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INTERNET PARSHA SHEET ON PINCHAS - 5770

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dateThu, Jul 1, 2010 at 10:14 PM

Rabbi Benjamin Yudin – Rising to the Occasion

There is a difference of opinion among the commentaries when the five daughters of Tzlofchad approach Moshe with their question as to whether daughters inherit their fathers in the absence of sons. Their clarion cry is “give us an inheritance among our father’s brothers” (Bamidbar 27:4). The Yalkut Shimoni (chapter 773) learns that the incident took place in the 2nd year of their being in the desert, immediately after the sin of the spies. The commentary Zayis Raanan on the above Yalkut presents the second opinion that goes with the order that it is presented in the Torah, namely, the daughters of Tzlofchad came after the death of Aharon, in the fortieth year (see Rashi 26:13). Following Aharon’s demise, they started traveling in the opposite direction, away from Israel back towards Egypt. Regardless of the timing, what is most exemplary on the part of these five righteous women is that at a time when the popular tide and trend of the nation was “let us appoint a leader and let us return to Egypt” (Bamidbar 14:4) they requested an inheritance in the Land of Israel.

The Yalkut derives a most important principle from the above: one who lives in a society that is practicing evil, but has the integrity and commitment to buck the system and do what is right, not only receives his due reward, but also all the potential reward and blessings that could have been accrued by the generation. Thus, just as Noach at the time of the flood, Avraham at the generation of the haflaga (Tower of Babel and time of national dispersion) and even Lot in S’dom, received the potential reward of their generations, so to the daughters of Tzlofchad not only received their reward for their love of the Land and pining, but also received the reward that was potentially awaiting the rest of the generation.

The above Yalkut teaches that not every mitzvah is created equally. Often the timing and environment of the mitzvah, and whether it is popularly observed with relative ease or requires major sacrifice to rise to the occasion, will determine the significance of the mitzvah. We are

all familiar with the sociological history of America seventy to eighty years ago when many immigrants came to its shores and had to make a most difficult sacrifice on behalf of Shabbos. If one didn’t come to work on a Saturday they were not welcomed at work on Monday. Today, most persons have little difficulty timing a job that allows them to observe Shabbos. Moreover, the law prohibits today religious discrimination. Kashrus at one time was a major challenge. It’s hard to believe that there really was a time when kosher pizza, Chinese, Mexican, sushi, and every other cuisine, was not available. Timing and sacrifice play a significant role.

A further proof that not all mitzvos are created equal: the Gra notes in his commentary to the Talmud Yuma 22B (Sefer Meor Hagadol on Aggadot of Shas) that Shaul erred in one sin, and it was reckoned against him - he lost the throne, whereas David erred in two sins and it was not reckoned against him. The Gra explains that here as well, it was not Divine favoritism towards one over the other, rather, the mitzvah of Shaul to blot out Amalek was a communal one that he violated, a mitzvah that only he as king of Israel could do. His violation thereof was therefore punished in a most severe way. The two sins of David were of a personal nature, and they were thus forgivable after and including personal punishments. Once again, timing played a most significant role in the assessment of mitzvos and aveiros.

The mishna in Avos (5:3) teaches that Avraham received “sechar kulam”- the reward that was potentially due to the ten generations, between Noach and Avraham. Rabbeinu Yona explains that this does not mean that he took their sechar in a literal sense, but rather he that filled the gap that they left in their neglect, and his living a life of mitzvos accomplished and had the value of all of theirs’ combined. One of the most challenging mitzvos we face, especially in our generation, during the summer is that of “v’haya machanecha kadosh”- your environment should be holy, worthy of the Shechinah. The Chofetz Chaim notes that only a breach of tznius evokes Hashem’s threat to withdraw from our midst. Therefore, in a season when the actions of those around us threaten to distance the Shechinah from us, we are presented with a unique opportunity to up to the temptations of our environmental pressures that run counter to modesty. We are able in this season to single-handedly bring the Shechinah into our midst to the same degree that would be the result of everyone dressing modestly. While the mishnah in Sanhedrin teaches that each person is a world unto themselves, this Yalkut teaches how one person can literally uphold the world by themselves.

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from Yeshivat Har Etzion <office@etzion.org.il> to yhesichot@etzion.org.il date Jul 17, 2008 subject SICHOT68 -41: Parashat Pinchas [From 2 years ago]
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PARASHAT PINCHAS
SICHA OF HARAV YAAQOV MEDAN SHLIT"A
Leadership
Adapted by Shaul Barth Translated by Kaeren Fish

Parashat Pinchas presents two models of leadership: that of Pinchas and that of Yehoshua. Yehoshua's leadership style is characterized by close, step-by-step accompaniment of Moshe, the previous leader, until Yehoshua is appointed as his successor. This process, by definition,

entails the new leader assuming his position at a relatively late stage in life. Indeed, according to the Seder Olam, Yehoshua was 82 years old when Moshe passed away.

Pinchas, in contrast, is a young man who, at a certain moment, feels that it is time to act. He embodies the teaching, In a place where there are no men, try to be a man." In the midst of helplessness and a leadership vacuum, while the leaders of Israel are weeping at the entrance to the Tent of Meeting," someone arises – with no appointment or authorization – and does something that is not exactly in keeping with halakhic rules, simply out of a sense that somebody has to do something.

I shall not discuss here Pinchas's deed itself. Rather, I shall attempt to learn something from the conduct of someone who was not awarded leadership, but rather decided to take it on. Pinchas acted out of a profound awareness that if he was not going to act, no one else would do what had to be done. Ultimately, God agrees and approves of his action.

When God revealed Himself to Moshe at the burning bush, entrusting him with the leadership of Am Yisrael, Moshe did not acquiesce at once; he first protested. Chassidic teachings attribute this to Moshe's humility. However, if we read this in a straightforward way, we can all identify strongly with Moshe. Suddenly, in the middle of his life, God is telling him to leave his home, his family, his source of livelihood and his routine, for a mission that is going to deprive him of any private life whatsoever.

Moshe argues until God was angry with Moshe." I am certain that if, following this statement, Moshe had continued to hesitate, God would have agreed with him and sent him back to shepherd his father-in-law's flocks for the rest of his days. For God, a thousand years are like a single day that has passed;" He could wait until someone else came upon the burning bush and agreed to accept the job. Who knows how many times in Jewish history we have lost out on first-rate leaders simply because, at the critical moment, the candidates were not willing to accept the responsibility? History has been changed thanks to people who took charge of the situation around them – and I am not referring here to the political realm. I refer to people who have made significant contributions in the spheres of security, the economy, academia - private individuals who have said to themselves, Where there are no men, try to be a man."

Among the prophets, there were some who continued on the path of Moshe. Yirmiyahu, for example, in the prophecy of his consecration, cries out: Ah, Lord God – Behold, I know not how to speak, for I am a child." Yishayahu, in contrast, hears God's voice saying, Whom shall I send; who shall go for us?" and he answers of his own initiative, Here I am, send me." This may be one of the many reasons for Yishayahu's success in preventing the threatened destruction by the hand of Ashur during the days of Chizkiyahu, in contrast to Yirmiyahu's lack of success in preventing the destruction in the days of Tzidkiyahu. Not every person merits to hear, with prophetic clarity, the voice of God calling to him: Whom shall I send, and who shall go for us?" However, every person hears such a voice from within himself, with the clarity appropriate to him and his level, at some time during his life.

Many students of our yeshiva are about to take part as counselors in Bnei Akiva's annual Shabbat Irgun. Bnei Akiva, more than any other body, seems to educate towards hearing God's voice as heard by Yishayahu and Pinchas. It also educates one to answer, Here I am, send me." The importance of leadership cannot be overstated. In Mesillat Yesharim, the trait of chassidut" (piety) comes only near the end of the process of self-perfection, following after watchfulness, alacrity, cleanliness, abstention, and purity. The trait of piety" is acquired by people of great spiritual refinement, and it demands the highest level of focused behavior, including the performance of commandments for the sake of God, and concern for God's honor. This trait also includes a

person being willing to offer himself for the sake of the community, out of his understanding that he is able to provide something that is missing from the nation. This quality is the foundation of leadership.

