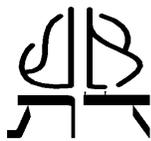


Toras



Aish

Thoughts From Across the Torah Spectrum

RABBI DOV KRAMER

Taking a Closer Look

“**A**nd Moshe spoke to G-d, saying: Hashem, who is the G-d of the spirits of all flesh, should appoint a man to be in charge of the congregation. [A leader] that will go out in front of them and come back in front of them, and who will bring them out and take them in; and G-d's congregation should not be like sheep that have no shepherd for them.” (Bamidbar 27:15-17) After all the years of being commanded by G-d, here Moshe seems to be commanding G-d what to do! Not only does he demand that G-d choose a new leader to replace him, but he tells G-d what the qualifications for the job are! I would think that G-d knows pretty well what it takes to lead the nation; how does Moshe have the audacity to tell G-d what to do, and how to do it?

What makes this question even stronger is that Moshe also demands that G-d give him an answer! Rashi explains that the seemingly superfluous word "saying" in verse 15 means that Moshe "said to him 'answer me whether or not You will appoint a new leader.'" How, and why, does Moshe insist that G-d tell him what his answer will be? There are a couple of other aspects of Moshe's demand/request that are difficult as well.

Rashi (27:16) explains why Moshe's request came at this point in time: "Since Moshe heard that G-d had said to give the inheritance of Tzela'fchad to his daughters, he (Moshe) said, 'the time has come for me to ask for my needs, that my sons should inherit my position of leadership.' G-d said to him, 'this is not my thought process; Yehoshua is worthy of taking the reward for his working for you, that he never moved from the tent.'" Rashi seems to be saying that this request is really that Moshe's sons should take over after his death, to which G-d says that his request is being denied, as Yehoshua will become the new leader. However, Rashi had just finished telling us (27:15) that this request shows us how praiseworthy the righteous are, "for even when they are about to leave this world they put aside their own needs and are busy with the needs of the community," i.e. making sure that there is a qualified leader to take his place. Which one is it- is his request on behalf of the nation, or is it on behalf of his children? How can it be both?

Additionally, the Rambam (Laws of Kings, 1:7), after telling us that when a king dies his son becomes the new king, adds: "And not only the monarchy, but all leadership positions and appointees that are in (the nation of) Israel are to be inherited by his son and his son's son, forever. This is provided that he can fill his fathers' position in wisdom and fear (of G-d). If he can fill [his position] in regards to fear (of G-d), even if he does not match his wisdom he takes over his father's position and he is taught (wisdom). And whoever does not have fear of heaven, even if his wisdom is greater (than his father's) he should not be appointed to any position in Israel." If we can safely assume that Moshe's sons feared G-d, it would seem that Moshe didn't have to ask that his sons take over, as it would have happened regardless. Why does Moshe feel the need to ask for something (and in such a demanding tone) that he should be getting anyway?

Although Rashi's words describing Moshe's request most closely resemble those in the Midrash Tanchuma (11), we find a similar description in the Midrash Rabbah (21:15), with a preceding comment that indicates that Moshe's forceful request was on behalf of the community (rather than a personal request): "Whoever asks for the community it is as if he comes with force. What did (Moshe) see that he asked for this thing after the order of inheritances (were taught)? Since the daughters of Tzela'fchad inherited their father, Moshe said 'the time has come to ask for my own needs; if the daughters inherit, it is appropriate (literally: it is the law) that my sons should inherit my honor,'" to which G-d responds that Yehoshua deserves it. The difference is subtle, but may speak volumes. First of all, it is clear that somehow this request is not of a personal nature, despite seeming that it is (how it isn't is still to be determined). Secondly, Moshe is not asking a favor that his undeserving sons become the leaders, but stating that they are appropriate, or literally, that by law they should become the leaders.

Let's look at the way other midrashim understand Moshe's request. The Sifri (139) says that the "man" ("ish") Moshe was referring to ("G-d should appoint a man to lead the nation") was Yehoshua, and brings a verse where Yehoshua is referred to as "man" ("ish"). It is certainly possible that the Sifri is arguing with the Tanchuma and the Midrash Rabbah, but Rashi quotes the Sifri (138) when saying that this shows that the righteous put the community's needs before their

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own. Besides, the Midrash Rabbah itself indicates that this was not a personal request.

Other midrashim paint a similar picture. Avos d'Rabbi Nasan (17:3), talking about how Torah is not an inheritance automatically passed down to the next generation, says that "When Moshe saw that his sons did not have in them [the level of] Torah necessary to take over the leadership after him, he wrapped himself (in his Tallis) and stood in prayer. He said before Him 'Master Of The Universe, inform me as to who will bring [the nation] in [to the Land of Israel], who will go out in front of this nation.'" In other words, Moshe knew that it would be better if his sons would not become the leaders, so was asking for guidance as to whom it should be. The Sifsay Chachamim (27:16:80) understands Rashi in a similar way: "His question was whether he needs to appoint a leader or if his sons will inherit the position."

