

Potomac Torah Study Center

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Rosh Hodesh Av is next Shabbat

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) at www.PotomacTorah.org. Thanks to Bill Landau for hosting the Devrei Torah archives.

May Hashem protect Israel and Jews everywhere. May Hashem's protection shine on all of Israel, the IDF, and Jews throughout the world. May the remaining hostages soon come home, and may a new era bring security and rebuilding for both Israel and all others who genuinely seek peace.

If a person reads the verses in the parsha for this week and does not know the name of the parsha, would "Pinchas" be an obvious choice? Of the fifty-four parashot in the Torah, only six – eleven percent – have a person as the name: Noach, Chayei Sarah, Yitro, Korach, Balak, and Pinchas.

Three of the individuals whose names identify a parsha are not Jewish (Noach, Yitro, and Balak). Korach and Balak are "bad guys," to use a description that my children and grandchildren used when young. There is no parsha named for Avraham, Yitzhak, Yaakov, Aharon, or most other significant Jews. Why Pinchas?

Pinchas comes to our attention after he takes a sword and kills Zimri, a prince of Shimon, and Cozbi, daughter of a prince of Midian, when they perform a disgusting form of idolatry to Peor (the central idol of Midian and Moab). Once Zimri and Cozbi perform their idolatry in front of B'Nai Yisrael, God starts a plague that quickly kills 24,000 people. When Pinchas kills Zimri and Cozbi, Hashem stops the plague and announces a reward of peace (and permanent status of Kohen for Pinchas and his descendants).

Rabbi David Fohrman and his associates at alephbeta.org summarize the stories in Pinchas to determine a common theme. Here are the stories in the parsha:

- (1) Pinchas kills the sinning couple (a high ranking Jewish man and a Midianite princess), and God presents an everlasting reward to Pinchas.
- (2) God has Moshe conduct a census of the Jews, by tribe and family, listing the heads of each family by name. These families will inherit permanent holdings in the land.
- (3) The daughters of Tzelofchad approach Moshe, say that their father is dead and that they have no brothers. They also want to inherit so there can be a permanent land holding to keep their father's name alive. God finds their request to have merit and amends the inheritance to include daughters when there is no son to inherit.

(4) God tells Moshe to go up a mountain to view the land and informs him that he will then die. Moshe requests that God appoint a proper leader to lead the people into the land. Hashem selects Yehoshua and tells Moshe to appoint him in front of the people and to transfer some of his Ruach Kodesh to Yehoshua.

(5) Hashem tells Moshe to command the people which korbanot to present each day and the Musaf (additional) offerings to give on Shabbat, Rosh Hodesh, and each Yom Tov.

Rabbi Fohrman and his scholars identify legacy as the common theme that connects all the stories in the parsha. The legacy for Pinchas is that he becomes a Kohen and all his descendants will also be Kohanim. (The initial appointment of Kohanim is to all sons of Aharon born after his appointment. Since Pinchas was born before Aharon becomes a Kohen, he is not a Kohen himself until God appoints him as a reward for stopping the plague at Baal Peor.)

The census and request of the daughters of Tzelofchad clearly relate to legacy, because they determine the permanent land holdings of the families that enter Eretz Yisrael at the time of Yehoshua. Although needy families could “sell” their land if necessary, the land reverts to the original land holders every Yovel year – so the land allocations are permanent until conquering nations take the Jews into exile and tribal identities are lost.

The land allocations do not include Moshe – there are no grants to his sons Gershom and Eliezer. Pirkei Avot opens by presenting Moshe’s legacy – Yehoshua, the judges, the men of the great assembly, and a long list of Rabbis who preserve the Torah that Hashem presents to Moshe and that his followers clarified through the Oral Law, always connecting new decisions by connecting them with statements in the Torah and previous religious case law.

Hashem presents the laws in chapters 28 and 29, the daily korbanot and all the Musaf korbanot, to Moshe either on Har Sinai or while B’Nai Yisrael are near the base of Har Sinai before our ancestors leave to complete the journey to Eretz Yisrael. The Torah presents this material here, in Pinchas, for thematic reasons. Once Pinchas becomes a Kohen and the priesthood will remain among his descendants, the details of the burnt offerings (olot) fit thematically in this parsha. Performing these korbanot is an important part of the legacy of Pinchas.

Rabbi Dr. Katriel (Kenneth) Brander reminds us weekly that the period since the Hamas attack on October 7, 2023, with the surge in anti-Semitic attacks all over the world, has brought Jews in Israel and the Diaspora closer together. While the obligations of Haredi Jews in helping defend Israel is still evolving, many frum Jews in Israel – both men and women – combine religious studies with helping defend the country. Half the women graduates of religious Zionist high schools now enlist in the IDF, and ten percent of them seek role in combat units. As more segments of the Israeli society work together to defend the country, and Jews in the Diaspora identify more closely with Israel, we look forward to a better future for Israel, Jews, and all people who wish for a better world. My beloved Rebbe, Rabbi Leonard Cahan, z”l, shared Rabbi Brander’s desire for all elements of the Israeli community to work together, and we try to teach this wish to our children and grandchildren.

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 Velvel David ben Sarah Rachel; Moshe Aaron ben Leah Beilah (badly wounded in battle in Gaza but slowly recovering), Daniel Yitzchak Meir HaLevy ben Ruth; Ariah Ben Sarah, Hershel Tzvi ben Chana, Reuven ben Basha Chaya Zlata Lana, Avraham ben Gavriela, Mordechai ben Chaya,

David Moshe ben Raizel; Zvi ben Sara Chaya, Reuven ben Masha, Meir ben Sara, Oscar ben Simcha; Miriam Bat Leah; Yehudit Leah bas Hannah Feiga; Miriam bat Esha, Chana bat Sarah; Raizel bat Rut; Rena bat Ilsa, Riva Golda bat Leah, Sharon bat Sarah, Kayla bat Ester, and Malka bat Simcha, and all our fellow Jews in danger in and near Israel. Please contact me for any additions or subtractions. Thank you.

Shabbat Shalom,

Hannah & Alan

Parshat Pinhas: Engaging with the Diaspora

By Rabbi Dr. Katriel (Kenneth) Brander * 5785 / 2025

President and Rosh HaYeshiva, Ohr Torah Stone

Dedicated in memory of Israel's murdered and fallen, for the return of our hostages still in Gaza, for the refuah shlayma of our wounded in body or spirit, and for the safety of our brave IDF soldiers.

*This week's OTS Devrei Torah are dedicated in memory of **Sergeant Shlomo Yakir Shrem z"l**, a graduate of our Derech Avot High School in Efrat, who fell in battle this week in northern Gaza*

The practice of reading a weekly passage from the Prophets, the haftarah, was first instituted in antiquity, during an era when persecutory laws forbade Jews from reading the Torah publicly. According to Rabbi David Abudraham, because the haftarot were originally read in place of the weekly Torah portion, the Sages selected them carefully to ensure that at least one of the central messages of each parsha would be embedded in that week's reading.

However, beginning this week, and for the next twelve weeks, we deviate from this norm. For three weeks, in anticipation of the fast of Tisha Be'av, we will read prophecies that focus on the causes of the destruction of the Beit Hamikdash and the expulsion of the Jewish People from the Land of Israel.

Then, for seven weeks after the fast, we will continue with readings that contain messages of consolation and salvation for the Jewish people, giving voice to our forward-looking optimism and faith in a speedy and complete redemption in our own time. This in turn will be followed by two haftarot devoted to the theme of teshuva [repentance] during the High Holiday period.

When it comes to the haftarot for the three weeks building up to Tisha Be'av, the Shulchan Arukh (Orach Chaim 428:8) lists the special readings from Isaiah and Jeremiah that are commonly read today. Five hundred years earlier, however, Maimonides, in his Mishneh Torah, painted a more complicated picture. At the close of Sefer Ahava, he provides a comprehensive list of all the weekly haftarot, and there he does not indicate any special readings for the three weeks. On the contrary, all the entries on his list are readings that connect to themes of the parsha.

The same holds for the Sheva Denechamta – the seven haftarot of consolation universally read on the Shabbatot following Tisha Be'av. One who consulted this list would have no inkling that special haftarot are ordinarily read during these weeks. And yet, earlier in the same volume, in Hilkhos Tefilla 13:19, he writes as follows:

It is the custom of the people on the three Sabbaths before Tisha Be'av to read haftarot of rebuke.... Similarly, it is the common custom in our cities to read the comforting prophecies of Isaiah as the haftarot from Tisha Be'av until Rosh Hashana. On the Sabbath between Rosh Hashana and Yom Kippur, we read "Shuva Yisrael" as the haftarah.

To understand the apparent contradiction in the Mishneh Torah, it is important to focus on Maimonides' opening formulation "*It is the custom of the people*" [*nahagu haam*]. This phrase hints to us that the people themselves changed their practice from what had been previously established. The tradition of selecting special readings to befit the solemnity of the season began in the Land of Israel, where the search to find ways of mourning the loss of the Temple and Jewish sovereignty was felt most acutely.

Diaspora Jews, however, did not originally mark these weeks enveloping Tisha Be'av with haftarot devoted to contrition, comfort and making sense of these traumatic events. As time went by, however, the Jews in exile began to adopt this practice in identification with the severity of our collective loss and our hope for national redemption. The dissonance in Maimonides' writing reflects this shift, expressing both the original custom of the diaspora Jews and the new custom they took upon themselves in solidarity with their brethren in the Land of Israel.

In today's connected world, we are experiencing a similar exchange of ideas and themes between Israel and Diaspora Jewry. The challenges and pain of recent years – from antisemitism, national crises and war – have drawn us closer together as one people. Here in Israel, whether one is haredi, religious Zionist, or celebrates Shabbat on the beaches of Tel Aviv, we face the same threats and celebrate the same miracles.

Those of us privileged to live in Israel experience Jewish identity and halacha not only in our homes or synagogues, but also in the public sphere – through language, culture, law and national life. That experience offers a spiritual and emotional dimension that is difficult to convey. Yet it is precisely in sharing those moments that we can influence and strengthen our bond with our brothers and sisters across the globe.

Jewish life outside of Israel is one of deep commitment. Yet, as with the haftarot of mourning and consolation that gradually became part of the Diaspora practice over time, there is a continuing process of connection and discovery of how the holistic messages found in Israeli Jewish life can also resonate far beyond its borders.

Like the haftarot themselves, which begin with rebuke and end with comfort, our collective Jewish story is one of shared struggle and hope. These weeks invite us into a conversation that bridges our distance with a common narrative. Through the three haftarot of rebuke, we express our vulnerability and longing for something more purposeful; and through the seven of consolation, we proclaim our collective optimism and belief that we will live to see the full redemption.

This relationship of engagement and dialogue with our family abroad, highlighted in Maimonides' halakhic comment "*nahagu haam*," represents a wondrous responsibility for us. It is up to us to demonstrate, articulate, and affirm that we are truly one nation – united by the same eternal mission, ideas and ideals, and to build a future worthy of our shared past.

Special note: In the wake of October 7th, something remarkable has happened: an unprecedented surge of religious young women stepping forward to serve in the IDF. Indeed, last year, close to fifty percent of the women graduating from Religious Zionist high schools enlisted, with an astonishing ten percent of these seeking roles in combat units. In response, the IDF requested a partnership with Ohr Torah Stone's *Maaminot BeMadim* program to create the first-ever combat unit exclusively for religious women — ensuring these trailblazers could serve their country without compromising their values

* President and Rosh HaYeshiva of Ohr Torah Stone, a modern Orthodox group of 32 institutions and programs. Rabbi Dr. Shlomo Riskin is the Founding Director, and Rabbi Dr. Brander is President and Rosh HaYeshiva. For more information or to support Ohr Torah Stone, contact ohrtorahstone@otsyny.org or 212-935-8672. **Ohr Torah Stone is in the midst of its fund-raising drive. Please support this effort with Donations to 49 West 45th Street #701, New York, NY 10036.**

Dvar Torah: Pinchas: What One Person Can Do! (5773)

By Rabbi Label Lam

HASHEM spoke to Moshe, saying: Pinchus 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 if 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 of 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 affect 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 school 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/>

A Thought on the Parsha (Pinchas): A New Leadership? Yes We Can!

by Rabbi Dov Linzer, Rosh HaYeshiva, Yeshivat Chovevei Torah © 2012

The Israelites have been wandering through the Wilderness for forty years, and they are now on the cusp of entering into the Land of Canaan. Things will be different now. There will no longer be the cloud of God to lead them during the day and the pillar of fire to lead them at night. There will no longer be manna from Heaven to feed them and the miraculous well to quench their thirst. And their leaders will all be different. Miriam has died, Aharon has died, and now, in parashat Pinchas, Moshe is told to prepare for his death as well.

From the time of the Exodus until now, the main players of the Biblical story have been God, Moshe, and Aharon. The Children of Israel have had very little identity other than that of chronic complainers. But now things are about to change. The larger-than-life leaders are dead or soon to be so, and God will soon step back as well and become a more distant player in the future events of the people. It is now the nation's story that will be told; it is now the story not of the leaders, but of the people.

It is thus that we find that the Children of Israel have been moving more and more into the foreground – and Moshe more and more into the background – in these recent parshiyot. In parashat Chukat, immediately after Aharon dies, the king of Arad goes to war against Israel, and then – who is the protagonist? Not Moshe, but Israel. For it is then that Israel takes the initiative, that Israel makes a vow to God, and that Israel goes to war against Arad. And it is then that God responds not to Moshe's prayers, but to the prayers of Israel – *“And the Lord listened to the voice of Israel”* (21:3) – and the people were victorious.

And so it goes. It is in that parasha that there is a song to the well, and song that opens not with *“az yashir Moshe,”* *“then Moshe sang,”* (Shemot 15:1) but rather *“az yashir Yisrael,”* then Israel sang (Bamidbar 21:17). It is then that messengers are sent to the neighboring countries for safe passage. Moshe does come briefly to the fore here – he sends messengers to Edom – but they are rebuffed and the mission fails. But at the next encounter, it is not Moshe who sends messengers, but Israel (21:21). And here – when they are likewise rebuffed by Sichon, king of the Amorites – the result is unexpected and phenomenal: Israel is brought to war against him (21:23), Israel defeats him and his army in battle (21:24), and Israel conquers all his territory (21:25). The story, clearly, is no longer about Moshe, but about Israel.

The absence of Moshe from almost the entirety of the next parasha, then, should not take us by surprise. The story of Balak and Balaam is a story of one nation plotting against another nation, and Moshe is nowhere to be seen. When Moshe does finally reemerge at the end of the parasha, it is to deal with a situation that Israel – again as an independent actor, as an initiator – has created. Israel has dwelled in Shittim (25:1), Israel has whored after the Moabite women (25:2), and Israel has worshiped the Ba'al of Peor (25:3). Moshe, on God's command, steps up and tries to take control of the situation. And then what happens? A new leader emerges. Pinchas is the one who takes charge and who does what is needed.

One can even hear in this story the echo of another leader who, when he saw a terrible act being committed, and when he saw that no one else was rising up, did what was necessary and slew the Egyptian who was beating a Hebrew slave. That earlier act of smiting the Egyptian was the leadership needed at that time – a leadership to protect an enslaved and oppressed people. Pinchas' smiting of Zimri, on the other hand, was the leadership needed for a free people, for a people who had choice and opportunity and who could easily go astray as a result. It was the leadership for a people about to enter and possess a land, a people about to become a sovereign nation.

And yet it was not Pinchas who was to lead them. A new leadership had to come to the fore, but ironically, those who were chosen were not the most obvious candidates. Pinchas was the Kohen who took initiative, and yet it was Elazar who would be the next Kohen Gadol, who would be the religious head of the people. And who was to be the political head? Not Caleb, the one who had the courage to stand up to the people, to silence their rebellious murmurings. Not Caleb, the one of who had *“a different spirit in him.”* No, it was not Caleb. It was Yehoshua. Why? Why not the obvious choice of Pinchas and Caleb? Why rather the quiet and unassuming leadership of Elazar and Yehoshua?

The answer is clear. Israel had just had two larger-than-life leaders – they had had Moshe and they had had Aharon. These were the founders of the nation. But if the nation were to succeed, were to stand on its own, it could not be by virtue of the personalities or the charisma of their leaders. It would have to be by virtue of their own character, their own national identity. The story would have to be theirs.

After a larger-than-life leader, what is needed is stability, continuity, and consolidation. What is not needed is another charismatic leader. After Avraham, we needed not another Avraham, but a Yitzchak. After Moshe and Aharon we needed not a Calev and a Pinchas, but a Yehoshua and an Elazer.

This transition of leadership is paralleled by the transition in their relationship with God. In the Wilderness, God had been a powerful, indeed overwhelming, presence: the cloud and the pillar of fire, the Tabernacle and the Glory which appeared in the cloud, hearing God's direct communication, and feeling God's direct punishment. All of that would soon change. As they were tilling the land and harvesting their crops, as they were working to create a government and its laws, they would have to exert serious effort and observe many mitzvot to ensure that they would keep God in mind, that they would remember the God who took them out of Egypt. In short, their religious leadership, their political leadership, and even their relationship with God would have to be a less imposing, less overwhelming. All these would have to step back so that the nation of Israel, and the people of Israel, could come into its own.

And the daughters of Tzelaphchad paved the way. According to the law that had been received from God, the daughters of Tzelaphchad would not receive any of their father's portion of the land. But they would have none of that. That was not going to be the end of the conversation. These women had a legitimate complaint, and they would be heard. And heard they were – and the law – God's law – changed as a result. In this, they proved themselves to be the generation fit to enter the land. They demonstrated not only their passion for the land, but their intuitive understanding that now they must stand up for themselves. Their relationship with their leaders would be different, and their relationship with God would be different. The human reality could be brought to God, could be brought in conversation with the law that was to govern their lives, and a truer law would emerge.

The Sefat Emet makes this point nicely:

The meaning is that now, for the generation entering the Land, a new way of life was beginning. It is for this reason that there was a new census (at this time, as we read in this parasha)... This was all a function of the transformation of this generation, which was now beginning a way of life based on human effort and "bestirring from below." This is in the (theological) category of the "Oral Torah," that everything was given at Sinai, but the Children of Israel must bring (this Torah) from potential into reality.

Until now, one book, one story, was being written. It was the Written Torah, the Five Books of Moses, and it was the story of Moshe, of Aharon, of God. Now, as the people prepare to enter the land, another story, another book, must start to be written. It is the Oral Torah. It is the Torah that emerges when the people come into their own. It is the Torah that emerges when the people don't experience God's overwhelming presence, but when they work to find God who is so often hidden in the world. It is the Torah that emerges when the people not only receive the Torah but engage in true conversation with the Torah. It is this Torah and this leadership – one of engagement and empowerment – which is needed to bring us into the land. It is this Torah and this leadership which allows us to flourish as a people on the land.

Shabbat Shalom!

From my archives.

The Dangers of "Echo Reasoning": Thoughts for Parashat Pinehas

By Rabbi Marc D. Angel *

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

* Founder and Director, Institute for Jewish Ideas and Ideals and rabbi emeritus of the historic Spanish and Portuguese Synagogue of New York City.

<https://www.jewishideas.org/dangers-echo-reasoning-thoughts-parashat-pinehas>

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(Troubling) Thoughts on the Kaddish deRabbanan: Blog by Rabbi Marc D. Angel *

“May we of Israel together with our rabbis, their disciples and pupils, and all who engage in the study of holy Torah here and everywhere, find gracious favor and mercy from the Lord of heaven and earth.” (from the Kaddish deRabbanan)

In chanting the Kaddish deRabbanan during our daily prayer services, we invoke God’s mercy on all who teach and study Torah. This prayer was originally designed to be recited after a Torah lecture/homiletic discourse. It now also is chanted by mourners after the recitation of rabbinic passages.

