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Rabbi Yisroel Reisman – Parshas Pinchas 5774

1. I have to share with you a few ideas regarding the Parsha and the first has to do with Pinchas himself. The incredible actions of Pinchas with which he was Zoche to Kehuna and certainly it is something which requires a certain amount of Havana, of understanding the significance of that which he did. I would like to share with you two ideas. The first comes from a GRA which the Pachad Yitzchok in Ma'amarei Sukkos 129:5 brings the following Yesodei from the Yesodei of the GRA and it is an incredible insight to the GRA which I will try to explain as best I understand.

The Gemara says in Maseches Sanhedrin 82a (bottom of Amud) that when Pinchas came to Moshe Rabbeinu and said isn't it Muttar to be (קנאין פוגעין בו) Kannaim Pogim Bo, isn't it permissible to kill Zimri for what he is doing? He said to Moshe Rabbeinu "אחי אבי אבא" (the brother of my father's father (my great uncle) (לא כך לימדתני ברדתך מהר סיני)? Isn't this something that you taught us when you came down from Har Sinai? (הבועל את כותית) (קנאין פוגעין בו) someone does what Zimri is doing we are permitted to kill him. These are the words that the Gemara relates that Pinchas said when he asked Moshe Rabbeinu. The GRA says is it really logical that when Moshe Rabbeinu came down from Har Sinai this is the first thing he had in mind to teach Klal Yisrael, the rules of (קנאין פוגעין בו) Kannaim Pogim Bo? This is not logical at all!

Therefore, the GRA says the following. B'hakdama, there are times that there is a Gadol B'yisrael (a leader of Klal Yisrael) has to do something that I would call a Halacha (אין מורין לו) V'ain Morin Kain, something unorthodox, something not typical. There are times that he has to be bold enough to take things into his own hands and do them. It is not something an ordinary person can do but a leader can do. When Moshe Rabbeinu came down from Har Sinai and saw the Eigel, he broke the Luchos. Hashem did not command him to break the Luchos as Rashi says. The Gemara in Maseches Shabbos 87a (26 lines from the top) says that Moshe Rabbeinu did

it on his own. He said (שבר את הלוחות מאי דריש אמר ומה פסח שהוא אחד מתרי"ג) וישראל מומרים על אחת כמה [מצות אמרה תורה וכל בן נכר לא יאכל בו התורה כולה] ככאן a Kal V'chomer if a Korban Pesach which is one Mitzvah a Mumar is not allowed to partake in then the Torah which is all Taryag Mitzvos certainly Mumrim, people who are rebelling, have no right to participate in. From that Moshe Rabbeinu taught Klal Yisrael a Halacha. (לא כך לימדתני ברדתך מהר סיני). When you came down from Har Sinai you taught us that there are times that a leader has to have the courage to do what needs to be done even though it doesn't follow the rules. For that, Pinchas learned that when there is a Chibur, a connection of the Jewish people with something inappropriate (קנאין פוגעין בו). It is a tremendous insight into Pinchas' appreciation. To that we add the following. Pinchas got (ברית קהנת עולם) Bris Kehunas Olam. Aharon Hakohen got (ברית קהנת עולם) after something else he did. When Klal Yisrael wanted to create an Eigel they came to Aharon Hakohen and said make an Eigel for us. As Rashi in Parshas Ki Sisa 32:5 says (ראה) (ואמר מוטב שיתלה בי הסירהו ולא בהם) let me do it so that the anger is against me and not against them. In other words, Aharon in his leadership capacity saw that he has got to break the rules. He has to make the Eigel and in that way somehow deflect some of the criticism from Klal Yisrael. Subsequently, Aharon became a Kohen. The Poshut Pshat, the simple understanding is that until the Eigel the Bechorim would have been Kohanim. Aharon got Kehuna because he went and did this. He sort of risked his own personal Ruchnios in order to do this Mesiras Nefesh, this incredible Mesiras Nefesh to put himself in spiritual risk for the benefit of Klal Yisrael. That is what Pinchas did. That is what Moshe did. It is not a lesson for something we should do on our own but it is a lesson in the leadership qualities of Manhigai Yisroel, willing to sacrifice even their own Ruchnios for the sake of Klal Yisrael. If so, this is itself an absolutely incredible lesson.

from: **Rabbi Yissocher Frand** <ryfrand@torah.org> reply-to: do-not-reply@torah.org to: ravfrand@torah.org date: Thu, Jul 9, 2015 at 6:05 PM subject: Rabbi Yissocher Frand - Parshas Pinchas

The pasuk in this week's Parsha says: "Hashem said to Moshe: 'Go up to the 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.'" [Bamidbar 27:12-13] These Parshios -- from Pinchas all the way to the end of the Torah -- cover literally the last days of Moshe's life. It takes us several months to read these Parshios in the annual Torah reading cycle, but they all transpire during the last days of Moshe's life.

There seems to be a redundancy in what Hashem told Moshe in the above cited pasukim. In pasuk 12, Moshe is told "and see the land" (u'Reeh es ha'Aretz). Then again, in pasuk 13 Moshe is told "You shall see it" (v'Ra-isa osah). Apparently Moshe was told to do something more than merely gaze at the land. There is something more significant that the Ribono shel Olam wanted Moshe to do.

An even more problematic question bothers me every Simchas Torah. (Although we know that this cannot be the case,) it seems that the Master of the Universe is engaged in some kind of cruel act with Moshe Rabbeinu. It is almost as if He is dangling something in front of the leader of the Jewish people and telling him "Moshe, you see this? You can't have it!"

I find the very last parsha in Zos HaBracha to be the most moving parsha in the Torah. Maybe it is the venue or maybe it is the spirit of the day. This occurs after much dancing and much Simchas Torah merry making. It is the climactic moment of the period of the Days of Awe. The entire shul is gathered around the Bimah. The Baal Koreh reads: "Moshe ascended from the plains of Moab to Mount Nebo, to the summit of the height that faces Jericho, and Hashem showed him the entire land: the Gilead as far as Dan. All of Naphtali, and the land of Ephraim and Manasseh; and the entire land

of the Judah as far as the western sea; the Negev and the Plain – the valley of Jericho, city of date palms – as far as Zoar." [Devorim 34:1-3]

Hashem tells Moshe, as it were, "Look at Eretz Yisrael! Look at its beauty!" Hashem then again – in the last moments of Moshe's life, forbids his entry into the Promised Land: "This is the land which I swore to Avraham, to Yitzchak, and to Yaakov to say, 'I will give it to your offspring'; I have let you see it with your own eyes, but you shall not cross over to there." [Devorim 34:4].

Subsequent to the promise to the patriarchs, there were many years of enslavement in Egypt. There was the 40-year period in the desert. Now we arrived at the climactic moment of Jewish history, to that point in time. At this point, G-d utters words that have many times brought tears to my eyes: "Herayseecha b'Ainecha, v'shama lo saavor" [I have let you see it with your own eyes, but you will not cross over to there.]

What does Hashem want from Moshe? Is this not like rubbing salt on the wound? This year I finally saw an answer to my question. It is an answer from Rav Uziel Milevsky, zt"l. (Reb Uziel Milevsky came to Ner Israel as a young man from Uruguay. He was an extremely brilliant student. He was a disciple of Rav Weinberg, zt"l. He went to Toronto and was the head of Or Sameach in Toronto. Unfortunately, he died at a very young age. He left behind a wealth of taped Torah lectures, some of which have subsequently been published.)

Rav Uziel Milevsky shares the following beautiful insight: The Jewish people have seven faithful "shepherds": Avraham, Yitzchak, Yaakov, Moshe, Aharon, Yosef, and Dovid (The "Succos Ushpizin"). Each one of these shepherds corresponds to one of the Divine Attributes of the Sefirah-Count (Chessed, Gevurah, Tiferes, Netzach, Hod, Yesod, Malchus). For example, Avraham Avinu is the father of Chessed [Kindness]. Avraham teaches us how to perform Chessed. Parshas Vayera is the Parsha where Avraham's many manifestations of Chessed are described. Yitzchak manifests the Attribute of Gevurah [Strength; Power]. He willingly puts his neck on the Altar, willing to be sacrificed. This takes a tremendous amount of fortitude and courage. And so on down the list.

What is the Attribute of Moshe Rabbeinu? Moshe's attribute is the Attribute of Netzach [Eternity] – that which lasts forever. Everything that Moshe Rabbeinu did in his life, he infused with the attribute of Eternity (Nitzchiyus). Everything he accomplished lasts forever. He was instrumental in the formation of Klal Yisrael [the Jewish people]. Klal Yisrael is L'Netzach [for all Eternity]. Moshe Rabbeinu gave us the Torah. Torah is L'Netzach. So to speak, whatever he touched became "Netzach". That is why the Sefarim say that Moshe Rabbeinu could not bring Klal Yisrael into Eretz Yisrael. Were he to have brought us into the Land of Israel, we would have had to remain there forever and we would have never left. That is why Moshe Rabbeinu could not have built the Beis HaMikdash. G-d knew that the Bais HaMikdash would be destroyed. Had Moshe built it, it could not have been destroyed.

The Master of the Universe, with His exquisite Divine Providence, manipulated things so that Moshe Rabbeinu could not himself bring the Jewish people into Eretz Yisroel or build the Beis HaMikdash. However, the Ribono shel Olam still wanted Moshe Rabbeinu to "touch" one facet of Eretz Yisrael. Hashem wanted Moshe to have an effect on the establishment of this facet and He wanted that it should be l'Netzach. That facet was the capacity to desire and long for Eretz Yisrael. The desire (teshukah) to be in Eretz Yisrael was something that Moshe keenly felt. Moshe longed to see it, be part of it, and go there himself. This longing is something that the Almighty wanted Moshe to experience.

This is why to a greater or lesser extent, depending on the individual, we all possess a connection with and a sense of longing for Eretz Yisrael. For many people, it is such a strong desire that it motivates them even to sacrifice, create hardship for themselves, and permanently move to Eretz Yisrael. Even for those of us who do not take that big leap, we really mean it when we beseech "Let our eyes see Your return to Zion with mercy" (something we

pray for 3 times a day in the Amidah prayer). Where does emotional connection come from? It comes from G-d asking Moshe in our Parsha and again in Zos HaBracha to cast his eyes upon the beauty of Eretz Yisrael and to bond with it such that his soul would eternally long to be part of it. "Look at it. Want it. Desire it. Every nook and cranny of the Land – the Gilead as far as Dan, all of Naphtali, the land of Ephraim and Manasseh, the entire land of Yehudah as far as the western sea; the Negev and the Plain, the valley of Yericho, city of date palms, as far as Zoar!"