However, there is also another quality that a leader needs. The secret of Shemuel's leadership is his declaration: Whose ox have I taken; whose donkey have I taken?" He did not act in order to receive any sort of reward. This is related to the leadership of Yehoshua, which I mentioned above. And now – fear God and serve Him, wholeheartedly and in truth... if it seems bad to you to serve God, choose yourselves this day whom you will serve: the gods that your fathers served, who were on the other side of the river, or the gods of the Emori, in whose land you dwell. But I and my household shall serve the Lord" (Yehoshua 24:14-15).

A leader who does not need a luxury car at the nation's expense is also a leader who will not make decisions on the basis of surveys; he will not change his mind in accordance with a prevailing mood. Rather, he will be prepared to lead the nation in accordance with his principles and his conscience, with no need for strategic advisors analyzing how he might find favor with every passing fad.

Leadership therefore involves an inherent paradox. There is no servitude like that of a leader, a servant to a holy nation." His entire private life is devoted to his mission, with no expectation of any reward. However, there is also no freedom like that of a leader – if he acts in accordance with his principles and his conscience, rather than with a view to finding favor with others.

I feel more than a grain of pride as I mention the General Secretary who brought about the great revolution in Bnei Akiva, transforming it from a subsidiary of the Religious Kibbutz Movement into a Torah-centered mass movement, and led it to become what it is today. He is a graduate of our yeshiva – a Gushnik" – named Avraham Lipschitz. He paved the way not only for Bnei Akiva, but also for us, as yeshiva students, showing our power to contribute and to bring about change.

Youngsters in Bnei Akiva are drawn after younger role models who inspire them. Many years ago I came to the yeshiva because of Rav Chanan Porat and Rav Yoel Bin-Nun who, at the time, were more or less the same age as our yeshiva students today. People in their twenties are capable of great things. Bnei Akiva, which presents Torah as a blueprint for a better future, is badly needed today amongst Am Yisrael. Those who are capable of molding the movement in this direction are young people like you.

Bnei Akiva is only one example of the need to invest our abilities in the building of the land and its revival. A few weeks ago, the yeshiva hosted a Shabbat reunion for the members of its 24th graduating class. During the course of the Shabbat I was exposed to leadership at its best and most powerful. I was amazed at what our graduates have succeeded in achieving outside of the yeshiva: one is a pillar of the Ofakim development town, keeping up its morale and its spiritual level. Another, a hi-tech professional, established a sterling community in a neighborhood of Modi'in – a city that was depicted, at first, as a secular city," but where Torah now occupies a place of honor. Another graduate heads a large Ethiopian community in Kiryat Menachem, Jerusalem.

People such as these, regardless of which profession they decided to pursue and where they live, have chosen to influence and mold the environment that surrounds them. This concern for the future of Am Yisrael is needed today more than ever before. While for our students this aspiration may be consigned to the distant future, it is a good idea to consider oneself an apprentice in the meantime. In Bnei Akiva as in other frameworks, it is important to assume responsibility.

Within the yeshiva, too, the same idea applies. Take responsibility for yourselves. When I agreed to serve as Rosh Yeshiva, I did so as part of a whole group that is prepared to take responsibility for what happens here. I refer not only to the Ramim, but also to every individual student. Leadership means, inter alia, learning how not to be swallowed up

within the frameworks that surround you over the course of your life. It is important that you absorb as much Torah as possible – and in the manner that will help you build your leadership ability and leave your mark, rather than being swallowed up in the system and its conventions, both in the present and in the future.

(This sicha was delivered during the week of Parashat Toldot 5768 [2007], prior to Bnei Akiva's annual Shabbat Irgun.)

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from Rabbi Asher Brander <link@linkla.org> hide details Jul 6 (3 days ago) reply-to link@linkla.org to internetparshasheet@gmail.com date Jul 6, 2007 2:16 PM subject Pinchas: To Own and To Have mailed-by in.constantcontact.com Reflections

**By Rabbi Asher Brander
To Own and To Have**

I refuse to tell the whole joke.

But somehow that super clichéd line about my father's a kohein, and my grandfather's a kohein (I wanted to be a kohen too) never fails to deliver concomitant grins - and groans (usually from the same people). Our parsha marks the first appearance of a man, whose father was a kohein, whose grandfather was kohein and yet himself was not a kohein himself. Pinchas who receives the gift of kehuna (not the big one, but the priesthood) after his act of kanaus (zealotry) whereby he disposes of Kazbi and Zimri (cf. end of last week's Parsha for the details)

In truth it's not that simple. Three opinions emerge from the gemara[1]:

1. Pinchas was a kohein from the very beginning as is implied by the simple meaning of the text.[2]
2. Pinchas was not deemed a kohein until Bnei Yisrael entered the land of Israel and brought peace amongst all the tribes (R. Ashi)
3. Pinchas was not a kohein from the beginning, but his act of zealotry brought him the new mantle of kehuna

According to the latter 2 opinions, Pinchas was technically not included in the original commandment for God only established Aharon, his children and future descendants. Pinchas, by accident of birth was excluded; he was neither a son, nor a future descendant (he was already born). The question that lingers - if we may venture such a query, is trying to understand the Divine mind. Why did Hashem create the technicality in the first place which necessitated Pinchas to earn that which (birth)rightfully could/should have been his?

A chacham might say hi hanosenes, i.e. Hashem wanted Pinchas to earn the kehuna. Why? One might suggest two basic notions[3]:

- a. Pinchas was merely a conduit to teach the world the essential notion of kehuna.
 - b. A personal reason required Pinchas davka to acquire the kehuna
- The first suggestion is simple. The Pinchas episode concludes with the teaching that the kehuna is a covenant of peace. The kohein may not take his status for granted, rather he must internalize kehuna by actively seeking shalom, ala Aharon and the mishna in Pirkei Avos. (Hevei mitalmidav shel aharon oheiv shalom v'rodeif shalom, oheiv es habrios u'mekarvan latorah)

Torah Temimah suggests the latter in a rather ingenious manner. Pinchas was a controversial figure. Kanaus contrary to popular belief is certainly not encouraged[4] and may not be ideal[5]. Kanaus however[6], requires total purity of motive. By contrast, mitzvos may come in variant shades of muddled intentions as long as the ultimate goal of mitoch shelo lishma ba lishma reigns supreme. Remarkably, even after the plague had stopped, the Jerusalem Talmud relates that Pinchas was on the verge of excommunication until God vouched that

he was kinei l'elokav - i.e. his heart was pure. In other words, Pinchas's zealotry was under the microscope. Since kohanim have a predilection towards anger[7], Pinchas's behavior would be ascribed to his personal foibles rather than his noble motivations. For Pinchas to be a kanaai, it would have been difficult to be a kohein

The Amish have a year called rumspringa where the older teenagers embark upon a year of "exploration". To be or not to be (Amish that is) is the question they ask of their teenagers. Reportedly (and impressively) about 85-90 percent of the kids return to the fold. I have no profound knowledge of this system and can't even tell you how accurate my information is. The system's wisdom appears manifest. Each young Amish man or woman decides whether being Amish works for him or her. If they decide it is right, they return probably stronger than ever. (Admittedly, there are enormous social pressures at work as well)

Such a notion, even as it has hit the unorthodox blogosphere will forever remain foreign to us for so many reasons. At the core, a Jew's holiness is immanent. Seeking refuge from one's innate, incontrovertible and undeniable sanctity is akin to Yonah trying to run away from the long arm of the divine: Simply put, it won't fly.

However, the wisdom of being able to acquire that which one already has should not be overlooked. Pinchas reacquires his birthright of kehuna, and it is not a minimalist acquisition. All told, at least 99 High Priests emerge from his line[8]. On some level, better to have loved, lost and loved again than to never have lost at all is very true. One can't really appreciate air conditioning unless you are stuck in a Bnei Brak summer day without it. More fundamentally, in the inimitable explanation of R. Hutner - sheva yipol tzaddik v'kam (seven times shall the righteous fall and then rise) is a prescription, not a description. Cookie cutters may create wonderful shapes but often the cookie is rather blasé. To the extent that we challenge ourselves and our talmidim/children to feel and rediscover the wonder of what we have, we will create inspired and creative Jews.