The prayer underscores the importance of Torah study. The Talmud records the statement of Rabbi Hanina that Torah scholars increase peace in the world (Berakhot 64a). Torah study brings rabbis and their students closer to the Almighty, closer to each other, more devoted to the welfare of society.

When we recite the Kaddish deRabbanan, we have in mind all who study Torah because we believe that Torah provides God’s guidance for upright lives. Those who study Torah should surely be among the finest, most honest, most loving, and most righteous people in the world. And many of them are.

But when I recite the Kaddish deRabbanan these days, I feel a certain unease. I am troubled by the fact that not all rabbis and students of Torah are people whom I find admirable or worthy of praise. There are those who study Torah but who act reprehensibly or say terrible things. They don’t increase peace in the world but rather increase hatred and divisiveness in the world.

The Jerusalem Post recently had an article about a rabbi from the extremist Neturei Karta group. He went to Brazil to meet with an Iranian government official to express his solidarity with Iran in the face of “Zionist” attacks. I assume that this rabbi studies Torah, but he openly identifies with the enemies of Israel who wish to annihilate the Jewish State. How can I pray for such a rabbi or others like him?

The Jerusalem Post also had an article quoting a previous Chief Rabbi of Israel who said that Israeli soldiers are being killed in battle because of a lack of Torah study. The implication is that if all Jews would be studying Torah, Israeli soldiers would not die in war. This rabbi is very learned and studies a lot of Torah; but his views on this matter, to my mind, are cruel, naïve and reprehensible. How can I pray for such a rabbi or others like him?

The Times of Israel reported on a prominent Haredi girls' seminary in Jerusalem that plans to operate a separate program for Sephardic students that will have a different entrance from that of Ashkenazic students. Even though the municipality of Jerusalem required the school to accept Sephardic students without discriminating against them, the school's director decided to establish a segregated program. No doubt the Haredi school establishment, including staff and parents, all study Torah. But in spite of this, they foster ugly discrimination against fellow Jews based on ethnicity. How can I pray for such people?

Perhaps when I recite Kaddish deRabbanan I should only have in mind those rabbis and students who study Torah in purity, who lead honest and compassionate lives, and who really do increase peace in the world. But the text specifically includes "all who engage in the study of holy Torah." It makes no exceptions, even for those who speak and act inappropriately.

Perhaps the lesson is for us to accustom ourselves to beseech God's mercy without our standing in judgment of the merits or demerits of the people for whom we pray. God is the ultimate Judge, not us. We pray that God, in graciousness and mercy, will lead all who study Torah to live moral, upright lives. We pray that the study of Torah will indeed bring rabbis and students to live righteously...to be sources of light, love and peace.

When we recite the Kaddish deRabbanan, then, we are not only praying for others: we are also praying for ourselves. May we live up to the standards we expect of others. May we be sources of Torah light, sweetness and peace. May we find "gracious favor and mercy from the Lord of heaven and earth."

* Founder and Director, Institute for Jewish Ideas and Ideals and rabbi emeritus of the historic Spanish and Portuguese Synagogue of New York City. July 11, 2025.

<https://www.jewishideas.org/node/3364>

Parshas Pinchas -- A Good Eye

by Rabbi Mordechai Rhine * © 2014

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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.**

Note: Rabbi Rhine is on vacation for a few weeks, and he has authorized me to reprint selected Devrei Torah from his archives during this period.

Pinchas - Thinking With Your Heart Or Feeling With Your Mind by Rabbi Yehoshua Singer * (2022)

Parshas Pinchas opens with Hashem telling Moshe how important it was that Pinchas killed Zimri and Kozbi. They were creating an indescribable desecration of G-d’s name and were bringing great harm to the Jewish people. So great was the desecration and damage that if not for Pinchas everyone could have been swept up in the evil of Zimri, and the entire nation could have been destroyed:

“Pinchas the son of Elazar the son of Aharon the Priest returned My wrath from upon the children of Israel when he avenged My vengeance among them, and I did not wipe out the children of Israel in My wrath.”)Bamidbar 25:11(

Despite the great importance for Pinchas’s deed, the Gemara in Sanhedrin)82a(teaches us that most people would not be allowed to take action as Pinchas did. The Mishna teaches that when one creates such a grave desecration of G-d’s name, “zealots can kill him.” Rav Chisda adds that anyone who has to ask if he is allowed to act is clearly not a zealot. To be allowed to take vengeance on G-d’s behalf one must have a true and complete, personal relationship with G-d, such that he feels compelled to act to protect G-d’s honor and to save His people. If he has any question in his heart about the depth of his concern, then he is not a true zealot and is not allowed to avenge G-d’s honor in this way.

G-d attests that Pinchas was indeed a true zealot. When he saw the great desecration to G-d's name and the threat to the Jewish people, his concern and pain overwhelmed him. He simply had to act.

Yet, the Gemara continues and tells us that this was not Pinchas's reaction. The Gemara describes the scene. Zimri gathered twenty-four thousand people, grabbed Kozbi, dragged her before Moshe and the Sanhedrin (High Court) and declared his intent to live with her despite G-d's prohibition. Moshe and the other members of the court could not remember the appropriate response. Pinchas alone remembered the law. However, seeing that his teachers and those older and greater than him didn't know what to do, Pinchas felt it would be inappropriate for him to act. He, therefore, stayed calm and did not react immediately.

The Gemara quotes two opinions as to what happened next. Rav teaches that Pinchas calmly spoke up and asked Moshe, "Great Uncle, didn't you teach us when you came down from Mount Sinai that one who engages in this act, zealots can kill him?" Moshe responded that Pinchas was indeed correct, and that since he remembered, he should be the one to act. Only then, when Moshe had both agreed with the ruling and appointed him, did Pinchas take action and kill Zimri and Kozbi. Shmuel teaches that Pinchas did not ask. Rather, Pinchas calmly thought over the matter and realized that when G-d's honor is being desecrated we do not give honor to teachers. When he realized that this rule applied to the desecration created by Zimri, then and only then did he step forth and kill Zimri and Kozbi.

According to both opinions, Pinchas clearly was not overwhelmed by his anguish and concern for G-d and the Jewish people. He stayed calm, considered his options and only acted once Torah law dictated that he should. If this is true, then how could Pinchas have been a true zealot? Why was he allowed to take action?

It is said that we sometimes think with our hearts, but it is more important to know how to feel with our minds. Our emotional reactions are directly proportional to our focus and our thoughts. The more we think about a topic, the more deeply we feel about it. The less we focus on it, the less strongly we will react. When Pinchas focused on what Zimri was doing, he felt an undeniable need to react. However, when he first felt himself reacting, he didn't allow himself to dwell on Zimri. Instead, he controlled his emotions and focused on the relevant Torah laws instead. Only once it was appropriate did he allow himself to focus on Zimri's desecration and react. This is the true greatness of mankind – when emotions are felt with the mind.

* Co-founder of the Rhode Island Torah Network in Providence, RI. Until recently, Rabbi, Am HaTorah Congregation, Bethesda, MD., and associated with the Savannah Kollel.

Parshat Pinchas

By Rabbi Haim Ovadia **

]Rabbi Ovadia did not submit a Dvar Torah for this week. Watch this space for his future teachings.[

Shabbat Shalom.

* Judaic faculty, Ramaz High School, New York; also Torah VeAhava. Until recently, Rabbi, Beth Sholom Sephardic Minyan (Potomac, MD). Faculty member, AJRCA non-denominational rabbinical school.

Many Devrei Torah from Rabbi Ovadia this year come from an unpublished draft of his forthcoming book on Tanach, which Rabbi Ovadia has generously shared with our readers. Rabbi Ovadia reserves all copyright protections for this material.

Pinchas: Maftir and the Rush of Time

by Rabbi Moshe Rube*

Every Maftir from every holiday comes from this week's Torah portion. From the shofars of Rosh Hashanah to the Matzoh of the Seder to the Shavuot cheesecake. All of them spring from Parashat Pinchas.

As the year begins to wind down, this parsha comes at a good time to remind us of all the wonderful experiences we've had over the past year celebrating the holidays. At the moment of writing, I remember the most recent Shavuot dinner, when we heard all varieties of Torah and perspectives from our congregants -- including stories of Holocaust survival, AHC history and a riveting magic act.

Who could forget our well organized and meaningful High Holiday services? How about the Seders that we celebrated together?

Time moves by so fast. Blink and you miss it. It's almost as if the Torah every now and then gives us a push to remember what we've done. It's good to remember Jewish history whether from a thousand years or six months ago.

May we relish in the memories of this year and merit to create new ones this coming year.

Shabbat Shalom.

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

Rav Kook Torah Pinchas: Zealotry for the Sake of Heaven

Pinchas' Lineage

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.

)Sapphire from the Land of Israel. Adapted from Olat Re'iyah vol. I, p. 394.(

<https://ravkooktorah.org/PINHAS58.htm>

Pinchas: Lessons of a Leader (5774, 5781)

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

The parsha of Pinchas contains a masterclass on leadership, as Moses confronts his own mortality and asks God to appoint a successor. The great leaders care about succession. In parshat Chayei Sarah, we saw Abraham instruct his servant to find a wife for his son Isaac, so that the family of the covenant would continue. King David chose Solomon. Elijah, at God's bidding, appointed Elisha to carry on his work.

In the case of Moses, the Sages sensed a certain sadness at his realisation that he would not be succeeded by either of his sons, Gershom or Eliezer.^[1] Such is the case with Keter Torah, the invisible crown of Torah worn by the Prophets and the Sages. Unlike the crowns of priesthood and kingship, it does not pass dynastically from father to son. Charisma rarely does. What is instructive, though, is the language Moses uses in framing his request:

"May the Lord, God of the spirits of all flesh, choose a person 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

There are three basic leadership lessons to be learned from this choice of words. The first, noted by Rashi, is implicit in the unusually long description of God as *"the Lord, God of the spirits of all flesh."* This means, Rashi explains, *"Master of the universe, the character of each person is revealed to You, and no two are alike. Appoint over them a leader who will bear with each person according to their individual character."*^[2]

The Rambam says that this is a basic feature of the human condition. Homo sapiens is the most diverse of all life forms. Therefore co-operation is essential – because we are each different, others are strong where we are weak and vice versa – but cohesion is also difficult, because we each respond to challenges in different ways. That is what makes leadership necessary, but also demanding:

This great variety, and the necessity of social life, are essential elements in human nature. But the well-being of society demands that there should be a leader able to regulate the actions of each person; they must complete every shortcoming, remove every excess, and prescribe for the conduct of all, so that the natural variety should be counterbalanced by the uniformity of legislation, and the order of society be well established.^[3] Maimonides, *The Guide for the Perplexed*, Book 2, Chapter 40.

Leaders respect differences but, like the conductor of an orchestra, integrate them, ensuring that the many different instruments play their part in harmony with the rest. True leaders do not seek to impose uniformity. They honour diversity.

The second hint is contained in the word *ish*, “a person” over the congregation, to which God responds, “Take for yourself Joshua, a person *jish* [of spirit] v. 18(. The word *ish* here indicates something other than gender. This can be seen in the two places where the Torah uses the phrase *ha-ish Moshe*, “the man Moses”:

One is in Exodus:

The man Moses was highly respected [gadol me’od, literally “very great”] in the land of Egypt, in the eyes of Pharaoh’s servants and the people. Ex. 11:3

The second is in Numbers:

Now the man Moses was very humble [anav me’od], more so than anyone else on the face of the earth. Num. 12:3

Note the two characteristics, seemingly opposed – great and humble – both of which Moses had in high degree *me’od*, “very”(. This is the combination of attributes Rabbi Yochanan attributed to God himself: “Wherever you find God’s greatness, there you find His humility.”⁷⁴ Here is one of his proof-texts: “For the Lord your God is God of gods and Lord of lords, the great God, mighty and awesome, who shows no partiality and accepts no bribes. He defends the cause of the orphan and the widow, and loves the stranger residing among you, giving them food and clothing”)Deut. 10:17-18(.

An *ish* in the context of leadership is not a male but rather, someone who is a *mensch*, a person whose greatness is lightly worn, who cares about the people others often ignore, “the orphan, the widow and the stranger,” who spends as much time with the people at the margins of society as with the elites, who is courteous to everyone equally and who receives respect because they give respect.

The real puzzlement, however, lies in the third clause: “Choose a person over the congregation who will go out before them and come in before them, who will lead them out and bring them in.” This sounds like saying the same thing twice, which the Torah tends not to do. What does it mean?

The Torah is hinting here at one of the most challenging aspects of leadership, namely timing and pace. The first phrase is simple: “who will go out before them and come in before them.” This means that a leader must lead from the front. They cannot be like the apocryphal remark of one British politician: “Of course I follow the party. After all, I am their leader.”⁷⁵

It is the second phrase that is vital: “who will lead them out and bring them in.” This means: a leader must lead from the front, but he or she must not be so far out in front that when they turn around, they find that no one is following. Pace is of the essence. Sometimes a leader can go too fast. That is when tragedies occur.

To take two very different examples: when Margaret Thatcher was Prime Minister she knew she was going to have to confront the miners’ union in a long and bitter struggle. In 1981 they went on strike for a pay rise. Mrs Thatcher immediately made enquiries about the size of coal stocks. She wanted to know how long the country could survive without new supplies of coal. As soon as she discovered that stocks were low, she in effect conceded victory to the miners. She then, very quietly, arranged for coal to be stockpiled. The result was that when the miners went on strike again in 1983, she resisted their demands. There was a prolonged strike, and this time it was the miners who conceded defeat. A battle she could not win in 1981 she was able to win in 1983.

The very different example was that of Israeli Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin. The peace process he engaged with the Palestinians between 1993 and 1995 was deeply controversial, within Israel and beyond. There was some support but also much opposition. The tension mounted in 1995. In September of that year, I wrote an article in the press giving him my own personal support. At the same time, however, I wrote to him privately saying that I was deeply worried about

internal opposition to the plan, and urging him to spend as much time negotiating with his fellow Israeli citizens – specifically the religious Zionists – as with the Palestinians. I did not receive a reply.

On Motzei Shabbat, 4 November 1995, we heard the news that Prime Minister Rabin had been assassinated at a peace rally by a young religious Zionist. I attended the funeral in Jerusalem. Returning the next day, I went straight from the airport to the Israeli ambassador to sit with him and talk to him about the funeral, which he had not been able to attend, having had to stay in London to deal with the media.

As I entered his office, he handed me an envelope, saying, “*This has just arrived for you in the diplomatic bag.*” It was Yitzhak Rabin’s reply to my letter – one of the last letters he ever wrote. It was a moving re-affirmation of his faith, but tragically by the time it was delivered he was no longer alive. He had pursued peace, as we are commanded to do, but he had gone too fast for those who were not yet prepared to listen.

Moses knew this himself from the episode of the spies. As Maimonides says in *The Guide*,^[6] the task of fighting battles and conquering the land was just too much for a generation born into slavery. It could only be done by their children, those born in freedom. Sometimes a journey that seems small on the map takes forty years.

Respect for diversity, care for the lowly and powerless as well as the powerful and great, and a willingness to go no faster than people can bear - these are three essential attributes of a leader, as Moses knew from experience, and as Joshua learned through long apprenticeship to the great man himself.

FOOTNOTES:

]1[That is the implication of the statement that “*Moses longed to die as did Aaron,*” Sifrei, *Pinchas*, 136, s.v. vayomer.

]2[Rashi to Num. 27:16, based on Tanchuma, *Pinchas*, 11.

]3[Maimonides, *The Guide for the Perplexed*, Book 2, Chapter 40.

]4[From the liturgy on Saturday night. The source is *Pesikta Zutreta*, Eikev.

]5[This statement has been attributed to Benjamin Disraeli, Stanley Baldwin and Alexandre Auguste Ledru-Rollin.

]6[*The Guide for the Perplexed*, Book 3, chapter 32.

Around the Shabbat Table:

]1[Why is it important that leaders consider their successors? Should leaders have a key role in choosing who will lead after they step down?

]2[Do you think the Rambam’s expectations of a leader are similar to your own? Are these expectations too demanding?

]3[What qualities in Moses do we see mirrored in Joshua?

<https://rabbisacks.org/covenant-conversation/pinchas/lessons-of-a-leader/> 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.

What Was the “Covenant of Peace” Granted to Phinehas?

By Mordechai Rubin *

The Torah relates that Phinehas, grandson of Aaron the High Priest, halted a plague by dramatically slaying the Israelite chieftain Zimri and the Midianite princess Cozbi, who were engaging in public sin. In reward, G d declared:

*Phinehas, the son of Eleazar, the son of Aaron the kohen, has turned My anger away from the children of Israel by his zealously avenging Me among them, so that I did not destroy the children of Israel because of My zeal. Therefore, say, "I hereby give him My covenant of peace. It shall be for him and for his descendants after him [as] an eternal covenant of Priesthood, because he was zealous for his G d and atoned for the children of Israel."*¹

This brit shalom, literally “My covenant of peace,” is a unique Divine pledge bestowed upon Phinehas. What is its meaning and purpose? Let’s explore diverse interpretations offered by generations of commentators.

A Gesture of Gratitude

Rashi comments somewhat cryptically, framing this as G d’s gratitude. “Just as a person owes gratitude and favor to someone who did him a favor, here G d expressed to him [Phineas] His feelings of peace.”² In Rashi’s understanding, there is no actual covenant of peace; instead, G d is expressing his gratitude, which manifests in the covenant of Priesthood described in the subsequent verse.

Phinehas did not become a Priest when his grandfather, Aaron, became High Priest. The Priesthood passed from father to son among those born after the appointment. Phinehas, however, was born before Aaron’s appointment and therefore did not receive the Priesthood by default.³

Protection from Vengeance

According to Ibn Ezra, G d’s covenant guaranteed that Phinehas would live in peace, safe from those angered by his vigilante act. Phinehas had killed Zimri, a prince of the tribe of Simeon, and Cozbi, a Midianite princess, thus potentially incurring the wrath of their tribes and allies. G d’s promise of peace was his assurance that no vengeful relatives would harm him.³

Bechor Shor⁴ and Chizkuni⁵ echo this view, which also underscores G d’s public endorsement of Phinehas — legitimizing his deed so that the community would not treat him as a murderer. In fact, the Talmud relates that some Israelites initially murmured against Phinehas for killing a tribal prince, until G d’s reward made it clear that Phinehas “avenged G d” properly.⁶

Preserving Phinehas’s Inner Peace and Compassion

Rabbi Naftali Tzvi Yehuda Berlin, known as Netziv, reads the covenant as safeguarding Phinehas’s character. He notes that an act of violence, even done zealously for a mitzvah, can alter a person’s nature toward cruelty. Phinehas might have become bloodthirsty or callous after killing two people with his own hands. Therefore, says Netziv, G d blessed Phinehas with “the quality of peace” as a countermeasure.⁷

Messianic Peace

The Midrash states:

Reish Lakish said: He is Phinehas, he is Elijah. G d said to him: You made peace between Me and the Children of Israel — so in the future, you will also bring peace between Me and them, as it says: “Behold, I am sending you Elijah the prophet.”^{8 9}

Thus, the promise of peace is that Phinehas, who is identified as Elijah the Prophet, will one day return as the harbinger of the Messianic era.