Hashem is not playing cruel games with Moshe Rabbeinu. He is building the spiritual DNA of Klal Yisrael. The spiritual DNA of Klal Yisrael has within it a longing, a 'teshuka', a 'cheshek' for Eretz Yisrael. This is why Moshe is told in Parshas Pinchas twice: See it! Look at it! In other words, "Look at it and want it". That now becomes a part of the Eternal bond between Eretz Yisrael and the Jewish people, a bond that is "Nitzchi".

A Parting of the Ways For the Shimon – Levi Alliance

Parshas Pinchas begins with a repetition of events that occurred at the end of Parshas Balak. Pinchas kills Zimri, Prince of the Tribe of Shimon, who committed a flagrant public act of immorality. The tribes involved in this incident, interestingly enough, were Shimon and Levi. Zimri was from Shimon and Pinchas (grandson of Aharon) was from Levi. These are two people who are on opposite sides of the spectrum, so to speak.

However, there is great irony here. We know from Sefer Bereshis that Shimon and Levi had a special bond. They were partners – sometimes they may be said to be "partners in crime", but they were certainly partners. Even in his blessing to his children on his deathbed, Yaakov treats them as partners and proclaims, "Shimon and Levi are brothers..." [Bereshis 49:5]. They were together in the incident with Shechem [Bereshis Chapter 34] when they avenged the travesty that occurred to their sister. They were the prime culprits in the selling of Yosef. They seem to have been comrades in arms.

Where did the divide occur? It occurs in Parshas Balak. Zimri, the Prince of the Tribe of Shimon, committed more than just an act of immorality. It was a challenge to Moshe Rabbeinu. Zimri's compatriots in Shevet Shimon sided with him. On the other hand, Pinchas, from the Tribe of Levi, was going to have none of this. The two "brothers" who previously saw eye-to-eye and shared so much in common, came to a sharp parting of the ways in Parshas Balak and Parshas Pinchas.

The Netziv in Parshas Vayishlach offers a very interesting idea. In spite of the fact that Shimon and Levi acted in tandem after the incident with Dinah, there was a dichotomy in their motivations. They acted as they each did for very different reasons. The Netziv infers this idea from the pasuk "And it was on the third day, and the two sons of Yaakov took, Shimon and Levi..." [Bereshis 34:25]. The Netziv says we could count ourselves; why does the pasuk redundantly tell us that Shimon and Levi were two sons of Yaakov?

The Netziv explains that the redundancy teaches that they both did the same actions, but that which motivated them was different. The pasuk says that their reaction to Dinah's rape was "...An abomination has been committed in YISRAEL, to (forcibly) lie with the daughter of YAAKOV..." [Bereshis 34:7]. YISRAEL is always used when referring to the spiritual side of Yaakov. The name YAAKOV always refers to the physical well-being of the third patriarch (who represents the entire Jewish people).

Shimon and Levi both took up arms to avenge the travesty that occurred but they did it for different reasons. Levi was concerned because "an abomination was committed in YISRAEL". The incident was a blemish on the sanctity of the House of Israel (YISRAEL). This was an affront not only to Yaakov, it was an affront to the Ribono shel Olam. We cannot let this stand. This is a Chillul Hashem [Desecration of G-d's Name]. Shimon's motivation was "...to lie with the daughter of YAAKOV" – not in our family! Nobody does this to our family and gets away with it.

Yes, says the Netziv, they acted in tandem and performed the same act, but it was from two different motivations. One was family honor (Shimon) and one was the Honor of G-d (Levi). The ramification of this dichotomy became

clear in the incident involving Zimri and Pinchas. Zimri from Shimon commits a despicable act and his entire tribe rallies around him. "He is our brother. We are clansmen. It is mishpacha! Blood is thicker than water. We must stand up for our family's honor!" Pinchas, from the Tribe of Levi, viewed the incident differently. "Forget about Kavod Mishpacha [family honor]. This is a public Chilul Hashem!" Here they diverge. The same Shimon and Levi who shared so much together, when there came a clash between Family Honor and the Honor of the Shechinah, each went their own separate way.

What happens eventually to Shimon and Levi? Moshe Rabbeinu divides the Land of Israel to Yaakov's descendants. Every tribe gets a portion of the Land. Only two tribes do not get their own portion: Shimon and Levi. Shimon does not have his own contiguous portion of land in Israel. Neither does Levi. It all stems from the incident with Shechem, which upset Yaakov. He decreed: "I will divide them in Yaakov and I will scatter them in Yisrael." [Bereshis 49]. They are going to be spread out.

Levi lives all over. He lives in the cities of refuge. He lives in the 42 cities of Leviim that were scattered throughout Israel. Shimon is stuck in a portion surrounded by the Tribe of Yehudah. Why the dichotomy of treatment? If they are being punished for the same incident then either spread them both out equally or else confine them both equally. Why was Levi spread out and Shimon confined?

This is the difference. Klal Yisrael needs a Shevet Levi. They need the presence of a tribe concerned about the Honor of G-d, wherever they live. G-d specifically wanted Levi to be spread out so that their attitude and their values would spread throughout the nation. Levi acts for G-d's Honor as it is written: "The one who says of his father and mother 'I have not seen him'; his brothers he did not recognize and his children he did not know; for they kept Your statement and Your covenant they would preserve. They shall teach Your laws to Yaakov and Your Torah to Israel..." [Devorim 33:9-10]. This is the history of Levi. Kedushas Yisrael [Sanctity of Israel]; Kiddush Hashem [Sanctification of G-d's Name].

Shimon, despite the fact that he did the right thing, did it for the wrong motivation. It was only for family honor. Unfortunately, that attitude carried through in the unfortunate scene where the leader of the Tribe committed a public atrocity and was cheered on by the members of his tribe who rallied around him. Therefore, Yaakov Avinu and Moshe Rabbeinu each said, "I don't want this characteristic spread out throughout Klal Yisrael. Such an attitude needs to be confined. This is not the type of influence to which the Jewish people should be exposed."

Transcribed by David Twersky; Jerusalem DavidATwersky@gmail.com
Technical Assistance by Dovid Hoffman; Baltimore, MD dhoffman@torah.org This week's write-up is adapted from the hashkafa portion of Rabbi Yissocher Frand's Commuter Chavrusah Torah CDs on the weekly Torah portion. A complete catalogue can be ordered from the Yad Yechiel Institute, PO Box 511, Owings Mills MD 21117-0511. Call (410) 358-0416 or e-mail tapes@yadyechiel.org or visit <http://www.yadyechiel.org/> for further information. Torah.org: The Judaism Site Project Genesis, Inc. 122 Slade Avenue, Suite 250 Baltimore, MD 21208 <http://www.torah.org/learn@torah.org> (410) 602-1350

from: torahweb@torahweb.org to: weeklydt@torahweb2.org date: Thu, Jul 9, 2015 subject: Rabbi Zvi Sobolofsky - The Power of a Tzibbur

Rabbi Zvi Sobolofsky The Power of a Tzibbur

The second half of Parshas Pinchas deals exclusively with korbanos tzibbur - the communal offerings brought daily, on Shabbos, and on yom tov. There is a seemingly technical question concerning the status of these korbanos which relates not only to the korbanos themselves but also to a fundamental principle concerning the relationship between the individual and the community.

Do we participate in a korban tzibbur as a collection of individuals, or as a single entity? A group of individuals can join together to offer a korban, so perhaps a korban tzibbur is merely a very large group of individuals, namely

the entire Jewish People, each donating a half-shekel annually (as described in Maseches Shekalim) to jointly purchase thekorbanos tzibbur.

Alternatively, one could understand that the korbanos tzibbur are not brought by a large partnership comprised of many individuals, but rather by a distinct entity known as Klal Yisroel. According to this understanding, by giving the annual half-shekel one becomes a member of the tzibbur, i.e. Klal Yisroel, and in turn participates in thekorbanos tzibbur which are owned and brought by that entity.

This question is not merely academic, but has a practical implication that is discussed in the mishna (Shekalim 1:4.) The Torah (Vayikra 6) tells us that a korban mincha belonging to a kohen may not be eaten. There are certain korbanos tzibbur that are a korban mincha and must be eaten, such as the lechem hapanim placed weekly on the shulchan, the omer brought on Pesach, and the shteihalechem brought on Shavuos. The mishna (ibid) records a view that kohanim should not contribute a half-shekel annually, since if a kohen would become a partner in all korbanos tzibbur through such a donation, the aforementioned menachos would partially belong to him and therefore it would be forbidden to fulfill the mitzvah of eating them, just as it is forbidden to eat any mincha belonging to a kohen. We reject this view, and yet Chazal do not explain why.

We can suggest that this disagreement concerning a kohen's contributing a half-shekel emanated from the two ways to view a korban tzibbur. We are not concerned with a kohen's monetary contribution toward the purchase of korbanos tzibbur because we view these korbanos as not belonging to a collection of individuals but rather to the distinct entity of tzibbur / Klal Yisroel. As such, the prohibition of not partaking from the korban mincha of a kohen is not relevant. We adopt the view that a tzibbur is not merely a group of individuals who happen to partner together, rather a tzibbur is an institution in and of itself.

Extending the role of tzibbur from the laws of korbanos to the realm of tefillah can enable us to understand an important aspect of hilchos tefillah. After davening Shmoneh Esrei as individuals, the chazzan recites the chazaras hashatz. The Rambam describes this as "tefillas hatzibbur - the prayer of the community." The Rav expounded on this idea that we approach Hashem in two ways. We first speak to Hashem as individuals; although we are davening in a minyan, we each approach Hashem on behalf of ourselves alongside the other members of our group who do so as well. Chazaras hashatz, however, is an entirely different experience. We are no longer davening as individuals, but rather eachtzibbur, which is a microcosm of the tzibbur of Klal Yisroel, speaks to Hashem in one voice offering its tefillas hatzibbur.