Good Shabbos to All

Asher Brander

[1] Cf. Zevachim 101b

[2] Cf. Shemos 29:29, and Shemos 30:3. The basic text reads that the clothing of the kohein shall be for Aharon and his children to be anointed/elevated through them. If this is the case, Hashem's reward to Pinchas of the bris kehunas olam must then be reinterpreted. It may mean the kohanim gedolim will emerge from him or it may reassert his validity as kohein to serve in the beis hamikdash even though he killed Zimri - which according to halacha renders a kohein invalid to duchen and to serve in the Beis Hamikdash. Cf. Da'as zekeinim and Moshav Zekeinim al Hatorah

[3] Cf. R. Benzion Firrer Panim Chadashos Batorah for an incredible 3rd notion that the kehuna needed to be earned by Aharon and his two children as well and it was when they stood up to the worshippers of the Golden calf. Pinchas however was too young at the time and therefore needed to earn it in some different manner. Cf. also Hegyonos Hagershuni for another beautiful notion.

[4] Cf. Sanhedrin 82a haba limaleich ein morin lo

[5] Cf. Mishna Lamelech Hilchos Rotzeiach, 1:15 for a fascinating discussion regarding this issue and a comparison to the concept of rodeif

[6] Similar to the concept of aveirah lishma. Cf. Netziv on the verse v'chipeir al hanfesh, cf. Nazir 23b regarding Yael and Sisera.

[7] Cf. Bava Basra Chapter 10

[8] Cf. Tosafos Zevachim 101b and Tosafos 9a. as to whether 99 or over 380 high priests come from his line. Remarkably, R. Nachsoni quotes a Chassidish sefer that points out the initials of the phrase v'hayita lo u'lezaro acharav bris kehuna olam= 99.

Thanks to hamelaket@hotmail.com for collecting the following items.

From Destiny Foundation/Rabbi Berel Wein
<info@jewishdestiny.com>

Subject Weekly Parsha from Rabbi Berel Wein

Jerusalem Post :: Friday, July 2, 2010
THREE DIFFICULT WEEKS :: Rabbi Berel Wein

The period of the “Three Weeks” on the Jewish calendar beginning with the fast day of seventeen Tamuz and culminating on 9 Av starts this week. This period of time is marked by different social and personal customs in the Jewish world. Ashkenazic Jews do not cut their hair or beards, refrain from listening to music and other forms of entertainment, marriages are not solemnized and new clothing is not purchased during this three week period.

Sephardic Jews usually limit most of these restrictions to the week of 9 Av itself. In any event, this period of time commemorates the destruction of the First and Second Temples in Jerusalem and the subsequent loss of Jewish sovereignty in the Land of Israel and the enforced exile and scattering of the Jews throughout the world. Personally, I have not found the restrictions imposed by the advent of this period of mournful restrictions especially onerous. I fast well, my hair grows slowly, I am not that much of a music fan and the relief from not having to attend weddings every night of the week (such as was the case during the previous month) is soothing, both physically and mentally. But this period of time is always very troubling to me and it agitates my thoughts and philosophical well being.

For it raises to me the fundamentally unanswerable question of all Jewish existence over the past millennia – why? Where is there the justification for all of the centuries of persecution and the fate of the millions of Jewish martyrs who were killed only because they were Jewish? Does the punishment seemingly fit the crime?

These questions are of course naïve, simplistic and not subject to human logical responses. The Lord operates in a special way, a way that precludes questions such as these. A wise man once stated that for the true believer there are no questions and for the committed non-believer there can never be any satisfactory answers. Yet is it not ironic that the Jew always bears the burden of others’ guilt and their past misdeeds. Look how the State of Israel, innocent of the accusations showered upon it is being made to pay for the imperialism, colonialism, racism and evil by the very countries and societies of Europe that perpetrated those very policies in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries.

Somehow overwhelmed by this gnawing sense of guilt that their dubious record of past behavior now engenders within them, the Europeans search for a scapegoat upon which to cast their past misdeeds and thereby be absolved of their sins. And the most likely and favorite scapegoat is the Jew, now represented by the State of Israel. This is in reality the message of these mournful weeks on the Jewish calendar. We are always available to serve as that convenient scapegoat. We should not be surprised by the world’s attitude towards our existence and especially our success against all odds. Hatred and bigotry towards us go along with the prize of being a special people and a source of irritation to the remnants of the world’s moral conscience. The three weeks of mourning and sadness, though localized in the history of the Jewish people, are really of universal import. The Jew and the Jewish nation has always been the litmus test of human morality and decency. Bilaam said that Israel is not to be reckoned amongst the nations. Its existence and history is singularly unique. Yet the corollary to this statement is that the nations are to be reckoned, judged and held to account according to their relationship to the Jewish people.

All of the persecuting empires that triumphed during this three week period of Jewish defeat are all since long gone from the human scene. In our time, Nazism, Fascism, Communism, all oppressors of the Jewish people and at one time seemingly invincible, have crumbled into nothingness. Our “friends” England and France have been cut down to

size and all of Europe has been destabilized by ethnic divisions and economic misfortunes.

It should be obvious to all that we do not mourn alone. Our very oppressors are partners to our sadness and regrets. There have been no comebacks in history. No empire, once weakened and defeated, has risen again to world dominance. Their weeping is permanent for former greatness is never restored. The United States itself currently teeters on the verge of losing its preeminence in world society. I feel that its attitude and policies towards Israel will somehow be weighed in determining its future.

Jewish mourning always eventually leads to determined consolation and a renewed future sense of purpose and accomplishment. It is never permanent. These thoughts are worthy of our contemplation as the period of the three weeks arrives.

Shabat shalom.

From Destiny Foundation/Rabbi Berel Wein
<info@jewishdestiny.com>
Subject Weekly Parsha from Rabbi Berel Wein

Weekly Parsha :: PINCHAS :: Rabbi Berel Wein

The recounting of the mandatory Temple sacrifices for the holidays of the Jewish year occupies a significant amount of space in this week’s parsha. The overall meaning and matter of animal sacrifices has been discussed a number of times previously by me in these parsha articles. But I wish to now attempt to dwell on the uniqueness of the sacrifices that are meant to somehow characterize the holiday itself.

For example, the sacrifices offered on the seven days of Succot differ for each day of that holiday. This is not true regarding the sacrifices ordained for the last six days of Pesach which are all identical. This difference has halachic implications regarding the recitation of a Haftorah blessing on the Shabat of Chol Hamoed. On Succot because of the fact that a different sacrifice was offered each day, the blessing is a holiday blessing and not only a Shabat blessing.

On Shabat Chol Hamoed Pesach the blessing is a purely Shabat blessing. Aside from the halachic implication just described, a subtle message of general insight is provided here. Pesach, representing a one-time redemption from Egyptian slavery, a great but essentially singular event, repeats its same sacrifice throughout the six latter days of the holiday.

Succot, representing the Divine protection over Israel and all individual Jews, is a renewed daily event which captures the differing circumstances that each day of life brings with it - a new salvation each and every day. Hence, the different sacrifices offered on the Temple altar on each individual day of Succot.

The description of the holiday altar sacrifices for the holiday of Shavuot is also significant. The Torah describes the holiday as Yom Habikurim – the day of the offering of the first fruits of the agricultural year. It also states that a new offering – the offering of the two loaves of bread - is to be part of the mincha offering of that day.

Even though all of the holidays revolve around the natural and agricultural year in the Land of Israel - Pesach is the holiday of springtime and the offering of the grain sacrifice symbolizing the harvest of the winter wheat crop and Succot represents the holiday of the fall harvest season – it is the offerings of the holiday of Shavuot that are most intertwined with nature and agriculture.

We know Shavuot as the holiday of the granting of the Torah on Sinai to the Jewish people. The Torah does not mention this directly but rather concentrates upon nature, agriculture and the blessings of the bounty of the earth. The Torah, by not dwelling especially on the granting of the Torah aspect of the holiday, sublimely suggests to us

that Torah is as natural and necessary to us as is the seasons of the year and the bounty of the earth.

