

Potomac Torah Study Center

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NOTE: Devrei Torah presented weekly in Loving Memory of Rabbi Leonard S. Cahan z"l, Rabbi Emeritus of Congregation Har Shalom, who started me on my road to learning 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. We mourn those of our people who have perished since attacks have resumed. May the IDF and the U.S. soon force Iran to seek peace, and may a new era bring security and rebuilding for both Israel and all others who genuinely seek peace.

The Three Weeks of mourning, which starts with the fast of 17 Tammuz, always seems to come during the hottest days in central Maryland. Yes, we are suffering with high temperatures close to 100 degrees and high humidity – but think of how our ancestors in Israel suffered surrounded by hostile armies, with a tight blockade, and no air conditioning. While it is difficult to be a Jew facing anti-Semitic attacks in many parts of the world and active war from Iran and its client terrorist groups, conditions for our ancestors were often even worse.

Parshat Pinchas opens immediately after Pinchas, grandson of Aharon, unilaterally kills Zimri (prince of Shimon) while he is engaging in the disgusting ritual fornicating and defecating with Cozbi, a princess of Midian, before an idol of Baal. This violent act of zealotry at Baal Peor, performed without advance permission, stopped a plague that had rapidly killed 24,000 Jews. Moshe probably felt that he could not act in this matter, because he had married a Midianite woman. Aharon also did not know how to react. The quick violent act of Pinchas shocked everyone. How should the rest of B'Nai Yisrael have viewed the action of Pinchas?

Everything so far took place at the end of Parshat Balak, which we read last week. Parshat Pinchas opens with Hashem speaking to Moshe and saying that Pinchas had turned back His wrath and stopped God from consuming (killing) any more of the Jews. For his action, Hashem grants Pinchas His covenant of peace, makes Pinchas and all his male descendants Kohanim, and gives Pinchas His "covenant of peace." Pinchas is not subject to any court of humans – only to Hashem's most exalted court. Hashem's ruling – Pinchas receives the highest possible endorsement for his action.

We normally reach parshat Pinchas during the Three Weeks, and today on one of the most eventful fast days of the year – the date when (from Chabad):

- [1] Moses broke the tablets when he saw the Jewish people worshipping the Golden Calf.
- [2] During the Babylonian siege of Jerusalem, the Jews were forced to cease offering the daily sacrifices due to the lack of sheep.
- [3] Apostomos burned the holy Torah (during Greek or Roman times)
- [4] An idol was placed in the Holy Temple.
- [5] The Romans breached the walls of Jerusalem in 69 CE, after a lengthy siege. (Three weeks later, after the Jews put up a valiant struggle, the Romans destroyed the second Holy Temple on the 9th of Av.) According to the Jerusalem Talmud,

this is also the date when the Babylonians breached the walls of Jerusalem on their way to destroying the first Temple.

Since God gives Pinchas such a massive reward for killing Zimri and Cozbi, are we to emulate Pinchas and engage in unilateral violence against our enemies when we consider such action to be necessary? Halacha and virtually all Judaic scholars argue that the conditions under which one may emulate Pinchas are extraordinarily rare. (See, for example, Rosh Yeshiva Rabbi Dov Linzer's Devar Torah below.) God gives Pinchas a **covenant of peace**, not a mandate for violent behavior. For example, halacha rules that if Pinchas had killed Zimri and Cozbi **after** or **before** they were engaging in the disgusting act, he would have committed murder, not an act of turning Hashem's anger away and stopping the plague. (There are several other necessary conditions for unilateral violence to be justified. An interested reader may easily find the other conditions.)

We read from Pinchas more often than from any other parsha – the musaf offerings that we read every Yom Tov day. For Sukkot, the musaf korbanot include seventy parim (bulls) over the seven days of the holiday. These parim represent the seventy nations of the world in our tradition (going back to Noach). When we read the musaf offerings, an important message is that we pray for the welfare of the non-Jews of the world every time we read the Yom Tov musaf offerings.

While we pray for non-Jews very often, especially when reading from Pinchas, what are we to do when we encounter vicious attacks from individuals or small groups of anti-Semites? Israelis who live in Judea and Samaria periodically face attacks from Arabs who live nearby. Thugs shout anti-Semitic remarks and attack our people in London, Paris, Los Angeles, and many other parts of the world. Some Jews even side with anti-Semites and promote protest activities favoring Arabs and condemning fellow Jews.

To what extent does Pinchas guide us to our behavior? For example, Yigal Amir murdered Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin on November 4, 1995. Does Amir merit a covenant of peace? (Update – he is serving a life sentence for murder.) The Jewish response to unilateral violence is strong opposition. The proper mode to respond to unilateral violence is to protect each other and seek police action to enforce the law. We protest unwise political decisions through the political process, not by killing those we consider misguided. While we oppose and try to prevent all attacks on fellow Jews, the conditions under which we can evoke Pinchas are extremely rare and narrow in scope. The ways of the Torah for individuals are peaceful, not violent. Any violence requires police and state action, not an individual's zealous response.

How we react to the lessons of Pinchas is part of the message of legacy that runs through this parsha. Hannah and I, as well as our sons and their families, are part of the legacy of our beloved Rebbe, Rabbi Leonard Cahan, z"l, who started me on my study of the legacy of our religion more than fifty years ago. Rabbi Cahan was our teacher, close friend, and inspiration – and also the person to whom we went first whenever we had difficult issues in our lives. His role was part of the positive message from Pinchas, something that we try to pass along to our children and grandchildren.

Shabbat Shalom,

Hannah & 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 Shleimah for Shani bat Tziporah; 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; Avram David ben Zeezl Esther; 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; Rena Michal bat Sara, 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.

Haftarat Parshat Pinchas: Inspiration Over Rebuke
By Rabbi Dr. Katriel (Kenneth) Brander *
President and Rosh HaYeshiva of Ohr Torah Stone

Rabbi Brander dedicates his Dvar Haftarot this week to the heroic soldiers, security forces and first responders of the IDF, defenders of the Jewish people and the land of Israel, and the United States Armed Forces, defenders of liberty and justice for all. May Hashem protect them and bring them all home speedily and safely.

Beginning with the Shabbat following Shiva Asar B'Tamuz, the haftarot shift away from reflecting the themes of their accompanying parshiot and instead feature special readings from Yirmiyahu and Yeshayahu, the great prophets of rebuke who warned of Jerusalem's destruction and exile.

Yet, even within this pivot away from the weekly parsha, there is a compelling connection between this week's haftarah and Parshat Pinchas; one that offers a powerful insight about the role of rebuke in leadership.

Yirmiyahu and Yeshayahu were not celebrated figures in their own times. Their mission – to confront hypocrisy and corruption – made them deeply unpopular. The Talmud (Yevamot 49b) records that Yeshayahu was ultimately killed by the wicked King Menashe, a sobering fate for a prophet who had enjoyed a warm and productive relationship with that ruler's father, the righteous King Chizkiyahu (II Kings 19). Yet even Chizkiyahu was not exempt from prophetic criticism: When he stripped the Temple treasury to pay tribute to the Assyrians, the prophets rebuked him for it (see Pesachim 56a).

Yirmiyahu fared no better: he was imprisoned as a national-security threat because of the unpopularity of his message (Jeremiah 37:15).

This week's haftarah opens at the very beginning of Yirmiyahu's prophetic career, with his call from God. From the outset, God prepares him for resistance:

"As for you, be courageous; stand up and speak to them as I will instruct you. Do not break down because of them lest I break you down before them. I have made you today a fortress city, an iron column, and walls of bronze against the entire land – against the kings of Yehuda, its princes, its priests, and the people of the land. They will wage battle against you, but they will not prevail, for I am with you," declares the Lord, "to rescue you." (Jeremiah 1:17–19)

This divine fortification is not incidental; it is a necessity. God knows the rejection and persecution that lies ahead for the prophet.

This raises profound questions: If prophecy carries the word of God, why does it so often fail to change the people it addresses? Why are our gifted prophets regularly ignored, scorned, and threatened by those they addressed?

In a powerful insight, Tanakh scholar Rabbanit Yael Leibowitz has suggested that the problem may not lie in the message, but in the method. People rarely change because they are told they are wrong; they change when they are shown a better way to live. [emphasis added]

When a person encounters a genuine model of proper behavior, when leadership draws them upward through example rather than pressing down through condemnation, the likelihood of lasting change is far greater. The fire-and-brimstone prophecies of Yeshayahu and Yirmiyahu endure for generations, but in their own moment, they often fell on deaf ears.

Understanding this illuminates an unexpected connection with Parshat Pinchas. The parsha contains the ceremony in which Yehoshua is formally designated as Moshe's successor (Numbers 27:15–23), a moment that sets two paradigms of leadership side by side.

Moshe Rabbeinu was the towering figure who transformed the Jewish people from a nation of slaves into a people of destiny. He also led through rebuke when necessary, confronting failure directly and forcefully. Yet across forty years of his leadership in the wilderness, the people often struggled to internalize his message, cycling through rebellion, complaint, and resistance.

Yehoshua's model is strikingly different. He leads less through rebuke and more through example and consensus building. When the time comes to cross the Jordan, the river does not part because Yehoshua wields a miraculous staff; it dries up through the presence of twelve ordinary Israelites, one from each tribe, who step forward together (Joshua 3:12). And in chapter 24, Yehoshua calls the people to reaffirm the covenant – not amid thunder and pyrotechnics, not under the duress of a mountain held over their heads, but through a quiet, voluntary ceremony of collective commitment. The result is remarkable: *"Israel served the Lord all the days of Yehoshua"* (24:31). This is a sustained commitment born not of coercion, but of collective choice.

The lesson is demanding precisely because it cuts against our instincts. When we see failure and wrongdoing, the impulse is to call it out – loudly, clearly, repeatedly.

But the careers of Yirmiyahu, Yeshayahu, and even Moshe, warn us that this impulse, however righteous, carries its own risks. **Leaders who demand and denounce may be vindicated by history while failing in their own generation. It is those who model, who lift, who inspire from below, like Yehoshua, who achieve transformation that lasts.** [emphasis added]

May we be blessed with leaders who understand that lasting change is not imposed from above, but cultivated from within; not demanded through rebuke, but inspired through example.

Shabbat Shalom.

* Ohr Torah Stone is 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. Donations to 49 West 45th Street #701, New York, NY 10036.

Shabbat Shalom

<https://ots.org.il/haftarat-parshat-pinchas-rabbi-brander-5786/?pfstyle=wp>

“Suddenly a Man Rises”: Parshat Pinchas for Our Generation

By Captain S. * (2025)

Many threads connect the story of Pinchas and the narratives in this portion to our own time, to our recent actions and to the enduring messages embedded within these events. In this article, I do not aim to offer revolutionary insights, but rather to draw attention to some of the messages that emerged for me through a straightforward reading of the parsha — its stories and its structure.

The portion of Pinchas famously opens with God's blessing to Pinchas. Pinchas — the quintessential “Biblical zealot” — steps off the path on which he was raised: the path of his grandfather, the man of peace. As he sits among the weeping assembly, witnessing Zimri and Kozbi at the center of the camp, he rises and strikes them both with a single spear. This act halts the plague that had already begun to claim the lives of the Israelites — all within the same verse.

But it seems that, in God's view, the mere cessation of the plague is not enough to signal His approval of Pinchas's act. He therefore speaks to Moshe and instructs him to convey a message to Pinchas: *“Behold, I give him My covenant of peace.”*

This blessing — of peace, no less — is striking. For a figure like Pinchas, who charged into battle, one might have expected a blessing more in line with his militant zeal: perhaps an appointment as a military commander in Israel's upcoming wars, a medal of valor, or at the very least the honor of giving a pe'ula (activity) in Bnei Akiva. But no — after his

act of violence, Pinchas is blessed with shalom.

Following this blessing, Pinchas is quietly sidelined for a time. He does not join his father in the census taken immediately after the plague he helped to stop. And in the war with Midyan, which appears a few chapters later, his spear is set aside in favor of sacred vessels and trumpets.[1]

Pinchas reappears in the book of Yehoshua, where he leads a political-religious delegation that negotiates peace between the tribes who chose to settle on the eastern bank of the Jordan and the rest of the Israelite nation.

And finally, in the book of Shoftim, in the grim story of the concubine of Giv'ah, it is Pinchas who grants permission to go to war against the tribe of Binyamin — but only after two bloody days of battle and direct consultation with God.

After Pinchas's act and the cessation of the plague, Moshe and Elazar are commanded to take a census: *"Take the sum of the entire congregation of the sons of Israel, from twenty years and up, by their fathers' houses."* And the verse continues, *"all who go out to war in Israel."*

As the nation prepares to enter the land — and in the aftermath of the plague — the Israelites must be counted. This census is directly linked to the division of the land and to its conquest. Each person who is counted receives a portion and an individual number. The years of wandering in the desert are drawing to a close, and naturally, it is time to prepare both militarily and politically for the campaign to conquer the land. No longer can they sit in their tents complaining about melons and onions — now it's time for basic training.

The daughters of Tzlofchad observe as the people of Israel mature and take on a new identity. Since the time they had participated in the women's dances of praise at the Splitting of the Sea, when they were still young girls, and since the time they had donated their mirrors for the construction of the Mishkan, they have remained largely in the background. But now they understand: everything depends on us. Hence, they come together — *"And the daughters of Tzlofchad drew near"*[2] — and step into the center of the camp, to the entrance of the Tent of Meeting, before the entire assembly and its leaders, and there they take their stand.

Their bold initiative is met with Divine affirmation: *"The daughters of Tzlofchad speak rightly."* Not only are they granted an inheritance — they give rise to a new law in Israel.

Now the people of Israel are ready. Through the gradual transformation spanning the portions of Balak and Pinchas — and indeed the full forty years of wandering — the nation has grown up. Responsibility now rests in their hands: on those who rise, take initiative, and choose to act. Miraculous leadership begins to recede, making way for a natural form of leadership — one that demands of a mature people to roll up their sleeves and confront their own challenges.

Moshe, the veteran leader of the desert generation, sees with his own eyes — through the story of the daughters of Tzlofchad — how by taking initiative things come to be. Afterward, he ascends Mount Nevo and is once again informed that he will not enter the land. Why? *"You rebelled against My word"* — by striking the rock. You brought about a miracle where the people themselves were meant to solve the problem of water.[3]

Moshe understands — and makes a decision: the time has come to appoint a successor. He turns directly to God: *"And Moshe spoke to the Lord, saying,"*[4] and he pleads with the God of all spirits to choose a leader: *"May the Lord, God of the spirits of all flesh, appoint a man over the congregation."*

But God replies in kind: You want Me to appoint him? *"Take for yourself"* — you must be the one to appoint him. And whom? The one you, with your own human instincts, trust: *"...and you shall place your hand upon him."*[5]

The new leader, Yehoshua, receives Moshe's glory and stature — and he receives it directly from Moshe himself. *"And you shall give of your glory upon him"* — not a Divine radiance from above, not a sacred light descending from heaven, but a human transmission of human qualities, from one person of flesh and blood to another. Yehoshua's authority comes from his predecessor — not from heaven.

This young man, who had left Egypt, had served Moshe with unwavering loyalty and never left his tent; who had led the

people into battle against Amalek with sword in hand (*"And Yehoshua weakened Amalek..."*); who had walked beside Moshe through the wilderness and grew alongside the nation — he is the one chosen to lead them.

Yehoshua is, above all, *"a man with spirit"* — which makes him fit to lead the people of Israel in times of both war and peace, navigate the nation through conflict and bring them back to calm. He is a man of action, a fierce and fearless warrior, yet one who dwells in tents. He is the kind of leader suited to a people of initiative — a nation now advancing in a grounded, natural way. Beyond the Jordan lie years of struggle — but beyond the struggle lies the promise of peace.

In these very days, in the twilight of war — after a devastating and seemingly endless loss, with our brothers still waiting in the depths of Gaza's tunnels — the people of Israel have risen. We have drawn our swords, oiled our rifles, readied our "chariots," fueled our aircraft — and have gone to war.

Our enemies, from across the globe, have been struck down and continue to be struck without mercy.

Our generation — my family, my friends and comrades-in-arms, and the nation as a whole — has borne the painful privilege of standing among those who restore the honor of Israel: zealous like Pinchas, bold like the daughters of Tzlofchad, resolute like Moshe, devoted like Yehoshua. A privilege not shared by all within Am Yisrael, unfortunately, those who refrain from being counted among "those who go out to war." [emphasis added]

And yet, the time of *"My covenant of peace"* will soon arrive. We must know how to return the spear to its place, to sit once again in the tent and the Mishkan. **Zealotry has no place within the camp.** The combat gear must be folded up and set aside with the uniform. **It is time to turn our hearts toward peace** — toward rebuilding, toward growth, and toward shaping a new reality: one in which, after *"those who despoiled you, shall become spoil, and all who devoured you shall be distanced... and you shall burst forth to the right and to the left,"* — the nation will be united. [emphasis added]

Our mission as the "generation of victory" is not fulfilled on the battlefield — but in the return from it. That responsibility is almost too heavy to bear. And yet only by bearing it, will we be able to cross the Jordan.

May we strive together to fulfill the prophecy from the haftarah: "See, I have appointed you this day... to uproot and to pull down, to destroy and to demolish — to build and to plant." [emphasis added]

FOOTNOTES:

[1] The scope of this article does not allow us to go into the extensive role of the Kohanim during warfare.

[2] The verses do not elaborate and explain what was it to which they drew near, but from a straightforward reading we may say they drew near to each other.

[3] See the commentary of the Netziv on the said verses.

[4] A unique phrasing which reflects Moshe's taking initiative.

[5] Of course, the straightforward meaning is the command to lay Moshe's hands on him during the act of succession. Nonetheless, it can also be read in this way.

* Hi, I am S., a graduate of Yeshivat Neveh Shmuel, married to T., a graduate of Midreshet Lindenbaum. We have both been serving in the army in meaningful roles for 6-7 years.

Neveh Shmuel was the place that shaped many traits in my personality and the yeshiva will always remain a home for me. The aspiration for excellence, together with deep Zionism, Yir'at Shamayim and Torah study left their mark on me and my friends. My fellow yeshiva students and I received from the wonderful staff independence to lead processes, personal example, and a bright countenance. The friendships formed in Neveh Shmuel will continue to accompany me for life.

I'm proud to be a 'Nosh-nik' (from Neveh Shmuel family)!

[Ed. note: from OTS: Among this year's overseas students at Midreshet Lindenbaum's Maria and Joel Finkle Overseas Program, 16 young women - 27% of the cohort - have chosen to remain in Israel next year to serve the country, whether in the IDF or some other form of National Service.]

<https://ots.org.il/parshat-pinchas-captain-s/>

Dvar Torah: Pinchas: Much Louder Than Words

By Rabbi Label Lam * (© 2007)

And behold! A man of the Children of Israel came and brought the Midianite woman near to his brothers before the eyes of Moshe and before the entire assembly of the Children of Israel; and they were weeping at the entrance of the Tent of Meeting. Pinchas, son of Elazar son of Aaron the Kohen stood up from amid the assembly and he took a spear in his hand. He followed the Israelite man into the tent and pierced them both, the Israelite man and the woman into her stomach – and the plague was halted from upon the Children of Israel. Those who died in the plague were twenty-four thousand. (New Parsha- Parshas Pinchas)) HASHEM spoke to Moshe saying, “Pinchas son of Elazar son of Aaron the Kohen turned back My wrath from upon the Children of Israel, when he zealously avenged My vengeance among them, so I did not consume the Children of Israel with My vengeance.” (Bamidbar 2:6-11)

Why is the story of the heroism of Pinchas broken into two (Parshios) parts? Firstly we have the narrative of what happened. Secondly Pinchas is credited with having halted the plague. He is then awarded the “Peace Prize” and Kehuna. Why is the account of his action and the “award ceremony” treated separately?

The Ben Ish Chai told the following parable:

A man went on a walk in the jungle. He was casually strolling along when he noticed that a lion was stalking him. The man sensed that the ferocious beast was ready to pounce on him. His heart fell into his stomach. He had no gun or other weapon. All he had was a walking stick. In desperation he raised the feeble walking stick he had in his hand and pointed it as a gun with the hope that it might scare the lion away. In the meanwhile, and unbeknownst to the man a hunter was behind him in a tree poised with a real rifle. The lion drew closer to the man with the stick. He took aim as if he was holding an authentic weapon. Seeing the situation worsening on the ground the man in the tree took real action and shot the approaching lion in his heart. When the man on the ground observed the lion lying dead before him he immediately looked at his stick, unable to explain the phenomena in any other way and began to give credit to his trustworthy loaded walking stick.

