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Wein - Parshas Pinchas

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Parshas Pinchas

Pinchas is not an overly popular figure in Jewish life and among his own generation. The people of Israel were angered by his act of violence in killing the head of the tribe of Shimon without giving the matter due judicial process. It is because of this type of murmuring that the Lord Himself, so to speak, blesses Pinchas personally and grants him the gift of priesthood and of peace.

Pinchas' motives are challenged by the people but they are vindicated by God. But it takes G-d himself, so to speak to quiet the objections to Pinchas and his behavior. And it is noteworthy therefore to emphasize that we do not find any other further act of holy zealotry mentioned in the Torah or approved of by Jewish tradition

Pinchas and his behavior become the exception and not the rule in Jewish life and tradition. Zealotry is a very difficult characteristic to gauge correctly. How much are personal quirks involved in such zealous behavior? Jewish history and society is littered by the victims of religious zealotry who were felled by personal attacks clothed in the guise of religious piety and zealotry.

The zealot often covers his own weaknesses and self-doubt by attacking others. That is why the people of Israel questioned the motives of Pinchas in killing Zimri. Because of this, it is obvious that only God, so to speak, could save Pinchas from unwarranted criticism and public disapproval. But in so doing, God, again so to speak, warns us of the dangers of zealotry. He will not step in again to rescue the zealot from public and historical disapproval.

We meet Pinchas again later in Jewish history, again at a moment of personal tragedy. He is the High Priest and head of the Sanhedrin at the time of Yiftach, the judge of Israel. Yiftach has made a foolish vow that whatever or whoever comes forth first from his house to greet him upon his return from the successful war that he waged to save Israel from the oppression of Bnei Ammon will be sacrificed to God.

The daughter of Yiftach, not knowing of her father's vow, rushes out of the house to welcome home the returning hero. Eventually Yiftach fulfills his vow and kills her on the altar. This entire horrible story could have been averted.

The rabbis in the Talmud tell us that Yiftach could have had the vow annulled retroactively by appearing before Pinchas and his court and requesting such an annulment. But ego and hubris interfere, even at the cost of the life of one's own child. Yiftach refuses to humble himself – after all he is the leader of Israel – to appear before Pinchas and ask for the annulment.

Even though Pinchas is aware of the vow, he also refuses to lower himself – after all he is the high Priest and the head of the Sanhedrin – to travel to Yiftach to effect the annulment. As the Talmud ruefully observes, because of this display of personal pique and ego, an innocent person is killed. Pinchas' reputation is therefore tarnished by this incident. Perhaps this is another reason that we do not find the zealotry of Pinchas repeated and complimented again in the Torah.

Shabat shalom.

Rabbi Berel Wein

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Peninim on the Torah
by Rabbi A. Leib Scheinbaum
PARSHAS PINCHAS

Pinchas ben Elazar ben Aharon HaKohen turned back My wrath from upon the Bnei Yisrael. (25:11) Who was Pinchas, and why was he selected for the distinct honor of receiving the covenant of peace from Hashem? When one considers that it was Moshe Rabbeinu who stood at the front line during the incident of the Golden Calf and that Aharon came forward during the Korach rebellion, it is surprising that they were not accorded any special "thank you" for their efforts, while Pinchas achieved great distinction for his actions. Horav Zalman Sorotzkin, zl, attributes this to the unique subtlety of Pinchas' personal history. When we think about it, until this very moment, we had not heard from, or about, Pinchas. When the Kohanim were anointed, he was not included. When the Princes of Shevet Levi were enumerated, he was not included. Pinchas happened to be a simple, common Jew, just doing his job and maintaining his spiritual well-being. Until this point, he had not excelled in any area. He was not outstanding - just a common Jew. Therefore, when he took a stand for the honor of Heaven, at a time when Moshe and Aharon and Klal Yisrael's leadership had been frozen, it was an act of great significance. A simple Jew saw the travesty of an insolent Prince of the tribe of Shimon denigrating Hashem's name, while no one was taking a stand to react to him. He felt the imperative to act in response.