Torah is truly our lives and the length of our days and is therefore an integral part of nature itself, the very wonders of nature that Shavuot itself celebrates. Perhaps that is the intent of the rabbis in their statement that the world itself was created in the image of God's Torah. Shabat shalom.

From Shema Yisrael Torah Network <shemalist@shemayisrael.com>
To Peninim <peninim@shemayisrael.com>

Peninim on the Torah by Rabbi A. Leib Scheinbaum Parshas Pinchas

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

Pinchas represents the paradigmatic kanai, zealous person. He was a kanai filled with the true spirit of kanaus, seeking to eradicate anything that would impugn the integrity of Torah. Throughout the ages, many have attempted to assume the mantle of kanai for Torah. Some have succeeded, while others have ended up as bitter, depressed individuals, regrettably seeing only the negative, never experiencing the positive. What determines who is the real kanai? I think that sharing a vignette from the life of Horav Aharon Kotler, zl, will give us insight into this phenomenon.

Rav Aharon was the consummate kanai: He saw through the sham created by those who undermined Yiddishkeit in their pursuit to satisfy their desire to be like "everybody else." In their attempt to accommodate Orthodoxy to the liberal world of secular Judaism, they succeeded in watering down a number of the basic tenets of Judaism, creating an approach to religious observance that was neither. The Rosh Yeshivah was relentless in exposing their charade and in warning the ignorant of the harm that could - and would - come as a result of an attempt to meld sheker, falsehood, with emes, truth.

The Rosh Yeshivah was seriously troubled - actually in pain - when he was compelled to take a negative stand, but Torah Judaism can only be built upon the foundation of emes. His kanaus was the result of genuine yiraas Shomayim, fear of Heaven, and a profound love for Yiddishkeit. In A Living Nishmas: Rav Aharon, Rabbi Yitzchok Dershowitz quotes Horav Leib Rotkin, zl, a close disciple of the Rosh Yeshivah who once saw Rav Aharon pacing back and forth, saying to himself, "Ich bin nisht aza lochein vi der Chasam Sofer, veil ich hab nisht der yiraas Shomayim fun der Chasam Sofer. "I am not a warrior [for Yiddishkeit] as was the Chasam Sofer, because I do not possess the same level of yiraas Shomayim as the Chasam Sofer." Ven ich volt gehat der yiraas Shomayim fun der Chasam Sofer, volt ich loichem geven vi der Chasam Sofer. "If I would have the yiraas Shomayim of the Chasam Sofer, then I would be a warrior like the Chasam Sofer." Rav Aharon kept on repeating this over and over again. He viewed himself to be deficient due to his inability to reach the level of the Chasam Sofer, the individual who saved Hungarian Jewry from falling into the evil clutches of the Haskalah, Enlightenment. He exposed the maskilim for what they really were.

Horav Shneuer Kotler, zl, explained that his father derived his kanaus from his deep love for Torah. His love was so encompassing that when he sensed that someone was undermining Torah, he would become angry. It was a "call to arms." His love and excitement for Torah was so strong that he could not tolerate any infringement upon it.

I have always wondered about this. Does this mean that when one observes elbonah shel Torah, the humiliation of Torah - either directly or focused on its disseminators - without reacting or exhibiting anger and disgust, he simply does not really care the way he should? Probably. When something hurts, it is not the time to be politically correct. When Torah is being slandered; when its spiritual leaders are being denigrated, a G-d-fearing Jew takes a stand, or he is simply deficient in his yiraas Shomayim!

I think kanaus has another characteristic which is a requirement in all mitzvah observance: passion. Yes, one should be a kanai, zealous in observing mitzvos, serving Hashem and performing good deeds. He must act in such a way that indicates how much the mitzvah means to him. We often shy away from acting boldly, due to petty concerns such as: "What are people going to say?" While our spiritual leaders exemplify this quality, I take the liberty of citing from the life of a baal ha'bays, layman, whose dedication to Torah was only paralleled by his myriad achievements on its behalf: Stephen Klein.

Stephen Klein arrived in this country in 1938, a refugee from Nazi tyranny. Without financial resources, he relied on sheer drive, charisma and extreme faith to build a high-profile business, while playing a leading role in saving Jewish

lives in Europe and establishing schools and yeshivos in America. He had passion for Yiddishkeit, and he was uncompromising in his standard of Torah observance. His business empire, although lucrative, also served as the cornerstone of many of the major Torah and chesed projects of the era. He did things that were unbelievable, such as opening stores on major streets where the sight of shutters rolled down at five o'clock on Friday afternoon had previously been unheard of. Indeed, the idea of a shomer Shabbos store provided an education to New Yorkers. This, and his full-page ads and candle lighting announcements in the newspaper, were among the most pioneering and far-reaching methods of mass education and outreach to the broader Jewish community. He was not afraid of what "others" would say. He acted according to the passion of his heart. He was a kanai for Yiddishkeit.

His boundless love for the Jewish People took him to Europe, where he toiled relentlessly on behalf of the survivors of the Nazi death camps. He spent six months away from his family and business, working for Jews in displaced persons camps, opening yeshivos, arranging visas and supplying affidavits for thousands, so that they could emigrate to the United States.

Returning home after a grueling six months, filled with a fiery drive to do everything within his power for the tragic survivors of the Holocaust, he had little tolerance for bureaucracy, factionalism and turf wars among the Jewish relief organizations. When it was all over, he did not rest, as he turned to establishing Chinuch Atzmai, working with the fledgling Torah U'Mesorah, championing Jewish education on all fronts. He worked side by side with Horav Aharon Kotler to build Beth Medrash Gvoah and to establish and support Central Yeshivah High School for Girls.

Stephen Klein had the courage to stand up against the trends of the times. A modern-day Pinchas, he was a singular Jew who bridged the world of Torah observance with corporate America. He never backed down from what was right. His adherence to halachah, as expounded by the Torah leaders, was unyielding. A faithful emissary of these Torah giants, he was a man of vision and action whose advocacy for Torah and chesed remains unparalleled. We are all beneficiaries of his passion and zeal for Yiddishkeit.

The daughters of Tzafchad drew near. (27:1)

Because he had no sons, the family of Tzafchad - his widow and five unmarried daughters - was not allotted a portion of their own in Eretz Yisrael. The daughters were wise women whose love for Eretz Yisrael was part of their family mesorah, tradition, as they were descendants of Yosef HaTzaddik, whose passion for the land was consummate. They felt that they were entitled to a cheilek, portion, of the Land, and they brought their case before Moshe Rabbeinu. Chazal teach us that they were extremely astute in selecting the right time to approach Moshe. They waited until he had begun teaching the laws of inheritance to present their case.

Chazal laud these exceptional women, attributing a number of virtues to them. Although these women possessed a number of fine qualities, the Midrash seems to highlight one in particular: their foresight in timing their request, knowing when they would be most likely to succeed. They waited for the most opportune time to approach Moshe and present their claim. While this was clearly a wise thing to do, why was it singled out above and beyond the other exceptional qualities that they possessed?

Horav Henach Leibowitz, zl, takes a practical approach toward interpreting Chazal. They are teaching us that the crowning achievement of a mentch, human being, is seichel, common sense. Intellectual acuity, outstanding erudition and the best intentions, do not guarantee success. One must possess seichel. This quality most often lays the foundation for success in many endeavors. Bnos Tzafchad knew when to make their move. They identified the most appropriate time to present their question, when they would most likely receive a positive response. Their understanding and insight enabled others to succeed in similar claims.

I think the greatest aspect of common sense is that one can develop it without having to be born with an especially astute mind. Wisdom, acuity, sharp-witted, and brilliant, are terms we use to describe intellectual assets with which one is born. One is either smart, or he is not. Common sense is a trait one can learn from others by watching and listening attentively. Indeed, many smart people lack the basics of common sense. In reality, they are far from astute, since they do not know when and how to utilize their G-d-given wisdom.