Putting these sources together, we may have an approach that can answer all of our questions. Moshe knew that Yehoshua was the best choice to become the next leader. He also knew that, by law, his sons would automatically become the leaders (or at least one of them would), and that without a divine decree to not follow this law, he could not go against it. After seeing Tzela'fchad's daughter's get their father's inheritance, Moshe remembered that he must deal with his personal issue too- his sons. They would not get an inheritance in the land (as they were Levi'im), but would be in line for the leadership. Putting his own needs (his sons) aside for the good of the community, he asks G-d to appoint Yehoshua rather than allowing his sons to become the leaders. The list of qualifications is not meant to give G-d direction as to whom to choose, but is part of Moshe's explanation as to why he doesn't want G-d to follow the normal line of inheritance, but give the leadership to Yehoshua instead- as he fits the bill. Moshe's request for an answer is now warranted, as

his question is not whether or not G-d will appoint a leader, but whether there will be a change in the status quo- with Yehoshua being groomed as the next leader instead of (one of) his sons. (When the midrash says that anyone asking on behalf of the community is coming as if by force, it is referring to the wording of the introduction of Moshe's request- vayidaber- not to the wording of the request itself.)

Although the simple reading of Rashi's words might indicate that Moshe was requesting that his sons become the leaders, a closer look may bring up the possibility that the request was just the opposite- that his sons **not** become the leaders.

May we all be blessed with the most appropriate leadership, enabling us to become closer to G-d and His Torah. © 2004 Rabbi D. Kramer

RABBI AVI WEISS

Shabbat Forshpeis

After Pinhas killed the Jewish man and Midianite woman who were committing immoral acts, God applauds Pinhas, granting him a "covenant of peace (brit shalom)." (Numbers 25:12) Can we deduce from God's approval, that zealotry is desirable?

Netziv (R. Naftali Zvi Yehudah Berlin, 19th C.) sees the brit shalom as a counter measure to zealotry. He notes "that the nature of his (Pinhas) act, killing with his own hand, tends to leave a harsh feeling in the heart. He who acted for the sake of heaven, was [therefore] granted a blessing to remain gentle and peaceful." Here, Netziv points out the need of an antidote for zealotry.

Perhaps his idea can be taken a step further. Rather than viewing the Pinhas story as an approval of other acts of zealotry, it may teach the opposite. Zealotry is limited to the case of Pinhas, who received the brit shalom from God. In other cases, where God does not offer His explicit imprimatur, zealotry is prohibited.

Note that the ancestor of Pinhas disapproved of zealotry. Pinhas is a descendant of Levi who participated in the decimation of the city of Shekhem. His father Yaakov (Jacob) was incensed, and on his deathbed disavowed any connection to Levi's brutal act. (Genesis 49:6)

Note also that Pinhas' descendant, the prophet Eliyahu (Elijah) may have been removed from his position after becoming over-zealous. This occurs when Eliyahu, in this week's Haftarah, declares to God "zealous have I been for the Lord...for the children of Israel have forsaken your covenant." (I Kings 19:10) God then indicates to Eliyahu that His spirit is not found in the wind, the earthquake or fire ...rather God's presence is best felt through "a still small voice." (I Kings 19:11,12) After Eliyahu persists in his commitment to being zealous, God tells him that he will be replaced by his student, Elisha. (I Kings 19:14-16)

In fact, a reading of the Book of Joshua reveals that Pinhas comes full circle. Years after his zealous act, Pinhas brokers a truce between Israel and the tribes of Reuven, Gad and half of Menasheh. (Joshua 22) Some commentaries suggest that only after Pinhas' intercession, an intercession which avoids a split within the Jewish people, is Pinhas completely embraced as a leader. (Tosafot, Zevachim 101b)

The pathway to redemption is not the way of the Pinhas in our portion, but the Pinhas in the Book of Joshua. This pathway to redemption will reach its crescendo when Eliyahu, the descendant of Pinhas, returns parents to children and children to parents, the antithesis of zealotry, as he announces the coming of the Messiah. (Malakhi 3:23-24) © 2004 Hebrew Institute of Riverdale & CJC-AMCHA

RABBI SHLOMO RISKIN

Shabbat Shalom

Pinhas is generally considered a great hero of Israel: the Kohen-Priest who successfully arrested a plague from destroying the Israelites, the activist who stood up against public transgression even when Moses seemed paralyzed into passivity, the moralist whom our Sages identify with Elijah the Prophet, herald of redemption. But what was the precise nature of the sin against which he acted? The Biblical account appears to be very straightforward; after all, Pinhas receives his reward from G-d, the Divine covenant of peace and eternal "Kehunahood" for his descendants who will follow him, after he "speared" the private parts of two public fornicators, Zimri the prince of the tribe of Shimon and Kozbi the Midianite aristocrat. Apparently, he took a rather decisive public position against a brazen act of free sex between Israelite and Midianite.

