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The Crown All Can Wear Rabbi Lord Jonathan Sacks

The Crown All Can Wear Britain's Former Chief Rabbi Lord Jonathan Sacks
Covenant and Conversation Family Edition on OU Life

Moses said to the Lord, "May the Lord, God of the spirits of all flesh, appoint a man over this community to go out and come in before them, one who will lead them out and bring them in, so the Lord's people will not be like sheep without a shepherd." (Num. 27:15-17)

Moses was in sight of the Angel of Death. Miriam had died. So had Aaron. And God had told Moses "you too will be gathered to your people, as your brother Aaron was." (Num. 27:12-13), so he knew he was not fated to live long enough to cross the Jordan and enter the land. Who would be his successor? Did he have any thoughts on the matter?

With profound attentiveness, the Sages noted the immediately previous passage. It is the story of the daughters of Tzelophehad, who claim their rights of inheritance in the land, despite the fact that inheritance passed through the male line and their father had left no sons. Moses brought their request to God, who answered that it was to be granted.

Against this background, the Midrash interprets Moses' thoughts as he brings his own request to God, that a successor be appointed:

What was Moses' reason for making this request after declaring the order of inheritance? Just this, that when the daughters of Tzelophehad inherited from their father, Moses reasoned: The time is right for me to make my own request. If daughters inherit, it is surely right that my sons should inherit my glory.

The Holy One, Blessed Be He, said to him, "He who keeps the fig tree shall eat its fruit" (Prov. 27:18). Your sons sat idly by and did not study the Torah. Joshua served you faithfully and showed you great honour. It was he who rose early in the morning and remained late at night at your House of Assembly. He used to arrange the benches and spread the mats. Seeing that

he has served you with all his might, he is worthy to serve Israel, for he shall not lose his reward.[1]

This is the unspoken drama of the chapter. Not only was Moses fated not to enter the land, but he was also destined to see his sons overlooked in the search for a successor. That was his second personal tragedy.

But it is precisely here that we find, for the first time, one of Judaism's most powerful propositions. Biblical Israel had its dynasties. Both Priesthood and, in a later age, Kingship were handed down from father to son. Yet there is a staunchly egalitarian strand in Judaism from the outset. Ironically, it is given one of its most powerful expressions in the mouth of the rebel, Korach: "All the congregation are holy and the Lord is in their midst. Why then do you (Moses) set yourselves above the congregation?" (Num. 16:3).

But it was not only Korach who gave voice to such a sentiment. We hear it in the words of Moses himself: "Would that all the Lord's people were Prophets and that the Lord would put His spirit on them" (Num. 11:29).

We hear it again in the words of Hannah when she gives thanksgiving for the birth of her son:

The Lord sends poverty and wealth; He humbles and He exalts. He raises the poor from the dust and lifts the needy from the ash heap; He seats them with princes and has them inherit a throne of honour. (I Sam. 2:7-8)

It is implicit in the great holiness command: "The Lord said to Moses, 'Speak to the entire assembly of Israel and say to them: Be holy, because I, the Lord your God, am holy'" (Lev. 19:2).

This is not a call to Priests or Prophets – a sacred elite – but to an entire people. There is, within Judaism a profound egalitarian instinct: the concept of a nation of individuals standing with equal dignity in the presence of God. Korach was wrong less in what he said than in why he said it. He was a demagogue attempting to seize power. But he tapped into a deep reservoir of popular feeling and religious principle. Jews have never been easy to lead because each is called on to be a leader. What Korach forgot is that to be a leader it is also necessary to be a follower. Leadership presupposes discipleship. That is what Joshua knew, and what led to him being chosen as Moses' successor.

The tradition is summed up in the famous Maimonidean ruling:

With three crowns was Israel crowned – with the crown of Torah, the crown of Priesthood, and the crown of Kingship. The crown of Priesthood was bestowed on Aaron and his descendants. The crown of Kingship was conferred on David and his successors. But the crown of Torah is for all Israel. Whoever wishes, let them come and take it. Do not suppose that the other two crowns are greater than that of Torah.... The crown of Torah is greater than the other two crowns.[2]

This had immense social and political consequences. Throughout most of the biblical era, all three crowns were in operation. In addition to Prophets, Israel had Kings and an active Priesthood serving in the Temple. The dynastic principle – leadership passing from father to son – still dominated two of the three roles. But with the destruction of the Second Temple, Kingship and a functioning Priesthood ceased. Leadership passed to the Sages who saw themselves as heirs to the Prophets. We see this in the famous one-sentence summary of Jewish history with which Tractate Avot (Ethics of the Fathers) begins: "Moses received the Torah from Sinai and handed it on to Joshua, who handed it on to the elders, the elders to the Prophets, and the Prophets to the men of the Great Assembly" (Mishnah Avot 1:1).

The Rabbis see themselves as heirs to the Prophets rather than to the Priests. In biblical Israel, the Priests were the primary guardians and teachers of Torah. Why did the Rabbis not see themselves as heirs to Aaron and the Priesthood? The answer may be this: Priesthood was a dynasty. Prophetic leadership, by contrast, could never be predicted in advance. The proof was Moses. The very fact that his children did not succeed him as leaders of the people may have been an acute distress to him but it was a deep consolation to everyone else. It meant that anyone, by discipleship and dedication, could aspire to Rabbinic leadership and the crown of Torah.

Hence we find in the sources a paradox. On the one hand, the Torah describes itself as an inheritance: “Moses commanded us the Torah as an inheritance [morasha] of the congregation of Jacob” (Deut. 33:4). On the other hand, the Sages were insistent that Torah is not an inheritance: “R. Yose said: Prepare yourself to learn Torah, for it is not given to you as an inheritance [yerusha]” (Mishnah Avot 2:12).