Probably the most significant lesson we can impart as parents and mentors is the significance of common sense. That would, however, require parents and mentors themselves to possess this quality. Ki ner mitzvah v'Torah ohr, "A mitzvah is a lamp, and Torah is light" (Mishlei 6:23). Horav Bunim, zl, m'Peshicha, explains this pasuk in the following manner. Two wise men and a simpleton were flung into a dark dungeon. The darkness was almost palpable. Every day their morsel of food was lowered down to them. Since the simpleton

could not figure out which were the utensils and dishes, he was unable to eat without the assistance of one of the wise men.

One day, the wise man asked the other wise man, "Why do you leave the feeding of the simpleton to me? You should share equally in this responsibility." The other wise man replied, "My friend, I am occupied with chipping away at the wall. Hopefully, I will create a crack large enough for some light to enter the dungeon. Then the simpleton will see by himself."

There are two ways of guiding people. We can either show them how to do everything, thereby denying them the tools to act with independence and the ability to think for themselves. I hate to think how many parents are guilty of this. Or, we can empower them by giving them the principles which will enable them to choose for themselves properly, so that they can make their own appropriate decisions.

Torah and its mitzvos are the principles by which one can live. They serve as a beacon of light in a world filled with darkness. A similar idea applies to common sense. It is the key which opens all doors. Without it, one has the treasures, but no access to it.

Take to yourself Yehoshua bin Nun, a man in whom there is spirit. (27:18)

Hashem informs Moshe Rabbeinu that his successor will be his prized talmid, disciple, Yehoshua. Exclusive of the many qualifications that Yehoshua possessed, he was a devoted student who "would not depart from the tent." (Shemos 33:11) Always at Moshe's side, waiting devotedly for him at the foot of Har Sinai for forty days, Yehoshua feared he might miss an important lesson, a piece of education that would later be helpful to him. Does devotion beget leadership? Just because someone is an excellent student does not necessarily mean he will be a superior teacher - or does it? Chazal cite the pasuk in Mishlei, Notzar te'ainah yochal piryah, "He who watches over the tree shall eat its fruit." Yehoshua demonstrated boundless love for the Torah. He did not leave Moshe's side, as he was watching over the "fig tree." He was afraid he might miss out on a dvar Torah, an important ethical lesson. A good teacher is one who appreciates the subject matter. A math teacher loves math - or at least he should. A rebbe exemplifies love of Torah. Yehoshua became Moshe's successor because he showed how important Torah was to him. He could not live without it. His entire life revolved around the Rabban shel kol Yisrael, the rebbe of all the Jewish People, his personal rebbe, Moshe. His rebbe was the primary exponent of Hashem's Torah, so he could not leave him.

In the Midrash Tanchuma, Pinchas 11, Chazal expound on the significance of the fig tree and its apparent relationship with Yehoshua as Moshe's successor. The fruits of other trees - such as olive, grape and date - are usually harvested all at once. The entire tree ripens at an equal pace. The fig tree is different. Its fruit ripens individually over time, so that it might take weeks until an entire fig tree is harvested. Torah study and achievement are very much like the ripening/harvesting process of the fig tree. One does not become a talmid chacham, Torah scholar, in one sitting. It takes diligence, toil and patience to accumulate the multi-faceted knowledge related to Torah. Slowly, the yedios, pieces of knowledge, germinate and grow in one's mind. Some students pick up the material more quickly but lack the retention, while others have no problem retaining the material once it has been acquired and assembled properly in their mind.

No shortcuts to Torah erudition exist. Distinction in Torah is a product of patience and resolve. Like the fig tree, the fruits of one's study are "harvested" one at a time and, often at different intervals. Horav Avraham Pam, zl, cited by Rabbi Sholom Smith in his latest anthology of the Rosh Yeshivah's shmuessen, ethical discourses, observes that some Torah students become disillusioned and discouraged when they realize that they are not going to become gedolim, Torah giants, overnight. They cannot wait to reach the apex of Torah knowledge. Thus, they have unreasonable expectations concerning their advancement in Torah. The next step is listening to the yetzer hora, evil inclination, when it conveys the message that a life of devotion to Torah is not their cup of tea. Why not pursue other endeavors - something easier, more lucrative, more acceptable to public acclaim?

The Rosh Yeshivah adds that growth in Torah is predicated on another factor: chazarah, review. Study is important, but if one seeks retention, he must review constantly. He cites the Maharal in his commentary to Pirkei Avos, Derech Chaim, who laments the fact that without chazarah, one ultimately forgets his learning. It should be no different than one who is carrying a pouch of diamonds on his person. He will constantly check to see if the pouch is secure, if all of the diamonds are still there. When something is precious, one takes great pains to guard it against loss. Torah is no different. One who cares about his learning, reviews. One who does not review cares very little about his learning. The Maharal decries the fact that some of the most brilliant and capable students squander their potential due to a lack of review. He considers this a tragedy akin

to the burning of a sefer Torah, which requires one to rend his garments as an expression of mourning.

Rav Pam noted that Parashas Pinchas is read during the beginning of summer vacation, at a time when one can evaluate how much he has achieved during the past year and what he has to do in order that his achievements are retained so that they become an integral part of his life. A parent should appraise his child's accomplishments during the past and correct when necessary, as well as encourage and offer praise when appropriate. The fruits of Torah achievement are like figs which ripen at different intervals. Children who study Torah are similar. They achieve at various paces, something parents should take to heart when comparing children. With this attitude, and the proper guidance, one will enjoy the luscious fruits of the fig tree of Torah learning.

l'zechar nishmas R' Yissachar Dov ben HaRav Yisrael a"h Hertzberg niftar 7 Av 5745 t.n.tz.v.h.

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Rabbi Yissocher Frand on Parshas Pinchas

The Pitfall of Consistency: Been There; Done That

Please note: The RavFrand shiur will be taking a summer break and will resume the week of Parshas Shoftim.

Parshas Pinchas contains a long list of sacrifices that are brought on various occasions. The first offering that the Torah discusses is the Korban Tamid - the Daily Sacrifice. When the Basi HaMikdash [Temple] is standing, there is a Biblical command to offer a Tamid Offering, every single day: "One Lamb is to be offered in the morning and one Lamb is to be brought toward the evening" [Bamidbar 28:4]. This offering is brought every day of the year, even on Shabbos, even on Yom Kippur.

There is something beautiful about consistency. But consistency does have one major pitfall. This pitfall is hinted to, by an incongruous pasuk [verse] in the middle of the chapter of the Daily Sacrifice. For no apparent reason, the Torah inserts a pasuk into the middle of the description of the Korban Tamid: "The continual Burnt Offering, which was made at Mt. Sinai for a pleasant aroma, a Fire Offering, before HaShem [Bamidbar 28:6]."

What does the Olah that was brought on Mt. Sinai have to do with this section about the Daily Sacrifice? That which happened on Mt. Sinai is history! Why is it mentioned in the middle of the section of the Korban Tamid?

The Sifrei and the Talmud [Chagiga 6b], the Tanaaim are all bothered by the question, "What is this pasuk teaching us?" One opinion states that the Olah on Mt. Sinai needed accompanying libations; one says it did not need libations; one says they did not offer the Daily offering at Mt. Sinai and that it only started later on. They are all troubled by the presence of this pasuk over here.

Rav Yosef Salant says that although the Rabbis of the Talmud are arguing about a halachic issue, there is also a very important hashkafic point that we derive from the presence this pasuk. That hashkafic point relates to this pitfall of consistency.

When something is done day in day out, as wonderful as it may be, it eventually becomes done by rote. It becomes stale. It becomes automatic, without thought.

On any ordinary day, we might arrive at Shachris late and quickly put on our Tefillin in the time between Yishtabach and Borchu [names of specific prayers] and still have time to answer 'Yehei Shmei Rabba'. That is the amount of time it takes us to put on Tefillin!