Surely Pinchas' inclination attempted to dissuade him. "Why you? The entire Jewish leadership is there. Let them react. Who are you to dare to make such a move against a Prince of Yisrael?" Pinchas, however, was not deterred. He saw what had to be done, and he acted accordingly. This is perhaps why Pinchas is spelled with an added small yud- to emphasize that, until this point, Pinchas had been a small, simple Jew of whom no one had heard. This is what distinguished him from anyone else: his simplicity, his personal insignificance. To come from nowhere and act as he did merits the reward that he received.

We can derive a powerful lesson from here. How many of us "put our money" on the brightest student, the most charismatic student, the "loudest" student - only to be wrong? Let us look around, and we will notice the quiet one who subtly remained at the back of the line, who did not seek all of the fanfare, who diligently plugged away quietly and, with determination, made it to the forefront of leadership of the Jewish community - everywhere. Let

Pinchas serve as a lesson for all of us: Let no child be left behind. Let no child be ignored. The student in the back might be our rav, our rosh yeshivah, our lay leader one day.

When he zealously avenged My vengeance among them. (25:11)

Rashi explains this pasuk to mean: when he avenged that which had to be avenged for Me, when he expressed the rage with which I should have been enraged. He adds that any form of the word kinah, jealousy, refers to one who settles a score, to avenge the vengeance of a matter. This is a great chidush, novel idea. Every act of jealousy is an act of vengeance. While this is understood in circumstances surrounding a zealous outburst, as was evinced by Pinchas, how does this fit in under "normal" circumstances of jealousy? One is jealous because he envies the other person or his possessions. How is this connected to revenge?

Horav Matisyahu Solomon, Shlita, explains that Rashi is revealing to us an important principle concerning the kochos ha'nefesh, human nature, of a person. What causes a person to envy his fellow? When we think about it, we realize that kinah, jealousy, is a strange character trait. Other character traits are motivated by desire and passion, a deep inclination for something that is often out of bounds. This passion is powerful and conjures up images of success as if the person has consummated his desire. Jealousy, however, is a sense of pain and misery for something that one does not have. The greater the envy, the stronger is one's pain. Yet, this pain does not deter him from increasing his jealousy.

This envy does not develop overnight. It is a gradual process that seethes as long as the individual sees his friend achieve success or increase his possessions. At first, it does not bother him. Until now, he had no need for this possession. After awhile he says, "Why not me? I also want such a possession or to achieve this success." Then it begins to gnaw at him. He no longer would like to have it; now, he must have it. After all, he deserves it more than his fellow. It gets to the point that he begins to feel that his friend took it from him. His friend has what rightfully belongs to him. He is a ganov, thief! He begins to feel justified in taking nekamah, exacting vengeance, against the individual for taking what is rightfully his.

Kinah, is thus, an emotion, a feeling that does not allow one to tolerate what his friend possesses, or the success that he has achieved. It is rightfully his, and his friend stole it from him! Jealousy is not focused upon the possession, for even when an individual succeeds in having his desire achieve fruition, and he has in his possession the item that he had so badly desired, he is still not calmed; he is still not happy. He hates the person who had it; he wants to take revenge on him. He took what belonged to him! Envy does not make sense. Yet, it destroys a person and drives him to act in the most perverse manner to satisfy his desire for vengeance.

How does one save himself from falling into the abyss of envy, from falling prey to the self destructive attitude it generates? Rav Matisyahu feels the only way one can save himself from this destructive trait is by developing a sense of histapkus, contentment and satisfaction, with life in general and everyday challenges in particular. One whose ayin ra, evil eye, dominates his vision, creating a myopia in which everything he sees is negative and jaundiced, will fall prey to kinah. He will always think that what his friend possesses should really be his. The mistapek, one who is always satisfied, has no worries. He is not missing anything. Whatever he possesses is what he needs, and what he does not have, he obviously does not need. Otherwise, Hashem would have provided him with it. Thus, he has no reason to view his fellow's possessions or success through a spectrum of resentment and spite. He is content with what he has and pleased for his friend for what he has achieved.

