

Toras Aish

Thoughts From Across the Torah Spectrum

RABBI LORD JONATHAN SACKS ZT"l

Covenant & Conversation

Hidden beneath the surface of parshat Pinchas, the Sages uncovered a story of great poignancy. Moses, having seen his sister and brother die, knew that his own time on earth was coming to a close. He prayed to God to appoint a successor: "Let the Lord, God of the spirits of all flesh, appoint a man over this community who will go out before them and come in before them, who will lead them out and bring them home. Let not the Lord's community be like sheep without a shepherd." (Numbers 27:16-17)

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

The Sages sensed two clues to the story beneath the story. The first is that it appears immediately after the episode in which the daughters of Tzelophehad sought and were granted their father's share in the land. It was this that triggered Moses' request. A Midrash explains: "What was Moses' reason for making this request after declaring the order of inheritance? Just this, that when the daughters of Tzelophehad inherited from their father, Moses reasoned: the time is right for me to make my own request. If daughters inherit, it is surely right that my sons should inherit my glory." (Numbers Rabbah 21:14)

The second clue lies in God's words to Moses immediately before he made his request for the appointment of a successor: "The Lord said to Moses, 'Ascend this mountain of Abarim and gaze upon the land that I have given to the Israelites. After you have seen it, you too will be gathered to your people, like Aaron your brother...'" (Num. 27:12-13)

The italicised words are seemingly redundant. God was telling Moses he would soon die. Why did He need to add, "like Aaron your brother"? On this the Midrash says: This teaches us that Moses wanted to die the way Aaron did. The Ktav Sofer explains: Aaron had the privilege of knowing that his children would follow in his footsteps. Elazar, his son, was appointed as High Priest in his lifetime. To this day kohanim are direct descendants of Aaron. Moses likewise longed to see one of his sons, Gershom or Eliezer, take his place as leader

of the people. It was not to be. That is the story beneath the story.

It had an aftermath. In the book of Judges we read of a man named Micah who established an idolatrous cult in the territory of Ephraim and hired a Levite to officiate in the shrine. Some men from the tribe of Dan, moving north to find more suitable land for themselves, came upon Micah's house and seized both the idolatrous artefacts and the Levite, whom they persuaded to become their priest, saying, "Come with us, and be our father and priest. Isn't it better that you serve a tribe and clan in Israel as priest rather than just one man's household?" (Judges 18:19).

Only at the end of the story (v. 30) are we told the name of the idolatrous priest: Jonathan son of Gershom son of Moses. In our texts the letter nun has been inserted into the last of these names, so that it can be read as Menasheh rather than Moses. However, the letter, unusually, is written above the line, as a superscription. The Talmud says that the nun was added to avoid besmirching the name of Moses himself, by disclosing that his grandson had become an idolatrous priest.

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

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

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

A third explanation has to do with the nature of

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

A fourth explanation offered by the Sages was quite different. On principle, God did not want the crown of Torah to pass from parent to child in dynastic succession. Kingship and priesthood did. But the crown of Torah, they said, belongs to anyone who chooses to take hold of it and bear its responsibilities. "Moses commanded us the Torah as an inheritance of the congregation of Jacob," meaning that it belongs to all of us, not just an elite. The Talmud elaborates: "Be careful [not to neglect] the children of the poor, because from them Torah goes forth... Why is it not usual for scholars to give birth to sons who are scholars?"

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

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

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

"R. Ashi said: because they call people asses.

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

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

However, there is a fifth factor worthy of consideration. Some of the greatest figures in Jewish history did not succeed with all their children. Abraham fathered Ishmael. Isaac and Rebecca gave birth to Esau. All twelve of Jacob's children stayed within the fold, but three of them - Reuben, Shimon and Levi - disappointed their father. Of Shimon and Levi he said, "Let my soul not enter their plot; let my spirit not unite with their meeting" (Gen. 49:6). On the face of it, he was dissociating himself from them. Nonetheless, the three great leaders of the Israelites throughout the exodus - Moses, Aaron and Miriam - were all children of Levi. (Note however that Rashi interprets the curse as limited specifically to Zimri descendant of Shimon, and Korach, descendant of Levi.)

Solomon gave birth to Rehoboam, whose

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

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

Two things rescued the story of Moses and his children from tragedy. The book of Chronicles (1 Chron. 23:16, 24:20) refers to Gershom's son not as Jonathan but as Shevual or Shuvael, which the rabbis translated as "return to God". In other words, Jonathan eventually repented of his idolatry and became again a faithful Jew. However far a child has drifted, he or she may in the course of time come back.

