



Parshas Pinchas

For the week ending 24 Tammuz 5758
17-18 July 1998

Overview

Hashem tells Moshe to inform Pinchas that Pinchas will receive Hashem's "covenant of peace" as reward for his bold action — executing *Zimri* and the Midianite princess *Kozbi*. Hashem commands Moshe that the people must maintain a state of enmity with the *Midianites* because they allured the Jewish People to sin. Moshe and Elazar are told to count the Jewish People. The Torah lists the names of the families in each tribe. The total number of males eligible to serve in the army is 601,730. Hashem instructs Moshe how to allot the Land of Israel to *Bnei Yisrael*. The number of the families of the Levites is recorded. The daughters of *Tzlofchad* file a claim with Moshe: In the absence of a brother, they request their late father's portion in the Land. Moshe asks Hashem for the ruling, and Hashem tells Moshe that the daughters' claim is just. The Torah teaches the laws and priorities which determine the order of inheritance. Hashem tells Moshe to ascend a mountain and view the Land that the Jewish People will soon enter, although Moshe himself will not enter. Moshe asks Hashem to designate the subsequent leader of the people, and Hashem selects *Yehoshua bin Nun*. Moshe ordains *Yehoshua* as his successor in the presence of the entire nation. The Parsha concludes with special teachings of the service in the *Beis Hamikdash*.

Insights

THE TURN OF THE SCREW

"Harass the Midianites and smite them" (25:17)

Imagine yourself sitting on an airplane. The person next to you smiles, pulls out a screwdriver, places the sharp end in his ear and starts to turn the screwdriver into his brain. You'd try and stop him, wouldn't you? You'd knock the screwdriver out of his hand and kick it away from him.

Would you have the same reaction if the person next to you was doing a sin? Why not?

Ideas don't frighten us. We are only frightened by what we see. The greatest proof is that we don't fear G-d as much as we should. We may know and believe that there is a G-d, but how many of us walk around feeling that He is in front of us at every moment? If we saw G-d, we would never sin. We don't see Him, and that's why we are able to "go away" from Him. In Hebrew, the word for *fear* — *yirah* — is almost identical to the word for *sight*. We are only frightened by what we see.

When we see someone murdering, it evokes in us a horror and a revulsion which is beyond words. But when we see someone encouraging a Jew to break Shabbos or eat non-kosher food, we don't have nearly the same reaction. And yet, logically, our reaction to the latter should be far greater than the former.

When someone murders, he takes away the life of a person in this world. But when someone makes someone else transgress the Torah, he takes away their life in this world and the next.

As far as our eyes can see, this world is but a brief walk between two darknesses. However, we know that this world is no more than an antechamber before the great palace of light. We don't see the light, but we know it's there. We don't see — and therefore we don't fear.

The Midianites incited the Jewish People to sin. It is for this reason that Hashem commanded us to take

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such harsh measures against them. It was not enough for us to attack them; rather we must maintain a constant enmity against them, a constant mindset to remind ourselves that they tried to implant in us a lust for immorality. They tried to remove us not just from this world but from the next as well.

HELPING DADDY

“By avenging My vengeance...” (25:11)

He expressed the anger that was Mine to show — Rashi.

When you ask your three-year old to help you set the table for Shabbos and he manfully steers the kiddush cup onto the table, you get a tremendous feeling of *nachas*. You certainly don't gain anything from his help, except of course, enormous pleasure. You could have just as easily done what he did at the same time as you brought in the rest of the plates and the cutlery. But you gave him a job all of his own!

Rashi explains the meaning of the expression “*he avenged My vengeance*” to mean: *He expressed the anger that was Mine to show*. It was specifically because Pinchas did something that was really Hashem's to do that he merited such a great reward.

The same idea applies to *tzedaka*, charity. Turnus Rufus once asked Rabbi Akiva: “If Hashem loves the poor why doesn't He feed them?” Rabbi Akiva answered that the poor give us more than we give them — for through giving them *tzedaka*, they save us from *gehinom* (purgatory).

