that snitches to the government against Jews. (One has to realize that this incident took place in the 1930s, under the Stalinist Government. The Communists were at their height of power and were terrible to the Jews.) There were unfortunately Jews who were members of the Communist party, and they would snitch on other Jews to get them into trouble with the Soviet authorities.

The Moser died and he left a letter to the Chevra Kadisha (Burial Society) in which he confessed that he had been sinful during his life, and stated that now prior to death he regretted those actions. He bemoaned the fact that he was responsible for having Jews arrested, sent to Siberia, and killed. Out of shame and repentance, he stated that he wished to achieve kappara (atonement) after death for his actions, and hence requested of the Chevra Kadisha that they not give him a proper Jewish burial. He requested that his body be mutilated and abused. "I don't want to have a tahara—just roll me in the gutter as a kappara for what I did in my lifetime."

The Chevra Kadisha came to the Rav of Luban, Rav Moshe Feinstein, and showed him this "Last Will and Testament" of this Moser, and asked for his advice. Rav Moshe paskened that they were not allowed to treat a Jewish body disrespectfully, and that they had to bury him with a tahara and with all the honor and dignity accorded to any Jewish person being buried. He ruled that no person is the master over his own body, and this person had no right to make such a request. "What is going to happen to him after death is between him and the Ribono shel Olam, but we cannot take the law into our own hands and do this to another Jew because it is against the Din (Jewish law)."

The Chevra Kadisha tried to argue with Rav Moshe, repeating what an evil person this fellow was. Rav Moshe persisted: "This is what it says in Shulchan Aruch. You need to follow the Din. Don't be frummer than the Torah."

The Chevra Kaddisah buried the fellow, perhaps not with "full military honors," but with normal Kavod HaMeisim (dignity due to the dead). A few days after the burial, the watchman at the cemetery reported that officers from the Russian Government came and insisted that the body be exhumed. The watchman was not in a position to tell the government officers "Sorry, we don't do that type of thing."

They dug up the grave. They opened the coffin. They looked at the body. They closed the coffin. And they reburied him. Before they left, the watchman asked if they could give him an explanation about what just happened. They told him what happened: Before this Moser died, he sent a second letter. He sent a letter to the government stating that he could demonstrate how much the Jews hate the Communist authorities. "They are not going to give me a proper Jewish funeral because I was a friend of the government."

Lo and behold, when they opened the coffin, they saw that he was buried k'das u'k'din (according to Jewish law) and that the allegation in the letter he sent them was in no way true. The moral of this story is: Keep what is written in Shulchan Aruch. Shulchan Aruch

states what we are supposed to do. We should not try to outsmart the Shulchan Aruch, and we should not try to be frummer than the Shulchan Aruch. "Al te'hee Tzadik Harbeh" — 'Don't be overly righteous!' (Koheles 7:16).

Dvar Torah

Chief Rabbi Ephraim Mirvis

The most important lesson every leader should hear. This is what I believe Moshe taught us just before he passed away. In Parshat Pinchas, Hashem gives Moshe the sad news that he will die before entering into the Holy Land. Immediately Moshe's response was, "Please God appoint my successor in my lifetime."

And what was the reason why this was so important? "Velo tiyeh adat Hashem katzon asher ein lahem roeh." — "In order that the people of the Lord should not be like sheep without a shepherd." (Bamidbar 27:17)

Now, many of our mefarshim want to know why there are so many words. We know of course that the Torah always uses the briefest possible way to present an idea. Surely the Torah here should have said that the nation should not be 'katzon bli roeh' — like sheep without a shepherd? Why is it 'katzon asher ein lahem roeh' — sheep who 'don't have any shepherd for them'? So the Ktav Sofer explains beautifully. He says this is a long-winded approach in order to include the word 'lahem' — for them. What Moshe was saying to Hashem about his successor was that the nation needed to have somebody who was there for them, not someone who's there for the sake of their own ego, power or control. Rather, the mark of a true leader is somebody who is there in the interests of those who they are serving.

Now that's such an important lesson for all of us. We should be parents for the sake of our children, teachers for the sake of those who are in the classroom, heads of communities for the sake of the members of the communities, and of course heads of nations for the sake of the interests of every single citizen.

The all important message conveyed to us by Moshe is: you can only be a good shepherd if you're there for every single member of your flock.

Rabbi Dr. Nachum Amsel **Encyclopedia of Jewish Values***

Rosh Chodesh- New Moon – The Most Misunderstood and Undercelebrated Jewish Holiday

In this week's Torah Portion of Pinchas, the Torah lists the details of all the sacrifices of the Jewish holidays. But it begins the list with Rosh Chodesh (Numbers 28:11-15), the Jewish New Moon, although nothing significant occurred on this day. And yet, earlier in the book (Numbers 10:10), the Torah does indeed call Rosh Chodesh a holiday and it seems to equate it with all other Jewish holidays. Why is this so? What is so special about Rosh

Likutei Divrei Torah

Chodesh? Why should it be celebrated at all, and how should Jews celebrate it today?

Unfortunately, most Jews, even traditional Jews, do not celebrate this holiday properly, or even celebrate it at all. At most, observant Jews are aware that there are additional prayers recited on Rosh Chodesh—the Jewish New Moon, and that is the extent of their cognizance of this special day. Since daily activities and work are permitted (unlike Shabbat or the festivals), almost no Jews celebrate this day at all with special rituals. As we will see through an examination of the sources, this non-celebration is counter to the wishes of the Rabbis. Why is this the reality for almost all Jews? Daily activities are also permitted on Purim and Chanukah holidays and yet, millions of Jews celebrate these holidays each year. What are the underlying ideas of Rosh Chodesh that it should be celebrated? How should this day ideally be celebrated by Jews today and why? And why have Jews "chosen" to ignore this holiday?

Importance of the Day off Rosh Chodesh-The New Month - If a survey were to be taken of Jews to list all the Jewish holidays, nearly all Jews would not even consider Rosh Chodesh a holiday at all. And yet the Torah disagrees. Based on the verse quoted above, the Talmud (Shavuot 10a) reiterates that Rosh Chodesh is a full Jewish holiday. On this Talmudic passage Rabbi Azulai (1724-1806) explains (Ben Yehoyada commentary on Shavuot 10a) that in the future, Rosh Chodesh is destined to become a "full" holiday (equated with Passover and the other Torah holidays), and this holiday was diminished after the sin of the Golden Calf (to be discussed below). Nevertheless, he continues, Jews should treat each first day of the month as a significant holiday even today, because all the other Jewish holidays are/were determined by the ceremony of what occurred on each Rosh Chodesh in Temple times. What ceremony is this Rabbi referring to?

The very first commandment given to the Jewish people as a people, while still in Egypt (Exodus 12:1-2), was to set up a calendar. One Midrash says (Midrash Mechilta, Bo 2) that God showed the people the moon, and told them that from now on, you, the people, would decide the beginning of each new month, as well as all the Jewish holidays. Another Midrash (Midrash, Shemot Rabbah 16:2) explains further and says that until now, this action was in God's purview, but He has now ceded some of His power to the Jewish people to set up the Jewish calendar, leap years, as well as Jewish holidays. How was this accomplished in practice?

During Temple times, the people, through their Rabbis, declared the New Month (Mishna, Rosh Hashana 2:6-7). Before the calendar had to be fixed, due to the destruction of the Temple and lack of a Sanhedrin-High Jewish Court, part of Jewish law dictated that each month, witnesses were required to come to the

Temple and testify that they saw a sliver of the moon, so that the Rabbis publicly declare that this day is the first day of the Jewish month (perhaps if this ceremony still existed today, more Jewish people would celebrate Rosh Chodesh) (Maimonides, Kiddush HaChodesh 2:7-8). But was this ceremony necessary at all? Why couldn't the New Moon simply be celebrated every 30 days, like today's calendars? Astronomically, each lunar month is approximately 29 ½ days (actually 29.531 days). Thus, the moon could sometimes be seen on the 30th day, and sometimes on day 31. Thus, witnesses had to come (or not come) on day 30 and testify to having seen the moon. If they came, then the New Moon is declared, and the previous month is 29 days. If not, then the next day would be Rosh Chodesh (even if witnesses did not come since it has to be so according to the rules of astronomy). Therefore, the concept behind Rosh Chodesh, the very first commandment, is that the Jewish people, and not God, through this ceremony, declare when Rosh Chodesh would take place, and all the Jewish holidays, which occur on a certain day of the Jewish month, are set up by the people, and not God. By God giving this "power" to the people, Jews are reminded each month they, not God, determine their lives and fortune as Jews (in part), unlike Shabbat, which occurs every seventh day, whether the Rabbis declare it or not.

The idea that Rosh Chodesh is a full holiday, equated with other Jewish holidays, is brought down in Jewish law. Just as it is forbidden to recite certain sad prayers over the dead on the day of Shabbat and other holidays, it is also forbidden to do so on Rosh Chodesh (Tur, Yoreh Deah 401). It is also brought down in Jewish law that on every Rosh Hashanah-Jewish New Year, each person is judged by God on how much food and income he or she will have that year. However, the money and food spent for Shabbat and Jewish holidays are not included in that sum. Similarly, rules Tur, the money and food spent on Rosh Chodesh is not included in that yearly sum (Tur, Orach Chaim 419). The mystical idea that Jews receive a "second soul" on Shabbat is well-known. But the Gaon of Vilna adds (Likutei HaGra, chapter 9) that on any day that the Musaf prayer is recited, a Jew similarly receives a "second soul". This would include Rosh Chodesh, equating it with Shabbat and most Jewish holidays.

The Day of Shabbat is Connected and Equated to Rosh Chodesh - In two places in Scripture, Rosh Chodesh is equated to Shabbat, in both holiness and importance. A special gate in the Temple would be opened only on Sabbath and Rosh Chodesh (Ezekiel 46:1). It says (II Kings 4:13) that it is appropriate to visit the prophet on each Shabbat and each Rosh Chodesh. Rabbi Mordechai Yafe (1530-1612) in his book on Jewish law, *Levush*, states that the day of Shabbat and the day of Rosh Chodesh are equated (Levush on Shulchan Aruch, Orach

Chaim 108, s.v. 9). Shelah writes (Shelah, Vayakhel-Pikudei 22) that just as there is no punishment of Gehinom-Hell on Shabbat, there is no such punishment on Rosh Chodesh. Thus, the prayer "*Tzidkatcha Tzedek*," usually recited in the Shabbat afternoon prayer, which refers to punishment, is omitted when Rosh Chodesh falls out on Shabbat.

Shem Mishmuel (1856-1926) forges an even deeper connection between these two Jewish holidays, and they complement each other (Shem MiShmuel on Tazria). He says that Shabbat comes at the end of the cycle of the week, while Rosh Chodesh takes place at the beginning of the lunar month, and before the other Jewish holidays are set. Thus, Rosh Chodesh is a time of new beginnings, while Shabbat is a time of taking stock of the past.

The prophet Isaiah (Isaiah 66:23) equates these two days, by saying that in Messianic times, both Jews and non-Jews will come to the Temple to celebrate Shabbat and also come to celebrate Rosh Chodesh. This not only implies equivalency (in terms of importance), but also that Rosh Chodesh will become a "major holiday" after the arrival of Messiah. On this verse, Rabbi Simeon in the mystical Zohar (Zohar, III:79b) declares that inextricable link between Shabbat and the Jewish New Moon. Both are days when God will symbolically "marry" the Jewish people.

If all this is true, then why is Rosh Chodesh thought of as a "minor" holiday, today, if at all? Why is it not given the sanctity and importance of the Shabbat that it deserves? As we will see below, most learned Jewish men are or should be "embarrassed" by what Rosh Chodesh has become today, as compared to what it should have been. Space does not provide to analyze an alternative answer, based on the Midrash that the moon was commanded by God to diminish itself, or even the specific customs how Rosh Chodesh is observed today. Just as the moon became symbolically "diminished," perhaps Rosh Chodesh itself also became symbolically diminished over time, even though all the books of Halacha-Jewish law demand a more rigorous observance of this day, such as special meals, special clothing, etc.

What Was the Original Idea a Jewish Holiday 12 Times a Year? - While the Jewish holidays stand on their own because God commanded them, the classic commentaries speculated about the origin of all holidays, or their symbolic meanings. Tur writes (Tur, Orach Chaim, 417) that he heard a tradition from his brother that Passover, Shavuot, and Sukkot Festivals were created to symbolize Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. He further reveals that originally, the first day of each month was to be celebrated as a full holiday by all the Jews, that a different tribe would lead this celebration every first of the month, and presumably the rituals would be carried out by the First Born of each tribe. We will never

Likutei Divrei Torah

know how precisely this holiday was going to look like, or the rituals therein, since this holiday never became a reality. The sin of the Golden Calf removed the First Born from special divine responsibilities and changed the nature of what was supposed to be Rosh Chodesh. Rabbi Mordechai Yafe (1530-1612) adds (Levush 417) that this monthly holiday by each tribe was the original intent of the Mitzvah of "The (first of the) month is for you" stated by God when the Jews were still in Egypt. It seems that the men were the instigators of the sin of the Golden Calf. When the man asked the women to donate their jewelry, the Torah says (Exodus 22:2-3) that the men donated their jewelry, implying the women refused to give their jewelry for the sin of the Golden Calf. As a result of this sin, God took away this monthly holiday from all the First Born and from each tribe, which was originally designated for each tribe to lead on each Rosh Chodesh. It was now given to all the women, as a reward for their proper behavior in the face of sin.