The other is hinted at in the genealogy in Numbers 3. It begins with the words, "These are the children of Aaron and Moses," but goes on to list only Aaron's children. On this the rabbis say that because Moses taught Aaron's children they were regarded as his own. In general, "disciples" are called "children". (See Rashi on Numbers 3:1)

We may not all have children. Even if we do, we may, despite our best endeavours, find them at least temporarily following a different path. But we can all leave something behind us that will live on. Some do so by following Moses' example: teaching, facilitating, or encouraging the next generation. Some do so in line with the rabbinic statement that "the real offspring of the righteous are good deeds." (Rashi on Gen. 6:9)

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

estranged will be reunited in faith and love. *Covenant and Conversation is kindly supported by the Maurice Wohl Charitable Foundation in memory of Maurice and Vivienne Wohl zt"l ©2016 Rabbi Lord J. Sacks z"l and rabbisacks.org*

RABBI SHLOMO RISKIN

Shabbat Shalom

Fanaticism, 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 God's command. For responding so quickly and decisively, we read that, "God spoke to Moses saying, Pinchas, a son of Elazar and grandson of Aaron the priest, was the one who zealously took up my cause among the Israelites and turned My anger away from them... Therefore tell him that I have given him My covenant of peace..." (Numbers 25:10-12).

The Biblical summation is certainly one of praise and approbation. Indeed, Pinchas' full genealogy is presented in this sequence; we are also given the name of his father as well as of his grandfather, Aaron the high priest, indicating that the Torah wants to underscore his linkage to Aaron, "lover and pursuer of peace". 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 (Numbers 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 (Numbers 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 wellbeing, 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 (Numbers Chapter 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 lifestyle which justifies any and every physical expression. At this point, God commands Moses to "...take the leaders and impale them publicly before God." (Numbers 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 40 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 God, 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 God? 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 40 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 Korach did. And now Zimri hopes to discredit Moses even before God –

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 reinstated the covenant between God and Israel, and so he is truly worthy of the covenant of peace. ©2023 *Ohr Torah Institutions & Rabbi S. Riskin*

RABBI BEREL WEIN

Wein Online

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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RABBI AVI WEISS

Shabbat Forshpeis

After being told that he will soon die, Moses asks God to appoint a successor so that the Jews "not be as sheep that have no shepherd" (Numbers 27:17). God responds by telling Moses to appoint Joshua. In the words of the Torah, "Take Joshua, the son of Nun, a man in whom is spirit, and lay your hand upon him" (27:18).

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

Perhaps Moses did not see Joshua as having the qualities of a loving shepherd. While Moses had his moments when he killed the Egyptian, shattered the Tablets and hit the rock – he was, in the end, a teacher par excellence who led his people with extraordinary compassion and love. Joshua, on the other hand, largely saw the world through a military lens. Several examples underscore this difference:

- Joshua leads the Jews in the war against Amalek. As the Torah states, "And Moses said to Joshua, choose us men and go fight with Amalek" (Exodus 17:9). Interestingly, as Joshua battles Amalek, Moses's hands are raised in fervent prayer to God (Rashi, Exodus 17:11).

- When Moses is told that Eldad and Medad are prophesying in the camp, Joshua suggests that they be eliminated. In Joshua's words, "My lord Moses, shut

them in [kela'em]" (Numbers 11:28). This is the language of an army general. Moses, on the other hand, suggests that Eldad and Medad and all others be given the chance to prophesize. In Moses's words, "Would that all the Lord's people were prophets" (Numbers 11:29).

And so, God tells Moses to take Joshua "a man in whom is spirit, and lay your hand upon him" (Numbers 27:18). God is telling Moses that while Joshua, at this moment, lacks the characteristics of a shepherd, if Moses puts his hand on his head, symbolizing, as Rabbi David Silber points out, his readiness to teach Joshua his leadership style, he will be endowed with spiritual teaching. Moses does so generously, placing not only one hand but both hands on Joshua (Rashi, Numbers 27:23).

Not coincidentally, the Torah at its conclusion, describing the death of Moses, points out that "Joshua, the son of Nun, was full of the spirit of wisdom, for Moses had laid his hands upon him" (Deuteronomy 34:9). As Rabbi Silber notes, Moses succeeded in teaching Joshua the values of the shepherd. Placing his hands on Joshua means that Moses transmitted to Joshua the vital qualities of a teacher who is soft, compassionate, and sensitive.