Peace from the Angel of Death – Extraordinary Longevity

Rabbi Ovadia Sforno offers a striking interpretation: *“My covenant of peace”* meant peace with the Angel of Death, i.e., immunity from premature death. Indeed, Sforno notes that Phinehas *“enjoyed an exceedingly long life on earth, more so than any of his generation.”* He points out that Phinehas was still serving as a Priest in the time of the Battle of Gibeah,¹⁰ long after Joshua’s era, and possibly even in the days of Jephthah¹¹ — which would make him nearly 300 years old! This borders on immortality, leading Sforno to reference the Midrash *“Elijah is Phinehas,”*¹² meaning Phinehas never died but lives on as Elijah the Prophet.¹³

Unity of Body and Soul

The Rebbe takes this a step further, understanding the phrase *“My covenant of peace”* as hinting at the unity of body and soul. This is clearly seen in Elijah the Prophet, whose soul never left his body — he ascended to heaven still in his physical body.¹⁴ This was possible because he had so completely refined his body, turning it into a vessel for holiness, that there was no need for death or burial. His physical body could receive spiritual revelations directly.¹⁵

Uniting Souls

In a similar fashion, a teaching attributed to the Baal Shem Tov, recorded by his disciple Rabbi Yaakov Yosef of Polnoya, views *“peace”* as integration and wholeness on a soul level. He notes that Aaron’s two righteous sons, Nadab and Abihu, had died prematurely, without children, described in Kabbalah as *“two halves of a single soul”* — incomplete due to their lack of offspring.

According to the Zohar, when Phinehas struck Zimri and Cozbi, the souls of Nadab and Abihu united within him.¹⁶ Thus, Phinehas became shalem)complete(with two souls in one body. On this basis, the Baal Shem Tov interprets G d’s promise, *“Behold, I give him My covenant of peace,”* to mean Phinehas was granted wholeness through a union of souls.

In Kabbalah, the Divine attribute of Yesod)Foundation(is nicknamed *“Peace,”* because it unites the spiritual realms)connecting the sefirot to the world(. Phinehas is compared to the tzaddik)righteous one(who, like Yesod, *“unites all the attributes”* and brings together that which was divided.

By receiving Nadab and Abihu’s energies, Phinehas healed a division — *“there was no peace between them, but Phinehas rectified this when he was given the covenant of peace, to unite their souls in one body.”*¹⁷

FOOTNOTES:

1. Numbers 25:11-13.
2. Rashi, Numbers 25:12.
3. Ibn Ezra, Numbers 25:12.
4. Bechor Shor, Numbers 25:12.

5. Chizkuni, Numbers 25:12.
6. Sanhedrin 82b.
7. Netziv, Numbers 25:12.
8. Malachi 3:23.
9. Midrash Aggadah, Numbers 25:13.
10. See Judges 20:2.
11. Judges 11.
12. Targum Yonatan Exodus 6:18. Pirke De-Rabbi Eliezer Chapter 46. Midrash Aggadah, Numbers 25:13.
13. Sforno, Numbers 25:12.
14. II Kings 2.
15. Likkutei Sichot, Volume 2, p 609.
16. Zohar 3:57b.
17. Toldot Yaakov Yosef, Parshat Acharei.

* Content editor and staff writer at Chabad.org.

https://www.chabad.org/parshah/article_cdo/aid/6955327/jewish/What-Was-the-Covenant-of-Peace-Granted-to-Phinehas.htm

Pinchas: The Joy in Self-Discipline

by Rabbi Moshe Wisnefsky

Special communal offerings were sacrificed every day of the seven-day holiday of Sukot. A special water-libation accompanied the morning daily offering on these seven days.

The Joy in Self-Discipline

One young he-goat as a sin-offering, besides the continual ascent-offering, its grain offering, and its libation.)Num. 29:16(

The difference between wine and water is that whereas the former has a distinct flavor and acts as a stimulant, the latter is bland. Accordingly, wine corresponds to our understanding of our Divine mission – the intellectual and emotional motivation that spurs us to pray, study the Torah, or perform G-d's commandments with joy and enthusiasm. Water, in contrast, corresponds to raw discipline, the devotion to G-d that we muster in order to persevere when intellectual or emotional motivation fails us, or to persist beyond the extent to which they drive us.

Nevertheless, we are told that the joy that accompanied the ceremony of drawing the water for the Sukkot water-libation exceeded that of all other celebrations. The unbounded joy that accompanied the water-libation reflected the unbounded

nature of raw discipline. Our intellect and emotions are limited by our mental acuity and emotional sensitivity. Discipline, in contrast, is unlimited; our devotion to G-d is rooted in the essential connection between Him and our Divine souls, and it is therefore not subject to any limitations. Our renewed realization of this unassailable connection to G-d is what powers the unparalleled outpouring of joy accompanying the water-libation.

– From *Daily Wisdom* #3

* An insight by **the Lubavitcher Rebbe** on parshat Pinchas from our *Daily Wisdom* #3 by Rabbi Moshe Wisnefsky.

May G-d grant continued wisdom, strength and peace in the Holy Land.

Gut Shabbos,

Rabbi Yosef B. Friedman
Kehot Publication Society

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Volume 31, Issue 38

Shabbat Parashat Pinchas

5785 B"H

Covenant and Conversation

Rabbi Jonathan Sacks, z"l

Pacing Change

Embedded in this week's parsha is one of the great principles of leadership. The context is this: Moses, knowing that he was not destined to lead the next generation across the Jordan into the promised land, asked God to appoint a successor. He remembered what had happened when he had been away from the Israelites for a mere 40 days. They had panicked and made a Golden Calf. Even when he was present, there were times of strife, and in recent memory, the rebellion on the part of Korach and others against his leadership. The possibility of rift or schism if he died without a designated successor in place was immense. So he said to God:

"May the Lord, the God who gives breath to all living things, appoint someone over this community to go out before them and come in before them, one who will lead them out and bring them in. Let the Lord's people not be like sheep without a shepherd." Num. 27:16-17

God duly chose Joshua, and Moses inducted him. One detail in Moses' request, however, always puzzled me. Moses asked for a leader who would "go out before them and come in before them, one who will lead them out and bring them in." That, surely, is saying the same thing twice. If you go out before the people, you are leading them out. If you come in before the people, you are bringing them in. Why then say the same thing twice?

The answer comes from a direct experience of leadership itself. One of the arts of leadership – and it is an art, not a science – is a sense of timing, of knowing what is possible when.

Sometimes the problem is technical. In 1981, there was a threat of a coal miners' strike. Margaret Thatcher knew that the country had very limited supplies of coal and could not survive a prolonged strike. So she negotiated a settlement. In effect, she gave in. Afterward, and very quietly, she ordered coal stocks to be built up. The next time there was a dispute between the miners and the government – 1984-1985 – there were large coal reserves. She resisted the miners and after many weeks of strike action they conceded defeat. The miners may have been right both times, or wrong both times, but in 1981 the Prime

Minister knew she could not win, and in 1984 she knew she could.

A much more formidable challenge occurs when it is people, not facts, that must change. Human change is a very slow. Moses discovered this in the most dramatic way, through the episode of the spies. An entire generation lost the chance of entering the land. Born in slavery, they lacked the courage and independence of mind to face a prolonged struggle. That would take a new generation born in freedom.

If you do not challenge people, you are not a leader. But if you challenge them too far, too fast, disaster happens. First there is dissension. People start complaining. Then there are challenges to your leadership. They grow more clamorous, more dangerous. Eventually there will be a rebellion or worse.

On 13 September 1993, on the lawn of the White House, Yitzhak Rabin, Shimon Peres, and Yasser Arafat shook hands and signed a Declaration of Principles intended to carry the parties forward to a negotiated peace. Rabin's body language that day made it clear that he had many qualms, but he continued to negotiate. Meanwhile, month by month, public disagreement within Israel grew.

Two phenomena in the summer of 1995 were particularly striking: the increasingly vituperative language being used between the factions, and several public calls to civil disobedience, suggesting that students serving in Israel's defence forces should disobey army orders if called on to evacuate settlements as part of a peace agreement.

Calls to civil disobedience on any significant scale is a sign of a breakdown of trust in the political process and of a deep rift between the government and a section of society. Violent language in the public arena is also dangerous. It testifies to a loss of confidence in reason, persuasion, and civil debate.

On 29 September 1995 I published an article in support of Rabin and the peace process. Privately, however, I wrote to him and urged him to spend more time on winning the argument within Israel itself. You did not have to be a prophet to see the danger he was in from his fellow Jews.

The weeks went by, and I did not hear from him. Then, on Motzei Shabbat, 4 November

1995, we heard the news that he had been assassinated. I went to the funeral in Jerusalem. The next morning, Tuesday 7 November, I went to the Israeli Embassy in London to pay my condolences to the ambassador. He handed me a letter, saying, "This has just arrived for you."

We opened it and read it together in silence. It was from Yitzhak Rabin, one of the last letters he ever wrote. It was his reply to my letter. It was three pages long, deeply moving, an eloquent restatement of his commitment to peace. We have it, framed, on the walls of my office to this day. But it was too late.

That, at critical moments, is the hardest of all leadership challenges. When times are normal, change can come slowly. But there are situations in which leadership involves getting people to change, and that is something they resist, especially when they experience change as a form of loss.

Great leaders see the need for change, but not everyone else does. People cling to the past. They feel safe in the way things were. They see the new policy as a form of betrayal. It is no accident that some of the greatest of all leaders – Lincoln, Gandhi, John F. and Robert Kennedy, Martin Luther King, Sadat, and Rabin himself – were assassinated.

A leader who fails to work for change is not a leader. But a leader who attempts too much change in too short a time will fail. That, ultimately, is why neither Moses nor his entire generation (with a handful of exceptions) were destined to enter the land. It is a problem of timing and pace, and there is no way of knowing in advance what is too fast and what too slow, but this is the challenge a leader must strive to address.

That is what Moses meant when he asked God to appoint a leader "to go out before them and come in before them, one who will lead them

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In memory of Scott Leitner, a"h

out and bring them in.” These were two separate requests. The first “–to go out before them and come in before them” – was for someone who would lead from the front, setting a personal example of being unafraid to face new challenges. That is the easier part.

The second request – for someone who would “lead them out and bring them in” – is harder. A leader can be so far out in front that when he turns round he sees that no one is following. He or she has gone out “before” the people, but has not “led them out.” He has led but people have not followed. His courage is not in doubt. Neither is his vision. What is wrong in this case is simply his sense of timing. His people are not yet ready.

It seems that at the end of his life Moses realised that he had been impatient, expecting people to change faster than they were capable of doing. That impatience is evident at several points in the book of Numbers, most famously when he lost his temper at Merivah, got angry with the people and struck the rock, for which he forfeited the chance of leading the people across the Jordan and into the promised land.

Leading from the front, all too often he found people not willing to follow. Realising this, it is as if he were urging his successor not to make the same mistake. Leadership is a constant battle between the changes you know must be made, and the changes people are willing to make. That is why the most visionary of leaders seem, in their lifetime, to have failed. So it was. So it always will be.

But in truth they have not failed. Their success comes when – as in the case of Moses and Joshua – others complete what they began.

Shabbat Shalom: Rabbi Shlomo Riskin

How Pinchas Achieved Peace by Zealous Action

“Therefore tell him that I have given him My covenant of peace; and it shall be unto him, and to his seed after him, the covenant of an everlasting priesthood, because he was jealous for His God, and made atonement for the children of Israel.” (Numbers 25:12–13)

Fanaticism, particularly when garbed in the accoutrements of extremist fundamentalism, hardly evokes in us a sympathetic bent. How could it, given its association with uncontrollable zeal and violence for the sake of heaven?!

But when we turn to the opening of this portion, the Torah lauds Pinchas for zealously killing a Jewish man and a Midianite woman in the very heat of their sexual passion as they recklessly defied God’s command. For responding so quickly and decisively, albeit without “due process,” we read that God spoke

to Moses, saying, “Pinchas, a son of Elazar and grandson of Aaron the priest, was the one who zealously took up my cause among the Israelites and turned My anger away from them... Therefore tell him that I have given him My covenant of peace (Numbers 25:10–12).

The biblical summation is certainly one of praise and approbation. Indeed, Pinchas’ full genealogy is presented in this sequence; we are also given the name of his father as well as of his grandfather, Aaron the High Priest, indicating that the Torah wants to underscore his linkage to Aaron, “lover and pursuer of peace” (Avot 1:12). Moreover, both grandfather and grandson succeeded in stopping plagues sent by the Almighty to punish the Israelites. Aaron was instrumental in stopping the plague that broke out after the Hebrews raised angry voices against Moses and Aaron when Korach and his rebels were swallowed up by the earth (Numbers 17:6–11), and Pinchas’ act of zealotry arrested the plague which had destroyed twenty-four thousand Israelites who engaged in immoral sexual acts with the Midianites (Numbers 25:9).

When all is said and done it would appear that the Torah wants us to look upon Pinchas not only as Aaron’s grandchild but as his direct spiritual heir. And when Pinchas received the divine gift of a covenant of peace, it is clear that he was being marked eternally as a leader who fostered peace and well-being, rather than fanaticism and violence.

How do we square this with what appears to have been a flagrant act of zealotry?

In order to really understand the true significance – the purpose and accomplishment – of Pinchas’ act, it is necessary to view it within the precise context and situation of its perpetration. I would submit that had it not been for his quick response, nothing less than “war” would have broken out – and civil war against Moses at that! Pinchas’ aim was not only – or even chiefly – the righteous punishment of flagrant sinners; it was first and foremost the salvation of Moses and Torah as the guides of the Israelites!

The Israelites had begun consorting with the Moabite women (Numbers 25), with harlotry leading to idolatry. They justified their actions philosophically and theologically by claiming that whatever is natural, whoever gives physical relief and “good feeling,” was proper and laudatory. This is the idol called Ba’al Peor, who was served by performing one’s natural functions before the idol, testifying to a lifestyle which justifies any and every physical expression. At this point, God commanded Moses to “take the leaders and impale them

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publicly before God” (Numbers 25:4). Only the leaders were targeted, but their death was to be vivid and painful, hanging in the hot sun.

What we have here on the part of the Israelites is a repetition of the Golden Calf debacle – but forty years later and in a far more grievous package. Then it was a panicky return to the comfort of Egyptian idolatry, a search for a Moses substitute; now it was glaring repudiation of both nationality and morality. Nevertheless, the previous time, at the dawn of Israel’s freedom, Moses lost no time in exacting punishment. He took the idol of the Golden Calf, ground it to powder, and called for volunteers to execute the ringleaders. The tribe of Levi killed three thousand Israelites on that day. Moses had only to send forth the clarion call “–Whoever is with God, stand with me” – and all of the Levites rallied to his side. Moses was clearly the leader of the Israelites. Indeed, the sinful idolatry at that time was even understandable. It had only occurred because of the people’s fear as a result of Moses’ absence; they felt like children bereft of their earthly father – and in their despair they turned to the Egyptian father-in-heaven-idol of a Golden Calf.

Now forty years had passed. Long gone were the grandiose hopes of an infant nation on the way to its Promised Land; such an exalted vision had been dashed upon the arid sand dunes of frustration and despair. The only thing this desert generation had to anticipate was dying in the desert! The bright Egyptian gloss on Moses’ liberating tunic had become burnished by the hot desert sun and the nagging Israelite complaints. The various rebellions turned Moses’ eyes downcast and made his shoulders sag; indeed, the would-be upstarts Dan and Aviram even refused to give the leader the courtesy of a meeting when they were summoned at his behest.

And now the disgusting Peor idolatry took place before Moses’ very eyes, those holy eyes which had a closer glimpse into the divine than any mortal before or after. Moses apparently did not feel himself to be sufficiently in control as to be able to impale the rebel-leaders as God had requested. The best he could bring himself to do was direct the judges to take action. He also felt the necessity to change the divinely graphically described punishment of hanging the leaders in the sun to the more diplomatic but far less aggressive command that “each of you must kill your constituents who were involved with Ba’al Peor” (Numbers 25:5).

And then, as a response to Moses’ orders, a devastating occurrence followed: “Behold, an important personage (ish) from among the children of Israel came and brought... a Midianite woman in the sight of Moses and in the sight of the congregation of the children of Israel” (Numbers 25:6). Moses declared

punishment for the idolaters – and a Jew added insult to injury by publicly committing adultery with a gentile Midianite woman!

And who was this Jew who dared defy the divine decree and the authority of Moses? He is biblically identified as none other than Zimri, prince of the tribe of Simeon, second in line of the tribes, between Reuben, the firstborn, and Levi, the priests. He was obviously continuing the rebellion of Korach, demanding his rights as a descendant of the son of Jacob who was born before Levi; he was now claiming for himself an exalted position. Perhaps that is why he chose Kozbi, a Midianite princess – a woman with status and lineage in the gentile world. And even more to the point, he chose a Midianite because he wanted to embarrass Moses as effectively as possible. It is as if he were daring Moses to stop his act of harlotry; after all, how could Moses criticize Zimri if the leader himself had a Midianite wife! No wonder Moses was paralyzed into silence and the people could only weep in impotence: “They were weeping at the Tent of Meeting” (Numbers 25:6). How else can we understand Moses’ lack of leadership, his inability to quell this rebellion against him and his God? As the sages of Talmud picture the scene, Zimri ran about taunting the venerated liberator of the Hebrew slaves: “How can he forbid sexual contact with Midianite women if he himself took a Midianite wife!” (Sanhedrin 82a).

Yes, the Israelite world had considerably changed from what it had been forty years earlier, during the period immediately following the Golden Calf. Now the Jews were no longer contrite in the presence of Moses. Everyone was demoralized and disappointed. Zimri now hoped to strike the death knell of Moses’ leadership by hitting below the belt, by taunting the supposed guardian of morality with the fact of his Midianite wife!

The Bible records: “And Pinchas saw” (25:7). What did he see? He saw the people rebelling and he saw Moses weeping. He saw the end of the history of the children of Israel almost before it began, he saw immorality and assimilation about to smash the tablets of stone for the second time – but now without a forceful, fiery, and respected Moses with the capacity of restoring the eternal tablets of testimony once again.

This is when Pinchas stepped in. In killing Zimri and Kozbi in the midst of their immoral act in front of all of Israel, he was not merely fanatically punishing a sinner without the justice of due process; he was quelling a rebellion against Moses which would have resulted in anarchy at best. He reestablished Mosaic leadership and authority, he enabled Torah to remain supreme. Pinchas reinstated

the covenant between God and Israel, and so he was truly worthy of the covenant of peace.

The Person in the Parsha **Rabbi Dr. Tzvi Hersh Weinreb**

Lessons in Leadership

Too often, leaders cling to power. They are so intoxicated by the privileges of their position that they become blinded to their own vulnerabilities and even oblivious of their own mortality.

Even our own Jewish history has many examples, some comparatively recent, of great leaders who failed to provide for their succession. Their deaths left a vacuum since they failed to designate their choice of a successor in a clear and unambiguous fashion. In some cases, chaos and strife ensued.

Such was not the case with the greatest of all Jewish leaders, Moses. In fact, one of the defining factors of his greatness was his concern that a proper successor to him be named.

And it is in this week’s Torah portion, Pinchas, that the story of Moses’ search for an appropriate successor is narrated.

“Moses spoke to the Lord, saying, ‘Let the Lord, source of the breath of all flesh, appoint someone over the community who shall go out before them and come in before them... so that the Lord’s community may not be like sheep that have no shepherd.’” (Numbers 27:15-17)

Rashi draws our attention to the peculiar way in which Moses addresses the Almighty, “Source of breath of all flesh.” Whatever can that mean? Why does not Moses address Him as “God of the heavens and earth”, or some similar familiar appellation?