However, a person only needs to have the nachas of seeing a son put on Tefillin for the first time, to recall a very different process. Watch a Bar

Mitzvah boy put on Tefillin, making sure they are straight and making sure they are tight enough and that every strap is in order. What is the difference? The difference is that we may have been putting on Tefillin for forty years. On the one hand that is great -- it is 'Tamid'. We can look back and say, we never missed a day! But that 'Tamid' becomes 'old hat' and sometimes lacks the true meaning of the Mitzvah. That is the pitfall of Tamid.

Therefore, the Torah inserts, "The Continuous Burnt Offering that was offered on Mt. Sinai for a pleasant Aroma, a Fire Offering before HaShem," in the middle of the parsha of the Korban Tamid that applies for all generations.

Remember that first Tamid! Remember that the Tamid that was brought on Har Sinai with tremendous enthusiasm, newness and excitement. Remember that! There should always be a little of that Tamid in the Tamid that is brought every single day.

That is the way it should be with our Tefillin and with our Kerias Shemah and with our Shmoneh Esreis [names of specific prayers]. We cannot lose the whole benefit of consistency by letting that very benefit become a pitfall.

Dovid HaMelech [King David] says in Tehillim, "I asked one thing from G-d, that is my request; to dwell in the House of G-d all the days of my life, and to visit His Palace." [Tehillim 27:4] The commentaries all ask what Dovid HaMelech is saying. First he asks to dwell in G-d's House his entire life, and then he asks to be a visitor? Which is it -- a Resident or a Visitor? Is he a "shivti b'veis HaShem"-nik or is he a "L'vaker b'Heicholo"-nik?

Dovid's request is to have it both ways. He wants to be one who dwells everyday in G-d's house, but he wants to feel as if he is only a visitor. He always wants it to feel special and new.

This is a difficult request, because these two qualities are almost mutually exclusive. When one has 'Tamid' he does not have 'Chiddush' and when one has 'Chiddush' he does not have 'Tamid'.

But this is the goal and this is the lesson of the Korban Tamid. It needs to be "One every morning and one every evening" but it also must be "like the first one which was ever offered, on Mt. Sinai."

Transcribed by David Twersky Seattle, WA; Technical Assistance by Dovid Hoffman, Baltimore, MD

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1. It is permitted to trim a mustache that interferes with eating.⁵
2. It is permitted to pluck one's eyebrows or eyelashes.⁶
3. Married women may cut hair that is protruding from their head covering.⁷
4. It is permitted to comb one's hair even though some hair will get torn out while combing.⁸
5. Nail cutting is permitted.⁹
6. A mourner who completed his mourning period during the Three Weeks may take a haircut and a shave.¹⁰
7. The prohibition of haircutting applies even to small children under the age of chinuch.¹¹ Thus if an upsheren falls during the Three Weeks, it should either be moved up or postponed.¹²
8. If absolutely necessary, it is permitted to take a haircut or a shave on the evening preceding the Fast of the Seventeenth of Tammuz.¹³
9. On the day of a baby's bris,¹⁴ the father, the sandak and the mohel may take a haircut.¹⁵

Question: In some communities it has become customary to shave or trim one's beard on erev Shabbos during the Three Weeks in honor of Shabbos. Is there a halachic source for this leniency?

Discussion: Yes, there is. It is based on the ruling of the Shulchan Aruch,¹⁶ which permits laundering [during the Nine Days] for Shabbos if one has no other garments to wear. Magen Avraham, quoted by all later authorities and the Mishnah Berurah,¹⁷ wonders why a similar leniency does not exist concerning haircutting as well. He answers that haircutting is not permitted for Shabbos since people do not take a haircut every week, while everyone needs clean clothing every week. Thus the Rabbis allowed laundering for Shabbos under certain circumstances but did not allow haircutting.

Based on this Magen Avraham, it may be argued¹⁸ that this restriction applies only to taking a haircut but not to shaving. Many men shave several times a week or even daily, so that shaving is comparable to laundering, not to haircutting. Accordingly, it would be permitted to shave on erev Shabbos, and possibly this is the source for those who do so.¹⁹ While those who have this custom are permitted to rely upon it,²⁰ most communities did not accept this leniency.²¹ As with all established customs, one may not deviate from his traditional custom.

Question: Many people involved in the business, academic or professional world shave or trim their beards throughout the Three Weeks. Is this allowed?

Discussion: While Shulchan Aruch and Mishnah Berurah do not mention such a leniency, it is mentioned by several contemporary poskim.²² Rav M. Feinstein²³ rules that the custom not to shave during the Three Weeks does not apply to situations where a monetary loss would result. Accordingly, if one would incur a loss by not shaving, he may shave. Rav Feinstein writes that this leniency does not apply to the week of Tishah b'Av itself (i.e., from the Sunday before Tishah b'Av until Tishah b'Av), where it would be prohibited to shave even if a monetary loss would be sustained.

Rav Feinstein further explains²⁴ that shaving is permitted only if otherwise a loss would be incurred. If appearing unshaven would merely engender ridicule [or would cause one to suffer embarrassment], the leniency does not apply.

Based on Rav Feinstein's rulings, the following rules apply:
* Before one relies on the leniency of shaving during the Three Weeks, he must ascertain whether or not doing so would actually cause him a financial loss. With the relaxed standards of dress prevalent in today's world, it is difficult to find situations where one would actually lose his job or suffer monetary loss if he did not shave. When in doubt, one should discuss his case with a rabbi.

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Haircuts and Shaving During the Three Weeks

The Talmud¹ tells us that only one who has properly mourned the Temple's destruction will merit to see its rebuilding. Accordingly, the three-week period between the fast of the seventeenth of Tammuz and Tishah b'Av, known as Bein ha-Metzarim, was established by the Rabbis² as a period of mourning over the destruction of the two Batei ha-Mikdash. To create an atmosphere of mourning, they restricted certain activities that are normally permitted. What are these restrictions? One of them³ is the injunction against men, women and children taking a haircut or a shave. These are the basic rules⁴:

* The leniency applies only to those days or those times when one must attend business meetings or discharge professional obligations, etc. It is not a blanket permit which allows any businessman, academician or professional to shave any time during the Three Weeks. Nowhere is it suggested that since it is permitted for a businessman to shave under extenuating circumstances, he may therefore dispense with the prohibition altogether. The prohibition remains in full force and it is lifted only when there is no other choice. Accordingly, a businessman who goes on vacation or is away from his office for several days over the weekend or a legal holiday, is not permitted to shave during that time.

* Some people who became accustomed to shaving during their years of employment continue to do so even upon retirement. This is not permitted.

1 Ta'anis 31b, quoted in Shulchan Aruch, O.C. 554:25.

2 This is the custom of the Ashkenazic community, as recorded by Rama, O.C. 551:4. Sephardic communities have different customs.

3 The others are: 1. Getting married or participating in a wedding; 2. Listening to music and dancing; 3. Reciting shehecheyanu. See The Weekly Halachah Discussion, pgs. 423-428, for the details.

4 The Three Weeks period includes another period of more intensive mourning, called the Nine Days. The halachos of those days –?from Rosh Chodesh Av through midday of the tenth of Av –?are more restrictive in several areas. We are discussing the laws of the Three Weeks only, not the special, more stringent, halachos of the Nine Days.

5 O.C. 551:13.

6 Bein Pesach l'Shavuos, pg. 241, quoting an oral ruling from Rav S.Z. Auerbach and Rav S. Wosner.

7 Mishnah Berurah 551:79. When necessary, women may shave their legs; Rav M. Feinstein (Oholei Yeshurun, pg. 9). See also Igros Moshe, Y.D. 2:137 where he allows women to take haircuts when necessary during the Three Weeks.

When necessary, a girl of marriageable age may take a haircut; Rav S.Z. Auerbach (Halichos Beisah, pg. 371).

8 Mishnah Berurah 551:20.

9 Kitzur Shulchan Aruch 122:5.

10 Mishnah Berurah 551:87.

11 Sha'ar ha-Tziyun 551:91. Aruch ha-Shulchan 551:31, however, seems to hold that only children above the age of chinuch are prohibited from taking a haircut. See also Igros Moshe, Y.D. 1:224, who agrees with this opinion.

