

# Toras Aish

## Thoughts From Across the Torah Spectrum

**RABBI BEREL WEIN**

### Wein Online

**T**he Jewish people go to war against Midian in this week's parsha. This war can be described as a preventive war - striking before the enemy strikes again against you - and even as a war of revenge and punishment over the culpability of Midian in the death of twenty four thousand Jews due to their willful planned seduction by the women of Midian.

In this war the leading chieftains of Midian are killed as is the arch foe and cunning enemy of Israel, Bilaam. None of this makes for pleasant reading according to our current pacific and humanitarian correctness system. Yet the Torah teaches us here an important lesson about pacifism and misplaced humanitarian considerations.

The Talmud teaches us that someone who intends to kill you should be subject to a preemptive strike so that you can save yourself. Waiting to be attacked is not a safe or even sane defensive policy. In fact it invites attack for the enemy always sees it as a sign of weakness that can be exploited.

Thus the instructions given to Moshe in this week's parsha are based on the clear premise that the Midianites are schemers and seducers who are attempting to destroy Israel. Stop them before they are able to execute their nefarious plans against the Jewish people. Moshe's actions in mobilizing a Jewish army to oppose Midian immediately and not wait until Midian executes its own warlike intentions are not only G-d given commandments but pure human common sense as well.

Revenge also plays a role in human life. Even though the Torah commands Jews not to take revenge against individuals who may have harmed us, nevertheless on a national level it is impossible to overlook crimes perpetrated against the Jewish people.

The tragedy of the aftermath of World War II is that most of the people who committed the atrocities of the Holocaust somehow have escaped proper human judgment and retribution. In a world of unfortunate moral equivalency judgment against criminals is now

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tempered with sociological wooliness that prevents justice from being done.

The Torah expressly states that the action taken by Moshe and Israel against Midian, aside from its preemptive quality and nature, is also a form of repayment for the sins of Midian against the Jews and their responsibility in the deaths of so many Jews.

Every action begets a reaction. The war against Midian is the reaction to the previous war of Midian against the Jews. Evil that goes unpunished, if not even rewarded by inaction, only perpetuates and strengthens itself. Even a cursory reading of Tanach will reveal that this policy of preemptive strikes and punishing evil behavior from outside nations was always the policy of Jewish leadership.

Harsh realism always should trump wishful thinking and pious hopes and policies. I am not in a position to draw policy conclusions in regard to current national and international events. Nevertheless the Torah's emphasis in this week's parsha on the necessity for strong reaction to protect the innocent and punish the guilty should certainly be taken to heart.  
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**MACHON ZOMET**

### Shabbat B'Shabbato

by Rabbi Yehoshua Shapira, Rosh Yeshivat Ramat Gan; Translated by Moshe Goldberg

**W**hen Moshe is told that he will soon die, a great fear comes over him. He is not worried about his death or about his sin of the "Mei Meriva," but he is worried for his people, who will be left without a leader. The move from one generation to another is most sharply felt when leadership is transferred from one person to another. The greater the leader, the more difficult the transfer. This is an even greater problem when the leader is our mentor Moshe, the archetype of the prophets. Many of the Thirteen Principles of Judaism of the Rambam are dedicated to the concept that Moshe was unique as compared to all other prophets of Yisrael.

G-d replies to Moshe's worry by pointing out Yehoshua Bin Nun, telling Moshe to place his hands on Yehoshua and share his glory with him. The words of the sages are well known. Moshe is commanded that

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he should give Yehoshua "from your glory" [Bamidbar 27:20], but not all the glory. "Moshe's face was like the sun, while Yehoshua's face was like the moon." This represents a substantial difference. The sun is the source of light, while the moon is only a reflection. The sun lights up and warms the entire world, while the moon spreads out a weak light that is not really bright and does not provide any heat.

However, the chain of handing the Torah down from one generation to the next continues without any break. "My spirit which is on you and my words which I have placed in your mouth will not cease from your mouth and the mouths of your descendents... from now and for all eternity" [Yeshayahu 59:21]. While the greatness of Moshe is certainly miraculous, the eternity of the Torah is an even greater miracle. It is an expression of the Divine power of the Torah, something that goes far beyond any differences between greater or lesser men. It has the power to help not only a weak generation but also a strong one. Since the time that Moshe left the world, we have experienced one crisis after another. The Sanhedrin was sent into exile, the semicha? the transfer of authority directly from a sage to his disciple? was interrupted, and the really great men no longer exist. Every generation remembers how the sunlight was reduced from the previous generation, and the people sigh deeply, like the elders of the generation of Yehoshua, who remembered Moshe: "Woe is to us for our shame, woe is to us for our disgrace."