However, immediately following the Divinely presented gifts to Pinhas and the revelation of the identity of the two sinners, the Bible commands:

"Do battle against the Midianites and smite them, they are your enemies because of the plot which they plotted against you concerning the matter of Pe'or and the matter of Kozbi the daughter of the Prince of Midian their sister who was struck down on the day of the plague because of the matter of Pe'or" (Numbers 25:16-18).

Why was Kozbi killed? Was it because of her immoral sexual seduction of an Israelite or because she and her Midianite clan worshipped the idol Pe'or? Rashi (ad loc) is aware of the textual problem, and suggest that the end-goal of the Midianites, and the reason for which they sent their daughters to tempt the Israeli men, was to get the Israelites to worship Pe'or. But I believe that there is an additional lesson to be learned here about the very nature of idolatry itself, an idolatry which is as contemporary and relevant as this morning's newspaper.

A careful reading of the Biblical account of Pinhas' act clearly emphasizes a seeming confusion concerning the nature of the transgression, or a fusion of two transgressions which are intermingled. In last week's Torah reading, the introduction to the story of public cohabitation begins,

"And the Israelites dwelt in Shittim, and the nation began to whore after the daughters of Moab. And it happened that the nation served their idols... and Israel became joined to Baal Pe'or, the anger of G-d waned hot against Israel (Numbers 25:1-3).

Again, what was the sin? Was it whoring, or the idolatry of Pe'or?

And finally, this same seeming confusion appears in our rabbinic commentaries. Balaam is identified as "ben Be'or" (Number 22:5) which Targum Yonatan ben Uziel immediately identifies as Pe'or, son of the idol Pe'or, and when the narrative continues to describe how "Balak took Balaam to the top of Mount Pe'or" (Numbers 23:28), Rashi comments, "Balak was a great magician, and he saw that the Israelites would eventually be punished because of Pe'or." However, when the Talmud attempts to describe the evil counsel which Balaam offered the nations who wished to vanquish Israel, the picture presented is one of sexual seduction by the young, nubile gentile women and not idol worship (B.T. Sanhedrin 106a).

And so we must ask the fundamental question: Was the more heinous crime the sexual immorality, or was it the worship of Pe'or?

I believe the answer becomes clear when we attempt to understand the nature of Pe'or worship. The Mishnah in tractate Sanhedrin teaches that Pe'or was worshipped by defecating in front of him—hardly the kind of appetizing religious cult which would attract masses of adherents. But apparently Pe'or was very popular, at least with Midian and Moab. And I would suggest that Pe'or remains popular until this very day. What was the Pe'or god saying to its adherents? Defecation is a normal human function, and the individual who relieves himself feels relieved! Do whatever is natural to do, do whatever makes you feel good. "Let it all hang out;" if this is your nature, if the act is natural, then it becomes correct to express it.

Is this not merely a re-statement—or cultural precursor—of much of contemporary, post-modern thought, of John Brown's Eros and Civilization and Herbert Marcuse's attitude towards life?! Discipline has become the "Hobgoblin of little minds," and self-expression takes precedence over duty to family, to country and to ideal. It is a ramification of Korah's "we are all holy" as is, without the necessity of sacrifice and striving, and a confirmation of the fact that there are no absolutes with regard to what is proper or improper conduct. Everyone has the right to his feelings, and everyone is right from his/her point of view. Ethics are "situational," dependent upon one's situation, and every

individual is a genius when it comes to justifying his desires in his subjective situation.

This is a far cry from Freud's Civilization and its Discontents which presumes the price of limiting one's desires in order to form a civil society; it is the very antithesis of the Jewish ideal of "perfecting the world in the Kingship of the Divine" and the necessity of self-sacrifice in order to achieve that goal.

What was the greater crime, worshipping Pe'or or indulging in public fornication? They are both precisely the very same thing. Pe'or teaches that if one feels like fornicating one fornicates, when and with whom one wishes to do it. After all, sex has nothing to do with love and sanctity and everything to do with a natural physical urge, much more in line with defecation than a sacred union.