Rashi’s answer yields a very important insight into Moses’ concept of the nature of leadership. A leader must be able to tolerate the great differences that exist among individuals. Every human being is different from every other, and a leader must be able to inspire diverse individuals, even individuals with contradictory ideologies and objectives. Only the Lord Almighty, “Source of the breath of all flesh,” can identify a leader with the capacity of relating to “each and every person according to his personality.”

So Moses was not only exemplary in taking the responsibility to find and to name a successor, but he was also careful to ask for divine assistance in locating a new leader with the capacity to deal with human uniqueness and individual differences. Moses knew from his long experience that a leader who expected uniformity and conformity was doomed to failure.

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But there is another aspect to leadership that Moses did not seem to ask for, but which God provided for.

God does not only respond to Moses’ request by naming Joshua as his successor. Rather, He insists that Joshua himself stand before and consult Elazar the Priest. The effective leader, nay the great leader, dare not think of himself as infallible, as the only source of intelligent leadership. Rather, he too must bow to a higher authority.

Hence “...he shall present himself to Elazar the Priest, who shall, on his behalf, seek the decision of the Urim before the Lord. By such instruction, they shall go out, and by such instruction, they shall come in... Moses did as the Lord commanded him. He took Joshua and had him stand before Elazar the Priest...” (Numbers 27:21-22)

Joshua was to be the undisputed leader of the Jewish people. Indeed, our sages see him as fulfilling the role of king. And he was chosen not just because he was a faithful disciple to his master, Moses, but because of the amazing skill he possessed to deal with a people as diverse and as fractious as the Israelites. Yet he too, from the very beginning, was made to realize that he had limitations, that he needed to depend upon others, and that, ultimately, he had to bow before “the Source of the breath of all flesh.”

Whenever I read these key passages of our Torah portion this week, I cannot help but apply their lessons to the very many leaders across a span of history who began their careers with talents equal or perhaps even superior to Joshua’s, but who ultimately failed utterly because they tried to “go at it alone.” They yielded in their hubris to their inner conviction that they knew best, and that consultation with others was a waste of time.

Failed leaders, leaders who do not look to the Elazars of their own times, are not just historical figures. Bechol dor vador, in each and every generation, ours too, leaders arise with God-given personal gifts and with great promise, but to our disappointment, they fail dismally. And, almost without exception, their failures can be traced back to their attempts to be a Joshua without an Elazar, a king without a conscience, an expert without a consultant, a wise man without an Urim, a human without God.

Torah.Org: Rabbi Yissocher Frand

Torah-Sanctioned Zealotry

In last week’s parsha, Pinchas turned back Hashem’s anger towards the Jewish people through his act of kanaus (zealotry). The Halacha states that – subject to very strict

conditions – a kanai (zealot) may kill a “boel aramis” (a person who is engaged in a specific type of public sexual immorality). As a payment to Pinchas for his act, Hashem gave Pinchas His Brisi Shalom (Covenant of Peace). Many commentators are bothered by the appropriateness of this reward. A kanai is usually understood to be someone who engages in arguments and controversy. Why is peace the appropriate reward?

There is an interesting Medrash that contains an implied criticism of Moshe Rabbeinu: “Since Moshe was passive during this incident, no one knows the location of his grave. This teaches us that a person must be as bold as a leopard, nimble as an eagle, speedy as a deer, and mighty as a lion to do the will of his Creator.” This Medrash indicates that the anonymity of Moshe’s gravesite is a punishment for the very slight infraction of Moshe not performing this act of kanaus himself. The Medrash itself points out that this is an example of Hashem acting meticulously with the righteous, measuring their actions with precision.

Properly performing an act of kanaus is not something that just anyone can take upon themselves. The person must be at the highest spiritual level. But the Medrash here faults Moshe Rabbeinu in the context of Hashem measuring the acts of the righteous “by a hair’s breadth.”

Rav Mordechai Gifter (Rosh Yeshiva, Telshe Yeshiva, Cleveland Ohio) emphasizes a very important point. The Torah describes Pinchas, or anyone who kills a person who is demonstrating this public immorality, as a “kanai”. People tend to translate the word “kanai” to mean an “extremist.” Rav Gifter writes that this is incorrect. As the Rambam writes (Hilchos Dayos 1:4), Judaism does not appreciate extremism. The middle path, the “golden mean” is the way the Torah advises people to act. “Kanaus” is not extremism.

Quoting the Sifrei, Rav Gifter defines kanaus as the act of sublimating a person’s entire self to the wants of Hashem, to the extent that the person is willing to give up his life, if necessary. That is why not all of us can assume the mantle of kanaus. Torah-sanctioned kanaus is reserved for those people who are willing to make the ultimate sacrifice for Hashem. When a personal agenda does not exist — when all that exists is Hashem’s honor — then, and only then, do we consider a person’s actions to be in the category of Torah-sanctioned kanaus. If a person’s motives are not completely pure — if there is an admixture of other motives to the act of kanaus — then it ceases to be an approved act of kanaus.

Consequently, it is highly appropriate that the reward for this act is the Brisi Shalom. Shalom does not necessarily mean peace. Shalom means perfection, as in the word “shalem” (complete). When a person performs an act of kanaus, such that his will and Hashem’s will become one, then he has achieved shleimus (completeness) with his Maker. The gift of shalom, meaning shalem is thus highly appropriate.

The chachomim (sages) say that despite the fact that Moshe Rabbeinu erred — if we can even use that word — by failing to assume the mantle of kanaus, Moshe corrects this passivity in next week’s Parsha. In Parshas Mattos, Moshe is commanded to “Seek revenge for the children of Israel against the Midianites, then be gathered into your nation” (Bamidbar 31:2). The chachomim infer from this connection between seeking revenge against Midyan and Moshe dying that Moshe had the ability to extend his lifetime. His death was dependent on his first taking revenge against Midyan. Moshe, in effect, had a blank check. He could have taken two years or five years or ten years to seek revenge against Midyan. What did Moshe do? Moshe immediately proceeded to take revenge against Midyan, knowing full well that its completion would pave the way for his own imminent demise. Here, Moshe performed the ultimate act of kanaus.

Kanaus is completely sublimating personal desires to the point that the person is prepared to even give up his life for Hashem. That is precisely what Moshe Rabbeinu demonstrates in Parshas Mattos. This is why Chazal view that incident as a kaparah (an atonement) for his passiveness during the incident at the end of last week’s parsha.

The ‘Sin’ of the Father Passes Down to the Son to Demonstrate True Parenthood

There is a famous comment of the Da’as Zekeinim m’Baalei haTosfos that appears in Sefer Bereishis.

There is a census in this week’s parsha that enumerates the various families of the Jewish nation. One pasuk (verse) contains the phrase, “Yoshuv of the family of YOSHUVI” (Bamidbar 26:24). Yoshuv was one of the sons of Yissocher. However, in Parshas Vayigash, where the descendants of the shevatim (tribes) who went down to Mitzraim are listed, there is no such son of Yissocher listed. However, there is a son of Yissocher listed named Yov (Bereishis 46:13).

The Da’as Zekeinim makes the following enigmatic comment. There is a controversy as to how the name Yissocher (which is spelled with a double letter ‘sin’) is pronounced. Do we pronounce both ‘sin’s (Yissoscher) or just

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one of them (Yissoscher)? Prior to Parshas Pinchas, where Yissoscher’s son is always called by the name Yov (without an extra ‘sin’), we pronounce Yissascher with both ‘sin’s. Starting here in Parshas Pinchas, we pronounce Yissocher, as if it were written with only one ‘sin’. What happened?

The chachomim say that Yov complained to his father that he had the same name as an idol and he did not like the name. Therefore, his father took a ‘sin’ from his own name and gave it to his son, whose name became Yashuv. From this point forward, we read Yissocher’s name with a single ‘sin’.

Rav Gifter quotes a simple question (from Rav Chaim Elezari). Why was this necessary? We do not need a ‘donor’ in order to add a letter. Why couldn’t any letter or name be added without removing it from someone else?

Rav Gifter says that the answer is obvious. This is a father who is trying to protect his son. Has there ever been a father who spared anything to guarantee that his son was protected? That is what parenting is all about. Nothing concerns us like the welfare of our children. “I am not going to rely on just any old ‘sin’ from the Aleph-bais. I am not sure that just any ‘sin’ will do the trick. I am giving you MY ‘sin’. My name will be different. My name will be lacking something and so will I. But that does not concern me in the least — because I am a father and my son’s welfare is all that counts! I insist on giving you the very best letter — one that comes straight from my name — to make sure that you are protected.” That is a father and that is love.

The gematria (numeric value using system of ascribing numeric values to Hebrew letters) of ‘ahavah’ (love) is 13 (1+5+2+5). The gematria of ‘da’agah’ (worry) is also 13 (4+1+3+5). Ahavah = Da’agah (Love = Worry). Every parent can appreciate this gematria. Being a parent means losing sleep, caring and worrying. It means looking at the clock, going to the window, and pulling the curtain. Why aren’t they home yet? Why haven’t they called? Ahava = Da’agah. This is what parenthood is all about.

Dvar Torah: Chief Rabbi Ephraim Mirvis

What’s the best way for us to make people to want to come to Shul?

In Parshat Pinchas, the Torah reveals to us details of the major festivals and the term that is used for a festival is ‘Mikra Kodesh’.

Rav Shimshon Rafael Hirsch translates this term as being a call to holiness, it’s an invitation that Hashem extends to us, to engage with him in a spiritual and meaningful way.

I'm sure that you're just like me, when an invitation arrives in the post, there is a sense of excitement.

You can see that the envelope suggests this must be an invitation, then you open it up and you reveal its content and indeed you are being invited to do something, to come along somewhere.

It is left up to you to send the RSVP and you're looking forward to the occasion, when you have decided that you want to take advantage of the opportunity, to benefit from that experience.

That is how the Torah presents our engagement with our Judaism.

It's not just the festivals, it's not just attending Shul on a weekly or daily basis, it's the performance of all our Torah and mitzvot, God has sent us a personal invitation.

You know there was a time when people would do the right thing, out of a sense of loyalty, but today I think within our communities around the globe, most people will do the right thing because they've decided to of their own accord, not because they have been 'coerced', but because they find it appealing and it's their decision.

We are so blessed because we have the ultimate product, it is a system of life, it's a way of life authored by Almighty God himself, relevant to every single generation and all we need to do, is to answer that invitation in the affirmative – to pitch up, to engage.

And I promise you, it will give you phenomenal deep meaning and ongoing joy in life.

We're so lucky, because it's the best invitation you can ever get.

Let's send our RSVP now.

O Leadership in Transition

Rivka Keller: Leadership in Transition

"And the Lord said to Moshe, 'Go up to this mountain of Avarim and see the land that I have given to the people of Israel. And when you have seen it, you also shall be gathered to your people, as Aharon your brother was gathered...'"

The above passage, which appears in the middle of the portion of Pinchas, raises two questions:

The first concerns the placement of these verses in this particular portion. In the section preceding these verses, Moshe is engaged in taking a census of the Israelites in preparation

for dividing the land among them, while addressing the case of the daughters of Tzelofchad regarding inheritance laws. Following the verses above, there is a detailed description of the daily offerings, as well as the special sacrifices offered on Shabbat and the festivals. It seems untimely, then, that the verses describing Moshe's ascent up the mountain to view the land of Israel, upon which he will never set foot, should be mentioned here of all places. Why does this passage appear here of all places?

The second question relates to Moshe's reaction. When God had initially decreed that Moshe and Aharon would not enter the land, their silence was quite notable. God was angry that they had struck the rock instead of speaking to it, and decreed that they would therefore not enter the land. Moshe and Aharon did not protest. A few verses later, Aharon ascends Hor HaHar where he dies in silence, still unprotesting. In a few weeks, we will read Parashat Va'etchanan where Moshe pleads with God to let him enter the land. We would expect the plea to appear here in our portion of Pinchas, when he is told to ascend the mountain of Avarim to view the land he cannot enter. And yet Moshe's reaction is quite different. Upon hearing the decree once again, instead of pleading for himself, he asks for a leader for the people: "May the Lord, the God of the spirits of all flesh, appoint a man over the congregation... so the congregation of the Lord will not be like sheep without a shepherd."

By reflecting on the preceding portions, we might find an answer to our questions.

The sin of Mei Merivah ["The waters of conflict"] comes immediately after Miriam's death, and Aharon dies shortly after. Aharon's son, El'azar, inherits the high priesthood and becomes Moshe's partner in leadership.

Next is the story of Balak. In this narrative, Moshe's leadership is absent. The events of the story take place among other nations, such that it is not a story of the Israelites per se. And yet it is still a wonder that Moshe's name does not appear at all. Similarly, when the Israelites sin with the Moabite women, Moshe's leadership is absent once again. At the end of this portion, it is Pinchas who takes the lead, stopping the plague that is raging through the camp of Israel by smiting with his spear, thus abating God's wrath.

Parashat Pinchas opens with God's approval of Pinchas' actions. For the first time since the exodus from Egypt, a complex problem within the Israelite camp is solved without Moshe's involvement.

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Thus, Pinchas forges a special bond with the Almighty, and secures a place for himself in the leadership of the people of Israel, as is reflected by God's reaction to Pinchas' daring deed: "Behold, I give him My covenant of peace. It shall be for him and his descendants after him a covenant of everlasting priesthood."

Following this, a census of all Israelite men fit for war is conducted. Israel has transformed into a nation of warriors ready to conquer and inherit the land, as per their respective families. The daughters of Tzelofchad then demand their father's inheritance. Again, Moshe is at a loss, and God answers the query, granting the daughters their father's inheritance.

It appears from these descriptions that we are deep into a transitioning leadership, from the generation who wandered the desert to that of the children and even the grandchildren. Miriam's well and Aharon's priesthood have already been passed on; now it is Moshe's turn.

Mount Avarim [עברים, which denotes "past" and "beyond"] perhaps hints at Moshe's place—in the past [עבר]. God gently directs Moshe to ascend the mountain of מעברים and look beyond [מעבר], into the future of the people without being a part of it. The reason for this is that Moshe's leadership belongs to the עבר, the past. A glorious past, to be sure. A past in which the Israelites slaves were liberated from Egypt with great might and an outstretched arm; with a myriad of plagues, and no words. A past evolving around a generation that was redeemed from Egypt and had to be led through the wilderness, but one that would not enter the land. Therefore, you Moshe, the leader of this generation, must remain with them in the past, beyond the borders of the land, on the eastern side of the Jordan [עבר הירדן], and you shall not cross over [לעבור] the River Jordan and enter the new era with the new generation.

In the past, the people would drink from a miraculous well, Miriam's well, but after the sin at Merivah, they are capable of obtaining water themselves: "From there they went to Be'er, the well where the Lord said to Moshe, 'Gather the people together so that I may give them water'" (Bemidbar 21:16). The Malbim explains as follows: "God gave them water directly without their having to ask, and without Moshe's intervention."

In the recent past, a priest was needed to stop plagues by Divine command with a censer and fire (as in the story of Korach), but now the people themselves, by the stab of a dagger, can halt a plague.

The people can now seek God's guidance directly through El'azar the priest: "And he shall stand before El'azar the priest, who shall inquire for him by the judgment of the Urim before the Lord; at his word shall they go out, and at his word they shall come in, both he, and all the children of Israel with him." (Bemidbar 27:21).

This is a different kind of leadership than the one we have seen until now. It is more distant and less miraculous; however, it is far more autonomous.

The placement of the portion of Har Ha'avanim in the middle of Parashat Pinchas suggests that Pinchas, El'azar, and the daughters of Tzelofchad belong to the generation of the future. It signifies a transition of leadership from the generation that had left Egypt and wandered in the desert to the one that will inherit and settle the land.

If this be so, we may just have found an answer to our second question. If, indeed, this particular portion appears here because the previous leadership has loosened its hold and the time has come for a new leadership to take its place, then Moshe's reaction is quite apt, for it conveys the need for a new and worthy leadership that will be suited to shepherd the people into the new land. Moshe's reaction is both noble and humble. He knows his place, and from a deep sense of responsibility to the people, he steps aside for his successor, who is also his disciple.

"And he laid his hands upon him, and gave him a charge, as the Lord spoke by the hand of Moshe" (ibid. 27, 23). With both of his hands upon Yehoshua's head, and not as instructed, Moshe transfers his leadership to Yehoshua with generosity of heart, both his hands outstretched to hand over his greatness of spirit.

Dvar Torah: TorahWeb.Org

Rabbi Ahron Lopiansky

The Lottery That Speaks

Tucked into a few verses in our parasha are the laws of dividing up Eretz Yisroel to the various shvatim. There seemed to have been three different methods employed.

First of all, it says that they prorated the different parts of Eretz Yisroel so that the apportioned areas were all of equal value. They did not divide up based on square footage, but, as Rashi says, they divided it up based on value and ability to use the land productively. We would therefore describe this as human effort that divided up and apportioned Eretz Yisroel.

Secondly, Rashi also says that Elazar the Cohen would be dressed with the urim

v'tumim, and he would proclaim with the Divine spirit upon him: "if the following tribe comes up in the lottery, then this will be the land he gets". In other words, it was heavenly ordained.

But the primary mechanism for dividing the land to the tribes is, as is written in the parsha, through a lottery. Rashi adds that when the lottery was finally drawn, it would proclaim, "I, this land, belong to the following tribe".

The different types of methods used to divide the land could be categorized as: a) human effort and a rational apportioning, referring to the evaluating the different portions of Israel and seeing what is similar in terms of value, b) a Divine commandment by the means of the urim v'tumim, where the cohen told us what each tribe is supposed to get, and c) the lottery, which in the parsha seems actually to be the most important of the three. This is strange, because a lottery seems to imply neither a human thought process nor a clear directive of G-d. What is the point of the lottery? Why is it the core method used for dividing up the land of Israel?

The settling of the land of Israel represents a new phase in the development of the Jewish nation. During their sojourn in the desert, they really were living in a Divine bubble. Nothing of the physical world really meant much to them. They were in an uninhabitable desert, with no natural means of survival. Their primary staples were all miraculous - the water from the well that travelled with them, the manna that served as their food, and the Divine clouds that served as shelter. This was a mode of life that represented the purely spiritual. In Eretz Yisroel, however, they would have to connect to the land and be able to express their spirituality through the physical world. The division of the land into different types of terrain meant that they would begin to notice specific talents that each one had which were relevant to the physical world. The different personalities of a person who is a farmer, a merchant, or a soldier all emerged in the Land of Israel; in the desert no one had to farm, no one had to do business, and only very few times did they have to fight. In Eretz Yisroel however, each group had to find its role and fulfill it successfully.

This is the deeper understanding of the division of Eretz Yisroel. The land has many different attributes - there are lakes and rivers, deserts, fertile land, and land that borders on enemy territory. The land that each tribe was given was the land that was most uniquely suited to their talents and hence their mission.

When we each ask ourselves, "what is my personal mission?", the best guide to disavowing the answer is taking stock of our resources and talents and the needs of the

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world around us. The Gr"a (Mishlei 16:4) states that it was the task of a prophet to instruct people as to what their mission in life was. When we don't have a prophet to tell us what our mission life is, we need to take a look at our personal resources and extrapolate as what must be our mission. For instance, a person who has musical talent obviously has a mission in line with that talent. It may or may not be readily evident what it is, but the fact that these are his resources tells him that this must be his mission.

The lottery is a complex device. On the one hand, it is not a rational human endeavor as was the conscious dividing up the land. On the other hand, it wasn't an open commandment of God; after all, it simply was the drawing of a card. But the lottery "expresses itself", in that each lot that came up in the lottery proclaimed that "such and such a tribe is designated for me". In other words, the piece of land, the resource itself, indicated which tribe should get it.