Why and How is Rosh Chodesh Today a Special Day for Women ? - The Midrash (Midrash, Pirkei DeRabbi Eliezer 44, 45) tells us that as a result of their non-action in the sin of the Golden Calf, God rewarded all the women both in this world and the Next World. Part of the reward in this world is that the holiday of Rosh Chodesh was given over to women. What does this signify in practice? Rashi, commenting on the page about Rosh Chodesh in the Talmud, states (Megillah 22b with Rashi commentary) that he was told in a tradition from his teacher that "this "Mitzvah was given over more to women, and then Rashi quotes the Midrash cited above. He goes on to say that women "keep" the holiday of Rosh Chodesh more than the men do. Although work is permitted somewhat, like on Chol Hamoed-Intermediate Days of the Jewish holidays of Pesach and Sukkot, women refrain from work much more than men do, and they only work if it is something whereby money will be lost if they do not perform the task (similar to laws of Chol Hamoed). In the World to Come, women will be much more prominent and rewarded in greater fashion for this action by the Golden Calf. Rashi's grandsons and great-grandsons, Tosafot, echo the same idea (Tosafot on Rosh Hashana 23b, "*Mishum*"). The Jerusalem Talmud simply states (Jerusalem Talmud, Taanit 6b) that on Rosh Chodesh it was the custom of Jewish women not to work.

Levush reiterated the Midrash and explains that the monthly celebration of Rosh Chodesh by each tribe was the original, first commandment given to the Jewish people in Egypt. Now, the women have "inherited" this commandment as a result of their behavior. Then he writes that as a matter of Jewish law, neither men nor women should do "heavy" work on Rosh Chodesh, like plowing and planting. But women should abstain from housework as well, as long as their husbands do not object. But if they need income, such as

through sewing or fixing broken objects, then they are permitted to do this work. Why was sewing chosen to refrain from? In the construction of the Tabernacle, it was necessary to connect the different colored cloths to be sewn together. The Torah (Exodus 35:25 with Rashi commentary) says that the women who had a skill for this action performed this task, and Rashi comments that it required a particularly high level of skill. Thus, when selecting how the women would uniquely celebrate Rosh Chodesh, this particular task was chosen. Tur similarly recounts the other sources and then rules that this holiday of Rosh Chodesh was given over primarily to the women (Tur, Orach Chaim 417). The Code of Jewish Law rules (Shulchan Aruch, Orach Chaim) that women should not do any household work on Rosh Chodesh unless the common custom is to do some work. Kitzur Shulchan Aruch (1804-1886) writes (Kitzur Shulchan Aruch 97:3) that women should be very careful to keep these customs on each Rosh Chodesh. Rabbi Kagan, who lived until 1933, says (Mishna Berurah, Shulchan Aruch, Orach Chaim 417, numbers 2, 3, 4) that men never had the custom to refrain from work on Rosh Chodesh like the women. Where this custom exists, women should be very careful to observe it and not neglect it.

Over the years, many observant households were rather negligent in this custom or did not have the tradition of women not sewing on Rosh Chodesh. However, as of late, many observant women saw this day as an opportunity to uniquely celebrate their Jewish womanhood and have adopted this custom and added other customs as well, such as women studying Torah together on Rosh Chodesh. Rabbi Horowitz (1555-1630) comments (Shelah, Parshat Bo) that the mystical connection between women to this particular day of Rosh Chodesh is related to their menstrual cycles, which, like Rosh Chodesh, reoccur approximately every thirty days.

Although Jewish law requires Jews to celebrate Rosh Chodesh with an extra meal, wearing "Yom Tov" clothing and other customs, few Jews do so, although these customs are brought by every mainstream Jewish decisor. Why not? One may say that, like some other Halachot-Jewish laws, these customs fell into disuse, even though they are "on the books" Or, perhaps, the men who recalled Rosh Chodesh in each generation, were cognizant that each month this holiday was diminished, that should have been a "Shabbat" every month, and its reason. They remember the sin of the Golden Calf (which is felt and present in every generation [Jerusalem Talmud, Taanit 22b]), that they were significant a part of, and, perhaps, they are loath to fully celebrate this day that deserves a greater recognition and celebration.

*** This column has been adapted from a series of volumes written by Rabbi Dr. Nachum Amsel "The Encyclopedia of Jewish Values" available from Urim and**

Amazon. For the full article or to review all the footnotes in the original, contact the author at nachum@jewishdestiny.com

Ohr Torah Stone Dvar Torah

Miriam as an Example of a Successful Educator - Zion Rosner

The summer vacation is finally upon us, during which time most schoolchildren are not in any formal educational setting; however, they do make up their own daily schedule, which is largely characterized by the habits they have acquired during the course of the year. Naturally, they have to face numerous dilemmas, for example, when and if to get up to daven (pray); whether to incorporate volunteering activities into their day; to what extent they should invest in other people, and how often they should be setting aside time for the study of Torah.

The school vacation comes after a long period of routine study, during which the students were used to having a clear schedule in a fixed learning setting, where everything was pre-planned for them. The vacation, on the other hand, allows us a peek into whether the educational and learning process in which teachers and students were engaged throughout the year has actually proven to be successful.

In this week's portion we learn just how important education is.

In the portion of Pinchas we are exposed to an exceptional request – one which exemplifies a yearning, and expresses the connection with God and the love for Him. In fact, what we read about is not only extraordinary, but illustrates the exact opposite of what we read of the Israelites in the previous portion: complaints, objections and the sinful event with which the portion ends.

In this week's portion we hear of the daughters of Tzelophehad, who approach Moshe with a surprising request: they want to receive their own portion in the Land.

"Then drew near the daughters of Tzelophehad, the son of Hepher, the son of Gilad, the son of Machir, the son of Menashe, of the families of Menashe the son of Yosef; and these are the names of his daughters: Machlah, Noah, and Choglah, and Milcah, and Tirzah. And they stood before Moshe, and before Ele'azar the kohen, and before the princes and all the congregation, at the door of the tent of meeting, saying: Our father died in the wilderness, and he was not among the company of them that gathered themselves together against the Lord in the company of Korach, but he died in his own sin; and he had no sons. Why should the name of our father be done away from among his family, because he had no son? Give unto us an inheritance among the brethren of our father."

Their father had died leaving five daughters and no sons. They also state that their father

Likutei Divrei Torah

died because of a sin he had committed, and our Sages tell us that he was the man who had gathered wood on the Sabbath and did so out of love for God and a desire to strengthen the People of Israel. The Tosefot says as follows:

"It is written in the Midrash that his intent was to glorify God's name. The People of Israel said in their hearts – 'Since it has been decreed that we will not enter the Land because of the Sin of the Spies, we are no longer obligated to fulfill the mitzvot'. What did he do? He stood up and desecrated the Shabbat so that he would be put to death and all would see. And his daughters did not marry until the fortieth year as can be proven from the verses" (Baba Batra 119:2, on the words *afilu ketana*).

This explanation clarifies why they chose to point out the fact that their father had sinned, but was not part of Korach's congregation, whose aim was to create divisions; rather, his sin was committed to reconnect the People of Israel to God. The daughters of Tzelophehad, it appears, are a 'second generation of people who love God and love the People'. This particular episode expresses yet another love: their love for the Land. And love for the Land also embodies faith in God.

The daughters of Tzelophehad come forward and demand to get an inheritance in the land. This comes at a time when the Israelites are drawing closer to the Land of Israel and the issue of inheritance and land plots becomes very relevant. The five daughters are suddenly concerned that their father will have no continuity, no plot of land belonging to his lineage in the Land of Israel.

Their request does not only stem from a concern that they will have no place of their own in the Land, but from an unequivocal love for the Land of Israel and a strong desire to preserve their family's inheritance which belongs to them by right. They are entitled to land of their own, because had their father been among the living – he would have received an inheritance. They want to ensure this inheritance does not dissipate, so that they have a piece of land to which they will be connected and, in turn, feel connected to the People of Israel and to God Himself. By right, and not out of pity for them. Interestingly, their request expresses the complete opposite of what the spies conveyed in their words – which was a loathing of the land.

The daughters of Tzelophehad embody a significant theme, expounded upon more than once by the exegetes: how the women of the desert compare with the men of that same generation.

On three different occasions at least, when the Israelite males engaged in sin, the fact that the women did not sin is highlighted: in the Sin of the Calf; the Sin of the Spies and the Sin of Korach and his congregations. Bamidbar Rabbah (21) says as follows:

"In that generation, the women would restore that which the men had broken. For example, when Aharon tells the people 'Break off the golden rings, which are in the ears of your wives' – the women refused and protested against their husbands. As is written: 'And all the people broke off their golden rings' – but the women did not take part in the making of the calf. Similarly, the spies spoke evil of the land saying 'we are not able to go up', and were therefore punished. But the women were not of like mind, and did not accept their words...". The midrash ends off by saying "... for this reason this portion comes in close proximity to the deaths of the generation of the desert – while the men of this generation broke down fences, the women were engaged in mending the fences."

And Rashi adds (Bamidbar 26, 64): "However, the decree of the spies did not apply to the women because the latter loved the Land. The men said: 'Let us appoint a leader and return to Egypt', while the women said: 'Give us an inheritance'. This is why the portion of the daughters of Tzelophehad is mentioned here." It follows then, that had women been sent out to spy the land, the Sin of the Spies would never have transpired!

From Rashi's words one can understand that the generation of the desert did indeed die out over forty years of wanderings, but, in actual fact, only the men died. The women, even those who took part in the Exodus from Egypt and saw the Ten Plagues and the splitting of the sea with their own eyes and stood at Mt. Sinai – entered the Land!

If so, the real question is – why is there such a discrepancy between the genders? How could it be that the men and the women of one and the same nation are so different, so much so that the male population of this specific generation is wiped out entirely, while the women population remains alive? It seems that the daughters of Tzelophehad did not only exemplify an individual story; rather, they represented all the women of their times.

Sivan Rahav Meir mentions the words of HaRav Neria Z"l, which illuminate this matter beautifully. HaRav Neria, an illustrious educator, looked at our portion and thought, there is more to this story than meets the eye. True enough, the daughters of Tzelophehad probably learned the value of love for the Land and for God at home. However, as previously mentioned, they were not the only ones. In fact, as individuals they actually reflect on the whole. They represent the women of their times. If so, what caused the women to develop such a yearning for the Land, while the men of the same generation display such a fear of entering it? The answer in a nutshell: it all boils down to education! The women probably had a teacher who managed to ingrain in them a passionate love for the Land of Israel. How did the teacher achieve this?

"Miriam was more successful an educator than both her brothers, Moshe 'ish Ha'Elohim', 'the man of God' and Aharon 'kedosh Hashem', who was sanctified unto the Lord. These two lofty brothers were unable to elevate the masses to the desired spiritual level, while their sister, Miriam, was able to achieve this. How did this happen? The secret to successful education lies in the interpersonal relationship between teacher and students. We are witness to Miriam's hands-on relationship with the other women when she joins them in song and in dance. It was probably not the only time either, and happened at every festive tribal or family event. The Torah doesn't divulge details regarding everyday routine in the desert, but the example of Miriam most probably attests to the general state of affairs: Miriam forged close ties with the women she taught and led, and this relationship had a lasting effect. That which Moshe and Aharon did not merit, Miriam did!"

HaRav Neria says that true impact is achieved through education. A close interpersonal relationship between teacher and student is essential. It does not suffice to talk from a distance, even if the words are important and truthful. HaRav Neria draws our attention to the fact that the daughters of Tzelophehad, who represent the entire generation of women, are also the disciples of Miriam and as such, translated into action all they had learned from her. When it comes to education, the true wisdom is how to turn the learning experience into something that is done together out of love. If the teacher shows s/he loves learning, the students will learn to love it as well.

In light of the above, when the summer break begins, leaving us in a state of high anxiety for our students and the void they are sure to experience for lack of routine, we must remember the following: the more we work throughout the year on instilling good values in our students, and constantly expressing our love for them and for what we teach them, and letting them feel we are connected – the greater are the chances that we will see the fruits of our labor during the school break, and throughout the students' lives, for that matter.

We must remember that real education bears fruit; real educators leave an impact also after the school year ends. This is our aspiration. This is what we work for all year long. The more we invest during the year, the clearer will be the reflection of this work during the vacation, and mirror the road we have paved so painstakingly and with so much patience during the course of the year.

Dvar Torah: TorahWeb.Org

Rabbi Yakov Haber: The Secret of Bread

The term "lechem" (bread or food[1]) or "lachmi" (My bread or food - referring to Hashem's bread) is frequently used with respect to korbanos, animal offerings in the mishkan. This anthropomorphic phrase, seemingly attributing a need for nutrition to

Likutei Divrei Torah

the Divine Being, certainly requires explanation. Furthermore, a careful examination of the mentioning of lechem regarding the sacrifices reveals that it is not stated as frequently as would be expected. In this week's parsha, for example, "lachmi" appears in connection to the korban tamid, the twice daily offering (28:2), and "lechem" appears regarding the korbanos musafin of Pesach (28:24)[2] but not with respect to any of the other korbanos of the other festivals listed. Why is this term so irregularly mentioned?