There are some who are spiritually harmed by the differences between the generations, and they fall by the wayside. Many movements throughout our history left the fold and were eliminated from Yisrael because they could not withstand the great gap between the sun and the moon, between the generation of the fathers and that of the sons. One example is the Tzedukim and the Baitussim, who would not accept the transformation of the light of prophecy into the new approaches of the oral Torah. The same is true of the Conservative and Reform movements, which were not able to understand the eternal aspect of the Torah in modern times. Today we can still hear voices trying to undermine the authority of the current rabbis? either because they are not as great as the rabbis of the past or because they are so far removed from the general public that their knowledge is no longer relevant.

We must remember that the covenant on the subject of the continuation of the Torah is that it will last "forever," and that the Divine spirit will be able to rejuvenate the light of redemption even from the depths to which we have sunk.

**RABBI DOV KRAMER**

## Taking a Closer Look

There are 35 paragraphs in Parashas Pinachas, with the paragraphs being separated from each other by empty spaces. (Actually, each paragraph is also called a "parasha," or section, but because we refer to the entire weekly portion as a "parasha" too, I am referring to them as "paragraphs" to avoid confusion.) Interestingly, the empty spaces that separate the second paragraph from the third one come right smack in the middle of a verse (Bamidbar 26:1), which reads, "and it was after the plague [had ended]," and G-d said to Moshe and Elazar the son of Aharon the Kohain." Numerous explanations have been given as to why this paragraph break comes in the middle of a verse (see Ba'al Haturim, Moshav Zekaynim, Or Hachayim, Alshich and Shach). The Chizkuni says that this break signifies the point at which all those that would die in the desert had already died, with the plague from which the last 24,000 died on one side of the empty spaces and the counting of all those who would enter the Land of Israel on the other side.

The approach of the Chizkuni raises several issues. First of all, twice in Parashas Chukas (see Rashi on 20:1 and 20:22) the Torah implied that all those that were supposed to die in the desert had already died; why is a third reference necessary? How could it be said that they all had died before they got to Kadesh or by the time they arrived at Hor Hahar if many died afterwards by the poisonous snakes (21:6) and 24,000 died in the plague in Shittim? Besides, even after this mid-verse paragraph break not everyone has died; Moshe doesn't pass away until after the census is taken, the war against Midyan is waged, additional commandments are given, and his entire Sefer-Devarim-long rebuke and review of the Torah is given.

The truth is, Rashi (on 20:22) gives us a partial answer to one of these issues. By the time they got to Kadesh, all those that death had been decreed upon because the sin of the spies had already died; that doesn't necessarily preclude others from dying because of additional sins committed. The Chizkuni could therefore be referring to any death, resulting from any sin, while the references in Parashas Chukas is specifically to those that died because of the sin of the spies. Nevertheless, more may be going on here.

The Yalkut Reuvaini (Bamidbar 1:21 and 25:14) tells us that "the entire Eirev Rav (converts that had joined the Children of Israel during the exodus) attached themselves to the Tribe of Shimon and gave birth from them" and that these children were "the 24,000 that died

in the plague" that was thwarted when Pinachas killed Zimri. The Or Hachayim (Shemos 13:17) quotes a Zohar that says that whenever the noun used to describe the nation is "am" (ayin-mem), it refers to the Eirev Rav. Since it was the "am" that became "short-winded" after they left Hor Hahar (Bamidbar 21:4), the "am" that spoke against G-d and Moshe (21:5), and many members of the "am" that died (21:6), it could be suggested that this incident also only involved members of the Eirev Rav. It is worth noting that prior to this incident the nation is repeatedly referred to as either "aidah" or "Yisroel" while those involved in this incident are referred to as "am" five times. (It would also explain why, being that this was the 40th year in the desert, and after the generation that left Egypt had already died, the complaint included "why did you take us out of Egypt." If this complaint was made by those left of the Eirev Rav, or their children, we can more easily understand why they are still harkening back to their native homeland.) It could therefore be suggested that the paragraph break in our Parasha refers to anyone (other than Moshe) dying (even those from the Eirev Rav), while the references in Parashas Chukas refer to the death of anyone that descended from Avraham, Yitzchok and Yaakov (and Sarah, Rivka, Rachel and Leah).

