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INTERNET PARSHA SHEET ON PINCHAS - 5771

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9:40 PM subject Rabbi Benjamin Yudin - Smart Stones vs Smart
Phones

Rabbi Benjamin Yudin Smart Stones vs Smart Phones

Parshas Pinchas is always read in conjunction with the fast of Shiva Asar B'Taamuz. This year being a leap year, the fast occurs this forthcoming Tuesday. At first glance the beginning of the parsha focuses on the goal of the three weeks, i.e. to restore shalom - true peace - between Hashem and the Jewish people. Pinchas takes action, indeed what is referred to as an act of zealotry, and this restores the peace. In our day as well, we yearn for the redemption, the restoration of the Beis Hamikdash, and the unification of the Jewish people.

Moshe teaches (Devarim 32:7) "zechor yemos olam, binu shenos dor vador - remember the days of old, understand the years of generation after generation", study history and learn well its lessons. I'd like to analyze one aspect of the cause of the destruction of the Beis Hamikdash. As we know there is a gradual build-up of intensity of mourning, and restrictions that reflect this mourning, in the period between the Shiva Asar B'Taamuz and Tisha B'av. Starting on Shiva Asar B'Taamuz we abstain from haircuts and weddings; once the month of Av arrives, we intensify the mourning and the refrain from eating meat, drinking wine, and laundering clothes; on the night and morning of Tisha B'av we sit on the ground as mourners. However, on Tisha B'av at chatzos hayom (1:01 PM this year) something very strange occurs. At that moment we arise off the floor and the intensity of the mourning subsides. Why? It is at that moment namely in the afternoon, that the

Romans set the Temple ablaze! As such, one would have expected an intensification, not a reduction, of the mourning, since this corresponds to the actual moment of destruction!?

The Gemara (Kiddushin 31b) explains this with the teaching of Avimai. The Psalmist (79:1) begins his psalm depicting the destruction of the Temple and Jerusalem with the words "Mizmor l'Assaf - a song to A'ssaf." One would have expected the psalm to begin with the word "kina - a lamentation"! A'ssaf answers that Hashem directed his anger and vengeance towards "wood and stones", the physical temple, and by destroying the temple He spared the people and stopped the human destruction. Hence the lessening of mourning at this time, in recognition of our losing the eitzim and avanim - sticks and stones - but our people live on.

The sticks and stones of the Beis Hamikdash were no ordinary edifice. The Rama, Rav Moshe Isserles, in his Toras Haolah writes that Plato the Greek philosopher accompanied Nevuchadnetzer to destroy the first Beis Hamikdash. After the destruction, Plato met the prophet Jeremiah crying over the Temple ruins. The philosopher asked the prophet, why are you mourning over a building, over sticks and stones? Jeremiah then asked Plato if he had any unresolved philosophical issues. Plato responded with a list of complex problems. The prophet addressed each one and precisely and methodically resolved all his questions. Plato was astonished and could not believe that any man could be so wise. Jeremiah pointed to the Temple ruins and said "all of my knowledge I derived from these stick and stones".

The late Rav Shimshon Pincus z"l explained in a most poignant way why we lost the Beis Hamikdash. The Mishnah (Avos 3:22) teaches in the name of Rebi Elazar ben Azariah "one whose wisdom exceeds his good deeds is compared to a tree with many branches but with few roots; such a tree is easily uprooted by the wind. But one whose good deeds exceed his wisdom is likened to a tree with few branches but with many roots that all the winds cannot uproot." At the time of the destruction of the Temple, the Beis Hamikdash had not changed - it was still the great repository of wisdom. The very existence of a residence for the Almighty is most difficult to comprehend, as King Solomon expressed (Melachim I 8:27), "behold the heaven and heaven of heavens cannot contain you, much less this Temple that I have erected". Our rabbis therefore utilize the concept of tzimtzum meaning while "the whole world is filled with his glory" (Yeshaya 6:3), there is a greater concentration of His essence and presence in the Mikdash. A further proof that the Mikdash was the storehouse of wisdom is that we conclude every shemoneh esrei with the prayer that the Beis Hamikdash be rebuilt, speedily in our days, and grant us our share in Torah. Why do we connect the rebuilding of the Beis Hamikdash with our being granted our share in Torah? Surely Torah study is independent of the Beis Hamikdash service! By making this connection we are reaffirming our belief that when the Beis Hamikdash is rebuilt, there will not only be the resumption of the avodah - service, but also that special heavenly enlightenment will again emanate from the Beis Hamikdash.

What changed at the time of the churban was the people. The breakdown of man to man relations, characterized by sinas chinum - gratuitous hatred, as portrayed in the Talmud (Yoma 9b), coupled with the idolatrous practices of the people as portrayed by the prophets Yeshaya, Jeremiah, and Yechezkel, diminished the quantitative and qualitative nature of their good deeds. They were no longer a worthy beis kibal - receptacle - for this special wisdom. They became that tree with many branches and few roots. Hashem had two choices. He could destroy the people or diminish the light and wisdom that emanated from the Beis Hamikdash. Fortunately, He chose the latter. This is what we mourn on Tisha B'av, the loss of the close relationship between the Jewish nation and Hashem. However, we rise at chatzos to breathe that sigh of relief that we survived though impaired, and we yearn and commit ourselves for the restoration Beis Hamikdash.

It is somewhat frightening to see the parallel in our contemporary society. Someday we will understand why our generation was endowed with exceptional wisdom and capabilities. The automobile, airplane, cellphone, incredible advances in medicine, laser surgery, in-utero surgery, and space exploration all reflect the technological explosions of our time. The hard question that we must ask ourselves is: are our deeds commensurate with this wisdom? Are we using these blessings to become more benevolent and magnanimous, more humble and moral, recognizing that they are a divine gift meant to enhance society if utilized properly? Are our deeds-roots more numerous than our knowledge? Or are we primarily channeling these gifts to satisfy our personal passions of greed and lust? The question must be addressed by society at large, but especially the Jewish community has to wrestle with the above.