Perhaps the greatest test of success is who succeeds you. Moses passes that test as he mentors Joshua, sharing spiritual teachings as he transfers leadership to him. ©2023 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

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Eliyahu Will Answer All Our Questions

Translated by Rabbi Mordechai Weiss

Some say that Pinchas is the same person as Eliyahu Ha-navi (the prophet Elijah). We await his coming, as promised by the prophet Malachi, with great anticipation. Eliyahu will provide answers to all our questions, clarifying laws as well as facts. Thus, the word "teiku," sometimes found in the Talmud following an unresolved question, is understood in folk etymology as an acronym for "*Tishbi yetaretz kushiyot u'ba'ayot*" ("Eliyahu will resolve all questions and difficulties").

Here is an example of a law to be clarified. When collecting a debt, do we leave the debtor the items which he needs to support himself? After all, when people donate to the *Beit HaMikdash*, we take their needs into account. Does this apply to debts owed to people as well?

The Talmud (*Bava Metzia* 114a) records that this question was once answered by Eliyahu based on a *gezeirah shavah*. (By the way, his view was not accepted by all. Even those who chose to accept his view were not doing so because he was a prophet. As we know, the

Torah is not in heaven, nor is a prophet permitted to make new laws. Rather, Eliyahu was no less a Torah scholar than anyone else, and might have even been better than most.)

Here are some examples of facts with which Eliyahu will help us. He will clarify whether certain *terumah* has become impure, and the status of a piece of meat which was out of a Jew's sight. He will be able to adjudicate monetary disputes in which a rabbinic court could not reach a decision and the money was held in abeyance. These cases are all very specific.

Eliyahu will also clear up some general doubts found in rabbinic literature about how things work: Do people base a meal (*kovea seudah*) on wine in the same way that they do on bread? Would a dead person have allowed certain disrespect of his body on the part of his heirs? May we write *tefillin* on the skin of a kosher fish, or is it considered disgusting? To resolve these doubts, we will rely on the prophetic power of Eliyahu, whose arrival we eagerly await. ©2017 Rabbi M. Weiss and *Encyclopedia Talmudit*

RABBI DAVID LEVIN

Zimri

At the end of last week's parasha we saw the zealous action of Pinchas, when he slaughtered a leader of Israel who was sinning against Hashem. Interestingly, the Torah divided this story in the middle; the action and its result in last week's parasha, and the conclusion of the story in this week's parasha. A famous radio personality, Paul Harvey, would introduce a detailed story, and then go to commercial. He began again with the words, "And now the rest of the story," clarifying some aspect of the story which put the entire incident into a new perspective. That seems to be the case here.

The Torah from last week's parasha ends with, "And behold a man of the B'nei Yisrael came and brought the Midianite woman near to his brothers before the eyes of Moshe and before the eyes of the entire assembly of the B'nei Yisrael, and they were weeping at the entrance to the Tent of Meeting. And Pinchas the son of Elazar the son of Aharon the Kohein saw, and he stood from among the assembly and he took a spear in his hand. And he went after the Yisrael man into the tent, and he pierced them both, the Yisraelite man and the woman into her stomach, and the plague was halted from upon the B'nei Yisrael. And those who died in the plague were twenty-four thousand." The continuation this week begins with, "Hashem spoke to Moshe saying. 'Pinchas, son of Elazar, son of Aharon, the Kohein, 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. 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 Elokim,

and he atoned for the B'nei Yisrael.' The name of the slain Israelite man who was slain with the Midianite woman was Zimri, son of Salu, prince of a father's house of Shimon. And the name of the slain Midianite woman was Cozbi the daughter of Zur; he was head of peoples, of a father's house in Midian."

There are several perplexing issues between these two sections. The Or HaChaim presents the first of these major problems. In last week's parasha, it appears that Hashem hid the names of the sinners. They appear to be an average Israelite man and an average Midianite woman. Still, their transgressions were serious enough that their story should be told. Yet, when their names and positions are revealed this week, the story becomes even more compelling. The Or HaChaim asks why their names were withheld last week, yet proclaimed this week. If Hashem wished to reveal the names, they should have been revealed when the incident took place. If it was Hashem's desire to hide the names, as was done with the man who collected wood on Shabbat, why were the names revealed this week? The Or HaChaim explains that Hashem does not like to reveal the names of sinners, but Hashem revealed the names now only in His praise of Pinchas. Hashem wished to acknowledge that Pinchas not only avenged Hashem and atoned for the B'nei Yisrael's sin, but he was not deterred when he realized that he was attacking, not a simple man and woman, but an important man, a prince of a tribe, and an important woman, a princess of a powerful nation.