The Abarbanel is of the opinion that Moshe hitting the rock is not the real reason why Moshe couldn't enter the land. Rather, because he was a causal factor in the incident with the spies (after all, he sent them), he could not escape sharing their fate. However, had the Torah told us the real reason he had to die before the nation entered Israel, some might equate it with the actual sin committed by the spies (or by the generation that bought their story). Therefore, in order to prevent anyone from thinking that Moshe was included in the decree against that generation, the Torah had to "cover" for him and attribute his having to die to having hit the rock. Similarly, the Abarbanel says that Aharon died because of his involvement in the making of the golden calf. Even though his intentions were pure, and he was trying to prevent others from worshipping idols (and not, G-d forbid, trying to promote it), because he actually formed the golden calf, he was not allowed to enter Israel. In order to make sure that no one thought that Aharon was caught up in the sin of the golden calf, the Torah never references the real reason for his not being allowed to enter, including his "sin" with Moshe's instead. There is a Midrash that says pretty much the same thing, quoted by Rabbi Menachem Kasher (Torah Shelaimah, Bamidbar 20:22): "A decree was made against the entire generation (not to enter the Land of Israel), and the entire generation died separately because of that one decree, and these three righteous ones (Moshe, Aharon and Miryam) did not die with them in that same death. Why? For it says (Tehillim 26:9), 'do not gather/include my soul with sinners.' Once that entire generation was finished (died

out), a decree was issued with a separate judgment for the three of them."

The next Midrash quoted, from the same source, gives two reasons why Miryam died. First, because it would be impossible for the well that provided water in her merit to dry up while she was still alive. Second, because she was on the same level as Moshe and Aharon, as all three were the leaders of the nation; it would be inappropriate for them to die while she continued on. Again the implication is that the three of them were connected to the generation they led, and couldn't enter the land if that generation didn't. Nevertheless, it was important to separate their deaths from everyone else so as not to equate them, even if they ultimately suffered the same fate.

We can now understand why there are three separate references to everyone else having died out. Before Miryam dies (20:1) we must first be told that the generation had already died, then we can be informed of her (separate) death. Before Aharon dies (20:24) we must be reminded again (20:22) that his death was not part of the decree against the rest of that generation. Then again, after everybody died (including the Eirev Rav and/or those that could have entered the land if not for a different sin), a new paragraph starts in the middle of a verse - in order to point out that, besides Moshe, no one else was left that had to die. Three references to the generation dying out, because there were three great leaders who should not be included in the generation's decree. © 2009 Rabbi D. Kramer

#### **RABBI MORDECHAI KAMENETZKY**

### **Elevating Actions**

**T**his week, Moshe teaches us the laws of inheritance. He actually needs Heavenly guidance to teach the laws, as he forgot them. And even though inheritance focuses primarily on male transmission, the laws of inheritance were actually taught because of the request of five women who brought a legitimate complaint to Moshe. The Torah tells us "The daughters of Tzelafchad, son of Hopher, son of Gilead, son of Machir, son of Manasseh, of the family of Manasseh son of Joseph drew near—and these are the names of his daughters - Mahlah, Noah, Hoglah, Milcah, and Tirzah and they stood before Moshe, before Elazar the Kohen, and before the leaders and the entire assembly at the entrance to the Tent of Meeting, saying 'Our father died in the Wilderness, but he was not among the assembly that was gathering against Hashem in the assembly of Korach, but he died of his own sin; and he had no son. Why should the name of our father be omitted from among his family because he had no son? Give us a possession among our father's brothers.' And Moshe brought their claim close to Hashem." (Numbers 27:1-5)

Many commentators discuss the expression, "And Moshe brought their claim close before Hashem."

Noting the fact that Moshe was unable to answer on the spur of the moment, Rashi comments that this was payback of sorts for Moshe's prior announcement (back in Parshas Yisro) to the Children of Israel to bring the small matters to lower judges, while he would adjudicate any difficult questions. In the case of Tzelaftchad's daughters' query he was not able to answer on his own, rather he needed a Heavenly consultation.

But the expression, and Moshe brought their claim before Hashem, seems to tell us more. It does not say, "and Moshe asked Hashem what to do." In fact, the Torah uses an expression *vayakrev* which means "he brought close." And in that vein, what does the Torah mean by saying that "Moshe brought their claim close to Hashem."

After the passing of the previous Satmar Rebbe, Rabbi Yoel Teitelbaum, his successor the Sigeter Rebbe, came to Monsey to pay his respects to my revered grandfather, Rabbi Yaakov Kamenetzky, of blessed memory, who at the time was the oldest Rosh Yeshiva of the Lithuanian Yeshiva world. Along with the rebbe came a significant group of his Chassidim who clung to the newly appointed seer, and were very curious to experience this first encounter between the Chassidic leader and the renowned Lithuanian sage. The Chassidim piled into the house and began pushing to the front of the table My grandfather, who was accustomed to orderly conduct, asked that the Chassidim be seated as well. He mentioned that there were folding chairs in his basement.