Tzibbur as a distinct entity has tremendous potential; a tzibbur can accomplish what a group of individuals cannot. Chazal tell us that an individual who does teshuva is only assured his teshuva will be accepted during Aseres Yemei Teshuva. The teshuva of a tzibbur, however, is always accepted. There is a prerequisite to attain this unique status oftzibbur, and that is that all the individuals that comprise the group must be willing to work together as a tzibbur.

In the end of Parshas Naso the Torah lists all the korbanos brought by each of the nesiiim (leaders of each tribe.) After delineating the individual korbanos the Torah lists the grand total of all the korbanos offered. The midrash comments that the final total is articulated to highlight that all the numbers of individual korbanos added up precisely to the total. Why would one have thought this wouldn't be the case? Because often even when individuals excel on their own, a group of such talented individuals doesn't necessarily form a successful team. The Torah is alluding to the fact that the representatives of the different tribes joined together to form a cohesive tzibbur. Their korbanos "added up" to create the avodas Hashem of Klal Yisroel.

May we merit once again to offer korbanos both as individuals and as a tzibbur, bringing our personal strengths together to create a Klal Yisroel united in avodas Hashem.

from: Chanan Morrison <ravkooklist@gmail.com> reply-to: rav-kook-list+owners@googlegroups.com to: **Rav Kook List** <Rav-Kook-List@googlegroups.com> date: Wed, Jul 8, 2015 at 5:11 AM subject: [**Rav Kook List**] Pinchas: Connecting the Natural with the Supernatural

Pinchas: Connecting the Natural with the Supernatural

Succoth and Water

The highlight of the Temple service during the Succoth holiday was Nisuch HaMayim, the Water Libation ceremony. While it was usually wine that was poured at the base of the altar, there is an oral tradition to offer a special libation of water on Succoth.

The Sages (Shabbat 103b) found an allusion to this tradition in the verses describing the Succoth offerings (Num. 29:12-34). Three verses conclude with the letters mem, yud, and mem - spelling out the word mayim, water.

What is the special significance of water to the holiday of Succoth? And why does the Torah only hint about the water libation and not mention it explicitly?

Festival of Harvest, Festival of Booths

We find two basic themes associated with the Succoth holiday. On the one hand, Succoth is called Chag Ha'Asif, the Harvest Festival. Harvesting is the culmination of the entire farming process - starting with plowing, planting, irrigating, and so on, until the crops are ready to be harvested.

Furthermore, harvesting thoroughly involves the natural world. All of the processes of nature must be functioning properly in order that the fruits and grains will be ripe for harvest. Succoth as the Harvest Festival symbolizes the natural world at its most cultivated and completed state.

On the other hand, Succoth is also called the Festival of Booths. Our sukkah-huts during the holiday commemorate the miraculous forty-year journey of the Israelites through the desert. During those forty years, the Jewish people were sustained by continuous supernatural phenomena: manna from heaven, Miriam's miraculous well of water, the protective Clouds of God's Presence, and so on.

Why is Succoth associated with two opposing themes: the natural order and the harvest on the one hand, and the supernatural realm of Divine providence and the miraculous trek in the wilderness on the other?

Bridging Two Realms

In fact, bridging these two themes is the very essence of the Succoth holiday. Succoth is a link between the physical and the metaphysical. It connects the natural world, as epitomized by the autumn harvest, with the realm of Divine intervention, unveiled with the appearance of Israel on the stage of history.

The passage of the Jewish people, from the miraculous Exodus from Egypt to the settlement and everyday life in the land of Israel, bound together the realms of the natural and the supernatural. This bridge revealed the inner connection between a Divinely- created world, designed for the elevated goal of providential justice, and a finished world bound by the fixed laws of science and nature.

Waters of Creation

How does this explain the special connection between water and Succoth? Water recalls the very beginning of creation. The Torah describes the initial stage of creation as "God's spirit hovering over the water" (Gen. 1:2). Even at that primordial state, before the appearance of dry land, God's infinite wisdom set in place all that was needed in order to bring creation to its ultimate form. Thus water reminds us of the Divine wisdom that resides in the very foundations of the world.

In summary, the two themes of Succoth bind together the world's physical nature with its metaphysical essence. This Divine essence was revealed in the emergence of the people of Israel - in the miracles of the Exodus and the journey through the desert - but, in fact, it goes back to the very foundations of the universe. Since the secrets of creation are beyond our grasp, the Torah

only alludes to these waters of creation in the final letters of the verses describing the Succoth offerings.

(Silver from the Land of Israel. Adapted from Ein Eyah vol. IV on Shabbat 103b (12:1).)

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**Elijah and the Still, Small Voice
by Rabbi Lord Jonathan Sacks**

Covenant & Conversation

Pinchas(Numbers 25:10-30:1)

Elijah and the Still, Small Voice

Then the word of the Lord came to him: 'Why are you here, Elijah?' He replied, I am moved by the zeal for the Lord, God of Hosts...' The Lord said to him, 'Go out and stand on the mountain in the presence of the Lord, for the Lord is about to pass by.' Then a great and powerful wind tore the mountains apart and shattered the rocks before the Lord. But the Lord was not in the wind. After the wind was an earthquake, but the Lord was not in the earthquake. After the earthquake came a fire. But the Lord was not in the fire. And after the fire - a still, small voice. (I Kings 19:9-12)

In 1165, an agonising question confronted Moroccan Jewry. A fanatical Muslim sect, the Almohads, had seized power and were embarked on a policy of forced conversion to Islam. The Jewish community was faced with a choice: to affirm Islamic faith or die. Some chose martyrdom. Others chose exile. But some acceded to terror and embraced another faith. Inwardly, though, they remained Jews and practiced Judaism in secret. They were the conversos, or as the Spanish were later to call them, the marranos. To other Jews, they posed a formidable moral problem. How were they to be viewed? Outwardly, they had betrayed their community and their religious heritage. Besides, their example was demoralising. It weakened the resolve of Jews who were determined to resist, come what may. Yet many of the conversos still wished to remain Jewish, secretly fulfill the commandments and when they could, attend the synagogue and pray. One of them addressed this question to a rabbi. He had, he said, converted under coercion, but he remained at heart a faithful Jew. Could he obtain merit by observing in private as many of the Torah's precepts as possible? Was there, in other words, hope left for him as a Jew? The rabbi's reply was emphatic. A Jew who had embraced Islam had forfeited membership in the Jewish community. He was no longer part of the house of Israel. For such a person to fulfill the commandments was meaningless. Worse, it was a sin. The choice was stark and absolute: to be or not to be a Jew. If you choose to be a Jew, you should be prepared to suffer death rather than compromise. If you choose not to be a Jew, then you must not seek to re-enter the house you had deserted. We can respect the firmness of the rabbi's stance. He set out, without equivocation, the moral choice. There are times when heroism is, for faith, a categorical imperative. Nothing less will do. His reply, though harsh, is not without courage. But another rabbi disagreed.

The name of the first rabbi is lost to us, but that of the second is not. He was Moses Maimonides, the greatest rabbi of the Middle Ages. Maimonides was no stranger to religious persecution. Born in Cordova in 1135, he had been forced to leave, along with his family, some thirteen years later when the city fell to the Almohads. Twelve years were spent in wandering. In 1160, a temporary liberalisation of Almohad rule allowed the family to settle in Morocco. Within five years he was forced to move again, settling first in the land of Israel and ultimately in Egypt. Maimonides was so incensed by the rabbi's reply to the forced convert that he wrote a response of his own. In it, he frankly disassociates himself from the earlier ruling and castigates its author whom he describes as a 'self-styled sage who has never experienced what so many Jewish communities had to endure in the way of persecution'. Maimonides' reply, the Iggeret ha-Shemad ('Epistle on Forced

Conversion'), is a substantial treatise in its own right. 1 What is striking, given the vehemence with which it begins, is that its conclusions are hardly less demanding than those of the earlier response. If you are faced with religious persecution, says Maimonides, you must leave and settle elsewhere. 'If he is compelled to violate even one precept it is forbidden to stay there. He must leave everything he has and travel day and night until he finds a spot where he can practice his religion.' This is preferable to martyrdom. None the less, one who chooses to go to his death rather than renounce his faith 'has done what is good and proper' for he has given his life for the sanctity of God. What is unacceptable is to stay and excuse oneself on the grounds that if one sins, one does so only under pressure. To do this to profane God's name, 'not exactly willingly, but almost so'. These are Maimonides' conclusions. But surrounding them and constituting the main thrust of his argument is a sustained defence of those who had done precisely what Maimonides had ruled they should not do. The letter gives conversos hope. They have done wrong. But it is a forgivable wrong. They acted under coercion and the fear of death. They remain Jews. The acts they do as Jews still win favour in the eyes of God. Indeed doubly so, for when they fulfill a commandment it cannot be to win favour of the eyes of others. They know that when they act as Jews they risk discovery and death. Their secret adherence has a heroism of its own. What was wrong in the first rabbi's ruling was his insistence that a Jew who yields to terror has forsaken his faith and is to be excluded from the community. Maimonides insists that it is not so. 'It is not right to alienate, scorn and hate people who desecrate the Sabbath. It is our duty to befriend them and encourage them to fulfill the commandments.' In a daring stroke of interpretation, he quotes the verse: 'Do not despise a thief if he steals to satisfy his hunger when he is starving' (Proverbs 6:30). The conversos who come to the synagogue are hungry for Jewish prayer. They 'steal' moments of belonging. They should not be despised, but welcomed.