Meshech Chachma by Rav Meir Simcha of Dvinsk (on 28:2) provides a brief answer to these questions touching upon a central component of the meaning of korbanos, a topic that in the contemporary era has often baffled thinking people. In his words, "Bread satisfies the heart of man and connects the soul with the body. So too the korbanos bind the dwelling (mishkan) of the Glory of Hashem with His nation, Israel. Therefore, they are called 'bread.'" I would like to expand on this answer with some additional themes many of which are discussed elsewhere by Meshech Chachma himself and other Torah scholars. Bread, or more generally food, keeps a person alive, the lack of any nutrition inevitably leading to loss of life. More fundamentally, on a theological plane, it is physical food that keeps the soul, the life force of the person, inside the body allowing it to continue to imbue vitality to what otherwise would be a non-functioning conglomeration of organic material. When the Torah refers to korbanos as lachmi, "My bread" or "Divine bread", it is labeling sacrifices as an example of activities man performs which brings the Divine Presence into the world. Hashem's Presence is the "soul" of the physical world granting it existence just as the soul in the body keeps it functioning. The Gemara (Berachos 10a) lists many parallels between the soul-body relationship and the G-d-world relationship. Hashem is referred to as "chai ha'olamim", the life of the worlds. Now, Hashem's will to perpetuate the physical world is an absolutely necessary requirement for all of existence to continue. (See Rambam, beginning of Hilchos Yesodei Hatorah). The very name of G-d, Y-K-V-K, means Existence, as well as One who constantly causes existence. But that is not all the Creator wanted for the world - for it to exist; He desired - for reasons unfathomable to man (see Tehillim 8:5-7) - to develop a relationship with mankind. Hashem wished not only to be a Borei (Creator) but also a Mashgiach (Providential Overseer) and even a Dod (beloved in the language of Shir Hashirim). This second aspect of the Divine plan and its degree of implementation depends on human action. When people elevate themselves by serving their Creator and actualizing the Divine image implanted within them, they "bring down" Hashem's Presence enabling a more intense relationship. Malbim explains that this is what is meant by the cryptic statement of our Sages, "האבות הן הן המרכבה" (see Rashi to Bereishis 17:22 from

Bereishis Rabba) - "our forefathers are the essence of the Divine chariot." Just as a chariot is the vehicle of transport of people from place to place, so too the righteous actions of our illustrious forebearers "cause" the Divine presence to more intensely reside in and move the world to its ultimate destiny. Korbanos, as examples of Divine service in general - elevating the entire physical world[3] - as well as with their precise, Divinely-endowed calibration and parallelism to the upper worlds (see Nefesh Hachaim, Sh'ar 2), "bring down" Hashem's Presence endowing the physical world more intensely with its "neshama", Hashem's Shechina. Therefore, korbanos are called "lachmi" not in the sense of their giving existence to Hashem chas v'shalom but in their being the substance that maintains the vitality of the world; just as food keeps the soul of the human inside his physical body - its existence not dependent on the body, so too korbanos keeps the Divine presence intensely in the world with all of its ramifications for intense Divine Providence and relationship with mankind, Hashem's existence also not in any way dependent on the korbanos. Since the general world rejected this great mission and relationship by refusing the message of Sinai, the Jewish people were tapped to primarily fulfill this great undertaking as the kohanim of the world.

Food is a daily requirement - even if not eating for one day will not cause cessation of life - and not eating for seven days leads to death as manifested by the halacha that someone who swears he will not eat for seven days is considered as having taken a meaningless oath in vain (shevuas shav). Therefore, explains Meshech Chachma, the Torah uses the lechem term specifically with respect to the daily offering, the tamid and the korbanos of Pesach, a seven day holiday. Even though the concept of korbanos as lechem would apply to all of the korbanos, the Torah chose certain ones to highlight the bread parallel.

The period of the Three Weeks and the Nine Days focus on the longing for Mikdash. In many people's minds, and understandably so, Mikdash is inexorably linked to animal sacrifices, a concept many in the modern world find foreign to their way of thinking. This in turn can impact the ability to relate meaningfully to the avoda of this time period specifically and longing for the Mikdash in general. Understanding the meaning of korbanos as "lachmi" and appreciating what they represent - bringing G-d intensely into our lives hopefully will help increase longing for Mikdash, which in turn Chazal tell us helps bring its rebuilding one step closer. May we merit constant G-d awareness in our lives and merit the greatest manifestation of our relationship with Him - all of Klal Yisrael in Eretz Yisrael with the Mikdash at its center speedily in our days!

[1] See Ibn Ezra on Shemos (16:4).

[2] In parshas Vayikra, the term is only mentioned in conjunction with the korban shelamim, not with respect to other korbanos. (See Meshech Chachma

for an explanation.) The phrase is also mentioned in parshas Emor regarding the kohanim eating korbanos.

[3] See also Korbanot - Elevating the Physical World.

Torah.Org Dvar Torah by Rabbi Label Lam

How Was Your Day in School?

HASHEM said to Moshe, "Go up to this mountain and see the Land that I have given to the Children of Israel, you shall see it and you shall be gathered unto your people, you too, as your brother Aaron was gathered in..." (Bamidbar 27:12-13)

Essentially Moshe is being told that he will die as his brother Aaron had just died and it is time to prepare a replacement. What we call death is described as being "gathered unto your people" or "gathered in". This is not the first time we have such a description of what dying is.

It sounds like there is some kind of family reunion that awaits Moshe. It's fascinating. We are left curious wondering why is there not more mentioned about the "next world"?! It seems death as described here is only a departure from this realm. In that case there really is no such thing as death, or is there? Why is there such a premium in Torah law and life on creating and affirming and saving life in this world? What makes the loss of life so tragic? What makes the living of life so precious?

There are a number of important approaches to explain why the Torah does not speak in detail about the next world. The Rambam explains that it is a spiritual realm that we have no vocabulary or frame of reference to comprehend what it really is because we are creatures of a physical world. It would be like trying to discuss colors with a blind person who has never seen the light of day. I heard it explained once that it is like trying to explain fire to a fish. Surely, a fish can see some light filtering through the water as he approaches the surface and he can feel some warmth as well but he cannot know the true magnitude of the sun's light or fire's heat. His natural environment, water precludes the possibility of him understanding what fire is really all about. The only time he will be able to grasp it is when it's too late, when he is caught, filleted, and on the grill, and so the verse says, "no man will see Me and live..." (Shemos 33:20)

One approach of the Chovos HaLevavos is that the reward of Olam Haba is not a quid pro quo. It's not a business deal. It's a relationship with HASHEM.

He explains, the Next World is dependent upon the extent to which one activated his "Duties of the Heart". Imagine a husband coming home with a beautifully wrapped diamond ring on his wife's birthday. The ring is worth many thousands of dollars. Instead of humbly presenting the gift with a thoughtful note or an

Likutei Divrei Torah

endearing, sincere declaration, he slams the gift angrily on the table and shouts in a brutish tone, "You like diamonds? Here a diamond! See if this makes you happy." No doubt his wife will go running into the bedroom and blockade the door for safety. Why!? He gave such a big diamond!? It was expensive and it was wrapped perfectly!? We know the answer. The attitude was sour. The personal part of the presentation was heartless. The Talmud tells us, "HASHEM wants the heart!"

The name for the Next World tells the whole story, "Olam Haba". It is "the world that comes", literally. It is not another world in another place. It is a realm that reveals, expands upon, and explains what we did in the hidden world in which we live.

The death that Moshe would merit like his brother Aaron (and Miriam too) is called the Misa she Neshika - "the kiss of death". This is not the mafia's version of the kiss of death. Tractate Brochos tells us that there are 903 types of death based on the Possuk in Tehillim, "L'Maves Totzaot" - "To death there are goings out". The numerical value of Totzaot is 903. The harshest one is called Askara. It is like extracting thorns from wool. The body and soul are so enmeshed that as Neil Sedaka sang, "breaking up is hard to do." The lightest form of death is "al pi HASHEM" by the mouth of HASHEM, the kiss of death. It is like pulling a hair out of milk. One of my Rebbeim asked, "Since when is the body compared to milk and the soul to a hair? It should be the other way around." He explained that that is exactly the explanation. The soul is milk and the body is a hair. To the person who lived as a soul with a body in this world, death is like when the bus door opens up and a child sees his adoring father standing there waiting for him. He goes running off with excitement into the loving embrace and the kiss of his father. "My son how was your day in school?"

**To sponsor an issue of Likutei Divrei Torah:
Call Saadia Greenberg 301-649-7350
or email: sgreenberg@jhu.edu
<http://torah.saadia.info>**

Home Weekly Parsha PINCHAS

Rabbi Wein's Weekly Blog

The Torah records for us the genealogy of Pinchas, the true and justified zealot of Jewish history. There are many reasons advanced as to why the Torah felt impelled to tell us of the names of his father and grandfather. Many commentators saw in this an explanation to justify Pinchas' behavior, while others emphasized that it was an explanation for Pinchas' reward and of God granting him the blessing of peace.

But aside from these insights there is another more general message that the Torah is recording for us. And that is that a person's behavior affects all of one's family members, even those of previous generations who may no longer be currently numbered among the living.

A great act of sanctification of God's name such as the one performed by Pinchas enhances the reputations and stature of previous generations as well. My Rebbe in the yeshiva summed this lesson up in his usual concise and pithy manner: "If both your grandparents and your grandchildren are proud of you and your achievements then you are probably alright in Heaven's judgment as well."

Our idea of immortality is based upon generations of our families, both previous generations and later ones. We find vindication of our lives and efforts in the accomplishments of those that come after us and continue our values and faith. We cannot control what children and grandchildren will do, whom they will marry and what type of life they will lead. But innately, we feel that we have a connection to the development of their lives and the actions that they will take.

The Torah emphasizes for us that Pinchas' zealotry did not come to him in a vacuum. The Torah allows everyone freedom of will and behavior. Neither good behavior nor evil behavior is ever predestined. Yet as medicine has shown us, in the physical world there is an element of physical predestination in our DNA. And this DNA affects our moral behavior as well.

Judaism always envisioned itself not only as a universal faith but as a particular family as well. In our daily prayer service we constantly recall who our founding ancestors were. We name our children in memory of those who have preceded us. We extol a sense of family and a loyalty to the values that our families represent.

One of the most destructive trends in modern society has been the erosion of the sense of family in the world and amongst Jews particularly. Assimilation means abandoning family and abandoning family certainly contributes to intensified assimilation and loss of Jewish feelings and identity. It is ironic that in a time such as now when most children can be privileged to know grandparents and even great grandparents the relationship between generations in many Jewish families is frayed and weak.

Pinchas comes to reinforce this concept of tying generations – past, present and future – together. It is imperative for us to know Pinchas' genealogy for otherwise we have no clue as to who Pinchas was and why he behaved as he did in those given circumstances.

Shabat shalom.

Rabbi Berel Wein

Moshe's Disappointment

PINCHAS

Rabbi Jonathan Sacks

Hidden beneath the surface of parshat Pinchas, the Sages uncovered a story of great poignancy. Moses, having seen his sister and brother die, knew that his own time on earth was coming to a close. He prayed to God to appoint a successor:

Let the Lord, God of the spirits of all flesh, appoint a man over this community who will go out before them and come in before them, who will lead them out and bring them home. Let not the Lord's community be like sheep without a shepherd.

Numbers 27:16-17

There is, though, an obvious question. Why does this episode appear here? It should surely have been positioned seven chapters earlier, either at the point at which God told Moses and Aaron that they would die without entering the land, or shortly thereafter when we read of the death of Aaron.

The Sages sensed two clues to the story beneath the story. The first is that it appears immediately after the episode in which the daughters of Tzelophehad sought and were granted their father's share in the land. It was this that triggered Moses' request. A Midrash explains:

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.

Numbers Rabbah 21:14

The second clue lies in God's words to Moses immediately before he made his request for the appointment of a successor:

The Lord said to Moses, "Ascend this mountain of Abarim and gaze upon the land that I have given to the Israelites. After you have seen it, you too will be gathered to your people, like Aaron your brother..."

Num. 27:12-13

The italicised words are seemingly redundant. God was telling Moses he would soon die. Why did He need to add, "like Aaron your brother"? On this the Midrash says: This teaches us that Moses wanted to die the way Aaron did. The Ktav Sofer explains: Aaron had the privilege of knowing that his children would follow in his footsteps. Elazar, his son, was appointed as High Priest in his lifetime. To this day kohanim are direct descendants of Aaron. Moses likewise longed to see one of his sons, Gershom or Eliezer, take his place as leader of the people. It was not to be. That is the story beneath the story.

It had an aftermath. In the book of Judges we read of a man named Micah who established an idolatrous cult in the territory of Ephraim and hired a Levite to officiate in the shrine. Some men from the tribe of Dan, moving north to find more suitable land for themselves, came upon Micah's house and seized both the idolatrous artefacts and the Levite, whom they persuaded to become their priest, saying, "Come with us, and be our father and priest. Isn't it better that you serve a tribe and clan in Israel as priest rather than just one man's household?" (Judges 18:19). Only at the end of the story (v. 30) are we told the name of the idolatrous priest: Jonathan son of Gershom son of Moses. In our texts the letter nun has been inserted into the last of these names, so that it can be read as Menasheh rather than Moses. However, the letter, unusually, is written above the line, as a superscription. The Talmud says that the nun was added to avoid besmirching the name of Moses himself, by disclosing that his grandson had become an idolatrous priest.

How are we to explain Moses' apparent failure with his own children and grandchildren? One suggestion made by the Sages was that it had to do with the fact that for years he lived in Midian with his father-in-law Jethro, who was at the time an idolatrous priest. Something of the Midianite influence re-appeared in Jonathan three generations later.

Alternatively there are hints here and there that Moses himself was so preoccupied with leading the people that he simply did not have time to attend to the spiritual needs of his children. For instance, when Jethro came to visit his son-in-law after the division of the Red Sea, he brought with him Moses' wife Tziporah and their two sons. They had not been with him until then.

The rabbis went further in speculating about the reason that Moses' own sister and brother Aaron and Miriam spoke negatively about him. What they were referring to, said the Sages, is the fact that Moses had physically separated from his wife. He had done so because the nature of his role was such that he had to be in a state of purity the whole time because at any moment he might have to speak – or be spoken to – by God. They were, in short, complaining that he was neglecting his own family.

A third explanation has to do with the nature of leadership itself. Bureaucratic authority – authority in virtue of office – can be passed down from parent to child. Monarchy is like that. So is aristocracy. So are some forms of religious leadership, like the priesthood. But charismatic authority – in virtue of personal qualities – is never automatically handed on across the generations. Moses was a prophet, and prophecy depends almost entirely on personal qualities. That, incidentally, is why, though kingship and priesthood in Judaism were male prerogatives, prophecy was not. There were prophetesses as well as prophets. In this respect Moses was not unusual. Few charismatic leaders have children who are also charismatic leaders.

A fourth explanation offered by the Sages was quite different. On principle, God did not want the crown of Torah to pass from parent to child in dynastic succession. Kingship and priesthood did. But the crown of Torah, they said, belongs to anyone who chooses to take hold of it and bear its responsibilities. “Moses commanded us the Torah as an inheritance of the congregation of Jacob,” meaning that it belongs to all of us, not just an elite. The Talmud elaborates:

Be careful [not to neglect] the children of the poor, because from them Torah goes forth... Why is it not usual for scholars to give birth to sons who are scholars?