The Talmud (Taanis 30b) teaches, "all who mourn for Jerusalem will merit witnessing her joy, and all those who do not mourn for Jerusalem will not merit to witness her joy". Mourning for Jerusalem means revisiting the causes for her destruction. The generation that lost the Beis Hamikdash had much wisdom but simply could not utilize it properly and contain it. May we learn from the mistakes of yesteryear and prove our actions worthy of supporting and maintaining the third Beis Hamikdash speedily in our days.

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http://www.aish.com/jw/s/In_Memory_of_Leiby_Kletzky.html

In Memory of Leiby Kletzky

There are no words, only tears. by Rabbi Benjamin Blech

Tisha B'Av came early this year to Boro Park. An eight-year-old boy, Leiby Kletzky, was on his way home from day camp in Brooklyn when he mysteriously disappeared. A frantic search, spearheaded by the FBI and aided by the entire community, failed to find him for two full days. And then his mother and father had to endure every parent's worst nightmare. Leiby was found dismembered. Words fail to convey the immensity of this tragedy. Apart from its ghoulish aspects, it is simply too much to imagine what it means to send off a smiling child for a summer's day of fun only to learn that all that is left of him is a memory.

It's been said that the cruelest word in the English language is "never". Never will Leiby's parents ever again be able to hold him, to hug him, to prepare him for life with words of advice and of Torah. Never will his family be able to share in the milestones of his growth to maturity. Never will there be a bar mitzvah to celebrate, graduations to attend, a wedding canopy to stand under with him and his bride as he prepares to embark on his own journey to family and future. Never will all those who knew Leiby as a child be able to find out what his unique talents might have enabled him to accomplish. Never will the Jewish community discover the contributions Leiby might have made to it and to the larger world. Ever since the beginning of mankind the Torah reminded us that a single death leaves none of us untouched. In the aftermath of the first murder, God turned to Cain in anger and admonished him with the words "The sounds of the bloods of your brother cry out to Me from the ground." Not blood, but bloods, in the plural. The commentators explain that when Cain killed his brother he effectively destroyed all of Abel's future progeny as well. In the words of the Talmud, he who murders one person is as if he destroys an entire world. The loss of one person diminishes every one of us. It affects our collective future. It alters what might have been. It prevents us from ever receiving all the precious benefits every single life has to offer. And when murder snuffs out the life of a child, the enormity of the word never - that we will never truly know what that child might have become - staggers us beyond comfort. This is not the time for us to attempt any glib rationalizations or theological efforts to explain away the horror. Jewish law, in its

profound wisdom, teaches us that we are not permitted to offer consolation "while the body is still before us." The time for comfort can come only after the necessary tears. I remember very well a somewhat similar moment in the community I served as spiritual leader. There was a tragedy that involved a young child. No one could think of any words that might alleviate the suffering of the parents. We tried but found ourselves wanting. The scene is indelibly etched in my mind. A small group of us went to the parents, hugged them, tried to say something, choked up and simply cried. Days later, the parents told me the only thing that helped them get through their tragedy was what we did for them. Not our words, but our tears. "You showed us that the pain wasn't ours alone. Your sharing our grief made it somewhat bearable." And that is what we must do now for Leiby and his family. We must let them know that we cry with them. Our tears are the words our hearts don't know how to express. The fact that we shed them proves that evil has not fully triumphed. And most important of all, the Midrash assures us that the tears of the righteous summon the Almighty to hasten the day when wickedness and its practitioners will be eradicated from Earth. Readers can send their condolences to the family using the comment section below.

<http://www.thelakewoodscoop.com/news/2011/07/dear-leiby.html>

Dear Leiby

JUL 14 2011 1:10 PM

Dear Leiby, I just returned from your Levaya (funeral). You might be wondering why I went. After all, I never met you and I am almost a half century older than you. I don't know your parents or any of your family members at all. I am not a member of your parent's Shul and never even met your parents.

I know that where you are now, you realize the reasons things occurred the way they did.

However, we down here are struggling to make sense out of the senseless; to comprehend the incomprehensible.

Why then did I trek out to Borough Park to be at your Levaya?

The reason Leiby is simple, I went because you are a very special young man.

Chazal (our Sages) have taught us in the Gemara (Shabbos 105 b) that whoever sheds tears over a 'adam kasher' literally a 'kosher' or proper person, Hashem counts those tears and places them in His 'treasure trove'.

Leiby, more people cried today for you than for anyone I can recall in many years.

These tears shed openly and unabashedly certainly indicate that you are a special young boy.

However, there is another, more important reason I went to your Levaya.

The reason I went to the Levaya is because you are one of the most precious souls that Hashem has given us and to give proper respect and kavod to your special Neshama, I went to the Levaya.

Leiby, I cannot recall a single person has caused such unity; such an outpouring of togetherness; such fervent recitation of Tehillim as you caused these two days.

Leiby, today when I came to your Borough Park neighborhood, your presence could be felt by all. Everyone and I mean everyone, Jew and Gentile were more somber, more serious, indeed, nicer to each other.

Leiby, only a special person could have been chosen by Hashem to be the conduit of such an outpouring of care and consideration.

The Gemara teaches us that when Hashem wants to send 'zechusim' (merit) to His people, He chooses an individual who is already full of 'merit'.

Leiby, you are obviously a young man with much merit; why else would Hashem choose you to be His agent to send His people so many opportunities for mitzvohs?

Leiby, I do not know why this happened. Indeed, this is not the way life is supposed to be.

The way of life is that young people are not supposed to die young. They are not supposed to be abducted by anyone, certainly not by a fellow Jew.

The way of the world should be that old people pass on and that young people live on.

However, in your case, the opposite has occurred.

I know you are a special young man; and I know your parents must be special people to have been blessed with you.