HaRav Shamshon Raphael Hirsch explains that Pinchas acted as a zealot. The term used in Hebrew is "kanai," which Rashi indicates is an avenger, "one who settles a score." Hirsch indicates that Pinchas "was not deterred by any consideration of the possible enmity which his act might bring about against the nation. Nothing at all mattered when it was a question of saving the soul of a nation for faithfulness to Hashem and His Law." According to this interpretation, the names of both the Shimoni prince and the Midianite princess were mentioned to indicate that at the beginning of the action taken by Pinchas, he may have been unaware of their identity. Pinchas reacted only to the sin and not to the couple. When he came close enough to pierce them with the spear, he must have recognized Zimri, yet that did not deter him. He may even have recognized that this woman was of royal blood by the clothing she wore, yet he proceeded in spite of any consequences. Perhaps this is also the reason that Hashem blessed Pinchas with the covenant of Peace, a protection against the tribe of Shimon and the Midianites.

HaRav Zalman Sorotzkin gives us some other problems to study. He questions why Zimri is introduced simply as an Israelite man and Cozbi is referred to as "the one who was struck" rather than as a Midianite princess. The term "ish Yisrael, a man of Israel," indicates an important man, one who was recognized as

such by the entire community. Cozbi was not known by the people, and they thought that she was a Moabite, since the Torah describes the scene as the men being seduced by Moabite daughters. Even when Zimri brought her close to Moshe to taunt him, the people still were not certain that she was a Midianite and not a Moabite. They thought that Zimri was calling her a Midianite only to make fun of Moshe, who was married to the daughter of Yitro, a Midianite priest.

HaRav Sorotzkin points out that Zimri the son of Salu was not his real name. It is not uncommon for the Torah to change a name that indicates a change in responsibility or position. In Gemara Sanhedrin, we are told that his real name was Shlumiel the son of Tzurishadai. In translation this would mean that his name was "My Peace (Completeness) is Keil (Hashem)" the son of "My Rock is the Almighty." His name was then changed because he began to question Hashem, which led him to stray. His new name was reported while he was still in Egypt as "Shaol (The Questioner) the son of a Canaanite woman." The influence of his mother as a Canaanite may have led to his questioning the authority of Hashem. When he sinned, his name became Zimri (Lewd Man) the son of Salu (related to "Stung by a Thorn"). Zimri's sin here was even worse than directly recorded in the Torah. In the Torah, Zimri took Cozbi to the Temple to sin even though the plague was already killing sinners. He purposefully brought Cozbi before Moshe and the people; he continued his defiance while he was suffering from the plague and would have died even without Pinchas' interference.

We find several times in the Torah where a person's name is changed. Avram became Avraham, Sarai became Sarah, Ya'akov become Yisrael, Hoshea became Yehoshua. Each of these name changes were for the better. Each was a sign of praise. Here we find the opposite. Shlumiel had a strong connection to Hashem which was reflected in his name. His decline was signaled by a degradation of his name. May we always strive to maintain a Shem Tov, a Good Name. May our names be an inspiration to future generations that may be named after us. May we be worthy of the Good Name that we were given by our parents. © 2023 Rabbi D. Levin

RABBI JONATHAN GEWIRTZ

Migdal Ohr

"**T**he name of the Midianite woman struck was Cozbi daughter of Tzur; he was a tribal head of an ancestral house of Midian." (Bamidbar 25:15) Rashi quotes the Midrash Tanchuma that so great was their hatred of the Jews, that the Midianites sacrificed the daughter of the king to be demeaned by an act of harlotry. A number of commentaries ask how Rashi knew it was hatred, and not fear. Perhaps they wanted to protect themselves by causing the Shechina to leave the Jewish camp?

The explanation for the most part is that the Midianites were not afraid of the Jews. Their land was not slated for conquer, and the Jews had lived in the area of Midian for some time. They were not attacked and thus had no reason to fear. It must be that they only did this because of their hatred of Klal Yisrael. Her father was one of the five kings of Midian (some say it was actually Balak, who had been a temporary king of Moav) but his name was moved down the list of importance due to the lowly nature of what his daughter did. Though this was Bilaam's idea, some say she was the only one who did it.