Rabbi Akiva was saying that, of course, it's Hashem's “job” to feed the poor, but He allows us to feed them instead. And by doing “Hashem's job for Him” we earn a far greater reward. We are like the little boy setting the table for Shabbos. Of course, Hashem can feed the poor Himself, but He gives us the job to do, even though we're really not “helping” Him at all.

KINDRED SPIRIT

“Moshe spoke to Hashem, saying: ‘May Hashem, the G-d of all the spirits of all the flesh, appoint a man over the assembly.’” (27:15-16)

“**T**he G-d of all the spirits” is an unusual phrase. What was Moshe hinting to when he addressed Hashem thus?

The best kind of leader is someone who understands intimately the individual natures of those he leads. No one can know us as G-d knows us. Thus Moshe prayed that whoever would replace him should resemble G-d's quality of knowing the spirits of all the flesh; that he should be able to intuit the needs, the virtues and the foibles of those that he was to lead.

Sources:

The Turn Of The Screw - Rashi, Midrash

Helping Daddy - Rabbi Moshe Feinstein, z”tl

Kindred Spirit - Rashi

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Haftorah: Yirmiyahu 1:1-2:3

The three Haftorahs which are read in the Three Weeks (between 17th Tammuz and 9th Av) are called the "three of affliction." They detail the dire consequences that will befall Bnei Yisrael if they do not return to Hashem. Nevertheless, each of these three Haftorahs ends on a note of optimism, expressing the confidence that Hashem never forgets His people even in the deepest and darkest exile.

BAD COMPANY

"Thus says Hashem: 'I remember for your sake the kindness of your youth, the love of your bridal days, your following after Me in the wilderness in a land not sown.' Israel is sacred to Hashem, the first of His grain; all who devour him shall bear his guilt, evil shall come upon them — the word of Hashem." (2:2-3)

Once there was a sensitive lad who spent all his days in study and refinement of his character. While still at a tender age he was captured by bandits and forced to live among them. At first he was repulsed by their coarseness and clung to his original demeanor. However, as the weeks lengthened into years and no sign of rescue came, slowly but surely he began to degenerate to the level of his captors and eventually he became indistinguishable from them.

When the Jewish People are finally redeemed from exile the nations that have oppressed them will be held to account, not just for their own misdeeds against Israel, *but also for Israel's transgressions*, for had it not been for the company the Jewish People kept in exile, they would still be on the same spiritual level that they were on when they were in the desert.

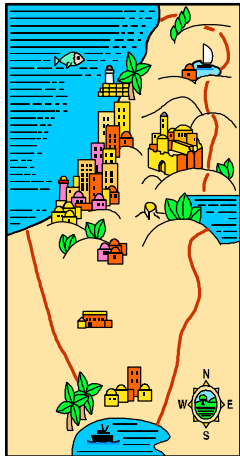
That is the meaning of these verses: *I remember for your sake the kindness of your youth, the love of your bridal days, your following after Me in the wilderness in a land not sown.* I remember, says Hashem, how you were when you followed after Me through the wilderness, before you were exiled among the nations. At your root you are holy, and if you have sinned it is because of the atmosphere you have imbibed during the long night of exile.

Kochav m'Yaakov in Mayana shel Torah

LOVE OF THE LAND

Selections from classical Torah sources which express the special relationship between the People of Israel and Eretz Yisrael

THOSE WHO SHOULD LOVE THE LAND



A total of seventy bullocks were offered on the altar in the *Beis Hamikdash* during the seven days of Succos (*Bamidbar 29:12 - 34, Parshas Pinchas*). These 70 sacrifices, says Rabbi Elazar, correspond to the 70 non-Jewish nations of the world. Since Succos is the time when the world is judged in regard to rainfall for the year to come, Jews offer these sacrifices in their Sanctuary in *Eretz Yisrael* as atonement for the shortcomings of all these nations in order that they may gain a favorable heavenly judgment for their water needs. This unappreciated service is what led Rabbi Yochanan to exclaim: "Woe to the heathen nations who lost something and are not even aware of their loss. When there was a *Beis Hamikdash*, the altar provided atonement for them, but now who will atone for them?"

Mesechta Succah 55b

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