From this perspective, the Rabbinical voices like the Meiri were absolutely correct: idolatry has little to do with theology and much to do with the "disgusting, immoral practices" of those who follow the teachings of the likes of Pe'or. © 2004 Ohr Torah Institutions & Rabbi S. Riskin

RABBI BEREL WEIN

Wein Online

A portion of the Torah reading of Pinchas is read on the days of every major holiday of the Jewish calendar. This Pinchas reading always forms the "maftir" - the additional reading for the day. And it is also read from a second, different Torah scroll than the main reading of the day that describes the holiday itself. The obvious and correct reason for this use of the "parsha" of Pinchas on the holidays is because the special additional Temple service and sacrifice - the "musaf" of the day for each of the holiday days of the Jewish year - is recorded and described there. In a Jewish world, now far removed from the Temple service and alien to the cosmic reasons for animal sacrifices, this entire additional reading ("maftir") strikes as foreign, strange and irrelevant. However, there perhaps may lie within these "maftir" readings an important and valuable lesson for ourselves, one that has survived the destruction of the Temple and the consequent suspension of the "musaf" sacrifice itself.

The rabbis of Israel have always warned their flock that there are no easy victories in life. This is certainly true in all realms of daily physical life, but it is even more appropriate and definitive in matters of the spirit and the soul. One of the cruelest hoaxes that the modern, progressive, socially-correct but spiritually-empty, forms of Judaism have perpetrated on their hapless and ignorant constituents is that religion, and especially Judaism, makes no hard demands on its believers. The portrayal of Judaism as a feel-good, guitar-playing, kumsitz-type of liberal, secular-humanist faith is a travesty and a tragedy. The synagogue was never meant to be a place of comfort, but rather one of

challenge and goal-seeking. The Sabbath and the holidays are days of spirit that have to be earned - that require sacrifice and effort and preparation. They are not cheaply obtained. The rabbis of the Talmud stated: "Torah is as expensive and difficult to acquire as vessels of gold, and it is as fragile and as easily shattered as the thinnest crystal glass." Thus, on the holidays of the Jewish calendar, Jewish tradition demands that we read of the sacrifices that were part of the Temple service in order to remind us of the sacrifices necessary from us in order to achieve an inner appreciation of the holidays and their meaning. The concept of sacrifice as described in the Torah relating to the Temple service, is, according to the insight of Rabbi Moses ben Nachman (Ramban), to impress upon us the idea of self-sacrifice for the Torah and God of Israel. Thus, on the easiest and most enjoyable days of the Jewish year, the holidays, we are nevertheless bidden to remember the constant cost involved in remaining a Jew and in achieving the spiritual pleasure and meaning that the holidays invariably bring with them.

We can therefore return to examine and understand why these portions of Torah sacrifices were specifically placed in the "parsha" of Pinchas. For is not Pinchas, in his heroism, courage, selflessness and denial of self-interest, the epitome of sacrifice, both physically and spiritually? The Lord Himself recognizes Pinchas' act of sacrifice and extends to him and his descendants the eternal spiritual blessings of peace, harmony and Godly service. These blessings, as we all know from our own personal life-experiences, are not easily obtained. But Pinchas, the champion of sacrifice, has earned them and will be able to maintain them throughout Jewish history. Every day that we give ourselves over to God's service, that we willingly sacrifice our time, talents, energies and wealth in His cause, is a holiday. The attitude of sacrifice ennobles our days and makes us a special people - a kingdom of priests and a holy nation. © 2004 Rabbi Berel Wein - Jewish historian, author and international lecturer offers a complete selection of CDs, audio tapes, video tapes, DVDs, and books on Jewish history at www.rabbiwein.com. For more information on these and other products visit www.rabbiwein.com/jewishhistory.

MACHON ZOMET

Shabbat B'Shabbato

by Rabbi Amnon Bazak

For the second time in the book of Bamidbar, Moshe is involved in a ceremony of "transfer of authority." In the Torah portion of Beha'alotecha, he says, "I cannot carry the burden of this nation, for it is too heavy for me" [11:14]. G-d replies, "gather together for me seventy men from among the elders of Yisrael... Take them to the Tent of Meeting... And I will descend and talk to you there, and I will take some of the spirit that lies over you and move it to them, and they will help you

carry the burden of the nation." [11:16-17]. In this week's portion, Moshe asks, "Let G-d, the G-d of spirit, appoint a man over the community, who will go out before them and come in before them..." [27:16-17]. G-d answers, "Take Yeshoshua Bin Nun for you, a man with spirit, and place your hand on him. And stand him up before Elazar the Kohen and before the entire community, and you shall command him in front of them. And you will transfer some of your authority to him, so that all of the community of Bnei Yisrael will hear. Let him stand before Elazar the Kohen, who will ask about the words of the Urim V'Tumim before G-d. According to His instructions they will come and go, both he and all of Bnei Yisrael." [27:18-21]. What are the differences between these two passages?