This Epistle is a masterly example of that most difficult of moral challenges: to combine prescription and compassion. Maimonides leaves us in no doubt as to what he believes Jews should do. But at the same time he is uncompromising in his defence of those who fail to do it. He does not endorse what they have done. But he defends who they are. He asks us to understand their situation. He gives them grounds for self respect. He holds the doors of the community open. The argument reaches a climax as Maimonides quotes a remarkable sequence of midrashic passages whose theme is that prophets must not condemn their people, but rather defend them before God. When Moses, charged with leading the people out of Egypt, replied, 'But they will not believe me' (Exodus 4:1), ostensibly he was justified. The subsequent biblical narrative suggests that Moses' doubts were well founded. The Israelites were a difficult people to lead. But the midrash says that God replied to Moses, 'They are believers and the children of believers, but you [Moses] will ultimately not believe.'² Maimonides cites a series of similar passages and then says: If this is the punishment meted out to the pillars of the universe, the greatest of the prophets, because they briefly criticised the people – even though they were guilty of the sins of which they were accused – can we envisage the punishment awaiting those who criticise the conversos, who under threat of death and without abandoning their faith, confessed to another religion in which they did not believe? In the course of his analysis, Maimonides turns to the prophet Elijah and the text that forms this week's haftarah. Under the reign of Ahab and Jezebel, Baal worship had become the official cult. God's prophets were being killed. Those who survived were in hiding. Elijah responded by issuing a public challenge at Mount Carmel. Facing four hundred of Baal's representatives, he was determined to settle the question of religious truth once and for all. He told the assembled people to choose one way or another: for God or for Baal. They must no longer 'halt between two opinions'. Truth was about to be decided by a test. If it lay with Baal, fire would consume the offering prepared by its priests. If it lay with God, fire would descend to Elijah's offering. Elijah won the confrontation. The

people cried out, 'The Lord, He is God.' The priests of Baal were routed. But the story does not end there. Jezebel issued a warrant for his death. Elijah escapes to Mount Horeb. There he receives a strange vision. He witnesses a whirlwind, then an earthquake, then a fire. But he is led to understand that God was not in these things. Then God speaks to him in a 'still, small voice', and tells him to appoint Elisha as his successor. The episode is enigmatic. It is made all the more so by a strange feature of the text. Immediately before the vision, God asks, 'What are you doing here, Elijah?' and Elijah replies, 'I am moved by zeal for the Lord, the God of Hosts....' (I Kings 9:9-10). Immediately after the vision, God asks the same question, and Elijah gives the same answer (I Kings 19:13-14). The midrash turns the text into a dialogue:

Elijah: The Israelites have broken God's covenant God: Is it then your covenant? Elijah: They have torn down Your altars. God: But were they your altars? Elijah: They have put Your prophets to the sword. God: But you are alive Elijah: I alone am left. God: Instead of hurling accusations against Israel, should you not have pleaded their cause?³

The meaning of the midrash is clear. The zealot takes the part of God. But God expects His prophets to be defenders, not accusers. The repeated question and answer is now to be understood in its tragic depth. Elijah declares himself to be zealous for God. He is shown that God is not disclosed in dramatic confrontation: not in the whirlwind or the earthquake or the fire. God now asks him again, 'What are you doing here, Elijah?' Elijah repeats that he is zealous for God. He has not understood that religious leadership calls for another kind of virtue, the way of the still, small voice. God now indicates that someone else must lead. Elijah must hand his mantle on to Elisha. In turbulent times, there is an almost overwhelming temptation for religious leaders to be confrontational. Not only must truth be proclaimed but falsehood must be denounced. Choices must be set out as stark divisions. Not to condemn is to condone. The rabbi who condemned the conversos had faith in his heart, logic on his side and Elijah as his precedent. But the midrash and Maimonides set before us another model. A prophet hears not one imperative but two: guidance and compassion, a love of truth and an abiding solidarity with those for whom that truth has become eclipsed. To preserve tradition and at the same time defend those others uncondemned is the difficult, necessary task of religious leadership in an unreligious age.

NOTES 1. An English translation and commentary is contained in Abraham S. Halkin, and David Hartman. *Crisis and Leadership: Epistles of Maimonides*. Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society of America, 1985. 2. Shabbat 97a. 3. Shir ha-Shirim Rabbah 1: 6. Published: July 5, 2015

from: Rabbi Kaganoff <ymkaganoff@gmail.com> to: kaganoff-a@googlegroups.com date: Mon, Jul 6, 2015 at 4:19 PM subject: Of Umbrellas and Eruvs

Of Umbrellas and Eruvs
By Rabbi Yirmiyohu Kaganoff

Question #1: Umbrellas and Eruvs "Why can't I use an umbrella on Yom Tov or on Shabbos within an eruv? Is it a mitzvah to get wet?"

Question #2: My Shabbos Nap "May I shade an area for my Shabbos nap by throwing a blanket on top of some lawn chairs?"

Question #3: Cocktail Torah "May I place a cocktail umbrella on top of a drink on Shabbos?"

Answer: The original sunscreen The umbrella, or parasol, was invented in the eighteenth century and came into use very quickly as a simple and practical way to be protected from the rain and the harshest rays of the sun. Shortly after its invention, we already find discussion among great halachic authorities whether this "new apparatus" could be used on Yom Tov or Shabbos in a location where carrying is permitted. Before analyzing their positions, we need to discuss the laws regarding the construction of an ohel on Shabbos and Yom Tov.

Building and roofing One of the 39 melachos, categories of work that the Torah forbids on Shabbos, is boneh, constructing (Mishnah Shabbos 73a). A subheading, or toldah, of boneh is making an ohel kavua, which translates literally as creating a permanent roof or shelter (Rambam, Hilchos Shabbos 10:13). Constructing an ohel arai, a "temporary" roof, on Shabbos or Yom Tov, was not forbidden by the Torah, but was prohibited by Chazal, our early Sages. Now we need to define:

1. What is considered a permanent ohel that is prohibited min hatorah?
2. How do we define a temporary ohel, so that we know what is prohibited because of a rabbinic injunction?
3. What type of covering, if any, is permitted?

What is an ohel kavua? Based on how the Rif (Shabbos, beginning of Chapter 20), the earliest of the great halachic codifiers, presented the topic, most respected authorities understand him to rule in the following way: Virtually anything that covers an empty area at least a tefach (about three to four inches) long, a tefach wide and a tefach high is halachically considered a permanent ohel. This “roof” does not need to be connected to the ground in any way. According to this approach, assembling such a covering is a violation of Torah law, even if the ohel is intended to exist for only a short period of time. The defining line between a permanent ohel and a “temporary” one (ohel arai), which was not prohibited by the Torah but only by the Sages, is that an ohel kavua has a “roof” that is one tefach squared, whereas an ohel arai’s “roof” is narrower than a tefach.

If the ohel is not flat on top, but peaked, yet it widens to a tefach squared within three tefachim of its peak, it is also an ohel kavua that is prohibited, min hatorah, to assemble on Shabbos. Only if it is very narrow on top and does not widen at all, or only widens at a lower point, does it qualify as an ohel arai, whose construction is prohibited only because of rabbinic injunction.

Thus, according to this opinion, throwing a blanket over a few lawn chairs so that you can crawl underneath to play or relax violates a Torah prohibition. Even those who hold that this does not violate a Torah law agree that it is prohibited because of a rabbinic injunction.

We can already answer one of the questions asked above: “May I shade an area for my Shabbos nap by throwing a blanket on top of some lawn chairs?”

According to all opinions, this is prohibited. Some opinions hold that this is prohibited min hatorah.

What is permitted? When is it permitted to make a temporary ohel?

According to this opinion, there are two situations in which a temporary cover, roof or tent may be assembled on Shabbos or Yom Tov.

1. When the area being covered is less than a tefach in height (see Shu’t Noda Biyehudah. Orach Chayim 2:30, s.v. Vehinei; Nimla Tal, Boneh, 15). Covering an area this low is not considered creating a “roof.”

2. When the ohel is very narrow -- less than a tefach wide -- and it is attached to something to make it easier to open and close (see Shabbos 138a). Since the area being covered is less than a tefach wide, it is not considered an ohel area min hatorah. We mentioned above that covering such an area is usually still prohibited, because of a rabbinic injunction. However, when there is some form of hinge to make its opening and closing easier, or any other indication that the ohel is meant to be opened and closed frequently, Chazal permitted its use on Shabbos or Yom Tov.

In addition, if a temporary ohel exists from before Shabbos or Yom Tov, it is permitted to open and close it. It is also permitted to make the ohel wider (Eruvin 102a).

A differing approach Not all authorities accept this approach that assembly of any “roof” over an area of a tefach squared is an ohel kavua prohibited min hatorah. Others rule that anything temporary is prohibited only because of a rabbinic injunction (Mishnah Berurah 315:34). This latter approach contends that any temporary ohel that is hinged, or has some other indication that it is meant to be opened and closed regularly, may be opened and closed on Shabbos, even when it covers an area a tefach squared. Thus, some authorities rule that one may open and close the hood of a baby carriage on Shabbos, since it is clearly meant to be closed temporarily, and it is hinged to facilitate its opening and closing (Chazon Ish, Orach Chayim 52:6). Other authorities are less lenient, requiring that opening the hood on Shabbos is permitted only when it was open the width of a tefach before Shabbos (Magen Avraham 315:4; Shu’t Igros Moshe, Orach Chayim 4:105:3; Ketzos Hashulchan 120:4).

London, 1782 One of the first internationally distinguished authorities to discuss whether one may use an umbrella on Yom Tov or Shabbos is the Noda Biyehudah, Rav Yechezkel Landau, renowned posek hador and Chief Rabbi of Prague (Shu’t Orach Chayim, 2:30). Sometime in late 1782, as the American Revolution was beginning to wind to a close, Rav Leib Hakohen, a talmid chacham in London, sent a missive to the Noda Biyehudah. Their correspondence was not about how the redcoats and their Hessian mercenaries were getting by in the western hemisphere, but about important halachic matters. Rav Hakohen wrote that he felt that one may not use an umbrella on Shabbos, but that he had sent the question to a different, unnamed posek who permitted it. Rav Hakohen was still not comfortable with the lenient approach and, therefore, wrote to the Noda Biyehudah, presenting the two reasons why the first rav had ruled leniently. (Based on his level of scholarship, we may assume that the first rav was not from the American colonies.)

The first reason to permit use of umbrellas on Shabbos and Yom Tov was this posek’s opinion that an ohel must cover a specific, defined area, and an item which is constantly

being moved from place to place, such as an umbrella, does not qualify as an ohel. The permitting rabbi substantiated this position on the basis of his understanding of Rashi (Shabbos 138b s.v. ela) that an item meant only to cover a person does not qualify as an ohel for the purposes of the laws of Shabbos. This is based on the following:

The Gemara rules that a type of felt hat called a siyana may not be worn on Shabbos if its brim is a tefach wide. Rashi explains that the Gemara’s conclusion that a wide-brimmed siyana may not be worn on Shabbos is because of concern that it will be blown off, and when the wearer retrieves it he may come to carry it in a public area, thus desecrating Shabbos.