One by one, each of the Chasidim brought up a chair from the basement, unfolded it, and sat down. After watching this scene repeat itself, Rav Yaakov could not contain himself. When somebody carries a chair from the basement and then sits on it, all he is a shlepper. But if each of you would bring a chair for someone else, then you become elevated. Instead of shleppers you become *ba'alei chessed*, kindhearted men who are helping each other! With almost the same action, you are transformed from chair-haulers into holy people who sweat on behalf of their friend! Let us bring our actions away from ourselves and closer to Hashem!

One of the greatest attributes of a spiritual leader is to view the actions of his flock in a holy light. Rav Nachum Yisrael of Lipna explains that Moshe did not view the daughters of Tzelaftchad's request as one of mere monetary or territorial request. Instead, he viewed it as a spiritual one. Thus, he brought their claim close to Hashem. Moshe took their actions not as selfish real estate related desires, but rather as a spiritual quest to have their father's inheritance perpetuated through a share in the Holy Land. And none other than Hashem Himself confirmed his assumption! Hashem confirms the claim, "The daughters of Tzelaftchad's speak properly" (ibid v. 7).

The true sign of a Torah leader is to either see the spirituality in the actions of his flock, or to make the

minor adjustments that will ensure that otherwise mundane actions become holy ones. © 2002 Rabbi M. Kamenetzky & Project Genesis, Inc.

**RABBI AVI WEISS**

## Shabbat Forshpeis

**A**fter being told that he will soon die, Moshe (Moses) asks G-d to appoint a successor so that the Jews "not be as sheep that have no shepherd." (Numbers 27:17) G-d responds by telling Moshe to appoint Yehoshua (Joshua). In the words of the Torah, "take Yehoshua, the son of Nun, a man in whom is spirit, and lay thy hand upon him." (Numbers 27:18)

One wonders why Moshe did not recognize that Yehoshua was his successor on his own. After all, the Torah had previously described Yehoshua as ministering to Moshe. (Numbers 11:28)

Rabbi David Silber argues that, in truth, Moshe did not want Yehoshua to succeed him. Moshe was a teacher par excellence who reached out to his people with extraordinary compassion and love. Yehoshua on the other hand, sees the world through a military lens where there is a clear delineation of right and wrong. Several examples underscore this difference.

Yehoshua leads the Jews in the war against Amalek. "And Moshe said to Yehoshua, choose us men and go fight with Amalek." (Exodus 17:9) Interestingly, as Yehoshua battles Amalek, Moshe's hands are raised in fervent prayer to G-d. (Rashi, Exodus 17:11)

When Moshe descends from Mt. Sinai, when the Jews worshipped the golden calf, Yehoshua meets him and tells him that he hears the noise of war in the camp. Moshe responds that he does not hear the voice of victory or defeat-rather he hears a tortured cry (*kol anot*). (Exodus 32:17,18) Yehoshua hears a war cry. Moshe, the teacher par excellence hears the angst of his people-nothing more than a painful calling out for help.

When Moshe is told that two men Eldad and Medad are prophesying in the camp, Yehoshua suggests that they be done away with. In Yehoshua's words, "my Lord Moshe, shut them in (*k'laim*)." (Numbers 11:28). This is the language of the general. Moshe on the other hand, suggests that Eldad and Medad and all others be given the chance to prophesize. In Moshe's words, "would that all the Lord's people were prophets." (Numbers 11:29)

In requesting an heir, Moshe couches his language using the terminology that the people need a shepherd. This was Moshe's hope that the new leader be much like himself-a shepherd of Israel. He could not perceive that Yehoshua, a more warlike figure, was a suitable successor.

It is here that G-d tells Moshe to take Yehoshua "a man in whom is spirit and lay thy hand upon him." G-d is telling Moshe that while Yehoshua, at this point,

lacks the characteristics of being a shepherd, if Moshe would but place his hands on his head teaching him his style of leadership, he would be endowed with spiritual teaching.

Rabbi Silber argues that not coincidentally, the Torah at its conclusion, when describing the death of Moshe, points out that "Yehoshua, the son of Nun, was full of the spirit of wisdom, for Moshe had laid his hands upon him." (Deuteronomy 34:9) In other words, Moshe had succeeded in teaching Yehoshua the values of the shepherd. The expression, placing his hands atop Yehoshua, means that Moshe had succeeded in transmitting to Yehoshua the vital qualities of a teacher who is soft, compassionate and sensitive.