Leiby, it seems to us that you were with us much too short a time.

However, in your too short life you gave us the gift of appreciating the importance of unity.

You gave us a wake-up call to remind us to take the mundane incidents in life and place them in their proper perspective.

For two too short days you allowed us to be more forgiving, more accepting of each other and ultimately more loving of each other.

For that and for so much more, I and thousands like me went to your Levaya.

Please Leiby, do what you can for us and help all of us maintain the unity and togetherness which you caused these last two days.

May we merit to see each other one day.

With much love and respect; your friend.....

from **Rabbi Yissocher Frand** ryfrand@torah.org reply-to
ryfrand@torah.org, genesis@torah.org to
ravfrand@torah.org date Thu, Jul 14, 2011 at 2:05 PM
subject Rabbi Frand on Parshas Pinchas

Parshas Pinchas These divrei Torah were adapted from the hashkafa portion of Rabbi Yissocher Frand's Commuter Chavrusah Tapes on the weekly portion: Tape # 776, Yayin Mevushal - Does It Exist? Good Shabbos!

Moshe Demonstrates The Priorities Of A Leader Of Israel

It says in this week's Parsha: "Hashem said to Moshe, 'Go up to this mountain of Avarim and see the land that I have given to the Children of Israel. You shall see it and you shall be brought in to your people, you too, as Aaron your brother was brought in; because you rebelled against My word in the Wilderness of Zin, in the strife of the assembly, to sanctify Me at the water before their eyes. They are the waters of the strife of Kadesh, in the Wilderness of Zin.'" [Bamidbar 27:12-14].

Moshe Rabbeinu must now come to grips with a reality that was extremely painful to him. HaShem told Moshe that he will never going to enter Eretz Yisrael. This message was already delivered to Moshe in Parshas Chukas, but it is only now that the reality and the finality of the message came crushing down upon him.

Upon hearing this news, Moshe's reaction is to ask the Almighty to appoint a worthy successor to lead the people. "May Hashem, G-d of the spirits of all flesh, appoint a man over the assembly who shall go out before them 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." [Bamidbar 27: 16-17].

Rashi comments on this dialog: "This demonstrates the praise of the righteous. When their time comes to leave the world, they abandon their own needs and occupy themselves with the needs of the community." Rather than go with his first instinct to pray to the Almighty to rescind the decree and let him go into Eretz Yisrael (as Moshe indeed ultimately does as we read in the beginning of Parshas V'Eschanan), Moshe forgoes that urge and his first reaction is to pray for a worthy successor.

This is the classic behavior of a true leader of Israel. Dovid HaMelech articulates this behavior in the Book of Tehillim in a very interesting and enigmatic pasuk [verse]: "K'Ayal ta'arog al afikei mayim, ken nafshi ta'arog eilecha Elokim" [Tehillim 42:2]. The simple translation of this pasuk is "Like the ayal (a type of deer, antelope, gazelle, or hind) screams out on the waters, so too my soul cries out to You, Almighty". The Yalkut Shimoni points out a grammatical anomaly regarding this pasuk: The ayal is the male of the species (ayeles would be the feminine form) and yet the verb used in the pasuk is third person feminine (ta'arog) rather than third person masculine (ya'arog). So the Medrash asked, what is the subject of this pasuk -- the male or the female of the species?

The Medrash elaborates: When this Ayeles is about to give birth, she crouches (as it were) on the birthing stool and cries out from the excruciating labor pains to the Holy One Blessed Be He. And He answers her. The Medrash continues: What is the meaning of the term "Afikei mayim" [the underground currents of water] and what does crying out from labor pains have to do with "Afikei mayim"? The Medrash explains that the Ayeles is the most good-natured animal of the animal kingdom (haChasidah she'bechayos). When the other animals are terribly thirsty, they gather around the Ayeles and she digs with her antlers into the ground to find underground water for them. Even when she is in labor and suffering excruciating pain, she still accommodates the needs of the other animals and cries out to the Almighty in prayer to provide a source of underground currents for them. The Almighty listens to her prayers, opens the underground springs and the waters rise to greet her, thereby providing water for all the animals in answer of the gazelle's prayers.

Thus according to the Medrash, we have two independent incidents relating to the same Ayeles. The pasuk begins with the story of the Ayeles suffering from the labor pains and crying out to Hashem. The end of the pasuk speaks of this very Ayeles who cries out to Hashem to supply the needs of the other animals for water. This seems like a strange Medrash. What is it telling us?

I once heard a fantastic explanation from Rav Yaakov Galinsky, the Maggid of Jerusalem. He comments that normally when people are in pain, they are preoccupied with their own problems. When people have 'tzores', the only thing they can think about is themselves and their troubles. The type of individual, who, when gripped with personal pain, can nevertheless raise himself up above his provincial problems and think about another person's pain, is a rare individual indeed.

The Medrash comments that this Ayeles is suffering the terrible pain of labor. She has her own problems and then, while she is suffering, the other animals approach her and say "Do something for us". They ask her to pray for them that HaShem grant them water. Her reaction should be "I have enough of my own problems. Do you not see I am in labor? Leave me alone! I can't help you!" However, the Medrash tells us this is not her response. She leaves her own problems and prays for the other animals.

This, says the Medrash, is why the masculine form (Ayal rather than Ayeles) is used "k'Ayal ta'arog". At that very moment, she makes herself like a male -- oblivious to the pains of labor. She puts aside her own tzores and prays for the rest of the animals that they should have what to drink. This is what Dovid HaMelech concludes: "So too may my soul ta'arog towards you, O' G-d."

Dovid HaMelech had a miserable life, a life of pain and tzores. He had problems with Shaul HaMelech. He had enemies. He had wars to fight. He had rebellions and embarrassments within his own family. Dovid HaMelech personally experienced every conceivable trial and tribulation a person can experience. Yet, "thus shall my soul yearn for You, O' G-d." He put aside his personal issues and served as the King of Klal Yisrael. He took interest in the needs and pains of everyone else and acted as if he had no personal tragedies whatsoever.