The posek questioned why Rashi did not prohibit wearing a siyana on Shabbos because of making an ohel arai on Shabbos, since the brim is a tefach wide. The posek answered that since a hat is meant only to shelter a person who moves, this does not qualify as an ohel, which he defines as something that shelters a location. He rallied further evidence substantiating the truth of this principle by noting that, regarding the laws of tumas ohel, the Mishnah mentions several items, a bird in flight, fluttering cloth, or a ship that is sailing, that are not considered an ohel because they are in motion (Ohalos 8:4).

The second reason to permit the umbrella was based on the fact that it is hinged, to ease opening and closing. The permitting rabbi held that any temporary covering cannot possibly involve a Torah prohibition -- the issue with an umbrella is only whether opening and carrying it violates the rabbinic injunction of an ohel arai. Since an umbrella is hinged, he felt that there are two valid reasons to permit using an umbrella on Yom Tov and on Shabbos within an eruv, although he admitted that some of the evidence for his position might be refutable.

However, Rav Hakohen felt that the reasons to be lenient were not sufficient and therefore referred the question to the Noda Biyehudah.

First response: Prague, 1783 On the eighteenth of Shevat, 5543 (1783), the Noda Biyehudah responded to Rav Hakohen, disputing both reasons of the permitting rabbi. He pointed out that careful analysis of the sources would reach the opposite conclusion. The Noda Biyehudah explained that there are many other ways to understand what Rashi wrote, such that they do not prove that something covering only a person is not an ohel. Furthermore, most authorities disagree with Rashi and, indeed, understand that wearing a siyana is prohibited on Shabbos because of the laws of ohel.

The Noda Biyehudah reports that several years previously, when the umbrella was first introduced to Prague, he taught publicly that it is strictly forbidden to use it on Shabbos, and that the prohibition might be min hatorah. He bases his approach on the Rif’s opinion that it is forbidden, min hatorah, to create any ohel that covers an area that is a tefach squared, which will certainly forbid the use of an umbrella. The Noda Biyehudah mentions that the majority of the people of Prague do not use umbrellas on Shabbos, in accordance with his ruling. He contends that, notwithstanding the fact that other rishonim (Rosh, Shabbos 20:2) clearly dispute the Rif’s definition of ohel, the Rif’s opinion should not be disregarded. Furthermore, in this instance, the Rambam (Hilchos Shabbos 22:29) may agree with him. Thus, we have two of the three great halachic codifiers (the Rosh being the third) ruling that a roof or awning constructed for very short term use may be prohibited min hatorah, if it is more than a tefach squared. This description seems to fit an umbrella very accurately. The Noda Biyehudah concludes that, indeed, the Rosh may be the only early authority that disputes this conclusion of the Rif, and that even the Rosh would prohibit use of an umbrella on Shabbos, albeit only because of the rabbinic injunction on an ohel arai. Many other authorities accept the Noda Biyehudah’s analysis of the topic (Aruch Hashulchan, Orach Chayim 301:113; 315:12; Shu’t Sho’el Umeishiv 3:2:42).

Nineteenth century Bratislava On the other hand, the Chasam Sofer (Shu’t Orach Chayim #72) saw the responsum of the Noda Biyehudah and took issue with his analysis of the topic. In an undated halachic essay, the Chasam Sofer, posek hador of his generation and rav of Pressburg, concludes that although he does not recommend using an umbrella on Shabbos, he is not convinced that it is prohibited, and feels that if it is, it should be only because of rabbinic injunction, and not because it violates Torah law.

The Chasam Sofer first contends that no authorities hold that any type of temporary construction is prohibited min hatorah. Thus, he disputes those who interpret that the Rif and the Rambam hold that a temporary cover may be prohibited min hatorah. Second, the Chasam Sofer contends that something movable cannot be prohibited because of boneh, since all construction in the mishkan, which is the source of the melachos of Shabbos, was not movable. Third, there is no Torah concept of ohel unless the covering has walls that reach the ground. To sustain the last position, he notes that the Rif, himself, implies that this is a defining factor of an ohel kavua. The Chasam Sofer contends that once he has established that an umbrella cannot possibly be an ohel according to Torah law, opening or carrying it on Shabbos is not even prohibited because of rabbinic injunction, because of its hinges, which are meant to facilitate its use. The Chasam Sofer thus concludes that although he does not advise using an

umbrella on Shabbos, there is no technical violation in using it. He permits asking a gentile to open an umbrella on Shabbos for one to use, implying that he sees no problem at all with carrying it afterwards (obviously within the confines of an eruv). Several prominent halachic authorities follow this approach and permit use of an umbrella on Shabbos (Beis Meir, Orach Chayim 315; Daas Torah 301:40).

A lawn umbrella We should note that the arguments raised by the Chasam Sofer as to why an umbrella is not an ohel may not apply to a lawn umbrella. This apparatus is meant for use in a backyard or garden, to provide shade against the sun. It is often left in its open position for months on end, or even indefinitely. Several prominent authorities contend that any ohel meant to remain open for more than a week is considered permanent, which would make it a Torah prohibition to open it (Pri Megadim, Mishbetzos Zahav 315:8; Eishel Avraham 315:1; Tiferes Yisroel, Kilkeles Shabbos 34:2).

In addition, since a lawn umbrella is not moved from one location to another, another of the Chasam Sofer's reasons to permit a regular umbrella does not apply. Although one of the Chasam Sofer's reasons, that an ohel is prohibited only when its "walls" reach the ground, applies to a lawn umbrella, it is difficult to rely only on this justification to permit opening a lawn umbrella on Shabbos. Therefore, there is strong reason to prohibit opening a lawn umbrella, even by a gentile, even according to the Chasam Sofer.

The position of the Chazon Ish A third approach to the question of whether an umbrella may be used on Shabbos and Yom Tov is presented by the Chazon Ish (Orach Chayim 52:6). Although he concludes that it is prohibited to use an umbrella on Shabbos, his ruling is based on completely different considerations. He rejects the Noda Biyehudah's position, contending that since umbrellas are meant for temporary use and are hinged for this purpose, opening them on Shabbos is not considered creating an ohel, just as opening and closing a door on Shabbos is not prohibited as an act of construction, since both are meant to be opened and closed frequently. The Chazon Ish rejects the position that any rishonim disagree with this definition of ohel. As I mentioned above, upon this basis, the Chazon Ish permits opening and closing the hood of a baby carriage on Shabbos. However, as I noted above, most authorities do not understand the Rif's position as the Chazon Ish does, and consequently rule that one should leave the hood open at least a tefach before Shabbos.

Notwithstanding that the Chazon Ish rejects the Noda Biyehudah's approach to the topic, he prohibits using an umbrella on Shabbos for two other, completely different reasons. First, he suggests that opening an umbrella might be prohibited because of tikun maneh, a general prohibition of completing items, which is a subcategory of the melachah of makeh bepatish. He then rules that opening an umbrella is forbidden as a takanas chachamim established by the Torah leadership of the recent generations to reinforce the sanctity of Shabbos.

Umbrella conclusion As I noted above, most authorities contend that there are rishonim who prohibit min hatorah creating a temporary ohel on Shabbos, if it is a tefach wide. It is indeed widespread custom to prohibit carrying an umbrella on Yom Tov or Shabbos, either because we are concerned about the prohibition of ohel, or, perhaps, because of the reasons advocated by the Chazon Ish.

A cocktail umbrella At this point, I would like to discuss the last of our opening questions: "May I place a cocktail umbrella on a drink on Shabbos?"

A cocktail umbrella is a tiny umbrella used to decorate a glass. Since it does not resemble an ohel in any way, opening it on Shabbos is permitted.

Conclusion Rav Samson Raphael Hirsch (Shemos 20:10) notes that people mistakenly think that work is prohibited on Shabbos in order to provide a day of rest. This is incorrect, he points out, because the Torah does not prohibit doing avodah, which connotes hard work, but melachah, which implies purpose and accomplishment. On Shabbos, we refrain from constructing and altering the world for our own purposes. The goal of Shabbos is to emphasize Hashem's dominion as the focus of creation by refraining from our own creative acts (Shemos 20:11). By refraining from building for one day a week, we acknowledge the true Builder of the world and all that it contains.

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July 10, 2015

The Bas Mitzvah

By Rabbi Yair Hoffman

The Bas Mitzvah celebration has had an interesting history. Some communities celebrate the Bas Mitzvah quietly and in the home. In other communities, the standards are that they be celebrated in halls and must be catered affairs. Regardless of how they are celebrated it would be worthwhile to explore what a Bas Mitzvah is all about

Earlier Adulthood

The Gemorah (Niddah 45b) tells us that a girl becomes an adult at the age of twelve. According to the Ibn Ezra (Vayikrah 20:19), this tradition was handed down to us by Moshe from Har Sinai as were all the figures, numbers, weights and amounts (See Sukkah 5b).

A girl enters into adulthood a full year before a boy enters into adulthood. The reason for this is explained by the Talmud (Niddah 45b):

It is because Hashem placed more wisdom and understanding into women than into men.

This is derived from the pasuk (Bereishis 2:22), "Vayiven Hashem Elokim et hatzelah – And Hashem built the rib" – The word "Vayiven" has a double meaning – it means both "built" and "understanding."

Origins of Bas Mitzvah Celebration

Some mistakenly say that the Bas Mitzvah celebration was invented by the founder of Reconstructionist Judaism, Mordecai Kaplan in 1922. This is not correct. A celebration for a Bas Mitzvah is mentioned in the Ben Ish Chai by Rabbi Yoseph Chaim (1883-1909) where he writes that the Bas Mitzvah should be a day of celebration. The Bas Mitzvah girl should wear a new outfit and recite a Shehecheyanu to celebrate her entrance into the "Ol Mitzvos" – the responsibility (and privilege) of observing Mitzvos.

So Kaplan actually took it from the Bas Mitzvah celebration of the Italian Jewish communities of Milan and Torino. There, the girls would stand before the Aron Kodesh and recite special prayers that ended with a shehecheyanu blessing. The Rav of these communities then spoke and gave them a Bracha. A Seudah followed in the home of the girl.

Seudas Bas Mitzvah

There are many opinions about whether a Seudas Bas Mitzvah is considered a Seudas Mitzvah. Rabbi Yitzchok Nissim cites Rav Mussafya (1606-1675) that a Bas Mitzvah is indeed considered a Seudas Mitzvah.