What is striking, however, is Rashi's comment: "This is to let you know the hatred of the Midianites." It's not just an explanation of why they did this, but it's intended to be a lesson to us. We are supposed to learn HOW MUCH they hated us. But why? We all know that the nations of the world hate us. They want to destroy us. What does Rashi mean by saying her name is mentioned to show us how much hatred they had?

Perhaps what the Midrash wanted us to understand was not the anti-Semitism of the Midianites, but rather, the devastating power of hatred. Hatred can make people do things that are vile, repulsive, and even self-destructive. It can cause people to do things a sane and rational person would not do.

And this is not new. We learned that Bilaam, himself, saddled his donkey to go curse the Jews. Though he had servants and others who could have done it, Sinah mekalkeles es hashura, hatred corrupts the order of things, and Bilaam demeaned himself in order to carry out his act of hatred against the Jews.

As we enter the Three Weeks, the period of mourning for the Bais HaMikdash, we recall all the hatred of our nation throughout history. We look back to the spies who hated Eretz Yisrael, to the leaders who worshiped idols and hated the prophets of Hashem, and we look back to the travesties we've committed against each other because of the hatred we create and harbor within ourselves.

We must recognize how dangerous this trait is, and seek to eradicate it from ourselves and our national identity. Yes, we are to hate those that hate Hashem, but even when doing so, we must be so careful not to let the hatred take over, and make us do things we'll regret.

One window of a Rebbe's home had a view of the local church. Each day he would pass the window, see the church, and express his contempt for it and its occupants. One day he asked his Shamash to cover the window with heavy curtains so that the sight should not bother him anymore. Surprised, the assistant readily agreed to do so but asked, "Rebbe, it has been visible for so many years. Why now does it bother you all of a sudden?"

The Rebbe replied with a sad smile, "I used to see that church each day and my blood would boil. I would be beside myself with hatred for the falsehood and

evil perpetrated under the guise of religion and holiness and I would spit to show my feelings.

Lately, however, I have found that after seeing it for so many years, day after day, it no longer bothered me so much... and THAT bothers me to no end!" © 2023 Rabbi J. Gewirtz & Migdal Ohr

DONIEL T. TRENK

The Baton is Passed On

Throughout Sefer Bamidbar, we find Moshe's leadership repeatedly challenged. One example, of course, was the rebellion of Korach v'Adaso. In others instances, the nation blamed Moshe for their deaths in the desert and threatened to head back to Mitzrayim.

In Parshas Behaloscha, the complaints came not only from Moshe's adversaries, but from his own siblings. Surprisingly, we find Aharon and Miriam virtually repeating Korach's words: "Is Moshe special? Doesn't Hashem speak to all of us equally?"

The attacks against Moshe, from both without and within, came with consequences. It appears that Moshe lost something essential in his role as the leader of Bnei Yisroel. What was it? Rashi says when the nation complained about the "flavorless" Manna, Moshe's strength became weakened – "Tash Kocho Shel Moshe k'Nkeivah."

In Parshas Pinchas, we find two examples where Moshe's strength as the Rabban shel Yisroel was indeed "weakened."

First, in the case of Maaseh Zimri, Moshe was at a loss regarding the Din concerning a Boel Aramis. Rashi states: The halacha was hidden from him, "Nisalma Mimenu Halacha." Consequently, what Moshe forgot, Pinchas remembered.

The second instance was with the Bnos Tzelafchad. Moshe didn't know how to answer when the daughters asked for an inheritance in the land. Notably, Rashi uses the same words as in the case of Maaseh Zimri- "Nisalma Mimenu Halacha." Tzelofchad's daughters had the zechus of revealing a halacha that Moshe had forgotten.

The question remains: How could Moshe, the greatest Navi who spoke to Hashem Panim el Panim, forget what he had learned on Har Sinai? Was Moshe Rabbeinu vulnerable to criticism? Doesn't this contradict an essential principle read in Zos Ha'Bracha, that even at 120 years of age, Moshe lost nothing of his strength – "Lo Nas Lecho"?

The Tiferes Tzvi presents a fascinating insight. In the six parshios from Behaloscha through Pinchas, there's a significant reason why Moshe Rabbeinu was "weakened." It wasn't due to old age or diminishing capacities. Instead, it was because the Torah's growth could only come at the expense of Moshe's decline.