Powerful leadership is one in which quiet tranquil compassion is at its base. And most important, the test of real leadership is the ability to leave a legacy, to transmit a value system to the next generation. No one lives forever. The test of success is whether one's values and principles can transcend one's lifetime into the next—as Moshe's love, compassion and softness did with Yehoshua. © 2009 Hebrew Institute of Riverdale & CJC-AMCHA. Rabbi Avi Weiss is Founder and Dean of Yeshivat Chovevei Torah, the Open Orthodox Rabbinical School, and Senior Rabbi of the Hebrew Institute of Riverdale.

**RABBI DR. ABRAHAM J. TWERSKI**

## TorahWeb

In some Passover Haggados, the question is posed, "When the child asks the Four Questions about the Seder ritual, the father responds, 'We were slaves unto Pharaoh.' How does that answer the child's questions?" One explanation is that the father is saying, "When we were slaves to Pharaoh, we did not question his orders. We did what we were ordered to do. G-d delivered us from Egypt and He is now our Master, We don't question his orders. We do as we are told."

At the Kotel, there are some young men who urge visitors to put on tefillin. One young man was about to do so when his comrades said, "Don't bother. We've tried with him, but he just refuses. He is not religious and just visits here as a national shrine." Nevertheless, the young man approached the visitor. "Pardon me," he said, "but aren't you General X?" The man said that he was. The young man said, "I was in your battalion in the Golan. When you ordered us to take the hill, we thought it was suicide. But, you were the general and we obeyed your orders. Here, there is another General, and we must obey His orders, whether we like to or not." Without a word, the general rolled up his sleeve and put on tefillin.

Whether it is a general and soldiers, or a king and his subjects, the master's orders must be obeyed.

Yes, we are Hashem's children (Deuteronomy 14:1), and we should relate to Him with the love and reverence of a child to a father, but that does not negate our role as slaves. The knowledge that we are

Hashem's children enables us to realize that whereas a human master assigns duties to his slaves for his own benefit, a devoted father has the child's best interest at heart, and the duties Hashem wishes us to carry out are for our own benefit, not for His.

In the Ten Commandments, G-d made it very clear. "I am your G-d who delivered you from the land of Egypt, from the house of enslavement." Subsequently, G-d says, "For the Children of Israel are My slaves, whom I delivered from the land of Egypt" (Leviticus 25:55). The only difference is that in Egypt we had no choice whether we wished to be Pharaoh's slaves or not, whereas with G-d, we voluntarily accept our servitude to Him every day when we say the Shema. We have bechira (free-will) to refuse to accept or accept of malchus shamayim, but if we do accept it, we are avodim, slaves in the full sense of the word, and we are not free to disobey Him. The Talmud says that by saying the Shema we subjugate ourselves to the "yoke of the Divine rule." Yes, it is a yoke, very much like that of the ox that pulls the plow.

The Declaration of Independence says that among the "inalienable rights of man are life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness." This is indeed a lofty concept. However, slaves have no inalienable rights. Slaves are obligated to follow the master's orders. Slaves have only duties. Slaves do not have rights. We do pursue happiness, but we do so because it is a mitzvah, v'hayisa ach some'ach (Deuteronomy 16:15). Failure to serve Hashem with joy is a serious dereliction (Deuteronomy 28:47).

Ramchal begins his epochal Mesilat Yesharim with a chapter entitled "The Obligation of a Person in His World." This sets the theme for the entire book. If a person has inalienable rights, then he is free, within accepted limits, to decide how he wishes to exercise these rights. If one is a slave and has obligations and duties imposed upon him by a Master, then it is incumbent upon him to know how the Master wishes these duties to be carried out. This is further emphasized in the Talmud. "Nullify your will before Hashem's will" (Ethics of the Fathers 2:4).

A Master wishes that his slaves be well nourished and healthy in order to be in optimum condition to perform their required duties. They should be well rested, because if fatigued, they cannot get the job done. If we see ourselves as slaves of Hashem, then everything we do should be in the interest of carrying out our obligations. We eat, sleep, recreate work and transact because these are essential to our fulfilling our obligations. "Nullify your will before Hashem's will" leaves no room for pursuits that are not directed to the service of Hashem.

Ramchal would fully agree with "life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness." Life, because the Torah says "You shall observe My decrees and My laws which man shall carry out and by which he shall live" (Leviticus 18:5). Liberty, because the Torah says, "Proclaim

freedom throughout the land for all its inhabitants (Leviticus 25:10). Pursuit of happiness, because the Torah says, "You shall be completely joyous" (Deuteronomy 16:15). These are inalienable mitzvos, not rights. © 2009 Rabbi Dr. A.J. Twerski & The TorahWeb Foundation

**RABBI SHLOMO RISKIN**

## Shabbat Shalom

**F**anaticism, particularly when garbed in the clothing of myopic fundamentalism, rarely evokes in us a sympathetic bent. How could it, given its association with an uncontrollable zeal and violence for the sake of heaven?