This is in the same mold as Moshe Rabbeinu, who when he hears the words "You are not going to go to Eretz Yisrael", instead of pleading right then and there for the decree to be rescinded, first and foremost his concern was for the people -- that they might be given a worthy successor and leader. This capacity, to put aside personal needs in favor of the needs of the community at large, is the mark of the true Jewish leader. That was the mark of Moshe Rabbeinu. That was the mark of Dovid HaMelech. One only achieves that by working on oneself constantly to raise oneself above one's petty concerns.

The type of leader Moshe Rabbeinu requested for the Jewish people was one who "would go out before them and go in before them; one who would take them out and one who would bring them in." As the commentaries point out, Moshe sought a man who could deal with all types of individuals "A man who has 'ruach' within him". This means a person who has the capacity to deal with different personalities and different types of individuals. This is what is required of a Jewish leader.

HaShem told Moshe to take Yehoshua and to give him part of his "spirit". Moshe placed his hands upon the head of Yehoshua and Yehoshua was thereby gifted with the spirit of Moshe and was able to be the leader.

Rav Simcha Zissel asks, if Moshe was anyhow going to place his hands upon the head of the individual and give him part of his "ruach", then what need was there for him to request a man with "ruach" in the first place? It would seem that anyone off the street would serve the purpose. They would be gifted with this attribute of "ruach" from G-d and then be ready to lead!

Rav Simcha Zissel answers that a gift from G-d can give one wisdom and knowledge. It can make a person be cunning, a great organizer, and a superb military strategist. It can do all these things. However, there is one thing that a gift from G-d cannot give anyone. That is "midos tovos" -- good character traits. This is something that a person has to achieve on his own. Therefore, even though, eventually, the ruach would come about from a Divine transfer from the spirit of Moshe to the spirit of the recipient, before that could take place the recipient had to be a man who had "ruach" within him on his own! It had to be a person of sterling quality who would be able to deal with the people. The leader of Israel must be that very special category of individual who can arise above his own personal package of worries and focus on the needs of the tzibur, the needs of the community.

This week's write-up is adapted from the hashkafa portion of Rabbi Yissocher Frand's Commuter Chavrusah Torah Tapes on the weekly Torah portion.

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Avoiding a Hateful Heart

Love is an emotion. It is a feeling, often a very passionate one, that we have toward another person, creature, or object.

Our Torah speaks of the love we are to have for each other, for the stranger in our midst, and for the Almighty. Scripture alludes to the love a man and woman have for each other as a feeling akin to a divine flame, a passion as powerful as death itself, an emotion which cannot even be quenched by many waters (see Song of Songs 8:6-7).

Giving is an action. Sometimes it is prescribed action, such as charity to the poor. "Give, yes give to him, and let your heart not begrudge what you give to him" (Deuteronomy 15:10). Often the giving is voluntary and takes many forms: Giving of tangible gifts, or of time, of compassionate words, or of careful listening.

The question has been asked, "Do we give to those whom we love, or, perhaps, do we love those to whom we give?" What comes first? The love for one another, or the giving to him or her?

This question was asked by Rabbi Eliyahu Dessler in the first volume of his posthumously published writings, known as Michtav M'Eliyahu. Rabbi Dessler was a prominent 20th century educator and thinker who was born in Eastern Europe, worked in England, and spent his last years in Israel.

The question is truly an ancient one, posed by many philosophers from both within and outside of the Jewish tradition. It is the question of whether feelings motivate actions, or whether actions stimulate feelings.

The American philosopher and psychologist, William James, had a definite answer to this question. He believed that first we act, and based on our actions, we feel. Act joyfully, dance and sing, and you will feel joy. Act despondent, sit in solitude and fret, and you will feel depressed. James' theory is known in textbooks as the James-Lange theory.

Within our own tradition, the medieval author of the Sefer HaChinuch, enunciated a similar belief centuries before James. He asserted, "Acharei hape'ulot nimshachim halevavot, the heart follows one's actions."

If it is true that feelings of love derive from loving and giving behaviors, then it must also be true that feelings of hatred derive from hateful and violent behaviors.

Thus, we can understand an otherwise puzzling passage in this week's Torah portion, Parshat Pinchas.

Pinchas, the grandson of Aaron the peace-loving High Priest, commits an action of zealotry. A Jewish man named Zimri parades his Midianite paramour, Kozbi, before the "eyes of Moses and the eyes of all the congregation of the children of Israel." (Numbers 25:6) Pinchas swiftly, almost impulsively, grabs a spear and thrusts it through the two of them, killing them instantly. That episode is narrated at the very end of last week's Torah portion, Parshat Balak.

This week, we read of the Lord's response to Pinchas' action. He commends it, saying that Pinchas "has removed My wrath from upon the children of Israel." (ibid. 25:11) And the Almighty proceeds to reward Pinchas with "My covenant of peace." (ibid. 25:12)

In his commentary on this phrase, Rabbi Naftali Zvi Yehudah Berlin (d. 1892), dean of the famed Yeshiva of Volozhin, expresses surprise at this reward. After all, Pinchas acted violently, militantly. Shouldn't his reward be a medal of war, a prize for zealotry and courage? Why a covenant of peace?

Rabbi Berlin, who is known by the acronym formed by the first letters of his long name as the Netziv, answers eloquently: "Because it is the nature of actions such as those of Pinchas, who killed another person by his own hands, to permanently leave behind strong feelings of hatred upon the heart of the perpetrator, therefore was the blessing of peace bestowed upon him so that he should always remain gentle and peace-loving and not develop into a cruel character."