This question was posed to Rav Moshe Feinstein zatzal (Igros Moshe OC I #104) a number of times. In a letter to Rabbi Boruch Poukko dated the 11th of Shvat 5716 (January 25, 1956), Rav Moshe states that it is not considered a Seudas Mitzvah whatsoever and if he had the capacity he would abolish the custom for Bas Mitzvos and Bar Mitzvos as they do not increase anyone's commitment to Torah and often lead to Chilul Shabbos. This, of course, was in the 1950's.

In a letter written to Rabbi Meir Kahane hy"d when he was the Rabbi of a Howard Beach congregation, Rav Moshe Feinstein writes (Igros Moshe OC IV #36) that a Bas Mitzvah celebration should not be held in a synagogue – even if the synagogue was built with a condition, and even if it was held in the evening. He did write, however, that the Rabbi should only take a stand against it if it would not lead to any embarrassment of the parents and if taking the stand would not cause machlokes – argument.

In this second responsum, Rav Feinstein did suggest an alternative – that a Kiddush be sponsored instead. This, in fact, would be no different than sponsoring a Kiddush for any Simcha. In order to avoid conflict, Rav Moshe zatzal; suggested that it is preferable to ensure that words of Torah be recited at the meal. The meal should not be held in a synagogue if possible. However, using a room adjacent to the sanctuary would be permitted.

On the other hand, Rabbi Yaakov Yechiel Weinberg has written (Sridei Aish Vol. III #93) that in our times, it is very appropriate to strengthen the religious faith of our daughters through the Bas Mitzvah ceremony.

The Blessing of Boruch ShePatrani

The blessing of Boruch ShePatrani is not recited for a Bas Mitzvah.. There are four reasons for this:

1] Since a daughter remains in her father's home until marriage the obligations involved in raising a child continue further on until the point of marriage (see Kaf HaChaim 225:15).

2] Rav Yoseph Teumim in his Pri Magadim suggests an opinion that since the daughter's obligation in Torah knowledge is action-based and not knowledge based, a father is exempt from teaching her and therefore does not recite the blessing (PMG Aishel Avrohom 225:5). He writes that even according to the opinion that the father is obligated in teaching her, the lesser

amount of Mitzvos that she is obligated to perform does not necessitate his recitation of the blessing.

3] Rav Moshe Feinstein zatzal explains in a letter to Rabbi Zalman Uri of California dated the 9th of Iyar 5719 (IM OC Vol. II #97) that the blessing is not recited because it is not readily identifiable that a change took place. In regard to boys, the change is readily identifiable by virtue of them being included in Minyanim.

4] There is a view found in the Levush that the actual intent of the Patrani meOnsho shel zeh is the opposite understanding of the one that we have. In other words, Blessed be Hashem, who has exempted me from having my punishment meted out upon my children. Girls, however, would never have been included in it in the first place, since they would be affecting a third party – their future husbands. It would be wrong to affect a third party and therefore Hashem would not exact punishment on them. This then would remove the need to recite the Borch ShePatrani.

As a parenthetic note, this position can only exist during a time of “idna derischa” where Hashem is in a period of Divine Anger against His people. Otherwise, this type of punishment would never be. (See Suktas Dovid by Rabbi Dovid Kviat zt”l on Sefer D’varim, “Hester Panim.”)

After the Bas Mitzvah

Although one is exempt from doing Teshuvah upon aveiros (transgressions) that one did as a child, the Ramah (343:1) writes that one should accept upon oneself something as Teshuva and atonement for these aveiros. The pasuk in Mishlei (19:2), “Even without knowledge it is not good” applies to this case.

The main idea of a Bas Mitzvah and to celebrate it is that it is a period where another member of Klal Yisroel is brought into the responsibility of Mitzvos and can develop that special Dveikus and relationship with the Creator of the world.

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And the Parchment Burned, but the Letters Ascended

Rabbi Eliyahu Safran

Rabbi Eliyahu Safran looks at the Three Weeks in light of his family's tragic history during the Holocaust.

We cried out to the Eternal from the harsh sting of Pharaoh's whip. We wept by the waters of Babylon, bereft that our glorious Temple had been destroyed and we were driven to exile. We were lost and vulnerable when we were cast out to the four corners of the globe when the Romans destroyed the Second Temple. In the centuries since, we have endured persecution at the hands of governments and thugs. Our own part in the narrative has smokestacks as backdrop.

It is true, in each generation a Haman arises to plague us.

Is it any wonder that it is both easy and understandable to view Jewish history as a narrative of distress and persecution? Yes, we have suffered. We have cried out to the Almighty to save us, to deliver us. We have ached and we have bled. We have been packed in railway crates and marched to the crematoria.

Oh, we have suffered.

We have been murdered.

Is there a lesson to be learned from our experience? Is there transcendence to be realized from our suffering? We have known the darkness of the darkest night. Is it, as Rabbi Soloveichik taught, that in the midst of every galut there is geula; that there can be no night without the morning to come? The world moves on, leaving behind and forgetting those who suffered and died. Is my father's lesson, that those who perished left us with a clear mission – to live and thrive, to build a Jewish world, true?

Not so long ago, my dear wife, Clary, and I were sitting on “our” bench in Yerushalaim's Keren Hayesod Street. From there we could see the beautiful stained glass windows embracing the Beit Knesset on the ground floor of Rehov Washington 12. As we sat enjoying the Jerusalem breeze, Clary could not take her eyes from those windows.

“What is it?” I asked her.

Slowly, and with tears in her eyes, she recalled the stained glass windows in the bombed-out shul in her native Szerencs, Hungary hometown. Her last memories of the shul was only of those windows. The interior had been destroyed and desecrated by the Nazis.

As I reached across to hold her hand, I could only imagine the image in her mind's eye and how seeing these beautiful windows in our rebuilt Yerushalaim had caused her memories to be rekindled.

As I looked at her, I could not help but remember my father, Rav Yosef ben Harav Bezalel Ze'ev and his community of fifty thousand. Elected to be chief rabbi at only twenty-seven years of age, an acknowledgement of his deep learning and wisdom, he brought together a community committed to unity, education and tradition. Each member of the community was as a member of his family, dear to him.

As chief rabbi, he together with my mother, Esther, were witness to the full brutality of the infamous pogrom in Iasi, Romania in June 1941. Three days of terror, described by historians as one of the most horrific and inhumane in Jewish history. He was one of the first to be shot, sustaining wounds to his legs. During those three days, thirteen thousand, thirteen thousand, were brutally and gruesomely slaughtered.

I thought of the horrors that befell the Hungarian Jewish community in those dark days of Shoah and destruction, a dynamic community of hundreds of thousands of good Jews, blessed by rebbes, rabbanim, shuls, yeshivas, centers of Jewish life and lore. A Jewish community in which Clary's parents Reb Shiya Guttmann and his beloved Alte Rochel Leah were separated, each to another part of hell on earth. He, alone. She, with her five kinderlach. Soon after their arrival in Auschwitz the children were taken from her. In anguish and desperation, she begged the cursed officer, “Where are my children? Where are my children?” He, rasha that he was, held her with the cold, cruel glint in his eye. He nodded toward the sky. “Your children, look up there at the top of the chimney. Do you see the smoke coming out?” She looked up, confused by his words. He laughed harshly. “That smoke. There are your children!”

The Talmud tells of the time Rabbi Chananya ben Tradyon went to visit Rabbi Yosi ben Kisma when he had taken sick. Rabbi Kisma said, “Chanaya my brother, don't you know that this nation [the Roman Empire] has been empowered by Heaven, allowed to destroy His House, burn his Sanctuary, kill His pious ones. They will burn you and the sifrei Torah together...”

Indeed, the Roman Empire wreaked destruction upon the Jewish Community, sparing no one. Certainly not Rabbi Chananya ben Tradyon. True to Rabbi Kisma's vision, Rabbi Chananya was burned at the stake, wrapped in the blessed Torah scroll. The Romans had placed moist cotton over his heart to prolong the process of his death, increasing his pain and agony.

As the tzadik was burning with the sefer Torah, the Romans mocked him by deriding him with the obvious. “Oh, teacher. Do you see the flames consuming you?”

His disciples came close, feeling the heat from the fire as they drew closer still. “Rabbi, what do you see?”

Incredibly, a smile flickered across the rabbi's lips. “I see the parchment being consumed by the flames,” he said. “But the letters... the letters I see flying off. They remain.”

The evil guard at Auschwitz saw only the smoke coming from the smokestacks of the crematoria. He saw the flesh being consumed.

He did not have eyes to see the children flying heavenward, forever to remain.

* * *

I held Clary's hand that day as we looked across Keren Hayesod at the stained glass windows and I said, “We will write a sefer Torah to be placed in that shul!”

She looked at me, the tears continuing to well up in her eyes.

“This is our home,” I said to her. “This is ours. We are here to stay.”

* * *

Each letter, precious. Each letter, holy. Within each, the entirety of Torah. Within the entirety of Torah, each letter.

Each child, precious. Each child, holy. Within each, the entirety of creation. Within the entirety of creation, each child.

* * *

The final mitzvah of the Torah rings with hope and joy, Veata kisvu lachem es ha'shira hazos, “So now write this song for yourselves.”

What an awesome command! To write a sefer Torah; to commit to the scroll each and every letter. We know that there are six hundred thousand letters in the Torah. This number is, of course, significant in and of itself. For it not only alludes to the name of our people and nation, but also to the number of Jewish souls counted in the first census in the desert after we had been freed from our slavery. Six hundred thousand, the number representative of all klal Yisrael.

The Pnei Yehoshua explains, based on the Shloh, that every Jew has within his soul one particular mitzva that is attached to one particular letter in the Torah. All the souls of klal Yisrael are inherent in the letters of Torah, letters each and every Jew claims rights to!

The Ari z'l taught that the soul of each and every Jew is rooted in a letter in the Torah, that each letter has a spiritual power to them because each originates at the Heavenly throne, the same place where all souls originate; and thus each is linked to a letter.

It is because of this truth that hachnossas sefer torah is such an incredible and astonishing simcha. Not simply because another sefer Torah is added to the aron hakodesh in Ohel Yitzchak, the shul that received our Torah, and not simply because another sefer Torah was added to the thousands all over Eretz Yisrael. No, this incredible simcha is not the consequence of an accrual but quite the opposite. It is astonishing in the uniqueness and singularity of the mitzvah.

This is, in truth, personal. Each and every Jew rejoices with the hachnasas sefer Torah because each and every Jew can truly and deeply know that he has a letter in it. Each can correctly claim, "It is mine!"