But when we turn to the opening of this week's portion, the Torah lauds Pinchas for zealously killing a Jewish man and a Midianite woman in the very heat of their sexual passion as they recklessly defy G-d's command. For responding so quickly and decisively, we read that, "G-d spoke to Moses saying, Pinchas, a son of Elazar and grandson of Aaron the priest, was the one who zealously took up my cause among the Israelites and turned My anger away from them... Therefore tell him that I have given him My covenant of peace..." [Num. 25:10-12]

The Biblical summation is certainly one of praise and approbation. Indeed, Pinchas' full genealogy is presented in this sequence; we are also given the name of his father as well as of his grandfather, Aaron the high priest, indicating that the Torah wants to underscore his linkage to Aaron, "lover and pursuer of peace." Moreover, both grandfather and grandson succeeded in stopping plagues sent by the Almighty to punish the Israelites.

Aaron had been instrumental in stopping the plague that broke out after the Hebrews raised angry voices against Moses and Aaron when Korach and his rebels were swallowed up by the earth [Num 17:6-11]. Pinchas' act of zealotry arrested the plague which had destroyed 24,000 Israelites who engaged in immoral sexual acts with the Midianites [Num 25:9].

When all is said and done, the Torah wants us to look upon Pinchas not only as Aaron's grandchild but as his direct spiritual heir.

And when Pinchas receives the Divine gift of a covenant of peace, it is clear that he is being marked eternally as a leader who fostered peace and well-being, rather than fanaticism and violence. How do we square this with a flagrant act of zealotry?

In order to really understand what Pinchas achieved, we must view the events leading up to Pinchas' act. I would submit that had it not been for his quick response, nothing less than 'war' would have broken out and Civil War against Moses at that!

The Israelites had begun consorting with the Moabite women [Num. Ch. 25], with harlotry leading to idolatry. They justified their actions philosophically and

theologically by claiming that whatever is natural, whatever gives physical relief and good feeling, is proper and laudatory.

This is the idol called Baal Peor, who was served by everyone doing their most natural functions of excretions before the idol, testifying to a life-style which justifies any and every physical expression. At this point, G-d commands Moses to "...take the leaders and impale them publicly before G-d." [Num. 25:4] Only the leaders are targeted, but their death is to be vivid and painful, hanging in the hot sun, their dissolute flesh to be devoured by birds of prey who live on carrion.

What we have here is a repeat of the golden calf debacle which had taken place forty years before. At that time, Moses didn't hesitate to exact punishment. He took the idol of the golden beast, ground it to powder, mixed it with water, and called for volunteers. The Tribe of Levi killed 3,000 Israelites on that day. Moses had only to call "Whoever is with G-d, stand with me" and all of the Levites rallied to his side.

Forty years later, the situation is tragically and radically different. Moses directs the judges of Israel to take action, but when he speaks to them, he changes the Divine graphic description of hanging the leaders in the sun to the more diplomatic, far less aggressive, command that "...each of you must kill your constituents who were involved with Baal Peor."

And then, a devastating occurrence follows: "Behold, and one of the children of Israel came and brought... a Midianite woman in the sight of Moses and in the sight of the congregation of the children of Israel (25:6)." Who was the Jew who dared defy the Divine decree and the authority of Moses? None other than Zimri, Prince of the tribe of Simon, second in line of the tribes, between Reuven the first born and Levi, the Priests. He was obviously continuing the rebellion of Korach, demanding his rights as a descendant of the son of Jacob who preceded Levi and was now claiming an exalted position. He chose a Kazbi, a Midianite princess - a woman with status and lineage in the Gentile world. In the face of this revolting and licentious defiance, what was the reaction of Moses the leader? "They were weeping at the Tent of Meeting" (ibid). Why was Moses rendered impotent, unable to quell this rebellion against him and his G-d? Because Zimri had previously gone around taunting the liberator of the Hebrew slaves: How can he forbid sexual contact with Midianite women if he himself took a Midianite wife! [B.T. Sanhedrin 82a].

The Israelite world is considerably changed from what it had been forty years before, during the period immediately following the Golden Calf - the Jews are no longer contrite in the presence of Moses. The Israelites had been told that after the sin of the scouts, the entire generation was doomed to die in the desert. Everyone was demoralized and disappointed. For years after the exodus, no-one stood up to Moses as did

Korach. And now Zimri hopes to discredit Moses even before G-d - because of the Prophet's Midianite wife.