Violence contaminates the soul, regardless of whether or not the violent acts are justified.

http://www.ou.org/torah/article/rabbi_weinrebs_parsha_column_parshat_pinchas

OU TORAH PERSON IN THE PARSHA

Sponsored in memory of Nathan and Louise Schwartz a"h

Rabbi Weinreb's Parsha Column, Parshat Pinchas

This is why soldiers, when they are debriefed after battle, need special counseling. They need to be able to put the actions that they performed, even for reasons of self-defense, behind them so that they do not develop permanent feelings of hatred and cruelty.

How well do I remember the words of Golda Meir, soon after the Six Day War, who said that she could forgive Israel's enemies for everything, but not for the fact that they made warriors out of Israel's sons. She knew that once a person serves as a soldier in war, even in defense of his country, he will likely struggle for the rest of his life to make sure that he does not remain a warrior at heart.

All of us may have been guilty even unintentionally at one time or another of some sort of cruelty to others. We must be sure that those cruel actions do not result in "cruel hearts." We must be sure that we do not let the influence of actions which we legitimately perform in extreme circumstances become a permanent part of our character.

from Yeshivat Kerem B'Yavneh kby@kby.org date Thu, Jul 14, 2011 at 4:56 PM subject Parshat Pinchas

Whoever is Merciful on the Cruel

Rosh HaYeshiva **Harav Mordechai Greenberg**, shlita

"Harass the Midianites and smite them." (Bamidbar 25:17) Chazal say about this in the Midrash (Bamidbar Rabbah 21:5):

Even though I wrote, "When you draw near to a city to wage war against it, you shall call out to it for peace" (Devarim 20:10) – for these (the Midianites) do not do so – "You shall not seek their peace or welfare, all your days, forever." (Devarim 23:7)

Chazal learn a lesson for generations from here: "You find that one who deals with them with the trait of mercy, in the end comes to disgrace, battles, and troubles. Who is this? David." (Midrash ibid.) Namely, when David escaped from Shaul, he and his father's entire household went to Moab. Afterwards the king of Moav killed all of David's family, and only one remained, who found refuge by Nachash, King of Ammon, where he hid until David arrived. When Nachash dies and his son Chanun took the throne, David said, "I shall do an act of kindness for Chanun son of Nachash." (Shmuel II 10:2) The Midrash continues:

G-d said: You are violating My words? I wrote, "You shall not seek their peace or welfare," and you do acts of kindness with them? "Do not be overly righteous" – a person should not add beyond the Torah. This one sends to console Ammon and to do kindness with him, in the end comes to disgrace – "Chanun took David's servants and shaved off half of their beards and cut their garments in half." He also came to war with Aram Naharayim and the kings of Zova and the kings of Ma'achah and with Ammon, four nations, and it says, "Yoav saw that the battle faced him from the front and from the rear, etc." (And there was great trouble for Israel until Hashem saved them.) Who caused David all this? That he sought to do good with what those about whom G-d said, "You shall not seek their peace or welfare." That is why it says, "Harass the Midianites."

The attempt to find favor in the eyes of a nation that hates Israel, to find the way to their heart to form a peace treaty with them, with the thought of sparing war, is a mistaken thought. "Whoever is merciful on the cruel, in the end is cruel on the merciful." In the end, he does not prevent the war and also gets disgraced.

It seems that any further talk on the application to our generation is superfluous.

The Chasidim relate that R. Zusha and R. Elimelech were once in an inn at the time of their wandering. At night they both slept on a high bed. R. Zusha turned to his brother with a suggestion to fall for the sanctification of Hashem's name. R. Elimelech refused, while R. Zusha fell on the floor groaning with pain. The inn owner heard the sound of his falling, and ran into the room. He saw one on the floor, agonizing in

his pain, and the second on his bed. Convinced that it was he who threw R. Zusha, he beat R. Elimelech soundly, and in the end rolled him off the high bed to the floor. R. Zusha said to him: "R. Elimelech, my brother, would it not have been worthwhile from the beginning to fall for the sanctification of G-d's name? In the end you also fell!"

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**Peninim on the Torah
by Rabbi A. Leib Scheinbaum**

Shema Yisrael Torah Network to Peninim
PARSHAS PINCHAS

Pinchas ben Elazar ben Aharon HaKohen turned back My wrath from upon the Bnei Yisrael. (25:2)

One would think that the people would venerate Pinchas, applauding him for turning back Hashem's wrath against a sinful nation. Twenty-four thousand Jews had already died as retribution for their immoral involvement with the Moavite and Midyanite girls. There would have been more deaths had Pinchas not acted decisively. His actions put an end to the plague that was devastating the Jewish People. Yet, there were no accolades, no parades, no gratitude - only an accusation of wanton murder. They did not consider Pinchas a righteous zealot; they viewed him as a murderer whose ancestry traced back to Yisro, the Midyanite Priest who fattened cows for idol worship. Pinchas was motivated to kill as a result of the genes he received from his maternal grandfather. Thus, the Torah details his lineage as far back as Aharon HaKohen, to relay a message: This was no act of murder; this was a holy act that purified and atoned for the nation's dreadful sin.

It is very difficult to accept that the nation was poking fun at Pinchas' lineage. This is not only halachically inappropriate; it is spiritually forbidden. It is the antithesis of moral rectitude. You simply do not make fun of someone's lineage. The tribes knew Pinchas as a decent, upright, G-d-fearing Jew. Clearly, they did not think that he had any motive other than l'shem Shomayim, for the sake of Heaven, behind his act. Horav Yechiel Weinberg, zl, posits that the people were certain that Pinchas thought he was acting l'shem Shomayim. They felt that Pinchas had convinced himself of that. In reality, however, it was the maternal grandfather from within who was having an overriding influence on him. One does not always perceive the underlying essence of his actions. He thinks - he even believes - that he is acting with spiritual integrity l'shem Shomayim, but he forgets where it all started. For example, one sustained an embarrassing experience, an experience that personally demeaned him. He must now turn it all around and do something that will elevate him from the depths, raise his self-esteem, return him to his original self. He undertakes an action that he would have otherwise ignored - all this only to assuage his ego, to revive his self-esteem. Yes, he is acting l'shem Shomayim, but why is he acting l'shem Shomayim? Even the l'shem Shomayim must be l'shem Shomayim!