The simplest resolution of the contradiction is that there are two kinds of inheritance. Biblical Hebrew contains two different words for what we receive as a legacy: yerusha/morasha and nachala. Nachala is related to the word nachal, “a river.” It signifies something passed down automatically across the generations, as river water flows downstream, easily and naturally. Yerusha comes from the root yarash, meaning “to take possession.” It refers to something to which you have legitimate title, but which you need positive action to acquire.

A hereditary title, such as being a duke or an earl, is passed from father to son. So too is a family business. The difference is that the first needs no effort on the part of the heir, but the second requires hard work if the business is to continue to be worth something. Torah is like a business, not a title. It must be earned if it is to be sustained.

The Sages themselves put it more beautifully: “‘Moses commanded us the Torah as an inheritance [morasha] of the congregation of Jacob’ – read not ‘inheritance [morasha]’ but ‘betrothed [me’orasa]’” (Berachot 57a). By a simple change in pronunciation – turning a shin [=“sh”] into a sin [=“s”], “inheritance” into “betrothal” – the Rabbis signalled that, yes, there is an inheritance relationship between Torah and the Jew, but the former has to be loved if it is to be earned. You have to love Torah if you are to inherit it.

The Sages were fully aware of the social implications of R. Yose’s dictum that the Torah “is not given to you as an inheritance.” It meant that literacy and learning must never become the preserve of an elite:

And why is it not usual for scholars to give birth to sons who are scholars? Yosef said: So that it should not be said that the Torah is their inheritance. (Nedarim 81a)

The Sages were constantly on their guard against exclusivist attitudes to Torah. Equality is never preserved without vigilance – and indeed there were contrary tendencies. We see this in one of the debates between the schools of Hillel and Shammai:

“Raise up many disciples” – The school of Shammai says: A person is to teach only one who is wise, humble, of good stock, and rich.

But the school of Hillel says: Everyone is to be taught. For there were many transgressors in Israel who were attracted to the study of Torah, and from them sprang righteous, pious, and worthy men. To what may it be compared? “To a woman who sets a hen to brood on eggs – out of many eggs, she may hatch only a few, but out of a few [eggs], she hatches none at all.”[3]

One cannot predict who will achieve greatness. Therefore Torah must be taught to all. A later episode illustrates the virtue of teaching everyone:

Once Rav came to a certain place where, though he had decreed a fast [for rain], no rain fell. Eventually someone else stepped forward in front of Rav before the Ark and prayed, “Who causes the wind to blow” – and the wind blew. Then he prayed, “Who causes the rain to fall” – and the rain fell.

Rav asked him: What is your occupation [i.e., what is your special virtue that causes God to answer your prayers]? He replied: I am a teacher of young children. I teach Torah to the children of the poor as well as to the children of the rich. From those who cannot afford it, I take no payment. Besides, I have a fish pond, and I offer fish to any boy who refuses to study, so that he comes to study. (Ta’anit 24a)

It would be wrong to suppose that these attitudes prevailed in all places at all times. No nation achieves perfection. An aptitude for learning is not equally distributed within any group. There is always a tendency for the most intelligent and scholarly to see themselves as more gifted than others and for the rich to attempt to purchase a better education for their children than the poor. Yet to an impressive – even remarkable – degree, Jews were vigilant in ensuring that no one was excluded from education and that schools and

teachers were paid for by public funds. By many centuries, indeed millennia, Jews were the first to democratise education. The crown of Torah was indeed open to all.

Moses’ tragedy was Israel’s consolation. “The Torah is their inheritance.” The fact that his successor was not his son, but Joshua, his disciple, meant that one form of leadership – historically and spiritually the most important of the three crowns – could be aspired to by everyone. Dignity is not a privilege of birth. Honour is not confined to those with the right parents. In the world defined and created by Torah, everyone is a potential leader. We can all earn the right to wear the crown.

[1] Numbers Rabbah 21:14. [2] Maimonides, Mishneh Torah, Hilchot Talmud Torah 3:1. [3] Avot DeRabbi Natan, version 2, ch. 4.

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Rabbi Ahron Lopiansky

Kanous: Anarchy or Ultimate Justice?

This parsha starts by lauding Pinchas for his courageous act of kanous - zealotness. Bnai Yisroel are saved because of his act and he himself is granted eternal priesthood and an eternal covenant with Hashem. This would definitely indicate that what he had done was most worthy.

Yet when we take a closer look at the associated halachos, we are perplexed. For instance, the halachah is that if a kanoi first asks beis din what to do, he is never granted permission to act as Pinchas did (Rambam Hilchos Isurei Biah, 12:4). Additionally, the kanoi can only kill the transgressors while they are engaged in the sinful act. If he does so a moment later, he is judged as a murderer and punished. Even more vexing is the ruling (Sanhedrin 81b) that had Zimri turned around and killed Pinchas in self-defense, he would have been within his rights, and therefore innocent of murder! This all leaves us to wonder: was Pinchas's act laudatory or murder; was Pinchas right or wrong?

The Talmud Yerushalmi (Sanhedrin 48b) goes a step further and states that this type of action is and was disapproved by the Chachomim, and they actually wished to put him into cherem. The only reason they did not do so was because the Divine Spirit declared that a covenant was being forged with Pinchas on account of this act! But how does this square with the dictum, "lo baShomayim he", that the chachomim, and not new information emanating from Heaven, have the final say in determining the halacha? And if, on the other hand, the Divine Spirit does have the final say, then why do the chachomim still disapprove of kanoim?

The topic of kanous also raises troubling questions about a society that allows itself to be run by extra-judicial actions and vigilantes. Is this not anarchy?

The Akeidah (Sha'ar 83) give us tremendous insight into this parsha and I will try to rephrase his lengthy and somewhat hidden words.