Who would ever ask a yid at his son's or grandson's bar mitzvah or wedding, "Why are you so happy? Why do you dance with such a lightness and joy?"

Why?
Because this is a celebration of what is mine! It is besori! This is my flesh and blood! So it is that each and every yid is so mesameiach at a hachnasas sefer Torah. This is mine! This is my letter!

Each and every Jew commands a place at this table.

The source of the mitzvah to write a sefer Torah is in Vayelech, veata kisvu lachem es ha'shira hazos. These words conjure up the fullness of the simcha associated with the mitzvah. But, on either side of this mighty and joyful pasuk are words that fill us not with joy but with fear and trembling.

In this same parasha, we find Moshe Rabeinu nearing the end of his life. He tells the Levi'im whose task it was to carry the Aron, to take this sefer torah "ve samtam oso mitzad aron bris Hashem Elokeichem, vehoyu sham lecha l'eid." Take this sefer Torah – exactly which sefer Torah remains to be revealed – and place it next to the tablets and, "it shall serve on to you forever as a witness."

The Da'as Zekeinim, citing a Midrash, teaches that Moshe Rabeinu was instructed to place a copy of the sefer Torah with each tribe – twelve copies. It was the thirteenth copy that was to be placed next to the Luchos in the Aron. But when exactly did God instruct Moshe to place that thirteenth sefer Torah into the Aron?

On zayin Adar! On the seventh of Adar.

Thousands of years ago, Moshe Rabeinu was born on zayin Adar. It is also the date of his yahrzeit. It is also the yahrzeit of the sainted Kalever rebbe. Clary has often told me of how her father, Reb Shiya z'l, would wait all year to go to the Kalever's yahrzeit. "Men furt kein kaliv." We're going to Kalev.

Zayin Adar. A day filled with awe and kedusha.

Zayin Adar. A day profound and holy. The day Clary and I dedicated our Torah.

Zayin Adar. We placed a Torah in the "Aron next to the luchos."

The Midrash and Dass Zekeinim say that, "on that day, zayin Adar yorad gavriel..." – the Angel Gabriel descended and took the sefer Torah of Moshe Rabeinu and brought it up on high to the Heavenly Court so that the malochim (angels) would know how great a tzadik Moshe Rabeinu was!

Moshe Rabeinu was soon to leave this world. He joyfully placed the sefer Torah in the Aron. Velo od – but that is not all! The Tzadikim up in the heaven took that sefer Torah and read in it, every single sheini v'chamishi, (Monday and Thursday) every Shabbos, and on roshei chodoshim and yomim tovim.

Just imagine!

My beloved parents. Clary's beloved parents. My brother-in-law, Yaakov Nussbaum, the kinderlach, Clary's five siblings who perished oh so terribly young in Auschwitz's fiery hell. And Esther'ke. Each of them, all of them, gathered together in shomayim and, standing before the Heavenly gathering, they proclaim, "unsere kinderlech oben gebracht a neie sefer torah" – our children have sent up a new sefer Torah!"

They will read from it! Our joy is overwhelming, almost incomprehensible. In the moment we make this gift, the moment we fulfill this mitzvah, we hold hands with our parents and our loved ones; they, to welcome the sefer Torah up in the Heaven, we, to welcome it here.

Our emotions are beyond words.

V'ata kisvu lachem es ha'shira hazos!

The preceding psukim communicate such utter despair! We hear in them both God's wrath and the concealment of His countenance. Hide Himself from us! Rashi suggests that this is the harshest of all prophecies, softened only somewhat because, "...no matter what, the Torah will not be forgotten by Israel." There will always be Jews yearning to write another sefer Torah. Yes, even we, the children of those who have suffered in the worst days of God's concealment!

Can you hear these words of wrath and anger? "My anger will flare against it on that day and I will forsake them; and I will conceal My face..."

And yet the Torah tells us to go forward and write a sefer Torah. Write, "es ha'shira ha'zos" – write this song – a song, something that connotes feeling, sensitivity, emotion,

joy – all that is conjured up when we hear a great chazzan, baal tefila, menagen who sings from his heart.

We write the Torah with a song that springs from the depth of our souls. And this song, "shall be for Me a witness against the Children of Israel." This Torah will go as witness wherever you go. Even if we stray from God and, "turn to gods of others and serve them."

Should we do that, God will have no choice but punish us. "It will provoke Me and annul My covenant." And cause us to suffer more "when many evils and distresses come upon it." A gevald! Oy vey!

This is so painful to hear. However, "then this song shall speak up before it as a witness, for it shall not be forgotten from the mouth of its offspring."

Such a dichotomy! Two opposed thoughts and emotions framing our song!

The smoke rises. The parchment burns. But the letters, the letters rise up for eternity.

Rabbi Berel Wein <info@jewishdestiny.com> date: Wed, Jul 8, 2015 at 12:05 AM subject: Parshat Pinchas 5775- Rabbi Berel Wein

Weekly Parsha PINCHAS

Rabbi Wein's Weekly Blog

PINCHAS

There are great challenges in everyone's life. There are natural drives which exist within us that force people to commit sinful behavior. The Talmud succinctly sums up the situation by stating: "Most people steal, a minority of them are sexually immoral and all are covered with the dust of evil speech and slander." Money is a great temptation and the drive to acquire it is so strong that stealing in one way or another is natural to many and even condoned by large sections of society. Sexual immorality however, in spite of its current seeming glorification in media and the arts, is still frowned upon by most of society. All sections of our society are reeling from scandals of sexual abuse and inappropriate sexual behavior. Rabbis have taught us that the God of Israel abhors and hates sexual immorality. It stands not only as a defilement of the human body and a degradation of the human personality, but also as an act of rebellion against God's model for society. The sexual drive within us is strong, vital and necessary. Without it human continuity and creativity would be stifled and aborted. However, Judaism preaches not the abstinence or mortification but rather the channeling, control and discipline that enhances the sexual drive itself and creates a more moral society. The Jewish world, over its many millennia of existence, has seen many libertine societies rise to the fore and dominate for a time until eventually falling into disfavor. However, it is a constant struggle, both personal and societal, to prohibit sexual laxity and any form of immoral behavior. This is the background for the behavior of Pinchas and his act of zealotry. Though many even in his time, as Rashi points out, disagreed with his tactics and misunderstood his zealotry, Pinchas was the person who restored moral balance to Jewish society after the debacle of the daughters of Midian. Sexual immorality eventually destroys the society in which it reigns. It helps explain the demise of many empires and their inexplicable disappearance in past history. Pinchas sees his act as a lifesaving one for Jewish society and for all later generations. It taught us the vital lesson that sexual immorality is not to be tolerated, for it slowly but surely erodes the foundation of all societies and cultures. Only the Lord could judge the true motives of Pinchas in killing Kozbi and Zimri and therefore it was necessary for the Torah to reveal to us that Heaven condoned and approved of his zealotry and actions. Pinchas will go on to have a distinguished career as a High Priest and a leader of the Jewish people in the Land of Israel in later generations. But he will be eternally remembered as the enemy of sexual immorality and of his refusal to bow to current popularity or political correctness. There is a lesson in this for all of us today as well. Shabbat shalom Rabbi Berel Wein

from: Shema Yisrael Torah Network <shemalist@shemayisrael.com> to: Peninim <peninim@shemayisrael.com> date: Thu, Jul 9, 2015 at 3:55 AM subject: **Peninim on the Torah by Rabbi A. Leib Scheinbaum - Parshas Pinchas**

And it shall be for him and his offspring after him a covenant of eternal Priesthood, because he took vengeance for his G-d, and he atoned for Bnei Yisrael. (25:13)

Pinchas was inducted into the Kehunah, Priesthood, following his zealous act of killing Zimri, the Nasi, Prince, of the Tribe of Shimon. Rashi explains that, until this point in time, the only Kohanim were Aharon HaKohen, his sons and future offspring. Since Pinchas was not a son (neither were his future offspring), he was not included in the Kehunah. In one of the teachings of the Zohar, the position is taken that by killing Zimri, Pinchas became forever disqualified from the Kehunah. Thus, the Kehunah, which he received as a reward, was a totally new Kehunah, not connected with that of Aharon HaKohen. How are we to understand this?

The Shem MiShmuel quotes the Arizal who observes that Pinchas found his spiritual roots in Kayin, son of Adam and Chavah. Kayin committed the world's first fratricide by killing his own brother, Hevel. As such, imbedded deep within the psyche of Pinchas was a gravitational pull towards murder. This disqualified him from the Priesthood, until somehow this tendency could be expunged. This was accomplished when he killed Zimri, utilizing his proclivity for a positive means. He could now become a Kohen.

Obviously, the words of the Arizal must be expounded upon. In order to understand the spiritual relationship between Pinchas and Kayin, we first must consider the personality of Kayin. The name of a person indicates his true nature. The root of the name Kayin was expressed by Chavah when she gave birth to him: Kanisi ish es Hashem, "I have acquired a man from G-d" (Bereishis 4:1). Hence, the root of Kayin is kinyan, acquisition. In this light, we see Kayin as a man who views himself as significant - an entity of substance, a person who himself was an "acquisition," maintains a pretentious viewpoint of himself. Seeing oneself as important can make one headstrong. The person who feels that he may lord over others will soon try to lord over G-d. Kayin did not only kill his brother, but he also had other plans. Chazal teach (Pirkei D'Rabbi Eliezer 21) that Hevel had a twin sister who was quite striking. Kayin had designs on her, saying, "I will kill Hevel and take his twin from him." All this is rooted in Kayin's delusion of greatness.

Sources in Chazal state that Kayin's obsession with himself led to idolatry and denial of Hashem's guidance of the world. In other words, Kayin's arrogance and self-worship led him to commit the three cardinal sins of murder, idolatry and immorality.

As we have often mentioned, there is a flipside; the same deficient character trait has a counterpart which is positive and productive. The very same motivation which led Kayin to evil can also lead one to appreciate the value of a human being. Yehoshafat Ha'melech was a person whose "heart was lifted up in the ways of G-d" (Divrei HaYamim II 17:6). Chazal explain (Sanhedrin 38a) that while Yehoshafat did see himself as a significant, valuable person, he directed this feeling towards serving Hashem. Indeed, Chazal derive from him that "every individual should say, Bishvili nivra ha'olam, 'Because of me, the world was created.'"