If Moshe had lived forever and the nation remained under his shadow, what room would there be

for others to teach Torah, become leaders in their own right, and be mechadesh their chelek in learning? By Moshe gradually letting go of the reigns, by "forgetting his learning," others were gifted the opportunity to reveal their chelek in Torah, just like Pinchas and Bnos Tzelafchad.

The Sifri states that the laws of nachala, similar to those of Pesach Sheini, should have been introduced by Moshe himself. However, others merited to have it stated in their name— "Zachu Elu sh'Te'amer al Yedeihen, Sh'Megalgalin Zechus al Yedei Zachai".

This essentially implies that the seeds of Torah sh'Baal Peh were planted in Sefer Bamidbar.

Moshe is compared to the sun, and his student Yehoshua to the moon. Where the sun shines, the moon cannot. Its rays are too strong and don't allow anything to share its space. Therefore, at the end of Pinchas, Moshe had to pass on his spiritual aura to Yehoshua. Moshe's sun had to set.

This is the first instance of a Rebbe not just teaching his Talmid but also allowing the Talmid to take over the role of the teacher. This is the essence of Torah sh'Baal Peh and is expressed in the words, "Torah Tziva Lanu Moshe, Morasha Kehilas Yaakov". Although Moshe commanded the Torah, in the end, it's a yerusha, a "nachala", for all Kehilas Yaakov. © 2023 D. Trenk

RABBI YITZCHOK ADLERSTEIN

Meor Einayim

“**T**herefore say, 'Behold, I give him my covenant of peace.'" (Bamidbar 25:12) Notice the present tense: "I give," rather than I will give. The present implies continuing action, i.e. what I give to Pinchas continues to give at all times. You'll find a similar construction at the end of Malachi: "Behold, I send you," (3 Malachi 3:23) rather than I will send. This is not surprising, since the object of the verb is Eliyahu, who is otherwise known as Pinchas! (Yalkut Shimoni #771, beginning of Pinchas)

We know that Eliyahu is the harbinger of Mashiach, but let's unpack that further. The arrival of Mashiach means completion, or the coming together of all the materials needed to build the perfected world. Even when the pieces are available, they usually grate on each other to some extent. There is always tension, resistance to the pieces joining each other perfectly. Overcoming the tension means that the pieces are in peace with each other.

What overcomes the resistance is powerful longing and desire. Eliyahu's heralding of the soon-to-come redeemer is another way of depicting the great teshukah that we must have for redemption before it comes.

Similarly, the power of tefillah is unleashed when the elements of thought and speech come together in perfect fit. This unification is a smaller version of the one that takes place in the time of Mashiach, when all the

600,000 neshamos of Klal Yisrael come together, as they were in Adam before his sin. (The Besht in fact taught that it is the responsibility of every Jew to prepare the contribution of his neshamah to the complete stature of Man at the time of Mashiach.) Thus, Eliyahu is involved wherever there is an important unification -- where different elements fit together, including tefillah and learning. Thus, the berachah that Hashem gave Pinchas is indeed operative in all generations. It is a berachah of both peace and completion.

Just why did this task become identified with Eliyahu? Because as is known, Pinchas assimilated the neshamos of Nadav and Avihu. (Zohar3 57b) Those had died because of their enormous teshukah and passion for avodah of Hashem. So strong was their longing, that their neshamos departed from them while they served Him. The "fire" that went out and killed them was their own fiery passion for the pure light that they saw in drawing close to Him in their service. (While the gemara offers other explanations for their deaths, pointing to different aveiros, the real reason is what I've written. All the other reasons only explain why Hashem did not save them from becoming totally consumed by their extreme longing for union with Him.)

Pinchas/Eliyahu became the possessor of this passion and teshukah when the neshamos of Nadav and Avihu passed on to him. Through them, Pinchas received the berachah of shalom, or the shleimus/completion that comes whenever there is a yichud of elements that come together. (This is why the last berachah of the Shemonah Esreh is for shalom, coming after the successful integration of machshavah and dibbur.) And so it will be at the time of our redemption, may it happen soon, in our days! Pinchas/Eliyahu will play a crucial role in spurring the teshukah necessary for it to happen. (Based on Meor Einayim by Rav Menachem Nochum zt"l of Chernobyl.)

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