The world of mitzvos is aimed at one's rational faculties. The mitzvos of punishing sinners comprise a mandate imposed on the courts of Klal Yisroel. Concomitantly, those sins that are beyond the pale of human judgement, are only for G-d to judge and punish as He sees fit.

A person, however, possesses a spirit, that rises above his intellect. If a man is so moved by righteousness that he abandons logic and is willing to sacrifice himself [e.g. Pinchas exposing himself to the possibility of Zimri killing him in self-defense], it is his spirit rising to the occasion. His soul, thereby becomes an emissary for the Divine Beis Din, so to speak, and he is now acting as an agent of the Divine Court, not as an agent of a human beis din.

An analogous situation would be where one sees an innocent person being murdered. Assuming the witness has no chance of rescuing the victim, reason dictates that he protect his own life by not intervening. But if this witness has such a strong sense of moral outrage that he nonetheless stands

up and fights the attacker - even if it was to no avail, and makes "no sense" - we would commend his noble spirit of righteousness, that could not sit idly by and tolerate the injustice that was being perpetrated. Thus kanous is not, and can't be, mandated. It must be the spontaneous reaction of a noble spirit who can't tolerate evil, no matter what the consequences.

Rav Moshe Chaim Luzzato (Mesilas Yesarim, chapter 19) phrases it thus: It is obvious that a person who truly loves his friend will not be able to tolerate someone hitting him or humiliating him, and will surely defend him. Similarly, one who loves Hashem's Name will not be able to see its desecration by a wanton disregard for transgressions.

This kanous is, on the one hand, an expression of the ultimate nobility of the human spirit. But on the other hand, it is greatly suspect. It requires an extraordinary purity of motive and precision of timing.

The Netziv (Ha'amek Davar, Breishis 34:25) expresses this most precisely when describing Shimon and Levi's killing of Shechem:

Though the two brothers were united in their great fury, and personal endangerment, their motives were extremely different. One was merely expressing the human response to an insult to family pride, and that is an "alien fire" [i.e. an improper and un-Jewish motive.] The other was coming with a zealotry for G-d's justice without personal interest or gain. But even that motive needs to be applied at the right time and place, for if not, it too can be very destructive.

Yes, the rabbis condemn zealotry, for it is a non-halachic response, done out of motives that are suspect. But when the Divine Spirit revealed to us that Pinchas was the unique individual whose actions stemmed from the noblest of spirits and purest of motives, expressed at the right time and place, then we rightfully hail him as the savior of Israel!

More divrei Torah from Rabbi Lopiansky

More divrei Torah on Parshas Pinchas

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from: Rabbi Yissocher Frand <ryfrand@torah.org> reply-to: do-not-reply@torah.org to: ravfrand@torah.org date: Jul 24, 2019, 6:20 PM subject: Rav Frand - **Pinchas Did Not Daven – He Engaged in Argumentation** By **Rabbi Yissocher Frand**

Dedicated to the speedy recovery of Mordechai ben Chaya & Henya Chana Raizel bas Rochel Bayla.

A pasuk in Psalms says, "Vaya'mod Pinchas vaYefalel, va'Teaztar haMageifa" [Tehillim 106:30]. This is commonly translated "And Pinchas stood and prayed and the plague stopped." However, the Talmud questions this translation of the pasuk: "Rav Eliezer says the pasuk does not say 'vaYispalel' [he prayed], but rather 'vaYefalel'" [Sanhedrin 44a]. The nuance of this unique form of the root word, according to Rav Eliezer, teaches that Pinchas argued a case before the Almighty (translating the word vaYefalel from the word pelilim, which connotes judges and judgment [as in Shemos 21:22]). VaYefalel does not mean Pinchas prayed, but rather Pinchas presented a compelling case before the Master of the Universe, he contended with Him.

The Gemara presents Pinchas' argument according to Rav Eliezer: "Because of these two people (Zimri and Kozbi), twenty-four thousand people should be killed? (And even more people were going to be killed before Pinchas 'intervened'). It is not right!"

We can add an interesting observation. The Sefer HaKrim from Rav Yosef Albo discusses a very fundamental question: How and why does prayer help? If a person is sick, Heaven forbid, that means that the Almighty ruled regarding this person that he should be sick. How then is prayer supposed to help? Is our intention to change the Ribono shel Olam's Mind? Is the expectation that after we pray, the Almighty will say, "Do you know what? I never thought of that! I will change my decree regarding this person?"

Obviously, when the Almighty does something, it is Perfect and Righteous. So what is the whole point of davening?

Rav Yosef Albo's answer to this question is that something happens to the person who prays. When a person davens, he becomes a different person. The law or the decree that the Almighty issued regarding 'Ploni son of Ploni' was for a different person. Because of the person's prayers and his drawing closer to the Almighty, he changes into a different person upon whom the decree was never issued.

This explains something else, which with some understanding of a bit of the rules of Hebrew grammar, is most enlightening. The Hebrew verb for praying is mispalel, which is a reflexive grammatical tense (hispa-el). For example, it becomes similar to the expression Ani mislabesh – I am dressing myself – which is also a reflexive verb. However, why in conjunction with prayer is the verb reflexive (hispa-el)?