R. Joseph said: so that it should not be said that the Torah is their inheritance.

R. Shisha, son of R. Idi said: so that they should not be arrogant towards the community.

Mar Zutra said: because they act highhandedly against the community.

R. Ashi said: because they call people asses.

Rabina said: because they do not first utter a blessing over the Torah. Nedarim 81a

In other words, the “crown of Torah” was deliberately not hereditary because it might become the prerogative of the rich. Or because children of great scholars might take their inheritance for granted. Or because it could lead to arrogance and contempt for others. Or because learning itself might become a mere intellectual pursuit rather than a spiritual exercise (“they do not first utter a blessing over the Torah”).

However, there is a fifth factor worthy of consideration. Some of the greatest figures in Jewish history did not succeed with all their children. Abraham fathered Ishmael. Isaac and Rebecca gave birth to Esau. All twelve of Jacob’s children stayed within the fold, but three of them – Reuben, Shimon and Levi – disappointed their father. Of Shimon and Levi he said, “Let my soul not enter their plot; let my spirit not unite with their meeting” (Gen. 49:6). On the face of it, he was dissociating himself from them.[1] Nonetheless, the three great leaders of the Israelites throughout the exodus – Moses, Aaron and Miriam – were all children of Levi.

Solomon gave birth to Rehoboam, whose disastrous leadership divided the kingdom. Hezekiah, one of Judah’s greatest kings, was the father of Menasseh, one of the worst. Not all parents succeed with all their children all the time. How could it be otherwise? We each possess freedom. We are each, to some extent, who we chose to become. Neither genes nor upbringing can guarantee that we become the person our parents want us to be. Nor is it right that parents should over-impose their will on children who have reached the age of maturity.

Often this is for the best. Abraham did not become an idolater like his father Terach. Menasseh, the archetypal evil king, was grandfather to Josiah, one of the best. These are important facts. Judaism places parenthood, education and the home at the heart of its values. One of our first duties is to ensure that our children know about and come to love our religious heritage. But sometimes we fail. Children may go their own way, which is not ours. If this happens to us we should not be paralysed with guilt. Not everyone succeeded with all their children, not even Abraham or Moses or David or Solomon. Not even God himself. “I have raised children and brought them up but they have rebelled against Me” (Is. 1:2).

Two things rescued the story of Moses and his children from tragedy. The book of Chronicles (1 Chron. 23:16, 24:20) refers to Gershom’s son

not as Jonathan but as Shevual or Shuvael, which the rabbis translated as “return to God”. In other words, Jonathan eventually repented of his idolatry and became again a faithful Jew. However far a child has drifted, he or she may in the course of time come back.

The other is hinted at in the genealogy in Numbers 3. It begins with the words, “These are the children of Aaron and Moses,” but goes on to list only Aaron’s children. On this the rabbis say that because Moses taught Aaron’s children they were regarded as his own. In general, “disciples” are called “children”.[2]

We may not all have children. Even if we do, we may, despite our best endeavours, find them at least temporarily following a different path. But we can all leave something behind us that will live on. Some do so by following Moses’ example: teaching, facilitating, or encouraging the next generation. Some do so in line with the rabbinic statement that “the real offspring of the righteous are good deeds.”[3]

When our children follow our path we should be grateful. When they go beyond us, we should give special thanks to God. And when they choose another way, we must be patient, knowing that the greatest Jew of all time had the same experience with one of his grandchildren. And we must never give up hope. Moses’ grandson returned. In almost the last words of the last of the prophets, Malachi foresaw a time when God “will turn the hearts of the fathers to their children, and the hearts of the children to their fathers” (Mal. 3:24). The estranged will be reunited in faith and love.

[1] Note however that Rashi interprets the curse as limited specifically to Zimri descendant of Shimon, and Korach, descendant of Levi.

[2] See Rashi on Numbers 3:1.

[3] Rashi on Gen. 6:9.

Acts of Kindness, And Revealing the Divine Presence

Revivim

Rabbi Eliezer Melamed

In acts of kindness to others there is an aspect of revelation of the Shekinah (Divine Presence), sometimes even more than the spiritual achievements people long for * The great affection the Lubavitcher Rebbe had for Rabbi Aryeh Levin, and for the stories of his acts of kindness * Even people who travel for a long period of time on the roads of our country, should not recite the blessing of Birkat Hagomel * Testimonies received indicate that Rabbi Neuwirth was forced to change his rulings in “Shemirat Shabbat Ke’Hilchata” due to the controversy, but in principle, did not retract from the halachic rulings

A story is told of a Chassid who gained wealth and honor, married-off all his children, but nevertheless, was missing one thing – he longed for giluyee Eliyahu ha’Navi – revelation of the prophet Eliyahu. He went to his Rebbe and asked for his assistance in the matter, and even said he would donate a large sum of money for that purpose. The Rebbe replied: “No problem, at the outskirts of the poor neighborhood, lives a widow with four orphaned children – they have no money to buy the necessities of the Passover holiday. Buy them all the necessities of the holiday, and celebrate the Seder night with them, and you will merit the revelation of Eliyahu ha’Navi.”

The wealthy man bought all the needs of the holiday for seven days, and a few hours before the Seder night, knocked on the door of the widow’s house, and asked to join her for the Seder. The widow replied: “My house is completely empty. We have nothing to eat, how can I host you?” The wealthy man replied: ‘I brought with me all the needs of the holiday’, and began to remove food from the cart for the entire holiday, and even fine dishes. And thus, he celebrated the Seder night with them. The widow and her four children were exceedingly happy, and they even had food left over, after Passover.

There was only one problem. The rich man did not merit receiving the revelation of Eliyahu. He returned to his Rebbe, and complained about it. The Rebbe replied: “Do it again next year, and with God’s help, you will merit the revelation of Eliyahu.”

The following year he returned, and arrived at the widow’s house about two hours before Seder night. While standing at the door, from inside

the house he heard the children crying about their poverty, that they did not have the needs of the holiday, and did not even have matzah or wine. Their mother comforted them, and said: "Let's be strong in our faith – maybe like last year, when God sent us Eliyahu ha'Navi who brought us all the needs of the holiday, perhaps this year He will send him once again."

The wealthy man knocked on the door, and entered with all the needs of the holiday. The widow and her children were extremely happy, and the rich man was even happier, having realized that Eliyahu ha'Navi had appeared through him.

This is where the story ends, but apparently, after the rich man received the revelation of Eliyahu – understanding everything he needed to understand – he continued to care for the widow, and helped educate and marry-off the orphans, until they were able to stand on their own two feet.

Hospitality toward Guests is Greater than Receiving the Divine Presence Our Sages said: "Hospitality toward guests is greater than receiving the Shekinah (Divine Presence)" (Shabbat 126b), for we find that God revealed himself to Avraham Avinu in Elon Moreh, but when Avraham saw three people walking towards him in the heat of the day, he asked God, blessed be He, to wait until he received the guests into his tent, and only afterwards, for God to continue to reveal Himself to him. This is because in revelation of the Shekinah, God is above, and man is below. In such a situation, man merits receiving inspiration from God to a certain extent. However, when a person welcomes guests, he himself reveals the word of God in the world, and the Shekinah is revealed through him (see Maharal, Netiv Gemilut Chassidim, 4).

Rabbi Aryeh Levin and the Revelation of Eliyahu

Reb Simcha Raz related the following story: "It once happened that Shai Agnon, the famous author, was walking on a street in Jerusalem and met the writer and linguist Yaakov David Abramsky (son of the gaon, Rabbi Yehezkel Abramsky). Agnon said to him: 'I just came from the house of Rabbi Avraham Yitzchak HaKohen Kook, who told me he is certain that Rabbi Aryeh Levin merits having the revelation of Eliyahu. I asked him: Why does Eliyahu ha'Navi need to appear to Rabbi Aryeh, specifically? Rabbi Kook replied: "Eliyahu ha'Navi most definitely needs Rabbi Aryeh... there are times when, from Heaven, a person in need requires assistance, and his salvation comes through Eliyahu ha'Navi, may his memory be for a blessing. However, in order for the salvation to appear natural, and not miraculous – it is presented to him by Rabbi Aryeh"' (Tzaddik Yesod Olam, p. 323)...

Rabbi Eliezer Melamed

[CS – I added this which came through after Efraim sent his collection TorahWeb.org

Rabbi Hershel Schachter

Inheritance and Dina De'malchusa

About forty years ago, a prominent chassidishe rebbe passed away in America. Years earlier he had purchased three cemetery plots on Har Hamenuchos - one for himself, one for his wife, and an extra one. After his death, two of his sons were arguing over which of them would have the privilege to be buried next to their father. The oldest son was in business but felt that since he was the bechor, he should be entitled to the third plot. The younger son took over his father's position as the chassidishe rebbe and he felt that because he was his father's mimaleh mokom in the chassidus, he should be entitled to the privilege of burying buried in the third plot. When they finally agreed upon whom they would present the question to, the rov whom they asked paskened that kol ha'kodem zoche. Why should this be the psak?

In Parshas Pinchas, the Torah speaks about yerusha. The monetary assets of an individual are passed on b'yerusha to his closest relative, and only relatives from the father's side of the family are referred to as "mishpacha". The Minchas Chinuch points out, however, that the Gemara speaks of another concept called "kom tachtov" which is not identical with yerusha. When a married man dies leaving children, the surviving almana does not require chalitzah because the children are kom

tachtov of the father. An eved kena'ani is considered a monetary asset of his owner, and when the owner passes away, ownership of the eved transfers via yerusha to the closest relative in the mishpacha. An eved Ivri, however, is not considered a monetary asset and therefore should not lend itself to the laws of yerusha, and yet the son does in fact take the place of the father as master of the eved Ivri. This is based on the concept of kom tachtov, and only applies to the master's son and not to his daughter. There is a view in the Yerushalmi that an ama ha'ivriya, upon the death of her owner, is transferred only to the master's daughter and not to his son. These are all details within the concept of "kom tachtov".

The Mishna in Nazir records the following halacha which R' Yochanon explains is a halacha l'Moshe miSinai: if a father and son were each a nazir, and the father set aside animals for the korbanos he must bring upon the completion of his term of nezirus but then dies before he had a chance to bring those korbanos, his son is permitted to bring those animals for his own korbanos at the termination of his period of nezirus. This is a surprising ruling; usually, korbanos have to be designated at the time of their sanctification for a specific purpose, in this case they were designated for the father's nezirus, and yet we allow the son to bring them later for his own nezirus! This halacha is also based on the concept of "kom tachtov". The Gemara in Nazir discusses a slightly more complicated case than the one in the Mishna: what if the father who was a nazir leaves two sons who are both nezirim - do they divide the korbanos designated by the father equally between the two of them, or do we say that kol ha'kodem zocheh, i.e. whichever son's nezirus ends earlier has the right to use all of the father's korbanos for his nezirus? Apparently in Europe it was an accepted practice that the rule of kol ha'kodem zocheh would be applied in such cases. The psak issued by the rov in the case we described earlier (where two brothers who both wanted to be buried next to their father in the last available plot) was apparently based on these ideas that appear in the Gemara.

The Mishna teaches us that if a woman who is not currently married dies, her children inherit her monetary assets, but if children predecease their mother, their mother does not inherit their assets. The reason for this difference is that the relationship children have with their mother is one of "she'er basar" but is not one of "mishpacha". Only relatives from the father's side have the halachic status of "mishpacha", and yerusha only occurs when there is a relationship of mishpacha. As such, a mother does not inherit her children. Children do inherit their mother only because of the idea of "kom tachtov" - children are kom tachas their mother, but a mother is not kom tachas her children.

The laws of yerusha are very clearly spelled out in the Gemara and in the Shulchan Aruch, but unfortunately are not observed properly. There were Jewish communities in the Middle East where they assumed that even Jews should follow dina de'malchusa ("the law of the land") with respect to yerusha. In the sixteenth century, the rabbonim in Tzfat sent a young talmid chacham (Rabbi Yom Tov Tzahalon) to explain to these communities that whenever all the parties involved in a monetary issue are Jewish, we follow the Torah law as opposed to dina de'malchusa. The Rambam records a very interesting concept: we consider yerusha to be a matter of issur v'heter, based on the terminology used in the possuk in Parshas Pinchas which describes yerusha as a "chukas mishpat". As such, we should certainly not follow dina de'malchusa regarding yerusha, since dina de'malchusa only applies in areas of dinei mamonos (monetary matters) and not at all in areas of issur v'heter.]

[CS This also just came out.

From: Rabbi Yissocher Frand <ryfrand@torah.org>

11:18 PM (16 minutes ago)

By Rabbi Yissocher Frand

Parshas Pinchas

A Paradigm Incident Which Teaches: The Ribono Shel Olam Has a Grand Plan

These divrei Torah were adapted from the hashkafa portion of Rabbi Yissocher Frand's Commuter Chavrusah Tapes on the weekly portion:

##1257 – Learning on Tisha B'Av, Should You? Can You? Eating Tisha B'Av Night So You Can Fast on Tisha B'Av Day? This is the last shiur before the summer break. The shiur will resume in Elul. Good Shabbos
The pasuk at the beginning of Parshas Pinchas says: “And it shall be for him and his offspring after him a covenant of eternal priesthood, because he took vengeance for his G-d, and he atoned for the Children of Israel” (Bamidbar 25:13). As we learned in last week’s parsha, Pinchas did not tolerate the travesty of a nasi (prince) of a shevet (tribe) in Yisroel brazenly committing a public act of immorality with a Midyanite Princess. He took a spear and killed them both, based on the Halacha of “A person who commits public immorality with a female from Aram, may be smitten down by a kanai (religiously zealous individual).” As a result of that act of zealotry, he was rewarded with an eternal covenant of Kehunah (Priesthood).