The main task of the seventy elders is related to the spiritual leadership of the people. The sin of the lustful people in the first case above brought about a crisis for Moshe, and he therefore asked the Almighty to help him. The elders are appointed by G-d, while Moshe does not have a practical role in the process. The Almighty transfers some of Moshe's spirit to the elders, bringing them to the level of prophets. Yehoshua, Moshe's disciple, takes the opportunity to criticize two of the elders, Eldad and Meidad, and he is in return scolded by Moshe. "Are you jealous for me? It would be best if the entire nation were prophets, with G-d placing some of His spirit on them." [11:29]. Eventually, Yehoshua would begin to understand that he was destined for a different role than just a prophet.

Yehoshua's task, as can be seen from this week's Torah portion, is not as a spiritual help to Moshe but rather to replace him as the leader of the nation. Therefore, Moshe takes an active part in the appointment, and he places his hands on Yehoshua. In this case, it is not the Almighty who transfers Moshe's spirit to another, it is Moshe himself who transfers some of his own authority to Yehoshua. This is not a transfer of the Divine power of prophecy by G-d but is related to the ability to rule, which is indeed worthy of "a man with spirit." (Compare to this the following, "And G-d raised Shlomo high, before the eyes of all of Yisrael, and He gave him from the authority of his kingdom, such as had never been done for a king before him in Yisrael" [I Divrei Hayamim 29:25].)

This leadership is first and foremost in the realm of the military—one "who will go out before them and come in before them." Therefore, it is important to emphasize that the national and military leader must always remain dedicated to the word of G-d. In contrast to Moshe's original request, that the new leader will "go out before them and come in before them, and will take them out and bring them back," the Almighty replies that the second authority is that of the Kohen. "Let him stand before Elazar the Kohen, who will ask about the words of the Urim V'Tumim before G-d. According to His instructions they will come and go, both he and all of Bnei Yisrael." Even Yehoshua ("he") will come and go

according to the words uttered by the Kohen (see Rashi). There has never been another leader like Moshe, who was a master of both prophetic and military leadership.

How are Zimri and Shimon Linked?

by Rabbi Itamar Malat, Tekoah

"And the name of the man of Yisrael who was struck, the one who was struck with the Midyanite woman, was Zimri Ben Salu, head of a family in the tribe of Shimon" [Bamidbar 25:14]. The Midrash notes, "Head of a family— anybody who harms himself also causes harm to his family. Zimri Ben Salu is described by the verse, 'One who breaks down a fence will be bitten by a snake' [Kohellet 10:8]. His ancestor first showed jealousy about illicit sexual relations, 'and two sons of Yaacov, Shimon and Levi, acted' [Bereishit 34:25]. And this one went beyond the boundary that had been set by his father (Yaacov)." [Bamidbar Rabba 21:3].

This Midrash makes a clear link between Zimri's sin and his tribe, Shimon, and also between Shimon and Yaacov. The Midrash points out the contrast between the actions of Shimon, who limited sexual acts because of his fanaticism, and those of Zimri. On the other hand, others have seen Zimri's action as a continuation of the acts of Shimon. In summary, some view the actions of Zimri in a bad light, while others see it favorably.

Interpreting the act as evil: Rabbi Yuval Sharlo claims that Zimri's act throws light on the actions of Shimon (see "He spoke about them, in their name," Yeshivat Har Etzion contact bulletin, Re'eih, 5746). Shimon and Levi, who were partners in the zealous action against the people of Shechem, received an identical blessing from Yaacov. But their ways parted in the wake of the zealot's reaction by Pinchas, from the tribe of Levi, against Zimri, from the tribe of Shimon. In his final days, Moshe blessed the tribe of Levi, but Shimon is missing from Moshe's blessings. In the encounter between Pinchas and Zimri, it became clear that from the beginning Levi acted in Shechem out of a zealous feeling for G-d, while Shimon participated out of a desire for revenge. In the affair of Zimri, the later actions of the tribe of Shimon showed the basis for the earlier action.

Seeing the act in a positive light: A surprising and interesting approach can be found in the writings of Rabbi Tzadok Hacoheh of Lublin. "At first glance, the root of greatest failure in the souls of Yisrael is that of Shimon. The truth is that this was really a light transgression, since it is not written in the Torah (that is, there is no explicit sin to lie with a Gentile woman). The truth is that it is impossible for such a failure to exist within Yisrael, rather this matter must be studied in further detail. Therefore such a person is not killed by a court but is struck by a zealot. A zealot is quick to take vengeance, he is not mild in his approach, looking for credit and a way to save the accused, as the Sanhedrin

would have done." ["Takanat Hashavim" 6:56-74]. (In the original, this concept is long and complex.)