The lottery was therefore the procedure that most clearly expressed the essence of Eretz Yisroel. The lottery is not physical cause and effect, nor is it a clear Divine statement. Rather, it starts as a physical fact; one piece of paper came out and then another piece of paper matched up with it, and that's "merely" chance. But then the lottery itself proclaims that, "I belong to a certain tribe", it means that this is what Hashem had in mind for it all along. Eretz Yisroel is the place with this type of Divine Providence, where the physical realities are expressing Hashem's will. Eretz Yisroel is the place where each tribe finds its physical and spiritual niche. It's the place where each tribe is given the resources it needs to fulfill its unique mission.

Even today, when we do not have the old divisions of Eretz Yisroel, and we don't know - as far as the majority of us are concerned - from which tribe we descend, we still can examine the resources Hashem has given us and extrapolate from there what must be the mission that HKB"H intended for each of us.

Torah.Org Dvar Torah

by Rabbi Label Lam

Eisav and Shalom

"Therefore say, 'Behold! I give him My covenant of peace!'" (Bamidbar 25:12)

Admittedly, I don't understand how Gematria (the numerical value of words) works. For example, here is a puzzling pair. The Gematria of SHALOM is 376 but so is the name Eisav. How could that possibly be? Perhaps if we understood the true meaning of SHALOM then we might be able to make some sense of it. SHALOM is not passivity and it is not merely the absence of war. It is the harmonious

resolution of conflicting elements. How can there be a greater conflict and clash of agendas than the "Odd Couple" that resides within and compromises each and every one of us; the physical body and the G-dly Soul! How can they possibly "get along" together harmoniously?! Here are four classic and universal approaches to this ubiquitous challenge built into the human condition.

1-What we'll call the far eastern way is an ideal that the soulful portion dominates the physical body. The successful practitioner finds him-self atop a mountain-aloof. His physical needs have been thoroughly quieted. He feels almost no pain. He can sleep on a bed of nails and fast all day. He is divorced from his body. Having trained himself to not to hear the whimpers of his own physical being or the temporal world around him, he meditates in that state and transcends the mundane but fails to engage life.

2-The second we can refer to as the far western approach. Here the immediate needs of the body drown out the voice of the soul until it is a frail and thin voice, an afterthought called conscience. With plenty of continued practice that voice can be almost entirely annihilated. It is recorded how the Nazis were sick to their stomachs the first time they carried out the brutal murder of Jews but after a while they could go home and eat dinner as if nothing had happened. The callousness that develops with deeds that violate the sensibilities of the human soul grows thicker and darker with each repeated action. Eventually the body is divorced from its soul- Kores- cut off.

3- A third possibility encourages both spiritual and material indulgence but alternately. This "solution" is not a solution. In fact, it complicates the human experience. The Talmud says pithily, "Oy li M'yotzri, Oy li ' M'yitzi"- "Woe to me from my Creator (or) Woe to me from my desire!" (Brochos 61A) Either the conscience will ache when violated or the body will rebel when deprived.

A professor Meier from Michigan University was able to induce neurosis in rats. How? One door offered a food prize and the other a shock. Once the rat figured out which was which, the psychologist switched them. Now the rat crept cautiously from door to door uncertain whether it would receive a delight or an electric shock. At some point the rat parks himself equidistant from both doors and chooses to starve to death rather than risk getting a shock. OY! It's not easy being a laboratory rat or a person that plunges dramatically and often from heights of the spiritual spectrum into the abysmal abyss and back again, like a yoyo.

4-The 4th- the middle-east emphasizes the spiritual but without negation of the physical.

A fellow asked his friend, "Why are you busy caring for your horse all day?" He answered, "He's a dumb horse and I'm a smart person. He needs me!" His friend then replied, "If he's so dumb and you're so smart, why don't you get him to do things for you!?"

If the soul can learn, somehow, to discipline the body in a sensitive and caring way, then a peace plan can be brokered between these two giant competing forces. A person can happily navigate between the temporal and the eternal in a joyous way. King Solomon had said about the Torah, "Its ways are ways of pleasantness and all its paths are peace." (Mishlei 3:17)

Without the guidance of Torah, Eisav was never able to successfully negotiate peace between his animalistic nature and his G-dly soul, but SHALOM, peace was always possible and within reach. This may help explain the numerical equivalency between Eisav and Shalom.

Mizrachi Dvar Torah

Rav Doron Perez

How to Argue for Heaven's Sake

The essence of the spiritual impediment, the failure which led to the destruction of the Second Temple, which we are currently mourning in the Three Weeks, is 'sinat chinam'. Our Sages point out how in interactions between people there was baseless hatred. There was an inability to legitimize the view of others, or to accept on any level any legitimacy of others.

We know in Israel, there are tremendous arguments at the moment – politically, religiously – and in communities and governments around the world there is so much debate and divisiveness.

The Kli Yakar asks how can we create unity? Using the word for heaven '–shamayim'. The Mishnah in Pirkei Avot says an argument that is for the sake of Heaven, 'lesheim shamayim', will endure. What is 'shamayim'? He says the word is made up of the words for fire, 'eish', and water, 'mayim'. No two elements could be more confrontational and divisive – water extinguishes fire, and fire vaporizes water.

However, in heaven, these two elements come together and create peace '–oseh shalom bimromav', "He who makes peace on High." It brings together all the opposing spiritual forces in the world, all are legitimate. That is what an argument for the sake of Heaven is: argue, yes. Vociferously, yes. Totally differing views, yes. But always remember 'lesheim shamayim'. G-d brings the most contrasting views, not to be only in conflict but to be complementary in ways which bring together.

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In our arguments and in life, may we all be able to do it 'lesheim shamayim', for the sake of Heaven – and see the legitimate view, to find ways to bring these together that the contrast should ultimately be one which is complementary.

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Sefas Emes on Pinchas' Connection to Aharon and His Receipt of the Eternal Covenant of Kehuna

Sefas Emes on Pinchas' Connection to Aharon and His Receipt of the Eternal Covenant of Kehuna

The pasuk says, "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. Therefore, say: Behold! I give him My covenant of peace, 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 25:10-13).

Pinchas was gifted with the Kehuna for himself and his descendants because of his act of zealotry in killing Zimri, the nasi (prince) of the shevet (tribe) of Shimon, together with Kozbi, a princess of Midyan, for their public act of immorality and desecration of Hashem's name. (Although Pinchas was a son of Elazar Hakohen and grandson of Aharon Hakohen, he had been born prior to their inauguration as Kohanim, and until this point he had not been a Kohen himself.)

Rashi points out that the lineage of Pinchas in these pesukim (verses) is traced back to Aharon Hakohen because the shevatim (tribes) were mocking him based on his lineage stemming from his maternal grandfather Yisro, who himself had originally been a priest to avodah zarah. They castigated Pinchas for having the audacity — as the grandson of a priest of idolatry — to kill a nasi of a shevet of Bnai Yisroel. Consequently, the pasuk traces his lineage along his paternal line back to the great Aharon, Kohen Gadol.

We have spoken about the obvious question in previous years as well: Tracing Pinchas' lineage through his paternal ancestry does not really solve the problem. Why would that appease anyone? We know that he was the grandson of Aharon, but he was also the grandson of Yisro, the former priest of idolatry. The people were saying that his present act of zealotry must not have come from the peace-loving Aharon. Aharon would never do such a

thing. They claimed that this act was inspired by the genes Pinchas inherited from Yisro, which were rearing their ugly heads. Therefore, what did the Torah accomplish by saying that he is "Pinchas ben Elazar ben Aharon Hakohen?"

In past years, we have cited the Ksav Sofer (the son of the Chasam Sofer) that the Torah's point was not Pinchas' genealogy, but rather it was testifying regarding from where Pinchas inherited his righteous zealotness that prompted him to kill Zimri and Kozbi. The Torah is saying that this brazen act came from Aharon Hakohen. How could it be, you may ask, that such violence can come from the prototype model of "loving peace and pursuing peace," the gentle Aharon Hakohen? The Ksav Sofer famously points out that we are taught that Aharon was an "ohev shalom v'rodef shalom" rather than a "rodef achar shalom" — meaning that sometimes he was "rodef" the shalom. (he pushed aside the peace). Sometimes shalom is not the solution. Of course, in general, Aharon tried to bring shalom between people, but when a situation necessitated it, he was "rodef shalom" — he pushed it away!

I saw a similar approach to this question in a sefer of Rav Buchsban, which he based on the Sefas Emes. Rav Buchsban suggests that the expression "Aharon was an ohev shalom v'rodef shalom" might also have another meaning:

Who isn't for peace? Peace is one of those things that everyone subscribes to. "Of course I want shalom!" But it is not always easy to act for shalom and to promote shalom. People say "Of course I advocate for shalom, but how can I get involved?" That was not the approach of Aharon Hakohen. Aharon Hakohen was a "lover of peace," as is everyone else in the world. But it is easy to just be an "ohev shalom." However, not everyone who is an ohev shalom is also a rodef shalom, meaning that when the situation demands it, the person actually promotes shalom by being proactive to create that shalom.

That was Aharon. He was both an ohev shalom and a rodef shalom. When he saw a situation in which it was not enough to just "profess" love of peace, but it was necessary to actually "act" to bring about peace, he in fact did so. The situation with Zimri and Kozbi necessitated killing the offenders in order to bring peace so that is exactly what Pinchas did. The people witnessing this horrible act of public brazen immorality "were crying at the opening of Tent of Meeting" (Bamidbar 25:6). In other words, the standard reaction was to fret and to cry and to bemoan what was happening — but NOT to do anything about it! The masses were crying, but who is the only one who did anything? The only one who picks up a spear and says "I need to stop this situation" is Pinchas son of Elazar son of Aharon Hakohen! He is the one who acts. He inherited that initiative from his zeide (grandfather). His zeide was not only a lover and a professor of peace, but he was also a rodef shalom — he did whatever it took to make peace.

That is why the Sefas Emes says that the appropriate reward for Pinchas' action was that he became a Kohen. A Kohen takes people's thoughts and "activates" them. A person who does an aveira (sin) is obligated to bring a Korban Chatas (Sin offering) or a Korban Asham (Guilt offering) or a Korban Olah (Burnt offering). The sinner has thoughts of seeking atonement but the person who actualizes those thoughts and actually brings the korbanos is the Kohen. Therefore, the appropriate gift for Pinchas' actions is "bris kehunas olam" (the eternal covenant of priesthood).

The "Shame and the Embarrassment" of the Elders Was Their Own Parshas Pinchas contains the transition of the leadership of Klal Yisrael from Moshe Rabbeinu to Yehoshua bin Nun. The pasuk says "Hashem said to Moshe: 'Take to yourself Yehoshua son of Nun, a man in whom there is spirit, and lean your hand upon him.'" (Bamidbar 27:18). The Medrash remarks "Take Yehoshua, in fulfillment of that which is stated: 'Notzer te'ayna yochal piryah (The protector of a fig tree will eat its fruit), and the guardian of his master will be honored.'" (Mishlei 27:18).

Yehoshua was picked to lead because he put in the hours. "And the one who served him, the lad, Yehoshua bin Nun, did not depart from the tent." (Shemos 33:11) He did not leave his master's side. He cleaned up the Beis

Medrash. He is the one who worked. He is the one who sweated and toiled. Therefore “notzer te’ayna yochal piryah.”

The Gemara says (Bava Basra 75a) that when this transition occurred, the elders of that generation said “Moshe’s face is like that of the sun; Yehoshua’s face is like that of the moon. Woe to the embarrassment! Woe to the shame!” The elders who remembered Moshe in his prime felt that Yehoshua paled in comparison to their former leader.

Let me ask a question: What happens nowadays when a great Rosh Yeshiva dies and another Rosh Yeshiva steps into his shoes? Did you ever hear anyone get up at the hesped of the deceased Rosh Yeshiva and say “I remember the late Rosh Yeshiva. He knew how to learn. He was a true gadol. This thirty-year-old fellow who is now becoming the Rosh Yeshiva – what does he know? Woe to us at such shame and embarrassment!” Have you ever been to such a hesped? According to this Gemara in Bava Basra, that, in effect, is what the “elders of the generation” said about Yehoshua! Can we imagine such a public humiliation of Yehoshua bin Nun?

I saw a very interesting pshat quoted in the name of Rav Itzele of Volozhin. Chas v’shalom! The elders were not disrespecting Yehoshua. They were saying that they remember Moshe Rabbeinu in his youth. Moshe Rabbeinu, from the moment he was born, was a different type of person. At the moment of his birth, the room was entirely filled with light. He was a miraculous child. He was not a once-in-a-generation or a once-in-a-lifetime personality. A person like Moshe Rabbeinu was unique in the history of the universe. Each elder said as follows:

I am not Moshe Rabbeinu. When I was born, the house did not fill with light. Nothing like that happened. But Yehoshua? I went to cheder with Yehoshua bin Nun. I remember him as a child. He was nothing special. He was not even the best boy in the class. He didn’t get all A’s and he did his share of fooling around. But then something happened to Yehoshua bin Nun and he became a different person. It was not because of his brilliance or natural born gifts, but rather it was because “notzer te’ay’nah yochal piryah.” He put in his time. He never left the side of Moshe Rabbeinu. When I was out doing who knows what, Yehoshua was there with Moshe Rabbeinu. When I was fooling around, he was cleaning up the Beis Medrash.

This Yehoshua, the fellow that I knew and the fellow that I grew up with, has now become the next leader of Bnai Yisroel. Moshe was a “sun” – no one could ever again be like Moshe Rabbeinu. But Yehoshua bin Nun is like the “face of the moon” – he is a reflection of the brilliance of Moshe, just as the moon reflects the brilliance of the sun. Anyone could have done that and become the next leader of Bnai Yisroel – had they put in the time and had they put in the effort.

“Woe to the embarrassment and woe to the shame” is not referring to Yehoshua. It is reflexive, going back on the elders themselves. How embarrassing and shameful it is for us that we spent our time fooling around rather than emulating Yehoshua and seizing the advantage of being constantly with our great leader Moshe Rabbeinu.

I am sure all of us had experiences like this. “I went to school with this person. He became the (fill-in-the-blank) Rosh Yeshiva!” There are dozens of people like that. That is the shame and embarrassment of which they spoke. Had I only put in the time, effort, sweat and toil that he put in, maybe I could have also become like that, but I did not do so. Transcribed by David Twersky; Jerusalem DavidATwersky@gmail.com Edited 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. 7/18/25, 12:00 AM Gmail - Rav Frand - Sefas Emes on Pinchas’ Connection to Aharon and His Receipt of the Eternal Covenant of Kehuna

Hamizrachi Parshat Pinchas 5785

Inheritance and Dina De’malchusa
Rabbi Hershel Schachter

Rosh Yeshivah, Rabbi Isaac Elchanan Theological Seminary of Yeshiva University

About forty years ago, a prominent chassidish 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 chassidish rebbe, and he felt that because he was his father’s mimaleh mokom in the chassidus, he should be entitled to the privilege of being 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. 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 from 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 mamanos (monetary matters) and not at all in areas of issur v’heter. 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.

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from: Rabbi Yitzchok Adlerstein <ravadlerstein@torah.org>
to: targumim@torah.org
date: Jul 17, 2025, 4:46 PM

Be'er Moshe - Parshas Pinchas

By Rabbi Yitzchok Adlerstein

When Chesed Becomes Din – And That's A Good Thing![1]

Therefore say: Behold, I give him my bris of shalom.[2]

The Mesorah points to only one other use of the phrase, "therefore say."

Hashem uses it in commanding Moshe to bring word of the soon-to-come redemption from Egyptian slavery: "Therefore say to the Bnei Yisrael, I am Hashem!"[3] What is the connection? What lesson does the Mesorah find in this similarity?

The answer can be found in a mashal taught by the Toldos Yaakov Yosef, about an extremely coarse and lowly person who disparaged the king. Rather than execute him, the king came up with an even more painful punishment: he gave him a ministerial position. The culprit quickly found out about the real sterling and noble character of the king. His embarrassment and humiliation became unbearable, as he became consumed with guilt for his misdeed. At which point the king promoted him once more. Etc. With each promotion, the king's maligner learned more about the greatness of the figure he had insulted – which only added to his pain and remorse.

The Besht employed this idea in explaining a line in Tehillim: "G-d of vengeance! G-d of vengeance, shine forth!"[4] Hashem is indeed a G-d of vengeance. How does He take revenge? By showing more of Himself! He heaps upon us more and more chesed – which causes us to shrink in painful remorse when remembering how we have behaved so terribly towards Him. This remorse, however, is extremely valuable. "A single impulse of self-reproach," says Reish Lakish,[5] "is more effective than a hundred lashes." Furthermore, because we react to Hashem's largesse to us with humility rather than self-aggrandizement, His chesed acts as din! When din might

otherwise demand that we sustain some punishment, c"v, heaping even more of His kindness upon us can get us to the same end even more effectively. Hashem's punishment is never of the vindictive variety; it is meant to return us to proper behavior. When we react to His chesed by diminishing ourselves, and further subjugating ourselves to His Will, we arrive at the true purpose of His din.

Our pasuk now takes on new meaning, as does the pasuk in Shemos to which the Mesorah points. "Therefore say:" Because Pinchas demonstrated his intense yir'as Hashem by undertaking his dangerous action against Zimri, there is no risk that showering him with spiritual riches will lead to ga'avah. To the contrary, he will receive them with so much gratitude, that he will become even more humble than before. Therefore, I Hashem will grant him a gift of a revelation of Divine peace.

Similarly, Hashem instructed Moshe "Therefore say." They, too, will receive Divine chesed with submissive gratitude, rather than with inflated egos.

Therefore, say to them "I am Hashem," i.e. midas harachamim. I can shower them with extraordinary displays of chesed, and they will react properly.

Which is why the following pasuk explicitly articulates not one, but four different expressions of redemption.

Halevai that we should always receive Hashem's favors to us by minimizing ourselves, and stand in ever greater awe of His Majesty!

1. Adapted from Be'er Moshe, by the Ozherover Rebbe, zt"l. 2. Bamidbar 25:12. 3. Shemos 6:6. 4. Tehillim 94:1. 5. Berachos 7a

from: Ohr Somayach <ohr@ohr.edu>

date: Jul 17, 2025, 5:35 PM

subject: S P E C I A L S - Taamei Hamitzvos - **Eretz Yisrael**

by **Rabbi Shmuel Kraines**

"Study improves the quality of the act and completes it, and a mitzvah is more beautiful when it emerges from someone who understands its significance." (Meiri, Bava Kama 17a)

PREFACE

The three-week period between the 17th of Tammuz and the 9th of Av, when we mourn over the destruction of the Beis HaMikdash and our exile from Eretz Yisrael, is an appropriate time to contemplate the greatness we lost and hope to regain soon. We will explore the topic of living in Eretz Yisrael, which is a major focus in the Torah. Halachic authorities dispute whether it is a full-fledged Mitzvah or only a means to perform the Mitzvos that are applicable to Eretz Yisrael, such as tithing produce, but all agree about its foremost importance. This needs to be understood. Why is this land better than all the other lands, and why is it virtuous to live there? Why were our Patriarchs rewarded for all their loyalty to Hashem with this land, and why were all the tragedies of Tisha B'av decreed when our ancestors in the Wilderness rejected this land (Taanis 29a)? The coming article will scratch the surface of this vast topic.