He foolishly bragged aloud that he knew all the time that the stick was loaded and it was capable of functioning as a real gun. Just then the hunter descended from the tree and confronted him, “Silly, man do you really believe that your simple walking-stick can fire a bullet capable of stopping a charging lion? It's only a stick. Don't delude yourself any longer. It was my rifle that let fly the fatal bullet that spared your life and it happened just at that moment that you were pointing the stick!”

Here's a similar and true story. Maybe it's not nice to play a practical joke but I couldn't resist and plus the Doctor has a great sense of humor. We laugh out loud years later whenever it's mentioned. We bumped into each other at a huge wedding and briefly said hello. When it was time to leave I was walking down the darkened back streets with my son to our car which was parked a good distance away from the hall.

There was the good Doctor approaching his car too which happened to be parked right in front of my car. We were a short distance behind him and I noticed that when he pressed the mechanism on his key chain, the lock of his car flashed on. I

decided to click my automatic key and so my car lights and locks flashed at the same time. I hunkered down with my son and we noticed how the Doctor looked curiously at the phenomena. He blinked his key again and so did I. He was amazed to find that his key was turning on and off the car behind him. He looked on in wonderment his head turning back and forth over and over again as his key seemed to be able to open and close both cars. We laughed together with tears when we finally revealed ourselves and our little game.

All we know from the first account is that a plague was ravaging the Children of Israel and a brazen act of impudence was on display. People were crying and discussing what to do. Only Pinchas took real action. Suddenly the plague stops. There's room then for some to be deceived into thinking that the crying, complaining, and finger pointing saved the day. Therefore the record is set straight. There can be no room for ambiguity. What Pinchas did was **much louder than words**.

<https://torah.org/torah-portion/dvartorah-5769-pinchas/>

Use Your Words, Not Your Hands

by Rabbi Dov Linzer, Rosh HaYeshiva, Yeshivat Chovevei Torah © 2021

Pinchas is synonymous with zealotry in the name of God. And that is scary. Throughout history, zealotry has led to violence: murderous attacks, lethal Crusades, and horrific acts of terror, all done in the name of God. Such actions have destroyed innumerable individuals, cultures, and communities, and have raised profound questions as to the morality and values of the religions that could promote such behavior.

And while such behavior has been quite rare among the Jewish people, it is exactly this zealotry that singles Pinchas out for praise. After having taken up a spear and stabbed to death an Israelite man and Midianite women who were publicly engaging in sexually immoral behavior, God lauds Pinchas for his actions: *"Pinchas, son of Eleazar son of Aaron the priest, has turned back My wrath from the Israelites for being zealous on My behalf among them"* (Numbers 25:11-13).

It appears, then, that God endorses such zealotry. This conclusion, however, is overly facile. A closer look at the verses reveals that Pinchas's reward was not more of the same, not that he should embody or exemplify zealotry, but rather one of a different type of behavior: *"I grant him My covenant of peace."* The covenant, the defining relationship between this warrior and God, is not violence, but peace.

And yet, this covenant was given to him *"because he has acted zealously for God."* How are we to make sense of that?

It seems that, from the Torah's perspective at least, violence is sometimes required to defend God's honor. Just consider the Levites gathering around Moses, swords drawn, immediately after the sin of the Golden Calf. Such acts are seen as ways of staving off even more disastrous and lethal Divine retribution: *"And I did not destroy the Israelites in My anger."*

This may still leave many of us deeply disturbed and feeling that it has not solved the problem of violence in the name of God. And perhaps it hasn't. What is critical to note, however, is that even from the Torah's perspective, this was only justified in a world where God strikes people dead because of their disobedience. Once we have left that world behind, there would never be any justification for killing in God's name.

Which brings us back to the covenant of peace. **The Torah here is proclaiming loudly and clearly that violence, even on God's behalf, even when it was seen as necessary, is not the way. The true religious path, the very covenant with God, is one of peace.** To cultivate a religious personality is to live a Godly life, one of morality and ethics. There is no covenant of zealotry. There is only one of peace. [emphasis added]

It is noteworthy that the Sages rule that acts of zealotry – even in the case of Pinchas – can never be condoned by the law. Zealots are always acting in contravention of the law. The Talmud Yerushalmi (Sanhedrin 9:7) even reports that the Elders at the time said that Pinchas had committed murder. The Bavli states that, had Zimri, the Israelite who was slain by Pinchas, taken up arms against him and killed him in self-defense, he would have been exonerated, for at that moment Pinchas was coming to murder him. The law is about preserving peace and protecting human lives. It has no place for zealotry, for acts that destroy lives and shatter the structures of society.

This covenant of peace bore fruit. After the conquest of the land of Israel, the tribes on the eastern side of the Jordan River built their own altar, which almost provoked a civil war. Pinchas was sent to broker a peace between the tribes, and because of his diplomacy, war was averted (Joshua Ch. 22). The evolution of Pinchas here is quite compelling: The young warrior has turned into an elder diplomat. It was only at this moment, the Talmud tells us, that Pinchas became a priest, a true leader of Israel.

A life of religious zealotry may be an intense and passionate experience for the one living it. But it is a destructive life for others, for society, and ultimately for the person herself. It is in this parsha of zealotry that we are told that the covenant with God is one of peace. This is how one achieves deep meaning and fulfillment, how one partners with God to promote and protect life and society. Blessed are you, God, Who blesses his nation Israel with peace.

Shabbat Shalom.

<https://library.yct Torah.org/2021/07/use-your-words-not-your-hands/> [from my archives]

The Sanctuary of the Heart: Meeting the Moment on Tisha B'Av

By Rabbi Ysoscher Katz *

[Ed. note: Rabbi Katz will be on hiatus for July and August. His outstanding parsha messages will resume when he returns. Meanwhile, I plan to include other messages from Yeshiva Chovevei Torah during his absence.]

Dear Friends,

It is noon on Shiva Asar Be'Tammuz.

Soon the day will begin its slow turn toward evening, and with it the Three Weeks of *Bein HaMetzarim* will begin to settle over us.

As the day gives way to night, the darkness outside will echo our inner state. Our own light, too, will dim for three weeks, as we mourn what we lost close to two thousand years ago: the Mikdash, the place where the Shekhinah dwelled.

Once you strip the Mishkan and Beit Mikdash of their material layers – the blood, the sacrifices, and all the rest – you realize that the place was our spiritual charging station. Whenever people felt low on spiritual “juice,” they would leave home, trek to Har HaBayit, plug in, recharge, and return to their families and communities replenished.

Once that place was destroyed, that option disappeared. There is no longer a place to go when the soul needs a jolt. The Mikdash was demolished on the Ninth of Av.

Instead, we have to learn how to build a different kind of Mikdash, not one we travel to in space, but one we cultivate inside ourselves: a place of return, where dimmed embers can be rekindled and the sacred center of the self warmed back to life.

It is in that spirit that my soundtrack for the next three weeks will be **Moti Shteinmetz’s evocative rendition of Bi’levavi Mishkan Evneh**. In a few words, the song gives voice to that longing: to build a sanctuary in the heart, to discover there a place of holiness, and to keep its flame alive even when the outer Mikdash no longer stands.

Here’s an English translation. As is often the case, any art form encountered in translation lacks the full beauty of the original. It is nevertheless still better than the alternative: losing out on the aesthetic experience altogether.

In my heart, I will build a sanctuary,

a dwelling place for the radiance of the sacred.

*And in that inner sanctuary I will set an altar,
a place turned toward the light of holiness.
For the eternal flame,
I will draw upon
the fire of the Akedah.
And my offering will be
my own singular soul.
Every Jew carries a mikdash me'at, a small sanctuary.*

Now that the Mikdash no longer stands before us in space, each person is called to cultivate its presence in the heart: to make room for reverence, devotion, and the sacred center of the self.

Each of us shall build a dwelling place for the Godliness we carry, a place where the divine spark can settle and shine.

And the fire that gives warmth and light to that consecrated life shall be drawn from one's own Akedah: the willingness to bind the self to what is highest and holiest.

That, perhaps, is our challenge during these weeks. We mourn the Mikdash that no longer stands before us in space, while trying to tend the small sanctuary that still remains in the heart. The sacred flame is quieter now. It no longer rises from the mizbeach in Yerushalayim for all to see. But it can still burn inside us like the fire of the burning bush: bright, passionate, and alive, yet never consuming what it touches. A fire that warms rather than destroys. That is the flame we carry with us into these narrow days of *Bein HaMetzarim*.

Tzom Kal,

Rabbi Ysoscher Katz

* Chair of the Talmud Department and the Director of the Lindenbaum Center for Halakhic Studies, Yeshivat Chovevei Torah, Bronx, NY.

George Washington and Religious Liberty

By Rabbi Dr. David de Sola Pool *

In Washington's days, religious liberty as we now know it was not a well understood, conventional policy. It was a daring revolutionary departure from the universally accepted order. In all Europe, and throughout the New World also, there were established state churches. In this land, too, notwithstanding the pioneer efforts of Roger Williams, Jefferson, Madison and Washington, many of the clergy belonging to the faith of the majority were zealous in endeavoring to see their Church constitutionally recognized as that of the established official religion of the new United States. To their sincere piety, the state should naturally be, as it was everywhere else, the ally of the universal claims and missionary spirit of the Church. Had not that tradition been set up in this land by the Pilgrim Fathers when they established here not so much a state as a church polity expressing itself through the forms of a state?

The results of that union of Church and State are all too well known. Those very Pilgrim Fathers who had sought these shores as a refuge from the intolerant discriminations exercised by a dominant majority Church in the Old World, in their turn here exercised the same discriminations against those whom they regarded as dissenters.

Against this danger, George Washington took a firm, determined and consistent stand. Churchman though he was, he could not understand a concept of national liberty which gave physical freedom without spiritual freedom. He declared: *"The cause of American liberty is the cause of every virtuous American citizen, whatever be his religion or descent."* In the eyes of George Washington, this complete spiritual as well as civic liberty had to be not a grudging or a gracious concession, but a right. It was not to be toleration exercised by a privileged majority, it was to be religious equality.

Again and again, he expressed himself in this vein, as when he wrote to the United Baptist Churches: *"Every man conducting himself as a good citizen and being accountable to God alone for his religious opinion ought to be protected in worshipping the Deity according to the dictates of his own conscience."* To the New Baptist Church in Baltimore, he wrote: *"In this enlightened age and in this land of equal liberty, it is our boast that a man's religious tenets will not forfeit the protection of the laws nor deprive him of the right of attaining and holding the highest offices that are known in the United States."*

In Washington's letter to the Jewish Congregation in Newport, he wrote:

"All possess alike liberty of conscience and immunities of citizenship. It is now no more that toleration is spoken of as if it were by the indulgence of one class of people that another enjoyed the exercise of their inherent natural rights, for happily the government of the United States which gives to bigotry no sanction, to persecution no assistance, requires only that they who live under its protection should demean themselves as good citizens."

Washington himself took more than one occasion to give public and eloquent demonstration of his own utter freedom from religious prejudice, and his convictions that in this new America all religions must stand on a footing of equality, as when at his inauguration as first President of the United States the whole clergy of this city, including Gershom Mendes Seixas, the Minister of Shearith Israel at the time, took official part in the parade and epoch making ceremonies. In his letter to the Jewish community of Savannah, Georgia, he expressed his rejoicing that *"a spirit of liberality and philanthropy is much more prevalent than it formerly was among the enlightened nations of the earth, and that your brethren will benefit thereby in proportion as it shall become still more extensive."*

Alas that his roseate belief has been so bitterly belied, and that a century and a half after he wrote these noble words, the great majority of our brethren of Israel in other lands are cowering or crushed under social segregation, political discrimination, economic boycott, calculated persecution or bloody violence. This great principle of religious liberty for which George Washington stood so strongly, bravely and unflinchingly, is not yet fully granted by lesser men with narrower hearts. **Eternal vigilance is the price of religious liberty.** We must still be on our guard against those who, without daring openly to advocate an overthrow of the constitution, would yet undermine it by a thousand insinuating ways of giving to our government, our public schools and all our institutions a sectarian character in the pattern of a dominant Church. We must still exercise unwearying vigilance against the hydra-headed monster of bigotry. [emphasis added]

Truly, America's enemies today are within her own borders. We do not need a George Washington to lead us against a foe from other lands. Today we need a George Washington to preserve our America from disrupting intolerance within our own borders, whether it be the intolerance of religion or the intolerance of irreligion. Among America's enemies today are those who flaunt that constitutional civic liberty and liberty of conscience which we recall today as among the most precious gifts bequeathed to this country by George Washington.

Let us pray in the very words of Washington: *"May the children of the stock of Abraham who dwell in this land continue to merit and enjoy the good will of the other inhabitants, while everyone shall sit in safety under his own vine and fig tree and there shall be none to make him afraid."*

* Excerpt of a sermon delivered by Rabbi Dr. David de Sola Pool at Congregation Shearith Israel in New York City, February 20, 1932. The full text is included in the volume *Rabbi David de Sola Pool: Selections from Six Decades of Sermons, Addresses and Writings*, ed. Rabbi Dr. Marc D. Angel, Union of Sephardic Congregations, 1980, pp. 63-71.

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<https://www.jewishideas.org/article/george-washington-and-religious-liberty>

American Jews and the American Dream

By Rabbi Marc D. Angel *

[On September 12, 2004, a special service was held at Congregation Shearith Israel in New York (founded in 1654) to mark the Congregation's 350th anniversary. Since Shearith Israel is the first Jewish Congregation in North America, this occasion also marked the 350th anniversary of American Jewry. Rabbi Marc D. Angel delivered a sermon at the 350th anniversary service, reflecting on American Jewish history through the prism of the experience of Congregation Shearith Israel. This is an abridged version of that sermon.]

"We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable rights, that among these are Life, Liberty, and the pursuit of Happiness." These words from the American Declaration of Independence reflect the deepest ideals and aspirations of the American people. America is not merely a country, vast and powerful; America is an idea, a vision of life as it could be.

When these words were first proclaimed on July 4, 1776, Congregation Shearith Israel was almost 122 years old. It was a venerable community, with an impressive history – a bastion of Jewish faith and tradition, and an integral part of the American experience.

When the British invaded New York in 1776, a large group of congregants, including our Hazan Rev. Gershom Mendes Seixas, left the city rather than live under British rule. Many joined the Revolutionary army and fought for American independence. Our story in America is not built on historical abstractions, but on generations of Jews who have played their roles in the unfolding of this nation. It is a very personal history, ingrained in our collective memory.

On this 350th anniversary of the American Jewish community, we reflect on the courage and heroic efforts of our forebears who have maintained Judaism as a vibrant and living force in our lives. We express gratitude to America for having given us — and all citizens — the freedom to practice our faith. This very freedom has energized and strengthened America.

Within Congregation Shearith Israel, we have been blessed with men and women who have helped articulate Jewish ideals and American ideals. Their voices have blended in with the voices of fellow Americans of various religions and races, to help shape the dream and reality of America.

The American Declaration of Independence pronounced that all men are created equal. In his famous letter to the Jewish community of Newport, in August 1790, President George Washington hailed the United States for allowing its citizens freedom — not as a favor bestowed by one group on another — but in recognition of the inherent natural rights of all human beings. This country, wrote President Washington, *"gives to bigotry no sanction, to persecution no assistance."*

And yet, if equality and human dignity are at the core of American ideals, the fulfillment of these ideals have required — and still require — sacrifice and devotion. Reality has not always kept up with the ideals. In 1855, Shearith Israel member Uriah Phillips Levy — who rose to the rank of Commodore in the U.S. Navy — was dropped from the Navy's active duty list. He was convinced that anti-Semitism was at the root of this demotion. He appealed the ruling and demanded justice. He asked: *are people "now to learn to their sorrow and dismay that we too have sunk into the mire of religious intolerance and bigotry?... What is my case today, if you yield to this injustice, may tomorrow be that of the Roman Catholic or the Unitarian, the Presbyterian or the Methodist, the Episcopalian or the Baptist. There is but one safeguard: that is to be found in an honest, whole-hearted, inflexible support of the wise, the just, the impartial guarantee of the Constitution."* Levy won his case. He helped the United States remain true to its principles.

Shearith Israel member Moses Judah (1735-1822) believed that all men were created equal — including black men. In 1799, he was elected to the New York Society for Promoting the Manumission of Slaves. During his tenure on the standing committee between 1806 and 1809, about fifty slaves were freed. Through his efforts, many other slaves achieved freedom. He exerted himself to fight injustice, to expand the American ideals of freedom and equality regardless of race or religion.

Another of our members, Maud Nathan, believed that all men were created equal — but so were all women created equal. She was a fiery, internationally renowned suffragette, who worked tirelessly to advance a vision of America that indeed recognized the equality of all its citizens — men and women. As President of the Consumers' League of New York from 1897-1917, Maud Nathan was a pioneer in social activism, working for the improvement of working conditions of employees in New York's department stores. Equality and human dignity were the rights of all Americans, rich and poor, men and women.

The Declaration of Independence proclaimed that human beings have unalienable rights, among them are life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness. These words express the hope and optimism of America. They are a repudiation of the tyranny and oppression that prevailed — and still prevail — in so many lands. America is a land of opportunity, where people can live in freedom. The pursuit of happiness really signifies the pursuit of self-fulfillment, of a meaningful way of life. America's challenge was — and still is — to create a harmonious society that allows us to fulfill our potentials.

President George Washington declared a day of national Thanksgiving for November 26, 1789. Shearith Israel held a service, at which Hazan Gershom Mendes Seixas called on this congregation *"to unite, with cheerfulness and uprightness...to promote that which has a tendency to the public good."* Hazan Seixas believed that Jews, in being faithful to Jewish tradition, would be constructive and active participants in American society.

Life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness were not reserved only for those born in America; they are the rights of all human beings everywhere. This notion underlies the idealism of the American dream, calling for a sense of responsibility for all suffering people, whether at home or abroad. American Jews have been particularly sensitive and responsive to this ideal.

On March 8, 1847, Hazan Jacques Judah Lyons addressed a gathering at Shearith Israel for the purpose of raising funds for Irish famine relief. The potato crop in Ireland had failed in 1846, resulting in widespread famine. Hazan Lyons well realized that the Jewish community needed charitable dollars for its own internal needs; and yet he insisted that Jews reach out and help the people of Ireland. He said that there was one indestructible and all-powerful link between us and the Irish sufferers: "That link, my brethren, is HUMANITY! Its appeal to the heart surmounts every obstacle. Clime, color, sect are barriers which impede not its progress thither." In assisting with Irish famine relief, the Jewish community reflected its commitment to the well-being of all suffering human beings. American Jewry grew into — and has continued to be — a great philanthropic community perhaps unmatched in history. Never have so few given so much to so many. In this, we have been true to our Jewish tradition, and true to the spirit of America.

Who articulated the hope and promise of America more eloquently than Emma Lazarus? *"Give me your tired, your poor, your huddled masses yearning to breathe free, the wretched refuse of your teeming shore. Send these, the homeless, tempest-tost to me. I lift my lamp beside the golden door."* How appropriate it is that her poem is affixed to the great symbol of American freedom, the Statue of Liberty.

Alice Menken (for many years President of our Sisterhood) did remarkable work to help immigrants, to assist young women who ran into trouble with the law, to promote reform of the American prison system. She wrote: *"We must seek a balanced philosophy of life. We must live to make the world worth living in, with new ideals, less suffering, and more joy."*

Americans see ourselves as one nation, indivisible, under God, with liberty and justice for all. Yet, liberty and justice are not automatically attained. They have required — and still require — wisdom, vigilance, and active participation. America prides itself on being a nation of laws, with no one above the law. The American legal tradition has been enriched by the insights and the work of many American Jews.

In one of his essays, Justice Benjamin Nathan Cardozo — a devoted member of Shearith Israel — referred to a Talmudic

passage which has been incorporated into our prayer book. It asks that the Almighty let His mercy prevail over strict justice. Justice Cardozo reminded us that the American system relies not only on justice — but on mercy. Mercy entails not merely an understanding of laws, but an understanding of the human predicament, of human nature, of the circumstances prevailing in human society. Another of our members, Federal Judge William Herlands, echoed this sentiment when he stated that Justice without Mercy — is just ice!