According to Rabbi Tzadok, Zimri's act is not the opposite of that of his ancestor Shimon, as the Midrash understood, rather it stems from Shimon's high level of holiness. For the time being, we see the action as an ugly sin, but we will yet be privileged to see the high level that Shimon was able to achieve.

RABBI NOSSON CHAYIM LEFF

Sfas Emes

It helps to see this ma'amar in its historical context. Pinchos had stopped the outburst of aveira (sin), and the ensuing plague. Accordingly, HaShem had promoted Pinchos to the status of full-fledged kohein. The parsha's first Medrash Rabba—which is the Sfas Emes's starting point—elaborates on this account.

The Medrash tells us of HaShem's statement that Pinchos was receiving his reward "be'din"—with "din". What is "din"? Din is strict justice, in contrast to the opposite attribute of chessed (loving kindness, compassion, a willingness to forgo strict justice.) In the present context, the word "be'din" is open to two possible interpretations. One possibility is: Pinchos earned, and therefore, deserved this reward as a matter of justice. Another possible interpretation is that Pinchos earned his reward by exercising the attribute of din—by meting out well-deserved, just punishment to the sinning couple.

Applied to Pinchos—who was biologically a kohein—use of the word "be'din" in either sense comes as a surprise. Aharon was the prototype of the kohein's persona. And Aharon was known for his outstanding quality of chessed, not for din.

(Parenthetically, the Sfas Emes notes that the chessed-din dichotomy may also express itself in one's relationship with HaShem. A person with a proclivity toward chessed is likely to relate to HaShem via ahava (love). By contrast, a person who goes through life with a perspective of din is more likely to relate to HaShem with yir'ah (awe and/or fear).)

The notion that Pinchas earned the status and role of kohein also comes as a surprise. For, quoting the Sefer Tanya (!), the Sfas Emes observes that HaShem gave the kehuna—the priesthood—to Aharon as a mahtahna (a gift). Thus, HaShem tells Aharon (Bemidbar, 8:7) that his kehuna is "avodas mahtahna" (ArtScroll: "a service that is a gift"). And by definition, a gift is conveyed gratuitously, not as a quid pro quo. A mahtana is not "earned".

The Sfas Emes has brought to our attention two questions that lurk behind the seemingly innocuous word: "be'din". He now leaves us with these unanswered questions, and moves to a new line of thought.

When the Torah tells us of Pinchos's act of kana'us (zealotry), it states (Bemidbar, 25:7): "Va'yakam

mi'toch ha'eda," Pinchos "arose from amidst the people." Likewise, when HaShem recounts Pinchos's deed (Bemidbar 25:11), He specifies "bekan'o es kina'asi be'socham." That is, Pinchos did what he did "in the midst of Bnei Yisroel." We may not understand initially why this feature of Pinchos's action was important. B'H', the Sfas Emes now explains.

A person who does an act of zealotry may do so as a loner, an outsider, a marginal person. Similarly, a zealot may be trying to fill a well-defined social role—the role of zealot—and thus to stand out from the hamon am (the masses). Or, he may act zealously in an effort to "steig"—to grow in his avoda (service of HaShem).

The Sfas Emes tells us that such self-regarding behavior is not genuine kana'us for HaShem. That is why the Torah emphasizes that Pinchos did what he did "be'socham"—in the midst of Bnei Yisroel. The Torah—and the Sfas Emes—are trying to help us recognize the nature of true zealotry. In this particular act of kana'us, it was especially important that "one of the people"—a regular, ordinary person—rather than a "designated zealot" (either self-designated or socially designated) perform the kana'us.

When the Mishkan was inaugurated, Aharon and his sons were appointed kohanim, the priests who, together with their progeny for all generations, were to perform the avoda, the Divine service. However, Aharon's then-living grandchildren—e.g., Pinchos—were not included in the kehuna. It was only 39 years later, after Pinchos did what he did, that he was named a full-fledged kohein.

Why was Pinchos excluded for so long? The Sfas Emes proposes an answer. He suggests that this exclusion-inclusion feature was mandated so that when Pinchos "arose" to perform his act of kana'us, he do so "be'socham"—in their midst—as a regular, ordinary citizen (rather than one of the self-regarding "zealots" mentioned above). Imagine Pinchos's puzzlement and self-doubt during those 39 years! Eventually, Pinchos learned the reason for his exclusion. But during this excruciatingly long period, he had no clue for his exclusion; nor did he have any assurance that ultimately he would ascend to the kehuna.