The Bible records: "And Pinchas saw..."(25:7) What did he see? He saw the people rebelling and he saw Moses weeping. He saw the end of the history of the children of Israel almost before it began, he saw immorality and assimilation about to smash the Tablets of Stone for the second time, without a forceful Moses with the capacity of restoring the Eternal Testimony once again.

This is when Pinchas steps in. In killing Zimri and Kazbi in the midst of their immoral act in front of all of Israel, he quells the rebellion, re-establishes Mosaic leadership and authority, enables Torah to remain supreme. Pinchas has re-instated the covenant between G-d and Israel, and so he is truly worthy of the covenant of peace. © 2009 Ohr Torah Institutions & Rabbi S. Riskin

#### RABBI BORUCH LEFF

### Kol Yaakov

**“W**ar is a crime against humanity."  
"There is no such thing as a justified war."

These are statements from pacifists. "Pacifism: Opposition to the use of force under any circumstances; refusal for reasons of conscience to participate in war or military action." (Webster's New World Dictionary)

What is the Jewish view of pacifism? What does peace really mean? This week's Torah portion, Pinchas, instructs us concerning all of these issues.

Since Parshat Pinchas begins in the middle of a story, let's re-cap events from last week's portion, Balak. Many Jewish men were seduced by Moabite women and acted promiscuously with them. These women also influenced their victims to worship idols. One of the leaders of the men who were seduced, Zimri, of the tribe of Shimon, desired to publicly declare his support for involvement with the Moabite women. He brazenly committed his lewd, sexual acts in full view of Moshe and the Jewish people. G-d sent a plague, and 24,000 Jewish men, who were seduced, died. Pinchas could not tolerate Zimri's brazenness and promptly killed Zimri and his partner in sin, Kozbi, a Moabite princess. After Pinchas' zealous act, the plague ceased.

G-d begins this week's portion saying to Moshe, "Pinchas, the son of Elazar, the son of Ahron, the Priest, turned back my fury from the Jewish nation when he zealously avenged my vengeance among them. This is why I did not consume the Jewish nation in My vengeance. Therefore, say: Behold, I give him (Pinchas) My covenant of peace." (Bamidbar 25:10-12)

We know that G-d administers reward and punishment with the device called 'measure for measure.' The punishment or reward must fit the crime or good deed. In this case, Pinchas' act of zealousness is rewarded with peace. Is that measure for measure?

Do we usually associate a peaceful person with being a zealot?

G-d is teaching us a fundamental lesson about war and peace. Wars are necessary at times. There is such a thing as a justified war. As Kohelet 3:8 states, "There is a time for war."

G-d is saying to Moshe, "Tell Pinchas that his zealousness is peace." Peace does not mean a passive lack of war. If peace is a passive lack of war there is no way that through Pinchas' violent act of killing he achieves peace. Peace is a state of being in which there is a closeness, a relationship, a way of dealing with each other. It isn't just that I don't bother you and you don't bother me; that's not peace. It's that we live together and work together and have a unity, a commonality that all of us are part of a whole.

In Hebrew, the word for peace, shalom, is derived from the root shalem, which means whole or complete. Peace is a cooperative, symbiotic relationship, where both parties care for each other, help each other, and ultimately perfect each other. Two people who hate each other and never speak to each other, but never fight either, cannot be said to be at peace with each other. Marital harmony and domestic tranquility does not mean the simple lack of screaming and yelling in the house. It is a state of being in which your spouse genuinely shares in your triumphs, strengthens you when you are down, loves, adores, and cherishes you. (This is why it is a misnomer to refer to the 1979 Camp David agreement with Egypt as a 'peace' treaty. At most, it is a ceasefire. The rhetoric of hatred and contempt by Egypt for Israel, and anti-Semitism in the Egyptian press has never ceased. Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak has never even visited Israel, except to attend Yitzchak Rabin's funeral.)

Since peace is an active force rather than a passive lack of war, ultimately anything that disturbs and destroys this state of true peace must be removed in order for true shalom-peace-to exist. That is why Pinchas, through his zealous act, actually creates peace. Pinchas stops the plague against the Jewish people and through a violent act of war brings peace.

It is very often necessary to create peace only through what seems to be an act of violence. One must remove those things that disturb the harmony and that create tensions between peoples in order for peace to exist. And it is not always possible to remove the items that block peace through non-violent means.