The answer is because the person who prays undergoes a metamorphosis of sorts. He becomes a different person. This is one of the theories of how prayer helps – it is because through your prayers and your intense communication with Hashem, you change! If that is the case, it is very appropriate why over here the verb form is not reflexive (hispa-el) but it is (pea-el), vaYefalel. Pinchas did not need to change. He was a Tzadik [righteous person]. Pinchas did not engage in prayer in order to change himself. Rather, he engaged in dispute and argumentation with the Almighty, as vaYefalel connotes the idea of Pelilim [seeking justice before Judges]. "Elokai HaRuchos" Is the G-d of Unique Spirits When Moshe Rabbeinu was given the decree that he was about to die, in the spirit of all great Jewish leaders, he was not necessarily worried about himself, but requested that G-d appoint an appropriate successor to lead the Jewish nation. The language he uses, "Yifkod Hashem Elo-kai haRuchos l'chol basar, Ish al ha'Eidah" [May Hashem, G-d of the spirits of all flesh, appoint a man over the assembly] [Bamidbar 27:16], is itself somewhat peculiar. There is only one other place in Tanach where the Almighty is referred to by the unique formulation "Elokai HaRuchos l'chol basar" [G-d of the spirits of all flesh] [Bamidbar 16:22].

Chazal take note of this unique expression. The Medrash comments in this context: "Just as people's faces are dissimilar to one another, so too their opinions are different one from another." This is a very famous Chazal. No two people think alike, act alike, or have the same personality. People can share features and personality traits but no two people are identical. Every person has his own opinion, outlook, and perspective. This, the Medrash explains, is why Moshe invokes here the expression "G-d of the spirits..." You know what makes every single human being tick. You know how every individual is different. Your children each have their own opinion about matters. When I am now departing from them, I plead with You to appoint for them a leader who will be sensitive to the idiosyncrasies and uniqueness of every single individual. The leader should be able to relate to the whole spectrum of humanity that makes up Klal Yisrael.

There are two observations I would like to share on this. The first is an observation I once heard in the name of Rav Shlomo Eiger. Rav Eiger notes – if Chazal want to say over here that people are different, why did they use the expression "Just as their faces are different, so too their opinions are different"? Why could the Rabbis not have stated simply – "People are different"? There must be some significance in the formulation of the simile comparing differing faces to differing opinions.

Rav Shlomo Eiger asked, "Do you have anything against me because you do not like my face?" The assumption of course is that the fact that my face is different than your face should not bother you in the least. The fact that people's appearances are different from one another does not bother anyone. On the contrary, everybody wants individuality. I do not want anyone looking exactly like me. Similarly, it should not bother anyone that another person does not think like him either! This is the idea that Chazal are trying to convey – just as people's faces are different from one another and no one cares, so too their attitude about opinions should be the same. Why, then, are

people so intolerant when someone else has a different view? Somehow, people cannot tolerate it when someone sees matters differently from them. "It has to be my way or the highway!"

I saw a second related observation from the writings of Rav Dovid Povarsky, zt"l: There are no two human beings in the world who look exactly alike. That means that even people such as fathers and sons, brothers, and even identical twins who basically look alike, there are always at least slight ways to tell them apart. Now consider, how many people have walked on the face of the earth since the beginning of time? Billions upon billions — and nobody looks the same.

Why is that? It is because we all have a different shoshon neshama [root soul]. Our physical bodies are a reflection of our souls. Since our souls by definition are different, our faces need to be different as well. This explains why (even according to those opinions that they have some type of pseudo soul) animals do not have different appearances. Have you ever looked at squirrels? Examine any two squirrels — they look exactly alike! Even cows who might have spots or markings distributed differently over their bodies, is the face of one cow so different from the face of another cow?

The answer is that just as animals lack sophisticated souls with nuances of difference and variation, so too their outward physical manifestations similarly lack distinction and variety. Humans are totally different. Our opinions differ from one another and are not alike because our inner root souls are different from one another.

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Pinchas: The Daily Sheep Offering

Beit_HaMikdash The central daily offering in the Temple service was the Tamid, an offering of two lambs. One lamb was offered just after daybreak, at the start of the day's service; the second lamb was offered in the afternoon, at its conclusion. The sheep were purchased using half-shekel coins collected from the entire Jewish people.

Why was a small sheep used for the Tamid offering, and not a more impressive offering? And why use only young animals, less than a year old? Bulls and Sheep

Some Temple offerings were brought from bulls, while others from sheep. A bull is usually a peaceful animal and a productive worker. But on occasion a bull can suddenly transform itself into a terrifying force of danger and destruction. For this reason, a bull is an appropriate offering for those seeking to atone for a life that has tragically fallen into a grave state of ruin and disaster.

Sheep, on the other hand, provide a suitable offering when the problem is not one of destructive behavior, but rather a general spiritual decline and indulgence in materialism. The peaceful but mundane sheep are a fitting metaphor for our daily struggle against the negative influence of involvement in worldly matters.

With regard to the Jewish people as a whole, one cannot speak of widespread corruption and moral decay. The Tamid offering, purchased with funds from the entire nation, does not atone for the extreme vices of evil individuals.

Rather, it is meant to meet the nation's general spiritual needs: to uplift lives from the poverty of a materialistic existence and renew their aspirations for a life rich with meaning and holiness.

Yearlings

Why use sheep in their first year? Unlike older beasts, who are often difficult and ornery, these young sheep do not symbolize a life that is dominated by self-centered materialism. Since the intrinsic holiness of the Jewish people does not allow worldly influences to be etched deeply into the nation's soul, the Tamid offering is best represented by young, relatively innocuous animals.

(Sapphire from the Land of Israel. Adapted from Olat Re'iyah vol. I, p. 130)
See also: ?Pinchas: The Tamid Offering Performed at Sinai

1 Maimonides wrote that offerings are chukim, Divine statutes for which we do not know the reason. Yet that assertion did not deter scholars throughout the ages - including Maimonides himself - from suggesting possible reasons to explain various details of the Temple service.