The Mashgiach substantiates this with a pasuk in Bereishis 41:12, where Rashi -- in his interpretation of the description of the healthy cows in Pharaoh's dream -- says, "Yefos mareh," beautiful appearance. This is a sign of good times, days of plenty, when people look favorably upon one another. It is axiomatic that, although greed is rooted in human nature, people are less likely to resent one another during times of prosperity and

when everyone is prosperous. Let us think for a moment. If we were to ask anyone, "What is the symbol of years of plenty," the answer probably would be, brios basar, healthy of flesh, when the animal appears satiated and well-fed. Yefos mareh, beautiful appearance, implying a content appearance, is not necessarily the first thing for which one looks. Rashi is, therefore, telling us that a well-fed animal does not imply that times are good. Perhaps the owner has money, and he is able to purchase the necessary foods on the black market. It is only when people are not envious of each other, contentment and satisfaction reign, when no individual feels that he is losing out because of someone else, when everyone has an ayin tovah, good eye, are we living in good times.

The bitterness and resentment that we cause ourselves as a result of our lack of histapkus is, at times, overwhelming. It destroys lives and families. People feel inadequate and dissatisfied; they complain about everything and everybody. Probably the greatest loss from such an attitude is the loss of opportunity. One could do so much for others if he would only refrain from wallowing in bitterness. By doing good, one feels good, and, by feeling good, one views everything in a positive light. Why not try it?

The mantle of kanaus, true zealousness, is one that must be earned. While many have attempted to place this crown on their heads, only the few and the sincere are truly deserving of this exalted position. One of those unique individuals who fought for truth and morality, dedicated to the Torah way, was the Brisker Rav, zl. When he felt that the issue regarding autopsies and the desecration of graves in Eretz Yisrael was becoming a public travesty, he came to the fore in leading the battle to protect this sacrilege. Piles of bones that had been dug up during archaeological digs were thrown away as refuse after the laboratories were finished with them. It is beyond the scope of this paper to outline the horror and indecency that was perpetrated in the name of science, sanctioned by the secular government. Indeed, even after long years of protests and demonstrations, followed by diplomatic maneuvering, significant numbers of bones remain unburied to this very day.

In 1956, the archaeologists began digging up the graves of Tanaim and Amoraim in Beit Shearim. They also desecrated graves in the ancient Teveria cemetery near the grave of the Rambam. This profanity prompted the Brisker Rav to spearhead a campaign against the excavations. He called together the sages and leaders of Yerushalayim for a meeting. They signed a statement prohibiting these excavations, warning the populace of the grave sin of not complying with the demands of the Torah. The Brisker Rav cried bitterly while writing and signing this statement. His daughter later bemoaned the fact that none of those who were to read the proclamation would be aware of his copious tears. That night the Brisker Rav could not sleep. His son, Rav Raphael, zl, noticed that in the morning his pillow was drenched with tears. His father had cried all night.

There is so much more to write about the Brisker Rav's battles to maintain the moral purity of our Holy Land. I am recording this episode to demonstrate true kanaus. The Brisker Rav cried in response to the tragedy of chillul Hashem, desecration of Hashem's Name. The Brisker Rav cried because of the actions that he was obligated to take. The Brisker Rav was mekaneh for Hashem, but he cried the entire time! It was not something he wanted to do. It was something he felt he had to do. That is the difference between those who are kanaim and those who are rabble rousers, slanderers, who, in the name of zealousness, have no compunction about destroying innocent lives.