Our late rabbis Henry Pereira Mendes, David de Sola Pool and Louis C. Gerstein, were singularly devoted to social welfare, to religious education, to the land of Israel. They distinguished themselves for their devotion to Zionism, and played their parts in the remarkable unfolding of the State of Israel. They, along with so many American Jews, have keenly understood how much unites Israel and the United States — two beacons of democracy and idealism in a very troubled world.

During the past 350 years, the American Jewish community has accomplished much and contributed valiantly to all aspects of American life. We have cherished our participation in American life. We have been free to practice our faith and teach our Torah. We have worked with Americans of other faiths and traditions to mold a better, stronger, more idealistic nation.

America today is not just a powerful and vast country. It is also an idea, a compelling idea that has a message for all people in all lands. As American Jews, we are committed to the ideals of freedom and equality, human dignity and security, to life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness, the pursuit of harmony among ourselves and throughout the world. We have come far as a nation, but very much remains to be done. May God give us the strength and resolve to carry on, to work proudly as Jews to bring the American dream to many more generations of humanity.

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

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<https://www.jewishideas.org/article/american-jews-and-american-dream>

The Mystery of the Generations: Thoughts on Parashat Pinehas

By Rabbi Marc D. Angel *

Among Rabbi Joseph Soloveitchik's lectures was one that dealt with the relationship between grandparents and grandchildren: *"A grandfather stands before his newly born grandchild filled with paradoxical thoughts. Feelings of renewal merge with fading memories of the past."*

A grandparent gazes at grandchildren with a sense of wonder. Fifty, sixty and more years separate them. The grandparent is part of the *"old generation,"* while the grandchildren are part of a new world with new challenges and opportunities. Yes, the grandparent feels a sense of family continuity — but also a sense of anxiety. Will we — of different generations — feel a sense of harmony, a common history and destiny? Will we be able to talk to each other heart to heart? Or will alienation set in? Will the grandchildren have different life agendas than we have?

The larger question is: how can we hold our community and culture together from generation to generation? How do we avoid the ubiquitous problem of "the generation gap"?

The Mishnah (Eduyot 2:9) cites the opinion of Rabbi Akiba, who stated that parents transmit 6 characteristics to their children: physical appearance, strength, wealth, wisdom, longevity. The sixth quality is *"mispar ha-dorot lefanav,"* the

number of generations before them. But what exactly does this mean?

Children are not born into a historical vacuum. They are heirs to the generations of their family going back through the centuries and millennia. In the case of Jewish children (and grandchildren), they are not only heirs to their particular family's traditions, but "*inherit*" all the previous generations of the Jewish people going back to the time of Abraham and Sarah.

The challenge to the older generations is to transmit to the new generations a feeling of connectedness with the past. We introduce our children and grandchildren to "*the number of generations before them*," so that they come to see the biblical characters of thousands of years ago as part of their own group of close friends. We teach them that "*we*" were slaves in Egypt; that "*we*" were redeemed; that "*we*" built the Temples in Jerusalem; that "*we*" went into exile. Rashi and Rambam "*are*" our teachers. Our earlier generations continue to live in our memories, and are a presence in our lives. We want our children and grandchildren to understand that they are engaged in a life-long dialogue among all the generations of their family and of their people. What a wonderful gift to give children! And what a tragedy when this gift is not conveyed!

In a traditional religious setting, there need not be a generation gap, where alienation sets in between the generations. In some unique, mysterious way, the different generations see themselves as contemporaries. We share a spiritual outlook, a set of ideals, a style of living according to the mitzvot. We have the gift of "*the number of generations before us*."

This week's Torah portion includes a listing of the offerings that were to be made on the Sabbaths and holy days. These sacred days are powerful opportunities to bring the generations together in common and heartfelt dialogue. They provide ongoing spiritual context for shared experiences and shared memories between the generations. The observance of Shabbat and holy days serves to unite the generations by forging a profound awareness that we are all part of one family and one people. From the beginnings of the Jewish tradition to the end of time — members of all of our generations are contemporaries.

This is the profundity and the mystery of the generations. This is the profundity and the mystery of the Jewish people's ongoing adventure.

* 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/mystery-generations-thoughts-parashat-pinehas-july-3-2010>

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Pinchas -- Becoming Grand by Rabbi Mordechai Rhine * © 2016

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

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

Rashi explains that when the Kohanim were appointed, Pinchas was already born. To be a Kohein one would have to be

appointed, or born from someone who was appointed as a Kohein. Pinchas was not appointed when Ahron was appointed, and he was already born, so until this moment Pinchas was not a Kohein.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Our sages tell us that this is what was unique about the forefathers of our people. Each one forged a special relationship with Hashem, and developed their own personal status as a leader. For Avraham this came naturally. His had to discover monotheism on his own. But for Yitzchak and Yakov, who could have simply followed in the footsteps of those who preceded them, it took the conscious effort of self development to develop a personal relationship.

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

Wishing you and yours a wonderful Shabbos!

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

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

parsha.

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

From my archives.

* 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, or to help sponsor his Torah insights, contact Rabbi Rhine.

Parshas Pinchas

by Rabbi Yehoshua Singer * © 2020

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

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

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

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

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

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

Although we currently have limited connection with others, we all still have ourselves. Our individual growth and our own

individual awareness of G-d and relationship with G-d is so valuable that He creates the entire world for each of us. We each have very important work to do, even under the circumstances.

* Rav at Sha'arei Tefilla and the co-founder of the RI Torah Network in Providence, Rhode Island. For several years, Rabbi Singer was the Rabbi at Am HaTorah Congregation in Bethesda, MD. The RI Torah Network included this Dvar Torah in a booklet for Shavuot 5786. Rabbi Singer's recent Devrei Torah normally come as podcasts rather than texts.

Dvar Torah for Phinehas

By Rabbi Haim Ovadia *

Who was Phineas, after whom our Parasha is named? He was the grandson of Aaron the High Priest, who took action when everyone else was paralyzed with disbelief and confusion. At the end of the previous Parasha, we read of Zimri, the Israelite man who brought a Midianite woman with him to the Tabernacle. While all the spectators, Moshe included, were crying in view of this desecration, Phineas rose, took a spear, followed the two into the chamber, and killed both. His act served as a deterrent to those who thought of imitating Zimri, and prompted God to forgive the Israelites and to bring the plague, sign of the Divine wrath, to a halt.

In the beginning of our Parasha, God blesses Phineas and declares a pact of peace with him. The Hebrew word for peace – מוֹלֵט – displays a unique phenomenon. According to Jewish law, if any letter of the Torah scroll is split in half, the Torah scroll is rendered invalid until fixed. The one exception is in the word מוֹלֵט in our Parasha. The letter vav of that word must be written, instead of one long line, in two pieces. It is called Vav Ket'i'a - the broken vav.

Why did God have to declare a pact of peace with Phineas and why is the vav of מוֹלֵט broken? There can be two answers to this question:

Sometimes, peace must be broken. If there is a union of wicked people, or an axis of evil, it must be disrupted and stopped. Just as no one in his right mind will hail a peace treaty between two terrorist organizations, so also the unity of the Israelites against God and the Torah had to be stopped.

Or, we can have an opposite conclusion, which is that peace achieved through violence is incomplete, broken.

So, which path do we take? What do we do when we face a crisis of faith or when we witness a sin about to be committed? Do we charge and attack? Do we stand by idly and contemplate the possibilities, going through all probable scenarios? I believe that the answer is that both approaches to the broken vav should dictate the course of action. In situations of urgency or confusion, when immediate action is needed but confusion is great and there is no clear hierarchy or instructions, one must do what is necessary, but he must also be able to defend his acts.

If, for example, a wayward train speeds towards passengers on a platform, and a brave man saves them by pushing someone over the tracks, he will have to be able to prove that:

[1] He was unable to jump himself and had to push someone else.

[2] There was no way of saving the passengers without sacrificing one life.

[3] Most importantly, he will have to prove that the person pushed was chosen randomly and he had no grudge against him.

[4] And then, when all was said and done, the savior will have to live with the awareness that he had taken a life.

Most of us, hopefully, will not have to make such instantaneous life-and-death decisions, but this process also applies to what we conceive as mundane or trivial issues.

When criticizing a child, a friend, or a fellow congregant, for deviating from what we think is the religious norm, we have to ask ourselves some questions:

[1] Is this the best way to approach the issue?

[2] Are there any other opinions which will sanction that person's stance?

[3] Am I being a zealot because I care about God and the Torah, or because of an ulterior motive, such as a grudge against the person rebuked, arrogance, or pretense?

The broken Vav in the word מוֹלֵךְ and God's pact with Phineas reminds us that these are not easy decisions, and perhaps we should consider other alternatives. We should know that our decision and action might haunt us our whole life and that we will need to rely on God's help and love, His pact of peace, for healing. Is this pact guaranteed for us as it was for Phineas?

We should constantly evaluate our actions and their impact on ourselves and our circles of acquaintances, we should set our values right and be willing to take action, so when the need arises we can make the right decision without hesitation, maybe saving the lives of ones or many.

Shabbat Shalom

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

* 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 of Rabbi Ovadia's Devrei Torah are now available on Sefaria:** <https://www.sefaria.org/profile/haim-ovadia?tab=sheets> . The Sefaria articles include Hebrew text, which I must delete because of issues changing software formats. Rabbi Ovadia retains all rights (copyright) to this and all other Devrei Torah that he permits me to share.

A Bissel of Torah from a Tiny Jewish Community

By Rabbi Natanel Kaszovitz *

Auckland, New Zealand Hebrew Congregation **

I'm so happy and excited to be back after almost two weeks away. I had the unique privilege of completing part of my learning in shechitah with a very prominent rabbi who served as the shochet for the former Chief Rabbi of Israel, Rabbi Mordechai Eliyahu מרדכי אליהו. It was an incredibly special opportunity, and I want to sincerely thank everyone who came together to support me and my family and made this possible.

Today, Thursday, is the 17th of Tammuz, a fast day that marks the breaching of the walls of Jerusalem, which ultimately led to the destruction of the Beit HaMikdash (the Temple).

In exactly three weeks we will observe Tisha B'Av, the Ninth of Av, when we mourn the destruction of both Batei Mikdash, both Holy Temples that once stood in Yerushalayim.

During these three weeks, we take on different practices of mourning. There are some differences between Ashkenazi and

Sephardi customs, but in our predominantly Ashkenazi community here in Auckland, we generally refrain from cutting our hair or trimming our beards, avoid live music and celebrations, and do not hold weddings during this period. Anyone in a hurry to get married will have to wait just a little longer.

We do all of this to remember the tremendous loss that we still carry as a people.

There is a famous story, traditionally attributed to Napoleon during his campaign in the Land of Israel in 1799. The story says that he passed by a synagogue on Tisha B'Av and heard Jews crying. He entered and asked, "*Why are they weeping?*" They answered, "*We are mourning the destruction of our Temple in Jerusalem, the House of God.*"

Napoleon was shocked and asked, "*When was it destroyed?*" They replied, "*More than 1,700 years ago.*"

He is then said to have remarked: "*A nation that can mourn its land and its Temple after so many years will surely merit to see them rebuilt.*"

Whether or not the story happened exactly this way, the message is powerful. The Jewish people have never forgotten Jerusalem and have never stopped yearning for the rebuilding of the Beit HaMikdash.

Chazal (our Sages of blessed memory) teach us that every generation in which the Beit HaMikdash is not rebuilt is considered as if it was destroyed in that generation. In other words, if we have not yet merited its rebuilding, then we still have work to do to repair the causes of its destruction. [emphasis added]

The First Temple was destroyed because of three severe sins: adultery, idolatry, and murder.

The Second Temple was destroyed because of sinat chinam, baseless hatred and division among our people.

Unfortunately, this is still one of the great challenges facing Am Yisrael today. Therefore, we must do everything in our power to increase love and unity among our people.

And it starts at home.

Every individual and every family should ask themselves: Have I made peace in my own home? Have I repaired broken relationships close to me? Before we preach to the world, we must first put our own affairs in order.

Then we can work on strengthening unity within our community. And from there, hopefully, we can shine that light outward to the entire Jewish nation, leading by example, until all the pieces of Am Yisrael come together like a puzzle and merit the rebuilding of the Beit HaMikdash.

May we see it rebuilt speedily in our days.

Shabbat Shalom
B'Ahavat Yisrael
Rabbi Netanel

* Rabbi Kaszovitz, an Israeli ordained at Ohr Torah Stone, previously served as Rabbi in Nairobi, Kenya. He became Rabbi of Auckland Hebrew Congregation in September 2025. Rabbi Moshe Rube, whose remarks I previously posted in this space, is in the process of starting a new Rabbinic position in Australia. Rabbi Rube is waiting for his visa to enter Australia, when he will be able to start his new position. I plan to use this space to include messages from Rabbi Kaszovitz and Rabbi Rube going forward.

** Rabbi Kaszovitz is now posting his Devrei Torah and classes on You Tube: <https://youtube.com/c/TheNairobisher> .

Rav Kook Torah

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 korban 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)

<https://ravkooktorah.org/pinchas59>

Pinchas: Elijah and the Still, Small Voice (5785, 5782)
By Lord Rabbi Jonathan Sacks, z"l, Former Chief Rabbi of the U.K.*

Then the word of the Lord came to him:

'Why are you here, Elijah?' He replied, I am moved by the zeal for the Lord, God of Hosts..." The Lord said to him, 'Go out and stand on the mountain in the presence of the Lord, for the Lord is about to pass by.' Then a great and powerful wind tore the mountains apart and shattered the rocks before the Lord. But the Lord was not in the wind. After the wind was an earthquake, but the Lord was not in the earthquake. After the earthquake came a fire. But the Lord was not in the fire. And after the fire – a still, small voice. I Kings 19:9-12

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

These are Maimonides' conclusions. But surrounding them and constituting the main thrust of his argument is a sustained defence of those who have done precisely what Maimonides has ruled they should not do. The letter gives Crypto-Jews hope. They have done wrong. But it is a forgivable wrong. They acted under coercion and the fear of death. They remain Jews. The acts they do as Jews still win favour in the eyes of God. Indeed doubly so, for when they fulfil a commandment it cannot be to win favour of the eyes of others. They know that when they act as Jews they risk discovery and death. Their secret adherence has a heroism of its own.

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

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

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

Maimonides cites a series of similar passages and then says:

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

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

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

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

The episode is enigmatic. It is made all the more so by a strange feature of the text. Immediately before the vision, God asks, *'What are you doing here, Elijah?'* and Elijah replies, *'I am moved by zeal for the Lord, the God of Hosts....'* (1 Kings

19:9-10). Immediately after the vision, God asks the same question, and Elijah gives the same answer (I Kings 19:13-14). The Midrash turns the text into a dialogue:

Elijah: The Israelites have broken God's covenant.
God: Is it then your covenant?
Elijah: They have torn down Your altars.
God: But were they your altars?
Elijah: They have put Your prophets to the sword.
God: But you are alive.
Elijah: I alone am left.
God: **Instead of hurling accusations against Israel, should you not have pleaded their cause?**^[5] [emphasis added]

The meaning of the Midrash is clear. The zealot takes the part of God. But **God expects His prophets to be defenders, not accusers**. The repeated question and answer is now to be understood in its tragic depth. Elijah declares himself to be zealous for God. He is shown that God is not disclosed in dramatic confrontation: not in the whirlwind or the earthquake or the fire. God now asks him again, 'What are you doing here, Elijah?' **Elijah repeats that he is zealous for God. He has not understood that religious leadership calls for another kind of virtue, the way of the still, small voice.** God now indicates that someone else must lead. Elijah must hand his mantle on to Elisha. [emphasis added]

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

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

FOOTNOTES:

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

[2] Ibid., 32.

[3] Ibid., 30.

[4] Ibid., 33.

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

* 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.

<https://rabbisacks.org/covenant-conversation/pinchas/elijah-and-the-still-small-voice/>

Parshah for the Anxious: If You're Here, You Can

By Eliezer Shemtov * © Chabad

"If I were G d," said one of Rabbi Schneur Zalman of Liadi's colleagues, "I would create the world a little differently."

"And if I were G d," said Rabbi Schneur Zalman, "I would create the world exactly as He did."

One cause of anxiety and anguish is dissatisfaction or uncertainty about the role one has been given in life. *"Why was I made a businessman? I would have preferred to be a rabbi!" "Why do I live in this community? I would have preferred another." "Why did I get ... ? I would have preferred ... !"*

How can we feel better about the reality we have been given and learn to meet life's challenges with joy?

Actually, there are two distinct questions here: 1) Why was I given exactly these challenges? 2) How do I know I can meet them?

In this week's Torah portion, Pinchas, we read about the division of the Land of Israel, and there we find some answers.

The Land of Israel was divided among the twelve tribes through two systems: 1) lottery; 2) allocation proportional to population.

The topography of the land is extraordinarily varied — coastline, mountains, valleys, desert, and fertile plains, each with different potential. This physical diversity mirrors the spiritual diversity of the Jewish people. Each tribe had a different primary occupation: some were shepherds, one was engaged in international trade (Zevulun), another devoted to scholarship (Issachar), another produced olive oil (Asher), and so on. Each tribe needed a different type of territory to carry out its work optimally. And each tribe's population was different, determining how much space was needed to live comfortably.

The population of each tribe was visible and countable (i.e., rational); the mission of each tribe was not necessarily so. Hence the two systems of allocation: census and lottery.

The message for us: one's life mission is not arrived at rationally. It is something G d determines before we are born, according to criteria inaccessible to us. One hint our Sages offer is that if something is particularly difficult for you, that is a strong sign that it is especially important for you to do, which is precisely why it meets with such resistance. Consider how Adam and Eve fell in the Garden of Eden: they had an entire world to enjoy, and still they were drawn to eat from precisely the one tree that was forbidden.

But alongside the irrational nature of the mission comes a rational assurance: Just as the territorial allocation corresponded to each tribe's population, you have the resources you need to carry out your mission.

The tool for this week: Internalize the conviction that you are where you need to be, and that you have everything you need to fulfill your mission successfully. With this clarity, you can devote yourself more confidently to doing everything within your power to carry it out. And when you are unsure how — find yourself a trusted teacher to consult.¹

FOOTNOTES:

1. Numbers 21:4–9.
2. Rosh Hashanah 29a.
3. See Rashi on Numbers 21:6.

4. Genesis 37:24.

5. See Rashi on Genesis 37:24.

* Chabad-Lubavitch emissary in Montevideo, Uruguay.

https://www.chabad.org/parshah/article_cdo/aid/7408680/jewish/If-Youre-Here-You-Can.htm

Pinchas: Renewing the Torah

By Rabbi Moshe Wisniefsky *

On the day of the first fruits, when you offer up a new grain-offering to G-d, your [festival] of weeks, you must celebrate a holy occasion; you must not perform any mundane work. (Num. 28:26)

Allegorically, the term “first fruits” refers to the souls of the Jewish people, who are called “*the first of His produce*” because they were the first entity to arise in G-d’s thought before He created the world – meaning that He created the rest of the world (including the Torah itself) in their merit.

This is why Shavu’ot, the holiday on which we re-experience the Giving of the Torah, is called “*the day of the first fruits.*” The renewal of the Giving of the Torah is accomplished by the Jewish people, on behalf of all humanity. The Torah on its own cannot accomplish G-d’s purposes in the world; only we, using the Torah as our guide, are able to bring the world to its true completion and perfection.

– From *Daily Wisdom* *

* Insights by **the Lubavitcher Rebbe** on the weekly parashat from Chabad's *Daily Wisdom* by Rabbi Moshe Wisniefsky.

Gut Shabbos,

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In memory of Scott Leitner, a"h

Volume 32, Issue

Shabbat Parashat Pinchas

5786 B"H

Covenant and Conversation

Rabbi Jonathan Sacks, z"l

The Zealot

With Pinchas a new type enters the world of Israel: the zealot.