12 Mishnas Yaakov, O.C. 551 quoting Rav Y.Y. Teitelbaum (Satmar Rav).

13 Igros Moshe O.C. 4:112-2. See also She'arim Metzuyanim b'Halachah 122:1, based on Igros Moshe O.C. 1:168.

14 Or the evening before; Mishnah Berurah 493:13. If the bris is on Shabbos, it is permitted to take a haircut on Friday; *ibid*. If the bris is on Sunday, most poskim do not permit taking a haircut on Friday; see Kaf ha-Chayim 493:36.

15 Kitzur Shulchan Aruch 122:15; Sha'ar ha-Tziyun 551:4, quoting Chasam Sofer; Kaf ha-Chayim 551:10; Pischei Teshuvah 551:1; She'arim Metzuyanim b'Halachah 122:16. See, however, Be'er Heitev 551:3, who rules stringently.

16 Rama O.C. 551:3.

17 551:32.

18 See Chasam Sofer, Y.D. 348, who advances this argument.

19 She'arim Metzuyanim b'Halachah 122:5. See also Rav Akiva Eiger and Beirur Halachah (551:3), who quote the view of Tosafos which even allows haircutting in honor of Shabbos, just as laundering is permitted.

20 Kaf ha-Chayim 551:66. See also Nefesh ha-Rav, pg. 191.

21 Shemiras Shabbos K'hilchasah 42:52. One of the reasons suggested is that most people who rely on this leniency are not really doing so for the sake of honoring the Shabbos but rather for their own sake... (Teshuvos Sha'ar ha-Zekeinim, quoted by Pischei Teshuvah and Kaf ha-Chayim 551:66).

22 A possible source is Chasam Sofer, O.C. 158, who discusses permitting a mourner who had to attend an important business meeting to take a haircut during shivah and sheloshim.

23 Igros Moshe, O.C. 4:102. See also She'arim Metzuyanim b'Halachah 122:5.

24 Igros Moshe, C.M. 1:93.

Doubly Blessed

By Rabbi Yirmiyohu Kaganoff

In the beginning of the parsha, we are told that Hashem made a covenant, a bris with Pinchas, which reminds us of the mitzvah of bris that we so lovingly observe.

It was a big simcha, the birth of twin boys. Avi Habanim, the new Daddy, wondered whether he and Reb Mendel the mohel should recite the brachos once or twice. He also wanted to know whether the bracha after the bris, asher kidash yedid mibeten, is recited separately for each baby or not. Since holding the baby while this bracha is recited is a big honor, this would amount to two extra kibbudim for Avi to distribute – quite an asset in his sensitive family!

Response:

When celebrating the Habanim sons' bris, the older son was brought to shul first; the mohel recited the bracha of al hamilah prior to performing the older boy's bris. Avi then recited the bracha lehachnisu bivriso shel Avraham Avinu, to bring him into the Covenant of Avraham our forefather. After the bris was completed, Uncle Max was honored with reciting the bracha asher kidash yedid mibeten prior to naming the baby Peretz after Uncle Max's late father. After Max's booming baritone rendition was complete, the mohel recited the mishebeirach wishing Peretz a speedy recovery and then began Aleinu, the customary closing prayer to the bris ceremony.

Now the Second Bris

After Aleinu and kaddish were completed, Reb Mendel, Avi and Uncle Herman (I will soon explain why he, and not Uncle Max) took a brief walk outside the shul, and then Avi's younger son arrived just in time for his bris. Reb Mendel declared kvatter, the standard announcement politely asking people to end their conversations because the bris is beginning. Mendel recited the bracha al hamilah a second time and Avi then recited the bracha lehachnisu again. After the bris was completed, Uncle Herman was honored with reciting the bracha asher kidash yedid mibeten prior to naming the baby Zerach.

The Dvar Torah

At the banquet celebrating the bris, Avi began his comments by thanking Hashem not only for the birth of two healthy boys, but also for the opportunity to have had time to analyze a complex halachic topic that he had never previously researched. He then devoted his "Bris Torah" to sharing his research on the subject at hand. He began by noting that most early authorities contend that one should not recite the brachos twice, but recite one al hamilah and one lehachnisu bivriso for both brisin (this is the commonly used plural). When following this approach, one should be careful not to talk about anything not germane to the bris prior to performing the second bris (see Beis Yosef, Yoreh Deah 265; Gra"z 213:7).

Lehachnisam bivriso

Indeed, even the text of the bracha recited by the father changes to the plural: lehachnisam bivriso shel Avraham Avinu, to bring them into the Covenant (Beis Yosef; Rama, Yoreh Deah 265:5). The Rama even amends the prayer that includes naming the child to plural by saying kayem es hayeladim.

Among those authorities who follow this approach, we find a dispute concerning when Dad recites his bracha lehachnisam; although some imply that he should recite it immediately after the mohel recites his bracha on the first bris (Yam shel Shelomoh, Chullin 6:9), most contend that he should not recite it until after the mohel performs the second bris (Shu"t HaRashba 1:382). This dispute concerns whether the optimal time to recite this bracha (on every bris) is prior to the performing of the bris, assuming that it is a bracha of praise (see Tosafos, Pesachim 7a s.v. Beliva'eir). This is a complex discussion on its own that we will need to leave for now; perhaps it is a topic for a future bris. In order to accommodate both approaches, the father usually recites lehachnisu bivriso immediately after the mohel begins removing the foreskin but prior to his peeling back the membrane underneath that is halachically called the or haperiyah.

Asher Kidash

There is an additional dispute whether to recite the bracha asher kidash yedid mibeten (recited after the bris and before the baby is named) twice or only once. Rabbeinu Yeruchem implies that one should recite it after each bris, whereas the Beis Yosef disagrees, contending that it should be recited only once -- after the second bris. I would like to note that a much earlier authority than the Beis

Yosef, the Tashbeitz (2:42), already ruled exactly as the Beis Yosef did – that it should be recited only once, and after the second bris, so that it refers back to both brisin.

Avi noted that some might be concerned about the following curious problem. Since we usually name the child immediately after reciting the bracha asher kidash yedid mibeten, and one is now reciting only one bracha for both boys, how does anyone know which child was given which name? (Avi then noted tongue-in-cheek that in his particular instance this probably would not be such a concern, since people could always refer to Chumash and see that Peretz is the older twin.)

Actually, an early halachic source alludes to a response to this question. The Tashbeitz notes that after reciting the bracha asher kidash yedid mibeten, the custom was to pour two different cups of wine and name each baby while holding a different cup, although one recites only one bracha of hagafen for both cups since there is no interruption between them. He notes that there is no real reason to have two cups for this purpose other than to pacify people. One cup of wine for the bracha certainly suffices. Presumably, each cup of wine was brought near the child who was now being named so that people would know which child would bear which name, although it is also clear from the Tashbeitz that there is no necessity to do this.

Avi continued: According to the Rama's recommendation that one recites only one naming prayer for both boys, obviously one is using only one cup of wine. It also seems that one concludes this prayer by saying *viyakaru shemam biYisrael Peretz ben Avraham veZerach ben Avraham*. Since one recites only one prayer that then names both boys, presumably the naming follows the order in which they were circumcised.

Double Blessings

Avi then noted a more serious issue: If most poskim contend that one should not recite the brachos twice for the two brisin, why do we ignore this majority opinion! As you can imagine, after researching the shaylah, I asked my rav what to do, and followed his advice. However, before explaining his reasoning, I would like to share with you more of my research.

Truthfully, several different authorities, both early and late, recommend different reasons why one should recite separate brachos for each bris. The earliest dissenting opinion is that of the Baal HaTtur, an early rishon, who rules that each bris always requires its own bracha. Why should this be so? Does the Baal HaTtur contend that whenever one fulfills a mitzvah twice that each act requires its own bracha? This would mean that when installing several mezuzos one would recite a bracha on each mezuzah, and that a shocheit slaughtering many birds or animals should recite a new bracha before each shechitah. Although there is a recognized very early authority who indeed advocates this position (Rabbeinu Shmuel ben Chofni, quoted by Mordechai, Chullin #658), the other authorities, Baal HaTtur included, accept that one recites only one bracha before performing the same mitzvah several times (Tashbeitz 2:42). So why is this case different?