Zealousness can turn ugly, especially when one is motivated by inappropriate impulses. When one does not act with the Torah as his guide, with the fear and trepidation that was demonstrated by the Brisker Rav's tears, he acts instead with malicious arrogance, with one purpose in mind - to hurt and destroy anybody who stands in his way. How many of us can say that our motives are pure, that they are free of any vestige of personal aggrandizement and self-serving objectives? There are many reasons today for one to raise the banner of zealous offensive against some of the injustices that have been perpetrated within the Jewish community. Whistle

blowing that achieves nothing more than defamation of character, exhuming the dead for the purpose of burying them once again, destroying one's descendants because of the sins of the fathers, is not zealotry. It is murder.

And the name of the slain woman was Kasbi bas Tzur, he was head of peoples/ (25:15)

Later on, in (31:18), we read that Midyan had five kings. Tzur was the most prominent of them all, as he is referred to here as rosh umos, head of peoples. There, however, he is counted as third. Rashi explains that since he debased himself by allowing his daughter to participate in harlotry, the Torah lists him as third. Does this really make a difference? He is either the head or he is not. Just because the Torah lists him as third does not detract from the esteem in which he was held in the eyes of the Midyanites.

Veritably, he was still the head. As far as he was concerned, that is all that counts. Horav Shimshon Chaim Nachmeini, zl, in his sefer, Zera Shimshon, explains that a person merits monarchy for one of three reasons: he is in the family, descending from kings and princes; he is especially wise and intelligent, rendering him a prime candidate for guiding the country successfully; he is extremely wealthy, able to purchase the position, as did Achashveirosh.

Clearly, the individual who ascends to the throne as a result of his purchasing power will not be as respected as one who earns the position through pedigree or astuteness. At first, Tzur had it all. He had family, as he was a descendant of the previous monarchs. He was also a smart man, eminently capable of guiding the country. Wealth was also no drawback, since he had no shortage of funds. It all changed, however, when he foolishly denigrated his daughter and, consequently, himself. His hatred of the Jews destroyed his ability to think rationally. He was still king because he retained his wealth, but the honor that was originally his was no longer. His actions deprived him of his honor after what he had done. He was king only due to the third reason - money. Thus, he is listed third in the order of monarchs.

Smart people sometimes act foolishly, often out of anger or fear. While they may still retain their position of power, they no longer earn the respect of the people. Leadership demands respect, but it is a response that one must constantly earn and one of which he must be worthy. It just takes one foolish move, one deference to the yetzer hora, evil inclination, to destroy so much for which one has worked. It would be so much more beneficial if we would just stop to think for a moment concerning the ramifications of our actions. It might save us and our families so much heartache.

May Hashem G-d of the spirits of all flesh, appoint a man over the assembly who shall go out together, and come in before them, who shall take them out and who shall bring them in; and let the assembly of Hashem not be like sheep that have no shepherd. (27:16,17)

Hashem had told Moshe Rabbeinu that he was not going to enter Eretz Yisrael. He turned to the Almighty to request a replacement, someone who would assume the mantle of leadership. This was not a simple request. As Rashi comments, Moshe said to Hashem, "Master of the world! The personality of each individual is revealed before You, and they do not resemble each other. Appoint a leader who can put up with each individual according to his personality." The Berdichever Rebbe, zl, says in his inimitable manner, "Select a leader that will always be melamed z'chus, find merit and seek to justify the people's actions, just as You, Hashem, always finds a positive side to our actions."

In his Derashos El Ami, Horav Amiel, zl, writes that a leader does not necessarily have to find favor in the eyes of the people. Leadership is not a popularity contest. He need not concern himself with the psychosis of the people. He must lead, and they must follow, otherwise, he will end up following the people. The leader must be in front of the people - not behind them.