"Pinchas son of Eleazar, son of Aaron the Priest, has turned My anger away from the Israelites by being zealous with My zeal in their midst, so that I did not put an end to them in My zeal." Num. 25:11

He was followed, many centuries later, by the one other figure in Tanach described as a zealot, the prophet Elijah, who tells God on Mount Horeb, "I have been very zealous for the Lord, God Almighty" (1 Kings 19:14).

In fact, tradition identified and linked the two men even more closely: "Pinchas is Elijah" (Yalkut Shimoni, Torah, 771). Pinchas, says Targum Yonatan (to Num. 25:12), "became an angel who lives forever and will be the harbinger of redemption at the End of Days."

What is truly fascinating is how Judaism – both biblical and post-biblical – dealt with the idea of the zealot. First, let us recall the two contexts.

First is that of Pinchas. Having failed to curse the Israelites, Bilaam eventually devised a strategy that succeeded. He persuaded the Moabite women to seduce Israelite men and then lure them into idolatry. This evoked intense Divine anger, and a plague broke out among the Israelites. To make matters worse, Zimri, a leader of the tribe of Shimon, brought a Midianite woman into the camp where they flagrantly engaged in intimacy. Perhaps sensing that Moses felt powerless – he had himself married a Midianite woman – Pinchas seized the initiative and stabbed and killed them both, ending the misbehaviour and the plague by which 24,000 Israelites had already died. That is the story of Pinchas.

Elijah's story begins with the accession of Ahab to the throne of the northern kingdom, Israel. The king had married Jezebel, daughter of the king of Sidon, and under her influence introduced Baal worship into the kingdom, building a pagan temple and erecting a pole in Samaria honouring the Ugaritic mother goddess Asherah. Jezebel, meanwhile, was organising a programme of killing the "prophets of the Lord." The Bible (1 King 16)

says of Ahab that "he did more evil in the eyes of the Lord than any of those before him."

Elijah announced that there would be a drought to punish the king and the Baal-worshipping nation. Confronted by Ahab, Elijah challenged him to gather the 450 prophets of Baal to a test at Mount Carmel. When all assembled present, Elijah issued the challenge. The prophets would each prepare sacrifices and call on God, and so would Elijah. The one who summoned fire from heaven would confirm the true God. The Baal prophets agreed, made their preparations, and then called on their god, but nothing happened. In a rare show of scornful humour, Elijah told them to cry louder. Perhaps, he said, Baal is busy or travelling, or having a sleep. The false prophets worked themselves into a frenzy, gashing themselves until their blood flowed, but still nothing happened. Elijah then prepared his sacrifice and had the people douse it three times with water to make it even harder to ignite. He then called on God. Fire descended from heaven, consuming the sacrifice. The people, awestruck, cried out, "The Lord – He is God! The Lord – He is God!" words we say nowadays at the climax of Neilah at the end of Yom Kippur. The people then executed the false prophets of Baal. God had been vindicated.

There can be no doubt that Pinchas and Elijah were religious heroes. They stepped into the breach at a time when the nation was facing religious and moral crisis and palpable Divine anger. They acted while everyone else, at best, watched. They risked their lives by so doing. There can be little doubt that the mob might have turned against them and attacked them. Indeed after the trial at Mount Carmel, Jezebel lets it be known that she intends to have Elijah killed. Both men acted for the sake of God and the religious welfare of the nation. And God Himself is called "zealous" many times in the Torah.

Yet their treatment in both the written and oral Torah is deeply ambivalent. God gives Pinchas "my covenant of peace," meaning that he will never again have to act the part of a zealot. Indeed, in Judaism, the shedding of human blood is incompatible with service at the Sanctuary (King David was forbidden to build the Temple for this reason: see I Chronicles 22:8, 28:3). As for Elijah, he was implicitly rebuked by God in one of the great scenes of the Bible. Standing at Horeb, God shows him a

whirlwind, an earthquake and a fire, but God is not in any of these. Then He comes to Elijah in a "still, small voice" (1 Kings 19). He then asks Elijah, for the second time, "What are you doing here?" and Elijah replies in exactly the same words as he had used before: "I have been very zealous for the Lord God Almighty." He has not understood that God has been trying to tell him that He is not to be found in violent confrontation, but in gentleness and the word softly spoken. God then tells him to appoint Elisha as his successor.

Pinchas and Elijah are, in other words, both gently rebuked by God.

Halachically, the precedent of Pinchas is severely limited. Although his act was lawful, the Sages none the less said that had Zimri turned around and killed Pinchas instead, he would be deemed innocent since he would have acted in self-defence. Had Pinchas killed Zimri even one moment after the act of immorality, he would have been guilty of murder. And had Pinchas asked a court of law whether he was permitted to do what he was about to do, the answer would have been no. This is a rare instance of the rule, halachah ve-ein morin kein, "It is a law that is not taught" (Sanhedrin 82a).

Why this moral ambivalence? The simplest answer is that the zealot is not acting within the normal parameters of the law. Zimri may have committed a sin that carried the death sentence, but Pinchas executed punishment without a trial. Elijah may have been acting under the imperative of removing idolatry from Israel, but he did an act – offering a sacrifice outside the Temple – normally forbidden in Jewish law. There are extenuating circumstances in Jewish law in which either the king or the court may execute non-judicial punishment to secure social order (see Maimonides, Hilchot Sanhedrin 24:4; Hilchot Melachim 3:10). But Pinchas was neither a king nor acting as a representative of the court. He was acting on his own initiative, taking the law into his own hands (avid dina lenafshei). There are instances where this is justified and where the consequences of inaction would be catastrophic. But in general, we are not empowered to do so, since the result would be lawlessness and violence on a grand scale.

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More profoundly, the zealot is in effect taking the place of God. As Rashi says, commenting on the phrase, “Pinchas ... has turned My anger away from the Israelites by being zealous with My zeal”, Pinchas “executed My vengeance and showed the anger I should have shown” (Rashi to Num. 25:11).

In Judaism, we are commanded to “walk in God’s ways” and imitate His attributes. “Just as He is merciful and compassionate, so you be merciful and compassionate.” That is not, however, the case when it comes to executing punishment or vengeance. God who knows all may execute sentence without a trial, but we, being mere humans, may not. There are forms of justice that are God’s domain, not ours.

The zealot who takes the law into his own hands is embarking on a course of action fraught with moral danger. Only the most holy may do so, only once in a lifetime, and only in the direst circumstance when the nation is at risk, when there is nothing else to be done, and no one else to do it. Even then, were the zealot to ask permission from a court, he would be denied it.

Pinchas gave his name to the Parsha in which Moses asks God to appoint a successor. Rabbi Menahem Mendel, the Rebbe of Kotzk, asked why Pinchas, hero of the hour, was not appointed instead of Joshua. His answer was that a zealot cannot be a leader. That requires patience, forbearance, and respect for due process.

The zealots within besieged Jerusalem in the last days of the Second Temple played a significant part in the city’s destruction. They were more intent on fighting one another than the Romans outside the city walls. Nothing in the religious life is more risk-laden than zeal, and nothing more compelling than the truth God taught Elijah, that God is not to be found in the use of force but in the still, small voice that turns the sinner from sin. As for vengeance, that belongs to God alone.

Shabbat Shalom: Rabbi Shlomo Riskin

A Man of Peace

“Pinchas the son of Elazar the son of Aaron the High Priest turned back My wrath from upon the children of Israel when he zealously expressed My zealousness amongst them.... Therefore tell him I have given him My covenant of peace.” (Numbers 25:11–12)

A covenant of peace? To pursue why God’s gift of peace was bestowed upon Pinchas the zealot, we need to turn to the book of Joshua, examining an incident from the later history of the Jewish people which highlights Pinchas as a mediating peacemaker rather than a fanatic

zealot – and would confirm our previous commentary.

Many years had passed (Joshua 22); the Bible records that under Joshua’s leadership, the major conquest of the land had been accomplished, paving the way for the Reubenites, the Gadites, and half the tribe of Menashe to return to inhabit Transjordan, the land of Gilead on the eastern side of the Jordan River – good grazing land for their cattle requested long ago from Moses before the battles against the Canaanites had begun (Numbers 32).

The two-and-one-half tribes arrived in their desired and apportioned lands and immediately erected an altar near the Jordan, “a large altar, for everyone to see” (Joshua 22:10), a veritable showpiece. The other tribes of Israel were incensed; they saw the erection of a large altar in Transjordan – far from the central Sanctuary in Shilo – as an act of rebellion against the God of Israel, a “declaration of independence” from the rest of the tribes. “And when the children of Israel heard of it, the whole congregation of the children of Israel gathered at Shilo to rise up in battle [against the two-and-one-half tribes in Transjordan]” (Joshua 22:12).

But before they declared a civil war, they dispatched none other than Pinchas the son of Elazar the priest, together with ten heads of tribes, to attempt a peaceful resolution of the conflict. Pinchas’ delegation brilliantly reminded them of the disastrous plague that had descended upon the entire nation when they had first begun to worship the Peor idol and to cohabit with Moabite and Midianite women, an obvious reference to the idolatry which had led to Pinchas’ own act of punishment which brought about the plague’s cessation (Numbers 12:10–18). Pinchas warned that the building of their altar separate from the central altar in Shilo would cause repercussions, endangering the entire nation of Israel; the remaining ten tribes might be forced to take action against them to prevent a disastrous plague from striking these rebellious upstart idolaters.

The underlying motif of Pinchas’ argument was the integrity of remaining one nation – each responsible for the actions of the other – despite the distance that separated them. In the interest of unity, he told them that if they felt “defiled or contaminated by their distance from the Sanctuary on the other side of the Jordan, then they ought return to mainland Israel,” even though it would mean giving up some of their own land in the requisite redistribution of territory which would have to take place (Joshua 22:19).

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The response of the two-and-one-half tribes magnified the theme of unity; it was never their intention to use their altar to replace the Sanctuary in Shilo for sacrificial offerings. Theirs was not an act of rebellion, urging religious or civil acts of disobedience. Indeed, they intended their altar to serve as a symbol for future generations of the unity of faith and nationality between the tribes on both sides of the Jordan River. Their actual sacrifices would be offered only in the Sanctuary in Shilo.

His return to the children of Israel in Canaan marked Pinchas as a successful mediator and peacemaker, revealing the essence of his personality as a true kohen and lover of peace who, when younger, had been forced by extreme circumstances to step out of character and punish without due process in order to prevent Moses and his directives from becoming marginalized.

Or perhaps there is an alternative perspective: that in fact Pinchas had acted upon his emotions of zealotry, but since, in a fateful moment for Israel, his action actually saved the nation, God granted him the gift which is truly the goal of Israel, the gift of peace and the covenant of compassion. And now we see from the book of Joshua (22) that Pinchas learned his lesson and eventually became a successful mediator of peace!

Whatever may have been the initial character of Pinchas, one message is clear from the text: even if a momentary act of zealotry is called for in an unusual circumstance, fanaticism must neither be our national norm nor our national goal. Our norm and our goal must always be God’s covenant of peace!

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

Safeguards Against Extremism

A story with important implications for our own times is referred to in the opening passage of this week’s Torah portion, Pinchas (Numbers 25:10-30:1).

The background to the story is described in detail in last week’s Torah portion, Balak (see Numbers 25:1-9). It is a sad tale, a shameful tale, but unfortunately a true tale.

It is a blatant description of decadence and grave immorality. The Israelites are attracted to the daughters of Moab. They join them in festive offerings to the gods of Moab, chief of whom was the Baal Peor, thus angering the Lord.

Suddenly, an Israelite man intimately embraces a Midianite woman in public; indeed, in the very presence of Moshe and the entire assembly. All are shocked, paralyzed, tearful.

Pinchas son of Elazar, son of Aharon the Kohen, sees the scene, and immediately, spontaneously, leaps up, spear in hand, and fatally pierces the bodies of both the Israelite man and the woman.

Things quiet down and thus concludes last week's narrative.

This Shabbat, as we open our Chumashim, we discover the sequel to last week's disastrous drama. We become informed that the Lord spoke to Moshe with words of praise for Pinchas for having removed His wrath from the Children of Israel. The Lord affirms:

"Therefore, proclaim that I grant him My Covenant—peace!"

How are we to react to the story and to the sequel? Some of us may feel compelled to applaud Pinchas for his bravery and holy zealotry in defense of the Almighty and the honor of His people. Others might find his zealotry excessive and perhaps unduly impulsive.

Still others might adopt the reaction described in the Jerusalem Talmud (Sanhedrin chapter 9, paragraph 7); "Some say that zealots are permitted to attack those who consort with Aramean women; but we are taught that this is not the policy of the Sages and that Pinchas acted against the will of the Sages. Rabbi Judah ben Pazi insisted that the Sages sought to excommunicate Pinchas but were prevented by the instantaneous intervention of the Holy Spirit granting him, and his descendants, the eternal covenant of priestly peace."

The Babylonian Talmud (Sanhedrin 82a) delves into this issue at some length. I find this Talmudic passage to be particularly relevant to our times. This is because what biblical and rabbinic sources call *kanaut*, zealotry, is awfully close to what we call extremism. Thus, whatever the Talmud can teach us about ways to safeguard against zealotry can help us modify, and eventually control, extremism, whether it be left-wing extremism or right-wing extremism, in political affairs or in religious ideology.

The voice of several of the "safeguards" against illegitimate zealotry in the Talmudic passage just mentioned is the great second century sage, known simply as "Rav". He outlines three such safeguards:

The would-be zealot must be absolutely confident that his zealous intentions conform to halacha. That is, that they are consistent with the standards of justice and have judicial precedent. In Pinchas' case, "ra'ah maaseh

v'nizkar halacha, he observed an act, and recalled a halachic precedent."

That he has no personal bias against the offenders that would motivate his zealotry, that his motives were pure, unselfish, and unprejudiced.

That he acts spontaneously, without prior consultation with some neutral expert advisor. After all, "ha'ba l'himalech ein morin lo, had he consulted with an authority he would have been advised NOT to do so."

Only if these three conditions are met can he be excused and even complimented for his zealous outburst.

There is a fourth condition which can justify zealotry, a condition which I would describe as "cultural context". It is enunciated by one of the supreme halachic authorities of the previous century, known as the Chazon Ish, Rav Avraham Yeshaya Kerenitz, zt"l, in his discussion of the laws of ritual slaughter. He refers to a Talmudic ruling which condones very severe punishment for one who violates certain Torah prohibitions. He notes that such harsh punishments could only be applied in times when the cultural context was one of universal piety and faithful commitment to all halachic restrictions. Then the outlier, as part of a minute minority, could be held accountable for his failure to conform to society at large. In our times, argues the Chazon Ish, when such levels of piety and meticulous Torah observance are, to say the least, not the norm at all, but all sorts of deviant behaviors are tolerated and even advocated, the individual who does not conform cannot be punished so harshly. Such individuals are simply conforming to the norms of their environment and are swept away by powerful cultural influences, and have in effect been "brainwashed". Extremist actions against those with whom we may disagree cannot be justified in such cultural contexts. Zealots cannot take rash measures against "sinners" in a society where sin is just an "alternative lifestyle".

So much for constraints on extremism. Let me conclude with some of the statements made by Rav Avraham Yitzchak HaKohen Kook, zt"l, about the deleterious effects that extremism has had upon the Jewish people during the entire course of our history. These statements are to be found in a very early book of Rav Kook's, only recently finally published. The work is entitled *L'Nevuchei HaDor* (For the Perplexed of the Generation). It is published by Yediot Acharonot and has stimulated much interest, discussion, and controversy. Here is his assertion, translated to the best of my ability: "The tendency toward extremism has caused pain to every beneficent sector—extremism in education and in actions, and also extremism in ideologies... We have

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reached a level of extremism that is sufficiently extreme to assert dogmas and policies which are clearly refutable from every perspective."

Writing well over a hundred years ago, he is clearly referring to positions held then, and still not relinquished today, against the nationalist hopes and goals advocated by the Zionist movements. He insists that nationalism and patriotism are not at all inconsistent with our religious values and tradition, that we are a nation and not just a religion.

As in all of Rav Kook's writings, there are sparks of prophecy that one can recognize and should at least contemplate, consider, and debate. One thing is for sure; extremism is not always beneficial. It must be tempered, controlled, and redirected toward cooperation and mutual understanding. We all must share in the Almighty's gift to Pinchas—His covenant of SHALOM!

Torah.Org: Rabbi Yissocher Frand

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 Shim'on, 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 zealotry 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

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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.

Dvar Torah: Chief Rabbi Ephraim Mirvis

The saddest period of our calendar is charged with much hope and promise for the Jewish people.

This coming Shabbat we will be reading the first chapter of Jeremiah. That’s because we’ve just entered into the three weeks, a dark period on our calendar between the fasts of Shiva Asar B’Tammuz and Tisha B’Av. And in this Haftara, we read how God turned to the prophet and He asked him “Ma ata roeh?” – “what is it that you see?” And the prophet replied “Makel shaken ani roeh”- “I see the rod of an almond tree.” What is the symbolism of the almond?

Targum Yonatan explains that it is, God forbid, an ominous signal for our people, because the rod of the almond tree is similar to the sceptre of an evil king, on his way to cause trouble to the Jewish nation. But, on the other hand, the Rambam, Maimonides, tells us that the word ‘Shaked’ (almond), is similar sounding to ‘shoked,’ which means to look after. The almond therefore represents the fact that Almighty God will always look after the Jewish people.

And the Midrash in Eicha Rabba takes it one step further, noting that it only takes 21 days from the moment an almond tree first blossoms to the moment it bears edible fruit. And these 21 days match the 21 days of the three weeks that we’re currently in. Therefore, says the Midrash, the shaken, the almond, is a symbol of the fact that God will send the fruits of peace and happiness to us in the future.

Every Jewish child knows how to sing the lovely melody ‘Hashkediya Porachat,’ which is sung on the minor festival of Tu Bishvat, which takes place in January/February every year. Here the blossoming of the almond tree is a signal of the fact that winter is just about to end and spring is starting.

So therefore, the almond, at this saddest time of the year, sends out an exceptionally poignant and sadly relevant message to us. We have experienced so much darkness in the winter of our experiences, particularly since October 7th, 2023. However, the message of the almond is: it will soon be over. And we can indeed look forward to better times for our people.

We pray that Almighty God will indeed take us forward from darkness to light so that we will enjoy the sweetness of peace – may it happen soon.

Ohr Torah Stone Dvar Torah

“Suddenly a Man Rises”: Parshat Pinchas for Our Generation

Captain S, Israeli Air Force

Many threads connect the story of Pinchas and the narratives in this portion to our own time, to our recent actions and to the enduring messages embedded within these events. In this article, I do not aim to offer revolutionary insights, but rather to draw attention to some of the messages that emerged for me through a straightforward reading of the parsha — its stories and its structure.

The portion of Pinchas famously opens with God’s blessing to Pinchas. Pinchas — the quintessential “Biblical zealot” — steps off the path on which he was raised: the path of his grandfather, the man of peace. As he sits among the weeping assembly, witnessing Zimri and Kozbi at the center of the camp, he rises and strikes them both with a single spear. This act halts the plague that had already begun to claim the lives of the Israelites — all within the same verse.

But it seems that, in God’s view, the mere cessation of the plague is not enough to signal His approval of Pinchas’s act. He therefore speaks to Moshe and instructs him to convey a message to Pinchas: “Behold, I give him My covenant of peace.”

This blessing — of peace, no less — is striking. For a figure like Pinchas, who charged into battle, one might have expected a blessing more in line with his militant zeal: perhaps an appointment as a military commander in Israel’s upcoming wars, a medal of valor, or at the very least the honor of giving a pe’ula (activity) in Bnei Akiva. But no — after his act of violence, Pinchas is blessed with shalom.

Following this blessing, Pinchas is quietly sidelined for a time. He does not join his father in the census taken immediately after the plague he helped to stop. And in the war with Midyan, which appears a few chapters later, his spear is set aside in favor of sacred vessels and trumpets.[1]

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Pinchas reappears in the book of Yehoshua, where he leads a political-religious delegation that negotiates peace between the tribes who chose to settle on the eastern bank of the Jordan and the rest of the Israelite nation.

And finally, in the book of Shoftim, in the grim story of the concubine of Giv’ah, it is Pinchas who grants permission to go to war against the tribe of Binyamin — but only after two bloody days of battle and direct consultation with God.

After Pinchas’s act and the cessation of the plague, Moshe and Elazar are commanded to take a census: “Take the sum of the entire congregation of the sons of Israel, from twenty years and up, by their fathers’ houses.” And the verse continues, “all who go out to war in Israel.”