Rashi raises the obvious question: As a grandson of Aharon, was Pinchas not already a Kohen? Rashi answers that even though the Kehuna was already granted to Aharon’s children, Pinchas was not a Kohen prior to this incident. The reason for that, Rashi says, is that Kehuna was only granted to Aharon and his sons and those descendants of these original Kohanim who would be born later. This did not include the grandchildren of Aharon who were already alive but were not anointed with Aharon and his sons, such as Pinchas son of Elazar. (Zevachim 101b)

This is an example of the exquisiteness of hashgocha (Divine providence). Consider the following: Up until this point in time, Pinchas was just a regular Levi, not a Kohen. Every single day, Pinchas saw his father serve as a Kohen. He saw his grandfather serve as a Kohen. He saw his uncle serve as a Kohen. He even saw his cousins (who were born afterward) serve as Kohanim. Pinchas, however, because of an accident of birth and this quirk in the Halacha of who is a Kohen, was not a Kohen. He could have been asking himself: What did I do wrong? Where is the justice in all this?

Remember, this went on for forty years. Aharon and his four sons became Kohanim at the beginning of the forty years in the Midbar. The incident with Zimri and Kozbi occurred at the end of their time in the Midbar, forty years later. For forty years, day in, day out, Pinchas saw this going on. Perhaps he was stewing in his juices. What is the meaning of this?

The holy Zohar says, “No. This is all part of the Ribono shel Olam’s grand plan.” If the Ribono shel Olam had let it happen that Pinchas had already been a Kohen—either because he had been born to Elazar after Elazar had received the Kehuna, or because he had been included in the original anointing—he would have lost his Kehuna at this juncture. When the incident with Zimri and Kozbi occurred and Pinchas picked up his spear and killed them, Pinchas—if he had already been a Kohen—would have invalidated himself from the Kehuna. The Halacha is that a Kohen who has killed someone (even unintentionally) is not allowed to ‘raise his hands’ (to offer the Priestly Blessing). (There is a dispute among the Rishonim as to whether this excludes him from all of the Avodah done by a Kohen, but he is certainly not allowed to ‘Duchen’).

Thus, the Zohar says, the reason the Ribono shel Olam did not make Pinchas a Kohen up until this point is because He wanted Pinchas to be a Kohen for the rest of his life. Not only that, but Tosfos (Zevachim 101) says that there were 80 Kohanim Gedolim in the first Beis HaMikdash and 300 Kohanim Gedolim in the second Beis HaMikdash who were all descendants of Pinchas. All of that was possible because Pinchas did not originally become a Kohen.

Any observer might have asked, “Where is there justice in the world?” and “Why was Pinchas dealt this raw deal and this bad hand?” Now we can understand that it was because the Ribono shel Olam knew what was going to happen. It was all part of His grand plan to specifically make Pinchas and his future descendants Kohanim and Kohanim Gedolim.

The Zohar continues – isn’t it ironic that Moshe Rabbeinu, who knew almost every Halacha without exception, suddenly forgot the Halacha by Zimri and Kozbi, and did not know what to do. Why didn’t Moshe

Rabbeinu know what to do? It is for the same reason. If Moshe Rabbeinu knew what to do, Pinchas would not have done what he did. This was all part of the grand plan.

The take-away lesson of this is that it is common in life to be perplexed and not understand why events occur. Things don’t seem to make sense, and they don’t seem fair. Many times, they seem a lot worse than not fair. This incident is a paradigm to demonstrate that the Ribono shel Olam has a plan.

I would like to share three different stories. I have first-hand knowledge regarding two of these stories. I heard the third story from a reliable source. I know the people involved in the first two stories, and I received permission from one of the people to mention his name. I have not been able to verify that the person in the other story would not object to my mentioning his name, so I will relate the story anonymously.

I know a boy who went skiing, had a skiing accident, and received a severe blow to the head. He underwent an X-ray and it was discovered from the X-ray that he had a tumor, which was at the stage where it could be removed by surgery. Had they not discovered this right then, it would have been inoperable.

Someone may think: Why did this happen? That is why it happened!

The second story is even more incredible. The fellow lives at the Yeshiva (Ner Yisroel, Baltimore, MD) and works there as the assistant alumni director. His name is Eli Greengart. Two or three weeks ago, they had a Shabbos Sheva Brochos in the mountains. His family went. On Friday afternoon, they realized they didn’t know where his three-year-old was. Everyone was frantically looking for the toddler. Suddenly, they realized that the toddler fell into an area of the swimming pool that was ten feet deep. The child, who had apparently been in the water for four or five minutes, had already turned blue. They fished him out of the pool and helicoptered him to Westchester Medical Center. Baruch Hashem, they were able to resuscitate the child and he is now perfectly fine. This is amazing, if not a miracle.

Someone told me that both Eli Greengart and his wife are from Silver Spring, MD. Seventeen years ago there was a similar story in Silver Spring involving a two-year-old child who fell into a swimming pool. The outcome was not as fortunate. The child was in a coma for seventeen years. At the time, Eli Greengart was single and still in high school. For the four years that he was in high school, he went over to that family and gave showers to that child who was in a coma. Now, many years later, he had a similar incident and the Ribono shel Olam performed a nes for him!

It is always tricky business to go ahead and assume “cause and effect.” But we can wonder... There seems to be a connection between the act of chessed he did throughout high school with a child who fell into a swimming pool and the miracle that the Ribono shel Olam performed for him.

I heard the last story, which I verified this morning, last year when I was in Europe. I called the person who told me the story to verify the details. This is not a happy ending story, but it is an incredible hashgocha story.

There was a family in Lakewood that was sitting shiva for a little child who ran out into the street and was hit by a car and was killed, lo aleinu. Another family came to be menachem avel and told the parents of this little child the following story:

They were a couple involved in kiruv. They went to some off-the-beaten-path city to do ‘kiruv work.’ The city had no mikveh. They took it upon themselves that they would raise the money and see to it that a mikveh was built there. They did this with great self-sacrifice, to the extent that there were months that they did not eat meat during the week to scrape together the money to finally build the mikveh. One night, when they were doing some work in the mikveh, they had a little child with them. They turned around. They didn’t know where the child was, and to their horror, they discovered that the child fell into the mikveh and drowned.

The wife was inconsolable. No matter what anyone told her, she was inconsolable. They worked so hard, with such personal sacrifice, to

build the mikveh. “This is Torah and this is its reward?” “No matter how many times anyone says that no one understands the ways of Hashem – how could it be?”

The husband had a dream. In the dream, the drowned child came to him and told him that he is the neshama (soul) of a Jew who went through the Spanish Inquisition and was a martyr, who rather than be converted to Christianity was killed and was buried without the benefit of a tahara (ritual bathing performed on a dead Jewish body). He was in a high place in Gan Eden but he needed a tahara in a mikveh that was built al taharas hakodesh (in pristine purity) – the purest mikveh that could be built. His parents built that mikveh. That child with that neshama had that tahara in that mikveh. That is why it had to happen. That was their consolation, and that is what this kiruv couple told the couple in Lakewood.

Does it always work out like that? Do we always find out in our lifetimes why things like that happen? No.

Do we always connect the dots? Is it a smart idea to try to connect the dots? Not necessarily.

But the story of Pinchas—especially in light of what the Zohar and the Rishonim say—demonstrates that the wheels of hashgocha grind extremely slowly but they also grind extremely finely. The Ribono shel Olam has His calculations. “The Rock, perfect is His work, for all His ways are justice; a G-d, faithful without iniquity...” (Devorim 32:4).

Transcribed by David Twersky; Jerusalem DavidATwersky@gmail.com
Technical Assistance by Dovid Hoffman; Baltimore, MD
dhoffman@torah.org

This week’s write-up is adapted from the hashkafa portion of Rabbi Yissochar Frand’s Commuter Chavrusah Series on the weekly Torah portion. A complete catalogue can be ordered from the Yad Yechiel Institute, PO Box 511, Owings Mills MD 21117-0511. Call (410) 358-0416 or e-mail tapes@yadyechiel.org or visit <http://www.yadyechiel.org/> for further information.

Rav Frand © 2023 by Torah.org.]

.. Drasha

By Rabbi Mordechai Kamenetzky

Parshas Pinchas

Daughters-and-Law

There is a fascinating sequence of events in this week’s portion that is analyzed by the Medrash and expounded upon by every major Torah commentator.

At the beginning of Chapter 27, the daughters of Zelophchad appeal to Moshe. Their father died in the desert, but he was not amongst the insurgents who rebelled against Moshe during Korach’s uprising. He died of his own sin and left no sons. The daughters want an inheritance in the Land of Israel.

Moshe did not remember the law and consulted with Hashem. He advised Moshe that Zelophchad’s daughters had a valid argument. They were entitled to a portion of the land that had been allotted for Zelophchad.

The ensuing section of the weekly Parsha has Hashem reminding Moshe that he will not enter the Land of Israel. Immediately a conversation follows. In verses 15-18 Moshe pleads to Hashem, “the Lord of all spirits and flesh to appoint a man over the assembly who will go out before them and go in before them; so they shall not be like sheep that have no shepherd.”

Rashi quotes a Medrash that links the two episodes. He explains that after Moshe saw that Zelophchad’s daughters were entitled to inherit the Land, he felt that the time had come to ask for the torch of leadership to be passed to his own children. This does not come to pass. Hashem tells Moshe to bestow authority to his own disciple, Joshua, who ultimately leads the Jewish Nation into Israel.

Many Biblical commentators are puzzled by the connection of the request of Zelophchad’s daughters and Moshe’s request. Why did the former prompt the latter?

Second, were Moshe’s sons worthy of leadership or not? It seems that only after Moshe saw that Zelophchad’s daughter’s inherited did he say, “the time has come that I shall ask for my needs.” Why would the episode or conveyance of land to Zelophchad’s kin affect Moshe’s opinion of his own children’s leadership abilities?

The pious and humble Tzadik, Rabbi Yisroel Meir Kagan of Radin, known as the Chofetz Chaim, was once riding a train to Radin. He wore a simple cap and traveled alone, and hardly anyone knew who he was. A middle-aged Jew sat down beside him and asked him where he was going. The Chofetz Chaim answered softly, “to Radin.”

The man was excited. “Do you know the saintly Chofetz Chaim? I am going to Radin just to see him!”

The Chofetz Chaim was unimpressed. “M’nyeh,” he shrugged. “I don’t think he is so saintly.”

The visitor was so appalled that he slapped the old man and left his seat shouting. “How dare you make light of the leader of our generation!” A week later the man came to the humble abode of the great Tzadik. Lo and behold, the old man from the train was sitting by the table in the dining room. The man collapsed in shock.

He could not stop apologizing for the incident on the train when the Chofetz Chaim halted him.

“Do not worry, you taught me a great lesson,” said the sage. “One may not even slander himself.”

R’ Mordechai of Czernobel (d.1837) explains the connection. Moshe was concerned that the very sin that prohibited him entry into the Land of Israel would also prevent his children a chance at inheriting leadership.

When Hashem told Moshe that Zelophchad’s daughters shall not suffer for any past misdeeds, he reconsidered his own situation. He realized that his problem and sin had nothing to do with his children. They should not suffer from his humility and self-effacing.

We all may get down on ourselves at one time or another. But our children look up to us. We must show that we have confidence in ourselves. The qualities that they believe we possess are those that we must pass on to them.

Mordechai Kamenetzky – Yeshiva of South Shore

Good Shabbos

Rabbi YY Jacobson

[G-d's Vulnerability

Your Simple Prayer on an Ordinary Wednesday Shakes the Heavens

Two Requests

In this week’s portion, Moses, facing his mortality, asks G-d to appoint a successor.

May the Lord, God of the spirits of all flesh, choose a man over the congregation who will go out before them and come in before them, who will lead them out and bring them in, so that the congregation of the Lord will not be like sheep without a shepherd. (Num. 27: 16).

G-d responds that Moses should appoint Joshua as his successor; he will be the next leader of the nation.

Following that, the Torah states:

The Lord spoke to: Moses, saying: 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.

And you shall say to them: This is the fire offering which you shall offer to the Lord: two unblemished lambs in their first year each day as a continual burnt offering. The one lamb you shall offer up in the morning, and the other lamb you shall offer up in the afternoon.

The juxtaposition is strange. Moses is pleading for a new leader. He is afraid that the flock would be left without a shepherd. G-d responds by instructing the Jewish people to bring a daily offering—one sheep in the morning, one sheep in the afternoon; which since temple times has been substituted with morning and afternoon services, shacharis and mincha, when we “offer” our hearts to G-d.

The Parable

What’s the connection? Rashi, quoting the Sifri, explains that G-d said to Moses, “Before you command Me regarding My children, command My children regarding Me.” It is almost as if G-d is saying, do not worry about My responsibilities toward My children; I will take care of them. There is a far more worrisome issue: Tell the children to take care of Me.

This seems perplexing. G-d is upset with Moses that he is asking Him to take care of the children who might be left as a flock without a shepherd. Instead, G-d says, why don't you instruct the children to offer Me sacrifices?! But how can you compare the two? Moses is beseeching G-d that the nation survives and endures; G-d wants Moses to first tell the nation to bring the appropriate sacrifices!

So Rashi continues to present a fascinating parable, to shed light on the exchange: רש"י פינחס כח, ב: צו את בני ישראל: מה אמור למעלה (כו, טז) יפקוד ה' אמר לו הקב"ה עד שאתה מצוני על בני, צוה את בני עלי. משל לבת מלך שהיתה נפטרת מן העולם והיתה מפקדת לבעלה על בניה וכו', כדאיתא בספרי [1].

There was a princess who was about to die. She called in her husband and commanded him to take care of the children after her demise. Her husband, the future widower, responds: "Rather than you commanding Me about My children, command My children about Me."

Moses, the faithful mother and shepherd of Israel, who led them for more than four decades, is about to die. Now, mom is concerned: In the absence of a mother, who will make sure my kinderlach (children) are fine?

What is G-d's response? Rather than telling Me to take care of them, make sure to tell them to take care of Me! I will now be a widower. I will not have you anymore. I will only have my children—and I am afraid to lose them. I need you to speak to my children that they should take care of their dad after you pass on.