"Who shall take them out and who shall bring them in." A leader must not only lead in time of war. He must know when to take them out of the

environment of battle and bring them back to peaceful life. The battlefield is filled with blood that is spilled often carelessly and needlessly. This plays havoc on one's emotions. A leader must know how to guide his people back and teach them how to appreciate and live peacefully together. All too often, soldiers bring the battle back home with them, suffering from various syndromes and emotional outbursts. A leader must help his people adjust to an orderly, normal life-- or else it is as if he has lost them on the battlefield.

A community is composed of many individuals with distinct personalities and a multiplicity of family, personal and economic issues. A leader must remain focused on the diversity of his community, on the needs of the young versus the old, the wealthy versus those facing economic challenges and the multifariousness of religious observance - both real and imaginary. Everybody needs his leader, usually at the most inconvenient times. That is the essence of leadership.

A leader must "take them out and bring them in." He should not contend that they are his responsibility in shul, but what they do outside of the boundaries of the synagogue is of no concern to him. He must take them out and care about their lives outside of the confines of the halls of prayer. We must also bring them back in, seeing to it that what is picked up outside of the community stays outside and its influence not be allowed to penetrate the sanctity of the community. Above all, the leader must care about the needs of every member of his community, even if they are imaginary. To ignore a person's perceived needs is to ignore the person.

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Women And The Land Of Israel

By Rav Moshe Lichtman

This week's parashah contains the story of B'not Tzlofchad, those courageous and idealistic women who cherished the Land of Israel and demanded a portion in it. The first verse states, - The daughters of Tzlofchad, son of Chefer, son of Gil'ad, son of Machir, son of Menasheh - of the families of Menasheh son of Yosef - drew near (27:1). Rashi comments:

Of the families of menasheh son of yosef: Why is this stated? Does it not already say, son of Menasheh? It is to teach you [that just as] Yosef cherished the Land - as it says, - You shall bring up my bones... (BeReishit 50:25) - [so too] his daughters cherished the Land, as it says, - Give us a portion (27:4).

A few verses earlier, after recording the census of Moshe and Elazar, the Torah states: - But among these, there was not a man of those whom Moshe and Aharon the Kohen counted... For the Lord had said of them, "They shall surely die in the wilderness," and not a man was left of them, except for Calev son of Yefuneh and Yehoshua son of Nun (26:64-65). Rashi, quoting BeMidbar Rabbah (21:10), derives from here that the daughters of Tzlofchad were not the only women who loved the Land:

Among these, there was not a man: But the women were not included in the decree of the Spies, for they cherished the Land. The men said, - Let us appoint a leader and return to Egypt (BeMidbar 14:4), while the women said, Give us a portion. This is why this section is juxtaposed to the section of B'not Tzlofchad.

To help us appreciate the contemporary significance of these words of Chazal, I would like to copy (with permission) part of an article entitled "Women and Eretz Yisrael," written by a true lover of Zion, Mrs. Shifra Slater. It is taken from To Dwell in the Palace (Feldheim Publishers), pp. 61-63. I highly recommend the book:

This theme [that women often have a clearer perspective on things] was repeated more than once while bnei yisroel were in the desert. But never was it as plain as in the sin of the spies.

On this occasion the men of Israel - but not the women - made a drastic mistake. Spurning the cherished Land of Israel, they foiled the geula. Six hundred thousand men, great and wise men, accepted the evil report of their leaders. They simply could not see through the visible "realities" in the Land. All they saw was fortresses and death, Amalek and giants. They, after all, as men, had in-depth knowledge of many aspects of the situation. The men knew how unskilled the Jews were in the martial arts; they appreciated the particulars of the agricultural work that faced the nation; they had learned well the commandments warning us against the Amalekite people. And so they reached a pessimistic conclusion. The men wept, causing catastrophe, earning perdition. (Bemidbar 14)

But no woman shed a tear. The women, once again, maintained their perspective. True, the women lacked the detailed knowledge of the Land's circumstances which the men had. But they knew that reality could be defined only in terms of God's promise. The apparently insurmountable hurdles would somehow disappear. No matter how things looked, all that mattered was the will of the Almighty. Their reward was entry into the Land G-d promised to the Jews. Every woman in that generation merited this great privilege. (Bemidbar 26,64)

Ah, but what a bittersweet reward! Were women created to be righteous only for themselves? To enter Eretz Yisroel as elderly widows? Was woman not created to work at her role of ezer kenegdo? [Literally, "a help opposing."] If only they had mustered the strength of a Sarah or Rivkah. They might, like their foremothers, have "opposed" their men and, in doing so, been a real help.