As the nation prepares to enter the land — and in the aftermath of the plague — the Israelites must be counted. This census is directly linked to the division of the land and to its conquest. Each person who is counted receives a portion and an individual number. The years of wandering in the desert are drawing to a close, and naturally, it is time to prepare both militarily and politically for the campaign to conquer the land. No longer can they sit in their tents complaining about melons and onions — now it’s time for basic training.

The daughters of Tzlofchad observe as the people of Israel mature and take on a new identity. Since the time they had participated in the women’s dances of praise at the Splitting of the Sea, when they were still young girls, and since the time they had donated their mirrors for the construction of the Mishkan, they have remained largely in the background. But now they understand: everything depends on us. Hence, they come together — “And the daughters of Tzlofchad drew near”[2] — and step into the center of the camp, to the entrance of the Tent of Meeting, before the entire assembly and its leaders, and there they take their stand.

Their bold initiative is met with Divine affirmation: “The daughters of Tzlofchad speak rightly.” Not only are they granted an inheritance — they give rise to a new law in Israel.

Now the people of Israel are ready. Through the gradual transformation spanning the portions of Balak and Pinchas — and indeed the full forty years of wandering — the nation has grown up. Responsibility now rests in their hands: on those who rise, take initiative, and choose to act. Miraculous leadership begins to recede, making way for a natural form of leadership — one that demands of a mature

people to roll up their sleeves and confront their own challenges.

Moshe, the veteran leader of the desert generation, sees with his own eyes — through the story of the daughters of Tzlofchad — how by taking initiative things come to be. Afterward, he ascends Mount Nevo and is once again informed that he will not enter the land. Why? “You rebelled against My word” — by striking the rock. You brought about a miracle where the people themselves were meant to solve the problem of water.[3]

Moshe understands — and makes a decision: the time has come to appoint a successor. He turns directly to God: “And Moshe spoke to the Lord, saying,”[4] and he pleads with the God of all spirits to choose a leader: “May the Lord, God of the spirits of all flesh, appoint a man over the congregation.”

But God replies in kind: You want Me to appoint him? “Take for yourself” — you must be the one to appoint him. And whom? The one you, with your own human instincts, trust: “...and you shall place your hand upon him.”[5]

The new leader, Yehoshua, receives Moshe’s glory and stature — and he receives it directly from Moshe himself. “And you shall give of your glory upon him” — not a Divine radiance from above, not a sacred light descending from heaven, but a human transmission of human qualities, from one person of flesh and blood to another.

Yehoshua’s authority comes from his predecessor — not from heaven.

This young man, who had left Egypt, had served Moshe with unwavering loyalty and never left his tent; who had led the people into battle against Amalek with sword in hand (“And Yehoshua weakened Amalek...”); who had walked beside Moshe through the wilderness and grew alongside the nation — he is the one chosen to lead them.

Yehoshua is, above all, “a man with spirit” — which makes him fit to lead the people of Israel in times of both war and peace, navigate the nation through conflict and bring them back to calm. He is a man of action, a fierce and fearless warrior, yet one who dwells in tents. He is the kind of leader suited to a people of initiative — a nation now advancing in a grounded, natural way. Beyond the Jordan lie years of struggle — but beyond the struggle lies the promise of peace.

In these very days, in the twilight of war — after a devastating and seemingly endless loss, with our brothers still waiting in the depths of Gaza’s tunnels — the people of Israel have risen. We have drawn our swords, oiled our

rifles, readied our “chariots,” fueled our aircraft — and have gone to war.

Our enemies, from across the globe, have been struck down and continue to be struck without mercy.

Our generation — my family, my friends and comrades-in-arms, and the nation as a whole — has borne the painful privilege of standing among those who restore the honor of Israel: zealous like Pinchas, bold like the daughters of Tzlofchad, resolute like Moshe, devoted like Yehoshua. A privilege not shared by all within Am Yisrael, unfortunately, those who refrain from being counted among “those who go out to war.”

And yet, the time of “My covenant of peace” will soon arrive. We must know how to return the spear to its place, to sit once again in the tent and the Mishkan. Zealotry has no place within the camp. The combat gear must be folded up and set aside with the uniform. It is time to turn our hearts toward peace — toward rebuilding, toward growth, and toward shaping a new reality: one in which, after “those who despoiled you, shall become spoil, and all who devoured you shall be distanced... and you shall burst forth to the right and to the left,” — the nation will be united.

Our mission as the “generation of victory” is not fulfilled on the battlefield — but in the return from it. That responsibility is almost too heavy to bear. And yet only by bearing it, will we be able to cross the Jordan.

May we strive together to fulfill the prophecy from the haftarah: “See, I have appointed you this day... to uproot and to pull down, to destroy and to demolish — to build and to plant.”

Dvar Torah: TorahWeb.Org

Rabbi Eliakim Koenigsberg - Take the First Step

In Parshas Pinchas, the daughters of Tzlofchad 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 Tzlofchad understood that only males were to receive a portion in Eretz Yisrael (see Tosafos, Bava Basra 119b, s.v. “llu”). 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 Tzlofchad (and the

Likutei Divrei Torah

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 Tzlofchad 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' (Zechariah 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.

Mizrachi Dvar Torah

Rav Doron Perez - How to Argue for Heaven's Sake

The destruction of the Second Temple wasn't only caused by sinat chinam – baseless hatred – but by an inability to see legitimacy in those with opposing views. Then, as now, society suffers when disagreement turns into dehumanization, and debate into division.

There is a powerful insight from the Kli Yakar on the word "shamayim" – heaven – a fusion of two opposites: fire (eish) and water (mayim). These elements, by nature, extinguish one another. Yet Hashem fused them to create shamayim, teaching us that peace isn't the absence of difference, but the harmony of contrasts.

So too with our arguments. As Pirkei Avot teaches, only disputes for the sake of Heaven endure – not because they are conflict-free, but because they hold space for multiple voices in pursuit of a higher truth.

May we learn to argue not for ego or power, but for Heaven's sake. May our fire and water not destroy each other – but create shamayim together. And may Hashem bring peace above

and below, within our people and within our hearts.

Torah.Org Dvar Torah

by Rabbi Label Lam

Worthy of a Peace Prize

Therefore, say, "I hereby give him My covenant of peace.... (Bamidbar 25:13) Reuven, Israel's firstborn: The descendants of Reuven were: the family of the Hanochites from Hanoah; the family of the Paluities from Palu, (Bamidbar 26:5)

מְשַׁפְּחָת הַחֹנִיכִי. Since the nations were denigrating them and saying, "How can they trace their lineage by their tribes? Do they think that the Egyptians did not exploit their mothers? If they mastered their bodies, all the more so their wives. Therefore, the Holy One, blessed is He, appended His Name to them, the 'Hey' to one side and the 'Yud' to the other side, as if to say, "I bear witness for them, that these are the sons of their fathers"... -Rashi

Here we have a fascinating confluence of ideas. Pinchas is granted a "Peace Prize" for his surgical, but brutal act, which abruptly ended a plague that ravaged the camp of Israel taking 24,000 lives. Then we have a minicensus of the Jewish People. Rashi points out for us the signature of HASHEM is woven into that familial accounting. The primary letters for the Name of HASHEM – YUD and HEY are peppered throughout bearing witness to the purity of the lineage of the Jewish People. How do those letters testify? What is their significance here other than acting like a notary's official authorization?

The Talmud Sota 17A quotes Rabbi Akiva as saying the following profound statement: "ISH V'ISHA – A man and a woman, if they merit, the DIVINE PRESENCE is between them, and if they do not, then a fire consumes them". This is one of the most oft quoted and well-known Sheva Brochos Toras, but let's give it a little more context. The Hebrew word, "ISH" is spelled, ALEF-YUD-SHIN, and the word, ISHA is spelled ALEF-SHIN-HEY. They each have two letters in common, the letters ALEF and SHIN. That word AISH means fire. They each have two distinct letters, the YUD and the HEY. Together, in combination, those two letters are the primary part of the Holy Name of HASHEM.

Now we can plug in the formulaic statement made by Rabbi Akiva. When they merit to have peace between (SHALOM), then the NAME of HASHEM is present, and in their midst. However, when they are not representing their part of HASHEM's Name, then what remains is AISH + AISH = Major FIRE!

Likutei Divrei Torah

Let us take a step further in understanding. I once heard the following Klutz Kasha asked by Rabbi Avigdor Miller ztl: There are two places in the Torah where there is a requirement for DVEIKUS, absolute attachment. One can be found by the Torah's description of the first couple, Adam and Chava, "Therefore a man should leave go of his mother and father and (DAVEIK) cleave to his wife, and they should become one flesh." (Breishis 2:24)

Another place where this attachment, complete devotion is required is later in Sefer Devarim (11:23) where the Torah tells us, "U'L'Davka Bo" – "And you should cleave to HIM (HASHEM)" Now how can we have two arenas where we are required to be 100% dedicated? A person can have two full-time jobs that are each eight hours a day. It may be challenging and trying, but it is mathematically possible. How can a person have two jobs that each require 24 hours a day, 7 days a week? Now we are ready to understand why it's a Klutz Kasha, a strawman argument. He answered that the cleaving and attachment that the husband and wife each have to HASHEM, allows them to remain dedicated to each other. Before getting married to another, a person must first "marry HASHEM". That is the secret bond that holds Jewish families together.

Rashi in Chumash tells us that this world was made with the letter HEY and Olam Haba with a YUD. The Maharal points out that the letter HEY is made up of a DALET with a YUD. That means that Olam Haba is embedded in Olam HaZeh. The Husband and wife have a share and share in Olam Haba. Maybe now, we can appreciate why Pinchas, who guaranteed the possibility of Shalom between husbands and wives and restored the integrity of Jewish homes, was worthy of a peace prize.



BS"D

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RAV SCHACHTER ON THE PARSHA

Insights and Commentary Based on the Shiurim of **Rav Hershel**

Schachter Adapted by **Dr. Allan Weissman**

<https://tinyurl.com/RavSchachterontheParsha>

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PARSHAS PINCHAS - AVEIRAH LISHMAH

פינחס בן אלעזר בן אהרן הכהן השיב את חמתו מעל בני ישראל בקנאו את קנאתו בתוכם. Pinchas son of Elazar son of Aharon HaKohen, turned back. My wrath from upon *Bnei Yisrael*, when he zealously avenged My vengeance among them. (*Bamidbar* 25:11)

Rashi, quoting the *Gemara* in *Sanhedrin* (82b), explains why the Torah mentions here that Pinchas was the grandson of Aharon HaKohen. Pinchas had a second grandfather, Yisro, who served as a “galach” for *avodah zarah*, and members of the other *shevatim* mocked Pinchas by saying, “His mother’s father is an idol-worshipper, yet he killed a *Nasi*!” Therefore, the Torah traces his ancestry to Aharon HaKohen.

Rav Dovid Soloveitchik (*Shiurei Rabbeinu Meshulem Dovid HaLevi al HaTorah, Parshas Pinchas*) wondered how this explanation answers why it was important to mention Pinchas’ lineage. The only real question regarding Pinchas is whether he acted properly or improperly in killing Zimri. If the

Halachah L'Moshe MiSinai is that הבעל ארמית קנאין פוגעין בו “One who cohabits with an Aramean woman, zealots may kill him” (*Mishnah Sanhedrin* 81b), he was correct, regardless of his lineage. If the *halachah* does not apply in this case, his act was unlawful even if his grandfather was Aharon HaKohen!

Rav Dovid explained that the *halachah* of קנאין פוגעין בו applies only to one whose zealousness inspires him to avenge the honor of *Hashem*. In this sense, קנאין פוגעין בו is related to the concept of חטא בשביל שתזכה – “sin in order to gain.” In rare instances, we instruct a person to commit an *aveirah* if something significant will be accomplished through his sinful act (*Menachos* 48a).

The *Gemara* in *Nazir* (23b) elaborates on this notion in labeling the selfless act of Yael as an עבירה לשמה, as she offered herself to Sisera for the sake of the salvation of the Jewish People. Despite the fact that Yael (who was a married woman) engaged in illicit relations, since she did so for noble purposes, it was considered a “righteous transgression” that was worthy of great merit. The *Gemara* comments, גדולה עבירה לשמה ממצוה שלא לשמה – “A transgression committed for the sake of Heaven is greater than a *mitzvah* performed for ulterior motives.” [This is cited *l'halachah* by the *Beis Shmuel* (*Even Ha'Ezer* 178:4) in the name of the *Maharik*; see *Chochmas Shlomo*.]

The *Keren Orah* (*Nazir* 23b) writes that עבירה לשמה is permissible if it is למגדר מילתא, for the purpose of stemming widespread sinning.

With this comment, the *Keren Orah* alludes

to the related principle of The אין כח ביד חכמים לעקור דבר מן התורה – “*Chachamim* are empowered to actively suspend a Biblical law only as a temporary ruling and to curb a matter of rampant sin” (see *Yevamos* 90b). The *Rambam* (*Hilchos Mamrim* 2:4) elaborates on this idea:

אם ראו לפי שעה לבטל מצוות עשה או לעבור על מצוות לא תעשה כדי להחזיר רבים לדת או להציל רבים מישראל מלהכשל בדברים אחרים עושין לפי מה שצריכה השעה. כשם שהרופא חותך ידו או רגלו של זה כדי שיחיה כולו כך בית דין מוריים בזמן מן הזמנים לעבור על קצת מצוות לפי שעה כדי שיתקיימו כולם כדרך שאמרו חכמים הראשונים חלל עליו שבת אחת כדי שישמור שבתות הרבה.

If they [the *beis din*] saw that it was necessary to temporarily suspend a positive *mitzvah* or violate a negative *mitzvah* in order to bring people at large back to the Jewish faith or to save many Jews from transgressing in other matters, they may do what is necessary at that time. Just like a physician may amputate one’s hand or foot so that the person as a whole will live, so too, at times, *beis din* may rule to temporarily violate some of the *mitzvos* so that all of them will endure. In this vein, the *Chachamim* of the previous generations said, “Violate one Shabbos for a person so that he will keep many *Shabbosos.”

Thus, the *Rambam* understands that the source of the idea of מגדר מילתא is the *passuk* ושמרו בני ישראל את השבת, “The *Bnei Yisrael* shall observe the Shabbos” (*Shemos* 31:16), which the *Gemara* in *Yoma* (85b) expounds: חלל עליו שבת אחת כדי שישמור שבתות הרבה – “Violate one Shabbos for the sake of a person [whose life is in danger, and save his life], so that he will keep many Shabbosos.” It emerges from the *Rambam* that this *passuk* serves as the source of the principle of עבירה לשמה and the concept of חטא בשביל שתזכה.

Every legal system subscribes to the idea that, in unusual cases, the ends justify the means. The only question is which ends and which means. For example, everyone will agree that one who rushes his wife in active labor to the hospital in the middle of the night may

drive through a red light. The police would even assist him in doing this. It is recognized that those ends justify those means. This does not mean, however, that one can establish a yeshiva by taking funds from the government illegally. Those ends do not justify those means.

The *Likkutim* in the margin of *Mishnayos Yachin U'Vo'az* explains that the *Mishnah* in *Avos* (2:1) echoes this idea:

“Calculate...the reward of a sin against its cost.” – והוי מחשב ... שכר עבירה כנגד הפסדה
According to this interpretation, the *Mishnah* teaches that in rare cases, a person **should** commit an *aveirah*, since the reward he receives on behalf of his virtuous intention eclipses the more minor detriment caused by the sinful action itself.

If, according to his estimation, there is a definite and significant gain to be achieved by performing the *aveirah*, this benefit overshadows the adverse effects of the *aveirah*, and he may act according to the principle of חטא בשביל שתזכה *Tosfos* (*Shabbos* 4a, s.v. *v'chi*) applies this concept to the *Gemara* in *Berachos* (47b) that relates an incident involving Rabbi Eliezer, who freed his *eved Cana'ani* in order to complete a *minyan* of ten men with him. Rabbi Eliezer thereby transgressed an *issur* for the sake of fulfilling the communal *mitzvah* of *tefillah b'tzibbur*. The *Mechaber* (*Orach Chaim* 306:14; see *Bei'ur HaGr'a*) rules accordingly with regard to the permissibility of violating the *Shabbos* to save one's abducted daughter, who, it is feared, may be brought to apostasy as a consequence of her abduction. In this extreme case, we allow a person to commit an *aveirah* in order to benefit his fellow Jew. Likewise, the *Gemara* in *Ta'anis* (11a) quotes Shmuel, who teaches that whoever fasts voluntarily is called a *chotei* (sinner), much as a *nazir* is similarly labeled even though he abstained from only wine. *Tosfos* (s.v. *amar*) notes that Shmuel himself holds that under certain circumstances one is permitted to fast. This is because the *mitzvah* that he accomplishes through fasting outweighs the *aveirah* he violates through his abstinence. *Tosfos* compares this to one who observes a *ta'anis chalom* (a fast over a frightening dream) on *Shabbos*, who should then observe an additional fast on a weekday to atone for his fast on the *Shabbos* (*Ta'anis* 12b).

The *Gevuros Ari* (*Ta'anis* 11a, s.v. *amar Shmuel*) and the *Netziv* (*Meromei Sadeh*, *Ta'anis* 11a) wonder why the term *chotei* and the necessity for atonement apply in these situations. One who violates *Shabbos* for *piku'ach nefesh* (in a life-threatening situation) or who acts in accordance with the principle of עשה דוחה לא תעשה (a positive commandment overrides a prohibition) certainly does not require any atonement!

The explanation is that there is a significant difference between these cases and one who fasts voluntarily or becomes a *nazir*. In situations of *piku'ach nefesh* and עשה דוחה לא תעשה, the *aveirah* is overridden. Since no *aveirah* has been violated, there is no need for *kapparah*. However, when one volunteers to fast or to become a *nazir*, both a *mitzvah* and an *aveirah* continue to be present. Although he has the right to calculate the שכר עבירה כנגד הפסדה, and he may correctly conclude that the proper course of action is חטא בשביל שתזכה, the *aveirah* nevertheless remains in place. The act is labeled as an עבירה, and therefore a *kapparah* is necessary for that which he violated.

There is a second difference that emerges in reference to the special rule of חטא בשביל שתזכה. Although when one performs a *mitzvah* we require *kavanah*, the recognition that he thereby discharges his

obligation, what **motivates** him to perform the *mitzvah*, whether it be a desire to fulfill the *ratzon Hashem* or an ulterior motive, is generally not mandated. In fact, the *Gemara* in *Pesachim* (50b) teaches, לעולם יעסוק אדם בתורה ומצוות אף על פי שלא לשמה שמתוך שלא לשמה בא לשמה

A person should always engage in Torah study and the performance of *mitzvos* even for ulterior motives, because from Torah and *mitzvos* for ulterior motives he will eventually come to Torah and *mitzvos* for their own sake.”

In contrast, in relation to the application of חטא בשביל שתזכה, the *Gemara* in *Nazir* uses the term עבירה לשמה, implying that what prompts the performance of this act is critical. The *Netziv* (*Harchev Davar*, *Bereishis* 27:9) points out that this is due to our earlier observation that the *aveirah* remains an *aveirah*. Therefore, only one who is religiously motivated and performs the *aveirah* for the sole purpose of arriving at the intended spiritual benefit may rely on the calculation of שכר עבירה כנגד הפסדה. When one engages in an act of חטא בשביל שתזכה, his motivations must be completely *l'sheim Shamayim*, without personal gain.

Rav Shlomo Kluger (*Ha'Elef Lecha Shlomo*, *Even Ha'Ezer* 120) makes a related point in reference to a man who wanted to move to Eretz Yisrael for the purpose of improving his livelihood. The *Gemara* in *Kesubos* (110b) teaches that if one spouse wishes to relocate to Eretz Yisrael from *chutz la'Aretz* and the other spouse refuses, the latter is considered to be at fault regarding the dissolution of the marriage. This point has relevance to the requirement to pay the *kesubah* upon the couple's divorce. If the wife refuses to make *aliyah*, she must accept a *get* without receiving a *kesubah*; if the husband refuses, he must release her from the marriage and pay her the sum stipulated in her *kesubah*.