This was the spiritual danger inherent in Pinchas' act of zealousness. His entire life was overshadowed with the taint of his maternal grandfather's search for religion. During his quest, he went through various transformations on his journey to find true faith. He achieved his goal, but he had accumulated much baggage enroute. Pinchas lived with this. He was waiting for the opportunity to arise in which he could demonstrate to himself and to the nation that he was made of the same cloth as they. He was not adversely affected by his maternal lineage. Suddenly, the opportunity materialized - when Zimri took an idolatress, a Midyanite. The scenario that presented itself was one that served Pinchas' needs. He could now redeem himself. He could prove to everyone that he was pure, committed, with no taint of idol worship

lurking in his past. Pinchas had every reason to wipe clean the rumors by killing Zimri.

This is what the people feared. Was Pinchas acting l'shem Shomayim, or was this his way of declaring, "I am one of you. I abhor idolatry. My grandfather's religious journey has left no taint on me"? The Torah gives us the answer by underscoring his paternal yichus, lineage, to Aharon HaKohen. Everything that Pinchas did was on the up and up, acting l'shem Shomayim to sanctify Hashem's Name. B'kano es kinaasi, "When he zealously avenged Me." It was Hashem's vengeance - not Pinchas'.

It is so easy to delude oneself into thinking that his intentions are noble - especially if they are not. The yetzer hora, evil inclination, goes into overdrive in its attempt to present an aveirah, sin, as a mitzvah, or a personal vendetta as acting l'shem Shomayim. It is so difficult to introspect, to seek and confront the truth behind our actions. The risk we take by not introspecting can be devastating. If Pinchas' intentions had not been pure, his act of righteous zealotness would have been transformed into wanton murder. The divide between good and evil can often be quite narrow.

Pinchas ben Elazar ben Aharon HaKohen turned back My wrath from upon the Bnei Yisrael. (25:2)

Horav Moshe Tzvi Nahariyah, zl, distinguishes between three forms of kanaus, zealotness. First is the extremist who is filled with hate, obsessed with negativity, an individual who finds it difficult to live within his own skin. This is an individual who, if not religious, would be a thief and even a murderer. Instead, he is officially observant, but takes out his unchannelled anger on anyone and everything. It is his binding commitment to the Torah that prevents him from carrying out his fantasies against his self-imposed enemies. This is not a kanai, zealot. This is a sick, wicked man who is obsessed with hate.

Next is the individual who is spiritually inclined. He gravitates to anything spiritual. He is intolerant of anything or anyone who does not conform to a life of kedushah, holiness. His kanaus is the by-product of the mixture of ascetism and an extreme closeness to Hashem. While his zealotness does have roots within the parameters of Torah thought, it does not reflect shleimus, perfection. He still dislikes those who are not exactly like him. This is not the kanaus which Hashem rewards with Brisi shalom, "My Covenant of peace." Nothing is peaceful about him.

The third form of kanaus is one that is inspired by a father's love for his errant son. If another boy would have acted in this manner, he would neither be hurt, nor would he react. It is because this is his son, whom he loves dearly that he is in pain and that he must react. His anger is the result of love. He is upset with the negative action that his son has committed. His love for his son, however, has not diminished. It remains the same, in full force.

Pinchas' kanaus was Kinaasi - "My [Hashem's] vengeance." He did not direct his anger at Klal Yisrael. On the contrary, he acted decisively because of his love for the Jewish People and his burning desire to prevent a breach in the nation's sheleimus, perfection. He acted zealously, so that Hashem would forgive the nation. Indeed, as soon as he raised up the spear, the pasuk in Tehillim 106:30 writes: Vayaamod Pinchas va'yipallel, "Pinchas stood in prayer," so that there should not be an outbreak of plague against the people. He prayed that his forthcoming action would have an atoning effect on Hashem's wrath. Pinchas acted with extreme mesiras nefesh, self-sacrifice and dedication, for, if Zimri would have risen up to defend himself, thereby killing Pinchas, he would not have been held liable. This form of kanaus earned Pinchas the Kehunah.

Kanaus that sprouts from love is true kanaus. Interestingly, Pinchas was inducted into Kehunah as a direct result of his act of zealotness. This is in contradiction to the rules applying to the Bais HaMikdash and Kehunah. Any instrument of - and allusion to - bloodshed, including sharp steel utensils, is not permitted to be used. This encompasses even

inanimate objects capable of staving blood, such as those used to cut the stones for the structure. In addition, how are we to understand Pinchas' ascension to the Priesthood when Halachah clearly states that a Kohen who has spilled blood inadvertently may no longer perform the Priestly service? Yet, Pinchas became a Kohen as a result of his committing bloodshed.

What defines murder? Is the surgeon's scalpel considered a weapon of bloodshed? One who spills blood may not serve as a Kohen. That is correct only if the act of spilling blood - however inadvertent - remains an act of spilling. It does not achieve. It does not save. It does not grant life. If, by virtue of this act of taking a life, one increases life, thereby atoning for thousands who would otherwise have died, it is not a typical instance of bloodshed.

Pinchas' act of taking Zimri's life was an act of love - for the Jewish People. Sometimes, a surgeon must cut out of love. If the malignancy is not expunged, the patient will die. Pinchas' kanaus was love at its zenith. A parent who must discipline does so out of love. He loves - he thinks - he acts. It is not inadvertent. It is purposeful, with love and aforethought. Pinchas did not become a Kohen until he killed Zimri. A Kohen must bless the nation b'ahavah - with love. It takes extreme love - such as the love of a father for a child - to discipline, even if it hurts. His act of kanaus was love at its zenith. This does not mean that the end justifies the means. It is just that the definition of the "means" has changed. It is not murder; it is true kanaus and, thus, no longer has a negative connotation.