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Home Weekly Parsha PINCHAS Rabbi Wein's Weekly Blog

Judaism constantly stresses the importance and worth of the individual. Even though there are billions of people living on our planet, the worth of the individual should not be diminished by this fact. In the Torah reading of this week the Lord informs Moshe that it was the action of one individual — Pinchas — that saved hundreds of thousands, if not millions of Jews from destruction. The bold and audacious act of one individual had the power and ability to turn away, so to speak, the wrath of God from the Jewish people at a moment of crisis.

Positive acts of individuals that are bold and different do not usually result in public approval. In fact, many times that individual is roundly criticized by the general public and his behavior is seen to be incorrect, if not even immoral. Yet, after time passes and the situation can be studied and analyzed in the light of later events and circumstances, it may become apparent that the criticized action of the individual was not only correct but was and is of immense value to society. As an example, from recent history, Menacem Begin was pilloried and criticized for having prevented Saddam Hussein from acquiring nuclear weapons. All the do-gooders of the world and the United Nations clucked in disapproval and threatened action against Israelforthis aggressive act. A decade later the world begrudgingly acknowledged that this act of seeming aggression was really one of human salvation and enormous merit. The greatness of individuals lies in the fact that some of them are willing to swim upstream and do what is right even if it is unpopular and dangerous. One of the rites of passage into male adult Jewish life is the institution of Bar Mitzvah. In a very clear way this ancient Jewish celebration reinforces the idea of the worth of each individual Jew. When we add another individual to the Jewish nation, it is not just a matter of population and numbers. It is rather the addition of a special personality with talents that are unique to him, to a community that can and will benefit from those abilities. In our synagogue this week a wonderful young man, Eliya Goldvicht will be called to the Torah on the day of his Bar Mitzvah. Having grown up in our synagogue for the past four years he is known and beloved to all of us because of his wonderful talents, great smile and exemplary conduct. He is an individual who will undoubtedly make a mark on the Jewish community in future years. Simply by knowing and appreciating him, as the synagogue membership has done over these past few years, the synagogue has reaffirmed this fundamental idea of the importance, uniqueness and greatness of the individual. All Jewish history, in fact all human history, is really the story of individuals and of their great accomplishments and even some of their disappointing failures. Eliya will be a great person that we will all be proud of and be able to say to later

generations that we knew him when he became Bar Mitzvah. Shabbat shalom

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subject: Rabbi Riskin on the Weekly Torah Portion

Shabbat Shalom: Pinchas (Numbers 25:10-30:1) By Rabbi Shlomo Riskin *Efrat, Israel* – “The daughters of Tzelofhad speak right. You shall surely give them a hereditary portion of land alongside that of their father’s brethren.” (Numbers 27:7) One of the most fascinating aspects of the entire Torah is the portion which deals with the case of the daughters of Tzelofhad, an incident considered of such significance that it is repeated at the conclusion of the book of Numbers as well (Numbers 36). How much faith we learn from these resourceful and irrepressible women! But a most interesting secondary question may be pondered from the midrashic study of the incident of these five women: is it indeed permissible for men to learn Torah from women in the first place? In this particular instance the Talmud (Bava Batra 119) pictures Moses giving a class on the levirate marriage, with the five Tzelofhad sisters in attendance. They raise a question before Moses: Is a daughter considered significant issue, to be respected as progeny and heir to her father’s estate, or not? If not, then you must allow our widowed mother to marry her deceased husband’s brother and be supported by him as the respected wife of a levirate marriage, just as though she hadn’t had issue or progeny at all. But if we daughters are considered progeny enough to exclude our mother from a levirate marriage, then you must allow us to inherit our father! And God decides in favor of the argument of these women. Hence it would seem that we certainly can learn Torah from women! The Bible refers to two fundamental Jewish ideals, Torah and the Land of Israel, as *morasha*, a heritage, rather than *yerusha*, an inheritance (see Exodus 6:8 and Deut. 33:4). From a literal perspective, the unique word “heritage” (*morasha*) connotes more than the usual “inheritance”; it has the additional directive that it must be handed over from generation to generation. An inheritance can be cash money, and may be squandered away; a heritage is an heirloom, like candlesticks or a Kiddush goblet, and is meant to be passed down to one’s children. And Torah study applies to women as well as to men: “And Moses went up to God, and the Lord called to him from the mountain saying, ‘Thus shall you say to the house of Jacob [Rashi: this refers to the women] and shall you declare to the children of Israel [Rashi: the males]’” (Exodus 19:3). Therefore, the commandment of *hak’hel*, to gather the Israelites once every seven years and establish a reaffirmation of the covenant via a public study of Torah, includes the women as well as the men (Deut. 31:12). And if women must learn and accept Torah (at least the portions of Torah necessary to properly observe the commandment of God), then they must likewise be responsible to pass Torah down to the next generation – parent to child, teacher to student. It is for this reason that Deborah is praised as one of the first judges in Israel (Judges 4:4–5), that Bruriah disagreed halakhically with her father Rabbi Hanina b. Teradion and her view is recorded (Tosefta Kelim 4), and that the Sefer HaHinukh rules (Negative Commandment 152) that a learned woman fit to render religio-legal decisions may do so. (Similarly rule the Hida, Barki Yosef Hoshen Mishpat 7:12, and the Rishon LeTzion HaRav Bakshi Doron, Binyan Av Siman 65.) To cite only one anecdotal example amongst many, when a difficult *eiruv* question came up before a number of scholars, the grandmother of Rav Shneur Zalman of Liadi adjudicated the matter, and everyone acquiesced to her decision (Sefer HaZikhronot, Rabbi Yosef Yitzchak Schneerson, Part 2). The practical Torah that we learn from the daughters of Tzelofhad is that women do not only have a portion of Torah, but that they also have a portion in the Holy Land of Israel. Their particular case, which was ultimately adjudicated by the Almighty Himself because Moses did not have the answer, was that they were correct in insisting that