And what does the Father ask for? "Make sure to give me my daily bread; a daily sacrifice of sheep, one in the morning, one in the afternoon."

Why Is G-d So Lonely?

Which only leaves us scratching our head. The infinite G-d is "crying" to his "wife," Moses, that He is afraid of remaining a lonely widower after her death? I can understand Moses' wishes. He led the people for forty years, through thick and thin. He knows how disheartening and rebellious they can be. He also knows they can get on their Father's nerves. He comes to G-d and says: I need you to take care of my children and of Your children. They need a great leader.

But G-d? The infinite Creator? The all-powerful one? The omnipotent and the omniscient? G-d, the embodiment of perfection and flawlessness? Why is He comparing Himself to a lost widower? What exactly is He worried about?

The Alteration

Forty-nine years ago, on Shabbos Parshas Pinchas, 24 Tamuz, 5731, July 17, 1971, the Lubavitcher Rebbe presented a most moving insight.[2]

As always, it is intimated in one slight nuance.

In Sifri, the original midrashic text which is the source of Rashi, the parable is about a king and his wife. But Rashi alters the text. He changes one detail in the parable. It is about a princess and her husband. For the Sifri, G-d is the King and Moses is His queen. For Rashi, Moses is the princess, the daughter of a king, and G-d is her husband, a "regular" husband.

Why would Rashi make this dramatic change? why would Rashi turn Moses into the princess and G-d into the "layman"?[3]

Yet it is this subtle change that sheds light on the very powerful exchange between the Jewish leader and the Creator of the world.

The Lonely Husband

When a king loses his queen, it may be difficult, but the palace does not crumble, and the king's needs are still taken care of. The monarch is surrounded by an entire apparatus of ministers, assistants, advisors, servants who will ensure that the king has his needs met and that the country can continue running.

Not so with a simple widower. When his wife dies, he is often completely lost.[4] All he is left with are his children. If his children abandon him, he will be forlorn in an empty and tough world. So before his wife passes on he asks her to please encourage the children to be there for their father—to make sure his children do not neglect him.

Infinite Love, Infinite Need

It is here we discover the daring and shocking message of our sages here.

G-d is infinite, perfect, and has no "needs." Needs by definition indicate you are lacking; you are imperfect. How can G-d be lacking anything? A finite being can have needs. An infinite being has no needs.

Yet here lay one of the great ideas of Judaism. G-d, the perfect endless one, the essence and core of all reality, desired a relationship with the human person. G-d created the entire universe. Man is a tiny infinitesimal creature. Yet G-d chose us to be His children. The unlimited Creator chose to make Himself vulnerable. It is a choice that comes from G-d's undefined essence (not defined even by being "perfect" and "unneedy"), and hence it is absolute and infinite.

When you love because you need, the love is as deep as the need. When you have a relationship with someone just because you need them (such as a cleaning lady, or a family doctor) then when that need has been fulfilled the relationship ends. When you need because you love, it is an essential need, intrinsic to yourself. Hashem does not love you because He needs you; He needs me because He loves you, and if the love is limitless and absolute, so is the need.

We need G-d; but G-d needs us too.[5] So when G-d knew Moses was about to pass on, He pleads with him: Just as you say to Me that your children need Me, I

say to you: I need them with the same equal intensity, maybe more. Children need parents, but parents also need children. One of the most painful experiences for a parent is when a child rejects him or her.

I need them, says G-d, for my "daily bread," "lachmi l'eishei;" without them I am—so to speak—despondent and forlorn. Please make sure they remain connected and loyal to Me.

The Protest of Judaism

"I'm NOT needed." These are familiar words. We hear them from the lips of the young and those who have lived many years.

All of Judaism is a protest against this notion. G-d needs every one of us. We are here because we have something to do for Him and for His world. He has only our hands, feet, hearts, minds, souls, and voices. G-d needs my prayer, my heart, my truth, my mitzvah, my conviction, my commitment, and my passion. G-d needs us just as we need G-d. G-d is looking for ordinary people to do extraordinary work.

The Teenager

Rabbi Mannis Friedman shared with me a personal experience he had.[6]

He was once called to a hospital to see a Jewish teenager who was suicidal. Feeling that he was a good-for-nothing who could not get anything right, the boy had attempted to take his own life. But even his suicide attempt failed. Seeing that he was Jewish, the hospital staff called the rabbi to come and try to lift the boy's dejected spirits.

The rabbi arrived at the hospital not knowing what to expect. He found the boy lying in bed watching TV, a picture of utter misery, black clouds of despair hanging over his head. The boy hardly looked up at the rabbi, and before he could even say hello, the boy said, "If you are here to tell me what the priest just told me, you can leave now."

Slightly taken aback, the rabbi asked, "What did the priest say?"

"He told me that G-d loves me. That is a load of garbage. Why would G-d love me?"

It was a good point. This kid could see nothing about himself that was worthy of love. He had achieved nothing in his life; he had no redeeming features, nothing that was beautiful or respectable or lovable. So why would G-d love him?

The rabbi needed to touch this boy without patronizing him. He had to say something real. But what do you say to someone who sees himself as worthless?

"You may be right," said the rabbi. "Maybe G-d doesn't love you."

This got the boy's attention. He wasn't expecting that from a rabbi.

"Maybe G-d doesn't love you. But one thing's for sure. He needs you."

This surprised the boy. He hadn't heard that before.

The very fact that you were born means that G-d needs you. He had plenty of people before you, but He added you to the world's population because there is something you can do that no one else can. And if you haven't done it yet, that makes it even more crucial that you continue to live, so that you are able to fulfill your mission and give your unique gift to the world.

If I can look at all my achievements and be proud, I can believe G-d loves me. But what if I haven't achieved anything? What if I don't have any accomplishments under my belt to be proud of? Now it is time to remember: You are here because G-d needs you. and if you failed to live up to your potential till now, it only means that He needs you even more!

The Essence of Torah

This might explain an enigmatic Midrash which credits an isolated verse in this week's Torah portion, Pinchas, with encapsulating the quintessence of Judaism.

The Talmud and the Midrash[7] quote four opinions as to which biblical verse sums up the ultimate message of Torah. One sage, Ben Azzai, believed it was the verse in Genesis: "This is the book of the chronicles of man; on the day that G-d created man He created him in the image of G-d." [8] Another sage, Ben Zoma, holds a different verse to be more central to Jewish thought: "Hear O Israel, the Lord is our G-d, the Lord is One." A third Talmudist, Ben Nanas, chooses this verse: "You shall love your fellow man like yourself." [9]

Finally, the fourth sage, Shimon, the son of Pazi, casts his pitch for the epic verse of the Bible. It is culled from the section in this week's portion that deals with the obligation during the time of the Temple to bring each day two lambs as an offering to G-d. "One sheep you shall offer in the morning and the second sheep in the afternoon." This verse, according to Shimon ben Pazi, is the defining verse of Judaism.

The Midrash concludes: "One of the rabbis stood on his feet and declared, 'The verdict follows the opinion of Shimon the son of Pazi!'"

This is perplexing, to say the least. The notion that all of Judaism can be traced back to the idea that a human being reflects G-d, makes sense. The same can be said about the concept of a single and universal G-d, or the injunction to love our fellow man like ourselves—these ideas, introduced 3300 years ago by the Hebrew Bible, vividly embody the essential weltanschauung of Judaism and its contribution to human civilization.

But how does the verse "One sheep you shall offer in the morning and the second sheep in the afternoon" represent the essence of Torah? How can one even begin to compare the message about offering two lambs with the global and noble ideas contained in the other three opinions?

What is even more astonishing is that the final verdict in the Midrash selects this verse about the sheep as the "winner." The biblical verses dealing with love, monotheism and human dignity, the foundations of morality and civilization, did not "make it" in the contest; it is precisely this verse enjoining us to offer a lamb in the morning and a lamb in the afternoon -- that was chosen as the "representative" of the Jewish paradigm!

According to the above, we can perhaps understand the words of the Midrash. What this verse conveys more than any other verse is the mind staggering infinite dignity Judaism conferred upon human person and human life.

As Moses is about to die, and is pleading for the welfare of his people, G-d reminds him how much He needs us. He needs us as much as we need Him. Maybe more.

You may view yourself as small and insignificant. But remember: G-d has a burning need for you! G-d's "needs" are infinite, because they are not "coerced," but chosen by an infinite G-d. This means that G-d has an "infinite need" for your goodness, holiness, beauty, commitment, sacrifices, for your "bread," and for your offerings.

The Power of Prayer

Today, as we recall, these two lambs have been replaced by the two and three daily prayers. Sometimes you may think to yourself: What's the big deal if I miss a "mincha" on a simple Wednesday? What's the big deal if I don't pray at all? What's the big deal if during the prayer I am busy texting or checking my email? Don't tell me that G-d Almighty cares about some little guy's prayers, saying every day the same words.

Some people look at their davening (prayers) as valueless. Are you going to tell me that if I missed a "maariv," it really matters?

But this is not how G-d sees it. From G-d's perspective, a "simple mincha on a simple Wednesday,"[10] means the world to Him. Without it, He is missing His "bread," His food, His existence. My prayer, or lack of it, affects His essence. (I once heard from my Rebbe these words in Yiddish: "Yede tenuah fun a Yid," every move of a Jew, impacts G-d at His core.[11]) Never think of yourself as tiny and useless. Imagine, the infinite perfect G-d needs you to be here for Him, and to be here for His world. You are the axis upon which the entire universe revolves.[12]

A Simple Mincha

Dr. Yaakov Brawer is Professor Emeritus of the Faculty of Medicine at McGill University. He related a lovely story.[13]

The minchah, or afternoon, prayer is the shortest of the three daily services. Moreover, the time for this prayer often arrives while we are still immersed in our work. People are tired and busy, and it is difficult to divest oneself of the effects of a day at the office in order to generate proper intention and emotional involvement.

It has long been my privilege to speak at the Shabbaton held every year at the end of December in Crown Heights. I would usually arrive in New York on Thursday or Friday, and leave the following Sunday. I always scheduled my return flight to allow me the opportunity to join the Lubavitcher Rebbe's minyan (prayer quorum) for minchah on Sunday afternoon.

On one such occasion many years ago, I had arranged to fly back to Montreal at 4:30 PM. That Sunday morning, I began to worry about my return trip. I am a very nervous traveler, and I generally insist on being at the airport way in advance of my flight. Why had I decided to leave so early? The Rebbe's minyan generally began at 3:15, and usually ended at 3:30. Allowing myself 15 minutes to return to where I was staying, I could leave for LaGuardia no earlier than 3:45. What if traffic was heavy? What if a tire went flat? What if a tree had fallen across the Interboro Parkway, and it being Sunday, the road crews took their sweet time in removing it? I calmed myself with the thought that these possibilities were very unlikely, and that if I left at 3:45 sharp I would probably make my flight to Canada [This was at a time before security was so tight; you could still walk up straight to the plane.]

I then embarked on my yearly nerve-racking ritual of arranging for a ride to LaGuardia Airport. In those days there was only one car service in Crown Heights, and it was run by chassidim, a class of people for whom time means nothing. I walked into the storefront office and told them I wanted a car to take me to LaGuardia at 3:45. I emphasized (several times) that 3:45 does not mean 3:50, or even 3:46. I was not interested in approximations. The proprietor, in soothing tones, assured me of a car at precisely 3:45. They were professionals with considerable experience in this business, and there was absolutely nothing to worry about.

I started to leave, but I remembered something as I got to the door. I turned to the boss and asked him whether he would care to know the address to which the car

should be sent. "Oh yes, of course, sorry." You see the sort of people I was dealing with.

By 3:00 PM I was packed into the little synagogue in which the Rebbe prayed minchah. Every student attending one of the two local yeshivahs, as well as numerous neighborhood residents and out-of-town guests, were competing for space in that small room. My bones ached and I couldn't breathe, but this did not trouble me. This was normal. What bothered me was the time. 3:15, 3:16, 3:17. At 3:20 the Rebbe came in, and minchah began. I tried to concentrate on my prayer, reminding myself that I was in the same minyan as my holy Rebbe. However, my overwrought brain simply would not mind. It perversely dwelt on my imminent betrayal by the car service.

In the course of my struggles with myself, I became aware of a soft sobbing sound. I had already raced through my prayer, and I was able to glance sideways at my neighbor. He was a tall, thin, bearded man, dressed in chassidic garb. His eyes were closed and tears streamed down his cheeks. His face was intense with concentration. He prayed slowly and with obvious effort.

In spite of myself, I was touched. I could not imagine what sort of terrible trouble lay behind that heartfelt prayer. Perhaps he had a sick child at home, or some crushing financial burden. I assumed that he was an out-of-town visitor seeking the Rebbe's aid, and I could not help feeling guilty about my own silly preoccupations with the car service, the airport, etc. I mentally wished him the best and hoped that things would turn out well for him.

Minchah completed, I raced back to my host's home, and by 3:42 I was awaiting the promised car with fire in my eyes, certain that it would not show. At precisely 3:45, a noisy, rusty station wagon, belching blue exhaust, rolled up, and the driver waved me in. I couldn't believe it. I put my suitcase in the back and then climbed in next to the driver.

My second shock came with the realization that the driver was none other than my heartbroken neighbor at minchah. As we drove off, the driver hummed a jolly chassidic melody, and seemed quite happy. We began to talk. Cautiously I asked him about his welfare: his health, the health of his family and the state of his finances. Each question elicited a hearty (if somewhat perplexed) "Thank G-d." Moreover, his wife was soon due to give birth, and he was in a particularly excited and happy mood. Gradually, it began to dawn on me that the remarkable outpouring of the heart that I had witnessed earlier was this man's ordinary, daily minchah.

A Simple Davening

That is a how a Jew davens. Every Mincha is priceless. Every mincha is an intimate one-on-one with the Creator of the universe. Every time you pray to G-d, the world stops. All G-d wants to do is listen to you.