THE LAND OF THE JEWISH PEOPLE

Rabbi Shimon bar Yochai expounded: Hashem examined all the lands and did not find a land that was fitting to give to the Jewish people other than Eretz Yisrael (Vayikra Rabbah 13:2). Midrash Tanchuma (Masei §4) similarly compares Eretz Yisrael to clothing that is a perfect fit for the Jewish people. In light of this, it appears that it is important to live in Eretz Yisrael because it suits us and completes us.

To elaborate, Eretz Yisrael is not an ordinary inanimate land; it is spiritually alive. Indeed, Eretz Yisrael is called "the Living Land" (Yechezkel 26:20). Just as the Jewish people have a higher spiritual quality than gentiles, Eretz Yisrael has a higher spiritual quality than other lands. Only when we live in Eretz Yisrael is our spiritual quality complete (see Sacred Soil).

For example, Hashem watches over the Jewish people with special providence (Derech Hashem 2:4 §8), and He watches over Eretz Yisrael with special providence (Devarim 11:12). Thus, only when we live in Eretz Yisrael is the way He watches over us complete. Whereas, when a Jew lives outside Eretz Yisrael, he is missing a degree of connection with Hashem. About this, the Sages made an astounding comment: "Whoever lives outside Eretz Yisrael is considered as if he does not have a God." As the

commentators explain, Eretz Yisrael is the main resting place of the Divine Presence (Tashbetz §565) and Hashem watches over its inhabitants with special Divine providence (Rif to Ein Yaakov). Whoever lives outside Eretz Yisrael is missing this connection with Hashem.

The combination of qualities when we live in our land is not merely one plus one equals two. Just as clothing is an extension of a person, Eretz Yisrael is an extension of us. When we live there, our spiritual qualities expand to include a whole new dimension. This has ramifications on everything we do. A Mitzvah that is performed in Eretz Yisrael is much greater than a Mitzvah that is performed outside it. One of the leading Torah scholars of this generation once advised someone who flew to Eretz Yisrael and put on tefillin when he davened on the plane that he should ideally put them on again the same day when arriving in Eretz Yisrael. He explained that although we are only obligated to put on tefillin a minimum of once a day, doing a Mitzvah in Eretz Yisrael is not just a greater fulfillment of the same Mitzvah; it is a different Mitzvah, on a whole new dimension.

Kol Bochim goes so far as to suggest that Eretz Yisrael is not just like clothing to our body but like a body to our soul (cited in Eretz Yisrael §85, in commentary Ben Yisrael). In other words, it is an extension of us and connected to us, and without it, we cannot accomplish our purpose in this world. Perhaps according to this, “Eretz Yisrael” does not just mean “the land that belongs to the Jewish people,” but also “the land that is the Jewish people.”

Kol Bochim illustrates this concept by citing the teaching of the Sages that tzaraas, a spiritual disease that results from sin, only affects homes in Eretz Yisrael. [This was discussed in an earlier article about tzaraas.] If someone were to commit the exact same sin outside Eretz Yisrael, his home would not be stricken with tzaraas (see Vayikra 14:34). What is the difference? It is because only the land of Eretz Yisrael connects with the Jewish people who live there, feels the impurity of their sins, and reacts with tzaraas. In contrast, the land outside Eretz Yisrael is like dead flesh that does not feel nor react. The Torah similarly states that if people commit abominable sins within Eretz Yisrael, it “vomits” them out (Vayikra 18:28). This is because Eretz Yisrael is alive with spirituality and therefore reacts to anything that does not agree with its holy nature. While it is sensitive to all that occurs upon it, it is especially sensitive to the nation of which it is part, the Jewish people. On the other hand, when the Jewish people act virtuously in Eretz Yisrael, it feels and reacts positively. It becomes the bountiful and blessed land that was promised to our patriarchs as the greatest possible reward in this world, in which Hashem’s Presence rests upon His people and shines forth throughout the world.

from: Shabbat Shalom <shabbatshalom@ounetwork.org>

date: Jul 17, 2025, 6:50 PM subject: Three Weeks Inspiration; How to Host Guests; Dishwashers on Shabbat?

תורת חיים: Torah as a Way of Life

Pinchas 5785 – Becoming Torah

Rabbi Moshe Hauer

Are Torah-observant Jews different or do we just do different things? How personally transformative is our faith and practice?

Klal Yisrael was consistently exhorted by our prophets and leaders to be mindful of ritual actions and words empty of feeling (Yeshayahu 29:13), and of the utter inconsistency, meaninglessness, and even repulsiveness of the religious observances of those who are harmful and apathetic to others (Yeshayahu 1:10-17). If we are just doing and not feeling, or if we are doing some things while blatantly ignoring others, we are in that failed zone of doing without being. “Making it a part of ourselves” may sound cliché, but there is nothing more real.

Pinchas was someone who successfully made the Torah part of himself. My rebbe, Harav Yaakov Weinberg zt”l, whose yearzeit was this week (17th of Tammuz), noted how the first Mishna in Pirkei Avot teaches us “ha’ami talmidim harbei, raise up – or more literally stand up – many students.”

While we are accustomed to teachers telling their students to sit down and listen, the ideal is to empower the students to make the lessons their own and

to get up and act upon them. That was Pinchas. When Moshe himself was unable to respond it was Pinchas who stood up and acted upon the lessons that Moshe had taught him (Rashi Bamidbar 25:6-7). Hashem Himself then offers the ultimate description and accolade of Pinchas’ integration of religious values when He praises Pinchas for being passionate on His behalf, b’kano et kinati (Bamidbar 25:11). Pinchas did not just do Torah, he became Torah, as his own feelings and visceral reactions reflected the values of Hashem and His Torah.

This perspective may add a layer of meaning to the known tradition that identifies Pinchas with another great person known for his passion on G-d’s behalf, Eliyahu Hanavi (Pirkei d’Rabi Eliezer 16). Amongst other things, Eliyahu had the unusual experience of leaving this world by ascending in a chariot of fire – body and soul – to the heavens (Melachim II 2:11). He was the very opposite of Korach, who descended – body and soul, still breathing – into the depths of the earth. Typically, death testifies to the failed integration of body and soul, as “the dust returns to the earth where it began, and the spirit returns to the G-d Who gave it” (Koheles 12:7). In the case of Korach, his denial of the divine communication and connection experienced by Moshe testified to the utter grounding of his own spirit, its complete absorption by his physicality, to the point where it joined the body in being swallowed up by the earth. Eliyahu/Pinchas was the opposite. He passionately and completely upheld and supported Moshe, believing and feeling the connection of G-d and man to the point where his body joined his soul in its ascent to the heavens. Eliyahu/Pinchas was – to use a phrase that may sound shallow – a totally spiritual person. He wasn’t just doing Jewish; he was transformed by his Judaism.

We have just begun the Three Weeks, the period of mourning over the destruction of Yerushalayim and the Mikdash. As the Talmud records, the attacking Babylonian generals – or for that matter their Persian, Greek, Roman, German, Russian, Palestinian, and Iranian successors – were powerless to destroy a city or a temple occupied by G-d. They could only destroy an empty shell. “A Divine Voice emerged and said to (Nevuzaradon): You killed a nation that was already dead, you burned a Sanctuary that was already burned, and you ground flour that was already ground (Sanhedrin 96b).” Our task during this time and always is to ensure that our Jewish communities, our shuls, and our selves are not hollow shells but living, breathing entities, transformed and infused through and through by our vibrant connection to Hashem and His Torah.

Rabbi Moshe Hauer Rabbi Moshe Hauer joined the Orthodox Union (OU) as its Executive Vice President on May 1, 2020. In this role he serves as the organization’s rabbinic leader, heading its communal-oriented efforts and serving as its professional religious/policy leader and primary spokesman. Prior to joining the OU, Rabbi Hauer served as the senior Rabb... Show more

from: Rabbi Chanan Morrison <chanan@ravkooktorah.org>

date: Jul 17, 2025, 5:16 AM

subject: Rav Kook on Pinchas: Our Offerings of Bread, Fire and Fragrance

Pinchas: Our Offerings of Bread, Fire and Fragrance

The Torah uses a striking series of poetic metaphors to describe the daily Tamid offering: “Be careful to offer My offering — My bread-offering, My fire-offering, My appeasing fragrance — at its proper time.” (Num. 28:2) What is the deeper significance of these four descriptions: offering, bread, fire, and fragrance?

Each phrase reflects a core quality common to all Temple offerings. Yet they are particularly fitting for the Tamid, the communal offering that embodies the aspiration to infuse holiness into the daily life of the nation.

Korbani — ‘My Offering’

The word korbani shares a root with karov, meaning “close” or “near.” Every offering is an expression of the soul’s inner longing to draw near to God.

The Tamid gives voice to these yearnings in the collective soul of the nation.

Lachmi — ‘My Bread’

Why does the Torah compare the offerings to bread?

Bread sustains life; it binds the soul to the body, allowing the spirit to animate physical powers. The Hebrew root *lechem* also means “to solder” or “fuse together.”

In this sense, the Temple offerings are like *lechem*, a medium that binds the physical and spiritual, cultivating the manifestation of the nation’s sacred qualities in the realm of action.

Ishi — ‘My Fire-Offering’

Fire is a source of tremendous energy, capable of igniting and transforming physical matter.

The Temple offerings reflect the goal that the Divine within the nation’s soul is not limited to the intellectual and emotive spheres, but finds expression also in all aspects of physical life.

Rei’ach Nichochi — ‘My Appeasing Fragrance’

This final metaphor evokes pleasantness and sweetness.

The Temple offerings awaken a sense of spiritual delight — both for the individual and for the nation as a whole — as the soul is uplifted and refined. This inner sweetness is rooted in Israel’s unique bond with God, as we live a life of sanctity and meaning.

(Adapted from *Olat Re’iyah* vol. I, pp. 128-129)

YUTORAH IN PRINT • Pinchas 5785

A Silent Mountain of Hope and Tears

Rabbi Moshe Taragin

Jewish history unfolded across many legendary mountains. Our story is etched into numerous mountaintops of joy and revelation.

On a desert cliff named Sinai—its exact location now lost—Hashem gave us the Torah. Years later, upon the twin peaks of Gerizim and Eival in northern Israel, we reenacted Sinai. This mountain covenant bound a new generation directly to the revelation their parents had witnessed on those same Sinai heights.

In the heart of Yerushalayim stands another fabled mountain named Moriah. There, Avraham offered Yitzchak, and Yaakov dreamed of a ladder stretching heavenward. That mountain became the site of the Beit HaMikdash—a house built by man to host the presence of Hashem. Moriah is the mountain where Jewish history first took shape— and the one toward which all of history returns. It is both our point of origin and our final destination.

Judaism was shaped on summits—where heaven touched earth and the timeless broke into the flow of history.

A Mountain of Farewell

But not all mountains in Jewish history are bright. One mountain, shrouded in sorrow, rises in what is now Jordan. From its summit, Moshe Rabbeinu caught a final glimpse of the Land he would never enter. It is a heart-wrenching scene. Moshe had once spoken to slaves in Egypt of a land flowing with milk and honey, and had led a liberated nation across barren deserts. Now he stands alone—lonely and barred from the very land he had promised and dreamed of.

He climbs Mount Nevo, not to arrive, but to gaze—to look upon a homeland he will never touch. A lifelong dream stretched out before him, just beyond reach.

It’s curious that Hashem speaks of Moshe’s final ascent while so much still lies ahead. This moment appears in Parshat Pinchas, immediately following the guidelines for dividing the Land of Israel—yet Moshe remains deeply engaged in preparing the people for their entry, only ascending the mountain much later. He will still wage war against Midyan, negotiate with the tribes who wish to settle east of the Jordan, and deliver many more sections of the Torah. Most significantly, he will compose the great valedictory of *Sefer Devarim*—a second articulation of the Torah’s covenant.

Only at the very end of his life, after all is complete, does he finally climb the mountain to glimpse Israel. So why does Hashem command Moshe now to ascend, rather than waiting for that final moment? Perhaps Hashem wished to gently prepare Moshe for the painful truth that he would never enter the land. The instant he stands atop that mountain, gazing at a homeland he will never walk, will be shattering. To soften this blow, Hashem offers advance

notice. It is an act of compassion, allowing Moshe space to come to terms with the impossible. Moshe understands he will not enter long before he ascends that tear-drenched mountain.

A Selfless Gaze

Ironically, this recognition reshapes the end of his life, casting it in even greater heroic light. Until now, Moshe clung to the hope that he would eventually enter the land. He worked tirelessly, driven by the hope of experiencing the life he helped build in Israel.

Although the decree barring him from entry had already been issued, he believed it might be reversed. After all, he had prayed twice and saved the people from destruction. His confidence grew when he was entrusted with delivering the instructions for dividing the land—perhaps a sign he would personally oversee the process. Hearing that he will one day ascend the mountain to glimpse the land—but never enter—cements his fate. It becomes unmistakably clear: Israel is beyond his reach.

Yet heroically, he does not step aside. There are still wars to fight, laws to teach, and a final farewell speech to deliver. Moshe now labors selflessly for a future beyond his own lifetime. Though he will never dwell in Israel, every ounce of his strength is poured into preparing us to live there. His fate is clear, but his focus remains steadfast—working wholly for a tomorrow he will never see.

Faith in the Incomplete Moshe’s final days stand as a metaphor for life in Israel. Life here is about building toward a future we may never see or fully experience. Israel is a land shaped by history, where each generation lays the foundation for those who come after. Though we may not witness that future, we are the builders who make it possible. Nevo is more than the mountain where Moshe stood—it is a mindset, a vision carried in the heart of every person in Israel.

We are slowly emerging from a grueling two-year war, burdened by mental and emotional fatigue, swallowed by confusion. Conflicting reports, opposing visions—each pulling us in different directions. We hear reports of a new Middle East—promises of change, new alliances, and shifting powers. Yet beneath these headlines, the reality remains stark: our enemies have not disappeared. They remain relentless, working tirelessly to defeat us. The landscape may be changing, but the threats we face endure.

Additionally, antisemitism has flared anew, menacing Jews across the globe, casting shadows over Israel’s diplomatic standing. Where are we headed? Toward a radiant, hopeful future, or a more tangled, uncertain one? It’s difficult to discern what to believe—or who to believe in. Should we lean toward optimism or brace for pessimism? The answer is unclear.

One thing is certain—this journey will take time. Short of divine intervention, full closure and perfect solutions are unlikely to come within our lifetime. We must not be discouraged or lose heart in the face of the long arc of life in Israel. Like Moshe standing atop Nevo, we labor for a future our nation will inherit—one we may never fully live to see. Unlike Moshe, we have entered this land. We have built, and will continue to build, knowing the final chapters we seek belong to a tomorrow beyond our own. We are the bricklayers of history—the builders of a shared destiny. The work will be finished, and we remain bound to its continuing story.

Life in Israel hangs on the edge of Nevo—caught between what has been and what will be.

The View from Nevo

Nevo is not simply a cliff to stand upon, a place to ponder selfless commitment to a future we may never witness. It is more than a mountain of vision—it is a mountain of longing. For thousands of years, Jews like Moshe have stood atop this peak, yearning for a distant land they never saw but carried deep in their imagination. For Moshe, that land was barred by divine decree; for generations of Jews, Israel was barred by exile and the harsh grip of fate.

The gates of Israel have now opened. No divine decree, no barrier of exile stands in the way. Yet still, many Jews stand atop Nevo, yearning to walk the land that Moshe could not enter. Life is complex, and not every soul who longs to cross that threshold will make the journey. But like Moshe, their

yearning shapes them—Israel becomes woven into their identity and etched deep within their imagination.

Moshe does not stand alone on Nevo—we stand with him. Together, we gaze toward a future we build but may never fully enter. Together with him many Jews look toward a land they may never cross.

Nevo is still with us—a mountain of longing and faith—a place where every Jew stands, caught between hope and history.

from: Ira Zlotowitz <iraz@klalgovoa.org>

date: Jul 17, 2025, 7:01 PM

subject: Tidbits • Parashas Pinchas 5785 in memory of Rav Meir Zlotowitz ZTL

This week is Shabbos Mevorchim Chodesh Menachem Av. Rosh Chodesh is next Shabbos, July 26th. The molad is Friday morning at 10:42 AM and 5 chalakim.

The first opportunity for Kiddush Levana is Monday night, July 28th. The final opportunity is at 10:43 PM on Friday night, August 8th.

The Y'mei Bein Hametzarim, the Three Weeks, began at nightfall (shekiya) on Motzaei Shabbos, July 12th (see Tidbits to Parashas Balak for more information). The haftarah of Parashas Mattos (Yirmiyah 1:1-2:3) is leined this Shabbos. This haftarah is the first in the series of the Shalosh D'Puranusa, the Three Haftarahs of Chastisement, that are leined on the three Shabbosos leading up to Tisha B'av. The Nine Days will begin next Shabbos, Parashas Mattos-Masei. As wearing new or freshly laundered clothing (or linen) is restricted during this time, one should briefly wear freshly laundered clothing and briefly utilize any fresh towels or linen before the Nine Days to remove its freshness. See the upcoming Tidbits for Mattos-Masei for more information on the Nine Days.

Pirkei Avos: Perek 1

Daf Yomi - Shabbos: Bavli: Avodah Zara 31 • Yerushalmi: Pesachim 51 • Mishnah Yomis: Zevachim 2:2-2:3 • Oraysa (coming week): Moed Katan 8b-10b • Kitzur Shulchan Aruch: 181:14-182:1

Summary

PINCHAS: Pinchas and his descendants are rewarded with Kehuna • Commandment to wage war against the Midianites • The generation of the 40th year in the Midbar is counted • Eretz Yisrael is to be divided among the Shevatim • The Bnos Tzelaftach request their father's portion of the land • Hashem informs Moshe that he will pass away before entering the land • Yehoshua bin Nun is appointed as Moshe's successor • The daily Korban Tamid • The Korbanos Mussaf of Shabbos, Rosh Chodesh, and the Holidays Haftarah: The haftarah of Parashas Mattos is leined. The Navi Yirmiyah (1:1-2:3) foretells the impending destruction of Yerushalayim because of the sins of the Bnei Yisrael. The haftarah ends with predicting the future redemption, "Zacharti lach chessed ni'urayich", that Hashem will remember the nation's earlier good deeds and grant their return to Eretz Yisrael.

Dvar Torah

Uvayom Hashabbos Shnei Kvasim Bnei Shana Temimim. "And on the Shabbos Day [you shall bring] two male lambs at one year old, unblemished" (Bamidbar 28:9)

The Midrash says that the two lambs brought for the korbanos mussaf of Shabbos must be identical in appearance.

Rav Moshe Feinstein zt"l explains that the two lambs correspond to the two mitzvos of Shabbos, Zachor and Shamor. The mitzvah of Zachor, to commemorate, is to honor the Shabbos and partake in oneg Shabbos, a mitzvah which is easily accepted and enjoyable to a person. The mitzvah of Shamor, however, is to guard and abide by the Shabbos prohibitions by not performing melachah. Such prohibitions may feel restrictive, and at times one may think he is losing out financially or in some other way by observing these prohibitions. But this is not the case. Shabbos is the source of all blessing, and all success and berachah attained during the work week is in fact derived from Shabbos.

from: Michal Horowitz <michalchorowitz@gmail.com>

date: Jul 17, 2025, 8:03 AM

subject: **Pinchas 5785: The Transmission of Torah
The Command to Go to War**

Michal Horowitz

The beginning of this week's parsha, Parshas Pinchas, resumes the narrative that began at the end of last week's sedra, Balak. At the end of Balak we read of the sins of the nation of Israel, who were persuaded to sin with the Midyanite women, and were worshipping the avodah zarah of Ba'al Peor (Bamidbar 25:1-3).