since their father had no sons, they – the five women – were to receive their rightful portions in the Land of Israel (Numbers 27:7). As a direct result of their vindication, the Almighty conveyed all of the laws of inheritance to Moses and Israel (Numbers 27:8–11). Indeed, women’s inheritance rights developed from this case to such an extent that if a father bequeaths only a small amount of property, the daughters’ sustenance and dowries must be provided for – even if nothing will be left over for the sons (Ketubot 108b). But what we really learn from the daughters of Tzelofhad is the true love of the Land of Israel, as we have seen in our previous Torah commentary. It is on this basis that Rabbi Ephraim of Lunschitz, known as the Kli Yakar, gives the following “feminist” spin to his interpretation of the first verse of the sin of the scouts: “And the Lord spoke to Moses saying, ‘Send forth your men that they may scout out the land’” (Numbers 13:2). Writes the Kli Yakar: “Since our Sages teach that it was [only] men who hated the Land [of Israel] and said ‘let us return to Egypt,’ whereas the women loved the land, as they [the daughters of Tzelofhad] said ‘Give us an inheritance,’ the Holy One blessed be He, who knows the future, said it would be better to send women, but [unfortunately], you [Moses] trust [your] men.” God understood, however, that only tragedy would result from a reconnaissance mission consisting only of men! **Shabbat Shalom!**

PARASHAT PINCHAS- 2019

Rabbi Aharon Ziegler

Here in Israel we are preparing for new elections. We have to select a new leader, to guide us and to unite us.

So too in the Parasha. Moshe is told that he will soon die and a new leader must be chosen. The difference is that in the Parasha it will be HaShem who will choose a successor to Moshe and not by popular vote of the people. Moshe says to Gd.(27:16) “Let the GD of spirits of all flesh, appoint a man over the congregation..who will lead them out and bring them in, so that the congregation of Gd will not be like the sheep without a shepherd”. Moshe is told, “take Yehoshua, the son of Nun, a man of spirit, and place your hand upon him”. Meaning, he will be your successor, the new leader of Am Yisrael.

The Midrash Tanchuma (Pinchas 11) asks why the leadership was given to Yehoshua when others, such as Pinchas and Eleazar, had greater intellectual talents. In reply, the Midrash quotes a passuk from Mishlei (27:18), *The one who guards the fig tree will eat its fruits*. Yehoshua was chosen as Moshe’s successor because he arranged the chairs and spread the mats on the floor before the shiur began. Because of his devoted service, he was the appropriate candidate to replace Moshe.

When the Baal Shem Tov passed away, the mantle of leadership was not given to Rav Yaakov Yosef, a Torah giant and the author of the “Toldot Yaakov Yosef”. Rather, It passed to the Magid of Mezeritch, who had served the Baal Shem Tov with great devotion and loyalty. Similarly, Rav Chaim Volozhin became the successor to his teacher, the Vilna Gaon, partly because he was not only his student but his attendant and confidant.

Yehoshua was not a greater scholar than Pinchas or Eleazar, but “the service (Shimush) of Torah scholars is greater than its study” (Berachot 7b). Service does not merely signify physical toil, it also represents a special closeness and friendship between the rebbe and talmid. The chosen talmid not only receives information from his rebbe, but absorbs his way of life, until they are practically identical in their essence. Moshe knew that through his trusted Mesharet (servant) and confidant, the Torah would be properly transmitted to future generations.

Torah is a way of life. It does not only consist of rules and laws but a totality of a 24/7 life conduct. The way a rebbe eats, dresses and walks. The way he relates to his wife and children, to his guests and strangers-all that is Torah. A student in Yeshiva Tifferet Yerushalayim was constantly disruptive and had no interest in learning. The Menaheil of the Yeshiva wanted to expel him but needed the consent of the Rosh Yeshiva-Rav Moshe Feinstein. Rav

Moshe consented to having the boy expelled-from classes, but not from the Yeshiva. The boy was assigned to the office of R' Moshe as his personal attendant; to carry his sefarim, to keep the office tidy and clean and to walk R' Moshe to his home after Yeshiva was over. The boy began to love R' Moshe, he became interested in learning and wound up becoming a "rebbe" in the Yeshiva for difficult students. SHABBAT SHALOM FROM YERUSHALAYIM-----Rabbi Aharon Ziegler

Rabbi Dani Staum
STAM TORAH
PARSHAS PINCHOS 5779
"FRUITS OF DILIGENCE"

Rabbi Eliezer Silver zt"l was a brilliant scholar, who spared no effort to help fellow Jews and to preserve traditional Torah Judaism. He was the President of the Union of Orthodox Rabbis of the United States and Canada and one of American Jewry's foremost religious leaders. He helped save many thousands of Jews during World War II.

In 1907, Rabbi Silver and his wife immigrated to the United States. They settled in New York where Rabbi Silver first became a garment salesman and then sold insurance.

That same year, he accepted his first rabbinic position in Harrisburg, Pennsylvania. At the time the community of two thousand had an eclectic mix of outstanding scholars and ignorant laymen.

One of the members was a scholar who had studied under the Netziv in Volozhin. The man was very particular on many areas of halacha, yet he did not observe Shabbos.

The young rabbi connected with his congregants and helped them grow spiritually. When they completed their first tractate together, he arranged a lavish siyum to celebrate the accomplishment. The Volozhiner scholar was most impressed with Rabbi Silver and became an ardent supporter for the rest of his life.

Rabbi Silver related that his years in Harrisburg provided him with tremendous opportunities to learn and to write his Torah thoughts.

The simpler members of the congregation were very bothered by the fact that their young rabbi was always immersed in study. They felt that if they hired a rabbi who was purportedly a brilliant scholar, he should already know everything, and shouldn't need to always be studying.