Does anyone seriously think that the Nazis could have been dealt with non-violently? Can Osama bin Laden be dealt with non-violently? Ariel Sharon has always said that the path to peace in the Middle East must begin with decisive military action against the terrorist infrastructure. Only once violence, as an option, is rooted out can peace be achieved. One can even argue similarly for Harry Truman's decision to drop the atomic bombs on Hiroshima and Nagasaki which brought peace in ending WWII. We have seen the

famous picture of the mushroom cloud which killed approximately 400,000 people. Was Truman's act of war justified? Consider the following:

"In a meeting on 18 June the Joint War Plans Committee gave Truman projected death rates ranging from a low of 31,000 to a high of 50,000, and a projected American causality rate (deaths, injuries and missing) of 132,500. During fighting in the Pacific, from 1 March 1944 to 1 May 1945, the Japanese were killed at a ratio of 22 to 1. Thus, if we use an estimate of 40,000 American deaths, we can extrapolate 880,000 Japanese deaths-for a combined total of 920,000 deaths. Although death rates for Hiroshima and Nagasaki vary widely, none are even half this high. Thus we can conclude that if an invasion of Kyushu had been necessary, and the Japanese were killed at a rate comparable to previous fighting, then the atomic bombs dropped on Hiroshima and Nagasaki actually SAVED lives."

(Barton J. Bernstein, "Understanding the Atomic Bomb and the Japanese Surrender: Missed Opportunities, Little-Known Near Disasters, and Modern Memory," Hiroshima in History and Memory, ed. Michael J. Hogan [New York: Cambridge University Press, 1996], p.45)

If all people in the world were committed to achieving a real peace, one which involves a cooperative, symbiotic relationship, perhaps pacifism could be a viable movement. Since this is not the case, we must often destroy violently those things that create tensions between peoples in order for peace to exist.

In the real world, wars usually bring ultimate peace, not pacifists. © 2007 Rabbi B. Leff & www.aish.com

### RABBI SHLOMO KATZ

## Hama'ayan

“**P**inchas, the son of Elazar, the son of Aharon the kohen.. ." (25:11)

Rashi writes that after Pinchas killed Zimri in defense of G-d's honor, Bnei Yisrael teased him, "Look at the acts of the grandson of Yitro [on his mother's side] who fattened calves for idolatry." In Pinchas' defense, Hashem emphasized that Pinchas was a descendant of Aharon.

R' Moshe Shick z"l (19th century) elaborates: The gemara (Kiddushin 70b) states, "If you see a kohen who is arrogant, be assured that his lineage is genuine, as it is written (Hoshea 4:4), 'Your nation is argumentative like a kohen'." Thus Hashem said, "Pinchas has demonstrated by his anger at Zimri that he is a genuine descendant of Aharon." (Maharam Shick Al Hatorah)

R' Shmuel Eidels z"l ("Maharsha") explains the above words of the prophet Hoshea as follows: Kohanim are argumentative because they think they are too important to give in. The prophet is rebuking the rest of the nation for acting like kohanim, i.e., being

argumentative, even though they are not as important as the kohanim. (Chiddushei Aggadot: Kiddushin 70b)

Another gemara (Bava Batra 160b) makes a related statement: "Kohanim are bad-tempered." Maharal explains that this is so because the "fire of holiness" burns within them and causes them to "boil." (Chiddushei Aggadot, end of tractate Sanhedrin)

R' Yehonatan Eyebchutz disagrees. He writes: Kohanim are meant to be kind-hearted people, just as their ancestor Aharon was known as a "lover of peace and pursuer of peace." However, so great is the strength of the forces of impurity which have overtaken us that the very things which are potentially the most holy in fact have become the most profane. This goes so far that the gemara records instances of kohanim killing each other in the Temple courtyard while arguing over who would perform certain Temple services. (Ya'arot D'vash I, No. 1)

Or: Because kohanim are by nature kind-hearted, their kindness must be balanced by bad-temper, lest they carry kindness to absurd extremes. Chessed perverted leads to immorality and adultery [see Vayikra 20:17], precisely the sin of Zimri. Because Pinchas saved the day by exhibiting anger and opposing the perversion of chessed, he merited to become a kohen. (Me'or Enayim:

Parashat Pinchas)

The gemara (Berachot 44a) records that the population of a certain city in Eretz Yisrael was once found to include 80 pairs of brothers who were kohanim married to 80 pairs of sisters who were daughters of kohanim. A similar search was conducted in Bavel and all that was found was one pair of brothers who were kohanim married to a pair of sisters, but those sisters were not daughters of kohanim.

R' Avraham Yitzchak Hakohen Kook z"l observes that this gemara highlights the unique qualities of Eretz Yisrael. Given the arrogant and argumentative nature of kohanim, those 160 marriages (in which both spouses were kohanim) were potential time bombs. Nevertheless, they apparently were successful, for if they had not been, the second sister of each pair would not have married her brother-in-law's brother. In contrast, outside of Eretz Yisrael, even one such marriage could not exist. (Ein Ayah p.197)



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