At this point, the Sfas Emes circles back to the two unanswered questions that he brought to our attention earlier. As you may recall, one question involved the apparent inconsistency between statements that speak of the kehuna as being earned or as being awarded as a gift. The second question focused on the apparent inconsistency concerning the attributes that a kohein should strive to personify. Should it be chessed/ahava or din-yir'ah?

How does the Sfas Emes deal with these issues? He notes that, in point of fact, the kehuna could be conferred either as an unmerited gift or earned. He cites No'ach's son, Shem, as an illustration of the kehuna's having been granted as a gift. Thus, we find

Shem—a person not noted for his exemplary acts of chessed—being named a kohein. (Note: Chazal—and the Sfas Emes -- are working with the tradition that the person named Malki-Tzedek— mentioned in Bereishis 14, 18 as a kohein—was Shem, the son of No'ach.) Continuing, the Sfas Emes cites Avraham Avinu as a case in which the kehuna was earned. Viewed in broader terms, the Sfas Emes is telling us that the kehuna could be awarded either as an unmerited gift or it could be earned. In other words, in ancient times HaShem did not run (this aspect of) the world in an "either or" framework.

More generally, the Sfas Emes tells us that at a higher level of abstraction, the dichotomy between ahava/ chessed and yir'ah/din is a false dichotomy. Thus, Pinchos was motivated by ahava for HaShem; and that love enabled him to mete out din to the people who deserved it. Likewise, the Sfas Emes tells us that Avraham Avinu—who is usually viewed as the prototype of ahava— reached that attribute by starting with yir'ah.

The name of our holiest city, Yerushalayim, shows the fusion of chessed/ahava and din/yir'ah fusion in its full glory. Avraham Avinu gave that city a name derived from the word yir'ah (Bereishis, 22, 4). And to complete the role reversal, Shem gave the city (Bereishis, 14, 18) a name, Shalem, that evokes HaShem's chessed in making the world whole, without blemish.

A take-home lesson? The Sfas Emes is telling us something that we knew already: that we live in a complex, confusing world. What he is adding is a focus on the paradoxes and apparent inconsistencies that litter this world. Apparently, he feels that we should be aware of unanswered (and perhaps unanswerable) questions; and, nevertheless, continue living Torah and learning Torah. After all, that is how he—the Sfas Emes—handled the situation. © 2004 Rabbi N.C. Leffl & torah.org

RABBI ZVI MILLER

The Salant Foundation

One day Rav Yisrael Salanter saw a lady about to jump off a bridge. He begged her not to jump. "But I had a child that took sick and died," she cried in utter despair, "Then my husband became sick with grief and cannot get out of bed. I hired a man to drive the horse and wagon—our only source of livelihood—and now the horse has died!"

Rav Yisrael comforted her, "Maybe things, with the help of HaShem, will get better for you. Maybe your husband will recover. And maybe you'll be blessed with a new child. And as far as the horse, I'll give you the money to buy a new one."

The woman gained her composure and returned to her home. Things started to turn around for her. Her husband recovered, and with the money from Rav Yisrael they bought a new horse. In fact, in the year

that followed, Rav Yisrael was invited to serve as the sandek at the bris of her newborn son!

Throughout our history we as a people and as individuals have risen to the heights from the ashes. What is the secret of our phenomenal knack of survival?

In parshas Pinchas, HaShem instructs Moshe to take a census. The tribe of Binyamin is numbered at 45, 600 souls, while the tribe of Don is numbered at 64,400 souls. Yet Binyamin had ten sons, whereas Don had one son, Chushie, who was hearing impaired. Nevertheless, HaShem blessed Don that his offspring should be fruitful.

When HaShem desires to favor someone, a person who has less than others, can ultimately be blessed with superior increase. The same is true regarding one's financial standing: HaShem can bless a poor person to rise from rags to riches.

No matter how dismal one's situation in life appears to be—there is no wisdom or advice that can deter the Divine Will from bestowing boundless blessings of success.

Implement: Envision the abounding blessings of HaShem flowing into every aspect of your life—filling you with joy. [Based on the Chofetz Chaim on the Torah]

DR. AVIGDOR BONCHEK

What's Bothering Rashi?

Rashi points out that Moses is subjected to a bit of poetic justice. "And Moses brought ('Vayikrav') their case before Hashem." (Numbers 27:5)

"Moses brought their case"—Rashi : He forgot the halachah. Here he was punished for 'assuming the crown' (assuming to be the final judge) by saying "The matter that is too difficult for you, you may bring to me." (Deut. 1:17)

This drash connects our verse with Moses' statement in Deuteronomy 1:17. Can you see why this connection was made? Hint: See the complete verse in Deuteronomy.