After Moshe confirmed that the daughters of Tzelafchad would receive a portion in Eretz Yisroel, he decided that the time had come for him to seek his own needs. The Medrash relates that Moshe requested that one of his own sons be his successor as leader of the nation after his passing. G-d replied, "Your children sat and did not engage in Torah study. Yehoshua served you and gave you tremendous honor. He would wake up early and stay late in the Bais Medrash. He would set up the couches and spread out the mats and serve you with all his strength. Therefore, he is worthy to take your place as leader after your passing." G-d then instructed Moshe to prepare Yehoshua for the nation's leadership after his passing.

If Moshe's children were not worthy to lead Klal Yisroel, how could Moshe have thought that one of them should be his successor?

Nachlas Eliezer explains that undoubtedly, the children of Moshe were on the same spiritual level as Yehoshua. Still, Yehoshua was more worthy of leadership.

When one recites a siyum upon completing a tractate of Gemara or Seder (order) of Mishnayos, he declares, "We express gratitude before you, Hashem, our G-d, and the G-d of our forefathers, that You have established our portion with those who dwell in the study hall, and have not established our portion with idlers. We toil and they toil; we toil and receive reward, while they toil and do not receive reward."

It doesn't seem to be true that "they toil and do not receive reward"? Would anyone work if he wasn't receiving remuneration?

The Chofetz Chaim related a parable about a king who hired a simple yet experienced shoemaker to design and make him shoes for his daughter's upcoming wedding. It was a tremendous honor, and the shoemaker understood the gravity of the responsibility. Every nobleman and aristocrat would be in attendance, and the king expected the shoes to be regal and perfect.

The shoemaker worked diligently on the shoes, sparing no effort, and working vigorously well into the night. Every stitch was sewn with precision.

A few days before the wedding the king returned for his new shoes. The shoemaker proudly showed the king one shoe which the king happily admired. It was truly magnificent and met his highness's standards. But when the king asked for the second shoe, the shoemaker apologized and said he needed another two weeks. All color drained from the king's face. Two weeks? The wedding was three days away. But the simple shoemaker insisted that there was no way he could have it done in that amount of time. The king controlled his rage, as he turned around to leave.

The foolish shoemaker asked the exiting king when he could expect payment for his efforts? At that point, the king lost his temper. "Payment?! I should have you killed for your insolence and for failing to fulfill your task. You get paid when you meet demands. It would have been better if the shoe was less perfect, if I would at least have two shoes. But now I have to wear old shoes to my own daughter's wedding. Be happy I'm allowing you to remain alive!"

The Chofetz Chaim explained that that people work so they will get paid, which is contingent upon their fulfilling their task. No one gets paid for their effort; payment is for production. It is only in the world of spirituality where reward is granted for effort, not for results.

There is an old saying that "G-d doesn't count the pages, only the hours." Similarly, the Mishna states: "Lefum tza'ara agra - Commensurate with the gain is the reward."

In the world of truth what matters is not how much one has accomplished, but how much effort one expended. It is that investment which effects internal change, and that is what counts in heaven.

Nachlas Eliezer explains that the sons of Moshe were undoubtedly great scholars. In fact, they may have even been more knowledgeable and more scholarly than Yehoshua. However, great as they were, they could have reached greater levels.

Yehoshua on the other hand, was constantly at his Rebbe's side, always seeking to grow and enhance his spiritual level. Therefore, Yehoshua was more worthy to be Moshe's successor than Moshe's own sons.

There is an often-quoted statement from the Chida, "אין לך דבר הנומד בפני - there is nothing that stands before want/desire." Simply understood, it means "where there is a will, there is a way". The problem is that although that may be an inspiring statement, it's simply not true. There are many things a person may truly desire yet will not be able to achieve or have.

The P'nei Menachem of Ger related the following explanation from his father, the Imrei Emes of Ger: The Chida didn't mean that one can achieve or ascertain anything that he wants badly enough. Rather, he means that although one cannot get whatever he wants, he has the ability to desire whatever he wants. Nothing stands in the way of desire! One can always yearn for greatness and higher levels.

Rabbi Avigdor Miller zt"l notes that results and accomplishments are solely in the Hands of Hashem. Our role is to make the right choices and to desire the correct things:

"Suppose a person has no desire for anything good. He's missing out on the most important part. If he's a poor man and thinks that he can't build yeshivos, and so he forgets about it. He doesn't even have any interest in building a yeshiva. He is losing out because the whole success in life is the desire to want to do it, even though he can't. That's why we ask in our daily prayers, that the Bais Hamikdash be rebuilt. This is a very important tefillah. We desire the Bais Hamikdash. We can't do more than that right now, so

Hashem gives us a reward for desiring it. People think that desire is a waste of time, but that's the biggest possible error...

"Rav Yisrael Salanter was once seen talking to an old man for a long time and explaining to him the importance of creating a kollel where married men could sit and learn. Rabbi Salanter's students assumed that the old man was wealthy. When they found out that he had no money, they asked why he had wasted his time on a poor man, he replied that the old man can want a kollel. We see how important it was to get an old man to merely desire a kollel.

That itself was an achievement - planting into somebody's heart the desire to do good, even though he cannot do it.

"This is a tremendous lesson for us. A person can build the Bais Hamikdash in his heart. He can build yeshivos in his heart. He can do all good things, as long as he makes up his mind that he'd like to do it."

In life, our responsibility is not to live up to anyone else's expectations or standards, but to desire and strive to be all that we can be with the G-d-given talents we have been endowed with. That barometer is very personal.

"We toil and receive reward"

"Nothing stands before desire"

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Parashat Pinchas 5779, 2019:

Who Should Lead the Jewish People?