They might have succeeded in pointing out the truth about Eretz Yisroel, instead of allowing the men their superficial view. In this way, all might have entered together, and the complete geula unfolded.

Is there a lesson for us today? Surely there is. No story in the Torah may be learned without its present-day application.

With the outstretched arm of open miracles, the Almighty has indicated to us that the time to return to Eretz Yisroel has come. A second chance, in our own days!

As women, we are in a better position to recognize this truth. For the men, finances, security, and a host of other gigantic realities may cloud the horizon. Caught in this tangle, they may resist the pull of the Land. They may turn their backs on this central mitzva, on this rare privilege.

If the women hold firm, we can put things into perspective for our men. Fulfillment of the will of G-d is, after all, the only reality. If we rise to His expectations, He will see to it that all the giants in the Land shrink and disappear. Holding us by the hand, He will lead us toward His goal.

Historically, the women of Israel have succeeded in just this way. Now the final chapters are tangibly near at hand. This is no time to fail in accomplishing our Divinely-ordained task. Today we dare not shirk our responsibility. Let us rise to utilize our "additional wisdom." Recognizing that the ultimate destiny of Israel can be only in God's own Land, let us show our men the way, and lead them triumphantly home.

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Rabbi Yonasan Sacks
MeiAfeila L'Orah

The character of Tisha B'av manifests itself in two distinct ways. Modeled after Yom Kippur, Tisha B'av is essentially a ta'anis tsibbur (a public fast). The Gemara in Pesachim (54b) explains: "Ein bein Tisha B'av l'yom hakippurim ela shezeh sfeiiko assur v'ze sfeiiko muttar" – the only

difference between Tisha B'av and Yom Kippur is that whereas situations of doubt are forbidden on Yom Kippur, they are permitted on Tisha B'av. Accordingly, the chamisha enuyim, the five afflictions that are forbidden on Yom Kippur are prohibited on Tisha B'av.

Teshuva, essential to Yom Kippur, is a central theme of the krias haTorah on Tisha B'av. "B'tsar l'cha u'mtsaucha kol hadevarim ha'eileh b'acharis hayomim, v'shavta ad Hashem Elokecha v'shomata b'kolo" (Devarim 4) "When you are in distress and all these things have befallen you, at the end of day, you will return unto Hashem your G-d and hearken to His voice."

Tisha B'av, however, is not merely a ta'anis tsibbur. The gemara in Taanis (30a) teaches, "Kol mitzvos hanohagos b'aveil nohagos b'Tisha B'av". In addition to ta'anis tsibbur, Tisha B'av is characterized as a yom aveilus – a day of mourning. This aspect of the day is emphasized in the haftarah, "asof asifem", "I shall utterly destroy them," which underscores the despair, suffering, and aveilus of K'nesses Yisroel.

The Rambam (Peirush Hamishnayos, Maseches Ta'anis) emphasizes these two aspects of the day. Because Tisha B'av is a ta'anis tzibbur we refrain from eating and drinking. We sit on the floor and refrain from Torah study to mark the fact that Tisha B'av is a day of mourning.

The Meiri (Yoma 78a) explains that because of the additional element of aveilus, Rabbi Yehoshua Ben Levi refrained on Tisha B'av from wiping his face, hands and feet with a towel – a practice that is permitted on Yom Kippur!