The name of the slain Yisraelite man who was slain with the Midyanitess was Zimri ben Salu, leader of a father's house of Shimon. (25:14)

A major issue confronting Torah Judaism for years has been the question regarding the relaxation of certain stringencies so that we might be able to include more of our fellow Jews in the fold. We must face the reality that a large population of Jews have acculturated; others have totally assimilated and hardly recognize their Jewish roots. How do we bring them back? We must determine why they left in the first place. They sought acceptance, freedom; they wanted to be like everyone else. By releasing them from the fetters of a religion that was inflexible, the early secularists thought that they would be able to at least maintain them as cultural Jews. They succeeded in developing a stream of Jewish life whose relationship with the Torah is, at best, insipid, and a cultural race that is neither here nor there. What they forgot was that Judaism is a religion. Without Torah it is nothing. One who attempts to emulate the non-Jewish world has nothing. He has no religion, no culture, no future, only a past which he has shunned and is now attempting to remember.

I am sure that some of the early secularists probably had good, albeit misguided, intentions. They thought that by relaxing Halachah they could bring back those who have gravitated toward the allure of the outside world. How wrong they were. They exchanged their spiritual legacy for a bowl of red lentils. Horav Yosef Chaim Sonnenfeld, zl, posits that this idea was behind Zimri's folly.

Let us face it. Zimri was the distinguished prince of Shevet Shimon. His behavior with the Midyanitess was reprehensible. What provoked such flagrant disregard for morality? Where was his shame? To cohabit publicly with an idolatress is something that only someone of an extremely base character would do, swept by uncontrollable passion and devoid of all sense of shame. Zimri was not like that. Quite possibly, he was a lot of other things, but the above negative appellations did not apply to him. Why, then, did he make a public spectacle of himself?

Rav Yosef Chaim explains that we must first address what was problematic about the Jewish men straying after the Midyanite women. Was it simply a case of wanton promiscuity, or was there more to it? Rashi explains that the purpose of the immoral relationships was to lure the men into worshipping their gods. The women were but a means to

ensnare the men into a greater and more definitive breach of their relationship with Hashem.

This concerned Zimri. As an individual who felt a strong responsibility for his tribe, he felt obliged to do something to counteract this scourge. If the Jewish men fell for the shikasas, non-Jewish women, the next step would be joining them in church, or whatever it was called then. Thus, for the good of the nation, Zimri felt that, rather than have the Jewish men chase the Midyanitess into their camp, Moshe Rabbeinu should instead welcome the shikasas into the Jewish camp! He might be uncomfortable with a flock of idolatress women setting up shop in the Jewish camp, but the alternative meant having the Jewish men moving in with the idolaters, a process that would lead to idolatry. Bringing the shikasas home was the lesser of the two evils - or so Zimri thought.

This pact with the devil frightened Pinchas, because he was acutely aware of where this would lead. Compromise in this case bespeaks weakness, thus inviting the devil to join us in our world. A compromise with idolaters is worse than having some Jewish men fall prey to the blandishments of the Midyanite women. The Torah camp may never be defiled. Those who choose to philander - let them go elsewhere, but the pristine nature of our moral code must never be impugned. The camp of Yisrael must retain its purity and sanctity. If this means that those whose base passions cannot reconcile with the Torah's moral code will leave - so be it!

We must be flexible in our approach to understanding what troubles those who choose to divorce themselves from the Torah camp. We must not, however, compromise one iota of our interpretation of Halachah as was transmitted to us throughout the generations. Understanding where they come from, the pathology which led to their alienation, the generations of self-loathing which was the background of their upbringing - are all important factors. This only makes us more amenable to reaching out to them. Our camp, however, must not become tainted with compromise to impress anyone.

Kanaus is a noble trait. It is, however, dangerous. Some kanaaim are fanatics. Once, in the course of a dispute concerning an important communal issue, a kanai accused Rav Yosef Chaim of being "soft". "The Rav used to be a zealot once, when his Rebbe, Horav Yehoshua Leib Diskin, was alive, but now it seems that he has mellowed."

Rav Yosef Chaim countered, "I was never a kanai. I was only following the dictates of my revered Rebbe. And, today, I continue to follow those dictates with the same determination!" Even in kanaus one needs a rebbe.

May Hashem, G-d of the spirits of all flesh, appoint a man over the Assembly... Hashem said to Moshe, "Take to yourself Yehoshua ben Nun, a man in whom there is spirit." (27:16,18)

Moshe Rabbeinu asked Hashem to appoint his successor, and he intimated the criteria which he felt the nation needed in a leader. Rashi explains that, actually, Moshe had hoped that his own son could succeed him. Hashem stipulated otherwise: "Yehoshua was chosen because of his devotion in never leaving Moshe's tent. He was a student whose dedication to his teacher - and to the Torah that he learned from him - was exemplary. His allegiance would be rewarded. While there is no question that loyalty has its perks and dedication is to be lauded, do these traits qualify the individual to become a leader? A leader is one who can address all of the compelling issues confronting a nation of varied personalities. It is not a reward for good behavior. A leader must be a capable person whose outstanding qualities warrant his ascension to the position. It is not a prize to be granted.