Like two people who love each other infinitely, who meet after five years of separation, when they come together, nothing else can disturb them. That is how G-d feels when you start davening.

Or as the Kotzker Rebbe put it when asked why in Kotzk they called the Passover Seder a "dinner," and Kal Nidrei—Maariv? He said: I teach my students that every supper is a Seder; and every Maariv is a Kal Nidrei.

[1] ספרי פינחס כה, ו: וידבר ה' אל משה לאמר צו את בני ישראל את קרבני לחמי - למה נאמר? לפי שהוא אומר אשר יצא לפניו ואשר יבוא לפניו; משל למה הדבר דומה? למלך שהיה אשתו נפטרת מן העולם, והיתה מפקדתו על בניה. אמרה לו: בבקשה ממך הוזהר לי בבני. אמר לה: עד שאת מפקדתי על בני - פקד בני עלי, שלא ימרדו בי ושלא ינהגו בי מנהג בזיון. כך אמר לו הקב"ה: עד שאתה מפקדני על בני - פקד בני עלי, שלא ינהגו בי מנהג בזיון, ושלא ימירו את כבודי באלהי הנכר! מהו אומר דברים לא כי אביאם אל האדמה, עד שאתה מפקדני על בני - פקד בני עלי! לך נאמר צו את בני ישראל

[2] Sichos Kodesh 5731. Toras Menachem 5731. Most of the talk is published in Likkutei Sichos vol. 13 Parshas Pinchas p. 99. There are a few moving expressions that are not in Likkutei Sichos, but they are in the original unedited transcript.

[3] Rashi does say, "as it says in Sifri." Obviously then he found such a version of Sifri, even though it is not existent in any of our Sifri manuscripts. Rashi, of course, would not amend the text and then state that "it says this in Sifri." The question is, why would Rashi not choose the far more popular version of the text of the Sifri?

[4] See Sanhedrin 22b

[5] There is an expression in Kabbalah, "our service is a Divine need." (Avodas Hakodesh section 2; Shalash Shaar HaGadol Toldos Adam.)

[6] The story was beautifully written up by Rabbi Aron Moss: https://www.chabad.org/library/article_cdo/aid/1853663/jewish/The-Rabbi-and-the-Suicidal-Teenager.htm

[7] The Midrash is quoted in the introduction to Ein Yakov, compiled by Rabbi Yaakov Ben Chaviv. He writes there that he found this information recorded in the name of the Midrash, but could not discover the original source. He proceeds to present his own explanation to the Midrash.

[8] The view of Ben Azai is in Toras Kohanim Kedoshim ch. 19 and in Talmud Yerushalmi Nedarim 9:4

[9] This is also the view of Rabbi Akiva, quoted in Toras Kohanim and Yerushalmi ibid.

[10] This was the expression the Rebbe used at the farbrengen.

[11] Sichas 6 Tishrei, 5735, September 22, 1974. See there for a beautiful proof from the words of the Rambam about Yeravan ben Nevat in his Igeres Teiman, and from the story of Miriam bas Bilgah, at the end of Talmud Sukkah.

[12] Mishnah Sanhedrin 37a

[13] https://www.chabad.org/library/article_cdo/aid/39916/jewish/The-Cabdriver.htm

Rav Kook Torah

Pinchas: Zealotry for the Sake of Heaven

When Pinchas saw a prince from the tribe of Shimon publicly cavorting with a Midianite princess, he took the law into his own hands. Using his spear, Pinchas killed them both. God praised his act of zealotry, rewarding him with the priesthood.

“Pinchas, the son of Elazar, the son of Aaron the kohen, was the one who zealously took up My cause among the Israelites and turned My anger away from them.” (Num. 25:11)

Why does the Torah need to point out Pinchas’ lineage here? This is particularly puzzling considering that the Torah just identified Pinchas a few verses earlier (25:7).

The Midrash (Sanhedrin 82b) explains that the tribal leaders mocked Pinchas: ‘His maternal grandfather [Jethro] fattened up calves for idolatrous sacrifices — and he had the audacity to murder a prince of Israel!’ Therefore, the Torah publicized Pinchas’ lineage through his father’s side, Aaron the High Priest.

This Midrash requires clarification. Why was it so important to respond to these disparaging comments? Furthermore, what does it help if one of Pinchas’ grandfathers was the high priest - his other grandfather was still a reformed idolater!

Pure Motives

Rav Kook explained that the Torah does not ordinarily approve of such acts of zealotry. They are sanctioned only if the zealot acted purely for the sake of Heaven.

Onlookers might have suspected that Pinchas harbored secondary motives. Perhaps he sought to demonstrate his faithfulness to Israel and its monotheistic faith, despite a grandfather who was a convert from paganism.

Therefore, God testified that Pinchas acted as Aaron’s grandson. What qualities characterized Aaron? The Sages wrote: “Be a disciple of Aaron, loving peace and pursuing peace, loving all people and drawing them near to the Torah” (Avot 1:12). Aaron, legendary for seeking the path of peace and reconciliation, would not have been suspect of ulterior motives.

Pinchas’ action, the Torah emphasizes, was worthy of his illustrious grandfather. He acted as befits the grandson of Aaron the High Priest, with selfless intentions and a pure heart.

Parshas Pinchas

Rabbi Yochanan Zweig

This week’s Insights is dedicated in loving memory of Reuven ben Aaron z”l.

Responsibility for the Law

The daughters of Tzelofchad came [...] And stood before Moshe and Elazar the Kohen and in front of the Nesi’im and the entire congregation (27:1-2).

This week’s parsha relates the quandary of the daughters of Tzelofchad who wished to receive their father’s portion in Eretz Yisroel even though he died prior to the division of the land and had no male heirs to inherit. They argued that it wasn’t fair that his portion should be taken away from his family just because he had no male heirs. According to Rashi (ad loc), Moshe forgot what the law was in such a case and therefore presented the question to Hashem. Ultimately, Hashem sided with the daughters of Tzelofchad and they were awarded their father’s share in Israel.

Maimonides (Yad, Hilchos Mamrim 1:4) describes a fascinating process of determining the law during the times of the Beis Hamikdash: “As long as there was the Beis Din Hagadol in Jerusalem there was never a conflict among the Jewish people (as to what the law was). If someone needed to know a law he would ask his local Beis Din, [and] if they knew the answer they gave it to him. If they did not, then both the inquirer and the Beis Din would travel to Jerusalem to ask the Beis Din that was located on the Temple Mount [...] If they didn’t know then everyone went to the Beis Din that was at the entrance to the courtyard and asked the question [...] If they didn’t know then everyone went to the Beis Din Hagadol in the Lishkas Hagazis (hewn chamber – a room adjacent to the Beis Hamikdash).” That was the court of final appeal and one way or another they would determine the final law to resolve the original question.

According to Rambam, every single court must accompany the original inquirer on this process until his question is answered; making it possible to have well over a hundred people present while this question is being presented to the Beis Din Hagadol. What could possibly be the reason for this? Additionally, Lechem Mishna in his commentary on Rambam (ad loc) asks: From where does Maimonides know that this is the process; what is the source for this?

In most societies, a court system is intended to adjudicate and apply the laws that have been enacted by a separate legislature. There is no actual responsibility for the law, just its application. It is very different in Judaism. Every court has a responsibility for the law. If someone presents a problem and the court doesn’t know the answer, it becomes the court’s question as well. Because each court has a responsibility for the law, a lack of knowledge of the law is a problem for the court itself. Therefore, the court itself now becomes a principal in the quest for a resolution as to what the law is. It is for this reason that every court in the process must join in the search for a resolution.

Clearly, Maimonides found a source for this law in the story of the daughters of Tzelofchad. The possuk seemingly makes a random observation; the daughters “stood before Moshe and Elazar the Kohen and in front of the Nesi’im and the entire congregation.” The Torah isn’t in the habit of repeating meaningless facts. Therefore, it must be that their presence had something to do with the original question. Rashi (ad loc) points out that this is very strange; if Moshe didn’t know then for sure Elazar wouldn’t know either!

This is how Maimonides knows that, after a question is presented through the normal chain of law, every person in that chain has a responsibility to see it through to the end. That is why all those individuals are mentioned as being present when the daughters of Tzelofchad finally presented their question to Moshe.

Make Yourself at Home

This week’s parsha describes the sacrifices brought for each of the yomim tovim. On the holiday of Sukkos there is a curious procedure relating to the amount of sacrifices that are brought; every succeeding day one less bull is brought as a sacrifice. In other words, on the first day thirteen bulls are brought, on the second day twelve bulls are brought, on the third day eleven bulls are brought, and so on.

Rashi (29:36) quotes the Midrash Tanchuma: “The Torah is teaching us how to properly conduct ourselves; one who has a guest in his home on the first day he should feed him stuffed fowl. On the next day he should feed him fish. On the next day he should feed him meat. On the next day he should feed him a bean dish. On the next day he gives him vegetables [...] He progressively decreases (every day) just like the bulls of the holiday of Sukkos.”

This is difficult to understand; surely the Midrash isn’t telling us that the proper way to treat guests is to make them feel less welcome each succeeding day that we are hosting them! Additionally, as Tosfos (Chullin 84a) points out, meat is more expensive than fish or fowl. In other words, if you follow this menu some of the succeeding days are more expensive than the prior days. So what exactly is the parallel of progressively decreasing?

The difficulty for most people who are guests in someone else's home is the uncomfortable feeling of imposing on their personal space. As the Gemara (Brachos 58b) explains, "The proper guest says 'Everything that the host has toiled for he has toiled for me.'" That is to say that a proper guest is very sensitive to the efforts expended by the host.

There are two ways for a host to compensate; the first is to make the guest feel as though the host is honored to host them, the second is to make them feel as if it is no imposition at all.

The proposed menu for a guest isn't listed in a declining order of expense; it is listed in a declining order of preparation. On the first day the host goes out of his way to prepare a very fancy meal of stuffed fowl, which requires the highest degree of preparation. The second day is fish, which is very delicate and needs to be seasoned and cooked very carefully but isn't as much preparation time as the first day. The third day is meat, which requires an even lesser amount of expertise and cooking technique (after all, every man is a BBQ grill master – it's in the DNA). The next day is a bean soup, which is simple fare and even easier to prepare, etc.

On the first day, the host prepares an elaborate meal to express his delight at hosting the guest. As the days go on, the host slowly begins to lessen his efforts in order make the guest feel more at home and less as someone who has to be catered to. The host's goal at this point is to show the guest that it is really no imposition at all and that the guest is welcome to stay as long as he wants as part of the family. That is the highest level of *Hachnosas Orchim*.

A Definite Impact

Pinchas, the son of Elazar, the son of Aharon the Kohen, turned away My wrath from Bnei Yisroel when he took My vengeance in their midst, and I did not destroy Bnei Yisroel in My vengeance (Bamidbar 25:11).

The word "b'socham – in their midst" that appears in this possuk seems to be superfluous. We are certainly aware that Pinchas' act of zeal took place in the midst of the Jewish people; ostensibly, there should be no reason for it to be mentioned here. What does this word add to the narrative?

It is also difficult to understand exactly what Pinchas accomplished by killing Zimri. By this point in time, 176,000 Jewish men had succumbed to the temptation of *avodah zarah*, and an unknown number had sinned with Midianite women. How could the slaying of a single sinner, even a prominent public figure, motivate the rest of the nation to refrain from sinning?

The Torah states (Bamidbar 25:6), "And behold, a man from Bnei Yisroel came, and he brought the Midianite woman near his brethren, before the eyes of Moshe and before the eyes of the entire congregation of Bnei Yisroel, and they were weeping at the entrance to Ohel Moed." As the next possuk relates, Pinchas immediately carried out the execution of Zimri and Kozbi, the Midianite princess, in the middle of their sin.

However, why does it mention the fact that the people were weeping? In what way is it germane to the narrative? The Torah is indicating that Bnei Yisroel were collectively aware of the impropriety of Zimri's actions; they knew that what he was doing was wrong, and this is what caused them to weep.

Pinchas was well aware that Hashem was furious with the Jewish people, and that the entire nation was facing the threat of destruction; however, it was only after Pinchas saw that the people were weeping that he reminded Moshe that the sinners should be slain. The reason why the Torah emphasizes that Pinchas' vengeful act was carried out b'socham, "in [the Jewish people's] midst" is because Pinchas acted in a way that he knew would have an impact on the many people who would witness it. He waited to act until an opportune moment, when he knew that his action would serve as a message to the rest of the nation to desist from sin – and that was possible only when the public perception of the situation was such that people understood the necessity for change. Striking out at a sinner can have an effect on others only if they recognize that the sinner is wrong; if that is the case, then such an act

can cause others to rally and bring about a much-needed change. Without that crucial public awareness, an act of zeal might not create any change at all.

Since Parshas Pinchas includes all the maftir readings of the holidays, and also the reading of Rosh Chodesh...

Kerias HaTorah

By Rabbi Yirmiyohu Kaganoff

Since Parshas Pinchas includes all the maftir readings of the holidays, and also the reading of Rosh Chodesh...

Kerias HaTorah

By Rabbi Yirmiyohu Kaganoff

Question #1: Twice on Shabbos!

"Why do we read the Torah twice every Shabbos?"

Question #2: Missed a posuk

"What is the halacha if we began an aliyah a posuk later than the previous aliyah had ended?"

Question #3: Skipped a posuk

"After davening on Shabbos morning, we realized that the baal keriah skipped a posuk during the last aliyah. What do we do now?"

Question #4: Torah or rabbinic?

"Can there be a takanas chachamim that originates in the Torah itself? Isn't this a contradiction?"

Introduction: The Four R's

The mitzvah of reading the Torah that we perform regularly during davening in shul incorporates at least four different takanos, two of which were established while the Jews were in the Desert, a third which was created in the days of Ezra, when the Jews returned to Eretz Yisroel to establish the second Beis Hamikdash, and the fourth, which may have the halachic status of "custom" and which has an uncertain history. Answering our opening questions adequately will require that we examine the basic structure of these takanos; we will then be in a position to understand better the issues involved. But first, an overview of the four takanos:

1. Regular reading - The requirement to read the Torah three times a week.
2. Festive reading - Reading on the festivals something that relates to the holiday.
3. Mincha reading - The requirement to read the Torah at mincha every Shabbos.
4. Complete reading - The practice of completing the Torah every year.