In this case, however, the husband's motivation to make *aliyah*, and divorce his wife who refused to go with him, was not in order to fulfill the *mitzvah* of *yishuv Eretz Yisrael*, but instead, was due to *parnassah* related considerations. Rav Kluger rules that one spouse's right to force the other to relocate to Eretz Yisrael is only when he does so **for the sake of the mitzvah**. In other words, divorcing one's wife in order to make *aliyah* is a form of עבירה לשמה, and here, when the husband is acting *shelo lishmah*, it is forbidden for him to divorce his wife.

In a similar vein, the *Mishnah* in *Avos* (2:2) specifies, וכל העוסקים עם הצבור יהיו עוסקים עמהם לשם שמים “All who exert themselves for the community should exert themselves **for the sake of Heaven**.” When one is involved in communal affairs, there is no well-delineated *ma'aseh mitzvah* that he performs, such that we could label his actions, in and of themselves, as *mitzvos*. A *lishmah* intent is therefore necessary to convert his act on behalf of the public welfare into a *ma'aseh mitzvah*. This is comparable to עבירה לשמה, where the act in and of itself is actually a *ma'aseh cheit*, not a *ma'aseh mitzvah* at all. Only if a person is moved by a *l'sheim Shamayim* consideration can we justify his commission of an *aveirah* under the rule of חטא בשביל שתזכה. [See *B'Ikvei HaTzon*, pp. 16-18.]

The *Netziv* (*Meishiv Davar* 1:46) extends this idea to any innovation, such as presenting *chiddushei Torah* or starting a new *minyan*. An action that is a distinct *mitzvah*, like donning *tefillin*, is always labeled as such, even if one's intent when performing it was *shelo lishmah*. However, when a new practice is introduced, if it lacks an intention of *lishmah*, there is nothing in place that first establishes the

practice as a *kiyum hamitzvah*.

There are numerous other circumstances in which the designation of a practice as a *mitzvah* is not clearly defined, and that makes the need for *lishmah* indispensable. For example, the *Chasam Sofer* (*Orach Chaim* 208, s.v. *l'hodi'a*) contends that the allowance to print *chiddushei Torah*, in the face of what ought to be a violation of transmitting *Torah SheBe'al Peh* in a written form, only applies to one who does so with sincere motives. The *Rambam* (*Hilchos Sanhedrin* 24:10) similarly specifies the requirement of pure intent with regard to a *dayan* who inflicts punishment in situations not clearly mandated by Torah law. Likewise, the *Gilyon Maharsha* (on *Shach*, *Yoreh De'ah* 246:8) rules that a new *minhag*, even if appropriate, may not be practiced if it was instituted by a *rasha*. We must assume it was established by the *rasha* with a motive that was *shelo lishmah*. [See *B'Ikvei HaTzon*, pp. 26-27.]

Given the above analysis, Rav Dovid Soloveitchik concluded that when Pinchas acted based on the principle of *קנאין פוגעין בו*, he was required to be a *kana'i l'sheim Shamayim*. If Pinchas' intentions were not completely pure, he would have had no right to kill Zimri, and his act would have been tantamount to *retzichah* (murder). This was the basis of the *shevatim*'s taunting of Pinchas. Since his grandfather was an idol-worshipper, they presumed that he must have had ulterior motives when he killed Zimri. To deflect this accusation, the Torah traces Pinchas' ancestry to his other grandfather, to indicate that he really was a *kana'i l'sheim Shamayim*. Whether Pinchas acted *l'sheim Shamayim* or not determined whether the act was proper or improper, and Pinchas' intent was related to which grandfather he patterned his actions after. Thus, Pinchas is identified as a grandson of Aharon HaKohen, known as *אוהב שלום ורודף שלום* – “loving peace and pursuing peace” (*Avos* 1:12), to teach us that Pinchas killed Zimri in keeping with the values of this grandfather. Since Pinchas acted completely *l'sheim Shamayim*, his act was permissible, and thus highly praiseworthy.

From: cshulman@gmail.com

Pinchas and the Covenant of Peace

Adapted from *Ruach Elyahu* by Rav Elya Svei zt”l

In parshas Pinchas, after Pinchas rose up for the honor of Hashem, the Torah records the reward given to him: *הנני נותן לו את בריתי שלום*. *I give him My covenant of peace*. He is also promised *ברית כהונת עולם* because he was *zealous for his Hashem and atoned for Bnei Yisrael*.

Why was this reward given specifically to Pinchas? Moshe Rabbeinu stood again and again in the breach for Klal Yisrael. After the Chet HaEgel he said *אשר כתבתיך אשר מספרך נא מחני אין מחני נא* *if You do not forgive their sin erase me from Your book that You have written*. Moshe saved Klal Yisrael many times. Yet the special promise of *ברית שלום* was not given to Moshe, but to Pinchas. What was unique about Pinchas's act?

Not Only Saving, But Removing the Anger

The Dubno Maggid, Rav Yaakov Kranz (1741–1804), explains that Moshe's tefillah after the Chet HaEgel saved Klal Yisrael from immediate destruction, but it did not erase the punishment entirely. Hashem said, *on the day that I make an accounting, I will bring this sin to account against them*. Chazal say, *אין לך כל פורענות ופורענות שבאה על ישראל שאין בה קצת מפרעון עוון העגל* *there is no punishment that does not contain some payment for the*

sin of the Eigel. Moshe held back the decree, but some trace of the claim remained.

Pinchas did something more. He did not merely delay the punishment. He removed the anger itself. Rashi explains *בקנאו את* *he expressed the anger that I had to express*. The anger that could have fallen from Shamayim upon Klal Yisrael was instead expressed through Pinchas's *kana'us* for kedusha. Once that anger had been expressed properly, it no longer had to descend upon the nation.

That is why the Torah says *ויכפר על בני ישראל* *he atoned for Bnei Yisrael*. Pinchas did not only save lives. He removed the claim against them. Therefore, he was worthy of *ברית שלום* and *ברית כהונת עולם*.

Revealing the Inner Kedusha of Klal Yisrael

The Sforno, Rav Ovadiah Sforno (c.1475–1550), adds another layer. Pinchas acted *בתוכם* in the midst of Klal Yisrael, before everyone's eyes. The Sforno explains that he did this *כדי שבראותם זה ולא לעיני כולם* *before everyone's eyes, so that when they saw this and did not protest, they would be atoned for*. Until then, their silence in the face of Zimri's sin could have been understood as acceptance. Pinchas revealed that this was not true. Deep down, Klal Yisrael did not agree with Zimri. Their inner self still belonged to kedusha. This is similar to what happened after the Chet HaEgel. Shevet Levi punished those who had served the Eigel. On the surface, it is difficult to understand how such an act became the source of their special *madreigah* (level). But the Meshech Chochmah, Rav Meir Simcha HaKohen of Dvinsk (1843–1926), explains that the Levi'im were far too few to overpower all of Klal Yisrael by force. If the nation had truly opposed them, they could have stopped them. The fact that no one stopped them showed that Klal Yisrael knew, deep inside, that the Levi'im were right.

So too with Pinchas. He killed a nasi of Shevet Shimon before the eyes of the nation, and no one stopped him. That showed that Zimri's act did not represent Klal Yisrael. Pinchas uncovered their true *madreigah*. He revealed that their heart was still with Hashem. This itself belongs to the role of *kehuna*. The kohen brings *kapparah* for Klal Yisrael, not only by dealing with sin, but by revealing that sin is not the deepest truth of Klal Yisrael. Therefore Pinchas, who revealed the inner kedusha of the people, was rewarded with *ברית כהונת עולם*.

Why the Reward Is Called Peace

But why is the reward called *שלום*? The Sforno explains that *בריתי שלום* means that Pinchas would be protected from opposition and destruction. Rav Elya connects this to the pasuk in Malachi, *בריתי* *My covenant was with him, life and peace*. Chazal also connect Pinchas with long life, and according to the view *Elyahu is Pinchas*, he remains alive.

This needs explanation. Why are *חיים* and *שלום* joined together? What does peace have to do with life?

The Alshich HaKadosh, Rav Moshe Alshich (1508–1593), explains that the *neshamah* comes from a very high place, *הצובה מתחת כסא* *carved from beneath the Throne of Glory*. It is placed into a physical body, but the body is material and coarse. The *neshamah* naturally longs to return to its source. In Rav Elya's formulation *בכל נשימה ונשימה משתוקקת להיפרד ממנו לחזור להדבק בשורשה* *with every breath, it longs to separate from him and return to cleave to its*

source. Death comes because there is no complete peace between the body and the neshamah.

When a person purifies his physical life, the body no longer contradicts the neshamah. The neshamah no longer needs to escape. There can be peace between them. That peace is life. This was the level of Adam HaRishon before the chet, and the level Klal Yisrael reached at Har Sinai, when פסקה זוהמתן, *their spiritual impurity ceased*.

This was the reward of Pinchas, מדה כנגד מדה. Since he brought peace between Klal Yisrael and their Father in Shamayim, and since he restored life to Klal Yisrael, Hashem gave him חיים ושלום life and peace. His body was purified to the point that it no longer challenged the neshamah.

So חיים ושלום was not only a promise of safety. It was a promise of inner wholeness, peace within the person himself, peace between the body and the neshamah.

The Avodah of Every Person

At this point the subject is no longer only Pinchas. Pinchas shows the highest form of שלום but the same struggle exists in every person. We see this in a letter in the introduction to *Da'as Chochmah U'Mussar*, written by Rav Nochum Zev Ziv (1857–1916) (son of the Alter of Kelm) to Rav Yerucham Levovitz of Mir (c.1875–1936).

A person is made from two opposite parts. The body is קצה הגסות *the extreme of coarseness and earthiness*, drawn toward the pleasures of this world. The nefesh is חלק אלוהי ממעל *a portion from Above*, and קצה הזכות *the extreme of purity*, which cannot be satisfied by physical pleasure. The avodah of a person is to make peace between these two parts.

The goal is not for the body to remain an enemy of the neshamah.

The goal is for the body itself to become a partner in avodas Hashem. This is what Dovid HaMelech said, נפשי לך צמאה לך בשרי *my soul thirsts for You, my flesh longs for You*. Not only the nefesh thirsted for Hashem. Even Dovid's body came to long for Him.

But this peace cannot be made by simply giving the body whatever it wants. Chazal say (Suka 52b), מרעיבו שבע משביעו רעב, *if one feeds one's eiver, it becomes hungry, but if one starves is he is satisfied*. The more a person runs after every desire, the emptier he becomes. The body imagines that another indulgence will satisfy it, but the neshamah knows that this is false.

At the same time, the body is not elevated by being crushed blindly. The neshamah must guide the body with wisdom, step by step, until the body learns that its own true happiness is to become connected to kedusha. The purpose is not to destroy the body. The purpose is to make it into a כלי for avodas Hashem.

This was the high madreigah of Pinchas, who is identified with Eliyahu. His body became so purified that it could rise together with the neshamah, בסערה השמימה, *in a storm to the heavens*. This is far beyond our level, but it points to the avodah of every person, to create some measure of הגוף והנשמה שלום בין.

Why Only Torah Can Make This Peace

The question then becomes practical. How does a person know when to allow the body something, and when to deny it? How does he know what will elevate the body, and what will only strengthen the yetzer? This cannot be left to instinct, because the body always claims that what it wants is harmless.

Rav Nochum Zev writes that this requires a very deep chochmah: חכמה הנמצאת בתורה שהיא קצה ותכלית כל החכמות

Torah, which is the ultimate end and purpose of all wisdom. Only Torah can teach a person how to make real peace between the body and the neshamah. Without Torah, a person may mistake indulgence for peace, or he may mistake harshness for kedusha. Torah gives the measure. It teaches what to bring close, what to push away, and how to train the body until it can serve Hashem together with the neshamah.

This is why the discussion of Pinchas naturally leads into the power of Torah. Pinchas received בריית שלום because he embodied peace at its highest level. Torah gives every person the path to build that peace in his own life.

Emes and Shalom

This also explains the Midrash about the creation of man. When Hashem wanted to create Adam, the malachim divided into groups.

חסד אומר יברא שהוא גומל חסדים *Chesed said, let him be created, because he will do acts of kindness*. אמר אל יברא שכולו שקרים, *Emes said, let him not be created, because he is full of falsehood* צדק אומר יברא שהוא עושה צדקות *Tzedek said, let him be created, because he will do acts of righteousness*. שלום אומר אל יברא שכולו קטטה. *Shalom said, let him not be created, because he is full of conflict*.

The claim of Emes was that the neshamah should not be sent into a body, because the body would pull it away from the truth of Hashem. The claim of Shalom was that man would be full of conflict, because the body and neshamah would be at war.

What did Hashem do? נטל אמת והשליכו לארץ, *He took Emes and cast it to the earth*. The malachim objected, מה אתה מבזה תכסים, *Master of the worlds, why are You disgracing Your royal seal?* Hashem answered, אמת מארץ תצמח, *truth will sprout from the earth*.

The mefarshim explain that Emes here refers to Torah. The malachim argued that Torah belongs in Shamayim, not on earth. Hashem answered that Torah must come down to earth, because only Torah can cause truth to grow from earthly life. Only Torah can teach man how to remain connected to emes while living in a body. The Midrash does not explicitly say how Hashem answered the claim of Shalom, that man should not be created because he is full of conflict. But the answer appears to be the same. Torah does not only make truth grow from the earth. Torah also makes שלום grow from the earth. It teaches the body and neshamah how to live together.

This brings us back to Pinchas. בריית שלום is not merely external peace, not merely safety from enemies and not merely long life. It is the inner harmony that allows life to endure. Pinchas made peace between Klal Yisrael and Hashem by revealing their hidden kedusha. In return, he was given חיים ושלום, a life in which the body no longer stood in contradiction to the neshamah.

That is the avodah that Torah opens for every person. Through Torah, even the earthy body can be joined to the higher neshamah, until both become תמימים לעבודתו יתברך, whole and complete in the service of Hashem.

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Pinchas and the Danger of Zelaotry

Adopted from

Nechama Leibowitz Iyunim B'Sefer Bamidbar.

The Trap of Bilam

Parshas Pinchas continues directly from the end of Parshas Balak. After Bilam failed to curse Klal Yisrael, he gave Balak a more dangerous weapon. If Israel could not be defeated from the outside, it could be weakened from within. Chazal describe Bilam's advice (Sanhedrin 106a): *The G-d of Israel hates immorality*. Bilam understood that znus (sexual immorality) could do what his curses could not.

The Gemara describes the trap in painful detail. Bilam advised Balak to set up stalls selling linen garments, with older women outside and younger women inside. The older woman would begin with ordinary commerce. The younger woman would then invite the Jewish man further in, speaking gently and making him feel at home. The sinning did not begin with open avodah zarah. It began with desire, a marketplace, clothing, conversation, and comfort. Then came wine. Once he drank, the yetzer hara was awakened. She would demand more from him, and when he agreed, she would bring out her idol and tell him to worship it. When he protested that he was a Jew, she answered that it did not matter. Finally, she would not leave him until he denied the Torah of Moshe.

This is the tragedy behind Baal Peor. The plan was not only to cause an aveirah, but to unravel the identity of Klal Yisrael step by step: desire to wine, wine to immorality, immorality to avodah zarah, and avodah zarah to denial of Torah itself. That is why the Navi says: *המה They came to Baal Peor and separated themselves to shame and became detestable like that which they loved* (Hoshea 9:10).

Why Pinchas Had to Act

Only against this background can we understand the opening of Parshas Pinchas. The Torah says: *פינחס בן אלעזר בן אהרן הכהן השיב את חמתו מעל בני ישראל בקנאו את קנאתי בתוכם ולא כליתי את בני ישראל בקנאתי Pinchas the son of Elazar the son of Aharon turned back My anger from Bnei Yisrael when he was zealous with My zeal among them and I did not destroy Bnei Yisrael in My zeal* (Bamidbar 25:11).

Pinchas was not responding to a private sin alone. He was standing at the point where the moral, religious, and national collapse of Israel had been engineered from the outside and was now spreading inside the camp. Zimri's public act was not only personal brazenness. It was the open eruption of Bilam's plan.

Still, this does not make Pinchas' response of kanaus (zealtry) the simple answer. Pinchas acted without the normal process of beis din, without the usual framework of edim, hasraah, inquiry, and judgment. Such an act as among the most dangerous thing from a moral social and educational standpoint. Zealotry can come from the highest place, but it can also come from anger, cruelty, pride, or private hatred dressed in holy language.

Therefore, the Torah itself must testify what moved Pinchas. The phrase *when he was zealous with My zeal* tells us that Pinchas was not acting from private anger. He was carrying Hashem's zealotry. But that is precisely what no human being can easily know about another person, and perhaps not even about himself.

Not at the Will of the Sages

The Yerushalmi says a startling thing about Pinchas: *שעשה פינחס שלא Pinchas acted not according to the will of the sages*. Chachamim were not ready to approve such an act merely because it appeared zealous. The Yerushalmi says: *The sages ביקשו חכמים לנדוהו The sages sought to place him in nidui*, until Ruach Hakodesh testified

otherwise and said: *והיתה לו ולזרעו אחריו ברית כהנת עולם תחת אשר קנא It shall be for him and for his descendants after him a covenant of eternal kehuna because he was zealous for his God and atoned for Bnei Yisrael* (Bamidbar 25:13).

This is not a weakness in Pinchas. It is a warning about zealotry. A person can believe he is defending Hashem when he is really defending himself. He can imagine that he acts l'shem Shamayim when he is driven by rage, pride, or resentment. Therefore, Chachamim could not simply accept the act from the outside. It needed Divine testimony.

The Torah Temimah explains that such an act is justified only when done *with a spirit of true zeal for the honor of Hashem*. But who can know whether the kanai is free of *some side motive*? Only Ruach Hakodesh could reveal that Pinchas was *truly a kanai for the sake of Heaven*.

This is why the Torah repeats the point. Pinchas acted *בקנאו את קנאתי with Hashem's zealotry*, and *because he was zealous for his God*. The Torah is praising Pinchas, but it is also protecting us from false zealotry. Without Divine testimony, no one can easily claim that his zeal is pure.

The Heart Must Be Clean

A similar idea appears in the Gemara's account of ברכת המינים. The berachah against the minim was composed by Shmuel HaKatan, the very same Shmuel HaKatan who would always say: *בנפל אויבך אל תשמח ובכשלו אל יגל לבך When your enemy falls do not rejoice and when he stumbles let your heart not be glad* (Mishlei 24:17).

Why was he chosen? Because a tefillah against evil must not come from personal hatred. Rav Kook explains that most berachos are filled with chesed and love, but a berachah directed against reshaim can easily be mixed with private anger. Only someone like Shmuel HaKatan, whose heart was purified from *natural hatred*, could formulate such a berachah.

This sheds light on Pinchas. If even a tefillah against evil must come from a heart cleansed of hatred, then an act of zealotry must be held to an even higher standard. The question is not only what was done. The question is what moved the person within.

Why a Covenant of Peace

Hashem's reward to Pinchas is surprising: *לכן אמר הנני נתן לו את בריתי I give him My covenant of peace* (Bamidbar 25:12). Why should the reward for an act of killing be *בריתי שלום*, a covenant of peace?

Abarbanel understands *בריתי שלום* as protection from those who might seek revenge against Pinchas. He had killed a prince of Israel and a princess of Midian, and many could have hated him for it. According to this reading, Hashem promised that Zimri's relatives and supporters would not harm him.

The Netziv reads it more inwardly. Hashem was not only protecting Pinchas from enemies outside him, but from the harshness that such an act could leave inside him. Even when killing is justified, it can leave a mark on the soul. The natural effect of taking life is to plant harshness in the heart.

The Netziv writes: *בשביל כי טבע המעשה שעשה פינחס להרוג נפש בידו היה Because the nature of the act that Pinchas did killing a person with his hand could have left a strong feeling in his heart afterward*. Therefore Hashem blessed him: *שיהא*

That he should always remain calm and in the middah of peace.

This is the depth of בריתי שלום. Hashem was not only rewarding Pinchas. He was preserving him. The fire that saved Klal Yisrael would not become a fire of cruelty inside him. The zealotry of that moment would not turn into a permanent middah of anger.

The Lesson of Pinchas

Pinchas teaches that there is such a thing as true zealotry. There are moments when silence is not righteousness, when the honor of Hashem and the survival of Klal Yisrael demand action. But the parsha also teaches how frightening zealotry is. It is not holy merely because it speaks in the language of holiness. It is not pure merely because it opposes sin.