Chazal present to us a deeper understanding of what a person should do with his feeling of self-worth. By considering himself significant and worthy of contributing to Hashem's world, he manifests the good side of Kayin's character trait. Clearly, this was Chavah's intention when she gave her son the name Kayin. She hoped that he would be a man of self-worth, who would understand his own value and who would apply this knowledge to serving Hashem in the proper manner. Sadly, Kayin took what he knew about himself and perverted this knowledge from its true purpose. The misapplication of his character trait transformed a man of substance into an egocentric sinner.

Let us now consider the action taken by Pinchas against Zimri. As mentioned, Pinchas possessed the same character trait as Kayin. It was his function to utilize this trait of self-worth for the greater good - not for personal aggrandizement. As a result of the effects of this trait, Pinchas was "zealous for G-d," personally killing Zimri because he was acutely aware that not all Jews could be considered to be kanaim l'shem Shomayim, zealous for Hashem. As a man of great spiritual sensitivity, Pinchas could not bear to see Zimri's flagrant desecration of the Torah. By acting out his self-worth in a positive way, Pinchas transcended his "Kayin" proclivity, redirecting it toward the common good.

Pinchas' intolerance of Zimri's blatant act of immorality was the result of a level of indignation found only in a person of such great spiritual sensitivity that he felt personally affronted by this act. As Yehoshafat "lifted his heart in the ways of G-d," so, too, did Pinchas take the initiative and act in accordance with his heartfelt motivation. Thus, he was able to conquer Kayin's arrogance.

The Shem MiShmuel takes it one step further. When the people saw Zimri's act of blasphemy, they were unsure how to react. The sinners committed adultery and idol worship. By allowing themselves to do this, they showed that they had very low self-esteem. This is true of all sinners. When they sin, they diminish their human status, acting akin to murder. When Pinchas repaired Kayin's residual defect which lay dormant within him, he corrected the damage caused by the three cardinal sins. He would now receive the gift of Kehunah, which had heretofore been denied him. His killing of Zimri was not murder; it was spiritual rectification - his own, as well as that of the sinners.

And it shall be for him and his offspring after him a covenant of eternal Priesthood. (25:13)

Up until that time, only Aharon HaKohen and his sons had been inducted into the Priesthood. Any additional offspring who would be born into the family would be "born Kohanim." Pinchas was already born; thus, he was not to be included in the Priesthood. As a result of his decisive act of zealousness, he was granted a place in the Priesthood, a place for himself and his offspring. The Zohar HaKadosh questions Pinchas' induction into the Priesthood, since he had just killed a Jew. We have a rule that a Kohen who takes a life is not permitted to serve. Here we see that specifically because Pinchas killed Zimri, he was granted the Priesthood. How are we to resolve this issue?

The Sfas Emes explains that the righteous are willing to give up their lives in order to serve Hashem. Their devotion is so exemplary that they will even relinquish their spiritual ascendancy in order to perform Hashem's Will - they will give up their portion in the World to Come. This is how we may describe Pinchas. Realizing that by taking Zimri's life, he was giving up his right to the Kehunah, Priesthood, Pinchas still responded and acted accordingly. It was more important that he curb the desecration of Hashem's Name by killing Zimri. If, as a result of his actions, he would lose out on the Kehunah - so be it! Saving the Jewish People had much greater significance. Since he was prepared to lose the Kehunah for the glory of Heaven, the Almighty rewarded him with everlasting Priesthood.

The Bais Yisrael quotes his father, the Imrei Emes, who contends that Pinchas did not receive the Priesthood until after he killed Zimri, so that when he killed him, he was not yet a Kohen. Otherwise, he would not have been allowed to kill him. He questions this, wondering what difference it makes when he became a Kohen. After all is said and done, Pinchas was Pinchas; the person did not change. Pinchas the person (not yet a Kohen) still had blood on his hands. How could he become a Kohen? The Bais Yisrael explains that the Pinchas who existed prior to becoming a Kohen and the Pinchas after becoming a Kohen were not the same person. He quotes the Zohar who says that, following Zimri's death, Pinchas' neshamah, soul, left him, and another neshamah took its place.

The Bais Yisrael related that a young avreich, man who was proficient in his Torah knowledge, but lacked the humility that should accompany his erudition, visited Horav Baruch, zl, m'Meziboz. The young man entered the room expecting the holy sage to greet him in accordance with his outstanding scholarship. He was, therefore, quite surprised when the Rebbe practically did not acknowledge his presence. He did not give the young man the time of day.

Realizing that he was being snubbed, the young man decided that this was obviously not a place for him. He would return home and move on elsewhere. On the way home, he suddenly became tired and stopped along the road. He sat down on a large rock to rest. His mind began to confront the reality that his arrogance had gotten the better of him and his self-consuming pretentiousness had catalyzed such a reaction from the Rebbe. Confronting the error of his foolish pomposity, the young man began to weep bitterly. Finally, he decided to take his chances and return to the Rebbe.

The Rebbe sensed the change in the young man as he was entering his courtyard, and, consequently, went out to greet him with a smile and good cheer. Following the young man's return, the Rebbe treated him with great deference in accordance with his Torah achievement.

The eight-year-old grandson of Rav Baruch had observed the entire episode: the original cold shoulder and the present warm embrace. He questioned his grandfather's actions: "Is this not the same man that you distanced earlier, and now he is being received with familiarity?" The Rebbe replied, "You are wrong. This is not the same person who came earlier; this is a totally different/new man." Likewise, Pinchas was transformed into a new man, once he had been granted Kehunah. Someone who has been rehabilitated, either with help or by his own volition, deserves to be recognized by his new status. There is a reason we pray to Hashem, Al tizkor lanu avonos rishonim, "Do not recall to us the sins of the ancients." It may also be interpreted as: "Do not recall to us our ancient sins."

"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." (27:16,17)

Moshe Rabbeinu asked Hashem to appoint his successor, hoping that his own son would be the one to succeed him as the nation's leader. Hashem had other plans: "Yehoshua, who has never departed from the (your) tent, deserves to be granted leadership over the nation." As Shlomo Ha'melech says (Mishlei 27:18) Notzer t'ainah yochal piryah, "He who watches over the fig tree should eat its fruit." Rashi, who cites the above Chazal, indicates that Yehoshua was selected as a result of his devotion to the ohalah shel Torah, incredible diligence in not leaving the tent of Torah. Lo yamush mitoch ha'ohel, "He never departed the tent," is the description of the quintessential masmid, diligent student of Torah, Yehoshua. From his early youth, Yehoshua

displayed an unparalleled devotion to the Torah and to his revered Rebbe, Moshe. This, apparently, earned him the position as successor to Moshe.

Horav Eliyahu Baruch Finkel, zl, distinguishes between two types of yerushah, inheritance, which Moshe bequeathed to Yehoshua. Moshe was the melech, king of Klal Yisrael. He was, however, not a king in the conventional sense. His monarchy consisted of malchus mikoach haTorah, monarchy as a result of his greatness in Torah. Va'yehi biYeshurun melech, "He became a king over Yeshurun" (Devarim 33:5). While there is a difference of opinion among commentators as to who is the "king" of the pasuk, some Midrashim, followed by Ibn Ezra, render Moshe as the king, since the entire nation showed its allegiance and obedience to him as a result of his greatness in Torah and for being their quintessential Rebbe.

Yehoshua's diligence was very much like that of Moshe, who toiled in Heaven without food or water for forty days and nights to learn Torah. Yehoshua became Moshe's heir apparent by emulating his Rebbe's devotion to Torah. Thus, he too, became the melech over Klal Yisrael.

There is, however, a distinction between Moshe's malchus, monarchy, and the monarchy of other kings. When a king dies, his son succeeds him, because malchus oveir b'yerushah, monarchy is passed on through inheritance. Moshe's malchus, founded upon his koach HaTorah, power of the Torah, could only be bequeathed to someone who could be called Moshe's spiritual heir. As a result of Yehoshua's peerless devotion to Torah, he was worthy of succeeding Moshe.

This idea (distinguishing between malchus mikoach HaTorah and conventional monarchy) is established by the Meshach Chochmah in his commentary to Parashas Yisro (Shemos 18:2). We find Moshe Rabbeinu, the leader and king of Yisrael, serving Yisro, Aharon HaKohen and the Zekeinim, Elders, during Yisro's welcome "banquet." Moshe was a king. How could someone of such exalted stature perform the menial task of serving others? Even if we were to argue that Moshe was mochel, forgave/absolved his honor, melech ein kevodo machul, a king's honor is not exculpatory, may not be absolved. Rav Meir Simchah, zl, explains that this law applies only to conventional monarchy, not to monarchy that one earns as a result of his Torah. Thus, Moshe was able to act as the waiter and serve the guests.

We turn now to another aspect of Yehoshua's right to leadership: Ish asher ruach bo, "A man in whom there is spirit," an individual who understands the nature and spirit of each of his constituents. This does not seem to be an inherited qualification. Yehoshua had this characteristic because of his unique personality, which was honed by the Torah that he learned.

Rav Eliyahu Baruch posits that, actually, we are not dealing with two qualifications for leadership. Rather, we are concerned here with two bequests which Moshe bestowed upon Yehoshua. First, Moshe transmitted to Yehoshua the Torah which he received from Hashem on Har Sinai. Yehoshua earned this as a result of his diligence and greatness in Torah. Torah bequeaths Torah. Second, was Moshe's ability to lead the nation. This came as a result of Yehoshua's personal qualifications, his ability to understand the unique differences between men.

We have identified two aspects of Moshe's leadership bestowed on Yehoshua: mesiras HaTorah, transmitting to him the Torah and mesiras ha'hanhagah, transferring to Yehoshua the power to lead the nation. At first glance, one would suggest that these two leadership qualities distinguished between the spiritual and the mundane. I do not think so. Yehoshua's greatness in understanding each person, in knowing how to address their concerns, was derived from his greatness in Torah. As the quintessential ben Torah, he absorbed daas Torah, the unique wisdom of Torah. One's mind is transformed, and the abilities and insights not granted to the average person become the sole possession of one whose mind has been transformed through daas Torah.

In loving memory of our parents and brother Cy and Natalie Handler 3 Av 5772 - 24 Teves 5771 Jeremy Handler 19 Tamuz 5766 by the Handler Family Peninim mailing list Peninim@shemayisrael.com
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