How did this disastrous situation come to be? After Bilaam's failure to curse the Jews, he gave King Balak advice as to how to bring destruction upon the nation of Israel. He encouraged Balak to set up tents (in the shuk) selling new linen garments, with zonos (seductive women) on the outside and inside of the tents, who would serve the Israelite men wine and then seduce them, which ultimately would lead to their worshipping idols (Sanhedrin 106a). His plan worked and Hashem's anger burned against the nation (25:3). When the prince of the tribe of Shimon publicly lay with a princess from Midyan, Moshe was overcome with distress, and Pinchas – a grandson of Aharon – rose up with a spear in his hand, and killed the pair who were sinning. Once he killed them, the plague which had been decimating Israel (due to G-d's wrath) subsided. The total number that fell by plague was 24,000 men (25:4-9).

In the beginning of Parshas Pinchas, the narrative resumes (25:10-15). For Pinchas' brave actions, which were solely for the sake of Heaven, Hashem rewarded him with the covenant of peace and eternal priesthood. The Torah identifies the couple who were publicly laying together as Zimri ben Salu from Shimon, and Cozbi bas Tzur, a Midyanite princess.

Immediately after this narrative, Hashem instructs Moshe to go to war against Midyan. "Antagonize the Midyanim and strike them for they antagonized you with their schemes, that they schemed against you at Baal Peor..." (25:16-18).

It is interesting to note that Hashem had to command Moshe (and the nation) to go to war against Midyan. 24,000 men had just died in a plague, brought upon them because of the seduction by Midyanite women. Would they not, on their own, decide to go to war?!

Rabbi Dovid Holzer notes that "The Bnei Yisrael (Bn'Y) suffered tremendous losses because they allowed themselves to be seduced by the Midianite women. Despite this, they were not eager to exact revenge on Midian afterwards. In fact, Hashem had to order Bn'Y to attack them. By contrast, when facing Amalek, Bn'Y seized the initiative to go out to battle (Bamidbar 21:1-3 w/ Rashi). How do we account for these two different reactions?" To answer his astute question, R' Holzer quotes Rav Soloveitchik, zt"l: "(My son) Chaim told me a story that is very characteristic (of our relationship with non-Jews). When you study the Gemara, (tractate) Avodah Zarah, there are many instructions pertaining to the relationship between Jew and non-Jew. One instruction says that a Jew should not walk in front and let a non-Jew walk behind him, because he may stab him in the back. Then there is another injunction that a Jew should not take a haircut or shave from a non-Jew.

"When he learned this Gemara, so a group of (his) students protested against our intolerance and suspicious nature. And, of course, they accused us of being too parochial and so forth and so on, of not caring for human beings, but just Jews. We are accused now of that...this is the major charge now of anti-Semites, I want you to know...the Jew is clannish, he is not universal..." "Chaim didn't say a word, he didn't say a word. And he told them he wants to take a walk with them. Alright, he took them for a walk, took them straight to the Old City, and they passed by a barber shop, an Arab barber shop. So one of his students needed a haircut, so he told him, here is a barber shop. 'I should go to the Arab barber shop!?' Where with the razor he'll cut my throat!' the student exclaimed. "...There is an autobiography by Rav Yaakov Emden (18th century). He writes that 'a miracle happened to me'. So you read what happened to him. He left the ghetto and he met a monk, and the monk gave him a stern look, but he didn't do anything to him. So he came home and wrote down that a miracle happened to him that a monk didn't do anything, didn't do any harm."

How does this answer the question of R' Holzer: against Amalek we were eager to attack, but against Midyan we had to be ordered to go to war? Says R' Holzer, "With this teaching (of the Rav) we can explain the different reactions of Bn'Y to the Midianites and the Amalekim. When the nations attack and oppose us openly, we recognize the danger and respond accordingly, as in the case of Amalek. But when the nations seduce us with their civility and surface friendship – as in the case of Midian – they can be just as destructive, or even more destructive, without us realizing" (The Rav Thinking Aloud, Sefer Bamidbar, p. 206-210).

Historically, throughout our long years of exile, our enemies can be divided into two camps, two thoughts, two ideologies. The first category, the Amalek type, are those who seek to destroy us physically, eradicate our Torah, nation, holy places of study and worship, and erase any vestige of Am Yisrael from the world

However, the second type of enemy is the enemy of Midyan, their seductive women, and overtures of acceptance, friendship, and camaraderie. "Shev – come sit in my tent, the Midyanite women said to the Israelite men, beror le'atzmecha – choose whichever linen garments you like, v'tzir'tzurei shel yayin Emoni mutzlach etzlah, and a pitcher of wine sat next to her" (Sanhedrin 106a).

This enemy can be even more dangerous than the Amalek type, because it's a foe-turned-friend, whose wicked design against our holiness, purity, morality, and Torah ways, we may not even realize... until "and his passion burned within him and he said to her, lay with me!" (ibid)

Today, enemies of all kinds rise up to destroy us once again! There are those who want to kill us, destroy our home and our Land, and those who seduce us with their crooked beliefs and twisted ways, beckoning us to join them in their way of life.

As Torah Jews, we must be ever vigilant against all who rise to destroy us. The path to our eternal survival lies in Torah and mitzvos, ki heim chayeinu v'orech yameinu. When we remain in the tents of Torah, remain faithful to G-d and committed to Am Yisrael, we will be victorious over every enemy who rises to destroy us; ViHKBH Matzileinu Miyadam.

from: TorahWeb <torahweb@torahweb.org> reply-to: TorahWeb <torahweb@torahweb.org> to: internetparshasheet@gmail.com date: Jul 17, 2025, 7:55 PM subject: Rabbi Eliakim Koenigsberg - Take the First Step read this on the web

Rabbi Eliakim Koenigsberg Take the First Step In Parshas Pinchas, the daughters of Tzafchad approach Moshe Rabbeinu with a request to be given their father's portion in Eretz Yisrael (27:1-4). When they heard Hashem's command, "To these (meaning to those who were counted) shall the land be divided as an inheritance" (26:53), the daughters of Tzafchad understood that only males were to receive a portion in Eretz Yisrael (see Tosafos, Bava Basra 119b, s.v. "ilu"). Since their father did not have any sons, he would be denied a share in the land. They therefore asked to be given their father's portion.

On the surface, their request seems puzzling. If they knew that women were not supposed to receive a share of the inheritance, then why did they ask for their father's portion? The answer is that the daughters of Tzafchad (and the women of that generation in general) had a deep affection for Eretz Yisrael (see Rashi, Pinchas 26:64, and Midrash Rabbah there 21:10). They could not bear the thought that their father and his family would not be given a share of the land. Therefore, despite the fact that their request seemed illogical, they felt the need to ask. And what happened? Hashem responded by including a clause in the laws of inheritance that allows for a daughter to receive her father's possessions when there are no sons in the family.

This is a recurrent theme we find in many different contexts - that when a person feels an intense desire for spiritual connection, Hashem enables that person to achieve his aspiration, but only after the person pushes himself and takes the first step toward his goal.

In Parshas B'ha'aloscha (9:7), after Moshe Rabbeinu instructs the Jewish people to bring a korban Pesach, a few men who were ritually impure approach Moshe Rabbeinu with a complaint: "Why should we be diminished

- lama nigara - by not offering Hashem's korban in its proper time with the rest of bnei Yisrael (just because we are tamei)?" At first glance, their objection seems unreasonable. If the halacha dictates that one who is ritually impure cannot bring a korban, then their problem is insurmountable. What purpose was there in protesting a rule of the Torah?

Apparently, these men had such an intense desire to bring the korban Pesach that they could not let go. Even though their complaint did not make sense, they had to speak up. And, once again, what is Hashem's response? He introduces the mitzvah of Pesach Sheini to offer a second chance for those who were unable to bring the korban Pesach on time. Both the daughters of Tzafchad and the men who were ritually impure are given the spiritual connection they requested, but only after they ask for it.

Similarly, Yaakov Avinu experiences a miracle on his way to Charan because of his heartfelt spiritual aspiration. The Torah says, "Vayifga bamakom - and he encountered the place" (Vayeitzei 28:11). The word vayifga sounds like Yaakov Avinu arrived at the place unexpectedly. Chazal explain (Chullin 91a) that this indicates that the earth contracted for him - kaftza lo ha'aretz. When Yaakov arrived in Charan, he said to himself, "Could it be that I passed a place where my forefathers davened, and I didn't daven there?" He set his mind to return, and the earth contracted and brought Har Hamoriyah to him.

If Hashem wanted Yaakov to daven at Har Hamoriyah, the future location of the Beis Hamikdash, then why did He not stop him there on his way to Charan? Rashi (Vayeitzei 28:17) answers that since Yaakov did not have the desire in his heart to daven when he passed the makom Hamikdash, Hashem did not stop him. Only after he set his mind to return to the place, and he traveled to Beis El, did the earth contract on his behalf. When Yaakov felt an intense desire to connect with Hashem through tefillah, and he acted on that feeling, Hashem performed a miracle to make it easier for Yaakov to reach his goal.

There is no limit to what Hashem can do to help a person achieve all his spiritual aspirations. But He waits for the person to take the first step. And sometimes that can seem like a daunting task. Megillas Eichah ends with the plaintive cry of the Jewish people, "Hashiveinu - return us, Hashem, to You, and we will return (we will do teshuva)." Chazal comment (Midrash Rabbah Eichah 5:21), "The Jewish people say to Hashem, 'It is up to You; return us Hashem to You, and we will return.' But Hashem responds, 'No, it is up to you, 'Return to Me, and I will return to you' (Zecharya 1:3)."

We long for redemption, for reconciliation with Hakadosh Boruch Hu. But Hashem waits for us to draw closer to Him. "Ha'ba li'taheir mesayim oso - one who seeks to purify himself receives the heavenly assistance he needs to achieve that goal" (Shabbos 104a). Hashem is willing and able to help, but only if a person is ba li'taheir - only if he really wants it and he makes the first move to come close.

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YUTORAH IN PRINT • Pinchas 5785

The 'Zealotry' of Pinchas

Rabbi Ephraim Z. Buchwald

This week's parasha, parashat Pinchas, opens with the conclusion of the story, that began in last week's parasha, of a tribal leader of Israel who committed a lewd public act with a Midianite woman.

In parashat Pinchas the protagonists are identified as people of pedigree background, Zimri the son of Salu, a prince of the tribe of Simeon, and Kozbi the daughter of Zur, a Midianite princess.

The Midrash (Tanchuma, Numbers 25:26 and Talmud Sanhedrin, 82a), cited by Rashi, portrays the brazen act of Zimri and Kozbi as a direct challenge to Moses' authority and personal integrity. The Midrash states that Zimri approached Moses, demanding to know whether he could cohabit with Kozbi, the Midianite princess. When Moses categorically prohibited the act,

Zimri directly challenged Moses by saying: “Why then were you [Moses] permitted to cohabit with a Midianite woman [Tziporah]?!” Of course, Moses’ marriage to Tziporah had occurred many years before the Torah was given, and was therefore not subject to the laws of sanctification through marriage that had been given at Sinai. But Zimri wanted to be provocative, and he clearly succeeded! Moses obviously felt compromised, and seemed unable to respond to Zimri, who proceeded to perform a carnal act with Kozbi in front of all the people. Into this void stepped a young relative of Moses, the grandson of his brother Aaron, whose name was Pinchas. At least according to the Midrash, (Tanchuma, Numbers 25:26 and Talmud Sanhedrin, 82b) cited by Rashi (Numbers 25:11), Pinchas knew well what it meant to be subject to public embarrassment and scorn. The Torah (Leviticus 9), records that on the first day of Nissan, in the second year of the people’s travels in the wilderness, the Tabernacle was sanctified and dedicated. On that same day the priests were invested into the priesthood. Despite being Aaron’s grandson, Pinchas the son of Elazar, was not designated to serve as a priest together with his father and his uncles. The skeptics of Israel, of whom there were always many, immediately noted the failure of Pinchas to become a priest. Looking for a reason to explain why Pinchas was not invested, they ridiculed him, pointing out that Pinchas was obviously not worthy of the priesthood since, on his mother’s side, he was the grandson of Jethro the idolater, who offered fattened animals as a sacrifice to the idols. They began to refer to Pinchas by the embarrassing name, “Ben Puti,” the son of one who fattens! Obviously stunned by the actions of Zimri and Kozbi, neither Moses, Aaron nor any of the seventy elders who witnessed the travesty, responded to this brazen challenge. Pinchas, who had spent much of his life fending off critics and attackers, felt compelled to step in to defend the dignity of G-d and Moses. The Al-mighty subsequently rewarded Pinchas for his heroic actions with a Brit Shalom” (Numbers 25:12) G-d’s covenant of peace, as well as a Brit K’hoo’not Olam (Numbers 25:13) the covenant of an eternal priesthood, because of the vengeance that he exacted on the enemies of G-d, as well as for bringing about atonement for the sins of the Children of Israel. Through his courageous act, Pinchas showed that he was not at all a zealot, but rather a seeker of peace. Pinchas’ actions were motivated by his concern lest Zimri’s act of immorality would cause resounding harm to the people. A plague had broken out among the people, and Pinchas felt compelled to act in order to save the nation. It was only because of Pinchas’ actions that the plague, that had struck the people of Israel, killing 24,000 people as the result of their immorality with the Moabite and Midianite women, was now stayed. In this way, Pinchas showed that he was a faithful descendant of his grandfather Aaron, a lover of peace, a pursuer of peace, who deeply loves G-d’s creatures__

Potomac Torah Study Center Divrei Torah for Shabbat Pinchas 5785

from: Alan Fisher <afisherads@yahoo.com>

BS”D July 18, 2025

Potomac Torah Study Center Vol. 12 #39, July 18-19, 2025; 23 Tammuz 5785; Pinchas 5785; Mevarchim HaHodesh Rosh Hodesh Av is next Shabbat Devrei Torah are now Available for Download (normally by noon on Fridays) at www.PotomacTorah.org. Thanks to Bill Landau for hosting the Devrei Torah archives.

If a person reads the verses in the parsha for this week and does not know the name of the parsha, would “Pinchas” be an obvious choice? Of the fifty-four parashot in the Torah, only six – eleven percent – have a person as the name: Noach, Chayei Sarah, Yitro, Korach, Balak, and Pinchas.

Three of the individuals whose names identify a parsha are not Jewish (Noach, Yitro, and Balak). Korach and Balak are “bad guys,” to use a description that my children and grandchildren used when young. There is no parsha named for Avraham, Yitzhak, Yaakov, Aharon, or most other significant Jews. Why Pinchas?

Pinchas comes to our attention after he takes a sword and kills Zimri, a prince of Shimon, and Cozbi, daughter of a prince of Midian, when they perform a disgusting form of idolatry to Peor (the central idol of Midian and

Moab). Once Zimri and Cozbi perform their idolatry in front of B’Nai Yisrael, God starts a plague that quickly kills 24,000 people. When Pinchas kills Zimri and Cozbi, Hashem stops the plague and announces a reward of peace (and permanent status of Kohen for Pinchas and his descendants). Rabbi David Fohrman and his associates at alephbeta.org summarize the stories in Pinchas to determine a common theme. Here are the stories in the parsha:

- (1) Pinchas kills the sinning couple (a high ranking Jewish man and a Midianite princess), and God presents an everlasting reward to Pinchas.
- (2) God has Moshe conduct a census of the Jews, by tribe and family, listing the heads of each family by name. These families will inherit permanent holdings in the land.
- (3) The daughters of Tzelofchad approach Moshe, say that their father is dead and that they have no brothers. They also want to inherit so there can be a permanent land holding to keep their father’s name alive. God finds their request to have merit and amends the inheritance to include daughters when there is no son to inherit.
- (4) God tells Moshe to go up a mountain to view the land and informs him that he will then die. Moshe requests that God appoint a proper leader to lead the people into the land. Hashem selects Yehoshua and tells Moshe to appoint him in front of the people and to transfer some of his Ruach Kodesh to Yehoshua.
- (5) Hashem tells Moshe to command the people which korbanot to present each day and the Musaf (additional) offerings to give on Shabbat, Rosh Hodesh, and each Yom Tov.

Rabbi Fohrman and his scholars identify legacy as the common theme that connects all the stories in the parsha. The legacy for Pinchas is that he becomes a Kohen and all his descendants will also be Kohanim. (The initial appointment of Kohanim is to all sons of Aharon born after his appointment. Since Pinchas was born before Aharon becomes a Kohen, he is not a Kohen himself until God appoints him as a reward for stopping the plague at Baal Peor.)

The census and request of the daughters of Tzelofchad clearly relate to legacy, because they determine the permanent land holdings of the families that enter Eretz Yisrael at the time of Yehoshua. Although needy families could “sell” their land if necessary, the land reverts to the original land holders every Yovel year – so the land allocations are permanent until conquering nations take the Jews into exile and tribal identities are lost. The land allocations do not include Moshe – there are no grants to his sons Gershom and Eliezer. Pirkei Avot opens by presenting Moshe’s legacy – Yehoshua, the judges, the men of the great assembly, and a long list of Rabbis who preserve the Torah that Hashem presents to Moshe and that his followers clarified through the Oral Law, always connecting new decisions by connecting them with statements in the Torah and previous religious case law.

Hashem presents the laws in chapters 28 and 29, the daily korbanot and all the Musaf korbanot, to Moshe either on Har Sinai or while B’Nai Yisrael are near the base of Har Sinai before our ancestors leave to complete the journey to Eretz Yisrael. The Torah presents this material here, in Pinchas, for thematic reasons. Once Pinchas becomes a Kohen and the priesthood will remain among his descendants, the details of the burnt offerings (olot) fit thematically in this parsha. Performing these korbanot is an important part of the legacy of Pinchas.

Rabbi Dr. Katriel (Kenneth) Brander reminds us weekly that the period since the Hamas attack on October 7, 2023, with the surge in anti-Semitic attacks all over the world, has brought Jews in Israel and the Diaspora closer together. While the obligations of Haredi Jews in helping defend Israel is still evolving, many frum Jews in Israel – both men and women – combine religious studies with helping defend the country. Half the women graduates of religious Zionist high schools now enlist in the IDF, and ten percent of them seek role in combat units. As more segments of the Israeli society work together to defend the country, and Jews in the Diaspora identify more closely with Israel, we look forward to a better future for Israel, Jews, and all people who wish for a better world. My beloved Rebbe, Rabbi Leonard

Cahan, z"l, shared Rabbi Brander's desire for all elements of the Israeli community to work together, and we try to teach this wish to our children and grandchildren.

Shabbat Shalom,

Hannah and Alan

Shabbat Shalom,

Hannah & Alan

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from: **Rabbi Kaganoff** <ymkaganoff@gmail.com> to: kaganoff-a@googlegroups.com date: May 13, 2025, 5:19 AM subject: Klal hatzarich lifrat

Since one of the examples of klal hatzarich lifrat is in Parshas Emor...

The Thirteen Midos of Rabbi Yishmael

By Rabbi Yirmiyohu Kaganoff

Question #1: Reasoning Can we restore a lost mesorah on the basis of logic?

Question #2: Kal vachomer If an opening is large enough for a football tackle to rush through unimpeded, shouldn't a healthy ten-year-old be able to walk through it?

Question #3: Gezeirah shavah What is meant that something is an "equal decree"?

Foreword: Immediately prior to the kaddish derabbanan recited at the end of the korbanos section of our davening, we recite a beraisa in which we enumerate the thirteen "midos" of Rabbi Yishmael, a listing of methods whereby the laws of the Torah shebe'al peh are derived from the written Torah. This beraisa is the beginning of the introduction to the Sifra (also called the Toras Kohanim), the halachic midrash of the book of Vayikra.