Baal HaTtur himself explains that bris milah is different from the other mitzvos mentioned because one may not perform two brisin simultaneously. Presumably, he means that because of the principle of *ain osim mitzvos chavilos chavilos*, one may not "bundle" together two mitzvos and perform them together because this implies that one finds performing mitzvos a burden that one wants to be rid of. The logic is that since I cannot perform the second bris until after I perform the first, the first bris is in effect an interruption between the bracha and the second bris (Shu"t Maharam Shick, Yoreh Deah #250).

Most early authorities dispute with the Baal HaTtur's logic. Although they presumably agree that one may not perform both brisin simultaneously because of safety concerns and because of the principle of *ain osim mitzvos chavilos chavilos*, they feel that this does not create a sufficient reason to require a new bracha on the second bris. Remember that the mohel knows that he will be performing a second bris when he recites the bracha on the first child. Although most early authorities rule differently, some seem somewhat unconvinced that one is forbidden from reciting separate brachos on each bris. For example, someone sent the Rashba a letter inquiring whether it is correct to recite only one bracha when performing two brisin. The Rashba responded that he had never been in attendance when two brisin occurred together – and consequently was unaware of an accepted practice. Logically, he feels that one should recite only one bracha, just as a shocheit should recite only one bracha prior to performing multiple shechitos, although it is clear from the Rashba's discussion that he would certainly defer to a minhag differing from his ruling (Shu"t HaRashba 1:382).

Later Authorities

Avi continued his discussion by mentioning that the Tur cites the opinion of the Baal HaTtur, but then quotes his father, the Rosh, who disputed the Baal HaTtur's conclusions. The Rosh compares this case to having two newly married couples in attendance at one sheva brachos, and whether one should recite two sets of brachos, one for each couple, or one series of brachos for both. He concludes that one should recite one set of brachos for both couples, and rules that when performing brisin on twins, one should recite only one series of brachos for both. Clearly, there is concern that one is reciting unnecessary brachos, brachos she'ainam tzrichos, which is a violation of halacha. The Rosh then notes that this is true even if there are two different mohalim involved – and even if the two babies are from different families – one mohel should recite the bracha before performing the first bris with the other mohel present and include the second mohel in his bracha. The second mohel should have in mind to be included in this first one's bracha. He then also rules that the same is true for the bracha recited after the bris, asher kidash yedid mibeten – concluding that this bracha should also be recited only once for both children, and even if the second child is not present when the first bris is performed since one knows that one will be performing both brisin (Shu"t HaRosh 26:4). Of course, this presents an interesting question, since this bracha is recited after the bris, and one may have already performed the first bris before the second baby arrived. The authorities conclude that even so, one should delay reciting the bracha asher kidash yedid mibeten until the second bris is performed, and then recite it after the second bris with intent for the first bris as well.

To sum up, there is a dispute between the Baal HaTtur and the Rosh whether one must recite separate brachos on these two brisin, or whether one is required to recite one bracha on both brisin.

Other reasons

Other, later, authorities present completely different reasons why one should not recite the brachos on two brisin together. The Beis Shmuel (Even HaEzer 62:3) quotes the Perisha as stating that one should not make two brisin together because of *ayin hora*, just as one should not perform two wedding ceremonies together. According to the Perisha, the concern is not about the brachos, but about the ceremony itself, and that therefore one should complete one bris ceremony before beginning the next one. However, most other authorities do not share this concern (see Taz, Yoreh Deah 265:11 for one approach why). We should note that the Perisha's approach results in a different procedure than the Baal HaTtur would advise. According to the Perisha, one should not bring the second baby to the location of the bris until after the first bris is complete, whereas according to the Baal HaTtur, one may bring both babies at the beginning and conduct the two brisin step-by-step one after the other. Avi then mentioned a different approach why we should not bring the two babies together. If we remember the Baal HaTtur's position, he contended that simultaneously performing the bris act for both babies violates *ein osim mitzvos chavilos chavilos*, bundling together mitzvos. However, the Baal HaTtur was not concerned that bringing the babies together violates *ein osim mitzvos chavilos chavilos*. However, there are authorities who feel that bringing two babies together with the intent of performing their brisin consecutively involves a problem of *ein osim mitzvos chavilos chavilos* (see Magen Avraham 147:11). Thus, we have two authorities who advise against bringing the two babies together to perform their brisin together. We are now going to present a third reason not to do so.

Interrupting the Brachos

Most authorities rule that if someone interrupted after reciting the bracha for the first bris, he must recite a new bracha for the second bris. They contend that it is prohibited to interrupt because this now causes the recital of a new bracha, which is a bracha she'ainah tzricha, an unnecessary bracha. For this reason, the Maharshah reached an interesting conclusion: Departing from the Rosh's conclusions, he contended that when two different families are making a bris, one should have them each recite its own brachos. He voices two different reasons for his conclusion:

1. There is likelihood that they will interrupt, which requires a new bracha, but fail to recite the bracha.
2. When dealing with two families, one needs to be concerned that they will get into a fight over who recites the brachos.

As a result, the Maharshah recommends making certain that the two brisin have an interruption between them to guarantee that they require two separate brachos. This alleviates the possibility of a *machlokes* and also guarantees that the proper brachos will indeed be recited (Yam shel Shelomoh, Chullin 6:9).

The Shach's Conclusion

The Shach (Yoreh Deah 265:15) takes the Maharshal's concerns even further, being concerned that even in the case of twins, there will be interruptions between the two brisin, and that one should therefore separate between them. In taking this position, he is disputing the conclusions of most Rishonim, and those of the Shulchan Aruch, Rama, and Taz, although one could argue that he was not disagreeing as much as reflecting changing patterns of human behavior. It may be that in earlier generations, people exhibited better self-control and remained quiet between the two brisin, whereas in his generation they did not.

Differing Customs

"If I have not yet put you to sleep," the erudite father continued, "I will return to the original dispute I mentioned above between the Baal HaItur and the Rosh whether one must recite separate brachos on these two brisin, or whether one is required to recite one bracha on both brisin. Among the later authorities, there is much discussion whether the custom follows the Baal HaItur or the Rosh. The Bach records that in his day this was dependent on local custom, some places following the Baal HaItur's approach of reciting separate brachos, and others following the Rosh. He mentions that the custom in Cracow followed the Rosh. The Bach concludes that the preferred practice in a place without an established custom is to bring one baby and perform his bris with its brachos, and then when finished bring the second baby and recite separate all the brachos again.

"What is the Sefardic Custom?

"The Tashbeitz, who was the Chief Rabbi in Algiers, a Sefardic community, reports that he attended many brisin of twins and never saw two brachos recited. This is also the conclusion of the Shulchan Aruch, usually the source for all Sefardic custom and practice. Nevertheless, some authorities quote an old established practice in Egypt, a Sefardic community, of performing the first bris with all its brachos, then reciting pesukim and similar things to create an interruption, following which they performed the second bris with all the brachos again (Shu"t Darchei Noam, Yoreh Deah #27, quoted by Pischei Teshuvah 265:10).

"A similar practice is noted in Nineteenth Century Hungary (Shu"t Maharam Shick, Yoreh Deah #250). Thus, it appears that in different places throughout Jewish history there were different established practices. However, Rav Elyashiv takes much umbrage at this practice, claiming that since most authorities quoted rule that one should recite only one bracha, they were also aware of minhagim, and that the places where the minhag was otherwise are the exception, not the rule (Introduction to Otzar HaBris).

"With this information, I asked my rav a shaylah, and he told me that he has attended many brisin of twins, and that the practice is always to perform one bris, make a slight interruption, and then begin the second. He told me that some people provide refreshments between the two brisin, both to accomplish more of an interruption and to have a "bris seudah" for the first twin.

"In Conclusion

"Prior to thanking all those who have helped us, I want to share with everyone the idea that we should recognize the paramount importance of being careful with our brachos. Here we see how much ink was used to clarify whether one should recite one or two brachos. Certainly, it behooves us to be careful about our recital of our brachos."