The Minchas Chinuch (mitzvah 312) suggests that the issur rechitzah, the prohibition to wash, for example, links these two elements. Both an aveil, as well as someone who observes a taanis tzibbur, are forbidden to wash. However, whereas aveilus prohibits one from washing their entire body, taanis tzibbur forbids one from washing a small part of the body as well.

The Minchas Chinuch further suggests that when Tisha B'av occurs on Shabbos, although the ta'anis is observed on Sunday, various aspects of aveilus apply even on Shabbos.

Emphasizing the nature of Tisha B'av as a day of mourning, the Chassam Sofer (Ohr Hachaim siman 157) maintains that even individuals who must eat on Tisha B'av can be called to the Torah and receive an aliyah. He suggests that the obligation of krias haTorah on Tisha B'Av is not merely a function of ta'anis tsibbur, but reflects the character of the day as a yom aveilus.

The Rambam extends another element of Yom Hakippurim to Tisha B'av. The Gemara (Yoma 81b) explains that one is obligated to begin Yom Hakippurim early, before sunset. The Torah obligation is determined from, "ve'inisem es nafshoseichem betisha bachodesh baerev," indication that Yom Hakippurim is to begin on the ninth of Tishrei towards evening. Most rishonim maintain that this mitzvah is not limited to Yom Hakippurim but applies to Shabbos and yom tov as well. The Rambam does not mention the mitzvah of tosefes Shabbos and yom tov in the Perush Hamishnayos; however, he does emphasize the need to begin Tisha B'av early, "umosifin michol oll hakodesh." According to the Rambam, the mitzvah of tosefes is not a function of kiddush hayom, but rather of taanis tzibbur.

Our commemoration of Tisha B'av uniquely binds these aspects of taanis tzibbur and aveilus. May our observance be meorer rachamei shomayim as we await biyas Goel Tzedek bimheira biyameinu.

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Kol Yaakov

By **RABBI BARUCH LEFF**

Parsha Insights based on and inspired by the teachings of Rav Yaakov Weinberg of blessed memory

"War 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.

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http://www.aish.com/torahportion/kolyaakov/Give_War_a_Chance.asp

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Covenant & Conversation

Thoughts on the Weekly Parsha from

Sir Jonathan Sacks

Chief Rabbi of the United Hebrew Congregations of the British Commonwealth

[From 2 years ago - currently 5765]

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Pinchas

KNOWING THAT HE IS ABOUT TO DIE, Moses turns to G-d and asks him to appoint a successor:

Moses said to the Lord, "May the Lord, G-d of the spirits of all mankind, appoint a man over this community to go out and come in before them, one who will lead them out and bring them in, so the Lord's people will not be like sheep without a shepherd." It is a farsighted, selfless gesture. As Rashi comments: "This is to tell the praise of the righteous - that when they are about to leave this world, they put aside their personal needs and become preoccupied with the needs of the community." Great leaders think about the long-term future. They are concerned with succession and continuity. So it was with Moses.

G-d tells Moses to appoint Joshua, 'a man in whom there is spirit'. He gives him precise instructions about how to arrange the succession:

"Take Joshua son of Nun, a man in whom is the spirit, and lay your hand on him. Have him stand before Eleazar the priest and the entire assembly and commission him in their presence. Give him some of your authority so the whole Israelite community will obey him . . . At his command he and the entire community of the Israelites will go out, and at his command they will come in." There are three actions involved here: [1] Moses was to lay

his hand on Joshua, [2] have him stand before Eleazar the priest and the entire assembly, and [3] give him "some of your authority [me-hodecha]". What is the significance of this threefold process? What does it tell us about the nature of leadership in Judaism?

There is also a fascinating midrash about the first and third of these gestures:

And lay your hand on him - this is like lighting one candle with another. Give him some of your authority - this is like emptying one vessel into another. (Bamidbar Rabbah 21: 15) Beneath these enigmatic words is a fundamental truth about leadership.