Rabbi David Etengoff

Dedicated to the sacred memories of my mother, Miriam Tovah bat Aharon Hakohen, father-in-law, Levi ben Yitzhak, sister-in-law, Ruchama Rivka Sondra bat Yechiel, sister, Shulamit bat Menachem, Chana bat Shmuel, Yehonatan Binyamin ben Mordechai Meir Halevi, Shoshana Elka bat Avraham, Tikvah bat Rivka Perel, Peretz ben Chaim, the *Kedoshim* of Har Nof and Pittsburgh, and the *refuah shlainmah* of Mordechai HaLevi ben Miriam Tovah, Moshe ben Itta Golda and the safety of our brothers and sisters in Israel and around the world.

Both our *parasha* and *Parashat Korach* contain an expression that refers to Hashem's unique knowledge of mankind:

They [Moshe and Aharon] fell on their faces and said, "O G-d, the G-d of the spirits of all flesh, if one man sins, shall You be angry with the whole congregation?" (*Sefer Bamidbar* 16:22)

"Let the L-rd, the G-d of spirits of all flesh, appoint a man over the congregation" (*Sefer Bamidbar* 27:16, these, and all Bible translations, *The Judaica Press Complete Tanach*)

The original Hebrew for "the G-d of the spirits of all flesh" is "*Elokei haruchot l'kol basar*." In the course of his commentary on Parashat Korach, Rashi (1040-1105) bases himself upon *Midrash Tanchuma*, *Parashat Korach* 7, and explains our phrase as "He who knows the innermost thoughts of man" ("*yoday'ah machshavot*):

...But You know the thoughts of man; You know who has committed a sin and who has not committed a sin. You know who has rebelled and who has not rebelled. You know the spirit [i.e. nature] of each one of them. Therefore, the Torah utilizes the expression: "*Elokei haruchot l'kol basar*" ("the G-d of the spirits of all flesh," translation my own).

In our *parasha*, Rashi explicates this expression in a different manner: "...the unique nature of every living person (*da'ato shel kol echad v'echad*) is manifestly evident before You, O' Ruler of the world, and [You know] that they are not similar to one another..." (27:16) In contrast to his first explanation of *Elokei haruchot l'kol basar*, focusing upon people's thought processes and behaviors, here Rashi emphasizes the *mahut adam* — Hashem's knowledge of the fundamental essence of each person and every

detail of their being. Taken in tandem, he is teaching us that the Master of the Universe knows all aspects of mankind, including our thoughts, motivations and intentions. In short, He knows the spirit of each of us.

In contrast to Rashi's comments, the beloved Chasidic *rebbe*, Rav Levi Yitzchak of Berdichev *zatzal* (1740-1810), one of the greatest advocates of the Jewish people, simultaneously emphasizes and reinterprets the words "*l'kol basar*" ("all flesh") that conclude our phrase, "*Elokei haruchot l'kol basar*:"

A human being is, after all, comprised of flesh and blood. As a result, he has numerous needs that must be fulfilled in pursuit of his livelihood (*parnassah*). [They are, in fact, so diverse in nature,] that, on occasion, they may very well cause one to be unable to serve Hashem at all times (*b'tamidut*). (*Kedushat Levi*, Parashat Pinchas, s.v. *yivkode Hashem*, this and the following translations my own)

Rav Levi Yitzchak recognizes that mankind is imperfect; as such, there will inevitably be times when the pursuit of *parnassah* will negatively impact our service of Hashem. Based upon his boundless love for the Jewish people, Rav Levi Yitzchak presents this observation in a non-pejorative manner, and intimates that this fundamental human failing should never drive a wedge between the Almighty and His people.

Rav Levi Yitzchak extends this notion, suggesting that the ideal Jewish leader, like Hashem Himself, should not only accept man's inherently flawed nature, but be willing and able to be *melamde zechut* (find merit) in our actions:

This, then, is the meaning of: "Let the L-rd, the G-d of spirits of all flesh, appoint a man over the congregation," that is, a judge and a leader who will continuously be *melamde zechut* on the Jewish people — just like You, Hashem, are melamde zechut on an individual who does not continuously serve You [due to the daily demands of making a living].

In Rav Levi Yitzchak's view, Moshe was beseeching Hashem to choose his successor based upon the capacity to find the good in the Jewish people — even when their actions would eventually fall far short of what they ideally should be. In this sense, a true leader of the Jewish people is one who focuses upon the possibilities and promise of our nation, rather than upon our pitfalls. Hashem found this crucial quality in Yehoshua, about whom the Torah states:

The L-rd said to Moses, "Take for yourself Joshua the son of Nun, a man of **spirit** (*ish asher ruach bo*), and you shall lay your hand upon him. And you shall present him before Eleazar the kohen and before the entire congregation, and you shall command him in their presence. You shall bestow some of your majesty upon him so that all the congregation of the children of Israel will take heed." (27:18-20)

Like our teacher *Moshe Rabbeinu*, Yehoshua was blessed with the capacity to be *melamde zechut* upon the entire Jewish people. This, I believe, is the meaning of the phrase, "*ish asher ruach bo*," that Hashem used when He presented Yehoshua as the next leader of *klal Yisrael* (the Jewish people). Significantly, "*ruach*" is the very same word used to describe the Almighty as "*Elokei haruchot l'kol basar*."

May Hashem continue to be *melamde zechut* upon us and bring the *Masiach* (Messiah), the "*ish asher ruach bo*," speedily and in our time. *V'chane yihi ratzon*.

Shabbat Shalom

Past *drashot* may be found at my blog-website: <http://reparashathashavuah.org>

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The email list, *b'chasdei Hashem*, has expanded to hundreds of people. I am always happy to add more members to the list. If you have family or friends you would like to have added, please do not hesitate to contact me via email <mailto:rdb718@gmail.com>.