That is why the Yerushalmi's phrase שלא ברצון חכמים is so important. Chachamim do not rush to approve zealotry. They know that hidden motives can hide inside it. Only Ruach Hakodesh could testify that Pinchas was ממש קנאי לשם שמים *a true kanai for the sake of Heaven.*

And that is why the reward is בריתי שלום. The Torah does not want a world of angry people who think they are defending Hashem. It wants servants of Hashem whose hearts remain whole, peaceful, and pure even when they must act with strength. Pinchas was not a man of violence looking for a holy excuse. He was a man of peace who, in that terrible moment, carried Hashem's zealotry. Therefore Hashem gave him the gift that could protect such a soul: הנני נתן לו את בריתי *Behold I give him My covenant of peace.*

Part 2 – Midian and the Restoration After Peor

Adopted from **Nechama Leibowitz Iyunim**

Why Midian

After the story of Pinchas, the Torah commands: צרור את המדינים *Harass the Midianites and strike them* (Bamidbar 25:17). The reason is stated immediately: כי צוררים הם לכם בנכליהם *For they harass you with their plots which they plotted against you in the matter of Peor and in the matter of Kozbi the daughter of a prince of Midian their sister* (25:18).

This command is difficult because the Torah is described as דרכיה *Its ways are ways of pleasantness and all its paths are peace* (Mishlei 3:17). How can that Torah command Israel to hate and fight a nation?

The answer begins with the kind of enemy Midian was. This is the second nation, after Amalek, that Israel is commanded to oppose on its way from Mitzrayim to Eretz Yisrael. Amalek attacked the weak from behind: ויגב בך כל הנחשלים אחריו *He cut off all the weak ones behind you* (Devarim 25:18). Midian attacked differently. Amalek endangered the body of Israel. Midian endangered the kedushah of Israel.

A nation that kills from the outside is dangerous. But a nation that corrupts from within threatens the very identity of Klal Yisrael.

על דבר פעור

The Torah explains Midian's sin through the phrase *על דבר פעור* *in the matter of Peor*. Rashi explains: על דבר פעור שהפקירו בנותיהם לזנות כדי *In the matter of Peor because they made their daughters available for immorality in order to lead you astray after Peor.*

This was not ordinary hostility. It was a planned attack on kedushah. Midian understood that Israel's strength depended on its purity. If Bnei Yisrael could be drawn into immorality and avodah zarah, they would fall from within.

Rashi also explains the word צרור as עליכם לאייב אותם *It is upon you to treat them as enemies*. This is not only a one-time military instruction. It is a command to recognize the danger of a force that tries to make Israel betray its own kedushah.

The Ramban adds that Kozbi's identity shows how organized the plot was. She was כזבי בת נשיא מדין *Kozbi the daughter of a prince of Midian*. This was not merely the act of private individuals. It involved the leadership of Midian. The זקני מדין, the elders of Midian, had been part of the counsel that led to Peor.

This also explains why the command is directed against Midian even though the Torah first says: ויחל העם לזנות אל בנות מואב *The people began to commit immorality with the daughters of Moav* (Bamidbar 25:1). Rav Samson Raphael Hirsch reads the wording carefully. The Torah does not say only that Midian harmed Israel in the past. It says: כי צוררים הם לכם *For they are harassing you*. The present tense shows that Midian remained an active enemy. Their hostility had not ended with the plague.

The Attack on the Family

The sin of Peor was not only a private failure. It threatened the home, the family, and the ability of Israel to live as a holy nation in Eretz Yisrael. The Torah had already warned in Parshas Acharei Mos that arayos corrupt the land itself: ולא תקיא הארץ אתכם בטמאכם אתה כאשר *Let the land not vomit you out when you defile it as it vomited out the nation before you* (Vayikra 18:28).

Midian's attack therefore struck at the very condition for entering the land. A people called to kedushah cannot build Eretz Yisrael while surrendering its kedushah.

Chazal describe Israel's special strength through family purity and yichus. When the nations asked why Israel was brought close more than they were, Hashem answered: הביאו לי ספרי יוחסין שלכם *Bring Me your records of lineage*. Israel could stand before Hashem *according to their families and their fathers' houses*.

But this is not automatic superiority. Yichus in Torah is a kedushah that must be guarded. It is בידו לשומרו ובידו לאבדו *in a person's hands to preserve it and in his hands to lose it*. That was Midian's goal, to make Israel lose the purity that had been guarded from generation to generation.

The Census After the Plague

The parsha itself shows the cure. Immediately after the command about Midian, the Torah says: ויהי אחרי המגפה ויאמר השם אל משה ואל אלעזר בן אהרן הכהן לאמר שאו את ראש כל עדת בני ישראל *It was after the plague and Hashem said to Moshe and to Elazar the son of Aharon HaKohen saying take a census of the entire assembly of Bnei Yisrael* (Bamidbar 26:1–2).

This census is not merely administrative. It comes אחרי המגפה *after the plague*, after the wound of Peor. The answer to Midian's attempt to corrupt Israel is to count the nation again by its families. Hashem lifts their heads again: שאו את ראש כל עדת בני ישראל *Take a census of the entire assembly of Bnei Yisrael*. The nation is restored not only in number, but in identity.

The Midrash sees this as Hashem's answer to the nations. The nations had once praised Israel's purity with the words: גן נעול אחותי *a locked garden my sister my bride* (Shir Hashirim 4:12). But

when Israel fell at Shittim, the nations rejoiced and said that Israel's crown had been taken from them. Therefore, immediately *אחרי המגפה*, after the plague, Hashem commanded a new census.

This was not only counting survivors. It was raising their heads again. It showed that the kedushah of Klal Yisrael could be wounded, but not permanently lost. The people could still stand *למשפחתם לביתם* according to their families and their fathers' houses.

The Lesson of Midian

Amalek and Midian represent two kinds of danger. Amalek attacks the body from behind. Midian attacks kedushah from within. Both must be opposed because both threaten the mission of Klal Yisrael. But the response to Midian teaches something especially deep. The danger of Peor is not only the sin of individuals. It is an attack on the home, the family, and the purity needed to live as Hashem's nation in Eretz Yisrael. That is why the Torah says *צָרֹר אֶת הַמִּדְיָנִים*, and that is why it immediately turns to the census.

The census is Hashem's answer to the nations that thought Israel had lost its crown. It says that even after a terrible fall, Klal Yisrael can be lifted again. Their kedushah can be wounded, but it can also be restored.

The question that remains is whether Israel will guard *אוֹתָהּ הַעֲטָרָה* *שהיתה בידם מדור לדור* that crown that was in their hands from generation to generation. Midian tried to make them lose it. The Torah shows how serious that danger is, but also how Hashem raises Israel after the fall and calls them again by name.

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subject: Rabbi Mordechai Willig - Rabbinic Leadership

Rabbi Mordechai Willig Rabbinic Leadership

I

"Hashem told Moshe to place his hand on Yehoshua" (Bamidbar 27:18), and yet Moshe placed both of his hands on Yehoshua (27:23). Rashi adds that he did so, "Generously - b'ayin yafa - much more than he was commanded. He placed both hands on Yehoshua and made him like a vessel that is full and overflowing with wisdom." The Kli Yakar (27:18) asks, how did Moshe violate bal tosif by doing more than he was commanded? Moreover, the final phrase (27:23) is b'yad Moshe, implying that he placed only one hand, and not two, on Yehoshua.

The Kli Yakar answers based on the two requests of Moshe to Hashem in appointing a new leader: "Who shall go out before them and come in before them, and who shall take them out and who shall bring them in" (27:17). Leadership in Torah and mitzvos is called taking out and bringing in. Moshe said (Devarim 31:2) "I can no longer come out and go in", in words of Torah (Rashi). For this, one requires two hands, to compel the people to observe Torah and mitzvos.

Going out and coming before them refers to "Hanhaga medinis letikun hamatzav", political leadership to improve the situation. For this, one must use only one hand, leading gently, without compulsion which could lead to rejection. The people will follow on their own. Moshe told Yehoshua (Devarim 31:7), "You shall come with this people". However, Hashem told Yehoshua (31:23), "You shall bring Bnai Yisrael". Moshe referred to political leadership, in accordance with their (the people's) opinion and advice, as Rashi explains[1]. But

Hashem describes Torah leadership, the exclusive domain of the Torah leaders.

Rashi (Shemos 6:13) explains that Hashem commanded ("vayetza'vim") Moshe and Aharon concerning Bnai Yisrael, "lehanhigam b'nachas", to lead them calmly. The context was political leadership dealing with Pharaoh. Similarly, "Command (tzav) Yehoshua" (Devarim 3:28) concerning the political entry into Eretz Yisrael requires additional alacrity ("tzav" lashon ziruz, Rashi, Vayikra 6:2), to lead in a way that the people will follow and not rebel.

"Take Yehoshua, a man in whom there is spirit (ruach)" (27:18) to deal with each individual appropriately ("k'neged rucho shel kol echad v'echad") (Rashi). "You will command - v'tzivihu", referring to Yehoshua (27:19). This requires one hand, i.e. calm political leadership. And so, the parsha concludes (27:23), "Vayetzavehu... b'yad Moshe", calm leadership signified by one hand.

"V'nasata meihodcha - place of your splendor upon him" (27:20) refers to the splendor of Torah. The term "nasata" means giving generously, b'ayin yafa (Bava Basra 53a), with two hands, to compel Torah observance powerfully. With help from the Urim (27:21), each halachic issue will be decided. Yehoshua will take them out and bring them in forcibly. This required two hands (27:23).

II

In today's world, no rav can compel observance in the personal lives of his congregants. However, a rav must be empowered to make halachic decisions for his shul singlehandedly. Moreover, he must be the one who decides what is a halachic issue.

My close friend, Rav Yaakov (Jay) Marcus zt"l, who preceded me in the active rabbinate, emphasized the last point. In my first interview in Riverdale, I made sure to mention it. Shortly after my election and arrival, the shul wanted to sponsor BINGO locally to add to its income. I said no. I was told, "Rabbi, this is a financial issue." I reminded them that as their rav I must decide if it is a halachic issue which is under my purview.

Not all shul rabbis are familiar with the rulings of the Shulchan Aruch and its classic commentaries on common halachic situations. Before responding to halachic queries, they should check the sources and consult with peers more experienced and/ or scholarly.

In my aforementioned interview I was asked if I knew how to "pasken a shaila", to rule on a halachic matter. Being young and inexperienced, I answered as follows. I may not know how to "pasken a shaila", but I know how to "look up a shaila", how to comb the sources in halachic works. I added a story that Rav Chaim Yaakov Goldvicht, founding Rosh Yeshiva of Kerem B'Yavne, told me.

There was a rabbi who, for every shaila brought to him, would consult a sefer before ruling. After a while he was asked, "Rabbi, you must have ruled on this issue before. Why do you look everything up in a book before answering?" He replied, "If I only look up that which I don't know, you will realize my ignorance and I will be embarrassed. I look up everything, so you will not know if I needed it." With this he interpreted Tehillim (119:6) "Then I will not be ashamed, when I gaze at all your commandments."

Halachic issues are not limited to explicit rulings of our predecessors. New issues are often called "matters of public policy". Sometimes, however, they involve halachic policy. This, too, is the domain of the shul rav, with appropriate consideration of the level and nature of his

congregants. In some cases, the rav should issue a non-binding response, in the hope that the congregants will follow. This is the "hanhaga medinis" of the Kli Yakar.

In purely financial or other non-halachic matters, a rav is well advised to allow the congregants to decide on their own. By rendering to Caesar unto Caesar, he increases the chance that they will render unto Hashem, and the rav, all halachic matters.

III

Must, or may, a congregant follow all of his rav's rulings in his personal life? When the institution of a town rav existed, his decisions were mandatory for all of its residents.

The Gemara (Shabbos 130a) relates that R' Eliezer encouraged melacha on Shabbos in preparation for a bris. His townspeople acted on this ruling, which for everyone else was chilul Shabbos. They were not punished by Hashem, rather they were rewarded. When the Romans prohibited bris mila in all of Eretz Yisrael, this town was spared.

The Ran (responsum 58) rules that one is obligated to follow the rulings of his rav, as R' Eliezer's townspeople did, even in a leniency against the majority opinion. The Rashba (1:253) extends this to a place that follows a rav's rulings in all matters, even if he is no longer alive, such as the Rif on the Rambam. The Rashba adds that, as the Ran rules, a learned individual (chacham harau' lehora'ah) may not be strict, so as not to diminish the honor of the rav. However, if the rav is no longer alive, he may find a proof to be strict, as this does not diminish the honor of the deceased gadol.

Rav Moshe Feinstein (introduction to Igros Moshe, Orach Chaim 1), based on this gemara, rules that a posek who is qualified in his generation, even if in previous times he would not be considered "higi'a lehora'ah", must pasken as he sees fit, after studying Shas and poskim with seriousness and yiras shamayim. His psak is the word of Hashem, even if in Shomayim he is actually wrong. As long as there is no contradiction to his words, we apply the principle of "Elu va'elu divrei Elokim chaim" (Eruvin 13b).

Nowadays, there is no longer a town rav that everyone in town must follow. However, if he is "higi'a lehora'ah", a pious and serious scholar, as described in Igros Moshe, one may follow all of his rulings, even minority lenient ones. Otherwise, when two poskim disagree, the Rashba (ibid.) rules that one must follow the greater posek. Today, when there are many opinions regarding many halachic disputes, this means the greatest posek accessible to him. If one has no access, he must be strict in Torah matters, and may be lenient in rabbinic ones. A similar ruling is found in Chazon Ish (Yoreh Deah 150:5).

If one follows his rav whom he views as a pious and serious scholar, he is rewarded even if in Shomayim it is wrong, as Igros Moshe wrote about the posek himself, based on Shabbos 130a. However, if one realizes that his rav neither qualifies as higi'a lehora'ah, nor consults with another rav who is, and yet adopts his leniencies which turn out to be wrong in Shomayim, he may be punished as the Rashba writes for one who relies on the lenient opinion in Torah matters. Rather, if he is unable to follow the Rashba's aforementioned rules, as he lacks access to a posek, and cannot determine if a matter is de'oraisa or derabanan, he should follow the prevailing custom of individuals who are scrupulous in keeping halacha. This is described in the Gemara (Berachos 45a) "pook chazi mai ama d'bar", go out and see how the people conduct themselves (Rashi).

The dual role of the rav, as explained by the Kli Yakar, has changed when he can no longer compel observance. Nonetheless, a rav does have authority, in both roles of the Kli Yakar, over shul halachic matters, including defining them.

For the overwhelming majority, rabbis and laymen alike, we conclude with the words of Pirkei Avos (1:6) "Aseh lecha rav". Artscroll translates "Accept a teacher upon yourself". If in your sincere estimation he is higi'a lehora'ah, one who relies on all of his rulings will be rewarded, even if his minority leniency is wrong in Shomayim.

Artscroll continues, i.e. "a competent mentor who can correctly transmit the tradition, and thereby avoid error. Be willing to submit to his direction, for without a mentor to respect, a person is directionless."

As we enter bein hametzarim, the three weeks leading to Tisha B'av, we are more mindful of the penultimate pasuk in the haftora of Shabbos Chazon, for whose fulfillment we pray thrice daily: "I will restore your judges as at first, and your advisors as at the beginning" (Yeshaya 1:26). The Chinuch (495) requires that we obey the advice of the gedolim in chochmas haTorah in each generation in all that they rule. If we fulfill these words and practice "Aseh lecha rav" sincerely, we can have greater hope for the fulfillment of our daily prayer that Hashem will restore the Sanhedrin, whose place is near the Beis Hamikdash (Rashi, Shemos 21:1), may it be built speedily in our days.

[1] Rashi refers specifically to the elders (zekainim) of the generation, presumably the Sanhedrin, the seventy ziknei Yisrael (Bamidbar 11:16). This yields an opposite interpretation in Devarim, and possibly in Bamidbar as well. See Leadership (TorahWeb, 2003).

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Parsha Parables By Rabbi Mordechai Kamenetzky

Behind the Name

Rabbi Mordechai Kamenetzky

Over the last few years, whether because of the proliferation, R"l, of illness, or simply the swelling membership of shuls, something has quietly changed about the mi shebeirach for cholim.

I am not criticizing it. I am just commenting.

In the traditional version, the gabbai begins the mi shebeirach and a small line forms. People shuffle toward him, leaning in close as he lowers his head to catch the name being whispered. Something important is being transferred from one person's worry to another person's tefillah. The person would say the name and the gabbai would repeat it, inserting it into the proper place. In many shuls today, that line no longer forms. Instead, the gabbai reads the words aloud, and when he reaches "es hacholeh," he simply stops. At that moment, everyone with a name on their list mumbles it quietly, privately, into the pause. It's like a "fill in the blank" on a puzzle. A few seconds later, the gabbai continues, "Ba'avur she..." and in unison, the room answers amen.

Where I daven, at the Yeshiva Gedolah of the Five Towns, they still do it the old-fashioned way. It takes longer. People approach the gabbaim with lists, sometimes five or more names deep, and there are four or more mi shebeirach zuggers working in parallel to move

through what can be scores of names without finishing the davening at the same time as the local shteibel that started an hour later. It also lends itself to lessons. One of the most striking comes when a fellow approaches the gabbai with no paper in hand. No list. No folded note. He simply begins, from memory, rattling off six or seven names in rapid succession. And these are not the Dinah bas Leah variety of names, the placeholders people use when they can't remember. These are full names. Chaya Devorah Malka bas Aliza Shaindel Sarah. Chaim Alter Yehoshua ben Miriam Fraidel Devorah. He goes on for a good forty-five seconds, name after name, none of them seemingly related to him or to each other, delivered without hesitation, without notes, as if these people's tzaros are embedded in his memory as permanently as the names of his own children. The last time I encountered that kind of memory born entirely from caring was at my uncle Rav Shmuel Kamenetsky's table, where the l'chaim before a meal was never just a l'chaim. He and his rebbeztin, zichronah livrocha, would precede it with a litany, "L'chaim, refuah sheleimah to..." and then the names would come, one after another, refuos, shidduchim, the whole spectrum of what Yidden carry and bring to the gedolim who carry it with them. Always. Without being asked. Without a list. Recently, I was standing near the bimah, waiting to submit my own names, when I overheard someone submitting theirs. The name was familiar, though it was a different person entirely, someone who shared the name of a relative of mine. I began to think about it. About the hundreds of names out there that are not really names, but people. People like my own relative, who are seeking a refuah, a yeshuah, or whatever form of salvation fits their particular need. It got me thinking about a few things. Three, to be precise. The first was a story with the Bluzhever Rebbe. A fellow in the Bluzhever Shteibel had yahrtzeit, walked up to the amud, set the large siddur aside, and reached for his own smaller one. The Bluzhever Rebbe stopped him. "You see that siddur on the shtender. Open it. Inside there is a name. Someone dedicated that siddur in the zechus of the person whose name is inside it. Everyone who davens from that siddur is giving that person's neshomah an aliyah. Use that siddur." That story has resonated with me for a very long time. So much so that I make a point of looking at the dedication page of every sefer I use. I always wonder, for instance, who Yitzchok Yair, whose name appears on the standard Nusach Ashkenaz ArtScroll siddur used in botei knesses the world over, was. What zechus did he have to be associated with tefillah so ubiquitously in this modern era? What zechus does he continue to accumulate from the countless tefillos emanating from a siddur that bears his name? We forget, far too easily, that behind every name, there is a neshomah. A real person. In many day schools, and even in some public schools, there is a program called Names, Not Numbers. For the broader world, it aims to combat antisemitism by connecting students with Holocaust survivors and veterans. For Jewish children, it tries to make the point that behind the number tattooed on an arm, there was a person, a story, a life. But truth be told, it goes deeper than names. There was a neshomah behind the name. A person who endured nisyonos, mesirus nefesh, loss, and pain. It is not even about names. It is about neshamos.

I once spoke for mechanchim after Shacharis in a hotel that had its own shul. The aron kodesh had a paroches with an inscription in English. It was quite explicit: The aron had been dedicated in memory of a young man—I will call him Jack Bergerman—who had been killed in a car accident.