The goal of this article is to explain the beraisa of Rabbi Yishmael, but I must first explain what halachic midrash is. Halachic midrash is the method whereby the laws of the Torah shebe'al peh can be derived from the Written Torah. When Moshe Rabbeinu spent forty days on Har Sinai, Hashem taught him all the laws of the Oral Torah. Moshe then taught these laws to the Bnei Yisrael in a method that is described in the Gemara (Ervin 54b) such that each adult male Jew would hear the laws four different times. Each person kept his own private notes to help him remember the laws of the Torah shebe'al peh.

The system was not perfect. When Moshe Rabbeinu passed on, the Jewish people realized collectively that they could not recall clearly thousands of laws that Moshe had taught them. The Gemara teaches that Asniel ben Kenaz was able to restore these laws to the collective memory by figuring them out bepilpulo, by use of dialectic reasoning.

To quote the passage of Gemara (Temurah 16a):

Immediately prior to his passing on to Gan Eden, Moshe Rabbeinu said to Yehoshua, "Ask of me every doubt that you have!" Yehoshua answered, "Rebbe, have I left you for a moment and gone somewhere else? Did you not write about me that 'his assistant, Yehoshua bin Nun, never left the ohel mo'eid'" (Shemos 33:11)? At that moment, Yehoshua weakened (as a punishment for the lack of humility implicit in his answer [Maharsha; cf. Rashi]): he forgot three hundred halachos and also now had seven hundred uncertainties (which were discovered after Moshe passed away). The entire people of Israel rose up against Yehoshua, planning to kill him... The beraisa taught: seventeen hundred cases of kal vachomer, gezeirah shavah, and derived halachic details were forgotten during the mourning period for Moshe. Rabbi Avahu responded that they were "retrieved by Asniel ben Kenaz with his dialectic reasoning."

Thus, the opening question to our article: "How can we restore a lost mesorah on the basis of logic?"

The answer is that, alongside the Torah shebe'al peh and the written Torah, there is a mesorah of rules whereby the laws of the Torah shebe'al peh are derived from the written Torah. These laws were all part of the original Oral Torah, as were the rules, which provide a backup whereby the laws may be retrieved should they be forgotten.

The rules for deriving the laws fall into two categories:

Extra words -- yalfusa 1. Some halachos are derived on the basis of extra words or parts of words in the Torah. An example of this is that, when the Torah provides lengthy instructions for offering the various korbanos each day of Sukkos, a discerning reader will notice that the template reading of the different days is not identical. While the wine libations on these days are identical, the

word used to describe those libations varies, twice with a נ added and once with a ך added. These extra letters spell the word נלם, water, whence we derive that, on Sukkos, there is a unique service called nisuch hamayaim, pouring of water on the mizbei'ach. This law is not mentioned anywhere else in the Written Torah, but is expounded upon in the Oral Torah, the Torah shebe'al peh.

Clearly understanding the pesukim of the Torah provides the sources for these halachos, and this is a common way that these laws are derived by the Gemara and by the halachic midrashim. Understanding the grammar as Chazal understood the pesukim of the Torah is an essential way towards deriving these laws. The absolute master in explaining these rules is the Malbim, in his work entitled Ayeles Hashachar, usually printed as an introduction to his commentary to Vayikra. The Malbim writes that he had originally planned to provide a thorough explanation of the halachic exegesis process as a running commentary to the Sifra. However, after writing the commentary to just two pesukim, he discovered that the results of this work would be the length of a multi-volume encyclopedia. As a result, he wrote instead an introductory work, Ayeles Hashachar, elucidating the grammatical principles whereby Chazal derived the words of the Torah as a source for the laws of Torah shebe'al peh. Throughout his commentary to Vayikra, the Malbim refers to the Ayeles Hashachar to explain how Chazal understood each pasuk and arrived at their conclusion.

Midos 2. Other halachos are derived on the basis of hermeneutic rules, called midos, that are methods whereby halachos not obviously mentioned in the written Torah are taught. In other words, these halachos were included in the Torah shebe'al peh, but, again, as a backup, they could also be derived on the basis of the rules of Torah shebe'al peh. The thirteen rules that we recite in our davening is Rabbi Yishmael's version of these rules. There are slight discrepancies or differences of opinion among tanna'im concerning some of the rules used to derive these laws, meaning that the details of how these rules work were occasionally disputed. That is why the midos are referred to as the thirteen rules of Rabbi Yishmael. This article will not address the disputes.

These are the thirteen rules that are mentioned in the beraisa of Rabbi Yishmael, as understood by the Ra'avad and most late commentators: 1. Kal vachomer 2. Gezeirah shavah 3. Binyan av 4. Klal ufrat 5. Prat uchlal 6. Klal ufrat uchlal 7. Klal shehu tzarich lefrat 8. Davar shehayah bichlal viyatza lelamid 9. Davar shehayah bichlal viyatza ke'inyano 10. Davar shehayah bichlal viyatza shelo ke'inyano 11. Davar shehayah bichlal viyatza bedavar chodosh 12. Davar halameid mei'inyano 13. Shnei kesuvim hamach'chishin.

Those familiar with the beraisa of Rabbi Yishmael will immediately note that I have omitted significant sections of the beraisa.

A. In some instances, the beraisa provides two variations of a rule, such as, it presents two types of binyan av. I will explain why there are two types, but they are both manifestations of the same hermeneutic principle.

B. Some of these rules are mentioned by the beraisa without any explanation as to how they work or what they mean. For example, four of the first five rules, kal vachomer, gezeira shavah, klal uprat and prat uchlal are not at all explained. On the other hand, the method of derivation of most of the other rules is mentioned in the beraisa, although they are never fully explained. Iy"H, I will be explaining these rules.

Frequency We should also be aware that some of these rules have thousands of applications, whereas others of them appear very few times in all of Talmudic literature.

Kal vachomer At this point, I will explain the first of Rabbi Yishmael's midos, which is perhaps the most obvious rule in terms of logic: the kal vachomer. Among the thirteen rules, this one is unique, because it actually appears several times in the Chumash itself as part of someone's logical argument. For example, to prove that they are innocent of stealing Yosef's goblet, the brothers rally a kal vachomer. "If we returned the money that we found in our sacks, how could we possibly have considered taking something that is not ours?" (Bereishis 44:8). Very simply put, a kal vachomer means that if something is true in a more obvious situation, it should certainly hold true in a less obvious situation. A simple application is as follows: If a burly, 6' 10" football tackle weighing 350 pounds can race through a passageway unhindered, a 100-pound, 5' person with no ambulatory difficulties should certainly be able to enter via the same opening. Ein onshin min hadin There are a few instances in which a kal vachomer cannot teach a halacha. Although a kal vachomer can prove that something is prohibited, it cannot be used to establish punishment, a principle called ein onshin min hadin. When the Torah imposes a penalty or punishment for violating a law, we cannot

derive by means of a kal vachomer that this penalty or punishment applies to a newly derived law.

Why not? We find two different reasons why ein onshin min hadin. One is that, although the punishment described by the Torah may be appropriate for a lesser crime, someone violating a more serious infraction should perhaps be punished in a harsher way. In other words, kal vachomer can teach that if the Torah prohibited a lesser sin, it certainly prohibited a more serious infraction. However, the more serious crime might require a more severe punishment than what the Torah meted out for the lesser offense.

Another reason explains that ein onshin min hadin is based on possible human logical fallibility. In general, we are obligated to apply our G-d-given intelligence when studying mitzvos, and kal vachomer is an example of this. However, prior to meting out judgment on the basis of a kal vachomer, we must recognize that there might be a reason why what appears as a kal vachomer is actually not.

According to this approach, the Torah's precept not to punish someone until and unless we are absolutely certain of his guilt requires that he not be punished on the basis of a kal vachomer.

These two approaches are not mutually exclusive; both factors might be true. We cannot punish someone on the basis of a kal vachomer because the kal vachomer itself may not be fully accurate; or the kal vachomer may be correct, and precisely because this act is a more serious crime its perpetrator should not be punished this way.

Dayo There is another instance whereby someone might think he can apply a kal vachomer, but he cannot. This is referred to as a case of dayo laba min hadin li'heyos kanidon, which means that you cannot derive with a kal vachomer more than the original source teaches, regardless as to how compelling the kal vachomer might appear. The Sifra picks an example of this from a pasuk in Chumash. When Miriam complained to Aharon about Moshe's behavior regarding his wife Tziporah, Miriam was guilty of saying loshon hora at that moment and turned white as a metzora. The pasuk then states, "Had her father spat in her face, would she not not have been ashamed for seven days" (Bamidbar 12:14). The Sifra completes the thought of the pasuk: for violating what Hashem has taught, she should be punished for fourteen days. Yet the Torah continues that her punishment is for seven days! Since the Torah concludes that she should be punished for no longer than she would have had her father censured her, any longer cannot be attributed to the kal vachomer.

Gezeirah shavah The second principle of Rabbi Yishmael's list is gezeirah shavah, which is a legal analogy based on the use of the same term in two separate cases. To explain this, we first need to translate and explain the words. Most people familiar with the concept of gezeirah shavah are not aware of the origin of the term. The word gezeirah in this context means "word structure;" the word shavah means "similarity." Therefore, the term means "a similarity of words."

Here is an example of a gezeirah shavah: through the use of the same term regarding the mitzvos of eating matzoh on Seder night and on sitting in the sukkah on Sukkos we derive that, although on the rest of the seven days of Sukkos a person may avoid eating bread and other foods that require him to eat in the sukkah, on the first night of Sukkos he is, indeed, required to eat a meal in the sukkah.

Please note that the halacha requiring that we eat in the sukkah on the first night was taught as a mesorah from Sinai. The gezeirah shavah is a means for making certain that this law would not be forgotten.

At this point, we can answer another of our opening questions: What is meant that something is an "equal decree"?

The answer is that this is a complete mistranslation and misunderstanding of the words gezeirah shavah, just as a "helicopter mom" does not require a pilot's license. The word gezeirah shavah means "a similarity of words."

Same meaning Those who are familiar with studying the concept of gezeirah shavah as it surfaces in the Gemara know that sometimes a gezeirah shavah is the exact same word, other times it is the same root, but not the exact same word, and at other times it can even be two words or terms that mean the same thing but are completely different words. One example of this last case is a gezeirah shavah that the Gemara derives from the words shav and ba in the laws of metzora (which is cited by Rashi on Chumash, Vayikra 14:39). Another example is where the words shachat and zavach are used as a gezeirah shavah (Chullin 85a). The two words both mean to slaughter.

There are many rules governing how a gezeirah shavah may be used to derive laws, depending on such issues as whether the word is repeated in both instances

of its application, the exact word is used in both places, and are there other places in which a more obvious comparison may exist. We will not study these differences in our article.

Most people do not realize how many gezeiros shavos actually exist. I am in possession of a lengthy manuscript that explains many of the usages and rules applying to gezeirah shavah, and includes an extensive list of every case of gezeirah shavah that its author identified -- over four hundred instances of gezeirah shavah and thousands of applications.

Gezeirah shavah is unlike any of the other thirteen midos in one very important way: regarding every other midah, a general mesorah exists to use the midah to derive halachos. Gezeirah shavah, on the other hand, requires that there is also a mesorah via Moshe at Har Sinai that the specific words are a gezeirah shavah. Otherwise, ein adam dan gezeirah shavah mei'atzmo, someone cannot declare that certain terms or words are a gezeirah shavah on the basis of his own personal authority.

Exception Based on a passage of Talmud Yerushalmi (Pesachim 6:1), we know that there is one exception to this rule. The Yerushalmi notes that, in an instance when we have a mesorah from an earlier source that a specific law is true, but we no longer know the hermeneutic origin for this law, someone may suggest a comparable word association, a gezeirah shavah that might be the hermeneutic source for this law.

However, in this instance, we cannot derive any new rulings with the gezeirah shavah. All we can do is suggest that perhaps the hermeneutic source of this law is the gezeirah shavah. (According to many rishonim, including Rashi, a similar concept exists relative to Halacha leMoshe miSinai. When we know that a halacha is true, but we are unaware that it has a hermeneutic source, we can suggest that its origin is a Halacha leMoshe miSinai [see Rashi, Bava Kama 3b].) Be'ezras Hashem, we will continue this topic of analyzing the thirteen midos taught by Rabbi Yishmael in a future week.

Conclusion When the Gemara teaches that the teachings of the rabbonim are dearer to Hashem than the laws of the Torah, it certainly includes the vast halachic literature devoted to understanding the thirteen midos. The Gemara expresses this notion by saying that what is derived from a drasha is more cherished even than the Written Torah (Yevamos 2b; 3a; see also Ritva and Aruch Laneir, Makkos 13a; Maharam Lublin, Bava Kamma 17b). To quote Rav Chaggai in the name of Rav Shmuel bar Nachman: "The Torah refers to that which is taught in the Oral Torah and that which is taught in the Written Torah, yet we do not know which is more cherished. When the pasuk states, 'according to these words I sealed the treaty with you and with Yisrael' (Yirmiyahu 33:25), this teaches us that the Oral Torah is more dear" (Yerushalmi, Peah 2:4).

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'être as entering the land.

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

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

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

VI. T'MIDIN UMUSAFIN

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

leadership of a Melekh – constant and seamlessly passing to the next leader, just as his brother did on Hor haHar.

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Parshat Pinchas: Moshe's Mysterious Protégé

by Rabbi Eitan Mayer

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

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

OH, YEAH . . . YEHOSHUA

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

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

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

A SHADOW FIGURE:

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

YEHOSHUA THE GENERAL:

Yehoshua first appears in the Torah as a military commander. In Shemot 17:9, Moshe charges Yehoshua to select men and lead a military force against Amalek. The Torah reports that Yehoshua successfully weakens Amalek in the ensuing battle, but, as we know, Amalek remains a foe with whom later Jewish leaders (Sha'ul, Shmuel, Mordekhai and others) will contend. What is important for our purposes is that Yehoshua's first appearance in the Torah is as a military organizer and leader. Yehoshua will succeed Moshe not only as political leader of Bnei Yisrael, but also as commander-in-chief.

Since he will direct the conquest of the Land, he needs to be a capable general. The Torah provides no formal introduction for Yehoshua, but it is certainly significant that the first time we meet him, he is clad in chain mail and brandishing a sword, to borrow an Arthurian image.

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

Alternatively, however, it could just indicate that Yehoshua, as a military leader, needs to know about Hashem's military plans. Why, after all, does Moshe command Yehoshua to put together a force and go to fight the enemy -- why doesn't he do the job himself? Either he is already too old (also hinted by his difficulty in keeping his arms raised during the battle), or he is not as skillful a general as Yehoshua. Especially if the latter is true, Hashem may want Yehoshua informed of His eternal enmity for Amalek so he will know at whom to aim the arrows as current and future military leader. It should be noted, however, that the grand style in which Hashem delivers His plan of continued aggression against Amalek sounds more like what you would tell tomorrow's leader than tomorrow's general: "For I will certainly wipe out the memory of Amalek from under the heavens . . . war for Hashem with Amalek from generation to generation!"

YEHOSHUA THE SERVANT:

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

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

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

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

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

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

3) Very often -- Shemot 28:35 is one example -- the service of the kohanim (priests) and 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

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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 the 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 Eivarim 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 record 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 & 17) 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 bnsa 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 "mitonim", 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 **dwelt** 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 **dwelt** among Bnei Yisrael, I will be their God..."

(see Shmot 29:42-45 compare Bamidbar 28:1-6).

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

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

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

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

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

shabbat shalom,
menachem

=====

FOR FURTHER IYUN

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

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

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

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

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

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

What issue led Ramban to this conclusion?

C. The story of Bnei Gad & Reuven (chapter 32) could be

considered part of the nachala section.

1. Explain why.
 2. Explain why it isn't, and why it actually continues to the story of milchemet Midyan.
- Pay attention to the opening words of perek 32.
How does this relate to milchemet Midyan?
3. How does this story relate to other events in the desert, such as chet ha-meraglim for example. (See the Netziv on this issue.)

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

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

[To whom was this land first promised?]

The CHAGIM in PARSHAT PINCHAS

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

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

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

INTRODUCTION

Even though we find several presentations of the Jewish Holidays throughout Chumash, their presentation in Parshat Pinchas is quite unique. In fact, our shiur will show how the primary topic of this unit may not even be the holidays!

[It will help us understand why these holidays are 'repeated' in Sefer Bamidbar, even though they were already discussed in Parshat Emor /i.e. Vayikra 23.]

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

AN ORGANIZED UNIT

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

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

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

In the opening verse God instructs Moshe (see 28:1-2):

"**Command** Bnei Yisrael and tell them - keep the laws of My [daily] offerings..."

In the closing verse (see 30:1):

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

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

This alone already indicates that all of the laws included between these opening and closing verses forms a unit.

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

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

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

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

As we will see, the progression is very logical:

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

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

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

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

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

Therefore, this unit begins with the KORBAN TAMID and then continues with the detail of each korban MUSAF that is offered in addition to the daily "olat tamid". Hence, a more precise definition for this unit would be KORBANOT TMIDIM u'MUSAFIM.

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

BETWEEN EMOR & PINCHAS

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

In contrast to Parshat Pinchas whose primary topic is korbanot, the primary topic in Parshat Emor is the holidays. In fact, that is precisely its title: "moadei Hashem..." - God's appointed times (23:1,4)! That unit details the nature and specific laws for each holiday. For example, the prohibition to work, the need to gather ("mikraei kodesh"), and special mitzvot for each

holiday, such as: offering the "omer", the "shtei 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 "shtei 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, ZEVACH, & 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, AYILIM, & KVASIM;
- * the appropriate flour & wine offerings,
[better known as "MINCHATAM V'NISKAM";
- * and a CHATAT offering of a SEIR IZIM (a goat).

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

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

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

SUCCOT (day 6) -	8	2	14	1
SUCCOT (day 7) -	7	2	14	1
SHMINI ATZERET -	1	1	7	1

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

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

Rosh Chodesh, Chag ha'Matzot, and Shavuot

Note how all three are connected to YETZIAT MITZRAYIM!

[Rosh Chodesh - based on Shmot 12:1, and Shavuot can be considered the conclusion of Pesach.]

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

Rosh ha'Shana, Yom Kippur, and Shmini Atzeret

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

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

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

The seven days of Succot

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

DOUBLE NATURE

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

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

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

On the one hand, Succot could be included in Group One, for that group contains the other two "shalosh regalim" (i.e. Chag ha'Matzot and Shavuot). On the other hand, Succot could also be included in Group Two, for that group contains all of the other holidays that fall out in the seventh month (i.e. "chagei Tishrei").

[Thematically as well, Succot fits into both groups. On the one hand it is a thanksgiving holiday (like the holidays in Group One), where we thank God for our fruit harvest /that's why we recite the Hallel. On the other hand, it is also a time of awe (like the holidays in Group Two), for we anticipate the rainy season which will determine the fate of the forthcoming year/& that's why we recite the "Hoshanot"].

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

It's rather cute, but if we add up all the 'extras', i.e.

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

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

Furthermore, should we add these 49 PARIM to the original 21 PARIM [3x7days], we find that a total of SEVENTY parim are

offered during SUCCOT. Chazal point out that these seventy bulls are representative of the seventy nations of mankind. [See shiur on Parshat Noach and the 'Migdal Bavel 'vort'.]

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

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

shabbat shalom,
Menachem

FOR FURTHER IYUN

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

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

3. The only korban that doesn't change for any holiday is the "seir izim l'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.