An Answer: In Deuteronomy 1:17 it says: "You shall not show favoritism in judgement; small and great alike you shall hear, you shall not tremble before any man for the judgement is God's. Any matter that is too difficult for you, you shall bring ("tikravun aili") to me and I shall hear it."

Our verse says: "And Moses brought ('Vayikrav') their case before Hashem."

Both contain the common word "to bring near." In Deuteronomy, Moses says "bring it near to me." In our verse it says that Moses (had to) bring it to Hashem.

This word association forms the basis for this drash. It points out how the Torah uses its words to subtly make a moral point: the poetic justice is brought home by the common word "tikravun" and "Vayikrav."

We are reminded what the Torah says in this verse itself "because [rendering] justice is God's alone."

The fact that Moses couldn't answer this question on his own, but had to ask Hashem, indicates that something was lacking in his ability to decide such questions. Moses was, after all, the ultimate interpreter of the Law, which he, alone, received at Sinai. On the basis of this unusual lapse of memory on Moses' part, Rashi (based on the Talmud in Sanhedrin 8a) interprets this as punishment for Moses' previous boasting, so to speak, about his ability to be the final halachic arbiter of "difficult matters."

Did you notice that the statement Moses made is quoted from Deuteronomy? It was for this statement that he was punished.

What would you ask about that?

A Question: How could Moses be punished now for a statement he made later, in his final oration to the people? You see that quote comes from the Book of Deuteronomy!

An Answer: True, this quote comes from the Book of Deuteronomy, but it records an event that happened much earlier, during the first year in the wilderness. See Exodus 18:24-26, where Moses heeds the advice of his father-in-law, Jethro and delegates halachic authority to others. There it says:

"And Moses heeded the advice of Jethro and he chose men of valor... and they judged the nation at all times. The difficult matter they brought to Moses and every lesser matter they judged themselves."

So, in fact, this actually happened much before the current story of the daughters of Zelafchad when Moses forgot the law.

But, if this was mentioned earlier in the Torah, we can ask another question of Rashi:

A Question: Why did Rashi quote the verse from Deuteronomy, when he could have quoted the original source in Exodus?

An Answer: The verse in Exodus does not quote Moses himself. It is an objective statement that "the difficult matter was brought to Moses." The verse in Deuteronomy, on the other hand, is a direct quote of Moses and thus shows what he was held accountable for. And in that quote we have the word that is similar to the word in our verse—"tikravun."

Considering Moses' various opportunities to answer halachic questions posed in the Torah, we can ask a more basic question on this comment. Can you recall other instances when Moses was asked a question of law? If you can, what is your question?

A Question: During the second year that Israel was in the wilderness, Moses was asked by some men who were impure, whether they may bring the Pascal offering (Numbers 9:8). He had to turn to God for the answer. He was also asked what the punishment was for the "gatherer of wood" on the Sabbath (Numbers 15:32-36). Here too, Moses had to wait until God told him the appropriate punishment to impose. Why didn't

Rashi comment on these cases as instances where Moses was punished by forgetting the law, as Rashi comments here?

Do you see any meaningful difference between those cases and ours?

An Answer: The two other cases when Moses was asked to decide a legal question, involved rare and unusual circumstances. The case of a man "gathering wood" on the Sabbath or the situation where a person became impure before Passover are not everyday occurrences and thus it is not expected that Moses be familiar with them. But the laws of inheritance come up whenever someone dies, which is a common occurrence. We would expect Moses to be knowledgeable of such laws. The fact that he was not, indicated a lapse in memory and thus Rashi saw this as a punishment. (See Sefer Zikaron.) © 2004 Dr. A. Bonchek and aish.org

RABBI SHLOMO RESSLER

Weekly Dvar

Among other things, Parshat Pinchas recounts the very first time G-d spoke to Elazar after his father Aaron passed away. As his first order of duty he was instructed to count all the Jews over the age of twenty. Is there any significance to this being his very first task? Also, why did there have to be any countings to begin with? If G-d wanted the leaders to know how many Jews there were, why didn't He just tell them? It seems as if Elazer's very first task was an unnecessary one.

It could be that there was a very real significance to counting the Jews: Rashi compares this counting to a Sheppard counting his beloved flock after a disaster. The counting therefore symbolizes G-d's concern for His people after a recent plague. But it could also be teaching the newly instated leader a critical lesson: Care about each and every one of your people, because they all count. In our lives too, we are surrounded by groups called family, friends, co-workers and employees. This Parsha teaches us that if we treat each and every single person in our lives as an individual, our relationship with them really count!

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