Everyone in that room had walked past that aron kodesh. Everyone had seen the inscription. When I began my remarks, I asked: "Has anyone here ever heard of Jack Bergerman? Does anyone know how he died?"

They looked at me as if I had lost my mind. Of course, I went on to explain. But the silence in that room said everything. We had all been davening in front of an aron kodesh given in this young man's memory, and not one of us had paused long enough to wonder who he was.

There are millions of names out there. On plaques and dedications, on the inside covers of siddurim, on parochos in hotel shuls, mumbled into the pause of a mi shebeirach on Shabbos morning. Each one has a neshomah and a story behind it. We cannot adopt them all. But maybe the next time you hear or see a name, a random name, the name of a stranger, you can pause for a moment. Hold it. Wonder about it. Carry it a little further than the parking lot. You may not get a public acknowledgment for caring about a neshomah you never knew. But somewhere, a siddur is sitting on a shtender, quietly waiting for someone to open the cover. Open it and think about the one whose name is the reason that the siddur is in the shul.

Just Saying.

from: YUTorah <yutorah@comms.yu.edu>

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Seeing Beyond Ourselves

By Rabbi Moshe Taragin

July 2, 2026

Seeing beyond ourselves. Moshe had already been told that he would not lead the people into the Land of Israel. Yet perhaps there was still hope that the decree might be rescinded. Moshe had successfully overturned previous heavenly decrees. Perhaps, with enough prayer and enough faith, even this decree could be rescinded.

Moshe conducts a final census, counting the people whom he had guided so carefully and lovingly through the harsh desert for 40 years. Despite the divine decree, he continues to lead the nation. Despite the loss of his brother and sister, he remains at the helm. The Torah then turns to the laws of inheritance. This may be the final sign that Moshe's fate has been sealed. As the Torah outlines how children inherit the legacy of their ancestors, Moshe realizes that he, too, must prepare to pass his own legacy to the next generation. In a heroic moment of selflessness, his first thoughts turn to the question of who will lead the people after him. He does not dwell on his own disappointment or plead once more for his own future. Instead, he asks Hashem to appoint a worthy successor. To ensure a smooth transition and avoid any crisis of leadership, he wants that successor appointed during his own lifetime.

In asking Hashem to appoint a successor, Moshe uses an intriguing description of Hashem. He addresses Him as "Elokei haruchot," the God who knows every spirit. In doing so, he hints at what he

considers the primary qualification for the leader who will guide the people into the Land of Israel.

Moshe seeks someone who understands the differences in the human spirit and the diversity of human experience. He wants a leader who appreciates those differences and cultivates them rather than trying to homogenize people and their lives. He realizes that Hashem alone fully understands the uniqueness of every individual. Hashem created us with different temperaments, different strengths and weaknesses, different perspectives and different missions.

No human being can see people as Hashem does. Yet Moshe sought someone who could come as close as possible.

The Limits of Conviction

Moshe knew that our deepest convictions often narrow our perspective. Our passions convince us that our way is the only way. We become emotionally attached to our own viewpoints and find it difficult to step outside ourselves and see the world through someone else's eyes. Over time, we become so committed to our own ideas that we struggle to recognize truth beyond them.

Moshe was different. In part, this grew from his prophetic vision, which lifted him beyond the narrowness of ordinary human perspective. In part, it stemmed from his unique life experience. He was raised in an Egyptian palace, married a Midianite woman, and spent decades away from Egypt before returning to liberate us. Above all, Moshe loved the Jewish people so deeply that he could look beyond their flaws and appreciate the richness of different personalities and different paths in serving Hashem.

Moshe realized that his successor would need to embody these same qualities, especially as we prepared to settle the Land of Israel and live as separate tribes. In the desert, tribal identity had been less pronounced. Although each tribe camped in its own section, everyone shared the same desert and the same experience. Life in Israel would be different. As the people spread across the land, regional and cultural differences would become more pronounced. Their leader would need to appreciate those differences rather than force conformity.

Moshe did not seek an influencer. He was not looking for a larger-than-life personality or a charismatic leader who could overwhelm people and persuade them to follow a single path. Nor was he searching for the sharpest intellect. He wanted someone who respected other people and appreciated the complexity of human experience.

A Lesson From My Rebbe

I encountered this same outlook in my rebbe, Rav Aharon Lichtenstein.

In 1978, Shimon Peres, then leader of the opposition and chairman of the Israeli Labor Party, visited my yeshiva. He asked my rebbe, Rabbi Aharon Lichtenstein, what the political credo of our yeshiva was. I was proud of Rav Lichtenstein's response. Politics had never been part of the educational agenda of our yeshiva. Our goal was to shape human souls and deepen religious commitment. Political convictions were left to each individual student.

Rav Lichtenstein replied that he hoped to instill three values in his students: a sense of responsibility for the broader community even while immersed in Torah study, the discipline to think deeply rather than simplistically about public issues, and the ability to respect those who hold different views even when convinced that your own position is correct.

He taught us to respect differing opinions without surrendering our own convictions.

Our Moment of Division

We are living through a period of deep division. We have formed staunch ideological camps and have become passionately committed to our own way of life. In Israel, we are enduring a painful period of social discord that has at times erupted into near violence. Have we lost the ability to understand those who see the world differently and appreciate their values even when we disagree with them? Have we become too narrow in our outlook? Do we possess enough humility and enough breadth of vision to see beyond our own assumptions? Where we live also shapes how we see one another. For good reason, Orthodox Jews tend to cluster in homogeneous communities. This is a healthy and effective way to cultivate shared values that are reinforced by communal norms and expectations. I live in a fully Orthodox yishuv, where Shabbat is built into the fabric of the community because the gates are closed.

Yet by closing those gates, I also limit my exposure to other types of Jews whose lives and experiences I need to better understand. This demographic isolation has become characteristic of many Orthodox communities, both in Israel and, to a large extent, abroad. While it strengthens communal identity, it also makes it more difficult to appreciate the depth and complexity of Jewish lives beyond our own circles.

In Israel, one important point of common ground remains the army, where people from very different segments of Israeli society serve together and learn to better understand one another despite their differences. By its very nature, military service is a leveling experience. Social distinctions fade, and people earn one another's respect through shared experience. That shared experience allows people from very different walks of life to develop genuine respect for one another.

Because most Charedim do not currently serve in the army, this interaction is largely absent. It becomes more difficult for each side to understand the experiences and assumptions of the other. As tensions continue to mount, it is increasingly apparent that the different sides in this debate are operating from very different narratives, and neither fully understands how the other sees the issue. A society cannot remain united if its different communities rarely encounter one another.

This is why Moshe addressed Hashem as Elokei haruchot. He knew that no leader could understand every person as Hashem does. But he hoped for a leader who would strive to see beyond his own perspective.

The first step toward healing our divisions is to broaden our own perspective rather than trying to change someone else's. That is a better path to leadership than simply speaking louder than everyone else.

The writer is a rabbi and educator at Yeshivat Har Etzion (Gush) in Israel. His latest book, *Reclaiming Redemption, Vol. II: Faith, Identity, Peoplehood, and the Storms of War*, is available at www.mtaraginbooks.com.

<https://jewishlink.news/women-and-kiddush-levana/>

Women and Kiddush Levana

By Rabbi Haim Jachter | July 2, 2026

A Surprising Custom

There is every reason for women to recite Kiddush Levana. Yet, the prevailing custom among Ashkenazic (Mishna Berura 426:1 and Aruch Hashulchan Orach Chayim 426:14) and Sephardic women (Kaf Hachayim 426:1 and Yalkut Yosef, Orach Chayim 426:8) is not to recite it.

Reasons for Women to Say Kiddush Levana

The Gemara (Sanhedrin 42a) implies¹ that women recite Kiddush Levana. Moreover, the Magen Avraham's assertion (426:1) that Kiddush Levana is a mitzvah asheh shehazman gerama, a time-bound positive mitzvah regarding which women are peturot (excused), is very questionable.

Rav Shlomo Kluger (Chochmat Shlomo, Orach Chayim 426:1) notes that a mitzvah asheh shehazman gerama is a mitzvah that can physically be performed at any time, but the obligation applies only at certain times. Shofar and matzah are excellent examples. However, mitzvot that cannot be performed at certain times due to the absence of certain physical conditions are not defined as time-bound positive mitzvot.

For example, although one can recite a Shehechyanu on a new fruit only when its season begins, women are not excused from this bracha because it is a mitzvah asheh shehazman gerama. Similarly, Kiddush Levana can be performed only when the new moon arises (either three or seven days after the molad) until the moon begins to wane. It is not therefore defined as a positive time-bound mitzvah.

Rav Yosef Dov Soloveitchik (cited in Rav Hershel Schachter's Mipenei HaRav 81-822) adds that similarly, Birkat Hamazon is not regarded as a mitzvah asheh shehazman gerama, even though it can be performed only within 72 minutes after finishing the meal (or before becoming hungry). While Rashi (s.v. Oh Drabanan) and Tosafot (s.v. Nashim) to brachot 20b offer reasons why women might be excused from Birkat Hamazon on a Torah level, they do not say it is a mitzvah asheh shehazman gerama. Moreover, Rashi (s.v. Nashim) explicitly states that Birkat Hamazon is not a mitzvah asheh shehazman gerama³. In addition, even if Kiddush Levana is a mitzvah asheh shehazman gerama, Ashkenazic women may nonetheless recite a bracha, and even Sephardic women might be able to recite a bracha. Some background is necessary to understand this issue.

All the Rishonim agree that women are exempt from performing most mitzvot asheh shehazman gerama. They dispute however whether a woman may recite a bracha if she voluntarily performs such a mitzvah.

Rabbeinu Tam (cited by Tosafot, Rosh Hashana 33a, s.v. ha; Kiddushin 31a, s.v. d'lo) and the Rosh (Rosh Hashana 4:7) argue that women may recite a bracha if they choose to perform these mitzvot. In contrast, the Rambam (Hilchot Tzitzit 3:10 and Hilchot Sukkah V'Lulav 6:13) rules that they may not.

The Rambam rules that women cannot recite a bracha on time-bound mitzvot because they cannot say, "v'tzivanu—and commanded us," as they are exempt from these mitzvot. Rabbeinu Tam, on the other hand, maintains that since "v'tzivanu" is in the plural, it refers to the Jewish people as a whole. Thus, a woman can thank Hashem for commanding us to perform mitzvot asheh shehazman gerama, since she is referring to the Jewish people as a community rather than to herself.

The Shulchan Aruch (Orach Chayim 589:6) follows the Rambam, while the Rama (ibid.) goes with Tosafot and the Rosh. Almost all Ashkenazic authorities follow the Rama, and Ashkenazic women

thus recite brachot on time-bound mitzvot. Thus, Ashkenazic women would seem to be eligible to recite Kiddush Levana just as they commonly recite Birkat HaChamah (see Teshuvot Yabia Omer 5: Orach Chayim 36:2).

Even Sephardic women might be able to say it based on the following discussion. Rav Ovadia Yosef (Teshuvot Yabia Omer 2: Orach Chayim 6:10) takes the Shulchan Aruch's ruling and argues that Sephardic women may not recite the berachot of Pesukei D'Zimra and Kriat Shema. Since women are not obligated in these mitzvot, Rav Ovadia concludes that women should not recite their brachot.

However, Rav Shalom Messas (Teshuvot Shemesh U'Magen 3:Orach Chayim 63:5), Rav Mordechai Eliyahu (in his Siddur Kol Eliyahu), and Rav Ben Tzion Abba Shaul (Teshuvot Ohr L'Tzion 2:5:3 and 2:6:10) disagree. They argue that the Rambam and the Shulchan Aruch's ruling applies only to birkot hamitzvah, in which the word "v'tzivanu" is used. It is only improper for women to recite such brachot, since they cannot describe themselves as being commanded. There is no reason however for women to omit the brachot on mitzvot such as Kriat Shema, in which the word "v'tzivanu" does not appear.

Thus, according to many, if not most, Sephardic poskim, women should be permitted to say Kiddush Levana, since its bracha does not include the word "v'tzivanu."

Why Women Do Not Say Kiddush Levana

Despite the many compelling reasons for women to recite Kiddush Levana, the custom persists that they do not, as Rav Mordechai Willig confirms. Part of the reason is that the most popular time for its recital is after Maariv in the beit kneset, which most women do not join.

Rav Ovadia Yosef (Teshuvot Yechave Da'at 4:18) offers a reason based on the Magen Avraham (end of 296). The Rama (Orach Chayim 296:7) writes that women should hear Havdala from a man, since it is questionable whether they are obligated in Havdala. The Magen Avraham wonders why the Rama does not permit women to recite it even if they are "peturot," since he follows Rabbeinu Tam, who holds that women may recite brachot on mitzvot from which they are excused.

The Magen Avraham answers that Rabbeinu Tam's and the Rama's ruling does not apply to mitzvot such as Havdala where the bracha is the mitzvah. The same applies to Kiddush Levana.

The primary reason, though, why women do not recite Kiddush Levana stems from the Shelah HaKadosh, cited by the Magen Avraham (426:1). The Shelah writes that women should not recite Kiddush Levana because they caused the moon to shrink. The Mishna Berura and the Yalkut Yosef cite the Shelah.

Explaining the Shelah: The Moon's Defect

Undoubtedly, there are deep Kabbalistic meanings behind the Shelah. We suggest a rational explanation for it.

The Kiddush Levana text includes a plea to correct the moon's defect, based on Chullin 60a. This Gemara states that Hashem originally made the sun and the moon equal in size. The moon complained that "two kings cannot use one crown." In other words, the moon asked Hashem to make the sun smaller. Instead, Hashem solved the "problem" by making the moon smaller.

The Seforno (Bamidbar 28:15) notes that Am Yisrael is compared to the moon, as conveyed in Kiddush Levana. Hashem's diminishing

the moon refers to Hashem reducing His overt presence amongst us, leading to our ongoing persecution. Presumably, the Seforno refers to our sinning leading to Hashem's dimming His presence.

Chava's convincing Adam HaRishon to partake of the eitz hadaat's forbidden fruit was the first instance of influencing another to sin.

Women's customary refraining from saying Kiddush Levana reminds us of this mistake, which diminished Hashem's this-worldly presence, expressed poetically as a reduction in the moon's size.

Indeed, the Aruch HaShulchan (Orach Chayim 426:1) notes that Kabbalah links the moon's diminishment to Adam and Chava's sin.

Conclusion: Why Women Do Not Say Kiddush Levana

A woman's outsized role in shaping her family's character is a compelling reason to remind them of Chava's sin. Refraining from Kiddush Levana summons women to influence their families for the good, thereby increasing Hashem's this-worldly presence or, in more poetic terms, correcting the moon's defect.

The Aruch HaShulchan (ibid.) notes that the Kabbalah also teaches that the correction of Chava's sin will herald our future redemption, and the moon's diminution then will also be corrected. Indeed, Yeshayahu (30:26; a pasuk that is cited in both the Sephardic and Ashkenazic Kiddush Levana liturgy) promises that in Messianic times, "V'haya ohr halevana k'or hachama—The moon's light will be as powerful as the sun's light."

Women's encouragement through the trying years of subjugation in Mitzrayim facilitated our redemption from Mitzrayim. As the Gemara (Sotah 11b) teaches, it is in the merit of the women that we merited the redemption of Egypt. Women's omission of Kiddush Levana reminds us that it is in the women's merit that will achieve our future redemption!

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1 See, however, the Magen Avraham (426:1) and Maharsha's (Sanhedrin 42a s.v. Neshei) interpretation of the Gemara's reference to women.

2 Significantly, Rav Hershel Schachter instructs women to recite Kiddush Levana. After recording the custom for women not to say Kiddush Levana, the Aruch HaShulchan concludes his discussion of this topic by noting that the Gemara clearly indicates that women said Kiddush Levana. His conclusion implies his preference for women to say Kiddush Levana. Interestingly, the Chayei Adam and Kitzur Shulchan Aruch do not mention a custom for women to not say Kiddush Levana. Even more interesting is the Kaf HaChayim (426:1) saying that it is preferable for women to hear a man say Kiddush Levana for them. This is not typically followed, for men usually say Kiddush Levana together with a large group of men, making it impractical for them to say it for women.

3 The Turei Even (Megillah 20b) notes that, for the same reason, bikkurim is not a mitzvah aseh shehazeman gerama.

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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.

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 protegee" or "Moshe's apprentice." Yehoshua 'serves' Moshe as an intern, so to speak; a young man selected by Moshe for future greatness, he accompanies Moshe where others cannot, learning by watching and doing.

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

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

YEHOSHUA IN THE DARK:

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

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

YEHOSHUA IN SECLUSION:

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

In this context, we hear that once again, Yehoshua is not with the people: "And his 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

Pinchas: The Sequence of Bamidbar 26-30

by Rabbi Yitz Etshalom

I. INTRODUCTION: PARASHAT T'MIDIN UMUSAFIN

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

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

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

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

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

- 1) Death of Miriam/Mei M'rivah (20:1-13)
- 2) Edom (20:14-21)
- 3) Death of Aharon (20:22-29)
- 4) War with K'na'ani (21:1-3)
- 5) Travels (complaints, plague, song of the well) (21:4-20)
- 6) Sichon/Og (21:21-22:1)
- 7) Balak/Bil'am (22:2-24:25)
- 8) P'or/Pinchas (25:1-15)
- 9) Command to Harass the Midianites (25:16-18)

- 10) Census (26:1-51)
- 11) Division of the Land (26:52-56)
- 12) Levite Census (26:57-65)
- 13) Daughters of Tz'lafchad (27:1-11)
- 14) Imminence of Death of Mosheh (27:12-14)
- 15) Mosheh's request re: continued leadership (27:15-23)
- 16) T'midin uMusafin (28:1-30:1)
- 17) Nedarim (vows) (30:2-17)
- 18) War with Midian (31)
- 19) Apportionment of East Bank to Gad and Reuven (32)

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

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

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

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

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

II. STRUCTURE OF THE INTERVENING SECTIONS

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

(War against Midian)

Census of the army (12 Parashot)

Command to Divide the Land (1 Parashah)

Census of the Levi'im (1 Parashah)

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

Command regarding impending death of Mosheh (1 Parashah)

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

T'midin uMusafin (15 Parashot)

Nedarim (1 Parashah)

(War against Midian)

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

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

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

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

12. And Hashem said to Mosheh, Get up into this Mount Abarim, and see the land which I have given to the people of Israel.

13. And when you have seen it, you also shall be gathered to your people, as Aharon your brother was gathered.

14. For you rebelled against my commandment in the desert of Zin, in the strife of the congregation, to sanctify me at the water before their eyes; that is the water of Meribah in Kadesh in the wilderness of Zin.

15. And Mosheh spoke to Hashem, saying,

16. Let Hashem, the God of the spirits of all flesh, set a man over the congregation,

17. Who may go out before them, and who may go in before them, and who may lead them out, and who may bring them in; that the congregation of Hashem be not as sheep which have no shepherd.

18. And Hashem said to Mosheh, Take Yehoshua the son of Nun, a man in whom is spirit, and lay your hand upon him;

19. And set him before Eleazar the priest, and before the entire congregation; and give him a charge in their sight.

20. And you shall put some of your honor upon him, that the entire congregation of the people of Israel may be obedient.

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

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

23. And he laid his hands upon him, and gave him a charge, as Hashem commanded by the hand of Mosheh.

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

III. “AS AHARON YOUR BROTHER WAS GATHERED”

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

successor inaugurated before his death.

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

Compare:

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

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

with

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

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

IV. THE NEW LEADERSHIP

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

V. THE CENSUS AND THE DIVISION OF THE LAND

The analysis suggested above brings us back to our original question regarding the odd placement of the Parashot of

T'midin uMusafin.

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

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

Tribe 2nd Year 40th Year

Reuven 46,500 43,730

Shim'on 59,300 22,200

Gad 45,650 40,500

Yehudah 74,600 76,500

Yissachar 54,400 64,300

Zevulun 57,400 60,500

Ephraim 40,500 32,500

Menasheh 32,200 52,700

Binyamin 35,400 45,600

Dan 62,700 64,400

Asher 41,500 53,400

Naphtali 53,400 45,400

Total: 603,500 601,730

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

When the young women approach Mosheh with their petition, they use the phrase: Lamah Yigara' – why should (our

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

VI. T'MIDIN UMUSAFIN

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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