Reminder reading

According to Rav Moshe Feinstein, there is another type of *kerias haTorah*, whose purpose is to make announcements – such as the four parshiyos and maftir on Shabbos Rosh Chodesh (Shu"t Igros Moshe, Orach Chayim 1:101:2). Since almost all these applications concern the maftir reading and not the primary Torah reading, I will not discuss them in this article.

1. Regular reading

One of the earliest takanos made by Chazal was the requirement to read the Torah three times a week. The Gemara (Bava Kama 82a) teaches this in an unusual passage that combines both halacha and midrash. In explaining the posuk in parshas Beshalach, And they (the Jewish nation) traveled three days without finding water (Shemos 15:22), the Gemara expounds:

The dorsei reshumos, those who "interpret hidden passages" (Toras Chayim), explain that water can mean only "Torah," as we find in Scripture, Behold, whoever is thirsty go to the water (Yeshayahu 55:1). Once the Bnei Yisroel had traveled three days without studying Torah, they immediately weakened in their commitment to Hashem. The prophets among them established that they read the Torah on Shabbos, on Monday, and again on Thursday, so that they should not go three days without studying Torah.

Every Monday and Thursday

Yiddish has a popular expression – *yeden Montag und Donnerstag*, every Monday and Thursday – which means something that occurs fairly frequently. This expression may originate from the takanah that the Torah is read on these weekdays. But there are other ways that could guarantee that the Jews not go three days without studying Torah. Chazal could have established reading the Torah on Tuesday and Thursday, or on Monday and Wednesday; or, they could have left it up to each community to decide what to do. Why establish that the reading be specifically on Mondays and Thursdays?

Based on a Midrash, Tosafos (Bava Kama 82 s.v. Kedei) explains that Moshe ascended Har Sinai to receive the second luchos on a Thursday and descended with them on a Monday. Since these luchos created a tremendous closeness between Hashem and the Jewish people, these days are called *yemei ratzon* (literally, days of favor). Therefore, the leaders of that generation felt it most

appropriate to establish the mitzvos of reading the Torah on these days. For the same reason, these days are often observed as fasts.

Min HaTorah or not?

Because there is Biblical origin for this mitzvah, one authority, the Bach (Orach Chayim, Chapter 685), considers the requirement to read the Torah three times a week to be min haTorah. However, the consensus of halachic authorities is that this requirement has the status of an early, and perhaps the earliest of, takanos chachomim, obligations established by the Sages.

2. Festive reading

Thus far, we have explained the origin of reading the Torah three times a week. The reading that takes place on a Yom Tov, each of which is about the festival on which it is read, has a different reason. The Mishnah (Megillah 31a) cites a Torah source for this requirement, that we should read on the Yom Tov about its mitzvos and its theme.

The following Mishnah (ibid. 21a) embellishes some of the details of these two mitzvos, the takanah to read the Torah on Monday and Thursday, and the special festival reading on holidays:

“On Mondays, Thursdays and Mincha on Shabbos, three people read the Torah. You may not have either less or more people read... The first person to read and the last one both recite berachos. On Rosh Chodesh and Chol Hamoed, four people read the Torah. You may not have either less or more people read... The first and the last person to read both recite berachos.”

Rashi explains that on Monday and Thursday we limit the reading to three aliyos to avoid inconveniencing people, since it is a workday.

The Gemara (Megillah 21b) explains the Mishnah's statement that the first person to read and the last one both recite berachos to mean that the first person reading the Torah on any given day recites the beracha before the reading (Asher bochar banu...) and the last person recites the beracha after the reading (Asher nosan lonu.... Rashi, in his commentary to the Mishnah, explains this to mean that only the first person and the last person were required to recite berachos, but that the others who read the Torah may recite the berachos, if they want.

Later, Chazal instituted that each person who reads from the Torah recites a beracha, both before and after his own aliyah. This was instituted out of concern that individuals who left shul before the completion of the Torah reading will think that there is no beracha after the reading; similarly, if only the first person recites a beracha before reading, those people who arrive after the reading of the Torah have begun will think that there is no beracha prior to the reading.

It is interesting to note Chazal's concern for people whose behavior is not optimal. It is forbidden to leave in the middle of kerias haTorah, and we certainly hope that people come to shul on time. Yet, Chazal made new takanos so that these people not err.

Returning to the Mishnah (Megillah 21a), it then explains: “This is the rule: any day on which there is musaf, yet it is not Yom Tov, four people read. On Yom Tov, five (people read the Torah), on Yom Kippur, six, and on Shabbos, seven. You may not have less people read, but you may have more”. We see that the more sanctity the day has, the more people read from the Torah. Musaf demonstrates that the day has some kedusha, and therefore, on Rosh Chodesh and Chol Hamoed, four people read. Yom Tov, which has greater sanctity than Rosh Chodesh or Chol Hamoed, requires that five people read. Since Yom Kippur has greater sanctity than other yomim tovim, it requires that six people read the Torah, and Shabbos, with even greater sanctity, requires that seven people read the Torah. That is why when Yom Kippur falls on Shabbos, we call up seven people for the Yom Kippur reading in parshas Acharei Mos, whereas when it falls on a weekday, we call up only six, not including maftir.

According to Rashi, the statement that you may have more people read applies not only on Shabbos but on Yom Tov and Yom Kippur as well. This means that you may call up to the Torah more than five aliyos on Yom Tov and more than six on Yom Kippur. According to other rishonim (mentioned by the Ran), only on Shabbos may we add extra aliyos. In general, we follow the latter opinion and do not add extra aliyos on Yom Tov, with the exception of Simchas Torah, when most Ashkenazic communities follow Rashi's opinion and add many aliyos (Rema, Orach Chayim 282:1).

In actuality, there is a dispute among tana'im whether Shabbos has greater sanctity than Yom Kippur, or vice versa. According to the tana who contends that Yom Kippur has greater sanctity, six people read the Torah on Shabbos and seven on Yom Kippur (Megillah 23a). The Turei Even explains that this tana considers Yom Kippur to be holier because of the extra prayer that we daven, tefillas neilah. The Gemara mentions a dispute whether the maftir aliyah is considered one of the aliyos counted in the Mishnah or not, but this is a topic that we will leave for a future article.

Although the Mishnah does not mention how this is applied on fast days, Chanukah and Purim, since there is no musaf on any of these days, we conclude that only three people read.

Rosh Chodesh reading

The discussion of the festivals in parshas Emor does not make overt mention of Rosh Chodesh. Is there indeed a Torah requirement to read the Torah on Rosh Chodesh? This matter is disputed among acharonim, the Penei Moshe ruling that it includes Rosh Chodesh, and Rav Moshe Feinstein ruling that it does not (Shu"t Igros Moshe, Orach Chayim 1:101:2; 2:8).

3. Mincha reading

The Mishnah (Megillah 21a) I quoted above also mentions that we read from the Torah at mincha on Shabbos. The Gemara (Bava Kama 82a) notes that this mitzvah is of later origin than the requirement to read the Torah on Monday, Thursday and Shabbos mornings. Reading the Torah at mincha on Shabbos was instituted by Ezra, at the beginning of the second Beis Hamikdash period. Its purpose was to accommodate the spiritual needs of those individuals whose business enterprises precluded them from making it to shul for kerias haTorah on Monday and Thursday (as explained by Shitah Mekubetzes). This reading provides these individuals with another opportunity to study Torah. A different approach is that this was instituted for people who spend their Shabbos afternoon in wasteful activity, and to provide them with an opportunity to be influenced by Torah to use their “free time” more wisely (Me'iri, Kiryas Sefer, 5:1). According to either interpretation, we see another situation in which Chazal created an obligation for everyone, because of concern for some individuals.

How much, how many?

The Gemara explains (Bava Kama 82a) that, although the original takanah when the Jews were in the Desert required reading the Torah three times a week, on Monday, Thursday and Shabbos, there was no requirement as to how much should be read. When Ezra instituted the additional reading at mincha on Shabbos, he also established several rules germane to that reading and to the reading on Monday and Thursday. He instituted that at least three people must be called to the Torah and that each reading must include at least ten pesukim. The Gemara explains that three people are called up to represent the Kohanim, Levi'im and Yisroelim, presumably to show that all three sub-groups within Klal Yisroel need to be involved in the fulfillment of this takanah.

With time, the custom developed that, on Shabbos mincha, Monday and Thursday, we read from the beginning of the next parsha (Me'iri, Kiryas Sefer, 5:1). Usually, we read what will be the kohein's aliyah on the next Shabbos morning, but there are weeks when this is not followed precisely, either because the kohein's aliyah is too short to accommodate three aliyos, or because his aliyah is longer than we want to read on Monday and Thursday.

4. Complete reading

The reading on Shabbos morning that was originally established when the Jews were in the Desert eventually included a custom that the entire Torah would be read in a cyclical pattern. Exactly when this was established is unclear; but it is very clear that, initially, there were at least two customs how often the entire Torah was completed in the weekly Shabbos readings. One custom completed the entire Torah as we do, every year, whereas the other approach completed it only every three years (Megillah 29b; Rambam, Hilchos Tefillah 13:1). At some point in Jewish history, it became common practice to complete the reading of the Torah every year, and to finish this reading on Simchas Torah (Megillah 31a; Rambam, Hilchos Tefillah 13:1). At that time, the division of the Torah into our current weekly parshios occurred, and the system of “double parshios” developed to accommodate the completion of the Torah whether it is a leap year or not.

After the practice to complete the entire Torah annually became universally accepted, the following became an issue: What is the halacha if you mistakenly skipped a posuk while reading the Torah -- or the baal keriah misread something in a way that invalidates the reading -- but it was not realized until later. Must you reread the Torah portion for the week?

Missed a posuk

At this point, we can return to one of our opening questions: “What is the halacha if we began an aliyah a posuk later than the previous aliyah had ended?”

Based on Mesechta Sofrim (11:6) and Hagahos Maimoniyos, the Shulchan Aruch rules as follows:

On Monday, Thursday, Shabbos mincha or Yom Tov, the rule is as follows: Provided each person called to the Torah had an aliyah of at least three pesukim, and the reading of the Torah was at least ten pesukim, there is no need to repeat the reading. However, if this happened on Shabbos morning, even if we already returned the sefer Torah and davened musaf, we must take out the sefer Torah again and read the missed posuk and two more pesukim next to it, to make it into a proper aliyah (Shulchan Aruch, Orach Chayim 137:3).

Thus, to answer this question, “What is the halacha if we began an aliyah a posuk later than the previous aliyah had ended,” we need the following information:

1. During which keriah did this happen?
2. Did the two aliyos, the ones before and after the skipped posuk, still have three pesukim?
3. Were at least ten pesukim read for the entire kerias haTorah?

Assuming that the answers to questions 2 and 3 were both Yes, and this happened to any keriah other than Shabbos morning, there is no need to do anything. If either of these rules was not observed, meaning that one of the people received an aliyah of less than three pesukim, or the entire reading was less than ten pesukim, then the sefer Torah should be taken out, one person should be called to the Torah, and he should read at least three pesukim (if rule 2 was broken) or four pesukim (if rule 3 was broken).

If this happened during a Shabbos morning keriah, and, as a result, one posuk from the week's parsha was not read, then they should take out the sefer Torah and read the skipped posuk, together with two other pesukim next to it. There is no need to reread the entire aliyah.

Skipped a posuk

At this point, let us address a different one of our opening questions:

"After davening on Shabbos morning, we realized that the baal keriah skipped a posuk during the last aliyah. What do we do now?"

The brief answer to this question is that it is the subject of a dispute between early acharonim. The Keneses Hagedolah, by Rav Chayim Benveniste of Turkey, one of the most prominent poskim of the 17th century, rules that we do not take out a new sefer Torah to read the end of the parsha in this instance. He is disputed by the Maharif, Rav Yaakov Feraji Mahmah, who was the rosh, av beis din and rosh

yeshiva of Alexandria, Egypt, in the early eighteenth century. The Maharif's contention is that once it is established practice where we stop reading the Torah each Shabbos, which the Levush (Orach Chayim 137:5) calls a takanas chachamim, we are required to complete that reading on Shabbos, even if we need to take out a sefer Torah a second time to fulfill it. The Keneses Hagedolah apparently holds that we are required to call up seven aliyos, but once the baal keriah completed the seventh aliyah and the sefer Torah was returned, we can fulfill the takanah of completing the entire Torah by beginning the next week's parsha early; thereby making up for the missing pesukim.

Conclusion

In the introduction to Sefer HaChinuch, the author writes that the main mitzvah upon which all the other mitzvos rest is that of Talmud Torah. Through Torah learning, a person will know how to fulfill all of the other mitzvos. That is why Chazal instituted a public reading of a portion of the Torah every Shabbos twice and on Mondays and Thursdays. Knowing that the proper observance of all the mitzvos is contingent on Torah learning, our attention to kerias haTorah will be heightened. According to the Torah reading the great respect it is due should increase our sensitivity to the observance of all the mitzvos

לע"נ

שרה משא בת ר' יעקב אליעזר ע"ה
ביילא בת (אריה) לייב ע"ה
אנא מלכה בת ישראל ע"ה

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 Tz'lafchad (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 disinheriting 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'la'had, 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'etre 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.

Text Copyright © 2014 by Rabbi Yitzchak Etshalom and Torah.org. The author is Educational Coordinator of the Jewish Studies Institute of the Yeshiva of Los Angeles.

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 mon

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 parshial!] |
| 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, ZEVAH, & 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 tiflat 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 its 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.

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: Pharo's winemaster and bakermaster. 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 leviyyim 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 Leviyyim, 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 protege" 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 "protege" or "apprentice" is the case of Eliyahu and Elisha, certainly another master/protege 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 protege [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 protege "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 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