Horav Gershon Liebman, zl, notes that when the Alter, zl, m'Novardok would select students to establish branches of the Yeshivah in towns throughout Russia, he chose those students who were outstanding in their devotion to him and to his approach to mussar, ethical character refinement. Thinking about it, it seems almost strange that someone

should be chosen for a position of leadership based upon his adherence to his rebbe's derech, specific method, of learning and mussar. A leader should be first and foremost capable, someone who would garner the respect of the public, because he is head and shoulders above them. He must look and act the part. A nice guy who is a devoted student does not necessarily make the grade. Obviously, Yehoshua made the grade. He was totally capable of leading the Jewish People. As such, he was the perfect successor to Moshe, but the Torah does not say so. It seems that he warranted this position because, lo yamush mitoch ha'ohel, "he did not leave the tent." Apparently, the central quality required for leadership is devotion to the community he is to lead. His dedication must be first and foremost unequivocal. He must lead with temimus, simplicity and complete loyalty - no shtick, no personal interests - everything for the people. This is what is meant by "not leaving the tent." Yehoshua had one thing, and only one thing, on his mind: Klal Yisrael. His rebbe thought of nothing else; therefore, so neither did he.

Acting with temimus in today's vernacular means to act with transparency, sincerity, straightforwardness, and with total candor and innocence. The individual has no personal objectives. He follows orders to the letter. Pinchas acted in such a manner when he saw a flagrant disregard for the law. Risking his life, he acted accordingly. He was rewarded with the covenant of peace. Clearly, Pinchas expected no reward; certainly, not such an incredible one. When he acted, he did not even know if he would emerge alive. He did, because he acted with temimus.

This concept is alien to contemporary society in which guile, subterfuge and manipulation are a way of life. A Torah Jew lives his life with temimus, total belief in Hashem, Who will provide for him as He sees fit. One who places his faith in man will have to rely on man.

The Rosh Yeshivah notes that, in prayer, we speak to Hashem in first person. This is not considered chutzpah, because we have such a non-assuming, innocent relationship with the Almighty. We totally rely on Him for everything

? May Hashem, G-d of the Spirits of all flesh, appoint a man over the Assembly. (27:16)

Moshe Rabbeinu speaks to Hashem in a very direct tone, almost "ordering" Him to provide his successor. The leader of the nation is concerned lest the nation be bereft momentarily of its leadership. This seems enigmatic. Leadership is very critical for a group of unbred, unknowing individuals. The dor de'ah, generation of knowledge, was quite different. This nation had received the Torah, endured the wilderness, subsisted on manna, and was privy to a host of miracles and wonders. While it is true that initially there were a number of debacles, complaints, disputes and incidents that were indicative of the nation's infancy, this all occurred at the beginning of their forty-year journey. The group that was entering the Holy Land were davuk b'Hashem, attached to the Almighty. They all understood fully well their goals and objectives, their mission in life. Surely, they could have been left "alone" without a leader for a short time. What was Moshe's urgency? Furthermore, why does Moshe compare the nation to sheep?

Sheep have a tendency to follow one another. They are all part of a herd, whichever way the herd goes, so follow the rest of the sheep. Human beings are easily influenced by their peers. The most erudite fall prey to peer pressure. While everybody seeks individuality, they also seek acceptance by the community. There is nothing so heart-breaking as the individual who, for some reason, cannot assimilate into a community. As hard as he tries, he does not seem to achieve acceptance. A leader provides guidance and instruction. He directs and chooses the path the people should follow - much like a shepherd with his flock.

The "herd complex" applies to those who follow the lead of others, who either decline - or are unable - to swim against the current, who reject the notion of taking a stand, lest it be deemed unpopular. There are

people who probably crave individuality, but are incapable of acting on their own. They need direction. Moshe understood that Klal Yisrael was easily influenced. Indeed, only Pinchas took a stand when the need presented itself. Where was everybody else? The leader of the tribe of Shimon committed a dastardly act of revulsion. How did the members of his tribe react to this affront? Did they stand up to him? No! They cowered and were even prepared to punish Pinchas - the one level-headed person who reacted with definitive action that ultimately achieved atonement for the nation. Moshe saw all of this and understood that, regardless of Klal Yisrael's unique spiritual status, their eminence notwithstanding, they required strong leadership - someone who would guide them along the proper path. Moshe had every reason to be concerned

We all need guidance - be it a shul, school, or an organization. We function properly only with guidance and direction administered by competent and caring leadership. We are easily swayed by the negative influences which prevail in the secular world. We gravitate to what we perceive is our salvation when, essentially, it is the opposite. A leader will see through the ambiguities and expose the falsifiers for what they really are. He will then choose the correct path to follow.

While many great individuals are eminently capable of leading, they have to elicit a positive reaction from the people. In other words, we must be willing and inclined to listen and bend to our leaders. We live in a generation in which many Orthodox Jews are educated. We have all had some form of advanced Torah education, which many of us think qualifies us to judge our leaders, to disagree quietly, or even, at times, to dispute our leadership openly. This is in itself an indication of the need for strong leadership. As long as the sheep follow the guidance of their shepherd, they are protected from the wolves. Once they run wild, they encounter serious challenges to their continued well-being. A great difference exists between independence and reckless abandon, between freedom and anarchy. Accepting a leader does not infringe upon one's individuality. On the contrary, it indicates his self-confidence and peace of mind. He does not view the leader as a threat, but rather, as someone who can enhance his way of life.

Va'ani Tefillah Ha'Bocheir b'shrei zimrah. Who chooses songs of praise.

The use of both terms, shirah and zimrah, seems redundant. They are both forms of melodious expression. Horav Shimon Schwab, zl, translates zimrah as praise, with shrei zimrah being songs of praise. The Chassidic masters define shrei zimrah as being related to shirayim, leftover, residual. Thus, they emphasize that one should make a point of garnering for himself the shirayim, residual, of the zimrah, songs. This refers to the mood, passion, emotion, after the song has been sung, the praises have been expressed, the emotion has run high, that which is left over within the person. Is he the same person, or has he been elevated by the song? That all depends on how much of it has been "left over" within. Horav Uri, zl, m'Stralisk, explains that the passion and fervor one manifests during davening is not much different than one who has a great desire and fulfills it. That which remains within him after he has concluded the davening, the emotion that he feels within his heart after he has poured out his heart to Hashem in Praise - that shirayim is what Hashem chooses.

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