IN L'ESPRIT DES LOIS (1748), Montesquieu, one of the great political philosophers of the Enlightenment, set out his theory of the "separation of powers" into three branches: the legislature, the executive and the judiciary. Behind it lay a concern for the future of freedom if power were concentrated in a single source:.

Liberty does not flourish because men have natural rights, or because they revolt if their leaders push them too far. It flourishes because power is so distributed and so organized that whoever is tempted to abuse it finds legal restraints in his way. Montesquieu's source was not the Bible - but there is, in a verse in Isaiah, a strikingly similar idea:

For the Lord is our judge; the Lord is our law-giver; the Lord is our king; he will save us. (Isaiah 33: 22) This tripartite division can also be found in Devarim/Deuteronomy 17-18 in the passage dealing with the various leadership roles in ancient Israel: the king, the priest and the prophet. The sages later spoke about "three crowns" - the crowns of Torah, priesthood and kingship. Stuart Cohen, who has written an elegant book on the subject, *The Three Crowns*, notes that "what emerges from the [biblical] texts is not democracy throughout the political system, but a distinct notion of power-sharing at its highest levels. Neither Scripture nor early rabbinic writings express any sympathy whatsoever for a system of government in which a single body all group possesses a monopoly of political authority."

The three-fold process through which Joshua was to be inducted into office had to do with the three types of leadership. Specifically the second stage - "Have him stand before Eleazar the priest and the entire assembly and commission him in their presence" - had to do with the fact that Moses was not a priest. His successor had to be formally recognized by the representative of the priesthood, Eleazar the High Priest.

POWER AND INFLUENCE are often thought of as being the same kind of thing: those who have power have influence and vice versa. In fact, though, they are quite different. If I have total power and then decide to share it with nine others, I now have only one-tenth of the power I had before. If I have a certain measure of influence and then share it with nine others, I do not have less. I have more. Instead of one person radiating this influence, there are now ten. Power works by division, influence by multiplication.

Moses occupied two roles. He was the functional equivalent of a king. He made the key decisions relating to the people: how they should be organized, the route they were to take on their journey, when and with whom they should engage in war. But he was also the greatest of the prophets. He spoke the word of G-d.

A king had power. He ruled. He made military, economic and political decisions. Those who disobeyed him faced the possible penalty of death. A prophet had no power whatsoever. He commanded no battalions. He had no way of enforcing his views. But he had massive influence. Today we barely remember the names of most of Israel's and Judah's kings. But the words of the prophets continue to inspire by the sheer force of their vision and ideals. As Kierkegaard once said: When a king dies, his power ends; when a prophet dies, his influence begins.

Moses was to confer both roles on Joshua as his successor. "Lay your hand on him" means, give him your role as a prophet, the intermediary through whom G-d's word is conveyed to the people. To this day we use the same word, *semicha* (laying on of hands), to describe the process whereby a rabbi ordains his disciples. "Give him some of your authority [me-

hodecha]" refers to the second role. It means, invest him with the power you hold as a king.

We now understand the midrash. Influence is like lighting one candle with another. Sharing your influence with someone else does not mean you have less; you have more. When we use the flame of a candle to light another candle, the first is not diminished. There is now, simply, more light.

Transferring power, though, is like emptying one vessel into another. The more power you give away, the less you have. Moses' power ended with his death. His influence, though, remains to this day.

Judaism has an ambivalent attitude towards power. It is necessary. Without it, in the words of Rabbi Hanina, deputy High Priest, "people would eat one another alive" (Avot 3: 2). But Judaism long ago recognized that (to quote Lord Acton), power tends to corrupt and absolute power corrupts absolutely. Influence - the relation of prophet to people, teacher to disciple - is altogether different. It is a non-zero-sum game. Through it, both teacher and disciple grow. Both are enhanced.

Moses gave Joshua his power and his influence. The first was essential to the political and military tasks ahead. But it was the second that made Joshua one of the great figures of our tradition. Influence is simply more enduring than power.